

Life Together

1 **Resolution 3-01**

2 **To Explore the Feasibility of Alternate Options of the New Jersey District President** 3 **as Full-Time Position**

4 WHEREAS, The New Jersey District of the LCMS encompasses the smallest geographic area of
5 the districts of the LCMS; and

6 WHEREAS, The New Jersey District has the second fewest number of congregations and
7 communicants (54 NJ, 53 SELC, 9619 communicant NJ, 12376 communicant SELC) among
8 synodical districts; and

9 WHEREAS, Congregational financial support has decreased to the point at which the district
10 must use savings, and continued sale of closed church properties to maintain the current level of
11 spending at a district level; and

12 WHEREAS, Larger districts both geographically (SELC, encompasses 11 states and 2 Canadian
13 provinces) and in number (Oklahoma, 82 congregations) are served by part-time district
14 presidents who regularly also serve as parish pastor; and

15 WHEREAS, It would be of best stewardship of the resources that God has entrusted to the
16 churches and the district to consider how other districts have organized themselves to best
17 accomplish the mission of the church; and

18 WHEREAS, Pastors have been called to congregational ministry and the church loses a great
19 resource when these men move from the congregational ministry to serve solely as District
20 President; and

21 WHEREAS, The New Jersey District in convention has already permitted the District President
22 to serve as a parish pastor; therefore be it

23 *Resolved*, That the New Jersey District Board of Directors discuss and evaluate the best possible
24 use of district resources and personnel, including the role of the District President as a possible
25 part-time position, both in time and compensation, with adequate use of all district staff and
26 elected officials to accomplish kingdom work; and be it further

27 *Resolved*, That the New Jersey District Board of Directors prepare a report and recommendations
28 to the 2021 New Jersey District Convention that includes the viability of such an arrangement of
29 a part-time District might serve.

1 Resolution 3-02
2 To Adopt Data Privacy Best Practices

3 WHEREAS, The District and Synod collect personal identity and contact information from
4 convention delegates and from those who vote for President of Synod; and

5 WHEREAS, Best practices for data privacy include the safeguarding of such personal
6 information, its use only in the official conduct of business, and strict limitations on its
7 disclosure; and

8 WHEREAS, Our delegates in convention take positions at odds with the culture, making
9 disclosure of their personal information a security concern. For example, the Family Research
10 Council in DC and donors to California Prop 8 were attacked professionally and personally for
11 the same positions on marriage that our delegates enacted in 2016 14-02A, 14-03A, and 14-04;
12 and

13 WHEREAS, LCMS Bylaw 3.12.2.3 now prohibits non-official use or distribution of the list of
14 congregation-selected voters for President of Synod; and

15 WHEREAS, The Synod openly publishes the street addresses of national delegates as part of the
16 Convention Workbook, which is posted on the Internet and easily downloaded; and

17 WHEREAS, The Secretary of Synod's office sells copies of this list to interested parties, which
18 use them mainly for political ends (In 2016, some of those distributions disclosed national
19 delegate e-mail addresses without prior consent); and

20 WHEREAS, LCMS districts have used their access to voters lists to send advocacy-type mailings
21 and e-mails directly to those who vote for synod officials; therefore be it

22 *Resolved*, That the New Jersey District affirms its commitment to data privacy best practices,
23 including protection of identity and contact information for its district convention delegates, and
24 the use or distribution of that information only for official business and with consent of the
25 persons involved; and be it further

26 *Resolved*, That the New Jersey District adopts a practice, consistent with LCMS Bylaw 3.12.2.3,
27 which prohibits the use of private voter contact information in connection with synod-level
28 elections; and be it finally

29 *Resolved*, That the New Jersey District memorialize the Synod in convention to adopt best
30 practices that stop the public disclosure of delegate personal information other than name and
31 congregational membership such as but not limited to street addresses and email addresses, and
32 require prior consent for any distribution of their personal contact information.

1 Resolution 3-03

2 To Ensure Timely and Transparent Financial Reporting in the Synod

3 WHEREAS, A principle of Biblical stewardship is to be accountable with the resources with
4 which one has been entrusted, as expressed in the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14 ff.); and

5 WHEREAS, Much is required of those to whom God has entrusted his gifts. As Jesus said,
6 “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they
7 entrusted much, they will demand the more” (Luke 12:48b, ESV); and

8 WHEREAS, The Scriptures teach “it is required of stewards that they be found faithful” (1
9 Corinthians 4:2, ESV); and

10 WHEREAS, The Synod has historically recognized its responsibility of accountability and
11 faithfulness in the handling of the finances entrusted to it by its members, as is witnessed in
12 Bylaw 1.5.4, “The Synod and each of its agencies shall fully disclose their financial books and
13 records to any member congregation of the Synod;” and

14 WHEREAS, The Synod in previous conventions has expressed its opinion that such
15 accountability and faithfulness be found additionally in regular reporting of such financial
16 disclosure by adopting 2010 Convention Resolution 4-03, “To Broadly Communicate the
17 Statement of Financial Position of LCMS,” which reads in its totality:

18 “WHEREAS, It is helpful to understand the Synod’s financial position and communicate
19 it to the members of the congregations of Synod; therefore be it

20 *Resolved*, That each November, the Vice-President—Finance—Treasurer of the Synod use
21 widely available means, (i.e., The Lutheran Witness, Reporter, the LCMS Website) to
22 state the financial position of the Synod in a format easily understood by persons
23 unfamiliar with financial terminology.” (2010 Convention Proceedings, p. 120); and

24 WHEREAS, The members of the Synod expressed even further the need for full transparency in
25 all areas of financial disclosure by adopting 2016 convention RESOLUTION 9-04A, “To
26 Improve Disclosures Related to Financial Gifts from God’s Stewards for Special Appeals,” which
27 reads in part,

28 “...WHEREAS, Monies for special appeals requested by corporate Synod (e.g.,
29 following natural disasters) are reported only in part in Synod publications (e.g., Reporter
30 and The Lutheran Witness) and sometimes only annually; and ...

31 WHEREAS, Donors and members of the Synod are interested in the impact of funds
32 raised for special appeals and will appreciate improved disclosure of results; therefore be
33 it

34 *Resolved*, That the financial offices of corporate Synod continue to recognize the desire
35 of donors and members of the Synod to improve processes of reporting and work to
36 provide clear, timely, and transparent accounting for all funding and special appeals, so
37 that the Body of Christ may experience the joy of Gospel-centered mission and ministry
38 beyond the local context or community.” (2016 Convention Proceedings, p. 189); and

39 WHEREAS, It was reported to the 2013 Convention of the Synod by the Board of Directors in its

40 Report on the Disposition of Funding the Mission Recommendations (R6-03-01) that “the decline
41 in the Synod’s annual unrestricted revenue continues...The board believes that congregations will
42 respond through better, open, and honest communication about the great things God is able to
43 accomplish for His kingdom when we work together. Numerous conventions have passed
44 resolutions calling on congregations to maintain and increase unrestricted support for district and
45 Synod ministries, yet the unrestricted support passed through our districts to the Synod has
46 continued to decline at the average rate of \$1 million each year.” (2013 Convention Workbook
47 2013, p. 114-115); and

48 WHEREAS, In 2016, the Chief Financial Officer of the Synod, in reporting to the Synod about
49 offerings received, stated, “This sharing from God’s bounty continues to decline. Although the
50 amount of decline in the past three years has not been as severe as the average decline of the
51 previous 20 years, it is still trending negatively. In the face of continued declining unrestricted
52 revenues, the ability of Synod, Inc. to respond quickly and nimbly to mission and ministry
53 opportunities and challenges laid before us by our Lord also declines, as does our ability to “fill in
54 the gap” when restricted revenues, needed to fund much of our mission and ministry activities,
55 fall short of their goals. The financial challenges facing our beloved Synod persist. I believe that
56 these challenges are of our own making, a product of how we distribute the resources provided by
57 our loving Father.” (2016 Convention Workbook, pp. 61-62); and

58 WHEREAS, There have been few tangible reports about the financial struggles of the Synod,
59 such as the need to trim \$4 million dollars from the budget of the Synod (ref. July 7, 2017
60 Reporter, <https://blogs.lcms.org/2017/international-national-mission> and the May 19-20, 2017
61 Synod Board of Directors Minutes <https://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=4769>),
62 these reports are less than sufficient to keep the members of the Synod regularly informed about
63 the financial condition of the Synod; and

64 WHEREAS, It has been widely reported that the Synod has only minimal days of operating
65 capital in its cash reserves, which would seemingly place the synod in a precarious financial
66 position (ref. Paragraph 45, Financial Reports of the February 17-18, 2017 LCMS Board of
67 Directors Minutes <https://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=4659>), which stated that
68 without funds held on behalf of the two Seminaries, Synod had only a 5 day reserve of cash
69 available); and

70 WHEREAS, In the face of such challenging financial times, transparency and regularity in the
71 reporting of the financial situation of the Synod is of upmost importance to the members and
72 constituency of the Synod who have a vested interest in the financial viability of the Synod and
73 who merit clear, concise, and timely reports; and

74 WHEREAS, The President of the Synod recommended in his report to the Synod in 2016 that the
75 Synod have “Uniform Financial Reporting.” (2016 Today’s Business, p. 28); therefore be it

76 *Resolved*, That the Synod in convention direct the Chief Financial Officer to report quarterly in
77 the Synod’s official publications about the financial position of the Synod in a format easily
78 understood by persons unfamiliar with financial terminology, such reporting to include, but not
79 limited to income and expenses, budget versus spending, cash reserves and cash position, etc.;
80 and be it further

81 *Resolved*, That these quarterly reports include information about the regular Synod budget and the
82 reporting on special appeals as stipulated in 2016 Resolution 9-04A; and be it further

83 *Resolved*, That the Synod be shrewd managers with the resources God has given it; and be it
84 finally

85 *Resolved*, That the Synod give thanks to God for the resources He has entrusted to us, recognizing
86 “That the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof” (Psalm 24:1, ESV).

1 Resolution 3-04
2 To Support the Well-being of All the Church's Workers in the New Jersey District

3 WHEREAS, The well-being of the church's workers is vital to the ministry and mission of the
4 church; and

5 WHEREAS, Those who are called to serve the church in various capacities are well advised to
6 care for themselves so that they can carry out their ministries to the best of their ability; and

7 WHEREAS, Congregations, schools, and other agencies are vital to the well-being of their
8 rostered workers and staff as they support those ministers in pursuit of their well-being; and

9 WHEREAS, Major challenges to the well-being of the church's rostered workers and staff are
10 known and documented, along with effective strategies to deal with those challenges to enhance
11 their wellbeing; therefore be it

12 *Resolved*, That the New Jersey District in convention express its support for all efforts of
13 congregations, schools, and agencies to care for our rostered workers and staff and support them
14 in their wellbeing, including the following components of holistic well-being: spiritual, financial,
15 vocational, intellectual, relational, emotional, and physical, leading to a chaste and decent life;
16 and be it further

17 *Resolved*, That the New Jersey District Board of Directors maintain current and equitable
18 compensation and holistic care guidelines for all rostered workers and staff that takes into account
19 the cost of living differences throughout the state, and the worker's years of experience and
20 education levels, as is done by most other districts; and be it further

21 *Resolved*, That our congregations, schools, and agencies support the holistic well-being of their
22 rostered workers and staff, including the district's minimum compensation guidelines, and
23 intentional, strategic, practical efforts at preventing problems before they develop and resolving
24 them before they become crises; and be it further

25 *Resolved*, That the New Jersey District rostered workers and staff be encouraged to care for
26 themselves in every aspect of holistic well-being making use of Ministerial Care Coalition and
27 the resources they provide so that they can continue to serve to the best of their ability with the
28 gifts and strength that God supplies; and be it finally

29 *Resolved*, That the New Jersey District Board of Directors give compensation and care guidelines
30 to the congregations by December 2018 and follow up regularly by the district president and
31 circuit visitors incorporated in the required congregation visitations.