Chapter 7. SYNOD ASSEMBLY

**†S7.01.** This synod shall have a Synod Assembly, which shall be its highest legislative authority. The powers of the Synod Assembly are limited only by the provisions in the Articles of Incorporation, this constitution and bylaws, the assembly’s own resolutions, and the constitutions and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

**†S7.11.** A regular meeting of the Synod Assembly shall be held at least triennially.

**S7.11.01.** The time and place of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly shall be determined by the Synod Council. The time and place for the next regular assembly normally shall be announced three (3) months prior to the assembly.

**S7.11.02.** The secretary of this synod shall prepare in advance of any assembly of this synod a roster of the synod and deliver the roster to the Committee on Registration and Attendance. The secretary shall list as lay voting members those persons whose credentials have been submitted by the congregations. The official roster shall be closed at the end of the second business session of the assembly.

**S7.11.03.** The bishop of this synod shall appoint: Committee on Elections, Committee on Minutes, Committee on Reference and Counsel, Committee on Registration and Attendance, Committee on Worship

**S7.11.04.** Every ~~cluster~~ conference shall have the right to memorialize the synod on any matter affecting the welfare of the church.

**S7.11.05.** Every congregation shall have the right to petition the assembly of the synod, through the Committee on Reference and Counsel, on subjects affecting its own welfare or legitimate interests.

**S7.11.06.** The floor of the assembly shall be divided so that those with voice and vote are seated in a restricted area, those with voice but no vote can be seated in a reserved area, with visitors seated elsewhere in the hall. Admission to the business sessions shall be by certified badge only.

**S7.11.07.** When a lay voting member is unable to serve, the alternate voting member elected by the congregation may be seated upon presentation of appropriate documentation to the Committee on Registration and Attendance.

**S7.11.08.** Each voting member, or those persons accorded the privilege of seat and/or voice, when recognized by the Chair, shall state his or her name, congregation or the institution or group he or she represents. Persons speaking from the floor shall use the floor microphones (if they are provided) and shall address and speak to the Chair. Speeches by an individual ~~delegate~~ voting member, or a person with privilege of voice, shall be limited to five minutes on each assembly issue. Speakers may speak a second time on the same issue, but only after all others desiring to speak have been given opportunity to do so. Those speaking a second time shall be limited to two minutes.

**S7.11.09.** All motions, resolutions, amendments and nominations shall be made in writing and on the proper forms available from the secretary of synod or the ~~convention~~ assembly pages.

**S7.11.10.** Except for items introduced by the Committee on Reference and Counsel, or items previously tabled, items of business which are not on the agenda may be introduced on the last day of the assembly only by a two-thirds majority vote of the assembly.

**Program**

**S7.11.11.** Normally, Holy Communion ~~shall~~ will be celebrated at each regular assembly.

**S7.11.12.** The secretary shall send a bulletin of reports to all ordained ministers~~, diaconal ministers, deaconesses, associates in ministry,~~ and lay voting members elect at least thirty days before each regular assembly.

**Procedures**

**S7.11.13.** A resolution of a general character which is not germane to the pending question or report shall be given by the proposer to a Committee on Reference and Counsel, which shall report thereon to the assembly with its recommendations. Such recommendations may include a recommendation the matter not be considered. A two-thirds vote of the assembly shall be required to add the item of new business to the agenda. Other duties of the committee shall be (a) to recommend special orders for the hearing of representatives, (b) to grant or deny permission to distribute printed matter not issued from the office of the secretary, and (c) to give such assistance to the bishop as may be desired in the course of the assembly.

**S7.11.14.** With the consent of the assembly, the chair shall have the authority to call items of business before the assembly in whatever order the chair considers most expedient for the conduct of the assembly's business.

**S7.11.15.** The chair shall have the option of deciding when to call for Synod Council recommendations printed in the Bulletin of Reports. The chair may interrupt procedures at any time to receive reports of voting or to call for balloting.

**S7.11.16.** Amendments to the proposed budget for the coming year may be made at the time of the presentation of recommendation from the Synod Council. Any shift in funds must be accompanied by a compensatory shift of another project in order to keep within the recommended parameters.

**S7.11.34.A91.** Proposed changes to the budget for the next year must be submitted to the Committee on Finance and Property within two hours of the formal presentation of the budget to the Synod Assembly. Hearings before the Committee on Finance and Property will be available for all parties involved in the proposed changes. Time and place of such hearings will be announced at the end of the session at which the budget was presented. Following hearings on proposed budgetary changes, the Committee on Finance and Property will present recommendations to the assembly.

**S7.11.17.** Unless specific exception is made all reports published in the bulletin of reports shall be received by the assembly by virtue of that fact without vote.

**S7.11.18.** Voting members shall not absent themselves from any meeting of the assembly except with valid excuse to the chair of the Committee on Registration and Attendance. Expense reimbursement will be proportionately reduced for unexcused absence(s).

**S7.12.** Special meetings of the Synod Assembly may be called by the presiding bishop with the consent of the Synod Council, and shall be called by the presiding bishop at the request of one-fifth of the voting members of the Synod Assembly.

a. The notice of each special meeting shall define the purpose for which it is to be held. The scope of actions to be taken at such a special meeting shall be limited to the subject matter(s) described in the notice.

b. If the special meeting of the Synod assembly is required for the purpose of electing a successor bishop because of death, resignation, or inability to serve, the special meeting shall be called by the Synod Council after consultation with the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

**S7.13.** Notice of the time and place of all meetings of the Synod Assembly shall be given by the secretary of this synod.

**S7.14.** One-half of members of the Synod Assembly shall constitute a quorum.

**†S7.21.** The membership of the Synod Assembly, of which at least 60 percent of the voting membership shall be composed of lay persons, shall be constituted as follows:

a. All ministers of Word and Sacrament under call on the roster of this synod in attendance at the Synod Assembly shall be voting members.

**S7.21.A94.** All ministers of Word and Sacrament on leave from call on the roster of the synod in attendance at the Synod Assembly shall be voting members.

b. All ministers of Word and Service, under call, on the roster of this synod shall be voting members in the Synod Assembly.

c. A minimum of one lay member elected by each congregation with fewer than 175 baptized members and a minimum of two lay members elected by each congregation with 175 or more baptized members related to this synod, typically one of whom shall be a man and one of whom shall be a woman, shall be voting members. The Synod Council shall establish a formula to provide additional lay representation from congregations on the basis of number of baptized members in the congregation. The Synod Council shall seek to ensure that, at least 45 percent of the lay members of the assembly shall be women and at least 45 percent shall be men.

**S7.21.C90.** Congregations whose baptized membership exceeds 600 shall be entitled to one additional lay voting member for every additional 600 baptized members, or major fraction thereof.

d. Voting membership shall include the officers of this synod.

**†S7.21.01.** Voting members shall begin serving with the opening of a regular Synod Assembly and shall continue serving until voting members are seated at the next regular Synod Assembly.

**†S7.21.02.** If a special Synod Assembly is called and voting members at the previous assembly are unable to serve as voting members, where permitted by state law, the congregation through the Congregation Council may elect new members who shall continue to serve until the next Synod Assembly.

**S7.22.** This synod may establish processes that permit retired rostered ministers, or those granted disability status, or on leave from call, on the roster of the synod to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, consistent with †S7.21.c. If the synod does not establish processes to permit the rostered ministers specified above to serve as voting members, they shall have voice but not vote in the meetings of the Synod Assembly.

S.7.22.A22. The Assembly grants rostered leaders on the retired and disability roster the privilege of voice and

vote. In the event that the rostered leaders consist of more than 40% of the registered voting members,

only rostered leaders under call will be granted vote.

**†S7.23.** The presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and such other official representatives of the churchwide organization as may be designated by the presiding bishop, shall have voice but not vote in the meetings of the Synod Assembly. Like privileges shall be accorded to those additional persons whom the Synod Assembly or the Synod Council shall from time to time designate.

**S7.23.01.** Executive directors of synod agencies, board chair persons of agencies or institutions of the synod, or their designees, officers of auxiliaries of the church, members of the synod staff, and deployed staff directly serving this synod's territory shall serve as advisory members of the Synod Assembly. These advisory members shall have voice but not vote.

**S7.24.** Ministers on the rosters of this synod shall remain as members of the Synod Assembly so long as they remain under call and so long as their names appear on the rosters of this synod. Lay members of the Synod Assembly representing congregations shall continue as such until replaced by the election of new members or until they have been disqualified by termination of membership. Normally, congregations will hold elections prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.

**†S7.25.** Except as otherwise provided in this constitution or in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, each voting member of the Synod Assembly shall be a voting member of a congregation of this synod.

**S7.26.** This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council that permit representatives of authorized worshiping communities of the synod, which have been authorized under ELCA bylaw 10.01.04., to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, consistent with †S7.21.

**S7.27.** This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council to grant a minister of Word and Sacrament from a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America the privilege of both voice and vote in the Synod Assembly during the period of that minister’s service in a congregation of this church.

**S7.27.A07.** Ministers of Word and Sacrament of full communion partners who are serving congregations of this synod will be invited to participate in the assemblies of this synod and will be granted the privilege of voice and vote.

**S7.28.** Duly elected voting members of the Synod Council who are not otherwise voting members of the Synod Assembly under †S7.21. shall be granted the privilege of both voice and vote as members of the Synod Assembly.

**†S7.31.** Proxy and absentee voting shall not be permitted in the transaction of any business of the Synod Assembly.

**S7.32.** *Robert's Rules of Order*, latest edition, shall govern parliamentary procedure of the Synod Assembly, unless otherwise ordered by the assembly.

**S7.33.** “*Ex officio*” as used herein means membership with full rights of voice and vote unless otherwise expressly limited.

**Chapter 9. NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS**

**†S9.01.** The Synod Assembly shall elect such officers of this synod and such other persons as the constitution and bylaws may require, according to procedures set forth in the bylaws. The Synod Assembly shall elect members of the Churchwide Assembly in accordance with bylaw 12.41.11 of the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

**S9.01.A08.** The Synod Council Executive Committee shall provide for background checking on newly elected synodical officers. The process shall be as follows:

a. Prior to the Synod Assembly appropriate notice of the background check protocol will be provided to voting members and potential nominees.

b. Newly elected officers will be required to provide information necessary to complete a background check.

c. The Synod Council's Executive Committee shall designate one member to request the background checks.

d. All officer background checks will entail a criminal background check. A financial background check will be completed for the treasurer. The Executive Committee shall decide what other types of background checks are appropriate for each officer position.

e. The background check results shall be provided to that elected officer and to the Synod Council's Executive Committee. Further communication of the results may be determined by the Executive Committee.

f. The Executive Committee is empowered to create other procedures or protocols as are necessary to provide for background checks for synodical officers, and shall report such actions to the Synod Council.

**†S9.02.** In all elections by the Synod Assembly, other than for the bishop, a majority of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election.

**S9.03.** There shall be a Nominating Committee who shall be appointed by the Synod Council to serve for each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly. Additional nominations may be made from the floor for all elections for which nominations are made by the Nominating Committee.

**S9.03.11.** The secretary of the synod shall furnish the ~~Committee on Nominations~~ Nominating Committee

with a list of vacancies to be filled at each assembly.

**S9.03.12.** Upon receipt of the ~~Committee on Nominations~~ Nominating Committee list of candidates, the secretary

of the synod shall prepare a ballot which shows for each nominee his/her address, occupation, and

congregation. Additional nominations may be made from the floor. Such other data as that provided by the ~~Committee on Nominations~~ Nominating Committee on its nominees shall be submitted in writing to the secretary of the

synod on the proper form at the time of nomination. The consent of the nominee shall be required.

Information on all additional nominees shall be made available to all ~~delegates~~ voting members prior

to the first ballot.

**S9.03.13.** In computing eligibility for continued membership on a board or committee of synod, prior service in completing a fractional term shall be disregarded if the unexpired term so served was less than one-half a full term in length.

**S9.03.14.** All terms of office, except as otherwise provided for in the constitution of the synod shall begin at the conclusion of the assembly, at which election thereto occurred, except as may be otherwise provided in the governing documents of related agencies and institutions.

**S9.03.15.** The synod shall elect annually representatives to synod-related institutions and agencies in accord with the governing documents of these institutions and agencies.

**S9.03.16.** For the election of voting members to assemblies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Nominating Committee shall nominate at least two persons for each available category of voting members. Additional nominations may be made from the floor consistent with the inclusive goals and/or quotas of the ELCA. Alternates to those elected shall be chosen among those nominated in reverse order of their elimination.

**S9.03.17.** The election of the officers of this synod, the care of the duties of their office(s) and replacement of officers who are disabled shall be in accord with procedures outlined in the constitution of this synod in Chapters 8, 9, 10.

**S9.04.** The bishop shall be elected by the Synod Assembly by ecclesiastical ballot. Three-fourths of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election on the first ballot. If no one is elected, the first ballot shall be considered the nominating ballot. Three-fourths of the legal votes cast on the second ballot shall be necessary for election. The third ballot shall be limited to the seven persons (plus ties) who received the greatest number of legal votes on the second ballot, and two-thirds of the votes cast shall be necessary for election. The fourth ballot shall be limited to the three persons (plus ties) who receive the greatest number of legal votes on the third ballot, and 60% of the votes cast shall be necessary for election. On subsequent ballots a majority of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election. These ballots shall be limited to the two persons (plus ties) who receive the greatest number of legal votes on the previous ballot.

**S9.05.** The Nominating Committee shall nominate at least one person for vice-president; additional nominations may be made from the floor.

**S9.05.11.** The Conferences shall nominate at least one person for each vacancy on the Synod Council. Additional nominations may be made from the floor.

**S9.06.** The Synod Council shall nominate at least one person for secretary; additional nominations may be made from the floor.

**S9.07.** If the treasurer is elected, the Synod Council shall nominate at least one person for treasurer; additional nominations may be made from the floor.

**S9.08.** In all elections, except for the bishop, the names of the persons receiving the highest number of legal votes, but not elected by a majority of the legal votes cast on a preceding ballot, shall be entered on the next ballot to the number of two for each vacancy unfilled. On any ballot when only two names appear, a majority of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election.

**S9.09.** The result of each ballot in every election shall be announced in detail to the assembly.

**†S9.10.** When notified by the secretary of this church, on behalf of the Nominating Committee of the Churchwide Assembly, the Synod Assembly shall nominate two persons in the specified categories for possible election by the Churchwide Assembly to the Church Council.

**S9.10.20.** Membership on Boards, Councils, and Committees

**S9.10.21.** Each person serving on a council or committee must be a minister of Word and Sacrament on the roster of the synod, a minister of Word and Sacrament of a full communion partner serving a congregation or institution of the synod, or a voting lay member of a congregation of the synod.

**S9.10.22.** Individual members of t~~T~~he Committee on Church Vocations will have a term limit of six consecutive

years.

**S9.10.23.** Any person receiving any emolument, benefit, gain, profit, or advantage from an institution or agency of the synod shall be ineligible for membership on that board, council, or committee that governs that institution or agency, with the exception of guests, clients, or recipients of service.

**S9.11.** The Synod Council shall elect or appoint representatives to the steering committee of its region.

**†S9.12.** Background checks and screening shall be required and completed for persons nominated as synod officers prior to their election, if possible, or as soon as practical after their election. The specific procedures and timing of background checks and screening shall be determined by the Synod Council.