

## **SYNOD CONSTITUTION PROPOSED CHANGES**

At last year's 2025 Churchwide Assembly, several changes were made to the required provisions in the ELCA's constitution for synods. According to ¶S18.11, amendments to required provisions are automatically incorporated into the constitutions of individual synods.

Among other amendments passed by the Churchwide Assembly are additional recommended changes. At the October 2025 Synod Council meeting, these recommended changes were reviewed and discussed. The Synod Council voted to endorse all recommended changes and forward them to the 2026 Synod Assembly for approval.

In accordance with the synod's constitution:

- Recommended constitutional provision changes identical to the ELCA's *Constitution for Synods* may be adopted by a majority vote at the Synod Assembly. This applies to changes 2, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, and 18 listed below.
- Other constitutional provision changes recommended by the Synod Council at least six months prior to the Synod Assembly may be adopted by a two-thirds vote. All such amendments shall become effective upon ratification by the Churchwide Assembly or by the Church Council. This applies to changes 1 and 7 listed below.
- Bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote at a Synod Assembly. This applies to changes 3, 4, 8, 13, and 14 listed below.

The synod council proposes the following amendments, which will be presented for adoption at the 2026 Central States Synod Assembly:

### **Change #1:**

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

The seal of this synod ~~is a black globe comprising four stylized quadrants with a cross in the center cross with three united flames emanating from the base of the cross and three entwined circles beside the cross.~~ The name of this synod ~~and the year of its constituting convention~~ forms the circular outer edge of the seal.



*Printed Version*



*Embossed Version  
(Estimated)*

**Background:** The 17th Churchwide Assembly, meeting in 2025, acted to change the ELCA seal to feature the globe symbol. As a result, synod seals are no longer required to have corresponding descriptions to the ELCA seal. The former corporate seal of the churchwide organization featured a cross surrounded by three flames, originally intended to represent

the Trinity and the uniting of the three predecessor church bodies. Synods raised concerns about the unintended connection with the imagery of a burning cross.

**Recommended Action:** For the sake of ELCA common identity, change the synod seal and its description to correspond to the new ELCA seal as follows:

**Change #2:**

**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 congregations under development and 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.

**Background:** S7.26. is no longer a required provision. The model constitution for synods has been amended as above. This change allows synod-authorized ministers (SAMs) or representatives of synod-authorized worshipping communities or outreach ministries to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly.

**Recommended Action:** Amend the provision as above.

**Change #3:**

**S7.2426.A2101.** A ~~Ssynod-Aa~~synod-authorized ~~Mm~~minister serving under a covenant by authority of the ~~Bb~~bishop of the Central States Synod shall have the privilege of ~~serving as a voting member voice and vote~~ at ~~assemblies of the Central States Synod the Synod Assembly~~.

**Background:** If S7.26. is amended as above, then raising S7.24.A21. from a continuing resolution to a bylaw and relocating and renumbering as S7.26.01. brings consistency and alignment to the constitutional provision. This change also brings steady emphasis to the voting member role since all voting members have voice.

**Recommended Action:** Adopt the bylaw as above.

**Change #4:**

**S7.26.012.** ~~Synod-aA~~Authorized worshipping communities and outreach ministries of the Synod ~~shall may have elect one two~~ lay members ~~to serve~~ as ~~their representative and~~ voting members at the Synod Assembly.

**Background:** If S7.26. is amended as above, then S7.26.01. needs to be amended for consistency. This change also brings steady emphasis to the voting member role as opposed to “representative” or “delegate” terminology. Renumbering as needed.

**Recommended Action:** Amend the bylaw as above.

**Change #5:**

**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.

**Background:** Recommended change from the model constitution for synods. Clarifies election process in the event of tie votes.

**Recommended Action:** Amend the provision as above.

**Change #6:**

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

**Background:** Recommended change from the model constitution for synods. Clarification, and establishment of the possibility that elected Synod Council members may receive compensation for other services provided to the synod.

**Recommended Action:** Amend the provision as above.

**Change #7:**

**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: Executive Committee, Consultation Committee, Committee on Discipline, Audit Committee. For this purpose, a related individual is one who, with respect to the synod employee, is a spouse, parent, child, sibling, sibling of a parent, child of a sibling, grandparent, grandchild, including corresponding members of blended families and in-laws (parent, child, or sibling of a spouse, spouse of a sibling, or the parent or sibling of the spouse of a sibling) and any person residing in the same household as the synod employee.

**Background:** Recommended change from the model constitution for synods with additional changes recommended by the Central States Synod Council for greater inclusivity. For purposes of avoiding conflicts of interest, this provision allows synods to define where relatives of synod staff may or may not serve.

**Recommended Action:** Adopt the provision as above.

**Change #8:**

~~S10.07.01. To the extent permitted by state law, meetings of the Synod Council and its committees may be held electronically or by telephone conference, and notice of all meetings may be provided electronically.~~

**Background:** A newly required provision in the synod constitution (§S10.09.01) now supersedes this bylaw. The new provision states: *“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. To the extent permitted by state law, notice of all meetings may be provided electronically.”*

In addition to making it a required bylaw, the new provision refines language concerning electronic communication for meetings of the Synod Council.

**Recommended Action:** Revoke bylaw S10.07.01 as above.

**Change #9:**

~~S10.0607.~~ If a member of the Synod Council ceases to meet ...

~~S10.0708.~~ The composition of the Synod Council ...

**Background:** If/as needed, renumber all previously existing S10.06. and S10.07 provisions and correlating bylaws to accommodate the addition of a new S10.06. and/or revoking of S10.07.01 as above.

**Recommended Action:** Amend the numbering as above.

**Change #10:**

~~S10.09. Robert’s Rules of Order, latest edition, shall govern parliamentary procedure of all meetings of the Synod Council.~~

**Background:** This is a recommended provision in the model constitution for synods. Perhaps unintentionally omitted or deleted in the course of prior amendments?

**Recommended Action:** Adopt the provision as above.

**Change #11:**

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

**Background:** S11.04. is no longer a required provision.

**Recommended Action:** Amend the provision as above to reflect the optional establishment of such a committee.

**Change #12:**

**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.

**Background:** These are recommended provisions in the model constitution for synods. Their amendment is consistent with recognition of outreach ministries elsewhere in ELCA constitutions.

**Recommended Action:** Amend the provisions as above.

**Change #13:**

**S10.01.01.** For the purposes of this chapter, “youth” and “young adult” are defined as stated in †S6.04.0201. ~~One youth and one young adult shall be elected as members of the Synod Council.~~

**Background:** With required changes to †S10.01, the second sentence of the bylaw is both redundant and conflicting in its wording. Additionally, the reference for definition of young adult and youth should be to †S6.04.01. and not †S6.04.02.

**Recommended Action:** Amend the bylaw as above.

**Change #14:**

**S10.01.02.** ~~The~~A youth member ~~shall~~ may be elected for a term of two years.

**Background:** With required changes to †S10.01, electing a youth member is a goal, but not required.

**Recommended Action:** Amend the bylaw as above.

**Change #15:**

**S14.33.** The minister of Word and Service shall become a member of the congregation upon receipt and acceptance of the letter of call. In a parish of multiple congregations, the minister of Word and Service shall hold membership in one of the congregations.

**Background:** **S14.33.** was recommended by the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. It appears it was overlooked for adoption at the 2018 Synod Assembly when other recommended provisions were received. The parallel provision for ministers of Word and Sacrament was adopted by the synod in 2018.

**Recommended Action:** Adopt the provision as above.

**Change #16:**

**S14.34.** Each minister of Word and Service on the roster of this synod shall submit a report of ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.

**Background: S14.34.** was recommended by the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. It appears it was overlooked for adoption at the 2018 Synod Assembly when other recommended provisions were received. The parallel provision for ministers of Word and Sacrament was adopted by the synod in 2018.

**Recommended Action:** Adopt the provision as above.

**Change #17:**

**S14.42.** No minister of Word and Service shall accept a call without first conferring with the bishop of this synod. A minister of Word and Service shall respond with an answer of acceptance or declination to a letter of call within 30 days of receipt of such call. In exceptional circumstances with the approval of the bishop of this synod and the president of the Congregation Council of the congregation issuing the call, an additional 15 days may be granted to respond to a letter of call.

**Background: S14.42.** was recommended by the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. It appears it was overlooked for adoption at the 2018 Synod Assembly when other recommended provisions were received. The parallel provision for ministers of Word and Sacrament was adopted by the synod in 2018.

**Recommended Action:** Adopt the provision as above.

**Change #18:**

**S14.47.** All ministers of Word and Service under a call shall attend meetings of the Synod Assembly, and the ministers of Word and Service of congregations shall also attend the meetings of the conference, cluster, coalition, or other area subdivision to which the congregation belongs.

**Background: S14.47.** was recommended by the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. It appears it was overlooked for adoption at the 2018 Synod Assembly when other recommended provisions were received. The parallel provision for ministers of Word and Sacrament was adopted by the synod in 2018.

**Recommended Action:** Adopt the provision as above.