



Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

To: Rostered Ministers, Congregations, Synod Council Members, and Executive Officers of Synod Related Social Ministry Organizations, Agencies, and Institutions

**From: Ms. Emily Valentine, Chair of the Nominating Committee,
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod**

Re: Nominations for 2024 Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly

Date: November 2023

How does the work of Jesus get done in Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod? By faithful members of our congregations who love Jesus, love the Church, and are willing to take leadership positions in our Synod. At the upcoming Synod Assembly, May 3 & 4, 2024, we will be electing a Bishop, which will take place by Ecclesiastical Ballot, and follow a distinct process. In addition, we need leaders to serve on the **Synod Council**, the **Consultation Committee**, and the **Committee on Discipline**. We also need to select **Voting Members to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly** (July 28 – August 2, 2025, in Phoenix, AZ).

First, we list the positions for which we seek nominees. In the second half of this letter is information describing the expectations of the positions, and the desired qualities of those who might serve.

Open Synod Council positions:

- 2 Clergy, that is, rostered ministers of Word and Sacrament (pastor) OR of Word and Service (deacon), terms ending 2027.
- 1 Lay Man, Central Philadelphia Conference Representative, term ending 2027.
- 1 Lay Woman, Upper Bucks Conference Representative, term ending 2027.
- 1 Lay Person at Large, term ending 2027 (*may be any gender identity*)

Open positions on the Consultation Committee:

- 1 Lay Man, term ending 2030.
- 1 Lay Woman, term ending 2030.
- 2 Clergy (rostered ministers of Word and Sacrament OR Word and Service), terms ending 2030.

Open positions on the Committee on Discipline:

- 1 Lay Man, term ending 2030.
- 1 Lay Woman, term ending 2030.
- 2 Clergy (rostered ministers of Word and Sacrament OR Word and Service), terms ending 2030.

Voting Members to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly

Each synod is allotted voting members in proportion to the number of its congregations and total baptized membership. For 2025 SEPA Synod is allotted 12 voting members. Each synod is also

asked to send one additional voting member who is a person of color or whose primary language is other than English, and one additional voting member who is a youth or young adult (30 years or under at the time of election or appointment). From this total of 14, 5 are to be clergy (including men and women), and 9 lay persons, with lay persons being at least 45% women and at least 45% men.

Needed for nomination:

4 clergy (1 slot is designated for the bishop), **at least 1** of the 5 to be a person of color or whose primary language is other than English.

7 lay persons – **at least 1** to be a youth or young adult, **and at least 1** to be a person of color or whose primary language is other than English.

- 3 Lay Women.
- 3 Lay Men.
- 1 Lay Person of no specified gender identity.

2 additional lay persons, no specified gender identity.

- 1 additional youth or young adult (30 or younger at time of election or appointment).
- 1 additional person of color or whose primary language is other than English.

Please be proactive in **seeking diversity in nominees**, both with regard to youth and young adults, and with regard to persons of color or whose primary language is other than English. While the ELCA goal is 10%, our Synod Constitution sets an intention that at least 20% of our representation be persons of color or whose primary language is other than English. LGBTQIA+ persons of any gender identity are also welcome to be nominated for, and serve in, these positions in our Synod. The nomination form should list the gender identification of the nominee, whether man, woman, or non-binary/non-conforming.

The synod's nominating form is available at the synod website MinistryLink.org, or by request. You may make additional copies of the nominating form if necessary. Names of prospective nominees are requested as soon as the nominee agrees to stand for election and the forms are completed. Handwritten nomination forms cannot be processed. The deadline for submission is **February 15, 2024**.

The Nominating Committee requires **all nominees submit a digital photo** of themselves and respond to the **following questions** – (1) List your top five spiritual gifts and/or personal gifts you would bring to the position if elected, and (2) How have you used these gifts in service to the church and your work? Please answer in 50 words or less.

A digital photo and responses to the questions are required for a nominating form to be considered completed. Nominating forms submitted without the required information will not be accepted and will not be placed in nomination. Completed nominating forms should be sent to:

Ms. Emily Valentine, Nominating Committee Chairperson, at
Nominations@sepa.org

Please note:

- Those nominated must be active members of congregations of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.
- As always, we seek a diversity of candidates.
- Before suggesting a person, ask whether the person is willing to serve if elected.

- The Nominating Committee is not required to place in nomination the name of any person suggested.
- Except for the congregations of the officers and the youth and young adult representatives, two people from the same congregation may not serve on the Synod Council at the same time. The Synod Council may make exceptions to this requirement to promote greater diversity and/or inclusivity.
- In light of the level of responsibility and influence of the following positions, it is our practice that a person may serve as one of the following at a time: Synod Council Member, Conference Dean, or Member of the Candidacy Committee. A person serving in any of these roles may stand for election or appointment to another, but if chosen must resign their current position.

Descriptions of Positions and Qualifications sought:

Our **Synod Council** is a *working* council that oversees the activity of our joint ministry across this 5-county region. The Synod Council serves as “the board of directors of the synod” and “its interim legislative authority between meetings of the Synod Assembly.” As such, the Synod Council reviews reports from ministry teams and committees, evaluates and considers proposals for ministry, ensures the work of the Synod is aligning with the budget adopted by the Synod Assembly, and oversees the roster of ministers, in line with the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Synod.

What is the Commitment?

- 5 regular meetings, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m., in June, September, December, February, and April
- Service on a Synod Council Committee – Executive, Nominating, Finance, Constitution, Audit, or Investment Committees. Committees work on different schedules, depending on responsibilities and needs of work to be done. Generally, each committee meets five times per year, in advance of Synod Council meetings.
- Promote the work of the Synod in your Conference, and through Synod events.

Gifts and Qualifications sought:

- People who love Jesus, love the Church, and are Team players who work with others for the advancement of the Gospel.
- An active, voting member of a congregation in Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.
- Skills in finance, accounting, administration, constitutional processes, and human resource management are particularly helpful.
- As the Synod Council receives its information digitally, and frequently meets via Zoom, ability to navigate on-line access is necessary.

The **Consultation Committee** seeks to resolve disagreements within congregations on “substantive” issues. “When there is disagreement between or among factions within a congregation on a substantive issue which cannot be resolved by the parties, members of the congregation may petition the synod bishop for consultation after informing the president of the Congregation Council of their intent to do so. [I]f the bishop’s consultation fails to resolve the issue, the bishop shall refer the matter to the Consultation Committee of the synod, which shall undertake efforts to find an appropriate solution.”

Members of the Consultation Committee serve one term and are not eligible for consecutive reelection. They are part of a pool from which the Bishop may choose, and may not be needed in the time of their term of service.

Those who serve on the Consultation Committee are expected to do so with maturity, objectivity, faithfulness, and commitment. Members should be people with a strong sense of self, and strong skills in listening and communication.

The **Committee on Discipline** specifically considers the discipline of rostered ministers, officers, congregations, and members of congregations. The process of discipline is described in detail in Chapter 20 of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. The process of discipline seeks to assure due process and due protection for the accused, other parties, and this church. “Since synods have responsibility for admittance of persons into the rostered ministries of this church and have oversight of pastoral and congregational relationships, the disciplinary process shall be a responsibility of the synod on behalf of this church.” 20.11. “It is the intent of this church that all matters of discipline should be resolved internally to the greatest extent possible” without resorting to the civil courts. 20.16.

As with the Consultation Committee, members of the Committee on Discipline serve one term and are not eligible for consecutive reelection. They are part of a pool from which the Bishop may choose, and may not be needed in the time of their term of service.

Those who serve on the Committee on Discipline are expected to do so with maturity, objectivity, faithfulness, and commitment. Members should be people with a strong sense of self, and strong skills in listening and communication.

Voting Members to the Churchwide Assembly

A voting member to the CWA from Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod must be an active, voting member of a congregation of this Synod.

Voting members are not “delegates” who vote as directed by their constituents. They are members of the Church, who vote on issues as they feel led by the Spirit and informed by the conversation of the Assembly.

Issues that come before the Churchwide Assembly will include budget items, constitutional provisions, receipt and possible action on reports of commissions, including receipt of the Report of the Commission on a Renewed Lutheran Church, and in 2025, the election of a Presiding Bishop.

Voting members will receive a significant amount of material to read in preparation for the week-long Assembly and are expected to review it prior to the gathering. There will also be a significant amount of further material that will be submitted at the Assembly for consideration and action.

The ability to travel on the dates of the Assembly, and to fully participate in the conversation and deliberation, is expected of all voting members.

The ability to use electronic communication will be needed, as most of the information will be shared digitally.