



Rev. Dr. Paul Linnemann, President

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Dear Friends in Christ,

In May of 2017 the Northwest District Board of Directors (NOW BOD) sent a document entitled, Workers for His Harvest, to the 34 other District Boards of Directors in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. This document was signed by all but one of the members of the NOW District BOD and was written as a theological dissent to the rationale behind Resolution 13-02A, “To Regularize Status of Licensed Lay Deacons Involved in Word and Sacrament Ministry,” enacted by the 2016 LCMS Convention. The status of this document has changed, and I am writing to provide you with a brief history of how it came into existence and how it might be used from here forward.

### Background

The 2013 Synod convention called for the establishment of a Task Force to study the question of the ministry of Licensed Lay Deacons in Resolution 4-06A – To Address Questions Re: Service of Licensed Lay Deacons. This task force was comprised of representatives of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR), the Council of Presidents (COP), the Synod Praesidium, and Seminary faculty, as well as one Licensed Lay Deacon from the New England District. The NOW District BOD was visited by the chairman of the Task Force, Rev. Larry Vogel, at its regular meeting in August of 2014. Since the NOW District had established a ministry plan to smaller, rural congregations dependent upon using LLDs, the District BOD asked the Synod leadership for representation on the Task Force on numerous occasions, but no one from the NOW was appointed to either the Task Force or Floor Committee 13 at the 2016 Synod Convention. In an effort to encourage real and meaningful dialogue in the Synod around this issue, the NOW BOD determined to write a dissent to the theological position and practical implications of Resolution 13-02A. Because the bylaws of the LCMS call for a dissent to be sent only to one’s peers, the NOW BOD determined to send its document to the other 34 District BODs. To date, the NOW BOD has received 7 responses from District BODs and one response from a District President speaking for himself. As a group these responses generally offered constructive criticism and most indicated support for the position of the NOW BOD.

In August 2017, I was asked by LCMS President Matthew Harrison to approach the NOW BOD about removing the dissent label from the document so that it could be discussed in a public manner. After much conversation and prayer, the Board agreed to do so. In November 2018, the NOW District sent a team of presenters to the LCMS Council of Presidents to open a conversation about the District’s position and future of ministry in the LCMS given the realities of declining resources, a growing number of vacancies, and the decrease in the number of seminary graduates. The COP will be having ongoing conversation about these issues in the year ahead.

While Resolution 13-02A doesn’t eliminate the use of LLDs, it does limit them in a very real way. The COP established an implementation committee, of which I was a member. After significant

conversation about what the limit for LLDs' service in Word and Sacrament ministry should be, it was determined to use the language, "preaching and presiding on a consistent and continuing basis," to identify those who should seek ordination. Early in the policy formation process we had discussed using 50% as a minimum for how often a person would have to preach for the resolution to apply, but the language ultimately adopted provides for discernment in particular circumstances that may vary widely. Resolution 13-02A also established a Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) regional colloquy process by which some LLDs could apply for admission to the roster of Synod as SMP pastors. To date the NOW District has had 15 men go through this process. The challenge we are facing in the years ahead is from where the next generation of these workers will come.

It's with this context that we are sharing an updated version of Workers for His Harvest with all the "dissent language" removed. I am also including a link to Resolution 13-02A which led to its creation. I want to encourage congregations and workers in the District to use this document as the basis for further conversation about the future of ministry in our churches as we seek to provide Word and Sacrament to every corner of the District under the Office of the Ministry in a responsible way. Any comments or feedback you wish to share can be sent to the Northwest District Office. A collection of documents and videos related to the issue of Licensed Lay Deacons can be found at [workersforhisharvest.com](http://workersforhisharvest.com).

Serving the Lord and His church,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Paul Linnemann", with a long, sweeping underline.

Rev. Dr. Paul Linnemann  
President of the Northwest District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod