

To Reclaim a Standing, Synod-wide Network for Ongoing Consensus-Building

WHEREAS, God calls us to a “common mind” about faith and practice (1 Co 1:10, Ph 2:2; Ro 12:16,15:5); and,

WHEREAS, the Scriptures and Confessions provide the foundation for this common mind; and yet, the precise meeting points between the diverse principles of the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:28) and the full range of relevant issues on the ground still must be worked out (cf. 1 Cor 8-10); and,

WHEREAS, unity in a truly common mind thus requires that all parties grasp for themselves that this working out is fully faithful to “all the truth” (John 16:3), neither subtracting from nor adding to the Word of God (Dt 4:2; Rv 22:18-19)—leading to a genuine consensus about what God’s Word does and does not say and demand; and,

WHEREAS, forming such a common mind thus requires that doctrinal and practical discussions are accessible and transparent to all, engaging all concerns and claims before decisions are made and positions taken; and,

WHEREAS, the unity of the Body also requires connections built through personal interaction, humility, looking first to oneself for errors, speaking truth in love, and much patience and bearing with one another (Ep 4; Mt 7:1f); and,

WHEREAS, convention voting and deliberation and decisions by various officeholders and subsets of Synod (e.g., the Praesidium, COP, CTCR, Seminaries, and the subcommittees and floor debates of Conventions) are necessary, and can be beneficial; and yet, ultimately, they are not the deliberation of the whole body—which means they simply cannot be sufficient for unity without being couched in a wider process of consensus-building; and,

WHEREAS, the Rev. Dr. C.F.W. Walther recognized these problems and thus sought to create a standing network of Circuit, District, and Synodical Conferences that would continually integrate Synod and build consensus, especially leading into and out of our Conventions [see “Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod,”]; and yet,

WHEREAS, the expansion of the geographic size of Synod caused this standing network and interaction to break down [see Bode, “Introduction” to Walther, *Predestination* (CPH)], leading to a need to reclaim it today; and,

WHEREAS, a contemporary reclamation would need to bring together, as far as humanly possible, all Congregations, Circuits, Districts, RSOs, Concordia Universities, Seminaries, the CTCR, the COP, and the Praesidium as well as all interested pastors, church workers, and laity—especially those who are major stakeholders in each specific issue or area of concern; and,

WHEREAS, logistically, this reclamation would require: 1) the Praesidium, COP, CTCR, and Seminaries, as the backbone of our Synod-wide infrastructure, to organize the network and fully link their own deliberations to it, and 2) other groups to hold more local exchanges that can funnel concerns and questions into the wider network; and,

WHEREAS, the Koinonia Project contains two key seeds for this reclamation, namely, 1) groups who already have met to this end, including the COP; and 2) the call to use technology to form such a Synod-wide network [“*Koinonia* Concept Paper,” 2013, #22]. An example of the later would be maintaining an online forum for all questions, claims, and responses, visible and accessible to all *in Synod (only)*. Making this forum truly helpful will require collective agreement on *how* to contribute productively and efficiently, including by further defining the process and by unlearning worldly ways of using online media (this “how” might be the network’s first topic); therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Indiana District in Convention overture Synod in Convention to direct the Praesidium, COP, CTCR, and Seminaries to appoint a joint task force that will: seek input from the other groups and organize the network accordingly; report at least once a quarter on their progress via lcms.org, the Reporter, and congregational bulletin inserts; and report fully at the next Convention; and be it further,

Resolved, That the Indiana District in Convention overture Synod in Convention to approve \$50,000 for the construction of the online forum and to direct the Synod President and CFO to select the source and to insert further maintenance costs into the Synod’s next budget; and be it further,

Resolved, That the Indiana District in Convention ask the District President to confer with our Circuit Visitors and Concordia Seminary-Ft. Wayne—the Circuit Visitors in turn requesting input from individuals and congregations in their Circuits—to consider how the District might establish a smaller-scale version of this network (without overburdening already-busy church workers), which could become a model for, and eventually a component of, the larger network; and be it finally,

Resolved, That the Indiana District in Convention encourage individuals, congregations, and circuits to give input into the formation of the network and participate in it as faithfully, fraternally, concisely, and helpfully as possible.