

REPORT ON THE CONSTITUTION, INCLUDING CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION, BYLAWS, AND CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS OF THE SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD, EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

Section 1. *Amendments to Required Provisions* of the Constitution for Synods adopted by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly have been incorporated into our Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions. The required amendments are effective upon notification by the Secretary of this Church and need no approval by the Synod Assembly. They are listed here for your information. (reference †S18.11.) – pages 2 – 6

Section 2. The 2025 Churchwide Assembly approved the redesignation of one provision from *non-required to required*. This provision is presented in Section 2. It must now be entered into each synod's constitution. If it is already part of a synod's constitution, it must now be marked as "required." This change has been made and needs no approval by the Synod Assembly. It is listed here for your information. (reference †S18.11.) – page 6

Section 3. The 2025 Churchwide Assembly approved the redesignation of three provisions from *required to non-required*. These provisions are presented in Section 3. If a synod desires to eliminate these provisions, there must be a majority vote by the synod assembly to amend the synod's constitution. Note also that there is a wording change to one of these provisions. If the synod maintains this provision, the wording change may be incorporated, and would require a **majority vote**. (reference †S18.12.) – *The proposal is to keep these provisions, with the updated wording for S11.04.* – pages 6 – 7

Section 4. Recommended amendments to *non-required* provisions of the Constitution for Synods adopted by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. These amendments may be adopted by a **majority vote** by the Synod Assembly. (reference †S18.12.) – *The proposal is to adopt each of these amendments.* – pages 7 – 8

Respectfully submitted,
The Reverend Karl M. Richard, Secretary
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

AMENDMENTS TO THE *CONSTITUTION FOR SYNODS* AS APPROVED BY THE 2025 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY

Official Notice of Certification of Required Provisions and Notice of Recommended Provisions

Prepared by the Office of the Secretary
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
August 2025

Following is official notification of amendments to the *Constitution for Synods* that were approved by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. Additions are underlined; deletions are ~~struck through~~; all changes are **highlighted**.

Section 1: Amendments to Required Provisions

Chapter 6.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

†S6.04.02. It is the goal of this synod that at least 10 percent of the voting members of the Synod Assembly, Synod Council, committees, and organizational units of this synod be members of historically underrepresented groups, in addition to the 10 percent representation of persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English in †S6.04. The Synod Council shall establish a plan for implementing this goal.

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:

....

- b. Lay voting members shall be elected by each congregation or its council as follows:
A minimum of one lay member elected ~~by from~~ each congregation with fewer than 175 baptized members and a minimum of two lay members elected ~~by from~~ 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.

†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~~ or its council may elect new members who shall continue to serve until the next regular 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 or a confirmed member of a synod-authorized worshiping community of this synod.

Chapter 8.

OFFICERS

- †S8.21. The vice president shall be elected by the Synod Assembly. The vice president shall be a layperson. The vice president shall be a voting member of a congregation or a confirmed member of a synod-authorized worshiping community of this synod. The vice president shall not receive a salary for the performance of the duties of the office.
- †S8.31. The secretary shall be elected by the Synod Assembly. The secretary shall be a voting member of a congregation or a confirmed member of a synod-authorized worshiping community of this synod. The secretary may be either a layperson or a rostered minister.
- †S8.41. The treasurer may be elected by the Synod Assembly or may be appointed by the Synod Council. The treasurer shall be a voting member of a congregation or a confirmed member of a synod-authorized worshiping community of this synod. The treasurer may be either a layperson or a rostered minister.
- †S8.51. The terms of office of the officers of this synod shall be as follows:

 c. The treasurer of this synod shall be [elected] [appointed] [elected or appointed] to a term of _____ years and may be [re-elected] [reappointed] [re-elected or reappointed]. The treasurer shall serve until a successor takes office.
- †S8.52. The terms of the officers shall begin on the first day of [(name of month)] [the (ordinal number) month] following election or, in special circumstances, at a time designated by the Synod Council.
- †S8.53. Each officer shall be a voting member in a congregation or a confirmed member of a synod-authorized worshiping community of this synod, except that the bishop need not be a member of a congregation of this synod at the time of election.

Chapter 10. SYNOD COUNCIL

- †S10.01. The Synod Council, consisting of the four officers of the synod, and 10 to 24 other members, and at least one young adult youth and with a goal of at least one young adult youth, shall be elected by the Synod Assembly.
- a. Each person elected to the Synod Council shall be a voting member of a congregation or a confirmed member of a synod-authorized worshiping community of this synod, with the exception of ministers on a roster of this synod who reside outside the territory of this synod. The process for election and the term of office when not otherwise provided shall be specified in the bylaws. A member of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, unless otherwise elected as a voting member of the Synod Council, may serve as an advisory member of the Synod Council with voice but not vote.

Chapter 11. COMMITTEES (names of other organizational units)

- †S11.11. This synod shall in its bylaws or by continuing resolution establish a process to ensure that the members of its committees and other organizational units will be persons possessing the necessary knowledge and competence to be effective members of such units, and to meet the requirements of †S6.04. With the exception of ministers on the rosters of this synod who reside outside the territory of this synod, each member of a committee of this synod, or any other organizational unit created by this synod, shall be a voting member of a congregation or a confirmed member of a synod-authorized worshiping community of this synod.

Chapter 13. CONGREGATIONS

- †S13.01. Each congregation, except those certified as congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by the uniting churches, prior to being listed in the roster of congregations of this synod, shall adopt the *Model Constitution for Congregations* or one acceptable to this synod that is not in contradiction to the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

....

- c. **Recognition and reception.** Recognition and reception of additional congregations into this church ~~of transferring or independent congregations by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America~~ is based upon the judgment of the synod that the congregations satisfy the criteria of 9.21. and 9.25. ~~is based on the judgment of the synod and action by the synod through the Synod Council and Synod Assembly.~~ The synod bishop shall provide for prompt reporting of such additions to the secretary of this church for addition to the roster of congregations.
- 1) Recognition and reception of congregations newly formed by this church is accomplished by action of the Synod Council.
 - 2) Recognition and reception of transferring or independent congregations is accomplished by the action of the Synod Assembly upon the recommendation of the Synod Council.
 - a. If a congregation is a member of another church body, the leadership of the congregation first should consult with the appropriate authorities of that church body before taking action to leave its current church body. After such consultation, leaders of the congregation should contact the synod bishop or synod staff in this church where the congregation is located.
 - b. The synod bishop or synod staff where the transferring or independent congregation is located shall confer with the congregation to assure its understanding and acceptance of commitment to and affiliation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Chapter 14. ROSTERED MINISTERS

- †S14.12. Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,
- a. Every minister of Word and Sacrament shall:

....

- 8) speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, proclaiming God's love for the world, advocating dignity, justice, and equity for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, caring for the marginalized, and embracing and welcoming racially and ethnically diverse populations.

†S14.18. The provisions for termination of the mutual relationship between a minister of Word and Sacrament and a congregation shall be as follows:

....

- d. In the case of alleged local difficulties that imperil the effective functioning of the congregation under paragraph a.3) above, the bishop's committee shall endeavor to hear from all concerned persons, after which the bishop together with the committee shall present their recommendations first to the pastor and then to the congregation. In the bishop's sole discretion, the bishop's committee may also present, as may be appropriate, either a report or report summary to the pastor and to the congregation together with the recommendations. The recommendations of the bishop's committee must address whether the pastor's call should come to an end and, if so, may suggest appropriate severance arrangements. The committee may also propose other actions that should be undertaken by the congregation and by the pastor, if appropriate. If the pastor and congregation agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action need be taken by the synod.

†S14.32. Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, every minister of Word and Service shall:

....

- c. Speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, proclaiming God's love for the world, advocating dignity, justice, and equity for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, caring for the marginalized, and embracing and welcoming racially and ethnically diverse populations;

Chapter 17.

CONSULTATION AND ADJUDICATION

†S17.02. The synod bishop and the Executive Committee of the Synod Council shall receive expressions of concern from rostered ministers—of this church, congregations, and organizations within this synod; provide a forum in which the parties concerned can seek to work out matters causing distress or conflict; and make appropriate recommendations for their resolution. When a concern relates directly to the synod bishop, the synod vice president will lead the Executive Committee's efforts at resolving the matter. When the matter at issue cannot be resolved in this manner, applicable procedures for investigation, decision, appeal, and adjudication shall be followed. Allegations or charges that could lead to the discipline of a rostered minister—of this church shall not be addressed by the Executive Committee but shall be resolved through the disciplinary process set forth in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.

Chapter 18.

AMENDMENTS, BYLAWS, AND CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS

- †S18.12. Whenever the secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America officially informs this synod that the Churchwide Assembly has amended any non-required provision of the Constitution for Synods, this constitution may be amended to reflect any such amendment by a majority vote at any subsequent meeting of the Synod Assembly without presentation at a prior Synod Assembly. An amendment that is identical to a provision of the *Constitution for Synods* shall be deemed to have been ratified upon its adoption by this synod. The Church Council, through the secretary of this church, shall be given prompt notification of its adoption.
- †S18.13. Other amendments to this constitution may be adopted by this synod through either of the following procedures:
- Introduced with the support of at least _____ 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-ratified unchanged by a two-thirds vote at the next regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.

Section 2: Provision Reclassified from Non-Required to Required

Chapter 10.

SYNOD COUNCIL

- †S10.~~0809~~.01. To the extent permitted by state law, meetings of the Synod Council and its committees may be held through electronic means such as the Internet or by telephone, as long as there is an opportunity for simultaneous aural communication or its equivalent. electronically or by telephone conference, and To the extent permitted by state law, Nn notice of all meetings may be provided electronically.

Section 3: Provisions Reclassified from Required to Non-Required

Chapter 1.

NAME AND INCORPORATION

- †S1.21. The seal of this synod is *(describe)*.

Chapter 9.

NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

- †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.

Chapter 11.

COMMITTEES (names of other organizational units)

‡S11.04. ~~The~~A Mutual Ministry Committee shall be appointed by the Executive Committee of the Synod Council to provide support and counsel to the bishop.

Section 4: Amendments to Non-Required Provisions

Chapter 7.

SYNOD ASSEMBLY

S7.26. This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council that permit persons currently serving as synod-authorized ministers and/or lay representatives of authorized worshipping communities and/or outreach ministries 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.

Chapter 9.

NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

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 receive the greatest number of legal votes (including ties in the final qualifying position) on the second ballot, and two-thirds of the legal 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 (including ties in the final qualifying position) on the third ballot, and 60 percent of the legal 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 (including ties in the final qualifying position) on the previous ballot.

Chapter 10.

SYNOD COUNCIL

S10.05. ~~No e~~Elected members of the Synod Council shall not receive compensation solely for ~~such their~~ service as council members.

S10.06. No person related to a synod staff member shall be eligible for nomination to or membership on the Synod Council or the following synod committees: Candidacy Committee, Finance Committee, Nominating Committee, Mutual Ministry Committee, Consultation Committee, and the Committee on Discipline. For this purpose, a related individual is one who, with respect to the synod employee, is a spouse, parent, son, daughter, sibling, uncle, aunt, niece, nephew, grandparent, grandchild, including corresponding members of blended families and in-laws (parent, son, daughter, or sibling of a spouse, spouse of a sibling, or the parent or sibling of the spouse of a sibling).

- S10. ~~0607~~. If a member of the Synod Council ceases to meet
- S10. ~~0708~~. The composition of the Synod Council
- S10. ~~0809~~. *Robert's Rules of Order*, latest edition, shall govern

Chapter 13.

CONGREGATIONS

- S13.40. **Synod-authorized Worshiping Communities and Outreach Ministries**
- S13.41. ~~Authorized worshiping~~ Worshiping communities ~~and outreach ministries,~~ authorized by the synod and 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.