

# 2018 Minnesota North District Convention Newsletter



## Tuesday in Review

### Opening

The Rev. Fondow opened Tuesday by apprising delegates that certain resolutions to be discussed required a change in the articles of incorporation of the District, which would require action in two successive conventions.

The Rev. Martin Mably, the District secretary, read the minutes of the previous day's business.

### Opening Devotion:

#### A Visit With Luther — Faith and Christ Alone

During the opening worship on Tuesday, Rev. Deardoff delivered the second installment of his dramatic presentation of Luther's life, work, and confession. The message focused on Luther's shift from dependence on his own works to merit God's grace and favor, toward the recognition of the joyous Gospel promise that the grace of God is founded and offered by the merits of Christ alone, and apprehended through faith alone, which itself is a gift from God Himself working through His Word.

### Children's Chorale

The convention delegates were treated to a very special welcome after the lunch break on Wednesday. The children from Zion Lutheran Church and School in Alexandria gave an exhibition of their vocal talents by performing a number of wonderful children's songs that praised their Lord and God and confessed their faith and confidence in Him.

The performance was a further demonstration of the excellent work performed by the



Lutheran Schools of our district, and the value they have not only for our district, but for the families and children that Christ has called His own.

### Updated Convention Attendance Statistics

The Rev. Ron Carnicom, chairman of the Committee on Registration, Credentials, and Attendance, reported that, as of 8:00am, convention attendance was as follows:

*Pastoral Voting Delegates: 121 (130 possible)*

*Lay Delegates: 127 (158 possible)*

*Total Voting Delegates: 248 present (288 possible)*

There were six members of the Board of Directors present, five advisory pastors, 23 emeriti pastors, 13 commissioned ministers, five emeriti commissioned ministers, 13 volunteers and office staff, 5 guest speakers and invited participants, and 41 other guests for a total attendance of 359.

## **State of the Synod**

The Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, president of the LCMS, apprised delegates of the state of the Synod, particularly focusing on questions of demographics. Harrison noted that most of us are painfully aware of the apparent 'decline' in numbers, and especially of younger people, in our congregations. He also noted that such a state of affairs inevitably causes us to wonder about the causes and to speculate, and occasionally re-criminate, about the reasons for such shifts.

Harrison then directed delegates to recent sociological research that demonstrates that the primary reason for declining membership numbers is the declining birth rate of American families, including Lutheran families. Harrison's point was not that we need to have more babies, or that this therefore removes any need for concern with or work in outreach. Rather, he cited this to illustrate that many of the assumptions about the relationship between our doctrine and practice and membership and retention levels that often give rise to disputes (or serve as justifications for positions such as open or closed communion), are not as determinative as often believed, and sometimes are simply in error. Harrison further noted that, given this data, further decline should be expected in the future regardless of the rela-

tive success of outreach efforts, as shift in demographics will inevitably outpace even best-case-scenario outreach efforts.

Harrison then noted, more positively, that retention rates of younger Lutherans, adult conversion rates, and evangelism success is actually extremely strong in the LCMS in comparison with many other denominations who are commonly perceived as outperforming us on these various scales.

Harrison noted, further, that this research does not undercut, but rather demonstrates, the need for continued faithfulness to our doctrine and practice, as well as renewed and serious efforts of outreach, in-reach, pastoral care, and Christian education.

Following his presentation, Harrison graciously held a Q&A with delegates. He fielded a wide range of questions touching on such issues as the role and import of small congregations, the Lutheran understanding of tradition, the state of the Concordia University System, and the Synod's commitment to the Biblical creation accounts.

## **Installation of District President**

The Rev. Dr. Donald Fondow was installed as President of the Minnesota North District during the convention. The Revs. Dr. Matthew Harrison, Synod President, and Nabil Nour, Synod Third Vice President, participated in the installation with Harrison officiating. Prior to his installation, Fondow addressed the delegates, not only to encourage them toward unity and to remind them of their mission to call people to God, but especially to focus on the need for recognition of our own defensiveness when dealing with one another. He called delegates to their need to humbly and lovingly continue in respectful dialogue and interaction with one another as fellow workers and brethren of Christ.



*Synod President Matthew Harrison installs Donald Fondow as District President*

Fondow pointed to the Synod's Koinonia project as exemplifying the desire to overcome our tenden-

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### Installation, cont. from page 2...

cy to treat each other as unbelievers and problems rather than as fellow redeemed in Christ, who carries our sins and one another's sins. He contrasted love with lifelessness, stating that lovelessness is characterized by one-upmanship, prideful problem solving, and the insistence that one knows all the answers. Love is characterized by listening, understanding, and deference of judgment until understanding is achieved. In all things, Fondow pointed out that the goal of love is to win the brother.

He reminded delegates that messengers of Christ bear the message in life, and that pastors in particular out to be examples of such loving forbearance to their flocks. The delegates responded to Fondow's message with a standing ovation.

### Closing Devotion

#### Portraying Peter



The Rev. Nabil Nour led the closing devotions of the day by taking on the role of the apostle Peter on the night before his crucifixion. 'Peter' took the opportunity to witness about his life as a disciple of Christ—events such as the transfiguration, the last supper, his denial of Christ, and above all, his encounter with the resurrected Jesus and the hope that it gave him. 'Peter' powerfully brought home the hope we share in the resurrection of Christ, and called us to fear nothing in the face of that hope.

### Shared Work Between Districts



*Dean Nadasdy, President of the Minnesota South District*

The Rev. Dean Nadasdy, President of the Minnesota South District, briefly addressed the convention on Tuesday. He expressed his gratitude to President Fondow and the Minnesota North District for the close working relationship between our two districts and for the collegial work we have been able to do together. Nadasdy announced that he would not be seeking re-election as District President.

The Rev. Fred Hinz, the public policy advocate for the MNN and MNS districts, then addressed the convention to apprise them of his work and of legislative issues to watch. He noted that, while he could not get into specifics of strategy, his office was performing a lot of work behind the scenes, often in partnership with public policy groups harboring similar goals, and that their labors have been bearing fruit.

Hinz mentioned that one important goal was to push for greater educational choice legislation, in the hope of facilitating Lutheran education. He noted that there had been several near victories on that score, and that he remained optimistic about two current efforts to that effect. He also mentioned that there was currently some pro-life legislation under consideration which would require abortion providers to show mothers sonograms of babies in utero prior to commencing with an abortion.

Hinz alerted delegates to the ongoing efforts of other groups to push for physician assisted suicide, and our need to be alert against such efforts and to inform members about the issues. Hinz also mentioned some work regarding attempts to regulate the problematic practice of commercial surrogacy.

## Convention Essayist

The Rev. Roger Zieger continued his presentation, which aims to answer the question, “Where are we standing, and where shall we stand going forward?” by picking up his examination of contextualization of the Gospel in the period from 400 up to 1500.



Although Zieger contended that contextualization and enculturation of Christianity as the creation of the Gospel is not only appropriate, but an unavoidable reality, in today’s presentation he focused on how such translation of the can and did go wrong. This happened in the period discussed as the Gospel encountered the Germanic tribes, and began to be over-translated into line with conceptualities and social structures. In this historical case, such over translation resulted in the creation of saints in the vein of the Pagan warrior Sagas, the veneration of relics, the reworking of the order of penance such that ‘penance’ proper became satisfaction done following absolution to remove guilt rather than prior to absolution as an expression of contrition and discipline, and the beginning of the state church.

Aside from helping better illuminate the background of the Reformation, this historical overview also illustrated how the difficulty of the task of the Church is to continue to stand on the unchanging message of the Gospel, while addressing specific persons in their particularistic cultures and historical locations. Enculturation is a natural, necessary, and unavoidable part of speaking the Gospel in every time and place; but translation should never result in a message or a Christianity that runs counter to the abiding message of the Gospel itself. Zieger closed his presentation by noting that on the final day, he would focus on using what we have learned to begin to approach the question of where we stand in our own day, given our culture and the appropriation of the Gospel to our culture, and how to proceed going forward.

## Warm Greetings

District conventions offer an excellent opportunity to become better acquainted with the mission and work of various institutions and organizations that our Synod and District are partnered with, and many organizations gave the delegates warm greetings and information.

Ken Erlandson and Louis Blocker updated the convention on the many programs and blessings offered at Lutheran Island camp for the benefit of the District. Stacy Lung also briefly discussed the work of Christ Serve Ranch in helping people engage the intersection of faith and science, as well as the work of stew-



*Jane Wilke sharing about the work of CSP*

ardship.

Jane Wilke brought delegates up to speed on the current state and vision of Concordia, St. Paul. (CSP). She laid out the mission of CSP to form and equip thoughtful Christian life in the world, and noted with pride that CSP has the lowest tuition of any private school in Minnesota, and the highest average salary.

LWML District President Marilyn Hittel reminded delegates of the great work the auxiliary does in supporting local and international missions as well as fostering the devotional life of women in the church. She also invited pastors to the upcoming District Convention in Bemidji.

Glen Borchers of the Lutheran Layman League

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## **Resolutions for Floor Committee #1**

The Floor Committee for Missions, Evangelism, and Stewardship presented the following resolutions:

### *4. To Encourage Support for Christ's Care for Children: Kenya*

Due to need for corrections, the resolution was referred back to committee to be presented again on the final day of the convention. When taken up again in the evening, the corrected resolution was overwhelmingly approved by the delegates.

### *5. To Continue Support for Project 24*

The delegates overwhelmingly voted to encourage District congregations to support Project 24 via a special Sunday, and otherwise support the work of Project 24.

### *6. Distribute the Convention Worship Offering Evenly Between Project 24 and CROSS Appeal.*

The convention overwhelmingly approved to pass the resolution.

## **Resolutions for Floor Committee #2**

The Floor Committee for Education, Youth, and Human Care presented the following resolutions:

### *7. To Provide Ministry Assistance to Pastors and Congregations*

A resolution was amended to have the District memorialize Synod at convention to ask Synodical educational institutions and RSO's to work to provide training for pastors to administer pastoral care to mentally afflicted. The convention overwhelmingly voted to adopt the amended resolutions.

### *8. To Oppose Physician Assisted Suicide*

After adding an amendment to memorialize the Synod to also oppose physician assisted suicide, the convention overwhelmingly voted that the District firmly declare its opposition to assisted suicide, to politically oppose any legislation supported assisted suicide, and to support the Minnesota Alliance for Ethical Healthcare.

## **Resolutions for Floor Committee #3**

The Floor Committee for District Administration presented the following resolutions:

### *1. To Commit to Supporting the Work of Lutheran Island Camp*

After slightly amending the wording, the convention voted overwhelmingly to adopt the resolution.

### *2. To Revise the District's Agreement with Lutheran Island Camp*

After some discussion, the convention overwhelmingly to have the District continue to maintain and periodically revisit long term agreements between the District and LIC.

### *3. To Encourage Congregations to Participate in the Mission of LCEF*

The convention overwhelmingly voted to encourage congregations to appoint advocates for LCEF and to celebrate an annual LCEF Sunday.

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## **Resolutions for Floor Committee #4**

The Floor Committee for Doctrine and Practice presented the following resolutions:

*1. To Encourage Study of Voting in the Christian Church Prior to Every Convention*

After discussion, the convention overwhelmingly voted to create a task force to perform theological research on the subject of voting in convention, and to send encouraging letters to congregations with respect to voting prior to each convention.

*2. To Encourage Study of the Office of the Keys Throughout the District*

After discussion, the convention overwhelmingly voted to encourage every congregation and circuit to study the office of the keys.

*3. To Decline the Overture 4-03 to Encourage Every Sunday Communion in the District*

The Behnken rule was invoked and narrowly passed to substitute the original overture as the resolution. The convention voted that the District encourage congregations to study and move towards every Sunday communion, and to memorialize the Synod to do the same.

*4. To Encourage Study and Practice of Closed Communion in District Congregations*

The Behnken rule was invoked and narrowly passed to substitute the original overture in place of the floor committee's resolution. After no further discussion, the resolution was overwhelmingly passed by the convention.

*5. To Reaffirm our Encouragement for the use of Approved Synodical Worship Materials in Congregations.*

The delegates overwhelmingly voted to reaffirm encouragement of congregations in the district to use Synodically approved materials for worship, and to memorialize Synod to do the same.

*6. To Find God-Pleasing Solutions to Member Movement between Congregations in Cases of Unresolved Discipline*

After a friendly amendment to the subject title, the convention overwhelming passed the resolution.

*7. To Reaffirm the Biblical Witness of a 6 Day Creation*

After much discussion of the wording of the subject title, the convention overwhelmingly voted to adopt the resolution as originally presented.

*8. To Decline Overture 4-08 (found on Workbook page 104-105)*

The Behnken rule was invoked and narrowly failed to pass, bringing the floor committee's resolution to decline back before the convention. After much discussion, the Order of the Day was called, and the convention will take up the resolution again on Wednesday.

## Elections

In the first vote, the convention elected to ratify the slate of circuit visitors elected throughout the district at their respective circuit forums. The list can be found on page 20 of the convention workbook.

As Mr. Timothy Browning and Mr. Marvin Kading were the only candidates to serve as lay members of the Board of Directors for the Park Region Conference, they were unanimously elected by acclamation.

The convention elected Mr. Delano Meyer and Mr. Ray Moldenhauer as the lay members of the Board of Directors for the Lakeland Conference.

As Mr. Rick Gilbertson and Mr. Rob Rydberg were the only candidates to serve as lay members of the Board of Directors for the Arrowhead Conference, they were unanimously elected by acclamation.

The convention elected the Rev. Matthew Vrudny to serve as the Minister of Religion, and Mr. Nick Booth to serve as the lay member, on the Nominating Committee from the Park Region Conference.

The convention elected the Rev. Donald Klatt to serve as the Minister of Religion, and Mr. Ray Moldenhauer to serve as the lay member, on the Nominating Committee from the Lakeland Conference.

The convention elected the Rev. Dr. Timothy Rehwaldt to serve as the Minister of Religion, and Mr. Dale Marohn to serve as the lay member, on the Nominating Committee from the Arrowhead Conference.

The convention elected Ms. Barb Hertling, DCE, as the Commissioned Minister at Large for the Nominating Committee.

The Rev. Kevin Mann was elected to the Lutheran Island Camp Board of Directors for the Park Region Conference.

The Rev. Justin Hesterman was elected to the Lutheran Island Camp Board of Directors for the Lakeland Conference.

The Rev. Jeffrey Walther was elected by acclamation to the Lutheran Island Camp Board of Directors for the Arrowhead Conference.

The Rev. Jeff Ross was elected as the at Large member of the Lutheran Island Camp Board of Directors.

The convention chose the Rev. Dr. Timothy Rehwaldt as the District's member of the Synod nominating committee, and the Rev. James Anthony as the alternate.

### **Greetings, continued from page 4...**

(LLL) gave an overview of the League's work of spreading the Gospel, making mention especially of the resources and programs offered by Lutheran Hour Ministries.

Ralph Simon shared a video on the history and ongoing work of the LCMS Foundation in gift planning.

Drs. James Fundum of Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, and Peter Nafzger of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, briefly updated delegates on the programs and emphases of the seminaries. Fundum announced that new students to either seminary will receive grants cov-

ering tuition completely through the generosity of donors. Nafzger urged delegates to identify and encourage young men to ministry.

Finally, the Rev. Bart Day of the LCEF thanked the District for its continued partnership. He shared statistics about District member involvement in the LCEF, and made special mention of the support programs LCEF offers to congregations and ministries—particularly the demographic studies LCEF can provide.

The LCEF further hosted an ice cream social following the convention business of the day, giving everyone a chance to enjoy some well-earned relaxation and conversation with one another.

### **Floor Committee #3—Continued from page 5**

#### *5. To Hold the 2021 Convention at either Grand Forks, ND or Thief River Falls, MN*

After discussion of an amendment which was ultimately withdrawn, the convention elected that the Crookston Circuit host the 2021 district convention, and that Grand Forks or Thief River Falls be considered for the location of the convention.

#### *6. To Explore Changing Meeting Days of the Week for District Conventions*

After amending the resolution to state that the District and Board of Directors consider changing meeting days of the week for the convention, with the proviso that Sundays may not be utilized for meeting days, the convention voted to adopt the resolution.

#### *7. To Reaffirm use of Lutheran and LCMS by all Congregations/Missions of the District and Synod.*

The convention overwhelmingly adopted the resolution, without discussion.

#### *8. To Decline overture 3-6 (overture proposed the unification of MNS and MNN)*

The convention overwhelming voted to adopt the resolution and decline the overture.

#### *9. To Express Appreciation for Faithful Service of the Revs. Ed Behling, Walter Brill, David Strohschein, and Paul Cloeter, as well as Mr. William Hansen, Mr. David Mowrey, and Mr. Gary Schroeder.*

The convention overwhelmingly voted to adopt the resolution. The delegates sang the common doxology in thanks for their faithful service.

#### *10. To Amend the District Articles of Incorporation, in Accord with Synod and State Requirements.*

The convention voted to amend the articles of incorporation as per Synod requirements, easily surpassing the 2/3 majority required for such amendment.

#### *11. To Amend the Bylaws of the District, in Accord with Synod and State Requirements.*

The convention voted to amend the bylaws as per Synod requirements, easily surpassing the 2/3 majority required for such amendment.