

# Convention Resolutions: Worker Wellness

The LCMS Kansas District and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod passed several resolutions in recent conventions that affirm the importance of worker wellness. The 2018 Kansas District resolution appears below. Synod resolutions, as published in the *2016 Convention Proceedings*, appear on the following three pages.

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## 2018 KANSAS DISTRICT CONVENTION

Resolution 18-02-02

### To Support the Well-Being of Professional Church Workers and Their Families

**WHEREAS**, the overall health and well-being of our church workers is of prime importance in fulfilling the work God, through the Holy Spirit, has called them to do; and

**WHEREAS**, those who are called to serve the church in various capacities are well advised to care for themselves so that they can carry out their ministries to the best of their ability; and

**WHEREAS**, it is vital that congregations, schools, and other agencies support church workers in pursuit of their well-being; and

**WHEREAS**, the LCMS in Convention in 2016 adopted in Resolution 18-04, "That church workers be encouraged to develop an intentional self-care plan as part of their continuing education portfolio," and

**WHEREAS**, intentional self-care plans may prevent problems before they develop or resolve them before they become crises; and

**WHEREAS**, major challenges to the well-being of church workers, along with effective strategies to deal with those challenges, are known and documented; therefore be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Kansas District in Convention express its support for all efforts of congregations, schools, and agencies to care and support church workers and their families spiritually, financially, vocationally, intellectually, relationally, emotionally, and physically; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that our congregations, schools, and agencies, be encouraged to utilize the Board of Caring Ministry and the Worker Care Team in the support of well-being of church workers and their families; and be it finally

**RESOLVED**, that the church workers of the Kansas District be encouraged to develop an intentional self-care plan, so that they can continue to serve to the best of their ability with the gifts and strength that God supplies.

Moved by committee. Adopted. Yes - 189 (95%); No - 10 (5%)

# To Task Board for National Mission to Develop Policies for Assessing Worker Wellness and Making Recommendations for Worker Care

## RESOLUTION 18-02A

Reports R1.2, R13 (CW, pp. 27, 74–76); President’s Report, Part 2 (TB, pp. 21–31)

WHEREAS, Jesus invites His followers, including ministers of the Gospel: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me ... and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt. 11:28–29); and

WHEREAS, Grace was given to the church and its members, including ordained and commissioned ministers, for “building up the body of Christ ... to maturity, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:7–16); and

WHEREAS, Rest was built into creation along with attending to God’s creation, especially the people of His creation, and in the pilot Church Worker Family Needs Assessment (CW-FNA) in the Pacific Southwest, Kansas, and Ohio Districts, 47 percent of the church workers (950) who took the survey reported that they rarely or never invested appropriately in Sabbath rest or leisure; and

WHEREAS, District presidents in a spring 2016 survey identified the primary worker-wellness issues to be burnout, stress, and depression, followed by marriage and family, diet and health, and finances; and

WHEREAS, The wellness of single and married church workers and their marriages and families is crucial to the health of the local congregation; and

WHEREAS, Concordia Plan Services (CPS), the LCMS Office of National Mission (ONM), and the Concordia Center for the Family (CCM) at Concordia University Ann Arbor (CUAA), have partnered with Congregation Family Services, a provider of family ministry research and consultation, in a pilot research project called the LCMS Church Worker Family Needs Assessment (CW-FNA) to deliver solid research-based information to provide the church with a portrait of church worker needs and health; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Board for National Mission prepare policies for the Office of National Mission to address, to include, for example:

1. assessing the gaps in ministerial wellness throughout the Synod
2. promoting worker wellness within the Synod through official publications and special mailings
3. facilitating cooperation and the sharing of resources between RSOs and specialized worker-wellness programs within the Synod
4. responding to the needs and requests of districts and district presidents in the identification and provision of ministerial wellness programming resources and funding

5. studying, developing, and encouraging opportunities and suggestions for sabbaticals
6. working with Mission Advancement to identify funding sources and solicit contributions for worker wellness throughout Synod; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the Office of National Mission provide biannual progress reports and conversation with the Council of Presidents; and be it finally

*Resolved*, That the Office of National Mission make a report of its progress at the 2019 Synod convention.

**Action:** Adopted (9)

(With no objection from the assembly, the chair called for the vote, and Res. 18-02A was adopted as presented [Yes: 898; No: 14].)

## Addressing Indebtedness of Church Work Professionals

### RESOLUTION 18-03A

Overtures 9-03–04, 9-08 (CW, pp. 379–382); President’s Report, Part 2 (TB, pp. 21–31)

WHEREAS, The Synod continues to pray that our Lord would send faithful laborers into the harvest fields (Luke 10:2); and

WHEREAS, Student indebtedness can be a deterrent for potential professional church workers; and

WHEREAS, The Synod takes seriously the Lord’s command that “the worker is worthy of his wage” (1 Tim. 5:18); and

WHEREAS, The cost of higher education has increased at a substantially higher rate than anticipated potential income; and

WHEREAS, The typical salaries for professional church workers may make it difficult to sustain a household and also repay the incurred debt; and

WHEREAS, Student indebtedness can discourage healthy stewardship; and

WHEREAS, One of the Synod’s foundational objectives is to “recruit and train pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers and provide opportunity for their continuing growth” (Constitution, Art. III 3); and

WHEREAS, Research done by the LCMS seminaries has shown that undergraduate debt and personal financial management contribute significantly to subsequent educational loan debt; and

WHEREAS, Student indebtedness is a well-documented burden; and

WHEREAS, In order to qualify for federal loan programs, our seminaries and universities are being forced to accommodate federal Department of Education policies that may be in conflict with our shared beliefs and practices in the Synod; and

WHEREAS, In order to become a certified professional church worker in the LCMS, students are required to attend a Concordia University System school or an LCMS seminary; and

WHEREAS, Attending a Concordia University System school also well equips men for subsequent seminary training; and

WHEREAS, The seminaries are pursuing making financial counseling available to all students; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the leadership of our Concordias—seminaries and universities/colleges—explore alternate funding sources apart from federal loans; and be it further

*Resolved*, That schools in the Concordia University System provide financial counseling to church worker students throughout their academic careers; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the congregations and ministries of the Synod identify and raise up the next generation of leaders for the ministry of the church and support them financially in obtaining their training; and be it finally

*Resolved*, That districts of the Synod be encouraged to develop means by which they may financially assist students preparing for church work careers and current church workers.

**Action:** Adopted (9)

(During brief discussion, an amendment was proposed to add “and current church workers” at the end of the final resolve paragraph. The committee accepted the change as a friendly amendment. Without further discussion, Res. 18-03A was adopted as changed [Yes: 887; No: 14].)

## To Encourage Congregations, Ministries, and Church Workers to Develop an Intentional Wellness Care Plan

### RESOLUTION 18-04

**Reports R1.2, R13 (CW, pp. 27, 74–76); President’s Report, Part 2 (TB, pp. 21–31)**

WHEREAS, “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood” (Eph. 6:10–18), and these satanic attacks on congregations, ministries, marriages, families, and individuals can lead to despair, loneliness, poor choices, and sin; and

WHEREAS, The most disciplined and faithful workers struggle with the weakness of the flesh (Rom. 7:18–25); and

WHEREAS, Many congregations and ministries are facing numerical decline and financial pressures leading to greater stress on workers; and

WHEREAS, Congregations and ministries know the value of healthy church workers; and

WHEREAS, Church workers know the gifts God has given to His own dear children even in the midst of struggles and suffering; and

WHEREAS, There is measurable value in forming and following an intentional and articulated plan; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That congregation and ministry leaders be encouraged to become informed of LCMS- and community-based resources in order to provide and assist church workers with emotional, physical, relational, and spiritual wellness; and be it further

*Resolved*, That congregations and ministries be encouraged to develop intentional plans for church worker care of body, mind, and spirit, drawing on the rich resources available that include Concordia Plan Services, Grace Place Wellness Ministries, DOXOLOGY: The Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel, and Shepherd’s Canyon; and be it finally

*Resolved*, That church workers be encouraged to develop an intentional self-care plan as part of their continuing education portfolio.

(Without discussion and with no objection from the assembly, the vote was called and Res. 18-04 was adopted as presented [Yes: 871; No: 39].)

## To Encourage District Presidents, Circuit Visitors, and Congregations to Utilize Resources Already Established for Ministerial Wellness

### RESOLUTION 18-05

**Reports R1.2, R13 (CW, pp. 27, 30, 74–76); President’s Report, Part 2 (TB, pp. 21–31)**

WHEREAS, Ministry is demanding, and the minister is to maintain high standards (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1); and

WHEREAS, On the basis of retreats offered at Shepherd’s Canyon Retreat since 2009, it is reported that common sentiments of ministers’ spouses attending weeklong counseling retreats have included feelings of resentment, powerlessness, intimidation, and sadness regarding dynamics within the congregation over which they have little influence; and yet by the end of the retreat, Shepherd’s Canyon reports that the retreat has resulted in many saved ministries and hopeful marriages along with participants gaining additional tools, insights, and appreciation for having experienced a safe place to work on themselves; and

WHEREAS, Based on Grace Place Wellness Ministries serving over 4,000 pastors plus spouses in retreats, it was learned that the primary challenges among pastors are various forms of isolation, financial challenges, and dealing with perceived unreasonable expectations of congregations; and in independent assessments of retreat participants by the Alban Institute, respondents overwhelmingly report improvements in spiritual health (94%) and intellectual health (81%), along with physical well-being and health of relationships (77%); and The Barna Group reports that attendees experienced improvement in emotional well-being (73%) and accountability (61%); and

WHEREAS, Concordia Plan Services (CPS) through their Employee Assistance Program and Pastoral Support Network, Ministerial Care Coalition, and other wellness programs offers both preventive and treatment options for the well-being of workers and families; and

WHEREAS, DOXOLOGY: The Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel has reported that women who have attended DOXOLOGY with their husbands have disclosed that their husbands who completed the program have experienced progress in handling stress, are more content and joyful in ministry, are more attentive to wife and family, and relate more effectively with their members; and

WHEREAS, DOXOLOGY reports that among other ministerial wellness results, 34 percent of pastors who participate in the three-part training and spiritual care program have noted a significant difference in their ministry as a result of being able to detect compassion fatigue and respond to it in healthy ways, and 46 percent of pastors have grown in their recognition and appreciation of emotional intelligence and its application in ministry; and

WHEREAS, It is estimated that nearly 40 percent of ministers “lack awareness” of ministerial wellness resources already available; and

WHEREAS, Over 70 percent of district presidents in a recent survey stated they would refer ministers to clinical pastoral education

programs if they were vetted, affordable, and convenient; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That Concordia Plan Services, DOXOLOGY, Grace Place Wellness Ministries, Shepherd’s Canyon Retreat, Soldiers of the Cross, and Veterans of the Cross be commended for their service to ministers and spouses; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the above-named ministries and other identified LCMS-approved ministerial wellness services be promoted within districts and circuits as valuable resources for ministerial and family care; and be it finally

*Resolved*, That clinical pastoral education programs be identified, vetted, and recommended through the Office of National Mission and Specialized Pastoral Ministry to district presidents and circuit visitors as sources of support for ordained and commissioned ministers who need to increase competency in pastoral care, explore a vocational change, and/or become revitalized for parish ministry.

**Action:** Adopted (9)

(The chair hearing no objection to proceeding to vote without discussion, Res. 18-05 was adopted as presented [Yes: 883; No: 22].)

## To Respectfully Decline Overtures

### RESOLUTION 18-06

WHEREAS, The floor committee has considered all overtures assigned to it and has concluded, for various reasons, that certain overtures should be declined; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the following overtures be respectfully declined for the reasons given:

<u>Number</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reason</u>
18-02	To Encourage CPS to Provide Paid Maternity Leave to Workers Enrolled in Concordia Disability and Survivor Plan Who Are New Adoptive Mothers	The responsibility of this overture lies with the local congregation; it is a human resources issue, not a benefit issue.
18-03	To Encourage Annual Review of Reported Salary Information	This issue is already being addressed by CPS.

**Action:** Adopted (9)

(The chair hearing no objection to proceeding to vote without discussion, Res. 18-06 was adopted as presented [Yes: 884; No: 23].)