

# Preparing To Elect Our LCMS Synodical President

A WEB Cast  
From the SED Offices  
June 12, 2013



But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things a man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

I Samuel 16:7

# Electing a President . . . . . Calling a Pastor



# Meeting the Candidates



Matt Harrison

Herb Mueller

David Maier

# Meeting the Candidates

	Current Experience	Former Experience
Dr. Matthew Harrison	President of Synod (1 <sup>st</sup> term)	Seminary – Ft Wayne Parish Pastor Exec Director of LCMS World Relief/Human Care
Dr. David Maier	DP Michigan District (2 <sup>nd</sup> term)	Seminary – Ft Wayne Parish Pastor
Dr. Herbert Mueller	1 <sup>st</sup> VP of Synod (1 <sup>st</sup> term)	Seminary – St. Louis Parish Pastor DP Southern Illinois

## **Theological Challenge**

Harrison: bearing witness to Jesus in light of demographic challenge

Mueller: Confession and mission dichotomy

*Maier: Planting Gospel seed and equipping laity for mission work in neighborhood*

## **Church's Role in Public Square**

Harrison: Synod President and church body has greater presence in kingdom of left

Mueller: Congregations are exactly where they need to be for witness and mercy focus

*Maier: Encourage pastors, church workers and laity to give answer for their hope*

## **Change one thing**

Harrison: Every circuit in synod plant a church

Mueller: Emphasis of visitation . . .circuit counselor to circuit visitor

*Maier: Greater emphasis of God's Word and prayer in our spiritual lives*

## **Seminary /Mission Funding to Proclaim Gospel**

Harrison: A capital campaign to endow seminaries

Mueller: Pray for harvest workers and work through congregations to plant new churches

*Maier: Strategy around indigenous workers on the mission field; alternate methods and models of theological education; preparing pastors for engagement with community*

*Reaching our neighbors with the love of Jesus for Kingdom growth.*

Our SED Vision

- What is your response to this vision concept?
- If elected or re-elected President, what are specific ways you could support us in our vision work?
- The word of encouragement/concern would you have for us?
- What experiences of intentional ministry in the neighborhood in which you live have you had?



## Areas of emphasis




Globalization of  
Lutheranism

Harrison



Congregational  
focus in  
community

Mueller



Deploying laity  
as gifts of the  
congregation to  
the community

Maier

# Four Questions from the Southeastern District and My Answers

Respectfully submitted by Rev. Dr. David P. E. Maier, President, The Michigan District, LCMS

## 1. What is your response to this vision concept?

The “vision concept” of the Southeastern District is a biblical, clear, concise, courageous call to follow Jesus into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At its core is a Holy Spirit inspired/driven **response** to the love, mercy, and forgiveness of God (clearly delineated in the Holy Scriptures) that we as His children have freely received by His grace through faith, which we are also to share with the world around us as directed by our Lord Jesus in His Great Commission to His Church. (*Matthew 28:18-20*)

It recognizes that in Christ we are simultaneously sinful and yet accepted. We are so bad He had to die for us and the world of sinners, yet so loved He was glad to die for us, for all. This Gospel truth leads to both a deeper humility but, at the same time, to greater confidence, a ‘God-confidence,’ that trusts our Savior’s leading, the power of the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit’s continued, promised working in the Word and Sacraments. God’s power and His working through Word and Sacrament remain - and can be mightily active - even in our dramatically, ever-changing cultural landscape too often characterized by its antagonism to conservative, biblical Christianity and its values.

The “vision concept” is a faith-filled, fearless, thoroughly Lutheran, practical application of the inspired Scriptures and obedience to our Lord with a healthy recognition that, even while holding on to the Holy Scriptures and its ancient, unchanging truth, **change** (often dramatic) **is inevitable** in the Christian life and for the body of believers **wherever** they may gather around Word and Sacrament, **in whatever time** they live. It is the Holy Spirit that then leads us, moves us along and gives us wisdom, to find the creative ways in which He desires us to give witness to, demonstrate, and proclaim God’s love and truth in the world.

It was that work of the Spirit that Jesus was talking about with Nicodemus in *John 3:8*: “*The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.*” *John 3:8* God’s truth does not change – this is Luther’s “Here we stand” – but the Holy Spirit continues to move and, by grace, in His supplied strength, we need to hoist our sails of faith to be “blown” where the Spirit wants us to be. He wants us to gather around the Word and Sacraments to praise our God, to demonstrate love for our God, for continued growth in personal discipleship, and to demonstrate God’s presence in the world through acts of mercy and through the numerous opportunities that He provides to witness to Jesus and His completed redemption. That’s the “Here

we go” of our Lord’s Great Commission, continuing His ministry which He puts forth in *Luke 19:10*: “*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.*”

What the Southeastern District Vision concept recognizes is that the Holy Spirit certainly seems to be blowing us into a renewed understanding of the priesthood of all believers. God’s people have Spirit-given gifts and our Lord’s promised presence, power, and peace to use them to glory Him and bless the world. But each of us has also been given the specific privilege and responsibility of being the light of the world (*Matthew 5:14*) and of living in such a way that others can see that Christ is Lord of our lives, so that when asked, we are “*prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks*” the reason for the hope that we have. (*1 Peter 3:15*)

Every member of every congregation can be involved wherever they live (their neighborhoods), or work, or go to school, developing deliberate relationships with fellow workers, classmates, friends, relatives and neighbors through acts of service, mercy, and caring. We are Great Commission People and Great Compassion People. Every pastor can be about that God-given part of his vocation of the “*equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.*” (*Ephesians 4:12 NASB*)

This renewed understanding of the priesthood of all believers, of forgiven and gifted people not just coming to church but being the church – wherever they are – could not come at a better time. With the possibility of our government taxing church properties [How long will we be able to hold on to our buildings?] and our Christian faith and values being challenged to the point of persecution [How distant can martyrdom be?] learning to live for Christ and share our faith outside of church buildings is not only biblical and an imitation of the Early Christian Church, but seemingly a growing necessity.

May God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit bless the working out of the Southeastern District’s vision of “Continuously reaching our neighbors with the love of Jesus for Kingdom growth.” It certainly is a well thought out, workable plan that clearly is a grateful response to God’s grace, recognizing the empowering work of the Holy Spirit in Word and Sacrament, so that people can be connected with Jesus.

**2. If elected or re-elected President of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, what are specific ways you could support us in our vision work?**

I would certainly keep your District President, your District Board of Directors, Pastors, teachers, DCE’s, DCO’s, all professional church workers, and the members of your congregations in my prayers. I would pray for your continued study of, and confident faith in, the Word of God and the continuing

promised working of the Holy Spirit. I would pray that all our professional church workers, grounded in their faith and growing in their understanding of our doctrine and our Lutheran Confessions, would use, or develop, their gifts to train and empower laymen to be Gospel-lights in their world through purposeful acts of mercy and deliberate witnessing in the Name of Jesus.

I would encourage our Seminaries to help our church and seminarians better understand the rapidly, ever-changing landscape of today's culture, and how to implement doctrines like the priesthood of all believers and the continued working of the Holy Spirit as our members share the great Good News of the **completed redemption** through Jesus' death and resurrection, **justification by grace through faith**, our **union with Christ in Holy Baptism** (*Romans 6:1-14*), the blessing and privilege of receiving the very price of our salvation in the body and blood of Jesus in **Holy Communion**. I believe this would be an encouragement for the Southeastern District as well as all of Synod.

Theological Conferences have been a major blessing in The Michigan District. The required Theological Conference on Worship (2011) was followed by a Theological Conference on Apologetics (2012). A Theological Conference on The Separation of Church and State – Living in Two Kingdoms (or Life in the Public Square), and in 2015 a Theological Conference on The Work, Power, and Presence of the Holy Spirit, continue to be planned. Held on three different Saturday's in three different locations (as will the future Conferences) they had a most positive impact on our laity and professional church workers. I believe such conferences organized across Synod (including the Southeastern District), covering topics like the working of the Holy Spirit, how justification leads to sanctification, the priesthood of all believers, models of witnessing and sharing our faith, would be blessed by God. One of the great strengths of the LCMS is that we are a biblically grounded, Lutheran Confessions oriented, well-educated, theological church. Let's play to our strengths, be in the Word, and hoist our sails of faith, and see where the Holy Spirit leads in terms of application, and live our faith.

I would enjoy coming to churches and conferences in the Southeastern District as invited and help in anyway that I personally could. I would look forward to, and pray for, God's wisdom and Spirit to determine what else would be beneficial to the Southeastern District in carrying out its vision.

### **3. What word of encouragement / concern would you have for us?**

I would encourage you – as a people of God who have received mercy, who are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (*1 Peter 2:9, 10*) – to continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (*2 Peter 3:18*),

through the study of God's Word, worship, diligent prayer, your reception of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper, and your obedience to His Word. Through this continued growth as a disciple of Jesus – *"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you," James 4:8* – you will also be able to sense and know where the Holy Spirit is 'blowing' as He continues to lead and guide.

The note of concern I would add is that we have to be patient with one another – particularly when change is involved – especially learning to speak the truth to one another IN LOVE (*Ephesians 4:15*). God's truth never changes. Grounded in God's Word, we are NOT to be *"tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming."* (*Ephesians 4:14*) But **change is inevitable**. Growth itself is change. While recognizing continued change all around us in language, culture, ethnicity, technology, economics, persecution levels, etc., and therefore, in how to share the Good News of the Gospel in a particular place at a particular time, we need to be better at exploring changes, asking each other about the changes that are taking place, seeking to understand and be understood, without being judgmental.

The only way for us to grow up together in all aspects of our Christian life in Christ is by speaking the truth IN LOVE. The Apostle Paul encourages us all, *"... but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."* (*Ephesians 4:15-16*)

#### **4. What experiences of intentional ministry in the neighborhood in which you live have you had?**

We've been in our present neighborhood, which is sort of out in the country, for not quite three years. We've talked to all five of our neighbors (we live on a gravel road with acreage in between homes), and with some, have had a deeper discussion on life and belief, especially after I've told them I am a pastor. Although Pat and I have talked about having the neighbors over for deserts and coffee, it just has not taken place with her schedule and mine. In thinking about it (as your questions have led me to do), *"busy-ness"* is not a good excuse. Who isn't busy? And what's at stake? With that in mind, I am talking to Pat this morning to see what we might schedule with our neighbors in the near future for deliberate opportunity of praying with them and sharing Jesus.

My four children went on from our Lutheran Grade School to attend a public high school. My wife and I were purposeful about meeting teachers, counselors, and coaches and pursuing conversations which showed interest

in their work, their personal lives, and our interest in supporting them. (One of the counselors and coaches did go through our Adult Confirmation Class and become a member of our congregation.) I believe, as a result of this, I was privileged to be invited to give the baccalaureate “message” for all four of my children (including Hannah, who only attended her school as a Senior for one year when we moved after my election as District President). Many conversations at school events led to numerous opportunities to minister to people and share the saving Name of Jesus.

I would also say that on the second weekend of June (2013) I will be privileged to do two weddings. What’s unique about these weddings is that they are for high school friends of my children. While I was pastoring in Lansing, MI, these friends had many interactions with our family at the dinner table, during devotions, when we prayed, and when they would come to our church. Both friends are Christian, their future spouses are too, but uniquely both are without a church home at the moment where they are living. I look forward to their wedding services, sharing Jesus, and through a continued relationship and counseling helping them to find a church home. I am very excited about that weekend.

There are many other similar stories like that I could share. I thank God for them all, for they have not only been opportunities to share the Good News of Jesus Christ and the hope that I have, but also have been powerful testimonies to me of how God continues to work in amazing and mighty ways.

Thank you very much for the opportunity of being able to answer the questions that were given me. I pray God’s continued blessing upon your vision refocusing, your resultant ministry, and especially for the witness you will all be giving in your neighborhoods. May God continue to bless President Harrison and Dr. Mueller in their continued ministries also.

Respectfully submitted by:  
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## **President Harrison's Response to the Vision Forward Document**

### **What is your response to this vision concept?**

The strength of the concept is that is less a program and more about being who we are as the church, the baptized, the spiritual priesthood. I was recently visiting the Lutheran Church of Australia. A friend who was a long time pastor and now is teaching practical theology, showed me a shelf in his office. *"This whole shelf is loaded with the books and programs we've tried in the Lutheran Church of Australia. They all promised to be "THEE" answer. They all failed. I've been telling our graduates this: Encourage your people to bear witness to Christ in their vocations (home, work, social circles, school, NEIGHBORHOOD). And hold regular adult membership classes and tell your people to bring their friends and neighbors."* That kind of activity can go on right in our homes and neighborhoods. So I think there is a fundamental truth and strength to the concept.

I also like the emphasis on actively designating a location, a neighborhood as one's area of service to Christ by loving one's neighbors. Go! As Jesus once told a man who wanted to LEAVE home to serve him, *"Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."* (Mk. 5:19)

### **If elected or re-elected President of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, what are specific ways you could support us in our vision work?**

The Southeastern District, like the rest of the districts of the Synod, has seen a long slow decline in membership. It has been declining slowly but steadily since about 1994. This decline has been caused most significantly by the fact that European descent Americans are getting married much later, and having fewer children. Our outreach, though vibrant indeed in the Southeastern district (you've had a steady rise in the number of congregations!), has not been sufficient to stem the tide. What's the recipe? Repentance. The greatest eras in the church begin with serious repentance. The Lutheran Reformation was a call to repentance! The first

words out of John the Baptist's mouth and the mouth of Jesus when they began their preaching was "Repent! For the kingdom of God is at hand!" (Matthew 3&4). We must dare to call each other to repentance over our love for the world and its pleasures, our sluggishness in sharing the gospel, our lack of support for our pastors, teachers and schools! And only the blessed Gospel of the free forgiveness found in Jesus' blood frees us from real sin and sends us empowered to love and forgive our neighbors! As president of the Synod I have the responsibility to proclaim law and gospel to the church, to cajole and to encourage. We must continue to lift high the craft of preaching, for there is nothing that so edifies the church. We are strongly emphasizing continuing ed for all our pastors as you will see from the upcoming convention. It's vital that we here in St. Louis stay on a steady central path, not veering left or right, but being unquestionably faithful to Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. It's vital that we get our financial house in order (we've reduced internal borrowing from 16 to 4.5 million, on the way to zero, God help us.). It's important to keep the national headquarters out of the (bad) news so you are not distracted by us! Yes, you may criticize my decisions with respect to New Town, however, unlike earlier similar controversies, which dragged on for years, this time no charges were filed and the matter was ended faithfully and with mutual forgiveness and love. It's vital that we do our work of mercy and mission extremely well, with great accountability to you. And it's important that we hold each other accountable for the mission of Christ in this time and place.

### **What word of encouragement / concern would you have for us?**

"Take heart!" Jesus said to the lame man! "Your sins are forgiven!" It's a tough day for the church. A recent Pew study showed us that 1 in 3 Americans under age 30 HAS NO RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION! Compare that with 1 in 16 for the WWII generation! There is a lot of "rocky ground" out there! Still, fully 10 percent of the religiously unaffiliated are looking for a church. And beyond that we have the power of the word of God (Rom. 1:17), the very same word that knocked Paul to the ground and turned a murderer into a disciple! Be of good courage! You're baptized for this moment! Be of good courage, you have the Word of God! Be of good courage! You know how the story ends! You can "dare something for



Christ” as Luther once encouraged a friend!

Concern? The Sunday service is the main time the church gathers to receive Christ’s gifts of forgiveness and life in absolution, word, supper. The gospel “fills up our sacks” at church and we head out to our vocations (neighborhood!) to dole out the good gifts of love, grace, forgiveness and mercy! Whatever happens in local homes (where the bible should be studied, the gospel shared, neighbors cared for), the goal should be to bring folks to the body together on Sunday (or another time as determined for some), no matter how long it takes.

**What experiences of intentional ministry in the neighborhood in which you live have you had?**

As a parish pastor I literally wore out shoe after shoe. I believe in visitation. I believe a pastor (and a Christian neighbor) ought be in neighborhoods! Luther said faith is a “busy, meddlesome thing!” In both the parishes I served (rural and inner city) I visited all the membership within months. I also regularly visited neighbors, businesses, fire stations etc. etc. In my second parish we partnered with the neighboring Roman Catholics in a neighborhood renewal effort, which has brought tens of millions in renewal and gained national attention. It was a platform for the gospel! Right now we share Christ with our neighbors, and especially with a continual flow of my two son’s high school and college friends in our home. Two adults were confirmed on Easter at our congregation as a result of these relationships! Jesus visits! He goes! “Let’s Go!” Mk. 1:38. Paul visits. Barnabas visits. Like Jesus, they returned repeatedly to certain church plants and small groups of believers! (Acts 15:36)

God bless you! Herb Mueller and David Maier are both stellar men of God. They are dedicated and want the best for the church. We’re blessed. Be at peace. But do GO!

Pastor Matthew C. Harrison