

December 14, 2020

Dear congregations, pastors and church workers of the LCMS,

Grace and peace to you as we celebrate this Advent season and the birth of Our Savior Jesus, who is the Christ.

You recently received a communication from LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison regarding a proposal to add one year to the current 2019–2022 triennium. This is due to complications that the recent spike in COVID-19 cases seems to be having on the planning and holding of district conventions in 2021.

Since this communication, the LCMS Board of Directors (BOD) has received several inquiries concerning the consultation process with the BOD and the likely financial impact of moving the convention out one year. I would like to address both of these points.

First, regarding the consultation process, President Harrison brought forward the option of delaying the convention one year during his report to the BOD. While a BOD vote was not required or taken, there was a healthy discussion of the pros and cons. The BOD noted that only two of the districts have their conventions in January/February 2021, with the bulk of them scheduled to start in the late spring and early summer of 2021. Several members cited that a lot can happen over the next few months, including the availability of a vaccine. There was also some concern about the stretching of the terms of service by an extra year for all district and Synod elected and appointed officials. The consensus of several of the BOD members was that the action seemed premature and they favored more of a wait-and-see approach. The president thanked the BOD for their counsel.

Second, regarding the potential financial impact, planning for any large gathering such as the Synod convention begins well in advance of the event. These arrangements include making financial commitments for hotel rooms (often with numerous hotels), transportation and meeting space. The cost will also depend on whether other companies or entities are negotiating for the same time block in St. Louis (where the 2022 convention is scheduled to be held) or any other city that the BOD may select. We have estimated that moving the convention out one year will cost between \$300,000-\$1,000,000. I realize this is a wide range, but the large number of variables impacting the ultimate cost makes a more precise estimate impossible.

I pray that this information will be useful and help guide you as you debate this decision and participate in the vote in January and February 2021.

God's richest blessings, and may He keep you healthy as we prepare for the gift of the Christ child!

On behalf of the LCMS Board of Directors,

Rev. Dr. Michael L. Kumm
Chairman, LCMS Board of Directors