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To Establish An SMP Oversight Committee

RESOLUTION 5-03

Overtures 5-22, 5-30 (CW, pp. 225, 227)

WHEREAS, 2007 Res. 5-01B established the SMP Committee, renaming the DELTO Oversight Committee to be the Specific Ministry Pastor Committee; and

WHEREAS, Res. 5-01B mandated that “the Specific Ministry Pastor Committee be placed under the supervision of the Board for Pastoral Education”; and

WHEREAS, The Board for Pastoral Education was eliminated in the restructuring of the Synod that occurred at the 2010 LCMS convention; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 2.13.1 be changed to read as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

2.13.1 Due to the unique nature of the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program,

(a) The President of the Synod shall appoint an SMP Oversight Committee which shall be responsible to him, consisting of:

(1) The LCMS Executive Director of Pastoral Education (committee chair)

(2) The LCMS Chief Mission Officer

(3) Two district presidents who have SMP students or pastors in their districts (appointed in consultation with the chairman of the Council of Presidents)

(4) Two representatives from Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne (appointed in consultation with the seminary president)

(5) Two representatives from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (appointed in consultation with the seminary president)

(6) Two parish pastors who are serving as supervising pastors of SMP students, or who have done so within the past three years (students from both seminaries must be represented).

(b) A “specific ministry pastor” is a minister of religion—ordained who has completed the requirements for service as a specific ministry pastor and has been examined by one of the Synod’s seminaries, has received a regular call, and has been placed by the Council of Presidents into a specific Word and Sacrament ministry context. He is eligible to serve only in that specific ministry

1 context for which he has been trained and may not be offered or accept a call for ministry for which
2 he has not been certified as determined by his district president. He shall serve under the supervision
3 of his district president and another pastor who is not a specific ministry pastor.

4 (a~~1~~) Because he is under supervision of another pastor and because a specific ministry pastor's
5 theological education has been formed in part by and for a specific ministry context, he may not be
6 placed or called into ecclesiastical roles that exercise pastoral oversight outside the context of his
7 call.

8 (b~~2~~) A specific ministry pastor is not eligible to

9 (1~~i~~) serve as a voting delegate to a national convention of the Synod—but may serve as an
10 advisory delegate to national conventions and as a pastoral delegate to district conventions;

11 (2~~ii~~) hold any elected or appointed office on the district or national Synod level that is
12 assigned by the Bylaws of the Synod to “a pastor” or “an ordained minister” (although
13 specific ministry pastors may serve in all other capacities, especially representing the
14 ministerial contexts in which they serve);

15 (3~~iii~~) supervise vicars; or

16 (4~~iv~~) serve as a circuit counselor.

17 (c) The ministers of religion—ordained records maintained by district presidents as well as the
18 official membership roster of the Synod shall distinguish between specific ministry pastors and other
19 pastors.
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23 To Continue and Strengthen the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) Program

24 RESOLUTION 5-04

25 Overtures 5-16–25, 5-27–34 (CW, pp. 223–229); Appendix IV (CW, pp. 414–417)
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28 **Rationale:** Residential seminary education has served the Synod as a wonderful blessing of Almighty God
29 throughout her history. It remains the premier path into the Office of the Holy Ministry.
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32 The 2007 LCMS convention established the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program at both seminaries to develop
33 pastors for “specific ministries” which “include such categories as church planter, staff pastor, and others as needs
34 arise” (Res. 5-01B). SMP was also established to address concerns expressed regarding the Synod’s permitting
35 licensed lay deacons (1989 Wichita Res. 3-05B).
36

37 The SMP Task Force recommends the continuation of the SMP program, stating:

38 “Special circumstances (e.g. small parishes which cannot afford a pastor) exist. Flexibility is vital as the
39 church fulfills her vocational calling to preach the Gospel to everyone everywhere. While the church
40 cannot maintain her theological integrity, fidelity, and courage in these bewitching times unless she has an
41 overall well-trained and doctrinally steeped ministerium, special circumstances warrant less-trained pastors
42 so the means of grace can be delivered by a called and ordained pastor. Therefore the task force
43 recommends the retention of the SMP program for special circumstances.”
44

45 The SMP program is relatively new with the first cohort completing the program less than a year ago. However, the
46 practice is not without precedent in the LCMS, since *Nothilfern* (“emergency helpers”) were utilized in the early
47 years of the Synod. Furthermore, the long history of Concordia Theological Seminary as the practical seminary
48 continued this practice.
49

50 Additional data are needed to assess the program fully. However, concerns regarding the program have been raised
51 in overtures and reports submitted to the floor committee and need to be addressed, including:

- 52 • the program’s admission criteria (cf. Ov. 5-21; Task Force Report, p. 414)
- 53 • lack of adequate academic standards within the SMP program (fewer overall courses in comparison with
54 residential seminary programs (cf. Ov. 5-21, 5-22, 5-28)
- 55 • lack of instruction in the biblical languages (Task Force Report, p. 416)
- 56 • confusion regarding the definition of “*specific* ministry” (cf. Ov. 5-23)

- 1 • lack of a consistent standard for mentoring SMP vicars and pastors (cf. Task Force Report, p. 415)
- 2 • a perception that men are being approved for SMP admission who should be enrolling in one of the
- 3 residential degree programs (cf. Task Force Report, p. 414)
- 4 • SMP vicars officiating at the Lord’s Supper without being properly called (*rite vocatus*; AC XIV; oral
- 5 report to the floor committee)
- 6 • the potential challenge of an ordained SMP pastor not completing the program and how properly to remove
- 7 him from the roster of the Synod (oral report to the floor committee)
- 8

9 On the other hand, both seminaries and several districts report that SMP students are hardworking, willing to
10 sacrifice (often bi-vocational, serving for minimal pay), receiving strong support from their respective
11 congregations, benefiting from contextual education (learning and application taking place nearly simultaneously),
12 and developing tight collegial bonds within each cohort of students. A significant number of overtures (5-22, 5-23,
13 5-24, 5-25, 5-27, 5-31) and reports were submitted in support and commendation of the SMP program.

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15 Therefore be it

16 *Resolved*, That the SMP program be retained; and be it further

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19 *Resolved*, That the Synod affirm that SMP pastors are properly called in accord with Article XIV of the
20 Augsburg Confession; and be it further

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22 *Resolved*, That the Synod in convention give thanks to Christ for the men who have completed the SMP
23 program and are now serving faithfully in Christ’s Church, and for the significant investment by both seminaries in
24 the development of an SMP curriculum; and be it further

25
26 *Resolved*, That the SMP Oversight Committee be directed to address the concerns enumerated below and
27 propose appropriate action to the Synod President by 2015, for action at the 2016 convention.

- 28 • The SMP Task Force recommendation that the Synod limit “the use of the SMP program for men who will
- 29 serve small congregations who are not able to support a full-time pastor and for ethnic ministries, and not
- 30 using it for the planting of churches or for staff pastors.” (CW, p. 417)
- 31 • The SMP Task Force recommendation that the Synod maintain an “SMP seminary enrollment at a level
- 32 that does not threaten residential seminary formation as the primary route into the Office of the Pastoral
- 33 Ministry” (CW, p. 417)
- 34 • The concerns listed in the rationale of this resolution and other concerns raised in the 2013 *Convention*
- 35 *Workbook*
- 36 • Assessment of the performance of graduates
- 37 • Cost, affordability, and financial aid for the program
- 38

39 And be it further

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41 *Resolved*, That the authority over admission to the SMP program remains with the seminaries while the
42 respective district president remains responsible for determining the appropriateness of the specific ministry; and be
43 it further

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45 *Resolved*, That district presidents not approve specific ministry sites which could reasonably be expected to
46 support a general pastor or sites where a minister of religion–commissioned could fulfill the duties; and be it further

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48 *Resolved*, That congregations, districts, and seminaries encourage their SMP pastors to engage in studies which
49 lead to general pastor status; and be it finally

50
51 *Resolved*, That residential theological education continue to be the primary means for training men for pastoral
52 ministry in the Synod.