

The opening service was held at Christ Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls. Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, president of the LCMS, served as preacher at the opening service. Christ Lutheran Church was filled to near capacity.

First Session

President Sailer called on Convention Chaplain Corey Aker to lead the opening devotion, using Responsive Prayer 1.

The convention was called to order by District President Rev. Dr. Sailer, welcoming the delegates and special guests. LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, Assistant to the LCMS President Rev. Michael Frese, convention essayist Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Oswald, LCMS Fourth Vice President Nabil Nour, President Emeritus Rev. Dr. Dale Sattgast, President of Concordia University System Rev. Dr. Jamison Hardy, Executive Director to the Ministry to Armed Forces Rev. Craig Mueller.

Initial Registration report was given by Rev. Dr. Brian Mosemann, chairman of Committee #3.

Pastoral Voting Delegates: 51

Lay Voting Delegates: 59.

Total voting delegates 110.

Votes required for majority is 56. Rev. Dr. Mosemann also reported that there are 21 Advisory delegates, and 50 registered guests. The total registration is 181. Motion made by Rev. Mosemann to accept the registration report. Hearing no discussion, the motion was **Adopted**.

President Sailer noted that quorum for the convention, according to Synodical Bylaws, requires 1/3 of eligible. The district has 64 parishes, comprised of 32 self-standing congregations, and 32 multi-point parishes. Therefore, we need 22 parishes represented to meet quorum, and as this convention is represented by far more than that, quorum was declared.

Rev. Paul Winckler, assistant to the president, reported that he has been appointed as the public relations liaison for the convention. He also noted that at the conclusion of the convention, there will be a press release sharing the actions of the convention. Delegates are encouraged to share that press release with their congregations and communities.

President Sailer presented the Standing Rules. Having read the Standing Rules during the orientation meeting, a motion was made by a lay delegate to adopt the standing rules. The motion was seconded. Hearing no discussion, the motion was **Adopted**.

The proposed agenda, distributed in Today's Business, was presented. It was moved and seconded to adopt the agenda. The motion was **Adopted**.

President Sailer reported that he appointed Rev. Marcus Ring of St John in Gregory to be the judge of elections. Hailey Jo Miller will be his assistant, along with Rev. Josh Mork from Madison and Howard.

The Parliamentarian of the Convention is Mr. Matthew Naasz.

Mrs. Krista Erickson, previously noted as the assistant to the Secretary, was unable to be in attendance, so Mrs. JoAnn Hirsch from Sioux Falls will be her replacement.

President Sailer noted that the convention workbook is available on the District Website, but there are paper copies available on the registration table.

District President Sailer called upon Floor Committee #1 to begin the work of the convention.

RESOLUTION 1-01 TO CELEBRATE AND LIVE OUT THE “GOD’S GOSPEL: SALVATION POWER” THEME.” Rev. Steve Weispfennig presented the resolution. The resolution was moved and **Adopted** with 106 (99%) yes votes and 1(1%) no vote.

RESOLUTION 1-02 TO RECOGNIZE INDIVIDUALS AND WELCOME THEM INTO THE SOUTH DAKOTA DISTRICT OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH – MISSOURI SYNOD. Rev. Steve Weispfennig presented the resolution. The resolution was moved and unanimously **adopted** with 107 yes votes. Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, President of the LCMS welcomed them into the ministerium.

President Sailer dismissed Floor Committee #1 for the time-being.

Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison presented the Synodical President’s Report. He emphasized the importance of the Book of Concord and Lutheran confessions in defining Lutheran identity and doctrine. He discussed current cultural challenges, particularly around sexuality issues, and how the church can respond with the Gospel. He provided updates on various LCMS initiatives, including church planting efforts, pro-life ministry work, and international partnerships. He addressed challenges and changes in the Concordia University System, particularly the challenges of Concordia University Ann Arbor. He discussed ongoing dialogue with the Wisconsin Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and efforts toward greater unity. Finally, he reported on the financial health of the Synod, noting strong unrestricted net assets and efficient fundraising ratios.

President Sailer called upon Floor Committee #1 to continue considering resolutions.

RESOLUTION 1-05 SOUTH DAKOTA DISTRICT TO RATIFY CONGREGATIONAL VOTE TO RESCIND 1976 DISTRICT CONVENTION RESOLUTION 3-03 REGARDING THE *LUTHERAN WITNESS*. Rev. David Otten presented the resolution. The resolution was moved for consideration and by clear majority voice vote it was **Adopted**.

Floor Committee #1 was excused for the time being and Rev. Aker offered a meal prayer.

The convention entered recess until 1:15 pm.

Second Session

President Sailer called the meeting to order after the lunch break at 1:16 pm.

Floor Committee #2 was invited to the podium to begin their business.

RESOLUTION 2-01 LCMS SOUTH DAKOTA DISTRICT TO CONTINUE TOGETHER IN MISSION (TIM) SUPPORT AND TO ENCOURAGE CONGREGATIONAL INVOLVEMENT THEREIN. This resolution was offered by Commissioned Minister Hope Genzlinger. This resolution was moved for adoption. After minimal discussion, the question was called. The vote was 104 (98%) votes in favor, 2 (2%) opposed. Motion is **ADOPTED**.

RESOLUTION 2-02 TO CONTINUE THE MISSION AND MINISTRY COUNCIL FOR THE SUPPORT OF WORKERS AND MINISTRIES. This resolution was presented by Mr. Dave Peterson. The resolution was moved for adoption. One delegate spoke in opposition to the resolution, asking about the organization and structure of the council as it fits into the district. Rev. Winckler spoke to explain this, describing how the flow goes from the District in Convention, to the District Board of Directors, to the District President, and then out to the Assistant to the District President, then the Mission and Ministry Council, and finally to the Ministry Area Teams. The vote was called, and there were 97 (95%) votes in favor, and 5 (5%) votes against. Motion is **ADOPTED**.

RESOLUTION 2-04 TO ENCOURAGE WORKER WELLNESS AND IMPLEMENT A STRATEGIC PLAN ADDRESSING WORKER WELLNESS. This resolution was presented by Mr. Brad Schardin. The resolution was moved for adoption. Hearing no discussion, the vote was called, with the result that 102 (95%) votes for, and 5 (5%) voted against. Motion is **ADOPTED**.

RESOLUTION 2-05 TO BUILD A CULTURE OF CHURCH WORK FORMATION AND RECRUITMENT. The resolution was presented by Rev. Chris Davis. The resolution was moved for adoption. One delegate asked about where we currently stand regarding church worker recruitment. President Sailer shared that applications to the seminaries have seen a marked increase. President Sailer called the vote. 106 (99%) voted in favor, and 1 (1%) voted opposed. Motion is **ADOPTED**.

President Sailer called the judge of elections, Rev. Marcus Ring, to make an announcement and then present the slate of candidates for District President. Rev. Ring reminded the convention that, according to our bylaws, no more than one member of a parish can be a member of the Board of Directors at one time. There are cases on our ballot where the election of one candidate might disqualify “down-ballot” candidates. Rev.

Ring presented the list of nominees for President. The slate of candidates for President is as follows:

Rev. Dr. Michael Kumm
Rev. Randy Sturzenbecher
Rev. Paul Winckler

By voice vote, the slate for president was **ADOPTED** unanimously.

Before the vote, President Sailer asked Chaplain Aker to lead the convention in prayer.

Voting on the first ballot for District President is as follows:

Rev. Dr. Kumm - 10 (9.5%)
Rev. Randy Sturzenbecher - 74 (70.5%)
Rev. Paul Winckler - 21 (20%)

Rev. Sturzenbecher has been elected President of the South Dakota District.

Rev. Ring now presented the slate of candidates for the Vice Presidents. The slate for 1st Vice President is as follows:

Rev. Corey Aker
Rev. Dr. Chris Ascher
Rev. Dr. Thomas Brown
Rev. Matthew Wurm

Rev. Dr. Michael Kumm was nominated from the floor. Rev. Kumm declined the nomination.

Motion was made by the committee to accept the slate of candidates for the 1st vice president. Motion **ADOPTED**.

On the first ballot, the results were as follows

Rev. Corey Aker - 32 (29.9%)
Rev. Dr. Chris Ascher - 19 (17.8%)
Rev. Dr. Thomas Brown - 21 (19.6%)
Rev. Matthew Wurm - 35 (32.7%)

Rev. Ascher was removed. On the second ballot, the results were as follows:

Rev. Corey Aker - 35 (33%)
Rev. Dr. Thomas Brown - 27 (25.5%)
Rev. Matthew Wurm - 44 (41.5%)

Rev. Brown was removed from consideration. On the third ballot, the results were as follows:

- Rev. Corey Aker - 47 (44.8%)
- Rev. Matthew Wurm - 58 (55.2%)

Rev. Wurm is elected 1st Vice president of the South Dakota District.

The ballot for 2nd Vice President is as follows:

- Rev. Corey Aker - 45 (41.7%)
- Rev. Dr. Chris Ascher - 22 (20.4%)
- Rev. Dr. Thomas Brown - 41 (38%)

Rev. Ascher is removed from consideration. The second ballot is as follows:

- Rev. Corey Aker - 59 (55.1%)
- Rev. Dr. Thomas Brown - 48 (44.9%)

Rev. Aker is elected 2nd Vice President of the South Dakota District.

President Sailer expressed his thanks to the outgoing board of directors, Rev. Sturzenbecher (1st Vice President), Rev. Ryneerson (2nd Vice President), and Rev. Brown (Secretary). Also he thanked the District staff and other positions, Chad Zinnel, Dave Geidel, Rev. Paul Winckler, and Julie Pike. He also thanked Vonda Sturzenbecher, who served for years as the editor of the South Dakota Lutheran Witness insert. President Sailer expressed his thanks to Kate Meadows who has taken over for Vonda. He also thanked Dr. Bob and Kim Heckmann, for their work on the district archives.

Floor Committee #1 was invited back to the podium.

RESOLUTION 1-03 TO APPROVE AMENDMENTS TO THE BYLAWS OF THE SOUTH DAKOTA DISTRICT OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH – MISSOURI SYNOD CONCERNING THE EXECUTIVE OFFICERS OF THE DISTRICT. This resolution was presented by Rev. David Otten. Resolution was moved for adoption. Having no discussion, President Sailer called the question. The result was 97 (95%) yes votes, and 5 (5%) no votes. Motion **ADOPTED**.

RESOLUTION 1-04 TO APPROVE AMENDMENTS TO THE BYLAWS OF THE SOUTH DAKOTA DISTRICT OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH – MISSOURI SYNOD CONCERNING ELECTIONS HELD AT THE DISTRICT CONVENTION. This resolution was presented by Rev. David Otten. The resolution was moved for adoption by the committee. One delegate thought that the proposed change, “laypeople,” ought to be “layperson” as it is on line 10 of the resolution. After some discussion, the convention seemed to agree that this does not change the substance of the resolution. President Sailer called the question. The result was 89 (87%) yes votes and 13 (13%) no votes. Motion is **ADOPTED**.

RESOLUTION 1-06 TO RESCIND 2003 CONVENTION RESOLUTION 1-04 CONCERNING THE TRIENNIAL DISTRICT PLANNING CONFERENCE. This resolution was presented by Mr. Adam Schulz. Resolution was moved for adoption by the committee. Hearing no discussion, the vote was called. The result was 98 (93%) yes votes and 7 (7%) no votes. Motion is **ADOPTED**.

President-Elect Sturzenbecher addressed the convention with words of gratefulness and humility.

The convention was called to recess at 2:53 pm. The third session will begin at 3:30 pm.

Third Session

President Sailer gave his report, focusing on his ten top blessings of his service as District President.

- 1) The five hundred year anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation in 2017.
- 2) Harvest Grants from 2017-2020, granting \$60,000 to churches, and \$40,000 to schools.
- 3) District partnership with Lutheran Family Services.
- 4) Consolidation of the District Church Extension Fund into the LCMS Extension Fund.
- 5) The growth of Lutheran Schools in South Dakota.
- 6) In 2024 we have receive record giving to District ministries and to the Synod.
- 7) From its beginning in 2022, Main Street Living has grown to ten stations and eight states!
- 8) The work of affirming life has continued to strengthen and grow.
- 9) New executive officer positions allow new work among workers, congregations, and schools.
- 10)The gospel pushes us through COVID and Natural Disasters.

Into the future, President Sailer mentioned opportunity for Church and Ministry planting all around the district. He also expressed his gratitude for the ministry at Trinity in Belle Fourche.

Going forward, President Sailer mentioned a few key needs. Namely, a need for attending to workers' health. He also mentioned handing down the faith and handing on the faith to the next generation. Also, he addressed the church worker shortage and recruitment. Finally, he expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to serve and encourage workers and congregations during this last decade.

Floor Committee #1 was called to the podium.

RESOLUTION 1-12 TO THANK THE PRESIDENT OF THE SOUTH DAKOTA DISTRICT AND TO CONFER THE TITLE OF “PRESIDENT EMERITUS OF THE SOUTH DAKOTA DISTRICT.” The resolution was moved for adoption. Motion adopted by voice vote and a singing of “Jesus Thy Blood and Righteousness.”

Rev. Dr. Brian Friedrich brought greetings from Concordia University, St Paul, MN.

Floor Committee #1 resumes its work.

RESOLUTION 1-07 DISTRICT OFFICERS SERVING CONGREGATIONS AS ASSISTING PASTORS This resolution was presented by Rev. David Otten, with a final resolved modified to read: *That the Bylaw 2.05 e., which reads “He shall not serve a congregation as its Vacancy Pastor,” be changed to “He may serve as an assisting pastor, contingent on approval of the Commission on Constitutional Matters.”*

The committee moved adoption.

A delegate asked the question about a grammatical change, and also asked about whether serving as an assisting pastor includes or excludes his work as a vacancy pastor.

Another delegate asked the question about whether it is realistic for the District President to assume additional duties.

Rev. Otten called on President Harrison to speak to this, as he is an assisting pastor of Village Lutheran Church, Ladue, MO. He shared from the Synod bylaws where the President can serve as assisting pastor, as well as the history from 1910 where this question first arose when the Synodical President of at the time had a nervous breakdown.

Another delegate noted that it would be voluntary for a District Officer to serve in an assisting capacity.

A delegate asked about whether this would apply to the Assistant to the President. Rev. Otten responded that this would also apply to the Assistant to the President, and to any district official.

A delegate spoke a word of caution that the District President is a full time position, then this encourages our church workers to become overcommitted.

An advisory delegate said that the Synod bylaws allow this, and yet, because the District president is so involved with a vacancy process, this opens up the possibility of a conflict of interest.

A pastoral delegate asked two questions. First, regarding worker wellness, if District Officers are serving additional calls, how available would they be to serve in congregations that have need? Second, why did the District move away from a District president serving in a call? The committee did not know the answer to the second question, and did not address the first question.

Another pastor spoke in favor, arguing that in light of the upcoming shortage of pastors, this would allow a District Officer to serve in places they might not otherwise be able.

Another pastoral delegate argued that the more opportunities a District Official has, the better.

A pastoral delegate spoke to the 1974 decision, saying that it was an anti-Sioux Falls vote, because you had to be in Sioux Falls to serve as District President.

An advisory delegate asked if the President is responsible for creating call lists, does he put himself on the call list? Rev. Otten said the committee discussed this but does not have an answer.

Another delegate spoke to the 1974 vote, saying the president who served in both roles died on the side of the road on the way home from the convention. He urged caution in overburdening the District Officials.

Another advisory delegate spoke against, concerned that such responsibilities would limit the availability of the District President to visit the congregations in the District.

A lay delegate reminded us that we have had a lot of good counsel, but stressed that this is optional for a District Official.

Another delegate called the question.

Regarding the vote to call the question, the parliamentarian reminded the convention that 2/3 of the delegates need to vote in favor of calling the vote. The result was 94 (90%) yes, 11 (10%) no. The question has been **CALLED**.

Considering the resolution as amended, the vote result was 73 (69%) in favor, 33 (31%) opposed. The resolution is **ADOPTED**.

Lutheran Family Services Director Rev. Max Phillips brought greetings and his report from LFS. LFS provides counseling, adoption services, and support for church workers and congregations. Seven staff members, including three counselors, serve South Dakota. LFS aims to become a prominent voice in Christian adoption services,

especially for children with special needs. The organization relies on church support and does not receive government funding.

Floor Committee #2 was invited to the podium to resume their work.

RESOLUTION 2-03 TO CONTINUE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE SOUTH DAKOTA DISTRICT (LCMS) AND LUTHERAN FAMILY SERVICE (IOWA) This resolution was presented by Rev. Greg Lehr. The resolution was moved for adoption. Hearing no discussion, the delegates voted 102 (98%) in favor, 2 (2%) opposed. The motion is **ADOPTED**.

Rev. Rynearson, 2nd vice president and advisor to Floor Committee #2, reminded the convention that the delegates just voted to spend more money. So, congregations need to raise that money above their regular support of the District and Synod.

RESOLUTION 2-06 ADOPTION – ONE OF GOD’S WAYS TO BUILD HIS FAMILY This resolution was presented by Commissioned Minister Hope Genzlinger. A pastoral delegate spoke in favor, sharing their experience of adopting children. President Sailer put the resolution to vote. Delegates voted unanimously 102 (100%) yes, 0 no. Resolution is **ADOPTED**.

Rev. Andrew Utecht reported on Missions to Native Americans on Rose Bud Reservation, sharing pictures and stories from his ministry.

Rev. Albert Sutton reported on his ministry to the Pine Ridge Reservation, sharing a story about the heartbreak and joys of Gospel ministry on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Oschwald, convention essayist and professor at Concordia Seminary, St Louis, brought greetings from our seminaries.

Rev. Aker led the convention in closing devotions.

President Sailer instructed the Brookings and Sioux Falls Circuits to caucus this evening to elect circuit visitors as their current circuit visitors have been elected to other positions. Also, the advisory ordained pastors need to caucus to attend the 2026 convention of the LCMS in Phoenix.

The convention adjourned for the evening and will reconvene at 8:00 tomorrow morning.

Brookings Circuit elected Rev. Tim Rynearson to be Circuit Visitor.

Rev. Dennis Mercer is the advisory delegate 2026 Convention in Phoenix. Rev. Paul Warnier is alternate.

Sioux Falls Circuit elected Rev. Dr. Chris Ascher to be Circuit Visitor.