

## CTCR Review of 2005 Task Force *Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational Offices*

### *Executive Summary*

The purpose of this document is to respond to President Harrison's Sept. 12, 2012 request to the CTCR to "review" 2004 Res. 3-08A "and particularly the January 2005 document *Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational Offices*," with reference to the following specific questions: female presidents/chairs of congregations and church councils; women leading worship; female elders; women assisting with Holy Communion, and women leading chapel at our universities.<sup>i</sup>

The Commission first offers an excursus which seeks to provide further clarification regarding certain historical and contextual developments and issues related to the adoption of 2004 Res. 3-08A and the January 2005 document. The Commission then notes that the 2005 Task Force *Guidelines* are helpful (first of all) in that they serve to clarify what the Synod did—and did not do—in adopting Res. 3-08A at the 2004 convention. The Synod did *not* adopt, approve, or affirm the CTCR's 1994 report *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices* as such or in its entirety. Rather, it affirmed two specific conclusions based on this report which are summarized as follows in the second "Resolved" of Res. 3-08A: 1) "that women may not serve in the office of pastor nor exercise any of its distinctive functions," and 2) "that women may serve in humanly established offices in the church as long as the functions of these offices do not make them eligible to carry out" official functions [that] would involve public accountability for the function of the pastoral office."

The second of these conclusions (regarding women serving in humanly established offices) was further clarified and delimited by the 2005 *Guidelines*. In that respect, and in its summation, clarification, and affirmation of the Synod's position on several other questions related to the service of women in the church, the Commission finds the 2005 *Guidelines* to be very helpful. Especially helpful, in the Commission's view, are the following clarifications and affirmations:

- 2004 Res. 3-08A does *not* simply "permit women to hold all humanly established congregational and synodical offices." Rather, this resolution permits women to hold humanly established offices *only* "so long as these offices do not call upon the holders of these offices to 'perform those functions that are distinctive to the public exercise of the ministry of Word and Sacraments' or to carry out 'official functions [that] would involve public accountability for the function of the pastoral office.'"
- The term "elder" should be reserved for that humanly instituted office in the congregation which has as its assigned duty the assisting of the pastor in the public exercise of the distinctive functions of this office.
- Lay assistance in the distribution of the elements in the celebration of Holy Communion, in order "to avoid confusion regarding the office of the public ministry and to avoid giving offense to the church," should be limited to lay men (cf. 1989 Res. 3-10).
- Men are encouraged to continue to exercise leadership in their congregations, just as they are encouraged to exercise their God-given leadership in the home.
- As changes in practice resulting from the adoption of 2004 Res. 3-08A are considered and/or implemented, congregations should always act in a spirit of love, caution, and charity, respecting the consciences of others, and they should consult with neighboring LCMS congregations before implementing any changes.
- The consecrated service of women in biblically supported vocations and tasks is to be encouraged and upheld.

The Commission also notes several deficiencies in the 2005 *Guidelines*, including especially the following:

- The historical background in the *Guidelines* document does not do sufficient justice to the division and disunity caused by the very narrow (52.5%) adoption of 2004 Res. 3-08A, which had the effect of changing the longstanding position of the Synod on a significant and sensitive issue. Hence, the Commission strongly recommends reconsideration by the Synod (cf. 2010 Res. 8-23) of a proposal to revise the bylaws in a way that would require greater consensus when adopting doctrinal resolutions.
- The *Guidelines* (like 2004 Res. 3-08A and the CTCR's 1994 report) do not directly or explicitly address the issue of the "order of creation" and its relevance for issues relating to the service of women in the church. This was and is a major concern of those who have expressed dissent from 2004 Res. 3-08A, and needs continued careful study and attention (a task to which the CTCR has explicitly committed itself).
- The *Guidelines* do not sufficiently address the real-life dilemma of those who may (and/or do) have conscience-bound concerns and disagreements with the action of the Synod in 2004 Res. 3-08A. Here the Commission points by way of illustration and parallel to 1995 Res. 3-05 and the helpful and fraternal way that it addresses "concerns regarding women suffrage" by acknowledging that "honest Christian conscience can and does exist on both sides of this issue" and that "members of the Synod, with due sensitivity to those for whom change in this area is a matter of conscience, continue to exercise Christian love and patience in all discussion and deliberations on this subject."

*Adopted December 12, 2014*  
*Commission on Theology and Church Relations*  
*The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*

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<sup>i</sup> The question of women leading chapel services is not specifically addressed in 2004 Res. 3-08A or the January 2005 document, but it was addressed in a 1993 opinion of the CTCR which is included with and re-affirmed by the Commission in its response to President Harrison (see below). This opinion observes that the general model for chapel services at our colleges and universities "is very similar to worship in a congregation," and therefore the principle that "women should not preach or lead [such] services of worship" applies to these chapel services.

## CTCR Review of 2005 Task Force *Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational Offices*

### Introduction: Request of the Synod President

In a letter dated September 12, 2012 President Matthew Harrison presented the following request to the CTCR:

We have noted that recent district conventions have passed overtures calling for the rescinding of Res. 3-08A (2004), "To Affirm the Conclusions of the 1994 CTCR Report: The Service of Women in Congregational Offices." I request that the CTCR please review this resolution, as well as 3-07 (2007) and particularly the January 2005 document "Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational Offices," in light of *The Creator's Tapestry* and other relevant Synod or CTCR action—all to provide clarity and direction on the issue of women's service in the church. The questions that arise most consistently are the issues of: female presidents/chairs of congregations and church councils; women leading worship; female elders; and women assisting with Holy Communion. The question of women leading chapel at our universities is also a persistent area of concern. Please address these questions, while affirming and upholding the consecrated service of women in biblically supported vocations and tasks. I find the January 24, 2005 "Memo" very helpful. The commission may simply want to affirm the "Memo," with some or little alteration, and present it to the Synod.<sup>1</sup>

We begin with a few observations and comments about the President's request (and most specifically about the "January 24, 2005 'Memo'" referenced at the end of his request) for purposes of clarification.

First, the "January 24, 2005 'Memo'" referenced by the President consists of two items: 1) a cover memo from Dr. Samuel Nafzger (Executive Director of the CTCR at that time) to the Council of Presidents (COP), written for the purpose of sharing with the COP a newly prepared Task Force document called *Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational Offices*; 2) a copy of the *Guidelines* document itself, which is attached to the cover memo (see attached, Appendix A). (The *Guidelines* document was on the agenda for discussion by the COP at its February 2005 meeting.) Dr. Nafzger's cover memo is essentially informational, written for the purpose of introducing and conveying the attached *Guidelines* to the COP. Therefore, when President Harrison suggests that "the commission may simply want to affirm the 'Memo,' with some or little alteration, and present it to the Synod," the CTCR understands his reference to "the 'Memo'" to include the attached *Guidelines* document. There is nothing of substance to "affirm" in Dr. Nafzger's cover memo itself, if read apart from the document attached to it and conveyed by it.

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<sup>1</sup> The response to this request that follows in this document focuses on the 2005 *Guidelines* document, which touches on all the specific questions and concerns noted in President Harrison's request *except* the issue of "women leading chapel at our universities." This issue is helpfully addressed in a previous (1993) opinion of the CTCR which is appended to this document and which the Commission continues to affirm (Appendix F). This opinion observes that the general model for chapel services at our colleges and universities "is very similar to worship in a congregation," and therefore the principle that "women should not preach or lead [such] services of worship" applies to these chapel services.

Second, the *Guidelines* document attached to this memo was later published in a larger (January 2005) document titled [The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices With Guidelines for Congregations](#) [SWCSOGC] that also contained two CTCR documents (the CTCR's 1994 report on *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices* and the CTCR's April 2004 *Opinion on The Service of Women in Congregational Offices of Executive Director/President or Assistant Director/Vice President*) as well as the text of 2004 Res. 3-08A. This has led some to believe that the *Guidelines* document was written or approved by the CTCR or even by the Synod in convention. This is not the case. The *Guidelines* document was presented to the Synod by a Task Force appointed by the President of the Synod following the 2004 convention in order "to provide assistance to the members of the Synod who wish to implement Res. 3-08A based on the officially adopted position of the Synod on the role of women in the church" (Jan. 24, 2005 cover memo). Neither the CTCR nor the Synod has acted on or officially approved the *Guidelines* document.

Third, the *Guidelines* document itself contains five distinct sections ("Background," "Scriptural and Confessional Basis," "Sample Paragraph for Congregational Constitutions," "Recommendations," and "A Concluding Word"), none of which are specifically titled "Guidelines." This has proven to be confusing to some readers in determining exactly what "guidance" is being offered here, and where and how the document seeks to offer such guidance in the various sections of the document. There is also a preface at the beginning of the document as a whole that offers some helpful (but necessarily limited and selective) historical and contextual background.

The CTCR is herewith responding to the September 12, 2012 request of the President, therefore, by offering a section-by-section review of the 2005 Task Force *Guidelines* document. The CTCR hopes that this review will be helpful in clarifying the background and purpose of the *Guidelines*, evaluating the guidance given in the various sections of this document, and identifying issues raised by the adoption of 2004 Res. 3-08A that may need further clarification, study, and discussion.<sup>2</sup>

First, however, the Commission offers the following excursus on certain significant historical and contextual issues referenced in the document's prefatory section (pages 3-4) which are essential for understanding the *Guidelines* document and this review of it.

#### Excursus: Historical and Contextual Developments and Issues

The information provided in the brief preface to the larger January 2005 document (pages 3-4) is very helpful for understanding the historical developments of the past 50 years or so within the LCMS that preceded the adoption of 2004 Res. 3-08A. These developments include the CTCR's 1968 report on woman suffrage, the Synod's adoption of 1969 Res. 2-17 "To Grant Woman Suffrage and Board Membership" (see attached, Appendix B), and the CCM's 1970 opinion (rendered "by human right rather than by divine right," in accordance with the province of the CCM) that women, even if voting members of the congregation, should not serve in the congregational offices of elder, chairman, or vice-chairman (see attached, Appendix C). This opinion of the CCM served as the official (albeit *de iure humano*) position of the Synod from 1970 until the adoption of 2004 Res. 3-08A.

The brief history provided in this preface does not, of course, tell "the whole story." It is true that "[t]he 2004 synodical convention adopted a resolution [3-08A] affirming the conclusions of the 1994 CTCR

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<sup>2</sup> Page numbers in the *Guidelines* document referenced in this "Review" correspond to the published version of the *Guidelines* document referenced in the hyperlink above.

report” (SWCSOGC, 4), which effectively changed the long-standing position of the Synod on the service of women in certain congregational offices. It is also true, however, that this resolution was adopted only after extended and impassioned debate, and then by a disconcertingly slim majority (52.5%, 576-520). Another motion was immediately passed at the 2004 convention (by a vote of 639-348) to allow delegates to record their negative votes. Many lined up to do so; the convention minutes (July 15, 2004) record the names of 210 delegates who registered their dissent in this way at the convention itself.

Dissent to this action of the Synod continued after the 2004 convention. In 2004 and 2005, a number of pastors, congregations, and circuits formally expressed their dissent from 2004 Res. 3-08A and submitted it to the CTCR in accordance with [2004] Bylaw 1.6.2. The CTCR responded to this (and other expressions of dissent) in its December 2006 document *CTCR Response to Expressions of Dissent (2004-2006)*.

More than a dozen overtures (including overtures from ten districts, several pastoral conferences and circuit forums, and various congregations) were submitted to the 2007 Synod convention asking that 2004 Res. 3-08A be “rescinded” and/or that the CTCR be asked to “re-study,” “re-consider,” or “critically review” the conclusions of its 1994 report. It should be noted that several other overtures (including overtures from two districts, one district board of directors, and various congregations) asked that the Synod “affirm” 2004 Res. 3-08A. Hence, 2007 Overture 3-78 “To Reconsider and Clarify Scripture Passages re Role of Women” (submitted by the Texas District) summarizes well the state of affairs in the Synod at this time: “Confusion continues regarding the proper roles and service of women in the church.” The 2007 convention responded by adopting (by a vote of 870-286) Res. 3-07 “To Study CTCR Reports Relating to the Service of Women in the Church,” which also encouraged awaiting release of the CTCR’s forthcoming report on the scriptural relationship of man and woman. That report, *The Creator’s Tapestry: Scriptural Perspectives on Man-Woman Relationships in Marriage and the Church*, was released by the CTCR in December 2009. It was “commended for study” by the Synod in 2010 Res. 3-06.

At the 2010 Synod convention, much time and attention was devoted to responding to the ELCA’s 2009 Assembly decisions and actions regarding human sexuality, as well as to the sweeping Synod restructuring recommendations brought forward at that convention by the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synodical Structure and Governance [BRTFSSG]. Only one overture (3-28, from a district, circuit forum, and two congregations) expressed concern about 2004 Res. 3-08A, asking for “review” of the issue of “the role of women in the church.” At the 2013 convention, concerns about 2004 Res. 3-08A and the service of women were expressed in the form of several overtures submitted by districts, circuits, and congregations (4-16 through 4-21; 4-65—cf. the reference in President Harrison’s request to overtures passed by “recent district conventions”).

Although (as evidenced by President Harrison’s request) questions and concerns persist in the Synod about various aspects of the service of women in the church, it appears that at least some of the concerns expressed immediately after the adoption of 2004 Res. 3-08A have been addressed or allayed by subsequent reaffirmations and/or clarifications of the Synod’s position on the service of women such as those offered in the 2005 *Guidelines*, the CTCR’s 2006 report responding to expressions of dissent on this issue, and the CTCR’s 2009 report on *The Creator’s Tapestry*. To whatever extent that may be true, however, there is in the view of the CTCR an important lesson to be learned from the confusion and division caused by the narrow adoption of a Synod resolution (2004 Res. 3-08A) that had the effect of changing the long-standing position of the Synod on a significant and sensitive issue in the life of the church (the service of women in congregational offices).

In fact, the confusion and division caused by the narrow adoption of 2004 Res. 3-08A (and perhaps other narrowly adopted resolutions in recent years) was undoubtedly one of the factors that led to the 2010 BRTFSSG's proposal at the 2010 convention to amend Synod Bylaw 1.6 by including the following provision (proposed as new Bylaw 1.6.3):

1.6.3. Doctrinal resolutions of special significance (such as those initiating, modifying, or repealing specific positions or practices of the Synod) may be adopted for the information, counsel, and guidance of the membership.

(a) They shall conform to the confessional basis of the Synod as set forth in Article II of its Constitution and shall ordinarily cite the pertinent passages of the Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and any previously adopted official statements and resolutions of the Synod.

(b) Such resolutions require a two-thirds vote for adoption. The floor committee shall determine which resolutions fall into this category. The convention may overrule such determination by a two-thirds vote. The convention may also, by simple majority vote, refer the matter to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations for evaluation, refinement, development, recommendation to the next convention of the Synod.

(c) All adopted doctrinal resolutions are to be honored and upheld by the members of the Synod in accordance with each resolution's intended status until such time as the Synod amends or repeals them. (2010 *Today's Business*, 179)

This proposal, submitted via 2010 Res. 8-23, died (like many other 2010 restructuring proposals) due to a lack of time and perceived priority. The Commission believes, however, that some revision of the bylaws along these lines—"raising the bar" for the adoption of doctrinal resolutions that would have the effect of changing or repealing the current position of the Synod—is well worth revisiting and reconsidering.

#### Section-by-Section Review of and Commentary on the 2005 *Guidelines*

##### "Background" (page 19)

The CTCR finds the "Background" section of the *Guidelines* to be helpful in the following ways:

- This section helps to clarify what the Synod did—and did not do—in adopting Res. 3-08A at the 2004 convention. The Synod did not adopt, approve, or affirm the CTCR's 1994 report *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices* as such or in its entirety. Rather, it affirmed two specific conclusions "based on" this report which are summarized as follows in the second "Resolved" of Res. 3-08A: 1) "that women may not serve in the office of pastor nor exercise any of its distinctive functions," and 2) "that women may serve in humanly established offices in the church as long as the functions of these offices do not make them eligible to carry out "" official functions [that] would involve public accountability for the function of the pastoral office."
- This section makes it clear, further, that 2004 Res. 3-08A does *not* simply "permit women to hold all humanly established congregational and synodical offices" (as many formal and informal

dissenters to this resolution have argued). Rather, this resolution permits women to hold such humanly established offices *only* “so long as these offices do not call upon the holders of these offices to ‘perform those functions that are distinctive to the public exercise of the ministry of Word and Sacraments’ or to carry out ‘official functions [that] would involve public accountability for the function of the pastoral office.’” (Further comments on these restrictions follow below.)

- This section also clarifies the specific nature of the “guidelines” requested by the Synod President following the adoption of 2004 Res. 3-08A. The President specifically requested “guidelines for congregations and District constitutional committees to follow *in revising congregational constitutions and bylaws*” (emphasis added) in a way that conformed to the position and polity of the Synod. (Hence, two of the representatives on the five-person Task Force appointed to prepare these guidelines were members of the CCM, and one of these CCM members was the Secretary of the Synod.) Even though none of the subsequent sections of the *Guidelines* is specifically titled “Guidelines,” therefore, it is clear from the President’s request that the portion of the *Guidelines* that addresses the President’s request most specifically and directly is the “Sample Paragraph for Congregational Constitutions” (page 21; see comments on this section below).
- This section also makes it clear that the “guidelines and recommendations” offered in the document are intended to “*summarize* the actions and statements previously adopted by the Synod which present its understanding of what the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions teach about the service of women in the church” (emphasis added). In other words, it is not the purpose of the *Guidelines* to “break new ground” or suggest some further modification of the Synod’s position. Their purpose is to *summarize* the position of the Synod and to offer guidance to “congregations and District constitutional committees” for applying and implementing it in specific situations as needed and desired.

#### “Scriptural and Confessional Basis” (page 20)

The CTCR regards the five principles presented in this section of the document to be an accurate summary of what the Synod has said in past statements and resolutions about the service of women in the church. It is aware that some members of the Synod continue to have questions and concerns about whether 2004 Res. 3-08A and the conclusions of the CTCR’s report on *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices* are consistent with the Scriptural and Confessional principles set forth in this section. It is also aware that some members of the Synod may not agree fully with some of the previously adopted resolutions of the Synod summarized in these principles—e.g., resolutions that “permit women to vote in congregational assemblies (without any limitations on matters on which they may vote)” and/or resolutions that permit women “to read the Scriptures in public worship services” (cf. 1969 Res. 2-17 and 1989 Res. 3-14). For these very reasons, however, the CTCR commends these principles to the Synod as a helpful basis and starting point for continuing discussion of these questions and concerns about the service of women in the church.

Regarding the issue of women reading the Scriptures in the context of public worship, it should be noted that (as 1989 Res. 3-14 itself acknowledges) the CTCR, in its 1985 report on *Women in the Church* (which has been repeatedly commended by the Synod for study and guidance), stated: “[I]t is the opinion of the CTCR that the reading of the Scriptures is most properly the function of the pastoral office and should therefore not ordinarily be delegated to a lay person, woman or man” (p. 45). The CTCR, of

course, does not determine the official position of the Synod. This is done by the Synod in convention. 1989 Res. 3-14, while referencing this 1985 opinion of the CTCR, proceeds to state: “Resolved, That the congregations of the Synod proceed with care and sensitivity in making decisions permitting the lay reading of the Scriptures, recognizing decisions in this regard lie in the area of Christian judgment.”

Finally, the CTCR notes what has been regarded by some (and understandably so) as a significant omission or deficiency in this section of the *Guidelines* document, reflecting a similar omission or deficiency in the CTCR’s 1994 report which served as the basis for the adoption of 2004 Res. 3-08A. One concern of many dissenters from 2004 Res. 3-08A is that it contains no explicit reference to or argumentation concerning the foundational theological principle of “the order of creation.” The CTCR responded to this concern in its December 2006 report *CTCR Response to Expressions of Dissent (2004-2006)* by stating, in summary:

The CTCR agrees with the dissenters that the order of creation is clearly taught in Scripture and has important implications for the service of women in the church—specifically with reference to the pastoral office and its distinctive functions. Contrary to the claim of some of the dissenters, the order of creation argument has not been ignored by the Synod or by the CTCR. In fact, all of the recent CTCR documents on women’s service in the church (1985, 1994, 2005) take into account what Scripture teaches about the order of creation in their argumentation. (28)

It is true, however, that argumentation regarding “the order of creation” is not made *explicit* in the CTCR’s 1994 report (or in 2004 Res. 3-08A), which was clearly a cause for concern on the part of many who dissented from 2004 Res. 3-08A. It is also true that the 1994 report does not explicitly address the question of the various implications of the order of creation for *humanly* instituted offices in the church. However, subsequent CTCR documents (e.g., the CTCR’s 2004 Opinion included as “Appendix B” in the January 2005 document, and the CTCR’s 2009 report *The Creator’s Tapestry*) do attempt to address certain aspects of this issue. The latter document also states that “the Commission intends to continue the work begun here by providing additional resources to address specific areas of concern,” including “the understanding and value of such ideas as ‘the order of creation’ and ‘headship’” (4).

Finally, it should be noted that while the Commission affirms that “the order of creation is clearly taught in Scripture,” and while it acknowledges that questions about the understanding and implications of this issue have not been sufficiently addressed and articulated, it also recognizes that questions about exactly “how to apply” the order of creation to specific questions of practice and polity (beyond its application to the pastoral office and its distinctive functions) are very difficult to address with complete certainty, clarity, and consensus on the basis of Scripture alone. In other words, the Bible does not spell out explicitly “where to draw the line(s)” when it comes to exactly how the Biblical principle of the order of creation applies to all matters of congregational polity and practice. Hence the need for continued careful study and discussion of this matter (and patience, charity, and restraint where there is disagreement about these very difficult questions of application), to which the Commission itself is strongly committed as is indicated above.

#### “Sample Paragraph for Congregational Constitutions” (page 21)

The CTCR appreciates the clarity with which the “sample paragraph” provided in this section of the document (for use in preparing or revising congregational constitutions) affirms the historic position of the Synod by stating that (1) “a woman shall not serve as pastor of this congregation” and that (2) a woman may *not* hold any office that calls upon her “to carry out the specific functions of the pastoral

office (preaching in or serving as the leader of the public worship service, the public administration of the sacraments, the public exercise of church discipline).”

The CTCR also appreciates the reminder in this section that this sample paragraph is intended for use *only* by congregations “*that wish to permit* women to hold all congregational offices that are not directly involved in carrying out specific functions of the pastoral office or in public accountability for the functioning of this office.” As with the Synod position on woman suffrage (1969 Res. 2-17), no congregation in the Synod is “forced” by 2004 Res. 3-08A (or by any other resolution of the Synod) to permit women to hold *any* particular congregational office. Congregations of the Synod retain the freedom to decide which congregational offices they wish to limit to their male voting members.

In addressing “Concerns Regarding Woman Suffrage” in 1995 Res. 3-05 (see attached, Appendix D), the Synod officially declared “that honest Christian conscience can and does exist on both sides of this issue, but such difference of opinion is not divisive of Christian fellowship.” The same is true, the CTCR believes, with regard to 2004 Res. 3-08A and the matter of women serving in humanly-established congregational offices “that are not directly involved in carrying out the specific functions of the pastoral office or in public accountability for the functioning of this office.” Therefore, the CTCR also affirms in this context the Synod’s appeal in 1995 Res. 3-05 “that the members of the Synod, with due sensitivity to those for whom change in this area is a matter of conscience, continue to exercise Christian love and patience in all discussion and deliberations on this subject.”

Finally, the CTCR notes that there is a certain ambiguity (seemingly an intentional ambiguity) in the language used in this section (and in 2004 Res. 3-08A itself) which speaks of congregational offices “that are not directly involved in carrying out specific functions of the pastoral office *or in public accountability for the functioning of this office*” (emphasis added; cf. 2004 Res. 3-08A, “official functions [that] would involve public accountability for the function of the pastoral office”). The Synod has not provided an official “list” of congregational offices that do or do not inherently or necessarily involve “public accountability for the functioning of the pastoral office.” Since congregations are granted considerable freedom by the Synod to determine which congregational offices they wish to include or not include as part of their polity and how they wish to delimit or delineate the functions of those who hold these offices, it would be virtually impossible for the Synod (within the framework of its own official polity) to create such a “list.” (See the “Recommendations” section below, however, with regard to the office of “elder.”)

This means, of course, that some congregations of the Synod may “define” certain offices and their accompanying responsibilities (e.g., president, vice-president, etc.) differently than others, which may well result in different conclusions about the possibility of women holding these offices.<sup>3</sup> Even when congregations define the same office in virtually identical ways, they may well have different understandings of whether or not the functions of this office “involve public accountability for the function of the pastoral office” (e.g., to what extent is the President of a congregation “publicly accountable for the function of the pastoral office?”). This certainly involves an “inconsistency” in congregational polity, and (potentially) in practice. The critical question is whether it also involves an inconsistency in doctrine that is (at least potentially) “divisive of fellowship.” Here again, the CTCR believes that the parallel to the Synod’s position and practice on the issue of woman suffrage is valid

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<sup>3</sup> The issue of the “order of creation,” discussed in the previous section, often plays a significant role when it comes to different understandings and definitions in this regard—another reason that continuing discussion and clarification of this issue is needed.

and applicable—together with the affirmation of the Synod in 1995 Res. 3-05 that such differences of opinion and practice are “not divisive of Christian fellowship” but rather call for the “exercise of Christian love and patience” (cf. the comments below on the section titled “A Concluding Word”).

#### “Recommendations” (pages 21-22)

The CTCR affirms the recommendation given here regarding the congregational office of “elder,” the recommendation regarding lay assistance in the distribution of the elements in the celebration of Holy Communion, and the encouragement to men to exercise leadership in their congregations in a way that parallels God-pleasing leadership of men in the home. These recommendations are consistent with the Scriptural and Confessional principles summarized earlier in the document, previously adopted resolutions of the Synod, and past reports and opinions of the CTCR. (In connection with the encouragement to men to exercise leadership in church and home, the CTCR calls attention to its 2004 opinion which is included as Appendix B in the 2005 *Guidelines* document, and especially the sections in that opinion on “Edifying Decisions in Matters of Adiaphora” and “Supporting the God-Given Family Structure.”) Congregations and districts of the Synod are urged to abide by these recommendations out of Christian love and charity and for the sake of our walking together in the Synod.

#### “A Concluding Word” (pages 22-23)

Finally, the CTCR strongly commends to the Synod the concluding section of the 2005 document with its emphasis on respecting “the consciences of others,” acting in a spirit of love and charity, avoiding the giving of unnecessary offense, consulting with neighboring LCMS congregations before changes in practice are implemented, and not limiting study and discussion of the Biblical (and blessing-filled!) relationship between man and woman to casuistic questions about the “eligibility” of women to carry out certain “functions” within the official congregational structures of the church. In this connection, the CTCR encourages continuing study and discussion of its more “full-bodied” treatment of the relationship of man and woman in *The Creator’s Tapestry: Scriptural Perspectives on Man-Woman Relationships in Marriage and the Church* (cf. the reference to this document in President Harrison’s request), with its reminder that “the Commission intends to continue the work done here by providing additional resources to address specific areas of concern under the general topic of ‘Man and Woman in the Contemporary World’” (4).

The CTCR also joins President Harrison in “affirming and upholding the consecrated service of women in biblically supported vocations and tasks.” Many Synod resolutions and CTCR documents, such as the following, have done the same (also note the ongoing work in this area given to the CTCR in 2013 Res. 4-11A, attached as Appendix E):

The Commission...recommends that congregations encourage all of their members (male and female, single or married) to exercise their God-given responsibilities of service and leadership in their congregations. (April 21, 2004 CTCR opinion on “The Service of Women;” January 2005 document; page 30)

The body of Christ requires that its individual members exercise the wide variety of their gifts, whether that individual is male or female (1 Cor. 12:7). Therefore our church has affirmed the calling of women teachers, deaconesses, professors, and missionaries. We have endorsed such organizations as the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League and the Women’s Leadership Institute. We have affirmed the freedom of organizations to grant

women's suffrage and have opened to women various lay leadership positions in congregations, districts, and Synod. We have recognized the leadership of women in business, government, the professions, and other sectors of society.

Such leadership of women is not inconsistent with Scriptural teaching. On the contrary, it exists in the very context of our church's life and teaching which upholds and promulgates the divinely-ordered responsibility of pastors and husbands. When women serve in this way they are enhancing the work of the priesthood of all believers, serving as members of the body of Christ, and not usurping pastoral authority or violating "the order of creation." (*The Creator's Tapestry*, CTCR, 2009; page 45)

*Adopted December 11, 2014  
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& Church Relations**  
The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

# Memo

**To:** All Members of Council of Presidents  
**From:** Samuel H. Nafzger, Chairman of Task Force on 2004 Res. 3-08A  
**Date:** January 24, 2005  
**Re:** *Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational Offices*

The CTCR has been informed that a copy of materials relating to the service of women in congregational offices will be ready to send to every synodical congregation and rostered church worker today. Included in this booklet are the following four items:

1. The CTCR's 1994 Report *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices*;
2. The Task Force's *Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational Offices*;
3. 2004 Res. 3-08A;
4. The CTCR's April 2004 Opinion on *The Service of Women in Congregational Offices of Executive Director/President or Assistant Director/Vice President*.

The Task Force is looking forward to discussing its Guidelines with you at the February meeting of the COP. Should questions be directed to you prior to this time regarding these Guidelines, we would encourage you to note that the Task Force understood that its assignment was to provide assistance to the members of the Synod who wish to implement Res. 3-08A based on the officially adopted position of the Synod on the role of women in the church. Its assignment was not to re-study this issue. These Guidelines, therefore, do not "break new ground."

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact any of the members of the Task Force, if you have any questions prior to our February time together.

Blessings in Christ.

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# Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational Offices

## Background

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, at its 62<sup>nd</sup> Regular Convention (July 1-15, 2004) adopted a resolution which affirms its understanding that the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions permit women to hold all humanly established congregational and synodical offices, so long as these offices do not call upon the holders of these offices to “perform those functions that are distinctive to the public exercise of the ministry of Word and Sacraments” or to carry out “official functions [that] would involve public accountability for the function of the pastoral office.”<sup>1</sup> This decision was based on a report issued by the Synod’s Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) in 1994 and which the Synod had commended for study throughout the Synod at its 1995 convention.<sup>2</sup>

Following the 2004 convention, President Gerald Kieschnick appointed a task force made up of two representatives from the CTCR, two representatives from the Commission on Constitutional Matters, and one District President to prepare “guidelines for congregations and District constitutional committees to follow in revising congregational constitutions and bylaws to permit women to hold all congregational offices so long as their assigned responsibilities do not include distinctive functions of the pastoral office.”

In response to this assignment the task force offers the following guidelines and recommendations which summarize the actions and statements previously adopted by the Synod which present its understanding of what the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions teach about the service of women in the church.

## Scriptural and Confessional Basis

The conclusions of the CTCR’s report *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices*, affirmed by the Synod, are based on the following principles presented in the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions:

1. The Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions teach that the office of the public ministry (pastoral office) is the only divinely established office in the church (Matt.

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<sup>1</sup> 2004 Resolution 3-08A “To Affirm the Conclusions of the 1994 CTCR Report *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices*,” *Convention Proceedings*, 132-3.

<sup>2</sup> 1995 Resolution 3-06A “To Continue to Study *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices* in Light of ‘Dissenting Report’ and Other Ongoing Studies by the CTCR on the Role of Women in the Church,” *Convention Proceedings*, 120.

28:18-20; John 20:22-23; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11; 1 Peter 5:1; Titus 1:5; AC XIV; Ap XIII; Treatise 67-72;<sup>3</sup> see also 1969 Res. 2-17.)

2. The Holy Scriptures teach that women are not to hold the office of the public ministry (pastoral office) or to perform those functions (see 4 below) that are distinctive to the public exercise of the ministry of Word and Sacraments, nor are they to carry out official functions [that] would involve public accountability for the functions of the pastoral office (1 Corinthians 14; 1 Timothy 2).<sup>4</sup>
3. The Augsburg Confession states that “according to the Gospel the power of the keys or the power of bishops [pastors] is a power and command of God to preach the Gospel, to forgive and retain sins, and to administer and distribute the sacraments” (AC XXVIII, 5; cf. 8-9, 21 etc.).<sup>5</sup>
4. Neither the Scriptures nor the Lutheran Confessions provide a detailed list of the activities required of pastors in the congregations they “are called to serve.” Intrinsic to this office, however, are the following functions: “1) preaching in the services of the congregation; 2) leading the formal public services of worship; 3) the public administration of the sacraments; and 4) the public administration of the office of the keys.”<sup>6</sup>
5. The Synod, based on its understanding of what the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions teach, has adopted resolutions which permit women to vote in congregational assemblies (without any limitations on the matters on which they may vote) and to read the Scriptures in public worship services, thereby indicating that these activities are not distinctive functions of the pastoral office nor do they constitute “official functions [that] would involve public accountability for the function of the pastoral office” (see 1969 Res. 2-17; 1989 Res. 3-14).

### Sample Paragraph for Congregational Constitutions

In light of the above understanding of what the Scriptures teach about the service of women, the task force has prepared the following sample paragraph for inclusion in the constitutions of LCMS congregations *that wish to permit* women to hold all congregational offices that are not directly involved in carrying out specific functions of the pastoral office or in public accountability for the functioning of this office:

*Women who have reached the age of \_\_\_ (1) \_\_\_ may serve as officers and as members of all boards and committees of this congregation which do not call upon them to carry out the specific functions of the pastoral office (preaching in or serving as the leader of the public worship service, the public administration of the sacraments, the public exercise of church*

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<sup>3</sup> See page \_\_\_ above.

<sup>4</sup> See page \_\_\_ above.

<sup>5</sup> See page \_\_\_ above.

<sup>6</sup> See page \_\_\_ above.

discipline.) Accordingly, a woman shall not serve as pastor of this congregation or as \_\_\_\_\_ (2) \_\_\_\_\_.

- (1) The age given shall be at the least the required age established by state law of not-for-profit organizations.
- (2) Here shall be listed those positions or offices which call for their holders to carry out the specific functions of the pastoral office as listed in this sample paragraph.

### **Recommendations**

The task force encourages congregations to take into account the following recommendations made by the Synod itself in its officially adopted resolutions and by the CTCR in its opinions as they consider changes to their constitutions:

1. That the term "elder," in view of the use of this term in the Scriptures, in the history of the church, and in the Synod's history, be reserved for that humanly instituted office in the congregation which has as its assigned duty the assisting of the pastor in the public exercise of the distinctive functions of this office.<sup>7</sup>
2. That lay assistance in the distribution of the elements in the celebration of Holy Communion, in order "to avoid confusion regarding the office of the public ministry and to avoid giving offense to the church," be limited to lay men. (See 1989 Res. 3-10 "To Address Practice of Women Serving Holy Communion.").
3. That, while situations exist in which the service of women in leadership positions in the congregation is desirable or even necessary, men be encouraged to continue to exercise leadership in their congregations even as they are encouraged to exercise their God-given leadership in a God-pleasing manner in their homes. (See CTCR opinion on "The Service of Women in Congregational Offices of Executive Director/Vice President or Assistant Director/Vice President" in response to a request from the Minnesota South District, p. \_\_\_ of this booklet.)

### **A Concluding Word**

When the Synod in 1969 concluded that nothing in the Scriptures prohibits women from exercising the franchise in the congregation, it also recognized the need to promote and facilitate "cautious and deliberate action in the spirit of Christian love" (Res. 2-17). Similarly, 2004 Resolution 3-08A includes a final resolve which states:

*That the members of the Synod considering changes regarding the service of women in congregational offices consult with neighboring congregations, recognizing that in matters of Christian liberty, Christians*

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<sup>7</sup> See page \_\_\_ above.

*are called, above all, to do what edifies the church, respecting the consciences of others.*

“The consciences of others” must be a primary concern when congregations consider changes that may impact the life of fellow Christians in neighboring congregations. The service of women in leadership positions is one such change. Particularly on the circuit level, members of congregations may be aware of what is happening in neighboring congregations, and officers of congregations may have occasion to meet and work together.

At the same time, it should be pointed out that 1977 Res. 3-06 “To Commend Task Force on Women and Continue to Study Role of Women in the Church” recommends

That the whole church be encouraged to sensitize itself to the needs and concerns of women, to recognize the gifts that women are and can be in the mission of the church, and to utilize fully *all* the people of God as the church carries out its witness and ministry in the world.

To utilize fully all the people of God remains the interest of the Synod, also in the adoption of 2004 Res. 3-08A. But this desire exists side by side with the Synod’s interest in heeding the clear teachings of the Scriptures regarding the office of the public ministry, as well as its expectations regarding the respective roles of men and women.

As congregations consider changes to their constitutions, therefore, care must be taken that the teachings of the Scriptures are not obscured by how a congregation understands “official functions” and “public accountability” in its corresponding practice. To address these and other issues, 2004 Res. 3-08A encourages the members of the Synod who are contemplating change, and those who will be affected by such changes, to consult with neighboring congregations (congregations in their own circuit, in neighboring circuits, etc.), lest unnecessary offense be given. Likewise, when congregations choose to change their constitutions, in conformity with this resolution of the Synod, these decisions should be respected and honored by those congregations which decide not to implement the conclusions of the CTCR Report.

We conclude these guidelines with the “Word of Encouragement” with which the CTCR concludes its report *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices*:

*The Biblical restraints regarding the service of women in the church and the authority of the pastoral office need not become the only, or even predominant, word we speak to one another. To speak of the “eligibility” of the service of women in congregational and synodical offices might give the impression to some that our primary concern in the contemporary church is to discourage women from exercising the privileges and responsibilities they hold as members of the priesthood of believers. Men*

*and women alike, however, need to help one another, first of all, to see that God's Word itself provides standards of "eligibility" for service in offices of the church, and it does so without any diminution of the value of persons. But just as important, God's people must be instruments of daily encouragement to one another and help each other to discover and appreciate the joys of Christian service. All of us would do well to emulate the apostle Paul's example in giving words of support and commendation to fellow workers in the church of God.*

#### **Members of the Task Force**

Raymond L. Hartwig, Secretary of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod and Secretary of the Commission on Constitutional Matters

Loren T. Kramer, Chairman of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations

Arleigh L. Lutz, President of the North Wisconsin District of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod and member of the Council of Presidents

Albert M. Marcis, Chairman of the Commission on Constitutional Matters

Samuel H. Nafzger, Executive Director of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations

To Grant Woman Suffrage and  
Board Membership

✓ RESOLUTION 2-17

1969 Convention Proceedings  
pages 88-89.

Report 2-01, I, J; Overtures 2-35, 2-36; Appendix II (CW, pp. 59, 84—85, 514—522); 2-6TU (URO, p. 8)

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations, in accordance with Resolutions 2-05 and 2-06 of the New York convention, made "a detailed and exhaustive study of the entire question of woman suffrage in the church" and of "the matter of full membership of women on synodical boards, commissions, and committees"; and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations has submitted its report (CW, pp. 514—522); therefore be it

*Resolved*, That we express gratitude to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations for this study; and be it further

*Resolved*, That we commend this study, as well as the study of the special committee reported in the *Proceedings, 1956* (pp. 553—569), to all congregations of the Synod; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the Synod accept the following declarations as guides on this matter:

1. Those statements of Scripture which direct women to keep silent in the church and which prohibit them to teach and to exercise authority over men, we understand to mean that women ought not to hold the pastoral office or serve in any other capacity involving the distinctive functions of this office.

2. The principles set forth in such passages, we believe, prohibit holding any other kind of office or membership on boards or committees in the institutional structures of a congregation, only if this involves women in a violation of the order of creation. We hold that they do not prohibit full membership of women on synodical boards, commissions, and committees. The manner of filling an office or establishing membership on a board or commission, in congregations or in the Synod, has no prohibitory Scriptural implications.

3. We hold likewise that Scripture does not prohibit women from exercising the franchise in congregational or synodical assemblies.

4. We therefore conclude that the Synod itself and the congregations of the Synod are at liberty to alter their policies and practices in regard to women's involvement in the work of the church according to these declarations, provided the polity developed conforms to the general Scriptural principles that women neither hold the pastoral office nor "exercise authority over men"; and be it finally

*Resolved*, That in the implementation of any changes in this area of women's ministry in the church we urge cautious and deliberate action in the spirit of Christian love.

**Action: Adopted (10).**

(The convention refused to consider a substitute motion declining to alter position on woman suffrage.)

1971 Convention Workbook

P. 244

(Adopted 1970)

CCM Opinion

## APPENDIX D

Suggestions for Congregational Constitutions  
or Bylaws Regarding the Privileges of Women  
(Voting and Holding Office)

The President of the Synod and many congregations have requested the Commission on Constitutional Matters to give guidance to those congregations which desire to incorporate in their constitutions or bylaws the provisions adopted by the Denver convention regarding woman suffrage.

The commission recommends that each congregation contemplating changes in this respect study thoroughly again Resolution 2-17 of the Denver convention, especially the following points:

Resolved, That the Synod accept the following declarations as guides on this matter:

1. Those statements of Scripture which direct women to keep silent in the church and which prohibit them to teach and to exercise authority over men, we understand to mean that women ought not to hold the pastoral office or serve in any other capacity involving the distinctive functions of this office.

2. The principles set forth in such passages, we believe, prohibit holding any other kind of office or membership on boards or committees in the institutional structures of a congregation, only if this involves women in a violation of the order of creation. We hold that they do not prohibit full membership of women on synodical boards, commissions, and committees. The manner of filling an office or establishing membership on a board or commission, in congregations or in the Synod, has no prohibitory Scriptural implications.

3. We hold likewise that Scripture does not prohibit women from exercising the franchise in congregational or synodical assemblies.

4. We therefore conclude that the Synod itself and the congregations of the Synod are at liberty to alter their policies and practices in regard to women's involvement in the work of the church according to these declarations, provided the polity developed conforms to the general Scriptural principles that women neither hold the pastoral office nor "exercise authority over men."

Some congregations may desire to insert a separate paragraph in their constitution or bylaws. We are proposing such a paragraph below. Other congregations may wish to change present provisions of their constitution and bylaws instead of introducing a separate new article. In any event, the commission would caution each congregation carefully to examine all articles of its constitution, bylaws, and articles of incorporation to make sure that there is agreement among and within these documents. In all probability legal counsel should be secured. All revisions of congregational constitutions must be submitted to the District President for review (*Handbook*, 1.11 b).

In offering the suggestion below to the congregations the Commission on Constitutional Matters is restricting itself to the position which the Synod has taken in this matter (*de iure humano* rather than *de iure divino*, by human right rather than divine right) at this point. It is therefore assumed that the Synod may further define its position in the future, thereby making it necessary perhaps to refine the suggestions being offered herewith.

## Privileges of Women

Women who have reached the age of \_\_\_\_\_<sup>1</sup> may hold voting membership in the congregation and serve as officers and as members of boards and committees as long as these positions are not directly involved in the specific functions of the pastoral office (preaching, the public administration of the sacraments, church discipline) and as long as this service does not violate the order of creation (usurping authority over men). Accordingly, they shall not serve as pastor, as a member of \_\_\_\_\_<sup>2</sup> as chairman or vice-chairman of the congregation, or as chairman of \_\_\_\_\_<sup>3</sup>

## THE COMMISSION ON CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

<sup>1</sup> The age given shall be at least the majority age established by state law.

<sup>2</sup> Here shall be listed the board of elders or corresponding board directly involved in the functions of the pastoral office.

<sup>3</sup> Here the congregation may list at its discretion those major policy and decision-making boards or standing committees, if any, whose chairmanship the congregation might wish to restrict to men.

1995 Convention Proceedings  
page 119-120

**To Address Concerns  
Regarding Woman Suffrage**

**RESOLUTION 3-05**

**Overtures 3-76-78; (CW, pp. 175-76)**

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod declared in 1969, and has subsequently reaffirmed, the position that "Scripture does not prohibit women from exercising the franchise in congregational ... assemblies" (1969 Res. 2-17), thereby placing the matter of woman suffrage into the realm of Christian liberty; and

WHEREAS, Some members of the Synod continue to believe that woman's suffrage is not in the realm of Christian freedom, but is contrary to the Scriptures and that the Synod was in error when in 1969 it changed its position regarding the permissibility of women exercising the franchise in voters' assemblies; and

WHEREAS, Other members of the Synod agree with the position of the Synod that woman's suffrage does indeed lie in the area of Christian liberty, but for various reasons, including the sensitivity of consciences of individuals, believe woman's suffrage is not advisable in their midst; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Synod reaffirm the 1969 Res. 2-17; and be it further

*Resolved*, That members of the Synod who are convinced that woman's suffrage does not lie in the area of Christian freedom but is contrary to the Word of God, be urged to make use of the established procedures for expressing dissent (Bylaw 2.39 c); and be it further

*Resolved*, That the Synod declare that honest Christian conscience can and does exist on both sides of this issue, but such difference of opinion is not divisive of Christian fellowship; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the members of the Synod, with due sensitivity to those for whom change in this area is a matter of conscience, continue to exercise Christian love and patience in all discussions and deliberations on this subject; and be it finally

*Resolved*, That we beseech the members of the Synod, by the mercies of God to honor and uphold its resolutions "until such time as the Synod amends or repeals them" (Bylaw 1.09 b).

**Action: Adopted (4).**

(During discussion delegates declined to consider an amendment which was ruled a substitute motion as well as an amendment to substitute the words *doctrinal difference* for *Christian conscience* and the words *can be divisive* for *is not divisive* in the third resolve.)

To Commend Faithful Service and to Study  
Proper Roles of Men and Women  
in the Church

RESOLUTION 4-11A

Overtures 4-16, L4-75 (CW, pp. 169–170, TB, p. 36)

WHEREAS, God created humans distinctly as male and female, in His own image (Gen. 1–2) with distinct roles; and

WHEREAS, The fall into sin has corrupted the fulfillment of these roles (Gen. 3); and

WHEREAS, In spite of sin, Old and New Testament Scriptures are replete with examples of faithful men and women who served God through word and deed; and

WHEREAS, Women in the LCMS have served the Lord in the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, on commissions and boards of the Synod, and in their own parishes, using the gifts God has given them; and

WHEREAS, Men in the LCMS have served the Lord faithfully in their callings and roles as pastors, teachers, elders and deacons, using their gifts in various roles in the Synod and their own parishes; and

WHEREAS, Men and women in the LCMS have served our Lord as commissioned teachers, directors of Christian education, directors of Christian outreach, directors of family life, directors of parish music, parish assistants, certified lay ministers, and deaconesses; and

WHEREAS, The Scripture exhorts men to be leaders in the family and in the church (Col. 3: 19–21; Eph. 5:25–33; 1 Tim. 3: 1–13); and

WHEREAS, Cultural shifts have called into question the distinction of gender roles and have created confusion; and

WHEREAS, There has been a noticeable decline in men accepting appropriate responsibility in the congregation; and

WHEREAS, There has been a noticeable decline in men demonstrating and fulfilling responsibility toward women and children; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Synod in convention thank God for the many men and women who serve our Lord faithfully and tirelessly throughout His holy Church; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the 2013 LCMS convention ask the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, in consultation with the seminary faculties, to provide materials for congregations to study the roles of men and women in the home, church, and society; and be it further

*Resolved*, That congregations of the Synod be encouraged to use these materials as well as other appropriate resources (e.g., materials from Lutheran Hour Ministry Men's Network, CPH, and others) for the proper nurture of our life together; and be it finally

*Resolved*, That the Synod encourage all people to use their gifts within their God-given vocations for the extension and cultivation of the Kingdom of God.

**Action:** Adopted (9)

(During discussion, a motion to amend Res. 4-11A by replacing its second resolve paragraph with "*Resolved*, That the 2013 LCMS convention encourage the use and study of the existing CTCR report, 'The Creator's Tapestry: Scriptural Perspectives on Man-Woman Relationships in Marriage and the Church' as prepared by the CTCR in consultation with seminary faculties and adopted by the 2010 convention for study within the LCMS" failed [Yes: 295; No: 582]. Debate ended, the resolution was adopted without change [Yes: 774; No: 105].)

Request of Board of Regents, Concordia Lutheran College, Austin, Regarding Women Conducting Chapel Services.

In a letter dated February 17, 1992, the Secretary of the Board of Regents of Concordia Lutheran College, Austin, Texas, forwarded to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) the following request from the Board:

**Question:** Be it resolved, in sensitivity to the request from the Concordia Lutheran College faculty to reconsider the policy concerning the exclusion of women conducting the chapel services at Concordia Lutheran College, that the Board of Regents request the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) to determine if colleges and universities have a 'word and sacrament ministry' similar to congregations, and what impact this determination would have on the BHES and the Concordia Lutheran College policy regarding women conducting chapel services.

**Response:**

Colleges and universities of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod do not have a "word and sacrament" ministry, as that is ordinarily understood. The Synod has not charged these institutions with administering the sacraments. Nonetheless, as the Synod's colleges and universities proclaim the Word of God in classroom, chapel, and in other venues, they extend the ministries of all the member congregations of the Synod.

At one time in the history of the Synod's higher education system, chapel services were conducted on a very deliberate "extended family devotion" model.<sup>1</sup> More recently, arrangements for chapel services have changed. Today the various schools commonly hold, to use the phraseology of the 1985 CTCR document *Women in the Church*, "public worship services under the responsibility of one who is called to be chaplain, campus pastor, dean of the chapel, etc." (p. 47). As this document further notes, these arrangements "would seem to be out of the realm of 'family devotions' in any acceptable meaning of the phrase" (p. 47). In short, the Synod's colleges and universities have generally moved from an "extended family devotion" model for chapel services to a model which is very similar to worship in a congregation, even if not identical with it. It must also be noted that Synod's colleges and universities do regularly have other worship opportunities, such as dormitory devotions, which are often of a very informal nature.

It is our observation that what occurs on a college campus today in the area of worship is not best understood using the family devotion model. We would, rather, take the following approach. We would distinguish between worship occasions which, essentially, involve proclamation of the Word and are a "public" expression of the corporate faith, on the one hand, and those which, essentially, involve an expression of personal faith and are "private" expressions of such faith, on the other. The former partake of the nature of a public worship service, and in accordance with the CTCR document on *Women in the Church* cited above, we would affirm that "women should not preach or lead [such] services of worship" (p. 47)<sup>2</sup>, even as they are not to exercise any of the distinctive functions of the pastoral office.<sup>3</sup> The latter worship occasions do not partake of such a

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public worship service character but are, rather, a private expression of faith on the part of one person from among the priesthood of all believers and, therefore, should not come under this stricture. It will be a matter of judgment into which of these two categories any given "worship occasion" will fall.

It is important to be aware of what our actions "say" to those who observe them. Because our Synod's colleges and universities have generally moved from an "extended family devotion" model for chapel services to a model which is very similar to worship in a congregation, even if not identical with it (as noted above), participants and/or observers can easily come to the conclusion that what is done on a campus is also appropriate for a congregation. To be specific, to have women conduct chapel services which are a "public" expression of the corporate faith can easily "say" to those observing or involved things which we do not wish to say about what we believe and practice re: women and the pastoral office. This is especially true in our current climate culturally.

Finally, the CTCR notes that outside of campus chapel, teachers in training have opportunities for practice and training in conducting devotions in the same teacher-aide and student teaching situations where they acquire a variety of actual classroom experiences.

Commission on Theology and Church Relations  
Adopted September 17, 1993

## End Notes

1. Typically, the president as *paterfamilias* of the college, conducted the entirety of every chapel service, acting *in loco parentis*. Today, some people may perceive campus chapel as an "extended family devotion," similar to that conducted in the home.

2. The entire opinion of the CTCR on this issue in its document *Women in the Church* is attached as an Addendum.

3. On the basis of those statements of Scripture which direct women to be silent in the church and which prohibit them to teach and to exercise authority over men (1 Cor. 14:33-35; 1 Tim. 2:11-12), the Synod has consistently taken the position "that women ought not to hold the pastoral office or serve in any other capacity involving the distinctive functions of this office" (1969 Res. 2-17; cf. 1971 Res. 2-04; 1977 Res. 3-15; 1986 Res. 2-09; 3-10; 1989 Res. 3-14). In addition, at its 1989 convention the Synod, in addressing appropriate roles for women and men in worship, affirmed that the following are included among the distinct functions to be exercised by the pastor: 1) preaching in the services of the congregation; 2) leading the formal public services of worship; 3) the public administration of the sacraments; and 4) the public administration of the Office of the Keys (1989 Res. 3-14). In this resolution the Synod made specific application of its position on the pastoral office and the service of women to the practice of permitting lay persons to read the Scriptures in public worship, urging "that the congregations of the Synod proceed with care and sensitivity in making decisions permitting the lay reading of the Scriptures, recognizing decisions in this regard lie in the area of Christian judgment" (1989 Res. 3-14). It should be noted that the CTCR currently has under consideration questions concerning the specific application of the Synod's position on the pastoral office and the service of women in public worship.

## ADDENDUM

*Women in the Church:  
Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice  
(A Report of the Commission on Theology  
and Church Relations, September 1985)*

5. What about the service of women in other worship contexts such as devotions conducted in the chapels of synodical colleges and other institutions?

Here, especially in the tradition of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, much has to do with definition and perception. While it is clear from the Scriptures that women should not preach or lead the formal public worship services of the church, many of the church's educational institutions conduct what has been referred to as extended "family devotions" and have asked women to serve in worship services. Institutions that hold public worship services under the responsibility of one who is called to be chaplain, campus pastor, dean of the chapel, etc., would seem to be out of the real of "family devotions" in any acceptable meaning of the phrase. In such contexts, women should not preach or lead the services of worship. In those other worship opportunities which may be appropriately understood as "devotions," the chaplain or other "spiritual head" of the community should make responsible decisions regarding the service of women, keeping in mind all of the guidelines presented in this report. It is impossible to anticipate all of the exigencies of such situations in a general study such as that offered in this document. (pp. 46-47)