



District Convention

Now You are the People of God

- Faithful Pastors
- Bold Witnesses
- Empowered Stewards

Questions and Answers

From the Board of Directors

The District Board of Directors is bringing various overtures to the Convention for consideration. These overtures include:

- Vision and Outcomes
- Board Governance
- Assistant to the President
- Term Limits
- Board Size

While you prayerfully study these issues, the Board of Directors believes it is important that everyone consider these issues based on fact. Please consider these Questions and Answers as you prepare for the Convention, January 22-25 in Grand Forks.

POLICY-BASED GOVERNANCE

(ALSO REFERRED TO AS OUTCOME-BASED GOVERNANCE)

Question #1

Is a certain structure, organization model, or way of governance mandated in Scripture or the Lutheran Confessions?

No. This is what we call *adiaphora*, which means it is neither commanded nor forbidden. The Church has the freedom to use the structure, organization model, or way of governance of her choosing.

Question #2

Why do we have structure (or governance) in the Church?

According to *The Apology to the Augsburg Confession*, Article IV.22, and external arrangement in the Church is for the sake of peace and good order.

Question #3

Is it within the purview of the Board of Directors to deal with matters of structure and governance?

Yes. This is the very work of the Board of Directors, as outlined in our Synod Bylaws 4.5.1, "The Board of Directors shall be vested with the general management and supervision of the district's business and legal affairs and shall adopt policies and require procedures which assure that said management and supervision is effected."

Question #4

Why is the Board of Directors recommending change in governance at this time? Is there anything wrong with the current model?

While there is no one perfect model of governance, the Board of Directors believes the suggested changes can bring clarity to roles, responsibilities, and accountability in and amongst the District President, Assistant to the President, Board of Directors, and Mission and Ministry Teams (currently Divisions). The Board believes these changes will alleviate current overlapping, confusion, and accountability between these individuals.

Question #5

Why is such a change necessary? Isn't the Gospel most important?

Indeed, the Gospel is the most important. Structure (governance) allows the elected servants of the Church to do their work, which will best benefit the church for the sake of the Gospel.

Question #6

How long have we been using the current model?

Prior to 2001, the governance model of the District followed a variation of the Don Abdon governance model. The current model of governance of electing division positions has been in effect since 2001. Prior to 2001, "Division" positions were appointed.

Question #7

If the current governance model is relatively new, then why change it now?

There seem to be deficiencies in the current model. The North Dakota District is unique. It has approximately 90 congregations, but covers much geography. Often times, individuals vote from a list of candidates they don't even know. Appointing individuals to various mission and ministry teams allows individuals to be appointed who have a passion for a specific ministry area, who are invested in the District vision and outcomes, and who are held accountable to fulfill their promise to serve in the District.

Question #8

In the proposed governance model, does the District President appoint the division chair?

The Board of Directors is proposing that the District President appoints the division chair with the approval of the Board of Directors?

Question #9

How will the District President decide whom to appoint?

Being held accountable to the Board of Directors, the District President will appoint someone who is most capable of the position. He will choose this person by getting the input from circuit counselors, pastors, vice presidents, and Board. In line with the vision and outcomes approved by the District Convention, the District President will seek an individual who has a passion and understanding of a specific area of ministry and committed to do the work asked of him/her. The District President will then bring before the Board the person he appoints, seeking approval from the Board.

Question #10

Could this be considered a “top-down” system of governance?

This governance model should not be confused with Word and Sacrament ministry that takes place in the congregation. This model does not advocate that the District President “telling the congregations what to do.” This governance model organizes our District work together on the District level.

Question #6

Will this proposed governance model give too much power to so few?

No. Actually, this model puts into place more accountability of the District President and other district workers to the elected Board of Directors.

Question #7

Isn't the proposed model of Policy-based governance a secular model of business governance? Is it right to bring a secular business model of governance into the Church?

Policy-based governance does borrow various features of Carver's *Policy-based Governance* model. It is not wrong to borrow First-Article gifts from the world if they do not conflict with the Scriptures and the Confessions. The governance recommendations of the North

Dakota Board of Directors are borrowing certain features of the Carver model, but not all of it.

The church has borrowed governance practices from the secular throughout history. Perhaps a most recent example is C.F.W. Walther in his model of governance with voter's assemblies and a democratic view of Church governance. Again, it is neither commanded nor forbidden.

Question #8

Does this governance model give the District President the power to do whatever he wants?

No. The District President will also be held accountable to the Board of Directors. Perhaps even more so, the District President must work and serve within the realm of the Holy Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and the Synod Handbook. In spite of verbalized fears, neither the current nor the proposed model of governance gives no one person the authority to close churches, mission starts, campus ministries, etc.

Question #9

Sincerely, does this governance model place the District President, whoever it is, in the realm of pope, or ultimate authority?

No. First of all the Convention would not elect an individual who advocated indulgences, believed in works-righteousness, prayed to Mary and the saints, etc. Secondly, this model does not advocate supreme authority, but the District President is always held accountable to the Board, and ultimately to the Convention.

Question #10

Is the North Dakota the first in the LCMS to advocate this form of governance?

No. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has operated within this system of governance for many years. The Synod Handbook reflects policy-based governance. Former LCMS World Relief/Human Care Chairman, Rev. Matthew Harrison, operated with policy-based governance. A good number of our LCMS District are also working under policy-based governance.

Question #11

Is the perfect model that the Board of Directors is advocating to be in place forever?

No. First of all, there is no perfect governance model due to a fallen and broken world. Those within the Church as most certainly sinners and can cause any governance model to break down. The Board of Directors does believe, however, that this is the best model at this time in the life of the Church in the North Dakota District. With new challenges and different times, the District may choose to alter or change her governance model in the future. This is the life of the Church.

Question #12

Does this model of governance advocate an “ends justifies the means” mentality?

No. A Lutheran people do not create any means outside the Word of God or the Lutheran Confessions. This being said, one must be careful not to make the “means” legalistic, which neither the current nor the proposed model of governance advocate.

Question #13

Policy-based governance speaks often of “leadership.” Can we speak of “leadership” in terms of Churchly positions of service?

Yes. There is evidence of church fathers throughout the ages speaking in terms of “leadership.” Leadership is seen in the likes of Joseph, King David, Nehemiah, St. Paul, St. Peter, Martin Luther, C.F.W. Walther, etc. Leadership is a term used in pastoral care and theology textbooks in the seminary, from Schuetze to Kraus. Most recently, President Matthew Harrison has a wonderful chapter on “Leadership” in his book *Christ have Mercy*. When the District Convention elects individuals to serve in the Church, it is most certainly electing “leaders” to serve the Lord and His Church.

Question #14

Can the Church be ruled by anything except the Word and Sacraments?

When speaking of the Word and Sacraments in the Church, we’re not talking about how the Church is governed and organized. The Word and Sacraments are the presence of Christ to forgive sin, strengthen faith, and promise eternal life. The congregation’s governance model of voter’s assemblies does not replace the Word and Sacraments. Neither does policy-based governance replace the Word and Sacraments of our Lord and His Church. Policy-based governance is how we choose to work with one another in carrying out the objectives of the Church (and Synod).

Question #15

Is Church governance “Law?” Should “The Gospel” govern the Church?

Church governance does operate within the realm of the Law, just as the voter’s assembly in the congregation is within the realm of the Law. The Law is not bad, but rather is a gift from God and is good and wise. When we determine how we will live together in the Church in a fallen and broken world, we are most certainly in the realm of the Law. This being said, however, we do not forget the Gospel. How we choose to govern ourselves as Church is always for the sake of the Gospel; to proclaim Christ crucified.

Question #16

Is Policy-based Governance used in congregations in our District?

While the Board of Directors did not take a poll of this questions, the Board is aware of some of our District congregations using Policy-based governance, or variations thereof.

Question #17

Why can’t we just keep the current divisions and either elect or have the chairs appointed?

Policy (or Outcome)-based governance governs according to the vision and outcomes of the Convention and District. For example, if the Convention determines that evangelism should be a priority, then someone would be appointed to lead that vision/outcome. Say a related vision/outcome is also determined by the Convention, such as foreign missions or Project 24. A separate person (not the same as the evangelism person) could be appointed to lead this vision/outcome. With this governance model, the Convention/District is not bound by pre-determined divisions, but rather works together as Church from the focus vision/outcomes she sets as priorities for the District.

Question #18

Does this mean that if an area of ministry is not one of the priority vision/ outcomes, nothing will be done in this area?

No. The priority vision/outcomes are areas of ministry to which the District/ Convention wants to give particular focus. Policy-based governance gives the District and her leaders the freedom to appoint individuals to all necessary and needed area of ministry. An example of this would be Youth. Youth is not one of the three proposed outcomes. However, it is a very important focus of ministry and is doing very well in our District. Therefore, the District President would most certainly want to appoint an individual to continue Youth ministry in the District. As the current Youth leadership is doing very well, the District President would most certainly want to ask the current Youth leadership to continue. This is but one example of how policy-based governance could be of benefit in the District.

Question #19

Why is it so important that the District do ministry together? Isn't the Church about local congregations proclaiming the Word and administering the Sacraments?

It is true – the local congregation does indeed proclaim the Word and administer the Sacraments. The local congregation also involves the work of education, stewardship, youth, evangelism, human care, etc. The purpose of Synod, which is the greater Church of congregations in “Life Together” is active in doing the things a local congregation cannot do alone, or desires to do together for the greater good. For instance, linking evangelism, or stewardship, or youth together district-wide, can have great benefit on the Church and those who receive her benefits. The Objectives of Synod detail what the Church does together for the Life of the world. 20-40 year-olds desire to see a Church that not only talks, but lives out the faith. This age group is to be commended, as this age group sees Christianity in action in the Book of Acts, in the life of Martin Luther, of the Saxon Lutherans in the mid 1800's, and so on. Whether in the local congregational setting or in our Life Together as District, the Church is a confessing and “living-out-the-faith” Church.

Question #20

The Board of Directors is proposing changing the concept of “Divisions” to “Staff?” How much will this cost the District?

This will cost the District no more than currently being done, unless, of course, ministry increases in our Life Together as District. The word “Staff” in the context of the North Dakota District would be unpaid individuals who are appointed to various positions of leadership. “Staff” is a term used by Policy-based governance to differentiate those who set policy from those who do policy. “Staff” are the ones to do policy.

Question #21

What are the “Fences” in Policy-based Governance?

The “fences” are the parameters, or boundaries, in which the Board of Directors limits District leadership. In Policy-based Governance, the Board does not micro-manage the Board or “Staff,” but gives these individuals the freedom to do that which they were called to do. However, as the individuals do their work, the Board sets certain “fences” which the workers are not to exceed. These fences would include matters of budget, legal matters, Scripture, The Confessions, ethics, and the like.

Question #22

The Nominating committee has already received nominations to fill division positions. Will these people be allowed to serve if policy-based governance is passed?

Yes. If the Board's resolutions are met with the Convention's approval, those nominated would be the first on the list to be considered for appointment to various positions. These individuals would also be the first on the list to be considered to fill out the committees (or teams).

Question #23

Will the District President appoint committee chairs and the entire committee (with Board approval)?

No. The District President would appoint only the committee (or team) chair. The chairperson would then fill out his/her committee (or team) of his/her choosing, realizing the chair is held accountable to the District President to do what was directed by the Convention.