

An Open Letter to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

As we approach this year's election for the office of president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the question is, ***“Is it time for a change in our national church leadership?”***

The current president, while possessing theological convictions and a strong personality, has had 13 years to lead our Synod to accomplish its stated mission ***“... vigorously to make known the love of Christ by word and deed within our churches, communities and the world.”*** The past 13 years have been less than fruitful.

Here are some realities that currently describe our beloved LCMS:

- Large percentages of our congregations are dying, slowly but surely.
- Baptized and confirmed membership numbers continue to decline.
- Many congregations have difficulty finding and keeping a pastor.
- A dire shortage of pastors has accelerated with historically low seminary enrollments.
- Our Synod was recently identified as having the oldest average age of any Christian church body in America. Too many of our children and grandchildren are no longer in our pews with us.
- Of our ten historic colleges and universities, three (Selma, Bronxville, Portland) have closed their doors in the past five years. Others are publicly criticized by our president.
- Our Synod and Lutheran Church Extension Fund are defendants in a \$300 million ascending liability lawsuit intensified by questions of institutional control.
- Our Synod's talented and motivated lay women and men are being kept in the shadows by leadership's hyper-clerical aggrandizement of ordained clergy.
- Lutheran Hour Ministries, LWML, and other parachurch organizations provide missional leadership on many fronts, while our national church body remains focused on the past. National leadership fails to inspire Lutheran Christians today to a bold, transforming witness in an increasingly secular world. We are called to be Christ's ambassadors!
(II Cor. 5:20)

Though a leader is not totally responsible for everything that occurs in an organization, what a leader says and does, his voice and vision, contribute greatly to the organization's success.

Facing significant election opposition, our current president is asking for one more term. The question “For what reason?” is begged. What meaningful initiatives are underway that would be accomplished by maintaining the current administration for an additional three years?

We need a leader who is not only committed to Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, but one who is also attentive to the huge challenges facing our congregations and church

workers and is dedicated to strengthening and encouraging our congregations, institutions, and organizations.

Wouldn't it be great if we had an effective national leader who ...

- Keeps the Gospel at the forefront of everything including all social and ecclesiastical issues.
- Encourages and advocates for our workers and ministries to walk together in proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ.
- Empowers and encourages local congregations to reach out into their communities with the love of Jesus for all people.
- Is a collaborative communicator who uses the District Presidents and other national, regional, and local LCMS leaders to work through issues and move Christ's Church ahead in mission.
- Shares and implements a mission vision for the church, with a strategic vision, to reach the mission goals.
- Trusts God, and the priesthood of all believers, to appreciate and celebrate the diversity God is giving us in the church and lets the Spirit lead.
- Is truthful and transparent, even-tempered, and evangelical, personal and professional.
- Is as humble and graceful in personal relationships as he is in public appearances.
- Is inspirational and visionary, respectful of the past yet focused on the future.
- Demonstrates by words and actions his commitment to Christian witness and evangelical proclamation of God's love in Jesus.

Under new leadership what could be different?

- A welcome change in leadership—style, tone, personality, and, more substantially, a change in priorities, approach, and outlook as we go forward together.
- In spite of the decline of Christianity in the US, our priority would still be to bear witness to our unchanging hope in Christ with an unbelieving world.
- Our approach would be not merely to complain about all the things in our broken world that we are against, but mainly to proclaim who we are for—Jesus, who is for us, and who came to seek and save the lost.
- Our support for Lutheran education at all levels would be an excellent priority. An approach that reflects confidence in educators serving in our schools, and trust that these colleagues are best able to connect faith and learning within their setting would be a welcome change.
- The Church would do well to embrace this opportunity and become the staunchest champion of Lutheran education rather than its sharpest critic.

- Division and factionalism would be replaced with a willingness to work together with mutual respect, trust, and support—to have each other’s backs rather than talking behind them. We need different kinds of churches to reach all kinds of people.
- Ours is a Church body known for our commitment to the truth of God’s Word. Ours could also become known as people of God who engage others winsomely and compassionately so that our witness to the love of Christ might, by all means, win some!

Given the critical challenges facing the LCMS, is it time for a change in our national church body’s leadership? Many believe it is! May the Lord of the Church bless the future efforts of the Synod we so dearly love, vigorously to make known the love of Christ!

As leaders and former leaders in The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, we agree with the above concerns and endorse Pat Ferry for our next synod president.

Ray Mirly, *President Emeritus, Missouri District*

Tom Ries, *President Emeritus, Concordia University, St. Paul*

Viji George, *President Emeritus, Concordia College, New York*

Anthony Steinbronn, *President Emeritus, New Jersey District*

David Buegler, *President Emeritus, Ohio District, former LCMS Vice President*

Gerald Kieschnick, *President Emeritus LCMS*

Roy Maack, *President Emeritus, Southeastern District*

Warren Schumacher, *President Emeritus, Northwest District*

Orville Walz, *President Emeritus, Concordia University, Seward*

Ronald Meyer, *President Emeritus, South Wisconsin District*

Tom Cedel, *President Emeritus, Concordia University, Texas*

Will Sohns, *President Emeritus Wyoming District, Former Chair of CCM*

Kurtis Schultz, *President Emeritus, Southern District*

Gerhard Michael, *President Emeritus, Florida-Georgia District*

Ken Hennings, *President Emeritus, Texas District*

Keith Kohlmeier, *President Emeritus, Kansas District*

Kurt Krueger, *President Emeritus, Concordia University, Irvine*

Larry Stoterau, *President Emeritus, Pacific Southwest District*

Dale Meyer, *President Emeritus, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis*

Jon Diefenthaler, *President Emeritus, Southeastern District*

John Nunes, *President & CEO Emeritus, Lutheran World Relief and President Emeritus, Concordia College, New York*