



CALIFORNIA-NEVADA-HAWAII DISTRICT

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD
2772 CONSTITUTION DRIVE, SUITE A
LIVERMORE, CA 94551-7566

June 2013

TO: District Convention Delegates

FROM: President Robert Newton

Dearest Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings to each of you in the Name of Jesus, our Risen Lord and Savior. He is the holy one, the true one, who holds the Keys of His Father's Kingdom. What doors He opens no one can shut; what doors He shuts, no one can open. To Him be praise, honor and glory now and forever.

In just over a week, you will participate in electing the President who will pastorally lead The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod for the next three years. This election process is a new experience for us in that each congregation of the Synod is given the opportunity to vote in a representative manner similar to what we enjoy in our District Conventions. Thus, the pastoral and lay delegates that participated in the 2012 Convention of the CNH District will cast a vote for the President of the Synod. You are receiving this letter because you are one of those delegates. Thank you for serving our CNH congregations and our Synod in this election.

As members of LCMS congregations in California, Nevada, and Hawaii we daily face the challenge of living and serving in a world that is increasingly apathetic, even antagonistic to the church and its message. We see the Christian church deliberately devalued in our society; it's spiritual and moral voice intentionally hushed in the public arena. Such cultural and social displacement can leave us bewildered and emotionally off balance, which naturally tempts us to shrink back in fear and discouragement. How can we faithfully proclaim the Gospel of our Lord Jesus in a world that rejects the church? Rather than succumbing to this fear and retreating from the world, our CNH District has for several years worked diligently to equip our people to serve as Christ's missionaries in it. Missionaries are by nature alien or foreign to the cultures in which they are called to proclaim the Gospel. Over the years we've learned to understand and embrace that our present "foreign" status is not by human accident but by Divine design. We are *"elect exiles of the dispersion,"* (1 Peter 1:1-2), that is, the Lord Jesus has intentionally chosen us to live as exiles in our own communities, being sown by Him as healing seed in this broken world. Jesus planted us in this sin impoverished soil, and with His promise, we grow and bear the abundant fruit of lives touched by His Gospel.

District Convention Delegates
June 2013
page two

Our Synod as a whole now stands at the same ministry crossroads that we as CNH encountered several years ago. Unfortunately, President Harrison and his administration have chosen to lead our Synod down a road quite different from the one CNH is traveling. Rather than a strong missional posture, where we engage the world at its “gates,” President Harrison champions a defensive posture that envisions the engagement taking place at the gates of the church. He responsibly alerts us to the several attacks being launched against our Christian faith and values from various political and cultural strongholds in our society. However, he mistakenly paints a battle scene in which the church, besieged by spiritual and temporal forces, must withdraw from the field, raise the drawbridge and fortify our church walls in order to protect what we hold dear—our Christian doctrine, sacred traditions, and religious liberties. Tragically, this road leads us to a place where we prioritize and structure our ministries from the belief that the Gospel can only be proclaimed properly within the safety of our sanctuaries--far from the earshot of those who have not yet heard. In his letter to us in the May issue of *The Lutheran Witness*, President Harrison concluded, *And know this: As traditional Christians are driven from the [public] square, the door is also closed for the Gospel* (*The Lutheran Witness*, Vol. 132, No. 5, p.1).

As much as the world’s growing hostility toward the church tempts us to feel besieged, we must not surrender to its deception. No power of the created heavens and earth is able to close the door on the Gospel’s proclamation. Only God can do that. Far from the belief that the hostility displayed against the church in the public square closes the door for the Gospel, God’s Word teaches that the Gospel thrives there. In fact, it specifically comes to those hostile to its message (Romans 5:10). We Lutherans are blessed to base and build our theology and, therefore, our action plan in this world, squarely and exclusively on the “Theology of the Cross.” That theology confesses that our Lord Jesus was rejected in the public square. More than rejected, he was condemned to death and crucified in the public square. Rather than close the door for the Gospel, the world’s hostility against the Lord and His Anointed opened it for all peoples. God not only anticipated this world’s hostility in His salvation plan; He harnessed it for His Divine purposes. *[This] Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it* (Acts 2). Make no mistake, this world would, with great vigor and violence, slam shut and lock tight the door against the very Gospel that has come to save it. It simply cannot. Our resurrected Lord holds the Keys. That’s why He is able to proclaim, *“On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”* (Matthew 16).

Three men of God—Matthew Harrison, David Maier, and Herbert Mueller--have been nominated by our Synod to serve as our President for the next triennium. All three are devoted to the Lord and His Word, desire to see the Gospel proclaimed to the ends of the earth, and love this Synod deeply. The differences between them lie primarily in the road upon which each would lead us. Of the three, David Maier champions the missionary

District Convention Delegates
June 2013
page three

posture that we have come to embrace in CNH. He is the grandson of Walter A. Maier, the first and great Lutheran Hour speaker. Dr. Maier faithfully and fearlessly proclaimed the pure Gospel across the airways of the world, at the risk of being accused of "unionistic" practices. David's uncle, Dr. Paul Maier, is a well known and respected apologist for the true faith in our present day, willing and able to enter any church or secular arena for the sake of the Gospel. David reflects the missionary heart, passion, and integrity of these men. As Michigan District's President, David has deliberately focused on equipping the pastors and laity of his congregation to be winsome "defenders" of the hope of the Gospel in the public square, as hostile as that environment may be--and to do so not defensively, but from a spirit of gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3).

In just over a week, you will cast a vote for one of these men. In actuality you will be casting a vote for which road you believe our Synod should take. You remain in my prayers as you prepare your hearts and minds for this decision. I commend you to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the wisdom of His Spirit. *"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."*

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert D. Newton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Robert Newton
District President

RDN/rk