

TOGETHER



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Important synod convention news and update from Martin Luther College

Conference of Presidents makes changes to the synod convention

At its January meeting last week, the Conference of Presidents (COP) examined its options for holding the synod convention this summer, in light of disruptions caused by COVID-19.

The Conference of Presidents (COP) is responsible for planning the synod convention, which was scheduled to take place July 26-29, 2021, at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.

At its meeting, the COP discussed the feasibility of holding the convention as planned, since it is impossible to know whether the current restriction on the size of gatherings in Michigan will remain in place, whether travel difficulties will remain, and whether travelers from certain states will still be required to quarantine after travel. In addition, the COP recognized that a significant number of people may not be comfortable with traveling, gathering in crowds, or staying in a dormitory.

In view of these uncertainties, the COP considered three options:

1. Have the convention as normal in Saginaw, hoping that the situation changes by July.
2. Cancel the convention and entrust the Synodical Council to make necessary decisions.
3. Hold a "mini convention" with a reduced number of in-person delegates and the remainder of the delegates attending virtually.

Recognizing that it is impossible to know what conditions will be like in July and at the same time wanting the business of the synod to be carried out as close to normal as possible, the COP chose the third option: to hold a mini convention. Here is how it will work:

The convention will take place in Watertown, Wis., at Luther Preparatory



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School, since Wisconsin has been less restrictive in its COVID-19 guidelines than Michigan.

All delegates still will be assigned to floor committees. Each floor committee will have a chairman, a secretary, and lay representative appointed by the synod praesidium. These committees will meet via Zoom in early July to discuss their assigned area of the Book of Reports and Memorials as well as to discuss broader issues such as the ministry financial plan, memorials, bylaw changes, and the pension issue. Synodical area of ministry advisors (representatives) will attend the appropriate floor committee virtual meeting and present any necessary information. The committees will formulate their reports and resolutions and submit them for editing and formatting prior to the convention.

Only the chairmen, secretaries, and one designated layman from each floor committee will attend the convention in person. This means only 50 to 60 delegates will meet in person instead of the normal 400. These in-person delegates will be authorized by their floor committees to vote on behalf of those who will not attend in person. The number of advisory delegates also will be limited. There will be no displays other than unmanned displays of synodical areas of ministry.

All elections will take place electronically prior to the convention, with voting open to all delegates.

The convention itself will be run as normal, with opening worship on Monday evening. The number of special presentations will be limited. With elections already completed and resolutions prepared ahead, it's likely the work of the convention will be completed in two days, Tuesday and Wednesday.

The convention will be livestreamed to enable all voting and advisory delegates to observe. Delegates will be able to communicate with their chairmen during the convention if they have questions or comments.

The districts will be asked to appoint the same delegates to the next synod convention in 2023 so that they don't miss the opportunity to attend a synod convention in person. Delegates will have the option to attend or to decline. No congregation will be charged the convention fee for this convention.

The Conference of Presidents and the convention planning committee will likely make additional decisions and adjustments as needed.

An important advancement for Martin Luther College's campaign

The Martin Luther College (MLC) administration and governing board are excited to announce a significant advancement in the Equipping Christian Witnesses (ECW) campaign pillar designated to campus facilities. Thanks to the gift of two generous donors, the new athletic center is fully funded.

After extensive interviews, analysis, and research, MLC's comprehensive campus site plan identified two priorities: residence space and indoor athletic space for sports teams, physical education training, and student life. For that reason, an athletic center and a residence hall were included in the facility improvement pillar of the ECW campaign.

MLC is thankful for the gifts received from many individuals, congregations, and schools throughout the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. MLC is also thankful for the support it has received from the New Ulm community. Those gifts provided a generous financial foundation for facilities, and now, God has moved the heart of two very generous donors to provide a transformational gift to the athletic center that will allow construction to commence.

The athletic center, named the Betty Kohn Fieldhouse, will be located at the MLC Athletic Field Complex west of the main campus, near the soccer and baseball fields. This 36,000-square-foot indoor turf facility will feature large practice areas, baseball/softball batting cages, golf simulators, and locker rooms. In April, the MLC campus family will celebrate the groundbreaking of the fieldhouse, with student use anticipated by the beginning of 2022.

MLC President Rich Gurgel commented on this milestone of the Equipping Christian Witnesses campaign: "We are thankful to God for the generosity of so many people. The Betty Kohn Fieldhouse will serve our student body well. It is also a significant beginning to our long-range plans for making our campus even more attractive to prospective students. And we look forward to exploring how the fieldhouse can serve the recreation needs of the New Ulm community as well."

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder