

FAQ Regarding the Board For International Mission (BIM) as the only Sending Agency of the Synod (Bylaw 3.8.3) and the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) Opinion 14-2724

Q. What is the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM)?

A. “The Commission on Constitutional Matters exists to interpret the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod and ensure that the governing instruments of the Synod and its agencies are in accord with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod” (Bylaw 3.9.2).

Q. Who serves on the CCM?

A. “The Commission on Constitutional Matters shall consist of six voting members:

1. Three ministers of religion—ordained, whose terms shall be for six years renewable once
2. Two attorneys, whose terms shall be for six years renewable once
3. The Secretary of the Synod, who shall serve as the secretary of the commission” (Bylaw 3.9.2.1)

Q. How are the members chosen?

A. District boards of directors nominate individuals. The Council of District Presidents chooses a slate of five names for each open position, and the president of the Synod appoints an individual from the slate provided.

Q. From where did the current language that the Board for International Mission (BIM) is the only sending agency for workers and funds (Bylaw 3.8.3) come?

A. In 1983, the Synod in convention adopted Res. 5-37 to add language to the bylaws that the mission board was the only sending agency for workers and funds. The language from that 1983 bylaw carried through the restructuring in 2010 to the present day; indeed, **the current bylaw language represents nothing new.** As described in the 1983 Res. 5-37, the rationale for this language was that “[s]ome confusion has existed in the past when districts and other entities have sent missionaries (clergymen, teachers, and others) to foreign mission fields at their expense,” noting that there had been a standing assumption “that this is to be done through the [Synod’s] Board for Mission Services” (1983 Proceedings, p. 195). The same confusion that existed in 1983 — among congregations, districts and partner churches in foreign mission areas — remains to the present day. For instance, many of our international partners mistakenly identify any LCMS worker operating in a foreign mission area as being “officially sent.” But what does the current Bylaw 3.8.3 actually state?

3.8.3

The Board for International Mission is charged with developing and determining policies in support of mission and ministry in foreign countries for the Office of International Mission (Bylaw 1.2.1 [m]). These policies shall embrace and apply the mission and ministry emphases adopted by the national convention. Under the leadership of the President of the Synod,

pursuant to Bylaw 3.3.1.1.1, the board shall assist in identifying the specific goals for the Office of International Mission. Policies determined by the board (implemented by staff) may include but not be limited to:

- strong mission leadership
- training of missionaries
- ministry for all of the Synod's military personnel
- safeguarding the rights of partner churches
- ministry for all civilians and their dependents overseas
- international human care
- liaison with the colleges, universities, and seminaries of the Synod
- liaison with the chief ecumenical officer of the Synod
- international schools

Upon the recommendation of the Office of International Mission, the board shall serve as the only sending agency through which workers and funds are sent to the foreign mission areas of the Synod, including the calling, appointing, assigning, withdrawing, and releasing of missionaries (ministers of religion—ordained and ministers of religion—commissioned) and other workers for the ministries in foreign areas.

Q. Doesn't restricting the calling and sending of international workers and funds to the Synod infringe on the rights of districts?

A. The calling and sending of workers and funds to foreign mission areas is one administrative area that the Synod has, since early on, intentionally reserved for itself by the decision of its members meeting in convention. In the same manner that districts may not call pastors to serve in other districts, districts may not call missionaries to serve in foreign mission areas. Likewise, congregations have the right to call their own pastor, but they do not have the right to call a pastor for someone else or for another entity.

Q. May districts send funds overseas to mission projects?

A. A district of the Synod may not send funds to an entity not part of Corporate Synod, with the exception of an Auxiliary or Recognized Service Organization affiliated with the Synod, for work in a foreign mission area of the Synod. Bylaw 3.8.3. states that the Board for International Mission (BIM) is "the only sending agency through which. . . funds are sent to the foreign mission areas of Synod. . . ."

Q. Are districts encouraged to have overseas relationships?

A. Yes. Districts have often provided vital support for called foreign missionaries and taken special interest in various mission fields with the support and encouragement of the BIM and the Office of International Mission (OIM). In this way and for the sake of good order and the most effective stewardship of resources, Bylaw 3.8.3.1 is fulfilled, which states in part: "The Board for International Mission shall have oversight of the implementation of policies adopted by the board and implemented by the Office of International Mission for the coordination of

and in support of ministries of the Synod in foreign countries.” This provides healthy, direct relationships for support of the mission of the Gospel around the world.

Q. Doesn't restricting the calling and sending of international workers and funds to the BIM infringe on the rights of congregations?

A. Congregations, by their adoption of the Synod's constitutional articles and by their present-day subscription to such articles, freely self-limit their right of self-government. This means that congregations agree to work with the Synod in the area of foreign missions by not independently calling and sending workers to foreign mission areas.

Q. May congregations send funds overseas to mission projects?

A. Congregations may indeed support mission societies or overseas mission work, so long as the sending of such funds does not violate Article VI of the Synod's Constitution that requires members to reject heterodox tract and mission societies. Synod congregations should therefore not be supporting non-Lutheran (i.e., Baptist, Pentecostal, etc.) churches and their human care organizations.

Q. Are congregations encouraged to have overseas relationships and partnerships?

A. Yes. Such relationships can be very beneficial to congregations eager to support the mission of the Gospel. By working together with the BIM and the OIM, many problems and pitfalls are avoided. When congregations have “gone it alone,” there have been numerous instances where large financial projects failed, confusion and even great consternation were created with partner churches and excessive time and corrective efforts were required of the Synod's international staff to assist or rectify such situations. Congregations have, for instance, supported non-partner churches or even non-Lutheran churches overseas to the detriment of the Synod's international partners in the same area. Many pitfalls may be avoided when congregations are in good communication and intentional coordination with the BIM and the OIM. Given the current trends of globalization in technology, communications and travel, as well as the burgeoning number of immigrants in the United States, the Synod's national office recognizes that the number of contacts in foreign mission areas by individuals and congregations of the Synod has greatly increased, and these contacts bring many salutary opportunities for spreading the Gospel and strengthening the Church.

Q. How does CCM Opinion 14-2724 regarding Bylaw 3.8.3 affect mission societies created by Missouri Synod members and congregation members?

A. The CCM Opinion 14-2724 has limited effect on mission societies. Mission societies associated with the Synod provide great support and encouragement for international education and mission and are encouraged. Mission societies may raise funds and send funds overseas according to the laws of the United States and those of the recipient countries. Individuals and congregations may send funds to mission societies. Districts may not send funds

to mission societies, however, unless those funds are sent through BIM for coordination with the OIM. Even prior to CCM Opinion 14-2724, a mission society was not able to call a rostered worker of the Synod, since a mission society is not an entity recognized by the Synod as a calling agency.

Q. May Recognized Service Organizations (RSOs) and auxiliaries send workers and funds internationally?

A. Yes. RSOs and auxiliaries (e.g., Lutheran Hour Ministries) are able to call and send workers internationally. They are also able to send funds internationally. RSOs and auxiliaries are encouraged to honor the Synod’s international mission policies and to work cooperatively with the BIM and the OIM. This cooperation and information sharing occurs regularly for the benefit of the mission of the Gospel. RSOs and auxiliaries while operating independent of the Synod also respect the protocol documents that may exist between The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and her partner churches (Bylaw 6.1.3g and 6.2.1d).

Q. How does CCM Opinion 14-2724 regarding Bylaw 3.8.3 affect congregational and district short-term mission trips?

A. The CCM opinion does not address short-term mission trips. The opinion primarily addresses the sending of permanent or long-term international workers. Congregations may send members and workers on short-term trips overseas. Congregations and districts are encouraged to work with the OIM and to follow best practices for short-term trips. Such trips are encouraged. It is, however, very helpful for congregations to make themselves aware of agreements that have been signed by the Synod with international partners in the area of the overseas short-term trips. The Synod’s international staff also often have tremendous experience with overseas individuals and can provide helpful information and point out issues that congregations will want to be aware of in planning such trips. Congregations can also share vital information with the Synod staff as a result of their international work.

Q. What is a “foreign mission area” of the Synod?

A. A “foreign mission area” of the Synod is determined by where the BIM calls and sends workers overseas and where the OIM sends funds to support that work. Consideration also must be given to those areas where the president, as the chief ecumenical officer of the Synod, has signed or authorized the adoption of protocol agreements, working agreements and other ecumenical agreements describing the relationship between the LCMS and another church body. The BIM will publish regularly through the OIM the foreign mission areas of the Synod. [Click here to view Our Work in the World map.](#)

Q. Is it possible for a district or congregation to issue a call to a church worker to serve in a foreign mission area of the Synod in cooperation with the BIM?

A. Yes. The BIM, in response to the desire of districts and the CCM opinion, has now adopted operative polices regarding Bylaw 3.8.3, which could allow consideration of either a dual call or a seconded call, should such a call be recommended to the BIM by the OIM. Supervision and financial responsibility for such a call would remain with the district or congregation. In a sincere desire to avoid quenching the work of the Holy Spirit while remaining respectful of and maintaining integrity in regard to their solemn duties defined by bylaws agreed-to by the congregations of the Synod, the BIM and the OIM will seek to be supportive and flexible when working with districts and congregations in this new endeavor.

Q. Why is it important for congregations and districts to work with the BIM and the OIM?

A. There are many reasons that it is good for congregations and districts to work with the BIM and the OIM. Some have been mentioned above. An important consideration in our life together is good order, maintained in love and charity. Coordination between congregations and districts with the mission board and office can prevent confusion among partners. Congregations and districts that work with the OIM can receive assistance in areas of accountability and project management. In the past, congregations and districts have become involved in long-term, expensive projects that exceeded their original capacities or desires. Large amounts of money have been lost. Individuals sent have run into great difficulty and extensive time, money and effort have been expended by the Synod's overseas staff to attempt to remedy situations. Coordination with the Synod can help districts and congregations plan goals and an exit strategy.

Another important consideration is that our Synod, congregations and districts acknowledge the reality of life in a fallen, sinful world where significant threats exist — risks that are best assessed and managed by OIM staff and workers well-coordinated and familiar with the field in which they labor. Mission and mercy work can be targeted by enemies of the Gospel. The Synod has a vital interest in assisting districts and congregation with the goal of providing necessary safeguards for all workers entering a mission field where they may encounter dangerous situations for the sake of the Gospel.

The Synod encourages overseas work and contacts by districts and congregations. For the sake of the Gospel, the Synod is seeking to expand and improve the mechanisms for such activity, that "all things should be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40).