

**Dear members of the Committee on Constitutional Matters and Structure,
and other interested members of Lutheran Church-Canada,**

At our March 28, 2017 Winkel, the gathered pastors of the Niagara Circuit asked me as Circuit Counselor to submit a written response on their behalf to some of the 37 Decisions published by the CCMS. Since Constitution and By-Laws are already being prepared and presented, it is unclear with whom these concerns should be shared. We would hope that the CCMS would take them into consideration and make some needed changes, but in case we are beyond that point we also feel the need to share these concerns with those who will be voting on the proposals.

By way of preface let me state, first of all, that there is much in the proposed restructuring plan with which we are quite pleased. We also know that it has been a very daunting task from the start and we commend the committee members for all of their hard work and effort to hear from as many members as possible from across our synod and to take their comments into consideration.

Secondly, we want you to understand that what follows does not cover everything we might dislike about the proposed structure. We tried to limit our discussions to what we found theologically objectionable or potentially harmful to the Synod. We tried to put aside our preferences in matters where something might seem to favour one segment of Lutheran Church-Canada over another. We know that you have received plenty of feedback on all of your proposals and we do not want to simply add text to be read. We believe the time to consider preferences is over and we want to help move forward in the process and not revisit every decision. For example, although we disagree with Decision 19 concerning Titles, and find Decisions 22 and 23 regarding Vetting to be questionable and unadvised, we are willing to let those things be and not derail the restructuring effort on those grounds.

With that being stated let me say that we consider what follows to be of the highest priority and would see any of the following points to be reasons why delegates to the Synodical Convention might rightly vote against the proposed structure. We feel that these areas need to be corrected, not because we prefer they were different, but because we feel they are wrong and will cause significant damage to our Synod if they are implemented as presented in the 37 Decisions.

Decision 15 Dividing the President's Responsibility – President and Administrator

The division of synod services into those that are ecclesiastical and those that are administrative creates a false dichotomy. Delivery of every one of the services will involve ecclesiastical and administrative work. *The President and the Administrator should be working together to deliver all of the services of Synod.*

As noted in the rationale, past presidents have told you that there is a mixing of these responsibilities in financial areas. In fact there is a mixing of these responsibilities in all areas, for the seven services assigned to the President will also entail the administrative functions of budgets, agendas, reports, and legal consultations. These tasks should not impede the President from carrying out his ecclesiastical and pastoral leadership of the Synod. Assigning seven of eight services in their totality to the President is an overload and will not result in any observable change in the work of our current President. Likewise, to remove all responsibility for financial services from the President and to assign it in totality to the Administrator is improper, since so much of our stewardship needs to be theologically and pastorally driven.

We realize that the Church Extension Fund debacle in the Albert-British Columbia District may have led many to voice that the clergy should not bear any weighty responsibility in financial matters.

However, if indeed the reason for the trouble arose from theological principles espoused by the clergy, it must be acknowledged that they were principles based on bad theology. We ought not and cannot cover up poor theology by supporting a structural change that would suggest financial decisions need not take into consideration the biblical principles of stewardship and sacrificial giving that the Lord presents to us in His Word. Instead, we need solid and constant ecclesiastical guidance in these areas. Although this may be a hard sell to those who feel betrayed by the ABC District CEF collapse, it will only be so if it has not been made abundantly clear that such theology behind those financial decisions was bad theology. It needs to be clearly and forthrightly condemned.

The Administrator, then, playing a part in all of the services of the Synod, should not be hired by the Board of Directors or accountable to them, but elected by and accountable to the convention. There are more comments to this effect below.

The rationale expresses concern that disagreement may arise between the President and the Administrator. If such a disagreement should arise the issue ought not automatically be defaulted to the Board of Directors. Rather, the Board should encourage and assist the President and Administrator in overcoming their disagreement. This step is omitted in the proposed rationale.

Decision 17 – Accountability of the President and

Decision 18 – Termination of the President’s Authority and Responsibility

The concern over an “erring” president is being given too much weight and needlessly driving these decisions. A look at the past presidents of LCC show that the Synod is blessed with qualified and faithful men to fill the office. *The accountability of the President should remain with the Convention alone.* It is the Convention that issues the Divine Call.

Four years is not too long a time to deal with any concern that might arise. In fact, it will give due time for proper and patient consideration of any such case. It should also be remembered that means of digital communication can be utilized in unlikely cases of urgency. The probability of any such happening is not sufficient reason to transfer accountability from the Convention to the Board of Directors.

In the highly unlikely event that immediate action needs to be taken, the clergy members of the Board of Directors or the Regional Pastors (which should be elected outright and not vetted by the President), ought to be assigned to work pastorally to bring an erring president to repentance.

It should also be understood that once elected, *the President has a Divine Call to his office that cannot be terminated except on the basis of infractions and errors required to terminate the Call of a parish pastor.* This means that the President should not be re-elected at a convention when he intends to continue in office. This is important in terms of his ecclesiastical supervision. He cannot be threatened by re-election concerns and faithfully carry out ecclesiastical supervision. We don’t expect this of our parish pastors and we cannot expect it of a synod president whom we want to serve the Synod pastorally.

Decision 20 and 21 – Administrator – Structure and Processes

The responsibilities of the Administrator were addressed in the comments on Decision 15 above. Just to restate, the Administrator ought to be handling administration for all services of the Synod in order to allow the President to focus on ecclesiastical and pastoral leadership of the Synod.

The main objection here, although requiring only brief comment, is our greatest objection to the proposed structure. It is seen as a deal breaker as far as we are concerned and we feel it ought to be so for all delegates to the Synod Convention. Fortunately, it is also most easily corrected.

The Administrator must have proven to be regular at worship and active participation in a congregation of LCC. There can be no exception. The Administrator must be thoroughly Lutheran in confession and life as evidenced by membership and active participation in one of our congregations. If a competent person cannot be found who belongs to a congregation of LCC, then this is not the right structural move for our Synod and the whole package needs to be reworked.

The person needs to be proven to be conversant and steadfast in our theology and congregational life, not just someone who joins a congregation in order to be eligible for the position. On the other side of the coin we see no reason why the candidate could not come from either the clergy or the laity of our Synod. From wherever the best candidate can be found, the election should be made.

Just to relate how emphatic the point was being made, let me reiterate that this was regarded to be reason alone to vote against the restructuring proposal and encourage others most strongly to do the same, whether it be as convention delegates or as congregations voting in the ratification process after the convention. We hope that proper amendments will be made immediately.

In conclusion, we have chosen to offer comment on only these decisions because we find them the most grievous and erring and in need of alteration. They are of such a fundamental nature that we are currently not convinced we can give our support to the proposed structure as these decisions stand. We hope that the CCMS will most carefully reconsider these decisions and provide for more acceptable amendments.

Kurt Lantz, Niagara Circuit Counselor
on behalf of the Niagara Circuit Pastors' Winkel.