

For Gospel-Centered, Mission-Driven, Future-Oriented Leadership  
in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

# Jesus First

Special Edition - 2010 Convention Newsletter

## Serving God as a Delegate

### *Welcome to Jesus First's Delegate Letter #1*

*“Congratulations on your election as a delegate to the LCMS national convention. God has blessed you with an opportunity to represent your circuit and participate in worship, Bible study, and leadership with representatives from across the nation. The LCMS convention should be an uplifting and wonderful experience for all participants.”*

These are the words I penned three years ago. I remember sadness as I added the word “should” to the paragraph. I had witnessed too many conventions filled with petty squabbles and behavior inappropriate for a church convention. I prayed with others who hoped that 2007 would be different and our prayers were answered in a positive way, with a lasting peace for three years in our beloved church. The past three years in the LCMS have been peaceful and productive. This year, I left the word “should” in the paragraph with a greater sense of peace and hope for you, the delegates who will participate in the 2010 LCMS convention.

Please allow me to introduce myself and Jesus First, as this is the first edition of the Jesus First Delegate

Newsletter for delegates. My name is Pastor Jon Coyne. I am the Senior Pastor at Bethany Lutheran Church in Menlo Park, Ca. Where others contribute to this newsletter, they will be identified in the byline.

Jesus First was formed after the 1998 LCMS convention by a small group of people who were concerned about the direction of our church body. At the 2001 convention, Jesus First endorsed two candidates to lead the LCMS as president and one of them, Rev. Gerald Kieschnick, was elected as president of the LCMS. Since then, Jesus First has worked to identify and support the election of many men and women who have supported the vision and leadership of President Kieschnick. During these past years, our goals have remained the same. We are “for Gospel-Centered, Mission-Driven, Future-Oriented leadership in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.” This simple statement guides us as we continue to support our leaders and, when necessary, to point out struggles within our beloved church.

By now you have received numerous pieces of information in the mail. Perhaps you are beginning to wonder how much of this mail

you will receive and how much you can possibly read. I would like to reassure you: Jesus First does not believe we will have more influence based upon the weight or number of our mailings! You will receive ten of these weekly newsletters leading up to the convention. You will also receive our normal newsletter (by e-mail) and a voting guide. Each of these brief publications will be filled with information that will contain the following:

**TRUTH** We will bring you the truth in every publication. If for some reason we do make a mistake, we will retract inaccurate statements and apologize. Most of the time, you will read statements made by others in an effort to help you make informed decisions about them or about issues before the convention. We will also share our perspective on some issues and on elections.

**BIBLICAL AND CONFSSIONAL SUBSCRIPTION** Jesus First Leadership strongly affirms the Bible as God's living Word. We also stand by our vows to uphold the Confessions of the LCMS as a true exposition of God's Word. At times we will ask you to consider the actions of others in the light of God's

*continued page 4*

*Keep the mission moving.*

## Serving God as a Delegate - continued

Word so that as a church we will be able to follow God's path for all of us.

**RESPECT** Jesus First Leadership respects your time and your intellect. We will not try to fool you with convoluted, confusing arguments. Neither will we assume that you need us to tell you everything about your church. We will bring to you what we identify as the most important topics for the convention.

**CLARITY** Convention resolutions and other aspects of the convention can be very confusing, even to those

who are accustomed to the process. We will work to provide facts and statements which provide a clearer understanding for you as a delegate. We trust that once you understand the issues, you will vote with wisdom.

**PRAYER** We believe that God hears and answers our prayers. Every edition of the Jesus First Delegate Newsletter will include a prayer for the week. We know you will be in prayer about the convention. We also want you to know that we will be praying for you and for the convention.

The 2010 convention could bring even greater peace and productivity to the LCMS. Over the next few weeks we will continue to share with you our hopes and dreams for the work of Jesus Christ through the LCMS. I thank you in advance for taking the time to read this brief newsletter. For more information, or previous articles, please visit our website at [www.jesusfirst.net](http://www.jesusfirst.net).

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# LCMS Nominations - The Church View

The United States uses a process of political primaries to “nominate” candidates for president from each of the two major political parties. In this process, candidates campaign for a fixed number of votes, attempting to garner the simple majority of their party votes. In many ways, the “nomination” process in the United States is more like a mini-election, determining the person who will lead each political party.

The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS) uses a process of nominations which may seem similar, but really is quite different than, the process used in our civil government. First, in the LCMS there are no “political parties.” Political parties are formed around ideological platforms in competition with one another. The LCMS has one theological platform, Scripture and the Confessions. Over the years there have been organizations like Jesus First and others who support one or more men for the office of president, but these support groups are not political parties, since they each support and defend the Scriptures and the Confessions.

Over 6,000 congregations have the opportunity to nominate pastors to the office of President and First Vice-President, but only about one-third of our congregations participated in the process this year, since submitting a nomination is not mandatory. As you can

see, with this system the total number of nominations is not representative of the entire church. Nevertheless, the process allows the church to identify five men who consent to serve if elected.

## A Process to Identify Leaders Willing to Serve

In the United States in an election year, or most recently a process that dragged on for nearly two years, political pundits will talk about momentum as a candidate begins to garner more or less nominations. Likewise, newscasters will begin to speculate about who will win with fancy charts and graphs to prove their prediction. In the LCMS, it would be easy to engage in the same thinking, but it would be inaccurate. The nomination process is not about momentum, or speculating who will win, it is simply about identifying the people who will serve if elected.

Nevertheless, there are people who believe that the nomination process is incredibly important. Rev. Charles Henrickson is a featured writer on a website where most articles criticize LCMS leadership, and he posts on another site, both filled with people intent on removing the LCMS president. He wrote the following on the LutherQuest website in 2008 (barely one year after the last convention): “What we need to do is to get networked and ORGANIZED, district by district, circuit

by circuit, and a) elect ABK delegates in as many circuits as possible, and b) generate as many congregational nominations for SP as possible for the guy (even two guys, since each congo gets two noms) with the best chance of beating Kieschnick. Both tasks are doable, if we have the will and the energy to do them.” For those of you who do not understand the acronyms, ABK means “Anybody But Kieschnick,” a term which I find offensive in a church body professing that God ultimately calls our elected leaders. SP stands for Synod President. “Congo” is short for congregations and “noms” is short for nominations. Earlier on this website Rev. Henrickson wrote the following: “This is why it so important to ELECT CONFSSIONAL DELEGATES AT THE CIRCUIT FORUMS IN 2009. That is how we can defeat bad proposals--and defeat our bad president--in 2010.”

## Speak Well of Your Leaders

I strongly disagree with these kinds of critical, pejorative statements, particularly on public websites. What is our witness when our pastors speak poorly of their leaders? It seems to me that the witness is contrary to the 8th Commandment which reminds us to “...speak well of him (our neighbor), defend him, and explain everything in the kindest way.” Jesus First has never called a president “bad” and never

*continued page 3*



## Delegate - Prayer of the Week

### A WORD FROM THE “AMEN CORNER” - #1

*Good and gracious heavenly Father, I thank you for the opportunity to serve in your Kingdom. Prepare my heart and soul for days of worship, prayer, study, and decision at the LCMS convention in Houston. Grant me the wisdom to discern your will for the LCMS as we further the mission of your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.*

*In Jesus' precious name I pray. Amen*

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*



## LCMS Nominations - The Church View - continued

campaigned against someone by stating that "anyone" would be better. It seems insulting to those candidates supported by Rev. Henrickson and others, that these candidates would be considered to be just "anybody." However, I congratulate Rev. Henrickson and all of the people who accomplished their goal of getting two candidates enough nominations to be on the ballot.

Many years ago when Jesus First recommended Rev. Gerald Kieschnick (LCMS President) and Rev. Donald Muchow (LCMS Chairman of the Board of Directors,) we worked to get enough nominations that each one would be on the ballot. This year Jesus First realized that President Gerald Kieschnick and First Vice President William Diekelman would easily receive enough nominations to be on the ballot. Considering their status as incumbent leaders in a time of renewed peacefulness in the church, there seemed to be little reason to rally congregations to create more nominations.

The same websites that "networked and organized" to create a large number of nominations for their two candidates are now filled with claims that this is a shift in momentum against the President and First Vice President and toward their candidates. I suppose we could not expect anything less from them. However, it is more accurate to look at

this from a church perspective rather than a civil government perspective. This process is not about momentum, it is about identifying the five men who, if elected, would serve as president or first vice-president of the LCMS.

### **Pray for the Convention**

Please consider doing the following things for the future of the LCMS. 1) Encourage your delegates to read the 10 brief newsletters that Jesus First will send to them. Our newsletters represent less than 5% of the total mailings and bulk of paper they will receive from influence groups prior to the convention. 2) Pray that your delegates will be able to discern God's will for the church as they cast their votes for elections and other decisions. 3) Remind all people, how we speak about our current President and Vice Presidents is about the 4th Commandment. We all have a right to support any candidate, but we are sinning when we use harsh, derogatory words to harm the reputation of our current leaders.

Jesus First continues to support President Gerald Kieschnick and First Vice President William Diekelman in 2010. We will have much more to share in the future as the convention draws near. We give thanks for the fact that with no Jesus First effort beyond an announcement in this newsletter, both men are on the ballot.

## Defining Terms

**Voting Delegate:** As a delegate you represent the pastors and congregations of your circuit. This simple concept allows everyone in the LCMS to know their voice is heard through yours. Some groups of influence attempt to tell you how to vote based on general distinctions proposing terms as opposites, like liberals vs. confessionals, liturgical vs. contemporary worship or missional vs. conservative. In real life, no one fits neatly into these categories. All of us are confessional, agreeing to the Confessions of the LCMS. Other labels lack a clear definition. As a delegate you represent others NOT because your views are exactly like theirs, but because they trust you to pray, think and make the best decision for them. Thank you for accepting this trust and the responsibility of serving as a delegate!

Jesus First