

# ENGLISH DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

## June 25, 2025

### Meeting Location:

Concordia University, 4090 Geddes Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48105.

**Attendance: Voting Members** - Rev. Todd Arnold, Mr. Christopher Cassel, Ms. Carol George, Mr. Thomas Habitz, Mr. Thomas Honebrink, Mr. Rod Lane, Rev. Justin Laughridge, Mr. Terry Leu, Rev. Jeffrey Miskus (*Pres.*), Mr. Keith Vieregge, Mrs. Kristin Wellik, Rev. Luke Zimmerman. **Non-Voting Members** - Rev. Robert Kieselowsky, Rev. Zachary Marklevitz, Rev. Michael Morehouse, Mrs. Sally Naglich, Rev. Robert Rogers, Mr. Jim Thielen. **Staff** - Mr. Albert Amling, Mr. Ronald Grimm, Mr. John Hoover, Rev. Derek Mathers.

**Call to Order:** Chairman Terry Leu called the meeting to order at 10:05am.

### 1. Opening Devotions

Rev. Zachary Marklevitz led opening devotions, following the Morning Daily Prayer for Individuals provided in *Lutheran Service Book* (p. 295).

### 2. Roll Call and Determination of Quorum

Secretary Luke Zimmerman called the roll of members, determining that a quorum of voting members was present.

### 3. Approval of FEB 2025 Meeting Minutes

Secretary Zimmerman presented the draft minutes from the Board's meeting of February 22, 2025 for approval. Motion: *"To approve the minutes as presented."* Motion carried.

### 4. Approval of MAR 2025 Meeting Minutes

Secretary Zimmerman presented the draft minutes from the Board's teleconference meeting of March 20, 2025 for approval. Motion: *"To approve the minutes as presented."* Motion carried.

### 5. Review of Prior Meeting

Chairman Leu initiated a discussion of the Board's prior meeting for comment by members. Board members noted the good hospitality provided by the host congregation: Risen Savior - Green Valley, AZ. Members appreciated having opportunity to visit multiple area congregations, including some where installations of pastors were conducted, as well as seeing developments in other congregations. Members also positively noted being able to visit with Circuit pastors, which has value.

## **6. District President's Report**

President Miskus began his report by restating the theme verse of the upcoming District Convention (Galatians 2:20) and how he had been presenting devotional teachings to the Board based upon that theme over the past year. His devotional teaching for the Board's meeting this quarter prompted by the incident recorded in Genesis 4:1-8: the source of righteousness in Abel's work comes from his tie to the LORD, while Cain's evil stems from his lack of tie to the LORD. The baptismal life is full of good fruit, living sacrifices offered to the LORD. This is possible due to the tie to Christ that the baptized Christians have. Without that tie to Christ, no good thing will be done by individuals.

President Miskus then highlighted preparations for the District Convention, noting the work that delegate floor committees and District Staff had done, as well as his own personal orientation to learn how to preside over a convention. Rev. Jon Gruen, a District pastor, has written a hymn for the convention. Rev. Dr. Chad Kendall from Concordia University Chicago will be the keynote speaker.

President Miskus spoke about the work that he had conducted through the past quarter (FEB 2025–JUN 2025). This included visitation at a number of District congregations, conducting the installation of several pastors, visiting the Dominican Republic Lutheran Mission (DRLM), and attending meetings of the LCMS Council of Presidents. During this, he mentioned that the DRLM will likely need another two decades of support before it can develop into a self-standing church body. Attendance at the LCMS Council of Presidents included participating in the call and vicarage assignment process; the LCMS Council of Presidents also issued unanimous consensus to acknowledge only those paths that the Synod has officially recognized and would not ordain or install anyone from paths not approved by the Synod.

President Miskus provided an update on the litigation involving the Arizona Campus Christian Center (AZCCC). A lawsuit on behalf of the District was filed on June 10, 2025. At the crux of the lawsuit is the contention that the property has been fraudulently sold well below fair market value by the AZCCC Board to First United Methodist Church, leading to a loss of rightful assets to the District. The litigator employed by the District believes that previous cases ruled on by the Arizona Supreme Court provides support to the District's claim. Settlement checks previously issued to the District have not been cashed.

President Miskus mentioned various ecclesiastical supervisory actions that he has conducted. These include completing one-hour teleconferences with nearly all the active pastors in the District, providing advice to calling congregations, conferring with the District Vice-Presidents and Circuit Visitors, ensuring that applicants for seminary enrollment have completed required interviews, and working with pastors and congregations in need of help and support.

President Miskus informed the Board that District Staff member Peggy Oke will not be present at the District Convention due to significant health concerns with her father and husband. This will be the first convention that she will miss during her 38 years of work for the District.

President Miskus closed his report by expressing his thanks to Board members for their support and help during his time that he assumed the role as District President.

## **7. District Constitution Committee Report**

Secretary Zimmerman informed the Board that the District Constitution Committee had no recommended actions for the Board to take at this meeting.

## **8. District Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Sally Naglich provided the Board with the Statement of Financial Position as of April 30, 2025 and April 30, 2024, and the Statement of Activities for the 3 Months Ending April 30, 2025. She highlighted various data points found in her report. Few questions were offered by Board members about the data points.

## **9. District Audit Review**

Results of the LCMS Accounting and Financial Services' audit of the District's financial statements for the Fiscal Years Ended January 31, 2025 and 2024 were shared with Board members. Results were published with a date of April 11, 2025. Board members Mr. Thomas Habitz, Mr. Terry Leu, Mr. Jim Thielen were involved with the auditing process, along with President Miskus and Treasurer Naglich.

The report included the following opinion from the Internal Audit Department (*p. 1 of report*):

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of the English District of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, which comprise the statement of financial position as of January 31, 2025 and 2024, and the related statements of activities, functional expenses, and cash flows for the years then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the English District as of January 31, 2025 and 2024, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Motion: *"To accept the District Audit report for the Fiscal Years Ended January 31, 2025 and 2024."*  
Motion carried.

## **10. Actions on Loans Receivable Involving the Former Trinity - San Dimas, CA and Good Shepherd - Chicago, IL Properties**

Treasurer Naglich presented to extension requests on seller-financed loans involving the former properties of Trinity - San Dimas, CA and Good Shepherd - Chicago, IL that are owned by the District.

Motion: *"To extend the loan issued to Step with Christ held on the former property of Trinity - San Dimas, CA by three years at an interest rate of 6%, amortized over 25 years."* Motion carried.

Motion: *"To extend the loan issued to Iglesia Cristiana Puerta Al Cielo held on the former property of Good Shepherd - Chicago, IL by three years at an interest rate of 6%."* Motion carried.

## **11. Midday Prayer & Lunch**

Rev. Zachary Marklevitz conducted Midday Prayers, following the Noon Daily Prayer for Individuals provided in *Lutheran Service Book* (p. 296). Chairman Leu declared the meeting to be in recess until 1:00pm. The Board meeting reconvened at 1:05pm.

### **13. District Treasurer Taskforce Update**

Secretary Zimmerman and Mr. Thomas Honebrink provided a June 23, 2025 status update of the Task Force's work. That update included several recommendations for future action by the Board. It also included initial drafts of job descriptions for a District Treasurer and a District Business & Finance Administrator positions.

### **14. 2026 Electoral Circuit Alignment**

Secretary Zimmerman presented a document that included a variety of electoral circuit alignment proposals and spoke about the necessity of the Board to establish electoral circuits for the 2026 Synod Convention. Motion: *"To adopt the electoral circuit alignment proposal Option A as presented."* Extensive discussion about the proposal ensued. Motion failed. Motion: *"To adopt electoral circuit alignment proposal Option B as presented."* Following discussion, motion carried.

### **15. LCEF/Canada Corporation Restructuring Update**

Mr. Jim Thielen spoke about an issue concerning the mortgage loan held by Hope - Kitchener, ON, which occupied the April 15 meeting of the LCEF–Canada Corporation Board of Directors. A request was made by the leadership of Hope Lutheran to restructure the loan to allow for a lower monthly payment, a longer term as part of the terms of a new agreement, and the option to suspend payments for a month(s) at their discretion. In response to the requests, a proposal was made to create two separate loans, which the Board of Trustees of Hope - Kitchener, ON approved. The loan agreements, which are to be adopted by the congregation, also includes several covenants.

Work continues to fully understand the legal requirements to enable LCEF–Canada Corporation to initiate lending activities in Canada. There are significant hurdles and complexities to overcome to enable LCEF–Canada Corporation to meet Canadian lending requirements. The vision of the organization in Canada is to expand beyond Ontario province; implementing that vision will require adoption of regulations on a province-by-province level (example: Quebec province will require the language for documents to be in French). Challenges include incremental costs associated with originating loans given government regulations; those costs may require a change in the calculation of interest rates in the future. Work continues to find ways to meet Canadian requirements for a lending organization.

### **16. District Endowment Fund Report**

Chairman Leu brought the Endowment Fund Board of Managers' recommendation that the Board approve a \$15,000 grant proposal from Bethesda International Academy - Chicago, IL. Motion: *"To approve the grant proposal."* Motion carried.

Chairman Leu informed the Board that the Endowment Fund Board of Managers is updating and revising its grant application forms. A Board member inquired whether the Endowment Fund Board of Managers needed to have the Board of Directors review or approve the change in the grant application form. The sense of the Board seemed to be that the Board of Managers could adjust the form, while the Board would suggest items that it desired to see on the form.

A Board member asked whether the Endowment Fund Board of Managers had identified a new fund manager to employ. Chairman Leu informed the Board that it had not yet done so, though the matter has been a topic occupying recent meetings.

A Board member inquired whether the Endowment Fund Board of Managers could have members with staggered terms for continuity. The suggestion was made that this probably could be done, though it would need to be reviewed by the Synod Commission on Constitutional Matters for an official opinion on that possibility. Making such a change would also likely involve District Bylaw amendments to revise sections on nominations and elections.

### **17. District Staff Reports**

Rev. Derek Mathers summarized his upcoming report about District Missions to the Convention for the Board. His report will highlight different facets of congregational life within the District:

- The District's essence being characterized by mission.
- The role of legacy congregations in supporting future endeavors.
- The place of institutional vitality and institutional revitalization.
- District support involvement in congregational/circuit efforts of church planting.
- Rethinking assumptions about church planting.

His report will conclude with an emphasis about the tie between baptismal identity and mission. Without participation in essential gifts of God—Baptism, Word, Supper—no mission activity will last long. Those who are baptized and participating in those gifts will also seek for others to share in the same benefits and will be empowered to do so, even when it is difficult or challenging.

Mr. Ron Grimm, District Planned Giving Coordinator, directed Board members to read his Convention report to see a summary of his work over the past triennium. A further written report about his gift plan activity was provided for the Board's meeting to review. His visitation of congregations can also glean information about activities and missions that donors can support in their gift plans, including some that are in sister congregations alongside their own congregation.

Mr. John Hoover, LCEF District Vice-President, spoke to the Board about his visitation of pastors and congregations around the District during his eight months in the role. These visitations include sharing of best practices with congregations. His report stated that there are 182 total loans with LCEF within the District, totaling an outstanding balance of \$29.77 million; all loans are current. There are 2,159 total investing accounts from District congregations or members of District congregations with LCEF, totaling \$46.77 million.

### **18. Presidential Salary Task Force Appointment**

Chairman Leu stated that a Presidential Salary Task Force needs to be appointed for approving a District President salary at the August 2025 meeting.

### **19. Review of Previous Action - District Pledge to Synod**

President Miskus reviewed with Board members their NOV 2024 decision to reduce the pledge to the Synod to 10% and the rationale behind it. This review included stating that the District is in a good financial position and that monies it received and promised to distribute to ministries were actually given. However, direct congregational support of the District has declined over the last 15 years and that the District has suffered some "paper losses" during the past fiscal year. The matter of the Synod pledge and possible increase will be revisited when the budget is adopted for the next fiscal year.

**20. Executive Session 1**

At 4:30pm, the Board entered into Executive Session to determine the benchmark salary of the District President-Elect as required. At 4:40pm, the Board exited Executive Session.

**21. Review of Board Flow Chart**

Chairman Leu reviewed the Board Flow Chart and determined that all required actions had been taken.

**22. Closing Prayer & Adjournment**

Rev. Marklevitz conducted closing prayers, following the Early Evening Daily Prayer for Individuals provided in *Lutheran Service Book* (p. 297). Chairman Leu declared the meeting to be adjourned at 4:45pm.

Submitted,

Rev. Luke Zimmerman  
Secretary, LCMS English District