

## A PASTORAL LETTER TO THE MEMBERS OF SYNOD ON NOMINATIONS FOR PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENT February 15, 2017

To the Pastors, Deacons and Congregations  
of Lutheran Church-Canada

Treasured friends in Christ Jesus,

Next month our office will send out forms encouraging LCC congregations to nominate pastors from the Synod's roster for the offices of President and Vice-President. This is part of our preparation for the 11<sup>th</sup> LCC Convention, set for October 13-16, 2017, in downtown Kitchener, Ontario. Local congregations are urged to send in nominations during the upcoming months of March, April and May.

I write today to inform the church that I cannot accept nomination for a fourth term as Synod's President. In this brief space it would be difficult to unpack all the details which brought me to this conclusion. I will attempt here to describe the essential things, and hope you will read this message carefully.

I have prayed to the Lord and turned these matters over in mind and heart every day for well over a year. The primary reasons I cannot continue have to do with the well-being of my family. Many of you know how the Lord spared my wife through multiple cancers (2006 and 2008) and has held this disease under control in recent years. At the same time, the effects of drugs and treatments, together with other medical conditions, are taking their toll on her. They make it increasingly a hardship for me to leave her so frequently, especially for longer periods of time. In order to properly do the work, the Synod President must travel extensively – both in Canada and abroad – on a regular basis. That is an essential job requirement. I am reluctant to go into personal details, but have come to the place where I cannot in good conscience set aside the priorities of my calling in our marriage and household.

In addition to that need, we have serious challenges in our extended family. In some of these matters Gail and I are the only ones who can provide the necessary support, since she is her mother's only surviving child. It is nearly impossible to do it properly from Winnipeg, since we live so very far away from our loved ones.

I have sought to make this decision in the fear of God. I ask the members of Synod's family to respect it. There are several other things on all of this I wish everyone to understand clearly:

**This is not a retirement announcement.** Although I expect to be 63 years old at the end of my term, I have no interest in retiring. If the Lord continues to give me good health, I also have no wish to end my active ministry even at the usual "quitting age" of 65. It is my hope that He may favour me with a call to return full-time to the parish ministry in eastern Canada so that I may do His work in one place where I can be available for my wife, and so that we together can address the needs we face in our extended family, especially with her aging mother. I hope to carry on as a parish pastor for a good number of years. (To be sure, as I write this, I have no way of knowing whether the Lord will grant me such a call.)



**This does not change my commitment to the current restructuring effort.** Our present LCC structure involving four corporate entities (LCC and three districts) in a church body smaller than many individual Missouri Synod districts is simply too much machinery. It is needlessly using up financial resources – but, even more importantly – consuming time and talent that must be poured more directly into the mission of reaching people for Christ and nurturing those already reached. I agree with the responses of most pastors and laypeople as expressed in last year’s survey and circuit meetings throughout the country, who are ready for this change. I intend to keep speaking out on these matters between now and the Convention, and fully support the ongoing efforts of the LCC Commission on Constitutional Matters and Structure (CCMS). The personal and family considerations leading me to seek release from my work as Synod President should not be understood as a “vote of non-confidence” in the restructuring project. LCC will simply compound its problems and may well organizationally “strangle” itself in the near future if we miss this opportunity.

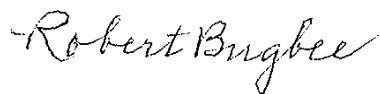
**This will likely be a long farewell.** You may recall that our Convention schedule was changed to accommodate the will of all three 2015 District conventions to have restructuring proposals ready this year. This is why our Convention was delayed four months to next October. If the restructuring effort is passed by the Convention – and then ratified by local congregations across LCC – it will be well into 2018 before the actual changeover of terms. That means the transition period between the election of a new President and the end of the current term will be more drawn out than in the past. (This would be a “one time” situation with the phase-in of restructuring.)

**Your immediate homework: Pray and nominate!** As you set this letter aside, I ask you to start praying on a daily basis that the Lord will raise up the leaders He knows we need. (I am already doing this.) I hope your church will schedule a special voters’ meeting between March 15 and June 15 to come together and send in nominations from your congregation. The needs of the church are pressing at this important moment when our society has – spiritually speaking – lost its way and is desperate for a clear witness to Jesus Christ. A leader who loves Christ, His Word, His people and has the will to address the challenges will be a true gift from God. Let’s call on the Lord now to use our people in local churches across Canada to identify servants of that kind.

I thank you for reflecting carefully on what I am writing here. I felt it important to notify all concerned before the forms are sent out, so that congregations will not “waste” their ballot by nominating me for another term.

*“May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing His will, and may He work in us what is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”*  
(Hebrews 13:20-21)

Sincere greetings in Christ to one and all,



Robert Bugbee  
President