

January 29, 2026

The Reverend Doctor Matthew C. Harrison
President of the Synod

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

What I share with you today weighs heavily on me and upon our whole church. In fact, it's devastating. I'm in shock at the injury of innocent victims, and the shame brought upon our faithful people. Jesus have mercy upon us! This afternoon, the Rev. Michael Mohr appeared before a federal magistrate to hear the charges against him. He did not contest the government's motion to detain him until trial, and a grand jury hearing is expected. The press release from the U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Missouri, states that hidden camera devices were found at his residence and an additional accusation of lewd behavior with a minor was part of the criminal complaint.

As the press release noted, an accusation does not constitute proof of guilt. Our church body has an ecclesiastical process for conduct unbecoming a minister of the Gospel. These processes will be followed. The duties of the District President for the Central Illinois District have been assumed by the First Vice President Michael Burdick.

If these allegations prove true, they are an unfathomable betrayal of the responsibility and trust placed in the servants of the church by Christ and His people. To commit sexual violence or exploitation against others, especially children, is an unconscionable sin and crime. This has no place in the church. Our Lord has strong words for all who would lead His little ones to stumble (Matt. 18:6). The LCMS will fully cooperate with civil authorities on this matter.

We know that such sins and crimes, as alleged, inflict intense pain and suffering on victims. Christ alone provides the healing, and we turn to Him. I commend those who, in any circumstance, courageously shed light on these crimes and sins. If you or a loved one have something to report in regard to this matter, please contact the FBI St. Louis Office at 314-589-2500.

The LCMS Central Illinois District has established a special resource to receive reports from any individual who may have experienced harm by Michael Mohr: 877-276-1740 or email at districtassistance@cidlcms.org. These channels are being monitored by Ms. Rebekah Wendling, a mental health professional.

There are other pastoral matters to address as this process plays out before us, and I'll do so.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too" (2 Cor. 1:3–5).

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Pr. Matthew C. Harrison
President, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod