

# JOY:FULLY LUTHERAN

1 THESS 5:16-18

REJOICE / PRAY / GIVE THANKS

## A STUDY OF THE IMPORTANT ISSUES IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH

### WHAT IS CONVENTION?

Convention is a triennial business meeting of delegates from the different circuits of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. These delegates attend to examine, discuss, and vote on both the elected officials of the Synod as well as discuss items of business that will help guide the church body over the next three years. The first convention occurred in 1847 in Chicago, IL and was the event of the founding of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (at that time named “The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States.” This first convention also elected C.F.W. Walther as the President of this new church body at the 1947 meeting, a role which he held until the next convention, and then again from 1864 to 1878.

The upcoming convention will be held from July 20-25 in Tampa FL. This is the first time that the convention has been hosted by our District, FLGA. Each District of the Synod will send a delegation of 1 pastor and 1 layperson from each circuit of the District. In addition, each District will

send a percentage of their commissioned workers and retired/non-voting pastors as well as a youth representative, a Board of Directors advisor, and a District Staff advisor. Currently only the 1 pastor and 1 layperson from each District may vote on business and elections, with the exception of all congregations having one pastor and one layperson vote.

## HOW DOES BUSINESS ARRIVE ON THE FLOOR?

190 days before the Convention, the Synod opens up to receive “Overtures” that will serve as the basis for the business of the Synod in Convention. These overtures may be brought forward by any congregation, circuit, district, or official gathering of the Synod (i.e. a Pastors’ Conference, a District Board of Directors). All overtures are accepted and published in the workbook. After overtures are collected, they are divided into manageable groups to be worked on by floor committees. The job of the floor committee is to take the overtures and to assure that they are presentable to the Convention. The floor committee may do this by amending the wording, combining similar overtures, or at times, choosing not to forward an overture on to the Convention. Once the floor committee finishes with its work, they present “Resolutions” that are to be voted upon by the Convention.

## OUR STUDY

Our study only has about a month of time to get through the work of twelve floor committees. Due to this reality, our study will focus on the important issues that are facing the Synod today, and those things that may be controversial in our Synod.

## NATIONAL WITNESS

Not much to see here folks. The biggest overtures have to do with the creation of a “Rosa J. Young Memorial” now that Concordia College in Selma AL (where there used to be a memorial) was once housed. Rosa J. Young was instrumental in the growth of African Americans in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, especially through school ministry.

## INTERNATIONAL WITNESS

Fire alert! This one is HOT. Last convention the Commission on Constitutional Matters (sort of a Supreme Court type group) ruled that all missionary funding had to come through the offices of the National LCMS office. Lots of people did not like this, including missionaries. There are a full 10 overtures calling for the overrule of this decision, and one that calls for support of the CCM ruling.

## MERCY

Immigration is a hot button issue for this floor committee. There are overtures like “To sever any agreements with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (a largely ELCA based immigration assistance ministry)” and “to direct the CTCR to prepare an addendum to the Study, “Immigrants Among Us.”

Also under this heading we see support for LCMS Life Ministry, a pro-life outreach of the LCMS, as well as three resolutions that call for the provision for mental health issues – both that pastors would be better trained to provide this, as well as pastors being able to receive better care for these issues.

## LIFE TOGETHER

The “Life Together” floor committee looks at how member congregations of the LCMS are “walking together” (The word “Synod” is actually a compound Greek word meaning “walk together”). It largely discusses how we handle issues that may cause trouble from congregation to congregation, especially where there may be disagreements.

There is a recurring hot button item this year around the practice of “Close(d) communion”. There are three overtures calling for stricter guidelines around communion, including one from the Southern Illinois District with 46 theses on the matter.

Another interesting set of a few overtures are essentially calling for more lay people to be employed by the Synod office, which is largely staffed by

ordained pastors presently. One interesting example questions if people serving at the Synod office can be considered rightly “called” or if they are just taking a break from their vocations of the Office of Ministry.

And just because it is fun. One overture from two congregations in Montana advocates for the use of the Oxford comma, beginning with the line “Whereas, the heretics, Martin Luther, and Martin Chemnitze have each had a significant impact on the life of the church, and whereas removing the Oxford comma in the paragraph above...”