

Dear brothers and sisters,

A Synod-Wide Decision on Upcoming Conventions – At their November 2020 meeting, the Council of Presidents (COP) discussed moving both the District and Synod Conventions back one full year due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Some District Conventions were scheduled to meet as early as January 2021. *Since this decision would add one year to the three-year convention cycle, it is ultimately a decision that needs to be made by the congregations of Synod.* The COP voted unanimously to support President Harrison in moving the decision forward to the congregations. A majority vote that is carried out electronically, with 25% of the LCMS congregations participating, would extend the deadline of the district conventions through 2022 and move the Synod convention back to the summer of 2023. All elected positions would remain until the next convention.

The CNH District Board of Directors met on Saturday, December 5, 2020. The CNH will be postponing their convention until fall of 2021 at a minimum. By February 15, 2021, we will have a response from the Synod's congregations to move back our convention cycle one full year. If this recommendation is confirmed, our CNH Board and President's office believe our best plan would be to host our convention in April or May of 2022. Extra time for vaccine distribution, a special care for our at-risk populations, and a focus on having a robust and healing convention gathering were all contributing factors to this opinion.

What happens next?

- Your congregation received an email from President Harrison's office on Monday, December 7, explaining the decision-making process. ***(Please see the LCMS blog post below.)***
- Each LCMS congregation will be sent instructions enabling them to vote "yes/no" to extend the time for all Districts to hold their conventions any time between 2021 and the end of 2022.
- The electronic voting will take place between January 1 – February 15.
- If the congregations vote in favor of the question, LCMS Districts will then be given the flexibility of time to plan and hold their conventions in the best and safest way possible in their particular context by the end of 2022.
- If the motion does not pass due either to not having 25% of the congregations participating or if the proposal does not have a majority vote, the conventions will resume taking place within the 2021 calendar year.

Some points to consider – as your congregation makes this decision:

- While our conventions can receive presentations and reports in an "online" or "virtual" manner, those parts of the convention business involving discussion and voting must be conducted in a face-to-face, in-person setting, according to the Committee on Constitutional Matters.
- As of today, there is no place in the CNH (of which I am aware) where delegates can legally gather for a convention as we have engaged in the past, due to the COVID-19 restrictions. We believe this will be resolved with time as restrictions loosen with the advent and effects of vaccines.
- The Council of Presidents voted unanimously to extend the time period for conventions through 2022. That affirmation by this body is significant.
- Our CNH Board of Directors voted unanimously to encourage the delay of the convention to Spring of 2022 should the Synod's congregations vote to move back the convention cycle.

Our CNH BOD's and my own encouragement – As we see the surge in infections, hospitalizations, and deaths due to this pandemic, we encourage each of our congregations to participate in the vote, and to vote in favor of this resolution. *We are convinced there is no political motivation and that this would be a healthy decision for our Districts and our Synod as we function effectively and faithfully together.*

(The following helpful comment is from my colleague, SED President John Denninger, on Proverbs 4:26.) *“Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm.”* “If I am able to make a decision that ensures the people in my family, congregation, school, and neighborhood will be safe, it is the loving and right thing to do. A pathway that considers health and safety is a ‘*level path*’ and the ‘*way that is firm.*’ It is love’s way.”

We pray that God continue to provide the wisdom necessary in our congregations and communities as we navigate Christ’s gospel ministry in the year of 2021. May God grant us relief and his care and all for his glory! Come quickly, Lord Jesus!

Serving humbly, choosing joy, praying fervently!



Rev. Michael R. Lange
President, CNH District – LCMS



Rev. Dr. Thomas Zelt
First Vice President and Chairman BOD
CNH District – LCMS

Council of Presidents encourages Harrison to invite congregational vote on convention delay

[CHERYL MAGNESS](#)

DECEMBER 7, 2020



COVID-19 continues to impact both the world and the work of the church. Due to ongoing effects of the pandemic, some district presidents have expressed uncertainty that their district conventions will be able to convene at all during 2021.

The LCMS Council of Presidents (COP) voted unanimously at their November 2020 meeting to encourage LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison to put before congregations a proposal, per LCMS Constitution Article XI B 8, to delay the 2022 Synod convention one year (to 2023), thus extending the window for district conventions to include also the calendar year 2022. Harrison also consulted with the Synod Board of Directors in accordance with Article XI B 8.

The participation of each LCMS congregation in this deliberation and decision is vital as the Synod navigates this historic vote. In a Dec. 7 letter to the entire Synod, Harrison noted:

“There are two main problems: The hotel/hospitality/restaurant/convention industry is barely functioning in many places, making preparation difficult or even impossible; and government restrictions on public meetings are placing in doubt the possibility of even holding a district convention. There are currently many states in which our districts cannot legally meet.

“This is not about undue fear of COVID. We face a situation in which a number of districts may only be able to meet barely long enough to get a minimum amount of business done, or they may be unable to meet at all.”

Harrison concluded: “While this is an important matter to consider for our walking together as Synod, it is not a church-dividing issue. Let’s hear each other out, act in good conscience, and together make a decision, one way or another, for the good of our Synod and our shared commitment to proclaim Christ crucified, the hope of the world.”

While congregations can begin considering the issue immediately, instructions on the electronic voting process will be sent to member congregations by mail early in January; the vote, which requires participation of at least one quarter of the Synod’s congregations, will conclude Feb. 15.

Read more:

- [The Synod president’s full letter](#)
- [A list of FAQs about the delay-vote process](#)
- [The minutes from the Commission on Constitutional Matters’ discussion of the process](#)