



LCMS Convention

July 20, 2026 Morning Session

Delegate Briefing, Resolution Analysis, Elections, and Ministry Implications

Prepared for: Delegates, pastors, circuit visitors, district leaders, and ministry partners

Project: LCMS 2026 Convention Guide

Location: Phoenix, Arizona

Convention theme: Christ Is Risen Indeed - 1 Corinthians 15:20-22

Christ crucified and risen preserves His Church through His Word and Sacraments. Convention work serves that Gospel; it does not replace it.

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Source boundary

This report uses the uploaded session transcript, official convention workbook, Today's Business materials, nominee materials, the 2023 LCMS Handbook, and project research notes. Official convention actions are distinguished from proposals, debate, and interpretation. Where the transcript is unclear, the report says so rather than guessing.

Session Information

Session: Monday Morning Session

Convention day: Monday, July 20, 2026

Approximate duration: About four hours, from morning worship through the lunch recess

Transcript duration: Approximately 4 hours, 4 minutes

Major agenda: Morning prayer and sermon; credentials; consent calendar; LCEF presentation; Floor Committee 6; elections; convention essay; Floor Committee 4; procedural rulings.

Delegate orientation

The session moved quickly between worship, policy, elections, and theology. The key discipline for readers is to separate what the convention *adopted* from what speakers *argued*, clarified, or proposed.

Executive Summary

The Monday morning session combined theology, elections, pastoral-formation policy, organizational oversight, and public witness. The most consequential legislative actions were the convention's strong reaffirmation of residential pastoral formation, its rejection of clarifying language that would have limited opposition only to exclusively online degree programs, its reaffirmation of Synod-approved routes to certification and ordination, revised oversight language for Recognized Service Organizations, and bylaw-linked clarification of the title *chaplain*.

- Resolution 6-04A passed 75.45%-24.55% after the “exclusively online” amendment failed 29.94%-70.06%.
- Resolution 6-05A passed 81.86%-18.14% after a rostering clarification failed.
- John W. Sias was reelected Secretary of the Synod; four LCMS Board of Directors members were elected.
- Resolution 4-05 reserved the title chaplain, in Synod contexts, for ordained ministers and amended related bylaws.
- Resolutions 4-08A and 4-09A directed theological work concerning political/social questions and artificial intelligence.

What every delegate should remember

The session favored clear confessional and institutional boundaries. The unfinished question is whether those boundaries will be paired with enough accessibility, listening, partnership, and missionary creativity to serve congregations facing real pastoral and cultural challenges.

Chronological Session Overview

1. Morning Worship and Sermon

The session opened with prayer, Psalm 30, hymnody, a reading from John 11, and a sermon centered on Jesus' declaration, "I am the resurrection and the life." The preacher contrasted Gospel wonder with the tendency of church leaders to become absorbed by finances, disputes, institutional pressure, family burdens, and convention mechanics.

Theological center

The Church lives by a declaration of dependence: dependence on the Father as Creator, Christ as Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit, who calls through the Gospel. No election or resolution matters apart from Christ, who forgives sins and raises the dead.

2. Credentials Report

- 951 voting delegates
- 161 advisory delegates
- 171 advisory representatives
- 168 special guests and others
- Credentials report adopted unanimously; electronic voting remained open for 25 seconds.

3. Consent Calendar

Resolution 9-01A had already been removed and returned to committee. Delegates also removed Resolutions 6-03 and 9-02A after each exceeded the ten-percent threshold. The remaining consent calendar passed 95.59%-4.41%.

Procedural caution

Removing an item from consent does not guarantee debate. The committee must still return it to the floor before the convention adjourns. A well-intended removal can therefore create real scheduling risk.

4. Lutheran Church Extension Fund Report

LCEF reported more than \$2.1 billion in total assets and approximately \$1.7 billion in loans. Its presentation emphasized lending, church-worker assistance, capital campaigns, strategic real-estate consultation, and creative use of underdeveloped church property.

Ministry opportunity

Congregational property may become a mission frontier: housing, schools, community partnerships, renovation funding, and new Gospel access points. Property remains a servant of Word and Sacrament ministry, not a substitute for it.

Floor Committee 6: Pastoral Ministry and Seminaries

Resolution 6-01A - To Reaffirm the Centrality of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions in Pastoral Formation

Affirmed rigorous Scripture study, biblical languages, lifelong exegetical discipline, and integrated use of the Lutheran Confessions across the seminary curriculum. Adopted by common consent.

Resolution 6-02 - To Encourage Specialized Seminary Training for Current Mission Needs

Requested seminary consultation with the Council of Presidents concerning specialized training, including church planting. A text correction removed the inaccurate phrase “which was adopted by unanimous vote.” Adopted by unanimous consent.

Resolution 6-03 - To Give Thanks for the Office of the Holy Ministry and Our Synod’s Pastors

A delegate successfully amended the resolution to remove the required singing of a hymn. The resolution then passed by voice vote.

Resolution 6-04A - To Support Residential Master of Divinity and Residential Alternate Route Pastoral Formation for the Sake of the Flock

Reaffirmed residential formation and rejected online M.Div. and residential alternate-route education. The committee stated that SMP and other specialized programs were not directly ended by this resolution.

Resolution 6-05A - To Reaffirm the Synod’s Process for Training and Certification of Pastors

Reaffirmed Synod-created routes, seminary faculty certification, placement through the Council of Presidents, and restrictions against independent pastoral-preparation programs intended as routes into LCMS ministry.

Resolution 6-04A Amendment

A delegate moved to insert **exclusively** so that the resolution would reject only “exclusively online” M.Div. and residential alternate-route education. Supporters sought to protect hybrid tools, remote components, and emergency accommodations. Opponents warned that the word could permit a program that was almost entirely online. The amendment failed 29.94%-70.06%. The main resolution passed 75.45%-24.55%.

Interpretive safeguard

The convention later voted 62.92%-37.08% to include the seminary president’s clarification in the minutes: ordinary online tools, digital materials, emergency remote instruction, and limited technological components were not understood to violate residential formation.

Resolution 6-05A Amendment and Postponement

A motion to postpone until Tuesday afternoon failed 31.09%-68.91%. An amendment adding “for the purpose of rostered status in the LCMS” failed 27.98%-72.02%. The main resolution passed 81.86%-18.14%.

Primary implementation question

The convention chose clarity around recognized pathways. It did not fully resolve how the Synod will address affordability, geography, bivocational contexts, pastoral vacancies, or future educational innovation.

Elections

Office	Elected	Result
Secretary of the Synod	John W. Sias	82.26%
Board of Directors - Central Region Lay	Andrew N. Grams	58.2%, first ballot
Board of Directors - West-Southwest Lay	Jesse L. Yow Jr.	458 votes; 52.89%, second ballot
Board of Directors - At-Large Lay	John W. Edson	551 votes; 63.77%, second ballot
Board of Directors - At-Large Commissioned	Jan W. Lohmeyer	550 votes; 63.51%, second ballot

The Secretary serves a central governance role involving official records, bylaws, rosters, dispute-resolution administration, constitutional matters, and convention proceedings. The Board of Directors carries legal, property, financial, corporate, and policy responsibilities for the Synod.

Convention Essay: Christ Changes Everything

Concordia Seminary President Thomas J. Egger presented the convention essay. Its argument was that the resurrection is not a religious slogan but the event that changes the Church's entire reality.

- Christ rose bodily and was witnessed alive.
- Christ is the firstfruits of the final resurrection harvest.
- The risen Christ gives life through His Word, Baptism, absolution, and the Lord's Supper.
- The resurrection announces justification: believers are no longer condemned in Christ.
- The resurrection creates new life and promises final freedom from sin.
- Death remains an enemy but cannot retain those united to Christ.
- Christian suffering is temporary; labor in the Lord is not in vain.

For preaching and teaching

The comfort is not merely that resurrection exists. The comfort is that Jesus is alive, reigning, interceding, forgiving, and delivering His gifts to His Church.

Floor Committee 4: Life Together

Resolution 4-05 - Chaplaincy Nomenclature and Related Bylaws

Reserved the title chaplain, in Synod contexts, for ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament; encouraged clear distinctions from other spiritual-care roles; adopted 95.58%.

Resolution 4-04B - Recognized Service Organizations

Clarified oversight, encouraged legal support for faithful RSOs, and directed withdrawal of RSO status from organizations intentionally promoting actions contrary to God's Word. Adopted with approximately 93% support.

Resolution 4-07 - Political Violence and Public Life

Condemned political violence and encouraged peaceful, lawful Christian participation in public life. The exact final vote was not sufficiently clear in the transcript and requires official verification.

Resolution 4-08A - CTCR Examination of Political and Social Issues

Directed the CTCR to examine contemporary ideologies and social questions, preparing new documents as it deems appropriate. Adopted; exact percentage not clearly preserved in the transcript.

Resolution 4-09A - Uses of Artificial Intelligence

Addressed AI in sermons, prayers, education, administration, images, music, and communication. Amended to say AI "generates" rather than "creates" material. Adopted; exact percentage not clearly preserved.

Resolution 4-04B Amendments

- Board composition amendment: would have allowed up to one-third of a witness-service RSO board to come from outside LCMS congregations or partner churches. Failed with about 22% support.
- "Words and actions" amendment: would have replaced "intentionally promote actions" with an objective words-and-actions standard. Failed with about 41% support.

Governance tension

The adopted text preserves confessional accountability and an intentionality standard. Implementation will depend on distinguishing willing promotion, compelled compliance, temporary accommodation, and sustained institutional unfaithfulness.

Dedicated Amendment Summary

Resolution	Amendment	Result	Effect
6-02	Remove inaccurate “adopted by unanimous vote” phrase	Passed by consent	Historical correction only
6-03	Remove required hymn singing	Passed	Courtesy resolution retained; floor time reduced
6-04A	Insert “exclusively” before online	Failed 29.94%-70.06%	Broader wording remained
6-05A	Add “for the purpose of rostered status in the LCMS”	Failed 27.98%-72.02%	Original wording remained
4-04B	Allow up to one-third non-LCMS/partner-church board members	Failed, approx. 22% support	Existing confessional board expectations remained
4-04B	Replace intentionality language with “words and actions”	Failed, approx. 41% support	Intentionality standard remained
4-08A	Add explicit historical minority-report references	Narrowly failed	No singled-out minority report
4-09A	Replace “create” with “generate”	Passed without objection	Improved theological and technical precision

Significant Decisions

- Credentials report adopted.
- Consent calendar adopted, excluding 6-03, 9-02A, and previously removed 9-01A.
- Resolutions 6-01A, 6-02, 6-03, 6-04A, and 6-05A adopted.
- Secretary and four Board of Directors elections completed.
- Resolution 4-05 adopted with bylaw implications.
- Resolutions 4-04B, 4-08A, and 4-09A adopted.
- Seminary-president interpretive remarks concerning online elements were ordered included in the minutes.

What did not happen

The session did not create a new outside route to LCMS ordination, did not adopt the “exclusively online” limitation, and did not loosen witness-service RSO board membership.

Ministry Implications

Congregations

Expect continued emphasis on calling pastors through recognized Synod routes. Review local chaplain titles, RSO partnerships, AI practices, and how political engagement is taught.

Pastors

Renew lifelong exegetical study, use of biblical languages, confessional depth, responsible digital practice, and clarity about the pastoral office.

Church workers

Commissioned workers and lay caregivers remain valued, but institutions may need to revise titles where “chaplain” is used.

District leadership

Districts and circuits will carry greater responsibility for continuing education, vacancy care, formation pathways, nomenclature, and RSO accountability.

Seminaries

The convention strongly supports residential formation but expects the seminaries to improve access, feasibility, specialized mission training, and responsiveness.

Mission work

The convention affirmed church planting and specialized preparation while retaining stronger confessional governance expectations.

Lutheran education

Schools need clear AI policies addressing authorship, academic honesty, privacy, formation, and human dignity.

Catechesis and evangelism

The sermon and essay provide rich material on resurrection, Baptism, justification, vocation, death, and hope. Mission must remain Gospel-bearing rather than merely institutional.

Kingdom Over Castle Analysis

The session was not simply “Kingdom” or “Castle.” It showed both missionary possibility and institutional consolidation.

Kingdom-facing strengths

- LCEF partnership and creative property use.
- Specialized seminary training for mission needs.
- Christian public vocation without political violence.
- AI study aimed at equipping rather than merely condemning.
- Religious-liberty support for faithful RSOs.

Castle-facing risks

- Pastoral formation boundaries were strengthened without an equally concrete accessibility plan.
- Residential-formation language may be interpreted more rigidly than the committee intended.
- RSO governance prioritized confessional control over broader local participation.

Harvest Partnership lens

The best path forward is high accountability with low control: shared confession, clear standards, transparent reporting, relational trust, open-handed resource sharing, and room for faithful contextual practice.

Natural partnership opportunities

- LCEF and congregations on property strategy.
- Districts, seminaries, and congregations on church-planting competencies.
- Circuits forming language and Confessions cohorts.
- Seminaries and congregations deepening field formation.
- Schools and congregations developing common AI guidance.
- Pastors and public servants building nonpartisan civic-formation forums.

Things to Think About

- How will residential formation become financially and geographically attainable?
- What measurable plan will address vacant congregations?
- How much practical authority will the recorded seminary clarification carry?
- How will Synod distinguish online components from online pastoral formation?
- What outside theological study remains permissible when not used as an LCMS rostering route?
- How will RSO intentionality be determined?
- What protections exist for RSOs under government coercion?
- How will chaplain terminology affect police, fire, hospital, school, and disaster ministries?
- Will CTCR political guidance avoid partisan shorthand?
- How quickly can useful AI guidance reach congregations?
- Are congregations given meaningful channels to advise seminaries?
- Can confessional accountability coexist with wider mission experimentation?

Things to Pray About

Synod leadership

Lord Jesus, Grant wisdom, humility, courage, and freedom from fear.

Seminaries

Lord Jesus, Raise up faithful professors and students; preserve Scripture and the Confessions while serving congregational need.

Vacant congregations

Lord Jesus, Send laborers into the harvest and preserve congregations from discouragement.

Pastors and church workers

Lord Jesus, Renew joy in the Gospel; guard against exhaustion, pride, isolation, and despair.

Delegates

Lord Jesus, Give charity in debate, clarity in voting, patience in procedure, and confidence that Christ preserves His Church.

Missions and RSOs

Lord Jesus, Open doors for planting, ethnic ministry, mercy, legal faithfulness, and Gospel partnership.

Public life

Lord Jesus, Restrain violence and raise up Christians who serve neighbors with integrity and peace.

Technology

Lord Jesus, Give wisdom to use AI and digital tools truthfully, responsibly, and humanely.

Unity

Lord Jesus, Preserve unity through repentance, forgiveness, truth, and confidence in Christ.

Looking Ahead

Reasonable expectations

- Further Committee 6 action on SMP and alternate pastoral pathways.
- Continued debate over pastoral shortage, access, and seminary funding.
- Implementation questions arising from 6-04A and 6-05A.
- Potential return of Resolution 9-02A.
- Additional RSO and governance resolutions.
- More elections and future CTCR/AI implementation questions.

Long-term significance

Resolutions 6-04A and 6-05A may shape pastoral formation for years. Resolution 4-05 may require practical title and job-description changes. Resolution 4-09A begins a Synodwide conversation about AI, authorship, truthfulness, and pastoral responsibility. Resolution 4-04B may become important in future conflicts involving doctrine, law, and RSO status.

Expectation, not prediction

The underlying tensions - formation quality versus access, residential community versus digital delivery, confessional accountability versus mission flexibility - were not resolved. They are likely to return because the underlying ministry conditions remain.

■ Key Takeaways and One-Page Summary

Five Most Important Decisions

- Residential M.Div. and residential alternate-route formation were strongly reaffirmed.
- The convention rejected the “exclusively online” clarification.
- Synod-approved seminary routes were reaffirmed as authorized paths to LCMS ordination.
- The title chaplain was reserved, in Synod contexts, for ordained ministers.
- The convention adopted stronger RSO oversight and religious-liberty language.

Five Most Significant Ministry Implications

- Seminaries must defend residential formation while improving access.
- Vacant congregations should not expect new outside paths to LCMS ordination from this session.
- Institutions need to review chaplain titles and job descriptions.
- RSOs face closer scrutiny regarding doctrine, governance, and public practice.
- Congregations should develop responsible AI policies before formal guidance arrives.

Five Questions Every Delegate Should Continue Asking

- Are we producing enough pastors for actual congregational needs?
- Does confessional accountability require this degree of structural control?
- How will residential formation become attainable?
- Are mission partnerships being equipped or unnecessarily narrowed?
- Does each action help the Church proclaim Christ crucified and risen?

One-page summary

The Monday morning session began with a Gospel declaration that the Church lives by dependence on Christ, who forgives sins and raises the dead. The convention adopted the consent calendar after removing 6-03 and 9-02A, heard an LCEF report emphasizing strategic ministry partnership, and then took major action on pastoral formation. Resolutions 6-04A and 6-05A strongly reaffirmed residential formation and Synod-approved pastoral pathways; clarifying amendments failed. John W. Sias was reelected Secretary, and Andrew N. Grams, Jesse L. Yow Jr., John W. Edson, and Jan W. Lohmeyer were elected to the Board of Directors. The convention essay centered the body’s work in Christ’s bodily resurrection. Committee 4 then secured adoption of chaplain-title restrictions, RSO oversight language, CTCR study of political and social questions, and AI guidance. The session’s overall direction was confessional consolidation. The continuing mission question is whether these boundaries will be paired with creativity, generosity, accessibility, and partnership for the harvest.

Full Footnotes and Sources

- ¹ Uploaded machine-generated transcript of the Monday morning session, July 20, 2026. Because automated transcription can mishear names, numbers, and procedural wording, official convention records control where available.
- ² The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, *2026 Convention Workbook: Reports and Overtures*, 69th Regular Convention, Phoenix, Arizona, July 18-23, 2026.
- ³ The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, *Today's Business, Issue 1: Proposed Resolutions 2026*, June 5, 2026. Later daily issues may revise, substitute, or amend the Issue 1 baseline.
- ⁴ The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, *Biographical Synopses and Statements of Nominees*, 2026.
- ⁵ The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, *Handbook: Constitution, Bylaws, and Articles of Incorporation*, 2023 edition.
- ⁶ Rev. Timothy J. Pauls, *LCMS 2026 Convention Bible Study: Christ Is Risen Indeed - Participant Guide*, 2026.
- ⁷ Rev. Timothy J. Pauls, *LCMS 2026 Convention Bible Study: Christ Is Risen Indeed - Leader Guide*, 2026.
- ⁸ Harvest Partnership, *Harvest Partnership Values*. Source detail not provided beyond uploaded document.
- ⁹ C. F. W. Walther, *Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod*, from *Essays for the Church*, vol. 2, Concordia Publishing House, 1992.
- ¹⁰ C. F. W. Walther, *The Church and the Office of the Ministry*, revised and annotated by Matthew C. Harrison, Concordia Publishing House, 2012.
- ¹¹ Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Fortress Press, 2000.
- ¹² Project research notes: floor-committee strategic read, confessional counter-quote collection, overture Scripture and Confessions index, and prior delegate analyses. These are study aids, not official LCMS action.
- ¹³ Vote percentages and exact wording reproduced in this report are drawn from the session analysis and transcript where clearly audible. Items identified as approximate or unverified require confirmation against the final Resolution Action Report or official minutes.
- ¹⁴ All interpretive sections - including "Kingdom Over Castle" and Harvest Partnership analysis - are clearly labeled analysis and do not represent official LCMS statements.

Footnote audit

Fourteen body/source notes are represented in this consolidated source section. Incomplete bibliographic details are explicitly marked rather than invented.

Final Summary

The session strengthened residential pastoral formation, reinforced authorized Synod pathways, clarified the title chaplain, tightened RSO accountability, elected key governance leaders, and directed further work on political ideologies and artificial intelligence. These decisions matter. Yet no convention vote saves or preserves the Church.

Closing Gospel frame

Christ crucified and risen preserves His Church through His Word and Sacraments. Convention work should serve His Gospel, guard the Church's confession, care for His flock, and send His people joyfully into the harvest. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia.