



**Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod**  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

**Proposed Constitutional Amendments for Consideration at the 2024 Synod Assembly**

Dear members of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod,

The 2024 Synod Assembly will be notable as we will be electing a Bishop to succeed Bishop Davenport. Yet there will also be other items that will come to your attention for consideration and action. We will be electing people to serve as Voting Members to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly, at which information from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church will be presented. And we will need to address certain issues with our Synod Constitution.

At the September 21, 2023, meeting of the Synod Council, the Council approved a number of changes to the Constitution, particularly in section S7., so they may be placed before the Assembly for anticipated adoption. These changes are in some instances simple grammatical “clean-up,” but in other instances more significant revisions regarding proper designation and consideration of rostered ministers.

Ordinarily a change to the Constitution would require presentation of the proposed amendment at one Assembly, and then a vote on the resolution at a subsequent Assembly. This would mean we could not enact these needed amendments for two years. There is a method by which we can shorten this timeline. This process is for the Synod Council to approve the proposed amendments and present them to the membership of the Synod six (6) months prior to the next Assembly. In this case, the Assembly may adopt the proposed amendments, without change, at one Assembly.

The following are the proposed amendments, **highlighted in yellow**, additions underlined, and deletions ~~struck through~~. Included are some related sections for background or clarification, and a brief explanation as to the rationale for each amendment is included in *red italicized type* following each proposed change.

Although the Constitution is not bedtime reading for most of you, I encourage you to read these proposals carefully so that you may be able to act on them in May of 2024.

Your servant in Christ,  
The Rev. Karl M. Richard, Secretary  
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

## Changes to Constitutional Provisions

- †S18.13. Other amendments to this constitution may be adopted by this synod through either of the following procedures:
- a. Introduced with the support of at least fifteen voting members and having been approved by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present and voting at a regular meeting of the Synod Assembly, an amendment may be adopted unchanged by a two-thirds vote at the next regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.
  - b. The Synod Council may propose an amendment, with notice to be sent to the congregations of this synod at least six months prior to the next regular meeting of the Synod Assembly. Such an amendment shall require for adoption a two-thirds vote of the voting members present and voting at such a regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.  
All such amendments shall become effective upon ratification by the Churchwide Assembly or by the Church Council.

### Chapter 7.

#### SYNOD ASSEMBLY

- †S7.21. The membership of the Synod Assembly, of which at least 60 percent of the voting membership shall be composed of laypersons, shall be constituted as follows:
- a. All rostered ministers under call on the roster of this synod shall be voting members of the Synod Assembly.
  - b. 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 the number of baptized members in the congregation. The Synod Council shall seek to ensure that, as nearly as possible, at least 45 percent of the lay members of the assembly shall be women and, as nearly as possible, at least 45 percent shall be men.
  - c. 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 the opening of 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 regular Synod Assembly.

**S7.21.11.** In addition to the congregation's election of voting member(s) of the Synod Assembly as established by †S7.21.e, each congregation may elect one additional voting member of the Synod Assembly who shall be a voting member of the congregation up to the age of 25.

*Correcting citation – add “dagger”, remove “c”*

**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, provided that such processes not result in fewer than 60% of the voting members of the Synod Assembly being laypersons in contravention of †S7.21. 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.

**S7.22.10.** Retired rostered ministers who have indicated to the bishop their willingness and availability to serve in the synod and whose intent meets with the concurrence of the bishop shall be permitted to vote at meetings of the Synod Assembly.

**S7.22.11.** In establishing a formula pursuant to Chapter †S7.21.e of this Constitution, the number of retired rostered ministers permitted to vote at meetings of the Synod Assembly shall be a factor in determining the number of additional lay representatives necessary to comprise at least 60% of the membership of the Synod Assembly.

*Correcting citation – add “dagger”, remove “c”*

†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.

**S7.24.** Ministers under call, or on leave from call but available for call, as determined by the Office of the Bishop, on the rosters of this synod shall remain as members of the Synod Assembly so long as they remain under call, or on leave from call but available for call, as determined by the Office of the Bishop, 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 the opening of the next regular synod assembly, or unless replaced by the election of new members for a special synod assembly, or until they have been disqualified by termination of congregation membership.

†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 lay 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. ~~Authorized worshiping communities, acknowledged under criteria, policies, and procedures approved by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, shall accept and adhere to the Confession of Faith and Statement of Purpose of this church, shall be served by leadership under the criteria of this church, and shall be subject to the discipline of this church.~~

*As of May 2017, Sections S13.40. and S13.41. (included below) were added which describe the criteria of authorized worshipping communities. It is no longer necessary to include here, nor germane to the issue being addressed here. This provision is no longer in S7. in the Model Constitution for Synods.*

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 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.

S7.28. 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.

~~S7.29. All **rostered** ministers of Word and Sacrament, on leave from call but available for call, as determined by the Office of the Bishop, on the roster of this synod in attendance at the Synod Assembly shall be voting members, consistent with †S7.21. above. All ministers of Word and Service, on leave from call but available for call, as determined by the Office of the Bishop, on the roster of this synod shall have both voice and vote as lay voting members in the Synod Assembly, in addition to the voting membership of lay members of congregations as provided in item †S7.21.e.~~

*Correcting an oversight from revisions related to changes at 2019 Churchwide Assembly. Ministers of Word and Service are no longer considered "lay," but "clergy."*

~~S7.30. Retired ministers of Word and Sacrament on the roster of the synod in attendance at the Synod Assembly may serve as voting members of this synod consistent with †7.21 above, and as specified in the bylaws.~~

*This is covered under S7.22. and S7.22.10. above, which sections also include Retired Ministers of Word and Service, which this section does not include.*

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

**S13.40. Synod-authorized Worshiping Communities**

**S13.41. Authorized worshiping communities, acknowledged under criteria, policies, and procedures approved by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, shall accept and adhere to the Confession of Faith and Statement of Purpose of this church, shall be served by leadership under the criteria of this church, and shall be subject to the discipline of this church.**