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**To:** [milatzclan@sbcglobal.net](mailto:milatzclan@sbcglobal.net)

**Subject:** A Communication from the Michigan District Board of Directors and President Davis Regarding Concordia University Ann Arbor

**Reply-To:** [president@michigandistrict.org](mailto:president@michigandistrict.org)

**A Communication from the Michigan District  
Board of Directors and the Michigan District President  
to Michigan District Congregations,  
their Members, and Other Supporters  
of Concordia University Ann Arbor  
June 21, 2024**



Greetings from the Michigan District as, together, we fix our eyes on Jesus.

The Board of Directors of the Michigan District (BoDMI) and President Davis regret the recent actions of the Board of Regents (BoR) and Administration of Concordia University Wisconsin/Ann Arbor (CUWAA) relative to the Ann Arbor campus (CUAA). We also heartily disagree with the [new direction](#) for what will be a dramatically diminished ministry.

We (BoDMI) had hoped that the new administration at CUWAA would be dedicated to continuing the growth and development that CUAA had seen over the last many years and work with stakeholders to make it financially sustainable. When the merger between CUW and CUAA first took place, leaders at the Concordia University System targeted a population of 1,100 students for a school to be sustainable. Having now met and exceeded that population, having new programs begin to hit their stride, and

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having an exciting master plan premiered in November, it looked like CUAA was going to become an ever-stronger partner for the Church generally and the Michigan District specifically.

## ***Michigan District specifically.***

While some things are unclear, what is clear is that the leadership of CUWAA is intent on dramatically diminishing the scope and therefore impact of CUAA. The leadership is focusing on fewer but “more Lutheran” students at the school.

It is unclear to the BoDMI how long the reimagined CUAA has been in the works. Our hope is that when President Ankerberg met with our President and the CEO of our Church Extension Fund in December to outline three options for CUAA that the micro-campus—the one option our leaders vehemently opposed—was not already either in process or the foregone conclusion. Subsequent events have caused this fact to be questioned. Our District worked hard to raise funds so that the District could be part of a solution in providing time for the school’s leadership to make strategic adjustments that kept the trajectory of the school materially the same. President Davis, as requested by CUWAA leadership, along with some volunteers worked to provide ideas and alternatives that became a Roadmap for Autonomy. We are concerned that the die was already cast.

***The work that our network of volunteers did on the Roadmap to Autonomy was met with no collaboration, but rather suspicion and criticism for having been offered.***

It is unclear to the BoDMI why greater effort was not given to working with stakeholders and other supporters of CUAA to arrive at a different outcome than what now appears certain. The Michigan District and our Church Extension Fund have demonstrated great capacity, especially in difficult times, to support the ministry of CUAA. The work that our network of volunteers did on the Roadmap to Autonomy was met with no collaboration, but rather suspicion and criticism for having been

offered. A number of times President Davis has been reminded that the BoR, not the Michigan District, holds fiduciary responsibility for CUAA and that the District's input was not welcome.

It is unclear to the BoDMI how exactly Lutheran identity has become such an issue. We know that criticism has been leveled at CUAA because of liturgical practices, people baptized without being part of a particular congregation, and a "paucity of Lutheran decorations on campus." (See [CUAA Task Force Report](#), May 31, 2024) Our understanding is that both biblically and confessionally a latitude in liturgical practice is permitted and that no one approach is commanded. We understand that Baptism is a gift and not contingent on being a member of any one congregation. The examples of people baptized outside of a congregational setting in the Bible are numerous. With such an accent on Lutheran decorations and other demonstrations of being "truly" Lutheran, we are concerned that idolatry of "Lutheranism" may be close to the door. The most disturbing issue relative to Lutheran Identity was this statement in the BoR's committee's report: "The weakness is a shallow understanding of Lutheran mission and identity that equates evangelization with Lutheran mission and identity." While we want to put the best construction on this, at the very least it is unfortunate that the language puts evangelization at odds with mission, which of course is odd.

Given where we are and the decisions that have been made regarding CUAA, how will we in the Michigan District work going forward?

**First**, we will do all we can to concentrate on Jesus' mission of seeking and saving the lost through the proclamation of His Gospel. Our accent is always what God is doing in and through Christians and their congregations. We are "people of hope vigorously making known the love of Jesus." We follow Jesus who was sent to

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seek and save the lost. We follow Jesus who tells the Church to go and make disciples.

**Second**, we will remain steadfastly biblical and confessional. We will be bound together in Christian love. We will not be bound together by tertiary authorities, e.g. human traditions, ancient theologians, or Lutheran writers. That in and of itself is “un-Lutheran” and borders on heresy.

**Third**, we will do all we can to help those negatively impacted by the recent actions at CUAA. The BoDMI will meet in August and determine how best to steward the gifts given to the District through the recent fund drive. We will ensure that the monies donated will be used as people intended them to be used as per the commitment form. We will also see how we can continue to support remaining students, faculty, and staff.

***... we will continue to work together within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod ... We want to be part of a Psalm 133 community.***

**Fourth**, we will have to assess what impact the changes surrounding CUAA will have on District finances and what we can support financially going forward. For example, an early estimate is that, if we have to move next summer’s Convention, the cost to the District may be approximately \$200,000. The BoDMI will carefully steward the congregational contributions to the District consistent with the intentions of our congregations and directives they may have.

**Fifth**, even at this late date we will be open to the will and power of God to provide a different outcome to what now seems inevitable.

**Sixth**, we will continue to work together within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to accomplish the objectives of the Synod to the glory of God, the good of His people and the increase of His Kingdom. We want to be part of a Psalm 133 community.

We are grateful for the people of the Michigan District. As your Board of Directors, we seek to serve you in this tender time. Please pray for all involved, that God's wisdom and mercy would lead us through these days.

**Rev. David A. Davis**

President

Michigan District, LCMS

**Dr. Stephen R.**

**Boergert**

Chairman

Michigan District Board of

Directors

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For more information about Concordia University Ann Arbor,  
visit [cuaa.edu](http://cuaa.edu)

For more information about Concordia University Wisconsin,  
visit [cuw.edu](http://cuw.edu)

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