

The 73rd Convention of the CNH District of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod

PRE-CONVENTION ACTIVITIES

A gathering of convention delegates and guests was held on Thursday, May 15th, 2025 at St. Mathew Lutheran Church in Rocklin, CA.

The evening's worship service was hosted by St. Matthew with pastors assisting from Sacramento Circuits 4 and 19. Synod President Matthew Harrison offered the message based on the convention theme, "Fruitful Branches – Pruned for Growth."

A dinner featuring barbecued pulled pork preceded the worship service. Many thanks to St. Matthew, the Hospitality Committee, and the Convention Planning Committee for their work.

First Session Friday May 16th, 2025

1. ORIENTATION

District Secretary, Rev. John Standley, welcomed delegates to the convention at 9:00am and offered comments about convention procedures including a review of the Convention's Standing Rules.

The Election Buddy App was used this year for voting. Silas Perez, the Administrative Assistant for the District's Office of Education, offered an overview of the system and helped with log-in instructions. Silas, as well as others, were available throughout the convention to assist the delegates.

2. CONVENTION OPENING

At 10:04 am, President Michael Lange welcomed convention delegates and guests and offered opening remarks based on the convention theme, stating, "*Already you are pruned for growth.*"

Distinguished Synod guests, President Matthew Harrison and Regional Vice-President Scott Murray were introduced, as well as the previous CNH President, Robert Newton. It was noted that former President Walter Tiejen was not able to attend; a video presentation will be shown later during the convention.

Mike introduced his wife, Kristi, with thanks for the love and support she provides for him.

The President continued with introductions of the District Board of Directors, the Convention Planning Committee, and the Audio-Visual team. Special thanks went out to the President's Administrative Assistant, Glenna Sanlis, and to St. Matthew Lutheran Church for their help with the pre-convention activities.

3. OPENING DEVOTION

Reverend Daniel Woo from Hope Lutheran Church in Daly City delivered the convention's opening devotion. Rev. Woo based his words on Psalm 51, verses 1-12. We, like King David, need forgiveness. Like him, we keep silent. Sin separates us from God. Confession allows the process of repentance and forgiveness. *"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow".* (ESV)

In Rev. Woo's words, "Confession takes the garbage out." From the Psalm, Pastor Woo shared King David's words, *"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me."*¹² *Restore to me the joy of your salvation and uphold me with a willing spirit."* (ESV). Daniel closed his devotion with prayer.

4. DISTRICT PRESIDENT'S REPORT – PART ONE

President Lange talked about his family's long-time relationship with the Steinbeck's, owners of the Steinbeck Family Vinyards. He spoke of his continued friendship with Cindy and Allen Steinbeck. In preparation for his presentation, Mike worked with Cindy in putting together several video clips taken on location at Steinbeck Vineyards.

Clip #1 – Mike is with Cindy among the grapevines. Cindy talks of the Convention theme, "Fruitful Branches" (John 15:1-3) and how it relates to the vineyard and the Vine Dresser. This setting was the basis for her book, "Father's Vineyard."

Clip #2 – Pruning and grafting make the vine more fruitful. We are the buds that are grafted into the Vine (Root), which is Christ. The root of the grapevine is resistant to disease. The vine is our home. What is it that distracts us from our home? What are the delusions that we run to? Where do we find sustenance? Christ is our Root in which we find sustenance. President Lange stated, "already you will never be closer to Christ than you are in your Baptism".

Clip #3 – God pruned Christ. He was wounded, suffered, and died for our salvation. We too are wounded, dead to self for our salvation. Both were wounded – Christ and us. *"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed."* (1 Pet. 2:24 ESV) We are cut from the old, grafted into the new. Mike noted, "It's never *not*, when it comes to closeness to Christ."

Clip #4 – Pruning gets us to the best. Pruning helps us produce the best fruit. Pruning takes that which could be good, to allow for that which is the best. Pruning is a process with purpose – Greater Fruitfulness! There are no bad buds. We are pruned to be better and best. In closing, President Lange added, *"Let your spiritual toes feel the vineyard floor. Recognize the forgiveness that you are treading upon...the refuge of our pruning journey."* God prepares you for fruitful growth.

Video Clips will be available for a time on the District's website.

5. CONVENTION BUSINESS

1. Adoption of the Standing Rules

The Chair asked for a motion to adopt the Convention Standing Rules. A motion was made to adopt the Standing Rules. The motion was seconded. The Convention Standing Rules were approved by a show of hands.

2. Floor Committee Three – Structure

Resolution #3-1 – “To Accept Changes to CNH District Bylaws As Recommended by Synod and District Commissions on Constitutional Matters.”

The Chair of Floor Committee Three, Rev. Stewart Crown, presented the Resolve statements of the Resolution. The committee moved to approve the Resolution; the motion was seconded. While the Election Buddy App was being loaded, Secretary Standley asked to speak to the Resolution. Rev. Standley briefly explained the reasons behind the changes as well as the lengthy process that was followed to seek approval of the changes through the Synod Commission on Constitutional Matters and the District Board of Directors.

The Chair asked for discussion, hearing none and seeing that the Election Buddy App was not cooperating, **the motion was approved by a show of hands.**

3. Introduction to the Election Process

Convention Teller, Rev. Robert Weller, explained the election process. Nominations from the floor will be accepted for all elections except for the President and 1st Vice-President. All floor nominations must have prior approval from the person being nominated. A brief biography must be submitted to the Secretary, preferably well before the nomination. Nominations for the Regional Vice-President and the Regional Lay Delegates will be made at the respective caucuses.

4. Registration Report

The Chair of the Registration Committee, Rev. Mark Oatman offered his report.

Pastoral Delegate	88
Lay Delegates	75
Total Voting Registered	163
Advisory and Guests	104
Total Registered	267

5. Election of the District President

The original slate included Rev. Michael Lange and Rev. Jason Bredeson. For personal consideration, Rev. Bredeson has declined the nomination.

The election was carried out through the Election Buddy App. **Rev. Michael Lange was elected with 95% of the voting delegates.**

6. Election of the 1st Vice-President

Rev. Mitchel Gowen, Rev. Jason Bredeson, and Rev. Robert Weller were nominated for the position of 1st Vice-President. For personal consideration, Rev. Bredeson has declined the nomination.

Since Rev. Weller was included on this ballot, the position of Teller was transferred to Rev. Stephen Becker for this election.

The Election was carried out through the Election Buddy App. **Rev. Mitchell Gowen was elected with 56% of the voting delegates.**

7. Election of the District Secretary

Rev. Morris Stephens, Jr. and Rev. Jared Eggebraaten were previously nominated for the position of District Secretary. There were no nominations from the Convention Floor.

The Election was carried out through the Election Buddy App. **Rev. Jared Eggebraaten was elected with 72% of the voting delegates.**

8. Election of the District Treasurer

Mr. Donald Busse's name has been submitted through the Nominating Committee. No nominations were made from the Convention Floor.

The Election was carried out through the Election Buddy App. **Mr. Donald Busse was elected with 100% of the voting delegates.**

9. Election of the Nominating Committee

Positions available for the Nominating Committee and nominations received are as follows:

One Clergy --	Rev. Stewart Crown Rev. Joseph Robb
One Commissioned	Mrs. Kayla McGowan Ms. Sara Agee
Two Laity	Rick Fielitz Dan Hahn

Election Results:

Clergy --	Rev. Joseph Robb --	67%
Commissioned --	Mrs. Kayla McGowan --	56%
Laity --	Mr. Rick Fielitz --	50%
	Mr. Dan Hahn --	50%

6. WEST COAST PARTNERSHIPS

President Lange introduced Rev. Dr. Mike Gibson, President of the Pacific Southwest District, and Rev. Dr. Mike Von Behren, President of the Northwest District. Together, these three Mike's have formed the West Coast Partnership of the LCMS.

President Gibson noted that the three Presidents meet most every Monday on Zoom. He stressed that it is important to know that you have those that walk beside you. Rev. Gibson talked about the MAP Program (Mission Applied Practice). This is a three-year program where District Executives, District Presidents, and pastors new to the District meet to share and grow.

President Von Behren offered the words of Phil. 1:3-5 as he expressed his thanks for the partnership. *"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."*(ESV). He went on to speak about the three District's joint partnership in the MTC (Mission Training Center) which offers online ministry training. The MTC is based at Concordia Irvine.

President Lange invited all Vice-Presidents to join together on the stage for a prayer before lunch.

7. LUNCH BREAK

Registration Report

The Chair of the Registration Committee, Rev. Mark Oatman offered his report.

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8. GREETINGS FROM OTHERS

During the course of today's session, several individuals and organizations presented video presentations and greetings. The following is a list of those videos in the order they were presented.

- Mission Training Center (MTC) – Rev. Jonathon Priest
- Lutheran Women's Missionary League -- Roxan Schwab
- Concordia University System – Rev. Dr. Jamison Hardy
- The Center – Rev. Dr. Robert Newton

9. CNH BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

1ST Vice – President Mitch Gowen spoke about the work of the Board of Directors. From his report in the Convention Handbook, the Chairman stated, "For almost 30

years, the California-Nevada-Hawaii District of the LCMS has operated under Policy-Based Governance. This form of governance differs from the way many churches and organizations are structured by defining the framework for decision-making and operations through setting policies, followed and administered by the District President, rather than actual hands-on administration by the Board of Directors.”

“While most Boards are able to point to things like, ‘we painted the building, we hired an administrative assistant, we created a new ministry, and we balanced the budget’ – the CNH BOD can’t say that. Instead, we would say, ‘we made sure the vision and resources were available to make sure the building got painted, an administrative assistant was hired, a new ministry was started, and the budget was balanced.’ The difference being – the BOD’s job is not to do those things – but rather to make sure the District President and staff have a vision, achievable outcomes, and the resources to accomplish it.”

10. INTRODUCTION OF STAFF

President Lange introduced the District’s Staff:

- Rev. Paul Ferguson, Jr. --Assistant to the President - Strategic Mission Leadership
- Doug Benton --Communications Assistant
- Matt Molinari -- LCEF District Vice President
- Joel Wahler – Assistant to the President - Education
- Kathryn Plott – Bookkeeper
- Renee Lawrence – Administrative Assistant – Office of Missions
- Glenna Sanlis -- Administrative Assistant – Office of the President
- Denise Lo – Operations Executive
- Silas Perez -- Administrative Assistant – Office of Education
- Rev. Allen Steinbeck – Director of Transitional Interim Ministry
- Matt Newton – In Touch Editor

11. LCEF REPORT

LCEF Vice President Matt Molinari referred to his full report in the Convention Workbook. Matt talked briefly about the work of LCEF in the CNH District, noting that it is all made possible through investments. He noted that he is working closely with LCEF Real Estate Solutions on several projects in the CNH District.

One of those projects is with Trinity Lutheran Church in Watsonville which will provide housing for farm workers. At the end of his presentation, Matt invited Rev. Joe Robb to come up to lead a prayer for the work at Watsonville.

12. CNH DISABILITY MINISTRY COMMITTEE

President Lange introduced Diane Flynn, who serves as the Chair of the District's Disability Ministry Committee. The committee was authorized by the 2022 Convention. A video showing some of the activities of the Disability Ministry Committee was viewed by the committee.

13. DISASTER RESPONSE COMMITTEE

The President called for the Chair of the Disaster Response Committee who was not in the Convention Hall, but in the parking lot, showing people the Disaster Response trailer. The trailer is fully stocked with all the material and equipment needed for disaster response. It was noted that the convention was "on the air" by way of Amateur Radio, which is at times during a disaster, the only line of communication. The committee has been very active during the past triennium with fires and storms in our District.

14. CONVENTION BUSINESS

1. Approval of the Agenda

A motion was made to approve the Convention Agenda. The motion was seconded and approved by a show hands.

2. Floor Committee Three -- Structure

Resolution # 3-2 -- To Establish a CNH Disaster Response Committee

The Chair of Floor Committee Three, Rev. Stewart Crown, was called forward to present the resolution. Stewart read the body of the resolution and moved the question on behalf of the committee. The motion was seconded. During discussion there was a question concerning the cost to the District. The President advised that the cost has been estimated at no more than a thousand dollars. Hearing no discussion, **the vote was taken by Election buddy and approved by 95%.**

3. Floor Committee Three -- Structure

Resolution #3-3 -- To Consider Recommendations for Circuit #13

Rev. Crown presented the resolution and moved to accept on behalf of the committee. The motion was seconded. Seeing no request for discussion, President Lange sensed that a hand/voice vote would be acceptable. **The Resolution was approved by majority.**

4. Commissioned Ministers Polling

President Lange noted that new Standing Rule #13 allows for a group of our Commissioned Ministers to share their opinion on orders of business as they come to the floor. The results of the polling will be shared before delegate voting takes place.

15. SYNOD PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Lange invited Synod President Matthew Harrison to the podium. President Harrison began by mentioning that the anniversary of the Augsburg Confession was coming soon. He stated that the Augsburg Confession tells us who we are and what we should be as a church. President Harrison offered some historical notes on the Confession. He stated, "Luther's confession is our confession." "We will stand before

the judgement seat of Christ.” He then worked through the first eleven articles of the Augustana, offering brief commentary on each.

Article One – Who is God?

Article Two – What is Man? What is Sin? – Original Sin.

Article Three – Who is Christ? – We affirm the Ecumenical Councils of the Church.

Article Four – Justification – Saved by Grace, through faith. Declared not guilty!

Article Five – The Preaching Office – How is faith appropriated?

Article Six – We believe in Good Works – God doesn’t need our works, our neighbors do.

Article Seven – There is a Church – Ceremonies are not necessary.

Article Eight – Church’s Will – What the Church is.

Article Nine – Baptism – Baptism now saves us.

Article Ten – Sacrament of the Altar – Close / Closed / Close(d) – Pastoral Discretion

Article Eleven – Confession – Speak Forgiveness

Matthew went on to say that as followers of Christ, we are not missing anything. We don’t need to be anything but what we are.

The President went on to speak of the many activities that are taking place in our Synod:

- National Missions – 70 Church Plants now in process. National Missions is “Rockin’ and Rollin’”, reaching out to Districts asking, “What do you need.”
- President Harrison spoke of church plants that are now in progress.
- The Executive position for Black Ministry Council is now the All-Nations Council.
- The Life Ministry Council is a blessing, assisting over 500,000 women, children, and men in crisis pregnancy situations.
- Disaster Response Council is actively working with local congregations. The Council Worked with Pacific Southwest District during the recent fires.
- School Ministries – Genesis Project – New School Start-ups
- Concordia Plans – Investigating the possibility of providing Property Insurance to congregations.
- National Lutheran Ministries – Bolivia, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Canada –Working to pull together our global partners – Ordaining three missionaries this week in Rome. We have a Church Plant in Rome!
- Commission on Theology and Church Relations – Working on a number of issues including a response to Rome.
- Rosters and Statistics reports that 36% of our members are adult converts. Half of our congregations have fewer than 50 people in church on a Sunday. Our churches are smaller than they used to be. Dual parishes are the reality of our future.
- Information / Situation / Relationship of Texas / Ann Arbor
- Synod Finances – Good!

After offering a prayer concerning the tornado damage in St. Louis and Concordia Seminary - St. Louis, President Harrison opened a time for Questions and Answers. Several questions were brought forward by Delegates and Advisory members.

- Demon Possession in Madagascar
- Alternate Routes to Ordination to allow more men to serve
- Preparing men for Alternate Routes without adding an asterisk (comparison of one route to another)
- Church life expectancy after a certain point according to Rosters and Statistics.
- Has the President sent congratulations to Pope Leo? What does he see as the future relationship with Catholicism?

(Secretary's note – The President's answers were candid and in-depth. As such I do not feel that short of a word for word verbatim, I could accurately do justice to his presentation.)

President Harrison thanked President Lange for his work in our District and Synod and noted that President Lange is well thought of by the Praesidium. In closing, Matthew offered the Benediction. President Lange thanked President Harrison for his presentation and for joining us in Convention.

16. CONVENTION BUSINESS

1. In Memoriam

A video was shown In Memory of the CNH District church workers who were called to be with their Lord Jesus during this past Triennium. The video featured pictures and information on each worker.

2. Floor Committee One – Mission Within the District

Resolution #1-1 – “To Implement a Stronger Process for the Participation of Commissioned Ministers at future CNH District Conventions”

Rev. Alan Sommer was introduced as Chair of Floor Committee #1. Alan noted that the Floor Committees may have changed some of the wording in the Overtures from what was in the Workbook. He directed the delegates to the District Website for the updated Overtures. Alan asked Danika Neal, Commissioned Minister and member of the Floor Committee, to introduce the Resolution, reading both the Whereas statements as well as the Resolves.

The Committee moved to adopt the Resolution. The motion was seconded. The Chair opened the floor for discussion. There was a “friendly amendment” offered to change the word “counted” in line 18 to “binding”. The amendment was accepted.

After further discussion, there was an amendment to strike all words in lines 12-15 beginning with the word “along” in line 12, and ending with the word, “conventions” in line 15. The amendment was moved and seconded. There was concern raised that there are other Advisory members that are not included in this Resolution. The Chair suggested that this should be considered further at another time.

There was no discussion on the amendment. Polling of the Commissioned Ministers was positive. The amendment to the Resolution was approved by a hand/voice vote. Moving to the main motion and hearing no further discussion, the chair called for the vote on the resolution as amended. **The resolution passed with 83% of the votes cast.**

17. DISTRICT PRESIDENTS REPORT – PART TWO

President Lange stated that part two of the President's report would begin with messages from staff. A video was shown featuring some of the activities of the CNH Mission Agency.

Following the video, President Lange introduced the Executive Director of LINC – Bay Area, Aaron Putnam. Pastor Putnam talked about the activities of LINC – Bay Area. He stated that their mission is to “raise up leaders where they serve.” Aaron showed photos on the screen of several of these local missionaries that are currently working in local mission fields.

Joel Wahlers serves as the Assistant to the President for Education. Joel talked about the schools in the CNH District. He offered several statistics that can be found in his report in the Convention Workbook. Joel says that adequate staffing continues to be a major challenge, this is especially true for rostered staff. Joel shared a video featuring CNH school staff that came out of District Schools. He stressed that the way to help with the teacher shortage is to raise up students within our congregations to pursue one of the many ways available to become a Lutheran School Educator.

Joel offered background material regarding the District's Strategic Ministry Plan (SMP) that was passed at the 2022 District Convention. Joel worked through the components that make up the SMP. These are Mission, Vision, Values, Goals, and Strategic Initiatives. Together, Joel and the President went on to share some examples of how these components work together to serve the District.

President Lange followed by saying, “Where do we go from here.” He then offered this Mission Statement --- “We strengthen God's people to serve and bear witness to Christ.” Mike went on to lay out a path forward to bring that Mission Statement to life. This includes raising up leaders, supporting individual congregation's visions, working with Real Estate Solutions, and seeing congregations partnering together to enhance their ministries.

18. CONVENTION BUSINESS

1. Floor Committee Two – Mission and Action Beyond

Resolution #2.1 -- To Strengthen the Nonvoting Advisory Role of Commissioned Ministers at Synodical Conventions

The Chair of Floor Committee Two, Rev. Brian Cummins, introduced the Resolution by reading the Resolves. The committee offered the motion which was seconded. The Convention Chair opened the floor for discussion.

A friendly amendment was offered to strike wording in line 10 beginning with the words

“along with” and all words to the semi-colon in line 13. The committee accepted the change.

The Commissioned Ministers poll was taken with 100% agreeing to the Resolution as amended. **The vote was taken on the resolution as amended. The result was 82.6% in favor.**

2. Resolution #2.2 -- To Support and Clarify the Prior Approval Process

Rev. Brian Cummins introduced the Resolution by reading the last Whereas and the Resolves. The Resolution was moved by the Committee and received a second. The Convention Chair opened discussion.

President Harrison spoke against the Resolution. There were several friendly amendments requesting grammar changes. The Chair suggested that this would all be corrected in the final draft. Rev. Andrew Jones stated that the Resolution was essentially seeking greater transparency in the process.

The polling of our Commissioned Ministers indicated approval. **The Resolution was approved with 85%.**

19. FRIDAY’S CLOSING DEVOTION

Rev. Berhanu Didanu, Executive Director and Co-Founder of Mercy Holistic Ministry, offered today’s closing devotion.

Pastor Berhanu’s remarks were based on Psalm 107 verses 1-9. He noted that Mercy Holistic Ministry speaks to the needs mentioned in verse 9 of the Psalm – *“For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things”*. (ESV)

Mercy Holistic Ministry seeks to offer the “good things,” both spiritual and material. “God fills and satisfies us, so that we can fill and satisfy others.” Rev. Didanu closed with prayer.

20. REGIONAL CAUCUS

Convention Delegates were released to their Regional Caucus to participate in the nominations of their Regional Vice-Presidents and Lay Directors. Both slates will be presented to the Convention tomorrow for election.

21. FRIDAY EVENING ACTIVITIES

Delegates and guests gathered for a time of fellowship followed by the Banquet.

Respectfully submitted

Rev. John M. Standley
CNH District Secretary