



*How very good and pleasant
it is when kindred live together
in unity!*

Psalm 133

2026 ASSEMBLY BINDER



Central States Synod

June 6, 2026
Online

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Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly
Section I - General Information

ASSEMBLY WELCOME



Welcome to the 2026 Central States Synod Assembly! We are excited to gather with you in this online space and from gathering spaces across the synod. Our theme for this year is Life Together. We're drawing from Dietrich Bonhoeffer's wonderful book by that name and asking how we—Lutheran Christians of Missouri and Kansas—might best do life, together.

The word synod means, "on the road together," so a synod assembly is a great place to consider what it means to be called together for the purpose of serving God and our neighbors. Likewise, our synod Mission Statement begins with the reminder that in Christ, through baptism we have unity:

United with Christ in Baptism.

Traveling the way of Jesus.

Joining God's reign of justice and radical love in the world.

Because we have unity, we are freed to serve. During this assembly, you'll have the opportunity to hear from organizations that are serving alongside you and on your behalf. We'll have a sort of "virtual display area" during lunch, and if you choose to do so, you will be able to talk with some of our synod mission partners. We will also hear from our partners at the ELCA Churchwide offices and from other folks from across the synod.

We are excited to share with you our plans for raising up leaders for our congregations and ministries, and how we are working with synods and seminaries to train those leaders. We look forward to talking together about how we will be investing in new ministries in the coming years. And we are excited simply to spend a day with you, talking about our hopes for the future and our dreams for all of the ELCA ministries in Missouri and Kansas.

Thank you for support and welcome to the Synod Assembly!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donna Simon".

The Rev. Donna Simon
Bishop
Central States Synod, ELCA

FROM PRESIDING BISHOP YEHIEL CURRY



“I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

Dear siblings in Christ,

As you gather for your synod assembly, I want to express my gratitude for what you are doing — and have been doing — for this church, *our* church.

In the months since I was installed as presiding bishop, I have been focused on connection. Some of you have heard me talk about what it means to be a connected church. This vision of connectedness grows directly out of one of the three priorities we, as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, have named for this season of our life together.

When we lifted up these priorities, we committed ourselves to them not as abstract ideas but as guiding commitments for how we live and serve as church. As I reflected on them, the third priority stood out with particular clarity: to be a connected, sustainable church, raising the bar together.

That priority has been shaping my thinking and my leadership. It asks not just what we do but how we do it — together, across congregations, synods and the churchwide organization. Connectedness is not a program or a slogan; it is a way of being church that recognizes our shared calling and our shared responsibility. This is not my church. It is yours. It is ours, together. The ministries you carry out in your congregations and synods are not just yours — they are ours together.

Over the next several years, you will hear this priority expressed with greater focus and clarity. In 2026, our emphasis is on connection — strengthening relationships, listening deeply and recognizing how much we depend on one another.

In 2027, you will begin to hear me speak more intentionally about sustainability — how we steward our people, our resources and our structures so that our witness remains strong for generations to come. By 2028, connection and sustainability will come together in a shared language of togetherness, as we more fully live into who God is calling us to be as church.

So, when you hear language about being together, it is about living out the ELCA’s vision of a world experiencing the difference God’s grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation. It matters deeply to me that we know who we are, moving forward as one body, trusting God and one another.

I believe this is how connection is built — not by standing alone but by being church together.

With gratitude and hope,



The Rev. Yehiel Curry Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

SYNOD BISHOP AND ELCA REPRESENTATIVE



**The Rev. Donna Simon,
Bishop, Central States Synod, ELCA**

Rev. Dr. Donna J. Simon holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature from San Francisco State University (1991), a Master of Divinity from Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary (PLTS) in Berkeley, California (1999), and a Doctor of Ministry in Congregational Mission and Leadership from Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota (2016).

Rev. Simon was ordained *extra ordinem* in Kansas City on October 28, 2000, and was called to St. Mark Hope and Peace Lutheran Church. In 2016, Simon joined the staff of the Central States Synod as the Director of Evangelical Mission. She continued both calls until she was elected bishop of the synod during the 2025 synod assembly. During her tenure in both capacities, Simon focused on mission, service, and justice, often asking, “What is God doing here, and how can we join with God?” Rev. Simon has also previously served as Dean of ELCA congregations in the Kansas City metro area and Lawrence, KS, and serves as treasurer of the board of the Heartland Center for Jobs and Freedom.

Rev. Simon lives in Kansas City, Missouri with her wife, Colleen, their son Dominic, and three cats. When she is not doing church work, she can be found with a book or in the kitchen trying to coax magic out of food.



**Adam DeHoek, Ph.D.
Senior Director, Research and Evaluation**

Adam DeHoek is the Senior Director for Research and Evaluation at the ELCA churchwide organization. Prior to this role, Adam has served in several capacities at the churchwide organization, including as Congregational Statistics Analyst (2021–23) and as a staff researcher (2011–21). As Congregation Statistics Analyst, he supported synods and congregations through the Annual Congregation Report process, expanding the accompanying communications strategy to include regular electronic updates and a comprehensive support webpage with videos and reference guides. During his tenure as a staff researcher, Adam co-authored the 2016 report *The Supply of and Demand for Clergy in the ELCA*, a publication he remains especially proud of and that continues to be widely cited.

He is a graduate of Calvin University and Loyola University Chicago where he earned his doctorate in applied social psychology. He is a resident of Berwyn, Illinois where he lives with his wife Rebecca and twin sons, Ezekiel and Malachi (age 7). When not working, you will find Adam cooking for his family or watching the Cleveland Guardians, Detroit Lions, or Kansas Jayhawks basketball.

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2026 SYNOD ASSEMBLY HEARINGS

Pre-assembly - (via Zoom)

Tuesday – May 26

7:00 – 8:00 pm. **Budget Hearing**

Wednesday – May 27

7:00 – 8:00 pm. **Resolutions Hearing**

Thursday – May 28

7:00 – 8:00 pm **Compensation Guidelines Hearing**

Tuesday - June 2

7:00 – 8:00 pm. **Voting Member Q&A**

All Pre-Assembly Sessions:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89975079902?pwd=utc3SHPyhFSxRguEecxZszUwesnghq.1>

Meeting ID: 899 7507 9902

Passcode: 765364

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2026 SYNOD ASSEMBLY AGENDA

[Please note this agenda is tentative and is subject to change]

Saturday - June 6, 2026

8:00 a.m. Zoom session opens, for announcements and troubleshooting

9:00 a.m.

Community

Opening Worship
Welcome and Introductions
Constitutional Amendments

10:00 a.m.

The Day Together

Vice President's Report
Nominations
Churchwide Report

11:35 a.m.

The Day Alone

Bishop's Report
Lunch and Discussion

12:00 p.m.- 1:00 p.m.

1:00 p.m.

Service

Budget Report
Compensation Guidelines
Director for Evangelical Mission Report

2:00 p.m.

Confession and the Lord's Supper

Resolutions
Closing Worship

VOTING MEMBER INFORMATION REGARDING ASSEMBLY PROCEDURES

INTRODUCTION

Each synod assembly's authority and procedures must conform to the requirements of the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of the Central States Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The parliamentary procedures are shaped by the most current version of *Robert's Rules of Order*. Further, each assembly may adopt other specific rules to better conduct its business. Finally, time and experience have led to several ordinary practices that are carried over from one assembly to another simply because they have proven to be effective.

For the most part, these organizational factors work well to provide an orderly framework within which each voting member may be fully and actively involved in the deliberative process of the assembly. However, at times, these same factors may seem artificially restrictive and notably frustrating if voting members do not know why a specific procedure is being followed or how they may participate at a particular moment. Please know that these rules and procedures have been thought out and evaluated by synod leadership as well as other synods conducting assemblies and gatherings. The intent is to allow the assembly to reliably conduct the business of the synod in the most equitable and accessible format possible.

The chart and notes which follow are a first opportunity for you to understand the procedures of this assembly so that you may fully and actively participate.

The synod has produced a voting member tutorial. The video will be accessible in mid-May from the synod website and explains this printed resource, the processes for addressing the assembly, voting, and requesting help or support. We encourage all voting members to view the video in advance of the assembly.

You may also join the **Voting Members' Q&A**. This advance session will give you an opportunity to ask questions and get clarification on the entire assembly process.

- **Tuesday – May 19, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.** Via Zoom:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89975079902?pwd=utc3SHPyhFSxRguEecxZszUwesnghq.1>
Meeting ID: 899 7507 9902
Passcode: 765364

Whether you are attending your first assembly, or you have attended previous assemblies as a voting member, your full and active participation is both welcomed and necessary for the continued well-being of our synod.

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GLOSSARY OF MOTIONS AND PARLIAMENTARY TERMS

	To accomplish this:	You say this:	RR ¹	Interrupt?	Second?	Debatable?	Amenable?	Vote	Reconsider?
Bring Back Motions	Reconsider an action taken by the assembly	"I move to reconsider..."	§37	YES*	YES	YES	NO	Majority (>50%)	NO
	Return to considering a motion laid on the table	"I move to take from the table..."	§34	NO	YES	NO	NO	Majority	NO
Incidental Motions	Ask a question about assembly procedure	"Parliamentary inquiry."	§33	YES	NO	NO	NO	CHAIR	NO
	Request information (such as fund balance)	"Point of Information."	§33	YES	NO	NO	NO	CHAIR	NO
	Demand a standing vote	"I move for a rising vote."	§29	YES	NO	NO	NO	DEMAND	NO
	Avoid considering a main motion altogether	"I object to consideration of..."	§26	YES	NO	NO	NO	2/3	YES (-)
	Suspend the rules	"I move to suspend the rules."	§25	NO	YES	NO	NO	2/3	NO
	Ask the assembly to overrule chair's decision	"I appeal from the decision of the chair."	§24	YES	YES	YES	NO	Majority	YES
	Make sure the assembly follows its own rules	"Point of order."	§23	YES	NO	NO*	NO	CHAIR	NO
Privileged Motions	End the meeting	"I move to adjourn."	§21	NO	YES	NO*	NO*	Majority	NO
	Take a break	I move to recess for [specify time duration] OR until [certain time].	§20	NO	YES	NO	YES	Majority	NO
	Register a complaint (such as noise)	"I rise to a question of privilege."	§19	YES	NO	NO	NO	CHAIR*	NO
Subsidiary Motions	Lay matter aside temporarily to address an urgency	"I move to lay the question on the table."	§17	NO	YES	NO	NO	Majority	YES (-)
	Stop debating a motion and vote on it	"I move the previous question."	§16	NO	YES	NO	NO*	2/3	YES*
	Limit or extend debate on a motion	"I move that the debate be limited to..."	§15	NO	YES	NO	YES	2/3	YES
	Postpone to a certain time	"I move to postpone the motion to [time]."	§14	NO	YES	YES	YES	Majority*	YES
	Refer a motion to a committee for further study	"I move to refer the motion to [committee name]."	§13	NO	YES	YES	YES	Majority	YES*
	Amend or change the wording of a motion	"I move to amend the motion by..."	§12	NO	YES	YES	YES	Majority	YES
Main Motion	Bring business before the assembly	"I move that..." OR "I move to..."	§10	NO	YES	YES	YES	Majority	YES

¹ Section Reference within *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* (12th ed.) | * Exceptions exist | (-) Only a negative vote can be reconsidered

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The following information is offered as an aid for those seeking assistance in using parliamentary procedure. All references are to the 12th Edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*. (Note: Parliamentary procedure may be modified by the Synod Assembly's Rules of Organization and Procedure.)

Amendments, §12

A motion may be amended (changed) before it is voted upon by inserting words, striking out words, striking out and inserting words, adding words at the end of a sentence, and substituting. A motion to amend must be germane to the motion to be amended. A motion to amend requires a second; is debatable, if the motion to be amended is debatable; can be amended; requires a majority vote (even if the motion amended requires a two-thirds vote for its adoption); and can be reconsidered.

Appeal, §24

If a member believes that the chair has ruled incorrectly, an appeal may be made. However, an appeal may not be made if the chair has expressed only an opinion (24:6). An appeal must be made at the time of the ruling; if any debate or business has intervened, it is not in order. An appeal must be seconded; is debatable, unless it addresses a matter of decorum or the matter appealed from is not debatable; is not amendable; and a majority vote or tie sustains the decision of the chair. An appeal may be reconsidered.

Incidental Motions, §6, Chapter VIII

Incidental motions usually relate to questions of procedure and, unlike subsidiary motions, do not have a rank. They include:

- Point of order
- Appeal
- Suspend the rules
- Objection to consideration of a matter
- Division of a question
- Consideration by paragraph or seriatim
- Division of the assembly
- Motions relating to methods of voting and polls
- Motions relating to nominations
- Parliamentary inquiry
- Point of information
- Request to read papers
- Request for any other privilege

Limit or Extend Limits of Debate, §15

The purpose of this motion may be 1) to shorten or to increase the time limit placed upon each speaker, 2) to limit the number of speeches, 3) to close debate at a specified time, or 4) to close debate after a specified period of time. This motion requires a second; can be amended; cannot be debated; requires a two-thirds vote; and can be reconsidered.

Obtaining the Floor, §3

Prior to speaking in the assembly, whether to make a motion or to engage in debate, a member must obtain the floor, in other words, be recognized by the chair as having the right to speak at that time (3:30–35). Once recognized by the chair, the member is entitled to speak, subject to the limitations in the Rules of Organization and Procedure. Each person recognized by the chair is asked to identify themselves by giving their name and the name of their congregation. In a few instances, it is not necessary to seek recognition of the chair before speaking. These include:

- to appeal a decision by the chair—appeal to be made before any debate or other business has intervened (24:1–13);
- to suggest amount, name, place, date, or numbers to “fill blanks” when invited by the chair (12:92–113);
- to call for division of the assembly, if a vote is doubtful (29:1–8);
- to call for a counted vote if the result of the division of the assembly is in doubt (30:1–3);
- to extend time for consideration of a pending question or until scheduled recess or adjournment, when the orders of the day are announced or called for (18:8(b));
- to call for the orders of the day (18:1–11);
- to raise a point of order, or a question of order (23:1–21);
- to make a parliamentary inquiry (33:1–5);
- to raise a question of privilege, unless a person is speaking or unless such interruption is unavoidable (19:1–17);

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- to request permission to read a paper or a section of a book (33:1–2, 33:20–21);
- to move reconsideration of a motion previously acted upon (37:1–52);
- to request permission to withdraw a motion, or to modify a motion, that has been stated by the chair (33:11–19);
- to object to consideration of the question (26:1–9).

Point of Order, §23

If a member believes that the rules of the assembly are being violated, he or she may rise to a “point of order” or “raise a question of order.” This calls upon the chair for a ruling and enforcement of the assembly’s rules. When in person, a “point of order” may be made by raising a white paper from the member’s seat, even if someone has the floor; it does not require a second; is not debatable or amendable; is normally ruled upon by the chair; and cannot be reconsidered. It must be raised at the time the alleged breach of rules occurs, unless the breach is ongoing (23:5–6).

Reconsider, §37

Should it be deemed desirable to return to a motion already voted on, whether adopted or rejected, a motion is made to reconsider the vote on that subject, if such a motion is otherwise in order. Such motion may be offered only by one who voted on the winning side of the issue and may be made only on the day the previous vote on the subject was taken or on the next succeeding day of assembly business. If adopted, the question before the assembly is exactly the same question and it is in the same form as at the time the original vote was taken. The motion to reconsider requires a second; is debatable if the motion to be reconsidered is debatable; cannot be amended; requires a majority vote; and cannot be reconsidered.

Refer (or Commit), §13

This motion may be used to commit a main motion, with or without amendments and with or without subsidiary motions, to the Synod Council, a synod unit or table, or an office to be designated by the Synod Council for study and report to a future assembly (or for interim action), or to an assembly committee or a special committee for study and report back to the present assembly. The motion to refer requires a second; is debatable; can be amended; requires a majority vote; and cannot be reconsidered, if the committee has begun to function.

Rescind or Amend Something Previously Adopted, §35

These two motions may be applied to an earlier action of an assembly. If adopted, the motion to rescind has the effect of nullifying the earlier action; the motion to amend something previously adopted is to be used, if only a part of the earlier action is to be changed. The motion requires a second; is debatable; and can be amended. Under proposed assembly rules, a two-thirds vote is necessary to adopt, and constitution and bylaw amendments, once approved, cannot be rescinded or amended. Only a negative vote can be reconsidered.

Voting, §4

The Rules of Organization and Procedure of the assembly describe rules for voting. Most motions can be adopted by a majority of the members present and voting, provided a quorum is present. Under *Robert’s Rules of Order*, the following motions require a two-thirds vote of members present and voting to adopt:

- Amend or rescind something previously adopted, if notice has not been given;
- Close nominations;
- Deal with an order for the day before it is pending;
- Extend time for consideration of pending question, or time until scheduled adjournment or recess;
- Limit or extend limits of debate;
- Make a special order;
- Previous question;
- Refuse to proceed to the orders of the day;
- Suspend the rules;
- Take up a question out of its proper order or take up an order of the day before the time for which it has been set.

RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR CENTRAL STATES SYNOD ASSEMBLY

Prior to the assembly

- Each voting member must register through the synod office no later than May 17, 2026. Late registrations and day-of-assembly registrations will not be allowed.
- Hearings for the budget, resolutions, and compensation guidelines will take place May 26 – 28. The full schedule and Zoom links can be found on page 4. These hearings are open to any member of the synod, not only voting members.

During the assembly

- **To speak to a motion before the assembly**, voting members are asked to send the following prompts to the **FLOOR FACILITATOR** to express their desire to address the assembly. **You need only to enter the prompt.** The Floor Facilitator may ask for additional information and will alert the assembly chair to your request.
 - **“FOR”** - wish to speak in favor of the item being discussed
 - **“AGAINST”** - wish to speak in opposition to the item being discussed
 - **“SECOND”** - to second a motion or amendment.
 - **“AMEND”** - would like to amend the current matter.
 - **“NOMINATION”** - to make a nomination from the floor.
 - **“INQUIRY”** - to make a parliamentary inquiry, a point of order, or request information.
- The chair will call upon individuals in the order in which they appear at the microphones (alternating, when possible, those in favor and those opposed). Each person will have up to **two minutes** to speak once recognized by the chair.
- Once recognized by the chair, unmute your microphone, introduce yourself including the name and location of your congregation before speaking.
- When making an amendment voting members will be asked to submit the written amendment using the chat feature. When at the microphone, state the amendment. **Wait for the bishop to receive a second.** Once a second has been received, you can speak to the amendment.
- When no further speakers wish to comment, or the debate has been ended, the bishop will call for a vote.
- **Voting:** All voting will be done using an online form. The form can be found at www.css-elca.org/vote or by using the QR code displayed at the time of the vote.
 - The online form will only be active once the bishop calls for the vote.
 - All voting members will be issued a 5-digit PIN and will need to enter their PIN for each vote. Votes entered with an incorrect PIN will not be counted.
 - Voting members will have at least 90 seconds to submit their vote before the form is closed.
 - Voting can be done on a mobile device or computer, and multiple voting members may share a single device.
 - For convenience, voting members are encouraged to use separate devices for participating in the Zoom meeting and for voting.
- **Tech Support:** During the assembly, if you have any questions, or technical difficulties with either Zoom or voting procedures, please contact the **Help Desk**.
 - Use the Zoom chat to send a message to **Help Desk**.
 - Call or text **816-375-2804**. (Please leave a message and a volunteer will return your call)
 - Email **HelpDesk@css-elca.org**.

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SYNOD ASSEMBLY OFFERING 2026

“But if there is so much happiness and joy even in a single encounter of one Christian with another, what inexhaustible riches must invariably open up for those who by God’s will are privileged to live in daily community life with other Christians!”

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*



This year we have designated our Central States Synod Campus Ministries as recipients of the assembly offering. We are a church that is energized by lively engagement in our faith and life. The mission of campus ministry in the ELCA is to invite people in academic settings to engage more deeply with the teachings of Jesus Christ and the community that bears his name, so they may discover and fulfill their vocation as disciples.

Across the Central States Synod, there are currently eight active campus ministries:

 Bethany College www.bethanylb.edu Lindsborg, KS	 ELCA Lutheran Campus Ministry at Southeast Missouri State University www.stmarklutherancapc.org Cape Girardeau, MO	 Ekklesia Campus Ministry www.ekkleiamsu.org Springfield, MO	 Episcopal Lutheran Campus Ministry www.calvaryonninth.org/campus-ministry.html Columbia, MO
 LuMin St. Louis www.lcmstl.org St. Louis, MO	 Lutheran Campus Ministry at Kansas State University www.ksulcm.org Manhattan, KS	 Us 4 U, Fort Hays State University www.facebook.com/Us4U.fhsu Hays, KS	 Westwood House at the University of Kansas www.westwoodku.org Lawrence, KS

Visit www.css-elca.org/campus-ministries for more information

You can visit the synod assembly page www.css-elca.org/assembly to give online or mail your offering to the synod office.

Central States Synod
420 W 14th St, Suite B
Kansas City, MO 64105



These offerings, which are above and beyond a congregation’s regular giving, reflect our commitment not only to the ministries of our synod – our life together – but also reflect our hope and trust in God’s abundant care.

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SYNOD STATISTICAL INFORMATION

[May 15, 2025 - May 14, 2026]

Congregations, Ministry Sites, and Ministers

Congregations	142
Synod-Authorized Worshipping Communities	3
Synod-Authorized Outreach Ministries	1
Other ELCA-Affiliated Ministry Sites Served by CSS Rostered Ministers	10
Other Non-ELCA Ministry Sites Served by CSS Rostered Ministers	13

Total Ministry Sites	169
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	Active	Retired	On Leave	Disability	Total
CSS Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament	95	135	3	2	235
<i>Serving CSS Congregations, SAWCs, and SOAMs</i>	75	10			85
<i>Serving Other Ministry Sites</i>	20	1			21
CSS Rostered Ministers of Word and Service	6	10			16
<i>Serving CSS Congregations, SAWCs, and SOAMs</i>	2				2
<i>Serving Other Ministry Sites</i>	4				4

Total Rostered Ministers	101	145	3	2	251
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Full-Communion Rostered Ministers under Invitations to Extended Service	5
Synod-Authorized Ministers under Covenant	21
Parish Ministry Associates (not serving as SAMs)	11
Parish Ministry Students	10

Total Rostered and Trained Lay Ministers Serving CSS Congregations, SAWCs, and SOAMs	124
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Candidates for Rostered Ministry

- Ryan Bose, Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, Word and Sacrament
- Sarah Freyermuth, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Word and Sacrament
- Jennelle Hinck, United Lutheran Seminary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Word and Sacrament
- Caroline Justice, Luther Seminary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Word and Sacrament
- Megan Mong, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Word and Sacrament
- Joel Pike, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, Word and Sacrament
- Joanie Saltzman, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, Word and Sacrament

New to the Synod Roster

	Effective Date
Rev. Samantha Nichols, from Metropolitan Chicago Synod to First Lutheran Church, Mission Hills, KS	8/11/2025
Rev. Richard Ashley, first call to St. Philip Evangelical Lutheran Church, Saint Louis, MO	8/24/2025
Deacon Rachel Helton, first call Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital, Saint Louis, MO (Synod Council Call)	8/24/2025
Rev. Susan Anderson, from Eastern North Dakota Synod to St. Martin Lutheran Church, Kansas City, KS	9/14/2025
Rev. Patricia Reep, from Central/Southern Illinois Synod to Interim Ministry, KS/MO (Synod Council Call)	1/1/2026
Rev. Donna Duensing (Retired), from Sierra Pacific Synod	3/25/2026

On-Leave Status Granted

	Effective Date
Rev. Matthew Helfrich, OLFC - 1st Year, from Lutheran Church of the Living Christ, Florissant, MO	5/31/2025
Rev. Callista Isabelle, OLFC - 1st Year, from Washington University, Saint Louis, MO	8/4/2025
Rev. Dean Apel, OLFC - 2nd Year	8/25/2025

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Retired Status on the Roster Granted

Rev. Jonathan (Jon) Anderson	7/1/2025
Rev. Winston Persaud	7/1/2025
Rev. Susan Candea	9/1/2025
Rev. David (Dave) Whetter	9/1/2025
Mr. Richard Krenning	11/1/2025
Rev. Bradford (Brad) Bray	1/1/2026

Moves within the Synod Roster

Effective Date

Rev. Matthew Helfrich, from On Leave, to Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Creve Coeur, MO	8/29/2025
Rev. Ashley Huber, from AdventHealth Shawnee Mission, Merriam, KS, to University of Kansas Health System, Kansas City, KS (Synod Council Call)	8/11/2025
Rev. Chad Langdon, from Christ Lutheran Church, Wichita, KS, to Central States Synod Office, Kansas City, MO	9/1/2025
Bishop Donna Simon, from St. Mark Hope & Peace Lutheran Church, Kansas City, MO, to Central States Synod Office, Kansas City, MO	9/1/2025
Rev. Robert (Lee) Bennight, from Disability, to American Lutheran Church, Smith Center, KS, Emmanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church, Stuttgart, KS, St. John Lutheran Church, Kensington, KS, & Zion Lutheran Church, Phillipsburg, KS	10/16/2025
Rev. Donald (Andrew) Beers, from St. Paul Lutheran Church, Wichita, KS, to Resurrection Lutheran Church, Haysville, KS	12/1/2025

Transfers Out from the Synod Roster

Effective Date

Rev. David Strommen, from Redeemer Lutheran Church, Salina, KS, to South Dakota Synod	5/16/2025
Rev. Anita Strommen (On Leave), from On Leave, to South Dakota Synod	5/28/2025
Rev. Bruce Freeman (Retired), to Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod	6/20/2025
Rev. Jennifer Thomas, from Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Chicago, IL, to Northeastern Iowa Synod	7/1/2025
Rev. Callista Isabelle, from On Leave, to Metropolitan New York Synod	11/8/2025

Removed or Resigned from the Roster

Mr. James (Jim) Gleason, resigned from roster of Word and Sacrament Ministry	5/29/2025
Mr. Richard Krenning, resigned from roster of Word and Sacrament Ministry	11/4/2025

Rostered Ministers Deceased

Effective Date

Rev. Vance Eckstrom	6/8/2025
Rev. Sharon Bockelman	8/3/2025
Rev. Gerhard Kraus	9/3/2025
Rev. Timothy (Tim) Leaf	1/3/2026
Deacon Carolyn Wilson	2/18/2026
Deacon Edward (Ed) Kruse	4/13/2026

Changes to the Roster of Congregations

Effective Date

Hope Lutheran Church, Rolla MO	Withdrawn	9/3/2025
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Lucas KS	Withdrawn	2/18/2026

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PARISH MINISTRY ASSOCIATE ANNIVERSARIES

5 Years

Michael Berry
Ralph Donald
Jonathon (Jon) Heerboth
Jody Helton
Randal (Randy) Schroeder

15 Years

Rhonda Templing
Albert (Al) Urich
James (Jim) Winter

20 Years

David Stock

ELCA ROSTER MILESTONE ANNIVERSARIES

5 Years

The Rev. Philip Alier Deng
The Rev. Sarah Pierce
The Rev. Teresa (Teri) Sutherland
The Rev. Alfi Wyatt

10 Years

The Rev. Jon Brudvig
The Rev. Austin English
The Rev. Nicholas (Nick) Giannatasio
The Rev. Barbara (Barb) Jones
The Rev. Delaney Schlake-Kruse

15 Years

The Rev. Dinah Dutta
The Rev. Anteneh Gebreselassie
The Rev. Janice Hawley
The Rev. Katherine Hayes-Wallenburg
The Rev. Kimberly (Kim) Knowle-Zeller
The Rev. Glenda Pearson

20 Years

The Rev. Nicki McIntyre
The Rev. Zachary (Zac) Sturm

25 Years

The Rev. Ivan Gonzalez
The Rev. Heidi Happel

30 Years

The Rev. Dean Apel
The Rev. Odir Flores-Canales
The Rev. Amy Oehlschlaeger
The Rev. Brenda Ulrich
Deacon Rachel Wolf

35 Years

The Rev. Bradford (Brad) Bray
Deacon David (Dave) Mareske
The Rev. Jeffrey (Jeff) Martin
The Rev. Austra Reinis
The Rev. Thomas (Tom) Wehrman

40 Years

The Rev. Cindy Breed
The Rev. Thomas (Ed) Breed
The Rev. Keith Hohly
The Rev. Scott Musselman
The Rev. Juel Pierce
The Rev. Gary (Mike) Rose
The Rev. D. Erich Schwartz
The Rev. Naomi (Noni) Strand

45 Years

The Rev. James (Jim) Brandt
The Rev. Daniel (Dan) Friberg
The Rev. Margaret Gary
The Rev. Thomas (Tom) Kamprath
The Rev. Douglas Mathison
The Rev. Edward (Ed) Merckel
The Rev. William (Bill) Say

50 Years

The Rev. Michael Hartzheim
The Rev. Paul Hegele
The Rev. Barbara (Barb) Kempees-Chapman
The Rev. Kurt Sortland
The Rev. James (Jim) Strasen

55 Years

The Rev. Emil Bartos
The Rev. Robert Klein

60 Years

The Rev. Nile Buch

65 Years

The Rev. Paul Beins
The Rev. Herman Frerichs

70 Years

The Rev. Richard Hoyer

CONGREGATIONAL MILESTONE ANNIVERSARIES

75 Years

Christ Lutheran Church, Wichita, KS
Kent Memorial Lutheran Church, Sunrise Beach, MO
Lutheran Church of the Atonement, Florissant, MO
Overland Park Lutheran Church, Overland Park, KS

100 Years

St. Philip Evangelical Lutheran Church, St. Louis, MO

150 Years

Marion Hill Lutheran Church, White City, KS

Congratulations and God's blessings to everyone who is celebrating an anniversary of note this year.

BISHOP'S REPORT FOR THE 2026 SYNOD ASSEMBLY

In the third chapter of the book of Exodus, God appears to Moses in a burning bush, saying,

"I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. . . .¹⁰So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt." – Exodus 3:7,10

What follows is a story that consumes the rest of the Torah—Moses wrestling with Pharaoh for the release of the Israelites, their dramatic escape from Egypt on that first Passover, and then many years of wandering and being formed in the wilderness. Throughout the decades-long experience of our ancestors in the faith, one thing remains clear: God is at work—for them, in them, and through them.

After twenty-five years as a parish pastor, nine as your Director for Evangelical Mission (time served concurrently) and now almost a year as your bishop, I am convinced that we have entered a time of wilderness and jubilee. The wilderness you have probably experienced and as was the case for the Israelites, it's not a comfortable place to be. The wilderness can be a place of loss. Lots of folks think everything would be fine if we just returned to the way things used to be *"⁵ We remember the fish we used to eat in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic, ⁶ but now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at."* – Numbers 11:5-6.

The wilderness can be a questioning place. Even Moses had questions for God: *"Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"* – Exodus 3:11. We have our own questions. Why don't people come to church? Why isn't Sunday a sacred day any longer? How do we reach our neighbors with the message of the gospel?

Trying to be faithful in a church no longer centered in the culture can be challenging. Other pressures of this time, particularly political partisanship, are challenging us as well. But this is also a jubilee time, people of God. We are finding answers to some of our questions. Sometimes we stumble upon answers to questions not yet fully formed. We are finding new ways to worship: Saturday Church, Wild Church, Dinner Church. We are proclaiming the gospel in service to our neighbors: through growing feeding ministries and advocacy for immigrant, LGBTQIA+, and unhoused neighbors. Most importantly, we are learning to ask the right questions. How is God working in our communities already, and how can we join God? How is God calling all of us—young, old, lay, rostered—into leadership and service?

These are the questions my staff and I have been considering each week as we began our time of service to you, the Central States Synod. You may have heard me say already, "God is doing something with the church." Something is happening in this challenging time, and if we slow down for a moment (something we're not always great at and I speak from experience), I think we'll learn some things.

Thing One: The Reformers were right about the Priesthood of the Baptized. Each of us was called to ministry when the water was poured (or sprinkled) down over us. A pastor prayed over us and reminded all present that we were now "united with all the baptized in the one body of Christ, anointed with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and joined in God's mission for the life of the world."

Emphasizing the Priesthood of the Baptized is a primary focus for this synod office. God is working through us to create a Lay Formation Academy for the Central States Synod, harnessing the power of our pastors, professors, chaplains, seminaries, lay members, and other synods, frankly, any place quality teaching is happening. The Academy will connect lay folks across our synod to the opportunity to prepare for service as Parish Ministry Associates and Synod Authorized

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Ministers (lay ministers serving in pastoral ministry in congregations). It will also—and I am just as excited about this part—create opportunities for all of us to live into our baptismal vocations. Bible Study taught by seminary professors and by some of our seasoned rostered leaders. Pastoral care classes taught by our experienced chaplains. Classes on worship, music, advocacy, theology, parenting, retiring well, service, and more. We covet your prayers, ideas, and support for this vital work.

Thing Two: There is a vast mission field all around us. Polling organizations like Pew Research still show that the majority of Americans believe in God and desire relationship with the divine. The latest Pew Religious Landscape Surveys even show a leveling in the number of Christians in the U.S., which has hovered between 60 and 64% since 2019, after a precipitous decline in the previous decade. What does this mean? Well, if we dig deeper into the numbers, we find that 37% of people belong to a church, and only 30% attend at least monthly. So, there are more self-identified Christians not attending church than there are attending. As people who understand how vital Christian community is for the life of faith, we have a story to tell those people, and we need to devote time and energy to telling it.

Thing Three: (There are always three, right?) We need to talk about worship. We will continue to explore new ways to worship, and new places to worship. The Fresh Expressions movement invites us to take worship to the places where people live, work, and play. We also need to talk about two things (I know, not three!): excellence and participation. Good liturgy is literally “the work of the people.” I’ve seen some creative ways of involving the people at worship in worship, and I want us to talk about finding even more. Worship is the time when the whole church gathers; it should be the most excellent part of our ministry.

I am so excited to be your bishop, and so thankful for the incredible staff team we have: our Communications Director, Tim Anderson; our Synod Administrator, Rich Gates; our Director of Lay Ministry, Adam Wutka; our Bishop’s Associate, Chad Langdon; and our Director for Evangelical Mission, Kristen Koch. Our priority is resourcing the congregations and ministries of this synod, and I promise you that is where we spend the vast majority of our time. Please reach out to us, invite Kristen, Chad, and I to worship with you and preach in your congregations and ministries, and let us know how we can serve you.

Faithfully,



Bishop Donna

2025 NOMINATIONS FOR CENTRAL STATES SYNOD

Introduction

Each year the voting members of the Synod Assembly elect people who have been nominated for various positions, such as members of the Synod Council. Ultimately, the voting members of the Assembly are responsible for the nominations, but they are assisted by members of congregations, area ministry leaders, and the Nominating Committee. There are two stages to the nominating process, one before the assembly and one at the assembly. All Synod Council positions (except the youth positions) require a background check. A link to complete the background check will be sent following the assembly.

Pre-Assembly

Early in the calendar year, the Nominating Committee works with conferences to fulfill its responsibility as described in the synod bylaws (S9.03.04). Nomination forms are to be submitted to the synod office no later than April 15, 2026.

At the Assembly

Nominations may also take place at the assembly as described in the synod bylaws (S9.03.05). Those nominated from the floor will be expected to complete the biographical form as early as possible following their nomination.

Participating in the Process

Whether you are a voting member of the assembly or not, if you have questions about how you can participate in the nominating process or would like to suggest someone for nomination, please contact your pastor, or Tim Anderson at the synod office (913-948-9701, tanderson@css-elca.org).

Helpful information:

Responsibilities for Synod Council members:

- Be the board of directors for the synod and serve as its interim legislative authority between meetings of the Synod Assembly.
- Carry out the resolutions of the assembly.
- Attend council meetings, ordinarily three times a year.
- Interpret the work of the synod through their conferences and across the synod.

The term "persons of color and/or person whose primary language is other than English" (PC/L*) is understood to mean African American, Black, Arab and Middle Eastern, Asian and Pacific Islander, Latino, Native American, and Alaska Native people.

The term "youth" means a voting member of a congregation who has not reached the age of 18 at the time of election. The term "young adult" means a voting member of a congregation between the ages of 18 and 30 at the time of election.

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 youth and young adults. (S6.04.B09. Adopted by 2009 Churchwide Assembly)

Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly
Section II - Nominations

NOMINATION FORM

Anyone elected to a Synod Council position will need to complete a background check.

[Submit a nomination online](#)

Conference: _____

Position Nominated for: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ e-mail: _____

Congregational membership (include city/state): _____

Congregational activities: _____

Synodical/churchwide activities: _____

Community activities: _____

Person of color/language other than English?	___ yes ___ no
Youth (younger than 18 years old)	___ yes ___ no (DOB _____)
Young Adult (between 18 & 30 years old)	___ yes ___ no (DOB _____)

Nominated by: _____

Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly
Section II - Nominations

PRE-ASSEMBLY NOMINATIONS 2026

The Nominating Committee presents the following nominations:

Synod Council Members (3-year term except where noted)

Secretary (4-year term)	Alesia Roccia*
Border Conference - clergy, male	Rev. Edd Wunderlich
Central Kansas Conference - lay, female	Julie Barstow*

* Incumbent

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION—NOMINEES

Synod Council Nominations

Position: Synod Secretary

Name: Alesia Martin Roccia

Congregation membership: Family of Christ Lutheran, Imperial, MO

Congregational Activities: As a founding member of Family of Christ, I have served in leadership roles for over 20 years, including on the Council and as Congregation President. I am deeply committed to community outreach and engagement, actively supporting initiatives such as food drives and family-focused events like Trunk or Treat and the Community Egg Hunt. I currently contribute as a member of the youth education team, worship team, and finance committee.

Synodical/Churchwide Activities: I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as Synod Secretary since October, bringing my experience in nonprofit leadership, record-keeping, and fundraising to support and strengthen the Central States Synod. I am also actively engaged with the Synod Hunger Team, where I focus on food insecurity education and the review of ELCA Domestic Hunger Grants.

Community Activities: I am deeply engaged in food insecurity and hunger relief efforts through distribution, fundraising, and advocacy as part of my work with the St. Louis Area Foodbank. I am also committed to supporting my daughter and individuals of all abilities through disability employment and life enrichment initiatives. In addition, I am an active advocate for neurodivergent communities.

YOUTH: No **YOUNG ADULT:** No **POC/LOE:** No

Position: Border Conference

Name: Rev. Edd Wunderlich

Congregation membership: Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Kansas City, MO

Congregational Activities: I am the pastor at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

Synodical/Churchwide Activities: I currently attend the Border Conf. text study. I also serve on the board for Oasis. I am also currently on the Hollis Retreat Center capital campaign fundraiser.

Community Activities: I would work with the outreach ministries in the Northland. I sing with the Heartland Men's Chorus, serving as the chair for the Aids Walk KC. I work closely with the Chinn Elementary School.

YOUTH: No **YOUNG ADULT:** No **POC/LOE:** No

Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly
Section II - Nominations

Position: Central Kansas Conference

Name: Julie Barstow

Congregation membership: Peace Lutheran Church, Manhattan, KS

Congregational Activities: Working at the church as the Director of Youth and Family Ministry often blurs the line between what is work and what is volunteering. I am part of the Mom's Group that meets monthly, I help with many of the activities and service projects provided by our Ministry and Outreach Committee, such as God's Work, Out Hands. I often find new projects to bring to other ministry teams, such a knitting project that would be a nice addition to outreach ministry. I love to find donations for projects that church is hosting, most recently the Peace-Full Pantry Fundraiser Meal and Auction.

Synodical/Churchwide Activities: I have served on the Synod Council now for 3 years. I have been part of the Executive Committee for one year. Due to my role as DYFM, I have attended 4 Youth Gatherings, take part in area Conference meetings when I am able and attend the Extravaganza about every other year. I have been on the Camp Tomah Shinga Auction team for 3 years where I get to help with decorations and finding auction item donations.

Community Activities: Our family enjoys supporting different groups around town that are hosting pancake fundraisers or chili feeds by purchasing tickets and attending. Our kids' schools often have specific drives such as a Pet Toy Drive or Clothing drives that we support. Instead of throwing out items we are getting rid of we like to offer them to area agencies such as MART or Be Able. We support the Manhattan Go Green Match day each year. I am a member and regular attendee of Chapter DE PEO (Professional Education Organization) which supports women in education. I am currently serving as Chaplin and on the membership committee.

YOUTH: No **YOUNG ADULT:** No **POC/LOE:** No

TREASURER'S REPORT

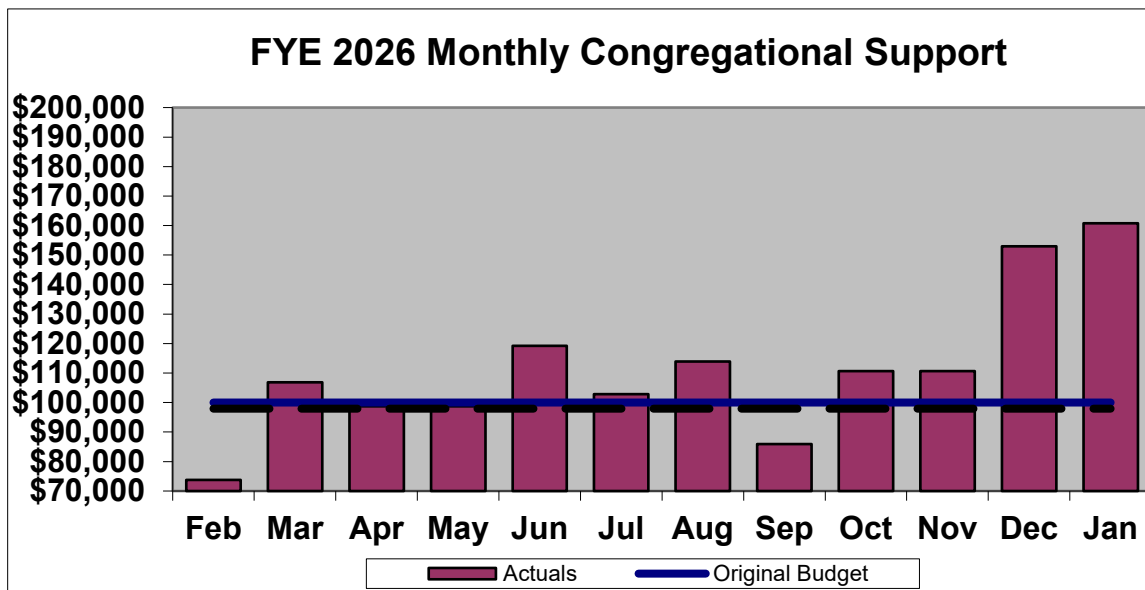
The Treasurer's Report provides commentary on three different budget years in varying levels of detail. I'll start with detailed comments about the 2025 fiscal year and follow that with a quick summary of any revisions that have been made for the 2026 fiscal year budget. I'll conclude my report with details about the budget proposal for the 2027 fiscal year. This is the budget that will be presented to the assembly for approval.

There are two versions of the budget for 2027 in the material immediately following my written report. The first version is the traditional worksheet style budget with rows and columns of numbers. This version provides a detailed breakout of each budget category for those that like to see the details. The second version is a narrative budget that provides a high-level textual description of the ministries of the synod and the funding required to support them. There are way fewer numbers in this version.

Financial status at the close of the fiscal year completed on January 31, 2026

Summary

We spent most of the 2025 fiscal year in a conservative spending mode to keep in step with the giving from the congregations. Giving was remarkably consistent, but modestly ahead of what we expected and slightly ahead of last year's pace. But, then we get to December and January and we see giving skyrocket to amounts that are greatly ahead of what we expected. It is always a good thing to receive more than expected, but we need to temper that by acknowledging that we had also lowered our expectations coming into the year. To demonstrate this point, we finished the year with giving \$160,000 above expectations, but only about \$4,000 ahead of the previous year.



In addition to the giving from our congregations, we witnessed another strong response to the Annual Appeal at the end of the year. This is the second year in a row that this has occurred, and it encouraged us to plan on giving this an even greater focus for the coming years to build on this response.

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Section III - Budget & Finance

Income vs. Expenditures

Total Expenditures for 2025 were \$1,313,829. The amount spent was \$8,729 more than anticipated but \$34,252 less than the previous year. We had budgeted for our expenses to be \$43,000 lower than 2024. Total Expenses were driven higher by our contribution to Churchwide due to the increased congregational giving. We finished the year with a surplus of \$75,355 and used none of the temporarily Restricted Funds that had been budgeted.

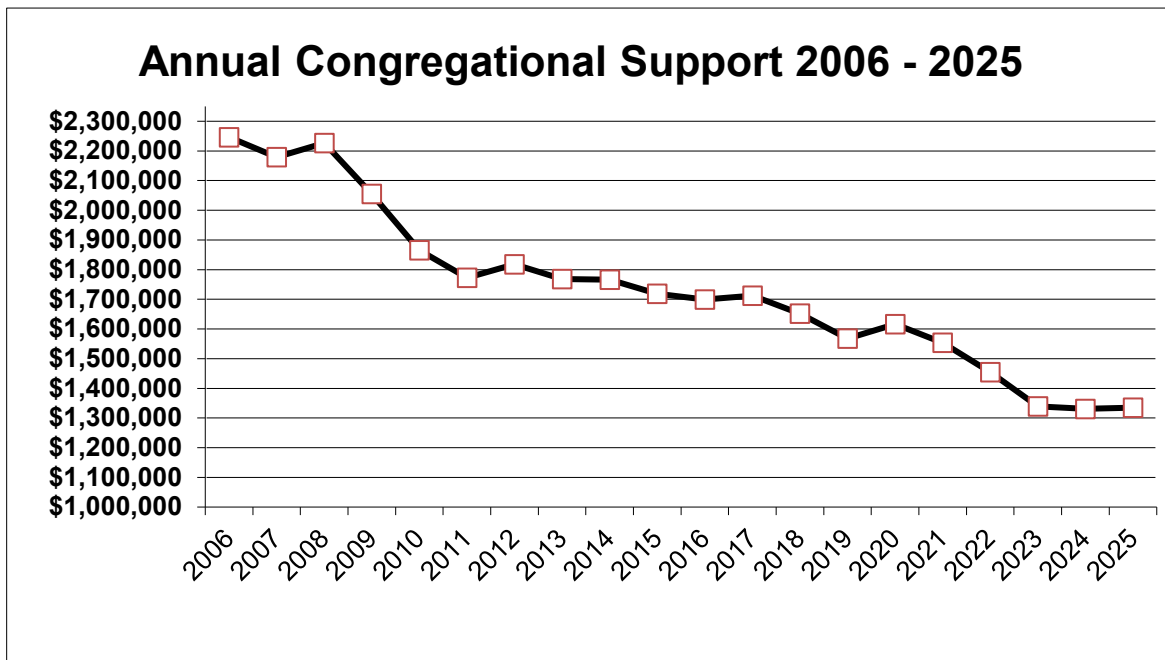
Total Revenue & Support was \$1,389,185 and was comprised of support from the congregations, the Annual Appeal, and reimbursements & grants. This amount was greater than we had expected in the budget by \$84,000! The amount received is about \$15,832 less than in 2024, but that difference is due to the changes in funding approach for the DEM position during the year. There was also a decrease in grant support from Churchwide for Campus Ministry.

A \$70,000 decrease in synod expenses was driven by lower-than-expected travel, Candidacy and accounting expenses. Our Audit expenses were much lower than expected because we did not complete the number of audits that we had planned for the year. Campus Ministry grants were lower because we are currently supporting only two sites. We did see an increase in Synod Staff Compensation, primarily due to increased benefits costs with the change in ordained leadership.

A detailed listing of the actual income and expenditures for 2025 is included in the attached budget spreadsheet. Refer to the "FYE 1/31/2026 ACTUAL" column.

Congregational Support

As I reported above, giving from the congregations was \$160,000 more than we had anticipated. We had reduced anticipated giving by \$200,000 in the 2024 and by an additional \$75,000 in 2025. This would suggest that we lowered our expectations a little too aggressively. I am delighted to be wrong about that and I thank all our congregations for your generosity in 2025.



Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly

Section III - Budget & Finance

As you can see in the graph above, we experienced steep declines in giving from 2020 to 2023. For 2024 and 2025, we appear to have plateaued at approximately \$1,330,000. In fact, we saw a slight \$4,000 increase from 2024 to 2025. The last time we experienced an increase in giving was from 2019 to 2020, which surprisingly, was the year of the Covid pandemic.

A report detailing the support received in the 2025 fiscal year from each congregation of the synod is attached as a part of this report.

ELCA Churchwide

In 2025, the synod continued to contribute to the Churchwide organization at a 50% rate. This means that half of the donations received from our congregations are shared with the larger church. The total contributed was \$666,548, which was an increase of \$996 or 0.1% from the previous year.

Annual Audit Report

We completed 2 audits in 2025 for the fiscal years ending in 2022 and 2023. The reports from these audits are available on the synod web site. We had planned to complete four this year, but we were not able to achieve the rate of work with our auditing firm that we had expected to achieve. In 2024, we changed our bookkeeper. In 2026, we are replacing our auditing firm. I have a high level of confidence that we will complete the three outstanding audits this year.

Current fiscal year budget, calendar year 2026

The Synod Council revised the approved budget for the current fiscal year to create a “spending budget” that considers additional or revised information received since last year’s assembly. This spending budget is included in the attached detailed budget spreadsheet as the “Revised” column for 2026 (FYE 1/31/2027).

The major themes for the changes in the 2026 budget are increased expectations for congregational giving, continued work on catching up with our audit backlog, increased spending for synod staff compensation and benefits, and restoration of funding for the Planned Giving Partnership

To create the 2026 spending budget, the following key changes were made:

- a. Increased the anticipated support from our congregations by \$25,000. This slight increase is inspired by the results from 2025.
- b. Increased the amount expected for the Annual Appeal by \$7,500 based on recent results and an increased focus on fund raising efforts
- c. Increased the amount to be released from Temporary Restricted Funds to \$117,000 to support the completion of three audits in 2026 and increased spending on synod staff compensation.
- d. Change to the Synod Salaries & Benefits include:
 - i. Retained the part-time Lay Ministry position at \$20,000
 - ii. Increased the anticipated benefits expense for ordained synod staff
 - iii. Provided for a 10% increase for non-ordained staff
- e. Reduced the amount for staff travel to \$35,423
- f. Restored funding of \$7,500 to support the Planned Giving Partnership
- g. Increased the funding amount for Audits to \$39,000 to reflect the plan to complete three this year
- h. Reduced the amount to be set aside for Bishop Transitions to \$5,000 because the costs for the 2025 transition were lower than expected
- i. Total planned spending increased by \$78,000 to \$1,364,500

Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly
Section III - Budget & Finance

Proposed budget for calendar year 2027, Fiscal Year Ending January 31, 2028

The proposed budget for the fiscal year ending on January 31, 2028, is shown in the attached detailed budget spreadsheet in the "Proposed" column for the year 2027 (FYE 1/31/2028). This budget will be presented at the synod assembly for approval.

The budget presented is targeting congregational giving of \$1,200,000, which is the same as the amount expected for the 2026 spending budget. In this budget, our Total Support & Revenue will support our anticipated Total Expenses of \$1,354,128. This is a decrease of \$10,000 from the revised amount budgeted for 2026.

There were several significant changes made in the budget for 2027. With that in mind, here are just a few of the key changes that require explanation. These changes are:

- a) Increased the amount expected for the Annual Appeal by \$7,500 for the second year in a row to reflect our increased focus on this area of fund raising
- b) Decreased the amount of funds to be released from Temporarily Restricted funds anticipating the completion of all outstanding audits in 2026
- c) Increased the amount for Reimbursement/Other Income by \$27,000 with the expectation of receiving grants to fund new ministry efforts
- d) Lowered the amount of congregational giving shared with Churchwide from 50% to 48%. This was a painful decision but could not be avoided. We last decreased this percentage 15 years ago
- e) There are several changes to the Synod Staff Compensation:
 - a. Included a 3% placeholder increase for the bishop and assistant to bishop compensation
 - b. Restored the compensation amount of the Director of Lay Ministry position to a full ¼ time amount
 - c. All other synod staff positions will receive an 8% increase.
- f) Eliminated the \$4,000 for the Fall Theological Conference with the expectation that it will become self-sustaining
- g) Estimated the amount for the annual audit at \$13,500 for the completion of one audit
- h) Increase the line item for accounting services to reflect a 3% increase

I would like to express my thanks to the members of the Mission Budget Team for their good work throughout the year. The team consists of the synod officers plus our bookkeeper. It is an honor and privilege for me to serve the synod and I am blessed to be able to work with each of these good and faithful servants.

Respectfully submitted,



Scott Schulte
Treasurer

Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly
Section III - Budget & Finance

BUDGET SPREADSHEET

	2027	2026		2025		
	FYE 1/31/2028 Proposed	FYE 1/31/2027 Revised	FYE 1/31/2027 Approved	FYE 1/31/2026 Actual	FYE 1/31/2026 Revised	FYE 1/31/2026 Approved
SUPPORT AND REVENUE						
1 Congregations	1,200,000.00	1,200,000.00	1,175,000.00	1,335,201.60	1,175,000.00	1,200,000.00
2 Annual Appeal	35,000.00	27,500.00	20,000.00	38,659.38	20,000.00	18,400.00
3 Shared Mission	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,781.80	0.00	0.00
4 Interest	0.00	0.00	75.00	151.01	100.00	175.00
5 Temp. Restricted Funds Released	72,128.00	117,000.00	71,000.00	0.00	90,000.00	53,000.00
6 Reimbursement/Other Income	47,000.00	20,000.00	20,000.00	9,391.13	20,000.00	20,000.00
Total Support & Revenue	1,354,128.00	1,364,500.00	1,286,075.00	1,389,184.92	1,305,100.00	1,291,575.00
EXPENDITURES						
7 ELCA CHURCHWIDE MINISTRY	576,000.00	600,000.00	587,500.00	666,548.01	587,500.00	600,000.00
SYNOD MINISTRY						
A. Agencies & Institutions						
8 Camp Tomah Shinga	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00
9 Hollis Center-Outdoor Ministry	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00
10 Kansas Interfaith Action Coalition	2,500.00	2,500.00	2,500.00	2,500.00	2,500.00	2,500.00
13 Reconciling Works	2,500.00	2,500.00	2,500.00	2,500.00	2,500.00	0.00
Total Agencies/Institutions	15,000.00	15,000.00	15,000.00	15,000.00	15,000.00	12,500.00
B Teams and Task Forces						
29 Candidacy	4,000.00	4,000.00	4,000.00	3,532.28	4,000.00	2,000.00
39 Teams & TF Expenses (Shared)	750.00	750.00	750.00	724.90	750.00	530.00
Total Teams and Task Forces	4,750.00	4,750.00	4,750.00	4,257.18	4,750.00	2,530.00
C. Oversight & Pastoral Care						
41 Synod Salaries & Benefits	541,177.00	498,862.00	457,692.00	430,897.58	421,350.00	486,913.00
42 Campus Ministry Salaries & Ben	50,000.00	50,000.00	50,000.00	46,255.11	75,000.00	75,000.00
43 Fall Theological Conference	0.00	4,000.00	4,000.00	2,350.00	4,000.00	0.00
44 First Call	1,000.00	1,000.00	2,000.00	532.94	2,000.00	0.00
48 Travel (Synod Staff)	35,000.00	35,423.00	38,000.00	27,692.41	38,000.00	35,000.00
Total Oversight/Pastoral Care	627,177.00	589,285.00	551,692.00	507,728.04	540,350.00	596,913.00
D. ELCA Partnerships						
61 Region IV	1,365.00	1,365.00	500.00	1,237.35	500.00	500.00
64 Planned Giving Partnership	7,500.00	7,500.00	0.00	0.00		
Total ELCA Partnerships	8,865.00	8,865.00	500.00	1,237.35	500.00	500.00
E. Office						
65 Rent & Occupancy	26,400.00	26,400.00	26,400.00	26,400.00	26,400.00	26,400.00
66 Asset Replacement Fund	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	13,568.28	5,000.00	2,000.00
67 Operations - Total	27,000.00	27,000.00	27,033.00	26,667.92	26,600.00	43,332.00
68 Audit	13,500.00	39,000.00	13,000.00	14,176.44	48,000.00	
69 Accounting	42,436.00	41,200.00	41,200.00	30,422.50	40,000.00	
Total Office	114,336.00	138,600.00	112,633.00	111,235.14	146,000.00	71,732.00
F. Synod Council						
70 Meetings	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	1,661.37	3,000.00	650.00
Total Synod Council	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	1,661.37	3,000.00	650.00
G. Conferences Support						
71 Dean's Meetings	1,000.00	1,000.00	2,000.00	162.35	2,000.00	750.00
75 Total Conferences Support	1,000.00	1,000.00	2,000.00	162.35	2,000.00	750.00
78 I. Bishop Transition Set Aside	5,000.00	5,000.00	10,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00
TOTAL SYNOD MINISTRY	778,128.00	764,500.00	698,575.00	647,281.43	717,600.00	691,575.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	1,354,128.00	1,364,500.00	1,286,075.00	1,313,829.44	1,305,100.00	1,291,575.00
NET REVENUE OVER OR (UNDER) EXPENSES	0.00	0.00	0.00	75,355.48	0.00	0.00

Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly
Section III - Budget & Finance

SALARIES AND BENEFITS DETAIL

Data Provided for Informational Purposes Only to Detail the Budget Line Item

Fiscal Year Ending 1/31/2027

Synod Salaries & Benefits detail for the year ending 1/31/27 is:

Description	Bishop	Clergy Staff	Non-Clergy Staff	Total Compensation
Base Salary	93,928.00	110,824.00	123,813.95	328,565.95
Employer's Social Security	0.00	0.00	9,471.77	9,471.77
Retirement	13,610.88	11,353.08	13,000.44	37,964.40
Basic Medical	38,792.28	38,545.44	40,994.88	118,332.60
Plan Administration & Disability	490.44	457.20	579.60	1,527.24
Continuing Education	1000.00	2,000.00	0.00	3,000.00
Total Compensation Prior to Reimbursements	147,821.60	163,179.72	187,860.64	498,861.96

Notes and Comments:

- (1) Bishop's and Bishop's Associate compensation per synod guidelines
- (2) 10% increase for non-clergystaff
- (3) Retirement funding rates for clergy are at the maximum contribution rates of 12%.
The bishop receives an additional 2% for a total of 14%. Others are at 10%
- (4) Bookkeeping expense has been moved to the Operations expense category
- (5) Number of FTE (full-time equivalents)

Bishop	1.00
Clergy Staff	1.25
Non-clergy Staff	<u>2.00</u>
Total	4.25

Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly
Section III - Budget & Finance

Fiscal Year Ending 1/31/2028

Synod Salaries & Benefits detail for the year ending 1/31/28 is:

Description	Bishop	Clergy Staff	Non-Clergy Staff	Total Compensation
Base Salary	96,555.84	119,848.72	133,719.07	350,123.63
Employer's Social Security	0.00	0.00	10,229.51	10,229.51
Retirement	13,610.88	11,353.08	13,000.44	37,964.40
Basic Medical	38,792.28	38,545.44	40,994.88	118,332.60
Plan Administration & Disability	490.44	457.20	579.60	1,527.24
Continuing Education	1000.00	2,000.00	0.00	3,000.00
Anticipated Portico Increases for January 2028				20,000.00
Total Compensation Prior to Reimbursements	150,449.44	172,204.44	198,523.50	541,177.38

Notes and Comments:

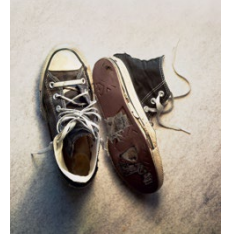
- (1) Bishop's and Bishop's Associate compensation increase estimate at 3% plus \$500
- (2) 8% increase for non-clergy staff
- (3) Retirement funding rates for clergy are at the maximum contribution rates of 12%.
The bishop receives an additional 2% for a total of 14%. Others are at 10%
- (4) Number of FTE (full-time equivalents)

Bishop	1.00
Clergy Staff	1.25
Non-clergy Staff	<u>2.00</u>
Total	4.25

2027 NARRATIVE BUDGET

Continuing with our practice of recent years, we are presenting this narrative budget as a supplement to the usual spreadsheet style budget also included in the assembly binder material. This approach helps relate the dollar figures in the budget to the synod's ministry plans for the coming year. Through this narrative budget, we hope to make it clear that each budgeted expense affects ministry, and that each ministry helps to carry out the overall mission of the synod and the larger church.

Since we all walk together to carry out God's mission, let's walk through how we will spend our money in 2027!



We are Church Together (\$576,000)

48% of all contributions received by the Central States Synod are shared with the Churchwide organization of the ELCA. This amount enables mission and ministry to happen beyond our borders (although some of these funds do indeed come back to us in terms of grants for new ministries and campus ministries.). For the first time in 15 years, we decreased our contribution percentage by 2%.

The Ministry Entrusted to the Synod. (\$19,750)

Walking together does not always mean seeing exactly where the other person goes. Different interests and responsibilities exist even among those who walk together.

This area of the budget supports the work of Camp Tomah Shinga and Hollis Renewal Center. These ministries provide outdoor ministry space and programming, so our kids and congregations have places to go for retreat and to get in touch with God's creation. **(\$10,000)**

We will support an advocacy agency in Kansas to work ecumenically to voice our concerns on matters important to all the corners of the synod. **(\$2,500)**

At the 2024 Synod Assembly, we voted to become a Reconciling in Christ synod. As a part of that commitment, we pledged to provide financial support for the Reconciling Works organization. **(\$2,500)**

Do you enjoy having a pastor to lead you? That's due to the work of the Candidacy Committee, who has shepherded those interested in the ministry along the way. **(\$4,000)**

Various ministries that help develop giving and the stewardship of resources through teams and committees such as Lutherans Restoring Creation, the Stewardship Team, and the Companion Synod Team occasionally incur expenses to facilitate the work that they do. **(\$750)**

Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly
Section III - Budget & Finance

The Ministry of Oversight and Pastoral Care (\$627,177)

When you walk together, you need someone to lean on from time to time and someone to take the lead as well.

The ministry of Oversight and Pastoral Care includes the salaries for Synod Staff, who work tirelessly to “be there” when called upon. They lend support and encouragement to congregations and to leaders, in all the “highs” and “lows” of life together. They sometimes take the brunt of anger and frustration as the powers and principalities of this present age cause friction in human community. These are leaders committed to “being there” in whatever the circumstances. **(\$541,177)**

We have dynamic leaders for two of our Campus Ministry sites in Manhattan and St. Louis. We will support the salaries of these campus ministers, who walk with new and returning students at these Campus Ministry sites. **(\$50,000)**

In conjunction with the Fall Theological Conference, all first call pastors share additional time together and with the bishop and support team. **(\$1,000)**

To enable the synod staff to be physically present with congregations and pastoral leaders this area includes travel expenses to support their work “on the road”. **(\$35,000)**

The Ministry of ELCA Partnerships (\$8,865)

A good walk sometimes calls for some specific guidance or expertise. No one goes off on a mountain hike without first investing in a good geographic contour map. It helps you plan the route, know about twists, turn and inclines, and can prepare you for the unexpected.

In the same way, our ELCA Partnership Ministries through our membership in Region IV help us anticipate and navigate through a changing landscape in the world. It’s not a large portion of the budget, but it’s an important one. Region IV helps give us a “bird’s eye” view of things changing and affecting a wider area of adjacent synods, coordinating ministry. **(\$1,365)**

The Planned Giving Partnership helps individuals, congregations and institutions better use resources, investing them, advising, and helping people do estate planning that assures a future for the things we value. **(\$7,500)**

Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly
Section III - Budget & Finance

The Ministry of Place and Property (\$114,336)

“Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to rest his head....” Jesus says, but then Jesus didn’t have to keep files to satisfy legal obligations and didn’t have a photocopier. There are some necessary things about administering a synod, and part of that is having a place to gather for meetings, to “hang one’s hat” when one is not out visiting congregations and leaders.

The Central States Synod offices are strategically located in Kansas City, right in the middle of our two-state footprint. We share office space with the local diocese of the Episcopal Church. They have been great partners with us and the space we have fulfills the needs of the staff and provides for good meeting space, when needed, for various teams and committees. You are encouraged to stop by and see your offices anytime. **(\$26,400)**

The synod does not possess many assets, but some of those that we have, need to be replaced every so often. A prime example of this are the two cars used by the bishop and the staff to be present where called. In 2024 we replaced both cars, which means we must continue to put away funds to replace those assets in the future. **(\$5,000)**

There are also the usual costs for running an office for any kind of an organization: a copier, paper, phone services, and computers. All those things that the staff needs to conduct the “business” of the synod. **(\$27,000)**

Jesus never had to worry about a financial audit, but the synod does each year. Doing this ensures the careful management of our resources and provides transparency into the business side of the synod. **(\$13,500)**

To support the bishop and staff in the financial management of the synod, we use a part-time bookkeeping service. Our bookkeeper manages the mundane, but critical tasks, which are necessary for the synod to function like payroll, receiving funds, and ensuring our bills are paid. **(\$42,436)**

The Ministry of Leadership and Outreach (\$8,000)

As we walk together, we need to support those that lead us by helping them communicate and providing them with the tools that they need. The same is true for enabling our congregations to reach outward to those in need of hearing the good news. We also need to look ahead to ensure a smooth change of leadership.

There are funds for Synod Council Meetings, Conference and Deans’ gatherings, and a set aside for bishop transitions, so that we anticipate the turnover of staff in election years.

Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly
Section III - Budget & Finance

How are these ministries funded?

Our mission relies primarily on congregations forwarding a portion of their regular offerings to our synod office as undesignated Mission Support (some call this “regular benevolence to synod”). When these offerings increase or decrease from year to year, the work of the church is strengthened or weakened and this has an impact not only synodically, but nationally and globally. **(\$1,200,000)**

Individuals, families, and congregations may designate gifts for the Synod Assembly offering and in response to the Annual Appeals or other special project needs. **(\$35,000)**

We will once again use some of the surplus that we have realized to help support the work of the synod if we don't receive the offerings or donations needed. These funds will only be used if necessary and in the amount necessary to balance the budget at the end of the year. **(\$72,128)**

In addition, the synod receives grants from the Churchwide organization for specific synod missions and reimbursements from a variety of agencies. **(\$47,000)**

To support all these ministries, as a synod we will spend a total of \$1,354,128 in 2027!

Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly
Section III - Budget & Finance

CONGREGATIONAL GIVING

FYE 1/31/2026

This report does not reflect any congregational gifts to local or other ministries that do not pass through the Central States Synod. "% Reg Rcpt" is Mission Support as a percent of Regular Giving received by the congregation as reported by the congregation on Form A for 2025.

If you believe there are discrepancies between this report and your congregational giving, please contact the synod office, administrator@css-elca.org.

Border Conference

Name	City, State	Mission Support	% Reg Rcpt	Other Giving
Advent Lutheran Church	Olathe, KS	\$52,904	10.3%	\$2,470
All Saints Lutheran Church	Blue Springs, MO	\$1,200	1.4%	\$50
Atonement Lutheran Church	Overland Park, KS	\$56,425	3.8%	\$2,005
First Lutheran Church	Saint Joseph, MO	\$4,698	1.5%	\$1,305
First Lutheran Church	Mission Hills, KS	\$10,000	4.2%	\$180
First Lutheran Church	Topeka, KS	\$37,327	11.2%	\$3,516
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church	Kansas City, MO	\$12,000	2.4%	
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church	Lawrence, KS	\$8,067	3.7%	
Grace Lutheran Church	Osage City, KS	\$3,685	4.7%	
Holy Cross Lutheran Church	Overland Park, KS	\$49,364	2.9%	
Hosanna! Lutheran Church	Liberty, MO	\$3,000	1.2%	\$223
Immanuel Lutheran Church	Kansas City, MO	\$28,237	8.3%	
Kaw Prairie Community Church	Lenexa, KS	\$4,750	0.5%	\$250
Lord Of Love Lutheran Church	Belton, MO	\$2,250	1.7%	\$512
Lutheran Church of the Resurrection	Prairie Village, KS	\$18,000	6.0%	\$150
Martin Luther Lutheran Church	Lees Summit, MO	\$6,600	2.5%	\$278
Oasis on the Boulevard	Kansas City, MO			
Our Savior's Lutheran Church	Topeka, KS	\$22,904	10.1%	
Overland Park Lutheran Church	Overland Park, KS	\$1,835	2.2%	\$1,383
Salem Lutheran Church	Overland Park, KS	\$12,910	5.8%	
Southern Sudanese Worshiping Community	Saint Joseph, MO			
St. James Lutheran Church	Kansas City, MO	\$8,050	3.4%	\$400
St. John Lutheran Church	Lancaster, KS	\$7,087	11.8%	\$706
St. John Lutheran Church	Bendena, KS	\$4,800	6.5%	\$2,163
St. Mark Hope & Peace Lutheran Church	Kansas City, MO	\$4,100	5.3%	
St. Mark Lutheran Church	Emporia, KS	\$12,936	7.3%	
St. Mark Lutheran Church	Atchison, KS	\$285	1.0%	\$2,000
St. Mark Lutheran Church	Olathe, KS	\$8,683	2.4%	\$4,355
St. Martin Lutheran Church	Kansas City, KS	\$2,500	1.6%	\$1,310
St. Paul Lutheran Church	Valley Falls, KS	\$900	5.2%	
Trinity Lutheran Church	Topeka, KS	\$5,334	4.5%	\$203
Trinity Lutheran Church	Lawrence, KS	\$23,917	4.4%	
Upper Wolf Lutheran Church	Robinson, KS	\$1,640	6.1%	\$1,000

Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly
Section III - Budget & Finance

Central Kansas Conference

Name	City, State	Mission Support	% Reg Rcpt	Other Giving
Ada Lutheran Church	Courtland, KS			
Amana Lutheran Church	Scandia, KS			
American Lutheran Church	Belleville, KS	\$3,750	7.8%	\$100
Andover Lutheran Church	Windom, KS	\$6,000	12.4%	
Assaria Lutheran Church	Assaria, KS	\$12,000	7.4%	
Bethany Lutheran Church	Lindsborg, KS	\$20,500	3.0%	\$11,259
Christ Lutheran Church	Eureka, KS			
Christ Lutheran Church	Wichita, KS	\$19,799	8.3%	
Concordia Lutheran Church	Concordia, KS	\$13,375	15.7%	\$906
Elim Lutheran Church	Marquette, KS	\$6,000	5.3%	
Emanuel Lutheran Church	Hutchinson, KS	\$20,000	5.0%	
Faith Lutheran Church	Junction City, KS	\$4,160	8.5%	
Falun Lutheran Church	Falun, KS	\$2,000	2.8%	
First Lutheran Church	Manhattan, KS	\$49,473	10.1%	\$2,167
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church	Wichita, KS	\$21,611	4.2%	
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church	Washington, KS	\$2,000	3.6%	\$300
Hebron Lutheran Church	Burdick, KS	\$3,000	6.5%	
Immanuel Lutheran Church	Salina, KS	\$3,000	1.7%	\$450
Marion Hill Lutheran Church	White City, KS	\$4,800	14.8%	\$350
Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church	Lindsborg, KS	\$6,038	4.1%	\$650
New Gottland Lutheran Church	McPherson, KS			
New Hope Lutheran Church	Onaga, KS	\$2,100	5.9%	\$1,208
Olsburg Lutheran Church	Olsburg, KS	\$3,000	5.9%	
Partners (Mision San Juan de Dios) Ministry	Wichita, KS	\$600	8.1%	
Peace Lutheran Church	Manhattan, KS	\$7,500	2.4%	\$1,000
Redeemer Lutheran Church	Salina, KS	\$9,600	4.1%	\$1,310
Reformation Lutheran Church	Wichita, KS	\$30,000	8.9%	\$125
Resurrection Lutheran Church	Haysville, KS	\$7,462	4.4%	\$11,605
Salemsborg Lutheran Church	Smolan, KS			\$13,800
St. John (Lanham) Lutheran Church	Hanover, KS	\$2,400	18.4%	
St. John Lutheran Church	Wellington, KS			
St. John Lutheran Church	Salina, KS	\$21,000	7.8%	\$3,808
St. Mark Lutheran Church	Waterville, KS	\$3,750	3.3%	
St. Paul Lutheran Church	Tescott, KS			
St. Paul Lutheran Church	Herington, KS	\$6,215	5.1%	\$250
St. Paul Lutheran Church	Peabody, KS	\$1,200	5.8%	
St. Paul Lutheran Church	Wichita, KS	\$1,500	1.3%	
St. Paul Lutheran Church	Gasco, KS	\$2,873		\$100
Trinity Lutheran Church	Greenleaf, KS			
Trinity Lutheran Church	McPherson, KS	\$30,150	9.5%	\$12,937
Walsburg Lutheran Church	Leonardville, KS	\$3,177	3.6%	\$717
Zion Lutheran Church	Hanover, KS			

Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly
Section III - Budget & Finance

Eastern Missouri Conference

Name	City, State	Mission Support	% Reg Rcpt	Other Giving
Bethel (University City) Lutheran Church	Saint Louis, MO	\$29,419	6.9%	\$250
Christ Lutheran Church	Webster Groves, MO	\$25,000	6.8%	
Family of Christ Lutheran Church	Imperial, MO	\$1,500	2.1%	
Gethsemane Lutheran Church	Saint Louis, MO	\$25,300	9.0%	\$240
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church	Manchester, MO	\$78,043	5.8%	\$2,000
Holy Cross Lutheran Church	Creve Coeur, MO	\$12,500	3.7%	
Hope Lutheran Church	Saint Charles, MO	\$11,230	3.4%	
Living Lord Lutheran Church	Lake St Louis, MO	\$25,000	2.5%	\$1,100
Lutheran Church of the Atonement	Florissant, MO	\$5,528	0.8%	\$530
Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd	Hazelwood, MO	\$9,000	3.4%	\$465
Lutheran Church of the Living Christ	Florissant, MO	\$4,000	3.4%	
Peace Lutheran Church	Washington, MO	\$14,248	10.6%	
Redeemer Lutheran Church	De Soto, MO	\$16,022	8.8%	\$488
Sargent's Chapel Lutheran Church	Sedgewickville, MO	\$5,000	14.1%	\$1,000
Sedgewickville Lutheran Church	Sedgewickville, MO	\$200	2.0%	
Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church	Bridgeton, MO	\$4,000	3.4%	\$4,000
St. Andrew Lutheran Church	Poplar Bluff, MO			
St. Mark Evangelical Lutheran Church	Saint Louis, MO	\$15,000	8.3%	\$15
St. Mark Lutheran Church	Cape Girardeau, MO	\$6,000	4.1%	
St. Philip Evangelical Lutheran Church	Saint Louis, MO	\$1,000	1.4%	\$386
St. Thomas-Holy Spirit Lutheran Church	Saint Louis, MO	\$11,000	3.9%	\$307
Trinity Lutheran Church	Chesterfield, MO	\$27,500	2.2%	
Trinity Lutheran Church	Kirkwood, MO	\$2,600	1.4%	
Unity Evangelical Lutheran Church	Saint Louis, MO	\$15,600	6.7%	\$2,200
Zion Lutheran Church	Ferguson, MO	\$10,044	6.5%	\$1,050

Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly
Section III - Budget & Finance

Osage Conference

Name	City, State	Mission Support	% Reg Rcpt	Other Giving
Christ & Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church	Sedalia, MO	\$1,400	3.6%	
Community Lutheran Church	Eagle Rock, MO			
Immanuel (Brauersville) Lutheran Church	Cole Camp, MO	\$1,400		\$2,900
Kent Memorial Lutheran Church	Sunrise Beach, MO	\$19,309	15.0%	\$2,040
Messiah Lutheran Church	Springfield, MO	\$44,648	6.9%	\$4,405
Our Savior Lutheran Church	Salem, MO	\$600	3.2%	
Our Savior's Lutheran Church	Jefferson City, MO	\$11,650	5.5%	
Our Savior's Lutheran Church	Camdenton, MO	\$4,583	4.5%	
Peace Lutheran Church	Joplin, MO	\$3,149	7.0%	\$160
Peace Lutheran Church	Salisbury, MO	\$500	2.9%	
Peace Lutheran Church	Hollister, MO			\$500
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church	Springfield, MO	\$8,318	3.9%	\$960
Pyrmont Trinity Lutheran Church	Stover, MO	\$800	2.7%	\$200
St. Andrew Lutheran Church	Columbia, MO	\$32,500	7.4%	\$240
St. John Lutheran Church	Pittsburg, KS	\$6,000	3.5%	
St. Matthew American Lutheran Church	Butler, MO	\$1,146	3.1%	
St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church	Cole Camp, MO	\$7,493	3.3%	\$3,965
St. Paul Lutheran Church	Nevada, MO	\$5,058	8.8%	
St. Paul Lutheran Church	Lohman, MO	\$19,447	9.9%	
St. Paul Lutheran Church	West Plains, MO	\$1,330	3.9%	\$260
Trinity Lutheran Church	Russellville, MO	\$6,000	4.9%	

Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly
Section III - Budget & Finance

Western Kansas Conference

Name	City, State	Mission Support	% Reg Rcpt	Other Giving
American Lutheran Church	Smith Center, KS	\$6,000	5.6%	
Bethesda Lutheran Church	Winona, KS	\$2,000	13.9%	
Bethlehem Lutheran Church	Wakeeney, KS	\$3,000	3.3%	\$600
Denmark (Sylvan Grove) Lutheran Church	Lincoln, KS			
Emanuel Lutheran Church	WaKeeney, KS			
Emmanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church	Stuttgart, KS	\$6,888	8.2%	
Emmanuel Lutheran Church	Hoisington, KS	\$1,300	2.3%	
Excelsior Lutheran Church	Wilson, KS	\$1,400	23.6%	
Faith Lutheran Church	Oberlin, KS	\$2,100	3.5%	\$900
First Lutheran Church	Dorrance, KS	\$1,288	4.5%	\$50
Garfield Lutheran Church	Garfield, KS			
Hope Lutheran Church	Rush Center, KS	\$1,250	3.0%	
Iglesia Luterana Sagrado Corazon de Jesus	Garden City, KS			
Immanuel Lutheran Church	Wilson, KS	\$4,728	10.0%	\$1,200
Our Savior's Lutheran Church	Brewster, KS	\$3,000	13.7%	
Peace Lutheran Church	Albert, KS	\$2,400	2.7%	
Sharon Lutheran Church	Sharon Springs, KS	\$1,530	7.8%	
St. James Lutheran Church	Garden City, KS	\$1,200	5.4%	\$150
St. John Lutheran Church	Kensington, KS	\$9,000		\$200
St. John Lutheran Church	Ellis, KS	\$2,400	3.2%	
St. John Lutheran Church	Russell, KS	\$10,100	5.2%	\$103
St. Mark Lutheran Church	Great Bend, KS	\$3,600	3.2%	
St. Paul Lutheran Church	Galatia, KS	\$610	1.9%	
Trinity Lutheran Church	Hays, KS	\$4,583	5.8%	\$223
Zion Lutheran Church	Phillipsburg, KS	\$4,414	6.6%	\$75

COMPENSATION GUIDELINES FOR 2027

*Compensation & Benefits for Rostered Ministers
Pastors and Deacons*



CENTRAL STATES SYNOD

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

COMPENSATION GUIDELINES TASK FORCE:

Pr. Chris Deines, Lindsborg, KS
Pr. Mike Kern, Liberty, MO
Dennis Kemper, Bel-Nor, MO
David Stock, Holts Summit, MO
Jennifer Leclair, Lake St. Louis, MO

SYNOD STAFF:

The Rev. Chad Langdon, Bishop's Associate

GUIDELINES FOR 2027

For approval by the Central States Synod Assembly, June 6, 2026

A MESSAGE FROM THE BISHOP OF THE SYNOD

“Those who labor deserve their wages”

--Luke 10:7 and 1 Timothy 5:18

Dear Ministry Partners,

I am so grateful for the ways you are working to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in your context and across our synod. We are blessed to have so many committed disciples here in the Central States Synod, and to have skilled and thoughtful professional leaders. Because we want to ensure that all those who labor in our ministries are fairly compensated for the work they do, we create compensation guidelines every year.

These guidelines are the result of hours of conversation about the financial burdens our leaders carry and the financial pressures on our congregations and other ministries. The Compensation Guidelines Team works hard to make sure that their proposed rates of compensation are fair to all parties. We want our congregations to be able to afford good leaders. And we want leaders to be compensated justly for the work they do. In addition, we want to be able to attract excellent leaders to our synod, which has become quite a challenge in the midst of a shortage of both clergy and lay leaders.

These guidelines are just that—guidelines. They frame a conversation around compensation that should be open and honest, grace-filled and respectful. The worksheet is a starting place, factoring in different variables, including years of experience, additional responsibilities, and advanced study.

The compensation begins with the worksheet and continues with expectations, goals, and priorities. Every year each rostered minister and synod-authorized minister should have a performance review, not simply to reflect on how things have been going in the partnership between the rostered ministry and congregation, but also to be clear about goals and expectations for the coming year. This is a gift to both the minister and the ministry.

Thank you for your work on the compensation process for your leader(s). If we can help you in any way, please contact the synod office and speak to myself or Pastor Chad Langdon, our Associate for Leadership.



*The Rev. Dr. Donna Simon, Bishop
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Link to:

[2027 Compensation Worksheet](#)

SECTION 1: COMPENSATION

A. APPROPRIATE COMPENSATION

Determining appropriate compensation is difficult! Rostered ministers (pastors and deacons) are not always paid what they should be paid. By virtue of their educational requirements and congregational/ministry site expectations, rostered ministers are professionals. They bring to their congregations or ministry sites many gifts, and should be compensated according to their education, ability, and responsibility, and in line with the incomes of professionals in comparable positions. Some synods define this as high school principals; others compare it with rostered leaders of other denominations. Based on their compensation, rostered ministers should be able to provide for their own economic needs as well as those of their spouse and/or children.

The Central States Synod cannot provide specific tax or legal advice to rostered ministers, congregations, or specialized ministries. If you have questions about tax matters or legal issues, contact a qualified tax adviser or attorney. Information provided by the IRS specifically for churches and religious organizations can be found at:

<http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p1828.pdf>

Just as the rostered minister ought to be paid a livable wage, compensation should not exceed the community's ability to give according to their own needs. The contributions of individuals and families in a congregation come from their own hard work, labor and time spent away from loved ones. All in the congregation need to find the appropriate balance in compensating rostered ministers and church professionals. Mission, ministry, and expectations must be clearly articulated if rostered ministers are to be held accountable for their service. A Congregation Council or specialized ministry governing board is expected to annually review the joint ministry expectations of the congregation or ministry and its professional ministers. Constructive adjustments in expectations and/or direction can be made at this time. For the financial health of the community, compensation packages ought to be annually reviewed as well. Realistic expectations and adequate compensation are critical to the future well-being of the whole community.

Everyone must remember that the process for determining compensation must be open, honest, and gracious conversation. Both professional ministers and ministry representatives, (whether the Congregation Council, a staff support committee, or personnel committee), should articulate their expectations clearly and develop a regular ministry evaluation process to note changes as program directions shift or as the rostered minister's skills or needs change. Honest assessment leads to healthy ministry. Not even carefully crafted guidelines can give congregations or specialized ministries automatic, concise and simple answers to what are inherently complex issues. Following the criteria set forth in the Rostered Minister Recommended Salary Worksheet will be helpful in ministry assessment and compensation discussions.

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While the focus of these guidelines applies only to rostered ministers, the principles apply to other church workers. Youth directors, secretaries, custodians, choir directors, organists, teachers and others also deserve fair compensation, and the responsibility of the congregation to these persons is no less than to the rostered minister.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Housing and Social Security allowances (Parts B, C, and D below) are provided for pastors only. All other recommended guidelines in this document apply to all rostered ministers (pastors and deacons).

If current compensation is below a level agreed to be fair, moving to a level of adequate compensation may involve patience on the part of rostered ministers as a ministry works to achieve that goal. It will also involve a ministry's determined effort in stewardship and education to reach that level. For example, if the compensation is 10% below the guideline, the ministry might make the commitment to increase the rostered minister's salary by 6% - 8% per year for three years to reach the appropriate compensation guideline three years hence. Finally, adequate and fair compensation encourages good morale on the part of professional ministers and the congregation or specialized ministry as they work together to do ministry and mission in the name and spirit of Jesus Christ. See Section 4. Part A. for a list of non-cash compensation options.

If the congregation or specialized ministry is already ABOVE the appropriate compensation guideline, a cost of living increase equivalent to the CPI-U for the Midwest should be considered (<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/cpi.t04.htm>), since the failure to provide a cost of living salary increase is, in effect, a salary cut. In addition, merit increases should be considered for all rostered ministers.

B. HOUSING ALLOWANCE FOR PASTORS

Pastors called to congregational or specialized ministries may designate a portion of their compensation as a "housing allowance." This is a significant tax advantage giving pastors the ability to exclude from federally taxable income that part of compensation that is used to provide a home (Internal Revenue Code section 107). Please remember that this designation does not change the total defined compensation paid to a pastor. This is also not an exclusion for income used in determining Social Security or SECA tax obligations.

Portico Benefit Services provides helpful information on housing allowance. Please contact them for more information.

Congregations that pay their pastors a housing allowance must approve a resolution prior to the beginning of each calendar year. Both pastor and congregation should keep a copy for their files. The original should be in the records of the congregation. See the bottom of the worksheet on the Ministry Leader tab for a sample resolution.

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The following kinds of expenses can be used when calculating the housing allowance.

- Mortgage or rent payments
- Real estate taxes
- Property Insurance
- Down Payment on a home
- Utilities
- Furnishings & Appliances (purchase & repair)
- Remodeling & repairs
- Yard maintenance & improvements

Only the lowest of the following can be used when a pastor files their federal income tax return:

- The fair rental value of the home (including all expenses listed above)
- The amount actually spent to provide a home
- The amount officially designated as the housing allowance

The housing allowance amount is always excluded from federal income. This means that the congregation or specialized ministry excludes this amount from Box 1 of the W-2. The amount will, however, be entered in Box 14 of the W-2, which is merely an information item. A pastor should always check with her or his own tax advisor for personal questions or concerns about the housing allowance or other tax issues.

C. MINISTRY-PROVIDED HOUSING (PARSONAGES)

Where a congregation provides a parsonage, the congregation should assume all costs for maintenance and utilities. The congregation may pay these costs directly or give an allowance to the pastor sufficient to cover the expenses. In addition to these costs, the congregation should provide and maintain major appliances in the parsonage. While living in a parsonage has many advantages, it does not build home equity for retirement. If a parsonage is provided, the congregation is encouraged to provide the pastor a Housing Equity Allowance. It is helpful for the congregation to pay directly to a tax deferred plan which delays the income tax due until the funds are actually withdrawn for use; this can be done by making additional employer contributions with Portico Benefit Services. It is recommended that these contributions total at least 3% of the defined compensation (Salary & Cash Value of Parsonage). When housing is provided for a pastor couple, a 30% housing allowance for *each* spouse must be included when calculating defined compensation for Portico Benefit Services.

D. SOCIAL SECURITY ALLOWANCE FOR PASTORS

While most pastors are employees for federal income tax reporting purposes, they all are self-employed for social security purposes. This means that pastors are not subject to "FICA" taxes, even though they report their income taxes as employees and receive a W-2 from their church. Rather, they pay the "self-employment tax" (SECA – Self-Employed Contributions Act) of 15.30% of their salary and housing allowance. Since congregations are required to pay 7.65% of a lay employee's salary for social security benefits, it is fair and recommended to pay this amount as a Social Security allowance to the pastor. Many

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congregations provide an allowance for all or part of this expense. This allowance, if provided, is part of the taxable income for the pastor. Deacons and lay ministers are considered to be employees of the congregation and congregations are required to pay Social Security taxes and file federal tax W-2 or 1099 forms, as appropriate.

SECTION 2: BENEFITS

A. ELCA BENEFITS PLAN (PORTICO)

The congregation shall budget for and participate in the ELCA Retirement, Health, Disability, and Survivor benefits through Portico Benefit Services. Health insurance shall be provided for the rostered minister and their family, unless their spouse has separate medical insurance that covers the family, and the rostered minister waives the health coverage through Portico. Rates are based on geographic location and rate class, defined compensation, plan member age, health benefit option, and household coverage level. To determine the amount to be contributed go to [Benefit Costs Calculator](#) and use the calculator tools provided on the website and see the four health plan options.

Each year in the fall, all employers (congregations) and plan members must go through open enrollment on the Portico website to choose the health plan they are going to provide and participate in. The health plan chosen cannot be changed during the next year, even if there is a transition in the call.

The synod recommends a minimum 12% retirement contribution, regardless of the age of the rostered minister. Retirement contributions can be modified during the year. Congregations in consultation with their rostered ministers have the option of reallocating 2% of the recommended retirement contribution to help those rostered ministers reduce their student loan principal. Other options also include extra contributions to their continuing education and professional expenses.

Portico Benefit Services, the nonprofit benefit ministry of the ELCA, provides the benefit program for rostered ministers, lay employees, and their families. Portico provides health benefits that also include dental and prescription drugs, as well as retirement, disability, and survivor benefits in one bundled program.* This program is designed to address the needs of rostered ministers and provide seamless benefits during change of call, leave from call, and other events unique to ministry. Our bundled approach is designed to help ensure rostered ministers and lay employees are protected against significant financial loss from a variety of risks. Through Portico, congregations** in this synod and across the country pool their collective purchasing power to provide benefits in a cost-effective manner.

Congregations and plan members share the cost of benefits. Congregations are expected to support the well-being of their covered plan members by paying all or a significant portion of the contributions for benefits (i.e., monthly premiums for the health plan). Plan

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members are expected to participate in the cost of utilizing their health benefits through out-of-pocket costs when they receive care (e.g., deductibles, copays, and coinsurance).

The ELCA Church Council endorses a balance of cost-sharing between congregations and plan members; the cost-sharing is reflected in all the ELCA-Primary health benefit options offered by Portico, effective Jan. 1, 2027. Each fall, congregations should engage in conversation with their sponsored plan member(s) to determine the option that best fits their needs and then make their selection during Portico's annual enrollment. Current contribution rates are available at EmployerLink.PorticoBenefits.org or by calling Portico at 800.352.2876.

*A plan member may waive health coverage if they have access to valid medical insurance coverage through their spouse or another employer, or if they qualify for a subsidy due to income level when purchasing health coverage through the exchange.

**"Congregations" may also refer to multi-point parishes or other non-parish ministry agencies such as Bible camps, long-term care facilities, hospitals, campus ministries, etc.

B. AUTOMOBILE EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

Automobile expense and other work-related travel are business expenses of the congregation and should not be considered by the congregation as part of the rostered minister's compensation. Automobile reimbursements should be sufficient to cover all congregation-related activities. Car expenses include actual expense plus depreciation. The Internal Revenue Service requires accurate records to support automobile expenses. The rostered minister is responsible for maintaining adequate records for every vehicle used for work-related travel. Because new tax laws no longer allow non-reimbursed business expenses, including mileage, to be claimed on tax returns, we recommend congregations use one of the options below rather than providing an automobile allowance:

- The congregation purchases or leases a vehicle and assumes the total expense.
- The congregation reimburses for actual miles driven at a specific rate per mile. The rate might vary depending on where the vehicle is driven and how many miles are driven each year. The current IRS reimbursement rate can be found on <https://www.irs.gov/tax-professionals/standard-mileage-rates>. The "business" rate shall be used.
- The Central States Synod does not recommend that congregations provide an automobile allowance.

C. PROFESSIONAL EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

It is recommended that the congregation share professional expenses such as books, clerical apparel, periodicals, professional dues, software, entertaining, and hospitality costs incurred in the performance of the duties of the ministry as well as technology tools such as phones and tablets which are essential and necessary for the minister's calling. The Central States Synod recommends that this be set as a line item in a budget.

D. VACATION

Because a rostered minister is “on call” day and night and carries heavy responsibilities daily, the recommended minimum annual vacation time is four weeks, which includes four Sundays. The congregation should consider granting additional vacation time based on length of service in ministry. The length of vacation time, including the number of Sundays off and when vacation time is to be taken, are all matters which need to be discussed openly with your rostered minister and are an important part of their compensation.

For a full time call, it is recommended that a minimum of 20 days of vacation (including 4 Sundays) should be provided as part of the pastor’s benefits.

Vacation time should be used within the calendar year and not accumulated, except by special agreement with the congregation council. Vacation time is available during the first year of any call. Vacation time is a good investment in the health and well-being of the rostered minister and his/her family. Time spent in outdoor ministries and retreats with congregation youth and adults, or work on area ministry, synod, or ELCA committees should not be considered vacation time or educational leave.

E. DAYS OFF

At least one, and preferably two, full days off should be granted each week. It is understood that congregation emergencies may require a change in schedule from time to time. Days off due to illness shall not be subtracted from vacation time.

F. HOLIDAYS

It should be noted that the rostered minister is seldom able to take advantage of three-day weekends and other holidays such as Christmas and Easter. Consideration is to be given and the rostered minister encouraged to take days off another time during the week to compensate for these and national holidays. Compensation time is not to be counted as vacation time.

G. CONTINUING EDUCATION

The Lutheran Church has a history of an educated and well-trained leadership. The congregation should expect its rostered ministers to be involved in continuing education programs which will provide opportunity for personal development, enrichment of devotional life, and growth in effectiveness and competency. Continuing education is regarded as an essential ongoing process that assists the leader in maintaining and sharpening the professional skills required for congregation rostered leader in a rapidly changing world. The ELCA expects each rostered minister to participate in an average of 50 contact hours of annually. Congregation and synod staff should consider a rostered minister’s continuing education record when granting compensation increases and in the call process.

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Continuing education is understood to be "professional growth" and "self-renewal," as distinguished from program development, vacation, or a theological convocation. Both the rostered minister and the congregation will benefit from the minister's involvement in continuing education. It is therefore suggested that any continuing education program be mutually studied and agreed upon by the leader and the congregation council. Continuing education may include courses, seminary classes, workshops, or independent study when directed toward a goal.

Conferences and events provided by this synod (such as the annual Fall Theological Conference) are not to be considered as part of continuing education.

The recommended continuing education time is two weeks (fourteen full days which include Sundays), plus the recommendation of \$1,000 per year to fund the continuing education. It is also recommended that this amount accumulate in a separate fund so that the equivalent of three years funds is available and that the rostered minister use at least one week per year. Unless a congregation has an explicit written policy relating to the use of continuing education funds, upon beginning a new call within the ELCA, those funds will transfer to the new congregation.

H. SABBATICAL

When a rostered minister has served longer than five years and has served for at least three years in their current call, the congregation is encouraged to grant sabbatical leave of three to six months. Further sabbaticals shall be granted every five years. Compensation during sabbatical leave shall remain unchanged for the pastor or deacon. The congregation is responsible for the costs of pulpit supply and emergency coverage, or the salary of an interim pastor, during a sabbatical leave. The purpose of sabbatical leave is for rest and renewal of rostered minister. *See Appendix A.*

SECTION 3: DISABILITY AND LEAVE

A. TEMPORARY DISABILITY

In the case of disability due to injury, or physical or mental health condition, the congregation shall continue to pay the full compensation and housing for the first sixty days of disability, until the temporary disability benefits of Portico Benefit Services go into effect. Disability benefits under the ELCA Disability Benefits Plan provide monthly income, health and survivor coverage, and contributions to the ELCA Retirement Plan. These benefits are designed to help rostered ministers adapt and recover from disabling illness and injury until they can return to work, if possible. The congregation council and rostered minister should contact the synod office and Portico prior to taking actions related to disability.

B. FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE POLICY

The Central States Synod and the ELCA seek to provide compensation and benefit policies that meet the needs of all rostered ministers. As such, this synod recommends that all congregations create a Family and Medical Leave policy that supports the needs and health of the rostered minister.

Family and Medical Leave shall be granted for the following:

- To provide care for a family member during physical or mental illness, injury, or other needs. Covered family members should, at minimum, include spouse, domestic partner, parents, siblings, children, foster children, in-laws, grandparents, and grandchildren.
- Adding a family member by birth, adoption, or foster care.

Since each family's situation is unique, congregations are encouraged to be flexible and understanding in granting the necessary time for the rostered minister to meet the needs of their family situation. Family and Medical Leave is a good investment in the health and well-being of the rostered minister and their family as well as a positive way to lift up and model healthy familial commitments to the whole congregation. Any weeks on leave are minimal relative to the length of a rostered leader's time in the congregation and the health that leader requires to care for congregations. Paid Family and Medical Leave shall not reduce allotted vacation time.

A minimum of eight weeks paid Family and Medical Leave shall be granted to a rostered leader, with the option to extend that leave without repercussion an additional four weeks by use of vacation time and/or unpaid leave.

A sample Family and Medical Leave Policy is included in Appendix B.

SECTION 4: OTHER MATTERS

A. ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION

Congregations who are unable to meet compensation guidelines or would like to reward faithful ministers for their service might consider a variety of means of additional compensation. They should ask their rostered minister what other types of compensation would be beneficial to them. Congregations are invited to think creatively about this. Examples vary by congregation, but some have provided:

- Additional vacation and/or continuing education time
- Additional continuing education funds
- Services from congregation members: licensed daycare, haircuts, car service, dry cleaning, lawn care, snow blowing, etc.

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- Additional retirement contributions (above 12%)

B. INTERIM AND PART-TIME MINISTRIES

Because situations vary greatly with interim and part-time ministries, guidance for structuring and compensating these ministries will be provided by the synod office staff as needed.

C. PULPIT SUPPLY

Pulpit supply is to be arranged and paid for by the congregation. \$190 for one worship service, plus \$65 for each additional service is a recommended minimum. If additional responsibilities are requested, such as service planning, visitation, faith formation, etc., additional compensation should be considered. Mileage reimbursement should be provided, based on the current IRS business rate (<https://www.irs.gov/tax-professionals/standard-mileage-rates>).

APPENDIX A - Extended Leave (Sabbatical Guidelines)

PREFACE

The Biblical witness is the story of God's continuing faithfulness to invest the Gospel into human hands and lives. The Apostle Paul speaks of it as pouring God's love into earthen vessels: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us." (2 Cor. 4:7). Earthen vessels are meant to be filled and emptied, again and again. But care must be taken that, once emptied, the vessels can be filled once again.

St. Paul cautions us that spiritual strength essential to effective ministry comes from God and does not come from ourselves. Both in the strength and in the filling, it is a transcendent power given to us, poured into us as God's people. This is true for all the baptized. It is equally true, perhaps even to a greater degree, of those we look to for filling and spiritual nurture, the rostered ministers who serve among us: pastors and deacons.

The concept of wholeness and wellness in ministry is an important principle in the life of the Church. Healthy congregations and healthy rostered ministers are essential to a healthy community of faithful people. It is our belief that sabbatical leave for rostered ministers is an expression of mutual care for one another.

Sabbatical Leave should be considered by both clergy and congregation as an integral feature of clergy's life and ministry. The clergy and congregation should plan together a definite sabbatical schedule which provides benefits in ministry for both. Sabbatical leave is a privilege granted by a congregation to its leader. It is an opportunity the congregation provides its leader to experience a renewal of oneself and of one's mission. It is a time for reflection, spiritual re-encounter, renewal, and community.

The distinct benefits of a sabbatical leave are twofold:

- a) The mission of the congregation benefits from the opportunity to be re-empowered through caring for the ministry of the congregation in the absence of a rostered leader in addition to the presence following sabbatical leave of rostered leaders whose skills and creativity have been renewed or enhanced through a time for reflection, spiritual re-encounter, renewal, and community.
- b) The ministry of rostered leaders benefits from the personal renewal that comes from an extended time for reflection, spiritual re-encounter, renewal, and community.

The Central States Synod has developed the following guidelines for congregations, institutions, and agencies of the church to make a sabbatical leave possible for the rostered persons who serve among us. An extended sabbatical leave provides an opportunity for rostered ministers to reflect on their call to ministry and relationship with God. An extended sabbatical leave should be holistic, including time for prayer, reflection, relaxation, and refreshment of body and spirit.

EXTENDED SABBATICAL LEAVE GUIDELINES

1. An extended sabbatical leave of three to six months be granted to rostered ministers. To be eligible for sabbatical leave, leaders shall have been (a) in rostered ministry for five years and (b) at least three years in their current call. Following their first sabbatical, rostered leaders shall be eligible for sabbatical leave every five years.
2. The rostered minister is normally expected to serve the congregation, agency, or institution for at least one year following completion of the sabbatical leave.
3. The congregation, institution, or agency shall maintain the defined compensation (base salary, housing, and Social Security allowance), and ELCA Retirement and Benefits program be maintained at the current budget level. Rostered leaders and congregations are encouraged to apply for outside funding support when available.
4. Extended sabbatical leave shall be presented to the congregation council or governing body of the agency or institution not less than twelve (12) months prior to the beginning of the proposed leave.
5. Expenses incurred by the rostered leader during the sabbatical leave will be borne by that leader. Continuing education funds would normally be used to cover some of the expenses.
6. Realizing the congregation, agency, or institution will be without the services of its regularly called person, it should consult with the synodical bishop regarding possible options for continuing coverage during the period of the sabbatical leave.
7. It is understood that the extended sabbatical leave is a mutually negotiated agreement between the rostered person and the congregation, agency, or institution. The extended sabbatical leave agreement will be filed with the synod office ordinarily at least three months prior to the beginning date of the sabbatical leave.

The above extended Sabbatical Leave Guidelines were amended by the Synod Council Executive Committee Meeting on May 13, 2022.

APPENDIX B: Sample Family and Medical Leave Policy

[Name of Congregation/Ministry] is committed to a culture that helps our rostered leaders and employees meet the demands of family and employment responsibilities. Offering our rostered leaders and employees the option of taking paid time off when they or a family member is sick is not just good for our leaders and their families, it's good for our faith community.

Therefore, it is our policy to provide up to 8 weeks of paid family and medical leave, with the option to extend that leave without repercussion an additional four weeks by use of vacation time and/or unpaid leave, in a 12-month period to eligible rostered leaders as defined below.

Eligibility

To be eligible for paid Family and Medical leave (PFML), a rostered leader or employee must qualify for leave from work for a reason covered by the Federal Family and Medical Leave Act:

- For the employee's own serious health condition.
- For the birth of the employee's child, and to care for the newborn child.
- For the placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care; or
- To care for the employee's spouse, domestic partner, child, or parent who has a serious health condition.

This leave will also be extended for siblings, children, foster children, in-laws, grandparents, and grandchildren.

Use of Paid Family Medical Leave (PFML), Rate of Pay and Benefits While on Leave

PFML will be subject to the following general requirements:

1. Generally, employees are entitled to take up to 8 weeks of paid leave in a single 12-month period for the reasons specified above. For the purposes of this policy, [Name of Congregation/Ministry] will calculate the amount of PFML available to an employee using a "rolling" 12-month period.
2. Employees are entitled to extend their leave without repercussion an additional four weeks by use of vacation time and/or unpaid leave.
3. Any PFML taken for the birth/adoption/foster care placement of a child must be completed within one year after the date of birth or placement.
4. Full-time rostered leader(s)/employees will be compensated at the regular, base weekly rate of pay. The compensation rate of those who are part-time will be pro-rated based on an average number of hours worked in the 6 months before leave begins.
5. If the reason for PFML also is covered by the [Name of Congregation's/Ministry's] short-term benefits policy (or other policies), benefits will run concurrently. However, [Name of Congregation/Ministry] will supplement the employee's pay so that the employee receives 100 percent compensation during the period of leave.

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6. To the extent applicable, PFML will run concurrently with federal FMLA and any leave provided under state or local law.
7. If a rostered leader/employee is enrolled in group health insurance or other insurance benefits, these benefits will continue as if the employee had not taken leave.

How to Request PFML?

If a rostered leader/employee requests leave for a reason that the employee believes qualifies under this policy, the employee must comply with **[Name of Congregation/Ministry]** notification policy **[include reference to handbook page here if congregation has one]**. Failure to comply with **[Name of Congregation's/Ministry's]** notification policies and procedures or to provide documentation or information requested may result in delay or denial of requested time off.

Reinstatement

When the rostered leader/employee timely returns from PFML and used the leave for the stated purpose, the rostered leader/employee will be reinstated to the same position held when leave began.

Before returning to work from PFML for the employee's own serious health condition, the employee may be required to submit certification from a health care provider that the employee is able to resume work.

Compliance with State and Local law

[Name of Congregation/Ministry] recognizes the co-existence of state and/or local laws regarding family and medical leave. Where such laws apply and provide greater family and medical leave rights than this policy, **[Name of Congregation/Ministry]** will comply with those laws.

Notes on this Sample Policy

The Federal Family and Medical Leave Act covers private sector employers who employ 50 or more employees for at least 20 workweeks in the current or preceding calendar year. Although this Act does not apply to many congregations, we seek to provide benefits in line with the spirit of this Act, taking into consideration the unique structure and number of employees in most of our congregations.

Please note that the information provided, while research-based, is not guaranteed for accuracy and legality. Please seek legal assistance, or assistance from state or federal governmental resources, to make certain your legal interpretation and decisions are correct. This information is for guidance, ideas, and assistance.

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Section V - Resolutions

2025 CENTRAL STATES SYNOD ASSEMBLY ACTIONS

Number & Name	Summary	Actions needed/taken
SA 25.01 Commitment to the Development of New Congregations	Establish a “New Mission Start Fund” seeded with money from the sale of synod owned property. Identify communities of growth and present a strategic plan with realistic goals for new starts over the next five years.	Task force was established. A full report follows below.
SA 25.02 A Season of Global Awareness	Epiphany season designated as Season of Global Awareness, October 5, 2025 – Sunday to remember ELCUSFE (Russia) and February 15, 2026 – Sunday to remember Papua New Guinea	The Companion Synod team provided a devotional series for the Epiphany season. Before designated Sundays, materials were made available for congregations to use during worship.
SA 25.03 Thanksgiving for Ministry	Remembered and gave thanks for: Retried Ministers Ministers who have died Congregations that closed Congregations that disaffiliated	The assembly joined together in prayer.

SA 25.01 New Start Task Force Assembly Report

In 2025 the Central States Assembly adopted SA 25.01 to commit \$100,000 of the Mission Transformation Fund to support starting new churches in the synod.

The second part of that resolution was a commitment to **Identify communities of growth in Kansas and Missouri** and **formulate a strategic mission plan** to be presented at the 2026 Synod Assembly of the Central States Synod. What follows is that report.

1. Identify viable opportunities for the development of new ministries (top tier growth)

- a. Wichita Metro Area
 - i. Maize, KS (Wichita)
- b. Kansas City Metro
 - i. Gardner, KS
 - ii. Spring Hill, KS
 - iii. Raymore, MO
 - iv. Parkville, KS
- c. St. Louis Metro
 - i. Moscow Mills, MO (Lincoln County)
 - ii. Wright City, MO (Warren County)

2. Present a comprehensive list of resource requirements for new congregation development.

The New Start Task Force is working to identify areas that offer potential for the development of a new congregation. Once an area has been selected, a Synod Authorized Worshipping Community (SAWC) Exploration process will take place to determine the vision and potential viability of a new start in the identified area.

The resources required for the SAWC Exploration which can be covered in large part by grants from Churchwide include; Exploration Leader Stipend, Programmatic Expenses (i.e. meals, coffee for one-to-ones), Travel Expenses, and Coaching for the Exploration Leader (\$100/month)

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Should the exploration process lead to a decision to officially launch a new start, a variety of resources are needed to support both development and launch. In many new and growing communities, the reality is that time is among the most precious commodities, especially for those raising children. People seeking to connect with a congregation often gravitate toward churches that already have well-developed ministries in place, offering immediate opportunities for involvement.

For this reason, a new start benefits greatly from having a strong, visitor-expectant ministry for children and youth from the very beginning. Effective tools for marketing, outreach, and follow-up should also be ready on day one. Worship—likely offered in a modern or contemporary style—requires capable musicians as well as reliable audio-visual technology. These well-formed ministries and systems depend on appropriate staffing, a committed volunteer base, and key ministry partners working together to launch a vibrant and sustainable new congregation.

A rough estimate of what it will cost to fund this kind of new start ministry for the first three years (including Staffing, Marketing, Worship, and Administration) is \$388,000 (year 1), \$335,000 (year 2), and \$345,000 (year 3)

3. Set forth a realistic goal for the number of new starts in the next five years.

The New Start Task Force has concluded that with the funds available from the synod along with grant support from the churchwide expression, we have enough financial support to start one new ministry.

The task force recommends starting with Maize, KS, for the following reasons: additional funds have been specifically designated by Peace, Newton, KS, upon their closing, for a Maize new start. Also, contextual research in the area has already been completed and partners have been identified because of a previous new start exploration that was cut short due to leadership transitions.

At the same time, we encourage as many Explorations to begin in the other Tier 1 areas as we have individuals to lead them. Exploration leaders can be lay or ordained individuals who have gifts for connecting with new communities and listening to their needs. Exploration leaders will be trained by the DEM and supported through cohort coaching.

4. Outline potential new missional opportunities and collaborative partnerships among established congregations in identified areas that will strengthen congregational mission and outreach.

The key to a new start initiative in our synod is raising up those (lay and ordained) leaders, connectors, and storytellers from within our communities. Therefore, we are asking individuals, congregations, and conferences to identify people in their congregations who are gifted in community listening and faith sharing who might be interested in “tending the soil” of a new ministry start. In addition, we invite individuals, congregations, and conferences to consider contributing to the New Start Fund as they consider their legacy plans.

As we seek to develop a culture of witness and evangelism in the synod, we will continue to share updates at each Synod Assembly.

REPORT OF THE CENTRAL STATES SYNOD RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE

Consideration of Resolutions

Resolutions are formal, written main motions used to make a statement, authorize action, or express an opinion formally. To assist the Synod Assembly in its task of responding to these proposals, the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions* of the Central States Synod defines a Resolutions Committee with responsibility to review all resolutions and propose recommendations for assembly action.

The specific functions of the Committee are to:

- 1) ensure that resolutions submitted for consideration to the Synod Assembly are in the proper form;
- 2) eliminate duplication when similar resolutions are offered;
- 3) present resolutions in a logical sequence to allow adequate consideration of each; and,
- 4) except as the rules may provide otherwise, report all resolutions referred to the Committee with a recommendation.

For every properly received resolution, the Committee may recommend that the 2026 Synod Assembly:

- vote separately on the proposed responses to certain resolutions, and
- vote on the recommended responses to the remaining resolutions as a group (*en bloc*).

Meeting in April 2026, the Resolutions Committee reviewed the five resolutions received from synod committees, synod teams, and individual voting members of congregations of this Synod. The committee has grouped those resolutions that address the same topic or related concerns in order to facilitate the assembly's consideration.

The Committee recommends that the Synod Assembly consider separately the following four responses to the five resolutions properly received for 2026:

SA26.A: Celebrate Global and Companion Synod Ministry

SA26.B: Act for Climate Justice

SA26.C: Affirm People of God of All Gender Identities

SA26.D: Give Thanks for Concluded Stages of Ministry

In each part of this Report of the Resolutions Committee you will find two components:

- **Resolutions received**
The resolutions are reproduced here in the form in which they were submitted, with edits for consistent formatting. The preamble (the "WHEREAS" clauses) provides information to assist readers in understanding context for discussion of the resolution. Attention should be focused, however, on the resolutions (the "RESOLVED" clauses), which make the actual request for action by the Synod Assembly. The resolved clauses are what inform the proposed action the assembly will vote on.
- **Recommendation of the Resolutions Committee for action by the Synod Assembly**
In each section, the committee's recommendation for assembly action is printed in boldface type. In certain instances, the proposed action may be to affirm or to decline to recommend the proposed action. In other instances, the committee may recommend referral to the Synod Council or to a synod office or unit.

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Recommendation SA26.A: CELEBRATE GLOBAL AND COMPANION SYNOD MINISTRIES

1. Central States Synod Companion Synod Team

A Season of Global Awareness: Remembering our Companion Synods and ELCA Ministries around the World

WHEREAS, the Central States Synod’s mission statement calls us into an “an active way of living and moving into and through this world” and invites us “deeper into a love of God and love of neighbor” that is not limited by boundaries but rather places us within a world-wide community of faith; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Time after Epiphany in 2027 be designated as a **Season of Global Awareness** for congregations within the Central States Synod and that congregations intentionally lift up in prayer and celebrate the church around the world through song, educational events, and in any way appropriate to the context of the congregation. The focus would be not only on our companion synods in Papua New Guinea and Russia, but also the global ministry we share in through the Service and Justice area of the ELCA such as missionary sponsorship, Young Adults in Global Mission, and our support of projects that promote the witness of the Gospel, works of compassion, and justice ministry around the world.

RESOLVED, that **Sunday, October 4th, 2026**, shall be designated as the Sunday to remember and celebrate our companion church relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Urals, Siberia, and Far East (ELCUSFE), with a special focus on the Far Eastern Deanery. *(This date was chosen because the first Sunday in October is widely observed by the churches in Russia as a harvest Sunday when they give thanks and celebrate the completion of the fall harvest.)*

RESOLVED, that **Sunday, February 7th, 2027**, be designated as the Sunday to remember and celebrate our companion church relationship with the Kote District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea (ELCPNG). This would be an appropriate way to conclude the Time after Epiphany, which is our Season of Global Awareness.

The Companion Synod Team of the Central States Synod – ELCA

Andrew Beers
Joyce Benedict
Jon Brudvig
Jim Cooper

Matthew Helfrich
Keith Holste
Penny Holste
Gary Kallansrud

Janice Kibler
Daniel Lilienkamp
Doug Reed
Gary Teske

Recommended for assembly action:

- A1. To receive with gratitude the resolution from the Companion Synod Team**
- A2. To publicly affirm the relationship of the Central States Synod with its companion synods by designating the described Season of Global Awareness**
- A3. To direct the Companion Synod Team to provide resources for mission education and worship for the Time after Epiphany and to relay prayer requests, recent news, and communications from our companion synods prior to the two Companion Synod Sundays to help us accompany one another in our journey as followers, servants, and witnesses to Jesus Christ in our respective parts of God’s world**
- A4. To request synod communication promotes congregational participation in the Season of Global Awareness and observation of the two Companion Synod Sundays**

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Recommendation SA26.B: ACT FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

1. Lutherans Restoring Creation
2. St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Columbia, Missouri
3. Peace Lutheran Church, Joplin, Missouri
4. First Lutheran Church, Mission Hills, Kansas

World Council of Churches Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action

WHEREAS, God created heaven and earth, and everything therein, and proclaimed it good (Gen 1:1ff); and God has entrusted humankind with the care of the earth (Gen 2:15); and

WHEREAS, in 1993, our ELCA social statement, *Caring for Creation*, expressed concern about “climate change;” acknowledged that, “according to the preponderance of evidence from scientists worldwide” we face “dangerous global warming, caused by the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide;” and emphasized that “action to counter degradation, especially within this decade, is essential to the future of our children and our children’s children. Time is very short;”¹ and

WHEREAS, in 2022 the ELCA Churchwide Assembly voted 672-45, “to receive with gratitude the memorials from 16 synods² concerning greenhouse gas emissions;” “to reaffirm the commitment of this church to engage in creation care and advocacy . . . ;” and “to encourage congregants, rostered ministers, and bishops to commit themselves to education about the urgency of the climate emergency . . . ;”³ and

WHEREAS, on Earth Day 2023, the ELCA Church Council unanimously adopted a social message, *Earth’s Climate Crisis*, stating that, “[f]rom a standpoint of faith, it is reasonable to conclude that the climate crisis is, indeed, a *kairos* moment”⁴ and challenged all expressions of the ELCA to “[j]oin with ecumenical, interfaith, and secular partners working to address the climate crisis;”⁵ and

WHEREAS, ELCA social teachings have emphasized the ethical priority for the most vulnerable and marginalized, who have contributed least to the climate crisis and bear a disproportionate weight of its effects; and the ELCA calls on organizations to support strategies that enable adaptation to climate change, including protecting the land rights of Indigenous peoples, in whose care land, resources, and biodiversity are more likely to be protected; and

WHEREAS, ELCA Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry, in his 2025 “Message on the Tenth Anniversary of the Paris Climate Accords,” affirmed the 2015 United Nations agreement that committed all nations, including the U.S., to limit global warming to well below 2° Celsius (C) while also pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5° C,⁶ and emphasized:

It is not too late to protect our climate. With God, it is never too late. *Kairos* means that this is an opportune and urgent time to address Earth’s climate crisis. I am calling this church to be more connected and sustainable. This includes stewarding God’s creation as an expression of faith and seeking sustainability rooted in ways of living that honor everything God has called ‘good,’ including learning from and following the leadership of Indigenous communities. I commend to you the social message, *Earth’s Climate Crisis*;⁷ and

¹ ELCA Social Statement, [Caring for Creation, Vision, Hope, and Justice](#) (1993), 4-5.

² Oregon Synod, Southwest California Synod, Northeastern Minnesota Synod, Minneapolis Synod, Saint Paul Area Synod, Central States Synod, Southwestern Texas Synod, Northern Illinois Synod, Northeastern Iowa Synod, East-Central Synod of Wisconsin, Greater Milwaukee Synod, North/West Lower Michigan Synod, New England Synod, Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod, and Delaware-Maryland Synod.

³ ELCA, [Report of the Memorials Committee, 2022 Churchwide Assembly](#) (July 15, 2022), 13-28.

⁴ ELCA Social Message, [Earth’s Climate Crisis](#) (approved on Earth Day, April 20, 2023), 7.

⁵ *Earth’s Climate Crisis*, 17.

⁶ United Nations Climate Change, [The Paris Agreement](#) (accessed 20 December 2025).

⁷ ELCA, [A Message on the Tenth Anniversary of the Paris Climate Accords](#) (December 9, 2025).

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WHEREAS, on June 21, 2025, the World Council of Churches (WCC) began an Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action, which is “a prophetic pilgrimage of repentance, transformation, and hope” that calls “churches to ecological *metanoia* and systemic change rooted in justice, peace, and the integrity of creation;”⁸ and

WHEREAS, in Belem, Brazil, WCC Vice President Rev. Dr. Angelique Walker-Smith introduced the Decade of Climate Justice Action to faith groups attending the 30th U.N. Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, stating that “We (WCC) have had Decades in solidarity with women, against violence, against racism, and now we say climate justice brings all of those together.”⁹ and

WHEREAS, the ELCA is a leader in resourcing churchwide staff positions dedicated to programming for racial justice and gender justice; and the ELCA seeks to lead comparably in the work of climate justice, especially in light of its 2023 Social Message, *Earth’s Climate Crisis*, which calls us to see the climate crisis as a *kairos* moment, a moment when we recognize “*God’s urgent call for decisive action in history*”; and the ELCA’s leadership in the call to decisive action will require bold resourcing of additional churchwide staff member(s) solely dedicated to climate justice”¹⁰; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the CSS Lutherans Restoring Creation Mission Table; St. Andrew Lutheran Church of Columbia, Missouri; Peace Lutheran Church of Joplin, Missouri; and, First Lutheran Church, Mission Hills, Kansas, urge every congregation, synod, ELCA-related educational institution, affiliated ministry, separately incorporated ministry, individual member, and the churchwide office of the ELCA to commit to active participation in the WCC’s Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action, since the ELCA is a member communion of the World Council of Churches;¹¹ and be it further

RESOLVED, the various expressions of the ELCA in our synod be guided over the next decade by “the convictions to guide discernment and actions toward the challenges posed by the climate *kairos*” adopted in the ELCA’s 2023 social message, *Earth’s Climate Crisis*,¹² which include the following:

- “Reduce greenhouse gas emissions at the rate scientists project will keep global warming below 2.0 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) and as close as possible to 1.5 degrees Celsius;
 - Support an interim U.S. target of 50% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from 2005 levels by 2030;
- “Support mitigation strategies to achieve these goals;
- “Promote scientific literacy and instruction about global warming and climate change in all our educational institutions;
- “Engage in legislative advocacy at all levels of government, individually and collectively;
- “Join with ecumenical, interfaith, and secular partners working to address the climate crisis;” and be it further

RESOLVED, the congregations in our synod be guided over the next decade by “the convictions to guide discernment and actions toward the challenges posed by the climate *kairos*” adopted in the ELCA’s 2023 social message, *Earth’s Climate Crisis*,¹³ which include the following:

- “Promote creation care through preaching, worship, and educational programming;
- “Consider adopting congregational commitments to creation care, for example, by becoming a Creation Care Covenant Congregation via Lutherans Restoring Creation;
- “Provide pastoral care to those struggling with “climate anxiety” and other related mental health concerns, especially our youngest people;
- “Witness publicly to the climate crisis and ‘walk the talk’ by:

⁸ World Council of Churches, “[Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action: Moving Together in Ecological Metanoia for Transformation.](#)”

⁹ World Council of Churches, “[Tapiri closing service brings climate justice decade to COP30](#)” (November 18, 2025).

¹⁰ The ELCA has a full-time Director for Racial Justice (Jennifer DeLeon) and a full-time Director for Gender Justice and Women’s Empowerment (Mary Streufert).

¹¹ World Council of Churches, “[Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action: Moving Together in Ecological Metanoia for Transformation.](#)”

¹² *Earth’s Climate Crisis*, 13-17.

¹³ *Earth’s Climate Crisis*, 13-17.

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- Achieving the same levels of greenhouse gas reduction that the ELCA urges the U.S. government to pursue
 - Investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy systems
 - Reviewing how ELCA landholdings can be used to sequester carbon, promote biodiversity, and/or encourage other life-giving relationships with creation
 - Becoming ‘anticipatory communities’ that model climate resiliency (e.g., emergency shelters, cooling spaces, community gardens);
- “Engage in acts of community organizing to build stronger relationships and more resilient communities that can take action to create meaningful climate solutions and help people understand that they have the power to make lasting change;” and be it further

RESOLVED, that the CSS Lutherans Restoring Creation Mission Table; St. Andrew Lutheran Church of Columbia, Missouri; Peace Lutheran Church of Joplin, Missouri; and, First Lutheran Church, Mission Hills, Kansas, urge the ELCA Churchwide Organization to devote additional funds and staffing to lead us in this *kairos* moment when decisive action is required, and to help all expressions of the ELCA participate actively in the WCC’s Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action; and be it further

RESOLVED, the ELCA shall launch a fund-raising campaign “Climate Justice Action for the Life of the World,” (in concert with the appropriate ELCA churchwide offices), as a means to strengthen awareness, commitment, and advocacy across all congregations, synods, and ELCA churchwide; and to raise at least \$1 million for concrete programs dedicated to greenhouse gas reduction and other efforts to address Earth’s climate crisis in response to *God’s urgent call for decisive action* in this *kairos* moment; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Central States Synod Assembly instructs the Central States Synod Council to request that the ELCA Church Council and Conference of Bishops implement the previous Resolveds.

Lutherans Restoring Creation Mission Table of the Central States Synod

St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Columbia, Missouri

Peace Lutheran Church, Joplin, Missouri

First Lutheran Church, Mission Hills, Kansas

Additional Endorsements:

Noni Strand, Atonement, Overland Park; Cindy Gross, Bethel, St. Louis; Sheryl Mehrhoff, St. Andrew’s, Columbia; Gary and Jeani Anderson, First, Topeka; Keith Mundy, Atonement, Overland Park; Larry Erickson, First, Manhattan; Janice Hawley, Good Shepherd, Lawrence; Jane Meyerkord, Atonement, Florissant; Christyn Koschmann, Martin Luther, Lee’s Summit.

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**5. Ryan Bose, American Lutheran Church, Smith Center, Kansas,
in collaboration with Ecojustice classmates at Wartburg Seminary and their professor, Rev. Craig Nessian**

Resolution on Solar Energy

WHEREAS, the Triune God has created the Sun as the source of all solar, wind, and fossil fuel energy to provide for our needs¹⁴; and

WHEREAS, the Creator's wisdom calls us to serve, keep, and love the earth, sky, waters, and all their creatures¹⁵; and

WHEREAS, God justifies us by grace in Jesus Christ and frees us to do justice by advocating for social structures that protect creation¹⁶; and

WHEREAS, the global climate crisis is a *kairos* moment for repentance and change¹⁷; and

WHEREAS, caring for the environment is an expression of our love for God's creation and our shared responsibility to be faithful stewards of God's earth; and

WHEREAS, God's Spirit calls us not only to avoid harming creation but to active works of justice for the flourishing of all creation; and

WHEREAS, the use of fossil fuels as a source of energy injures human health and leads to economic instabilities, exploitation, social injustice, and climate change, causing disproportionate and inequitable impacts on a worldwide scale; and

WHEREAS, the use of fossil fuels as a source of energy damages water, air, and land, and harmfully impacts all forms of life on earth, especially the most vulnerable; and

WHEREAS, the current energy policy of the US does not address climate change and energy independence has become a worldwide peacemaking need; and

WHEREAS, current technology provides the ability for independence from fossil fuels for the energy needs of most buildings through solar and battery technology; and

WHEREAS, some states provide tax incentives for solar energy that reduce carbon emissions and provide a more stable source of energy in times of natural and human made disasters; and

WHEREAS, using solar power to generate electricity can provide long term financial savings, also for future generations, and the money saved could be used for the church's mission; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Central States Synod encourage congregations to install solar panels both for energy savings and as a witness to their communities about loving creation as our neighbor; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Central States Synod encourage congregations to install EV charging stations in their parking areas to encourage people toward energy efficiency in transportation and as a witness to their communities about caring for creation; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Central States Synod draw upon the expertise of congregational members to facilitate these efforts; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Central States Synod establish and maintain a Renewable Energy Task Force to guide, support, organize, and create resources to support congregations in these initiatives; and be it further

¹⁴ Bill McKibben, *Here Comes the Sun: A Last Chance for the Climate and a Fresh Chance for Civilization*

¹⁵ ELCA Social Statement, *Caring for Creation, Vision, Hope, and Justice* (1993).

¹⁶ ELCA Social Statement, *The Church in Society* (1991), 7.

¹⁷ ELCA Social Message, *Earth's Climate Crisis* (approved on Earth Day, April 20, 2023), 7.

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RESOLVED, that the Central States Synod memorialize the ELCA Churchwide Organization to encourage synods, seminaries, and congregations to install solar panels both for energy savings and as a witness to their communities about loving God's people and creation as our neighbor.

Ryan Bose and Craig Nesson on behalf of the Wartburg Theological Seminary Ecojustice students

Recommended for assembly action:

- B1. To receive with gratitude the resolutions from Lutherans Restoring Creation and from Ryan Bose in collaboration with his classmates and professor, Craig Nesson.**
- B2. To request congregations and affiliated ministries of the Central States Synod to commit to active participation in the WCC's Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action**
- B3. To request the various expressions of the ELCA within the Central States Synod be guided over the next decade by the convictions adopted in the ELCA's 2023 social message, *Earth's Climate Crisis***
- B4. To encourage congregations of the Central States Synod to install solar panels and/or EV charging stations as primary ways of witnessing to their communities and exhibiting their active participation in the Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice**
- B5. To direct the Lutherans Restoring Creation Mission Table of the Central States Synod to explore and identify any additional resources they might need to guide, support, and organize congregations in their renewable energy initiatives and to report any related requests to the Synod Council by March, 2027**
- B6. To encourage congregation members with related expertise to participate in the work of the Lutherans Restoring Creation Mission Table of the Central States Synod**
- B7. To direct the Central States Synod Council to request that the ELCA Church Council implement the Churchwide budgetary, staffing, and fund-raising goals identified in the Lutherans Restoring Creation resolution and the solar panel encouragement of the Ryan Bose, Craig Nesson, and Wartburg Seminary Ecojustice Students resolution**

Recommendation SA26.C: AFFIRM PEOPLE OF GOD OF ALL GENDER IDENTITIES

1. Hearts Across the Heartland

Affirming Transgender, Nonbinary, Gender Expansive, Two-Spirit, and Genderqueer People of God

WHEREAS, the Judeo-Christian tradition teaches that “God created humans in [God’s] image” and “God saw everything that [God] had made, and indeed, it was very good,”¹⁸ and

WHEREAS, in Jesus Christ, we know that “God loves human life so much that ‘the Word became Flesh’ (John 1:14), and we know, therefore, that God’s love embraces us totally, including our sexuality”¹⁹ and gender identity, and

WHEREAS, in *A Social Statement on Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* we read: “this church must work toward greater understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity. It must seek that which is positive and life-giving while protecting from all that is harmful and destructive,” and “this church also will attend to the need for equal protection, equal opportunities, and equal responsibilities under the law, and just treatment for those with varied sexual orientation and gender identity. Such individuals are disproportionately and negatively affected by patterns of stigma, discrimination, and abuse. Likewise, it will attend to the particular needs of children and the families of those with actual or perceived differences in sexual orientation or gender identity because they are especially vulnerable to verbal, physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological, and sexual abuse,”²⁰ and

WHEREAS, in *A Social Message on Gender-based Violence*, the ELCA stated that “Gender-based violence is sin. While it takes many forms, in all its variations gender-based violence attacks, violates and often destroys the good that God brings to life,”²¹ and

WHEREAS, *A Social Message on Human Rights* declares, “The ELCA will support domestic and international human rights institutions, foster deliberation, and engage in sustained action that seek rights for any neighbors – especially the vulnerable – who are not being treated with the dignity that is God’s gift,”²² and

WHEREAS, the Central States Synod, along with twenty-eight other synods and 1,093 congregations across the ELCA, is a Reconciling in Christ partner with ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation, which has

¹⁸ Genesis 1:27 and 31 NRSVue.

¹⁹ *A Social Statement on Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (adopted by ELCA Churchwide Assembly on August 19, 2009), 10.

²⁰ *Gift and Trust*, 23-24 and 33-34.

²¹ *A Social Message on Gender-based Violence* (adopted by the ELCA Church Council on November 14, 2015), 6.

²² *A Social Message on Human Rights* (adopted by the ELCA Church Council on November 12, 2017), 14.

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advocated for the full welcome of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual/aromantic (LGBTQIA2S+²³) Lutherans in all aspects of the life of their Church, congregations, and community²⁴, and

WHEREAS, the current executive branch of the federal government has targeted transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit and genderqueer people with multiple executive orders and policies²⁵, and these executive orders and policies are harming the rights and lives of transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit and genderqueer people, especially children and youth, with regards to healthcare, mental health, employment, sports participation, social services, housing, and more²⁶, and

WHEREAS, the state governments of Kansas and Missouri have likewise enacted legislation that has targeted transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit, and genderqueer people²⁷ and is harming the rights and lives of these beloved children of God, especially with regards to the right to access healthcare, sports participation, government-issued identification, public facilities, and more; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Central States Synod publicly affirms the divinely-created goodness and beauty in all transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit, and genderqueer people of all ages, races, ethnicities, abilities, religions, and beliefs; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Central States Synod speak out against the harmful policies and language towards transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit, and genderqueer people perpetrated by government leaders and agencies wherever it is encountered; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Central States Synod, in partnership with long-time advocacy and education organizations ReconcilingWorks, Kansas Interfaith Action, and PROMO Missouri, along with ecumenical and community partners,

²³ **LGBTQIA2S+** stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and Two-Spirit. The terms used to describe gender identities and sexual orientations are constantly changing and being updated to better represent people. Where there are standing definitions, individuals interpret these definitions within their own lived experiences. **Sexual Orientation & Gender Orientation:** Sexual orientation or sexuality is an aspect of self that involves how you identify, the way you experience sexual or romantic desire (if you do), the gender(s) or sex(es) of the people you engage in sexual or romantic activity with (if any), the gender(s) or sex(es) of the people you are attracted to (if any). Sexuality can change over the course of someone's life and in different situations. It's understood to be a spectrum instead of a series of mutually exclusive categories. **Gender orientation** is how you define yourself in relation to your own gender. This can coincide with the sex you were assigned at birth or not. You can identify within the gender binary of either man or woman, outside, or in between. It's understood to be a spectrum instead of a series of mutually exclusive categories. **Transgender** is a gender identity that does not correspond with the gender assigned at birth. **Cisgender** is a gender identity that does correspond with the gender assigned at birth. **Intersex** means you're born with biological traits that are outside the strict male/female gender binary (such as anatomy, chromosomes, and/or hormones). Examples include Turners Syndrome, Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome, and Klinefelters Syndrome. Being intersex is not the same thing as being transgender. **Non-binary** typically is descriptive of someone whose gender identity is not exclusively male or female but whose identity falls in-between, outside of or independent of traditional gender identities. **Genderqueer** typically is outside of, in-between, or fluctuating between the binary gender categories of male and female. Genderqueer relates to the spectrum of both **Gender Identity** as well as **Gender Expression**, that is, they may move fluidly between the identities of male and female and separately may move fluidly between masculine expression and feminine expression. **Two-Spirit** refers to Indigenous people who express their gender or sexual identities as different from others. Not all Indigenous individuals who are not Cisgender or Heterosexual will identify as Two-Spirited, but all Two-spirit individuals identify as Indigenous. Some nations hold space for more than two genders, such as the Dine, the Anishnaabe, and the Lakota.

²⁴ <https://www.reconcilingworks.org/>; [2024 Synod Assembly Minutes.pdf](#), 9-11.

²⁵ "Defending Women from Gender Ideology and Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government," Presidential Executive Order, January 20 2025: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/defending-women-from-gender-ideology-extremism-and-restoring-biological-truth-to-the-federal-government/>;

"Keeping Men Out of Womens' Sports," Presidential Executive Order, February 5 2025: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/keeping-men-out-of-womens-sports/>;

"Prioritizing Military Excellence and Readiness," Presidential Executive Order, January 27 2025: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/prioritizing-military-excellence-and-readiness/>;

"Protecting Children from Chemical and Surgical Mutilation," Presidential Executive Order, January 28 2025: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/protecting-children-from-chemical-and-surgical-mutilation/>.

²⁶ <https://www.hrc.org/news/understanding-executive-orders-and-what-they-mean-for-the-lgbtq-community>;
<https://19thnews.org/2025/03/trump-anti-trans-executive-orders/>.

²⁷ Promo Equality in Missouri [The Advocacy Insider - PROMO](#) and Kansas Interfaith Action [KIFA Latest — Kansas Interfaith Action](#).

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equip congregations, ministries, and rostered and lay leaders with information and theological background in order to empower us to public witness, as specified in the Strategy Towards Authentic Diversity²⁸; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Central States Synod continually seek guidance from transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit and genderqueer leaders both inside the Church (ReconcilingWorks, seminary scholars and students, synod staff, Conference of Bishops, rostered leaders, lay leaders) and outside the Church for how to best advocate on their behalf in this time.

Hearts across the Heartland

The Reverend Meagan McLaughlin (she/her)

The Reverend David Frerichs (he/him)

The Reverend Micah Sievenpiper (he/him)

Recommended for assembly action:

- C1. To receive with gratitude the resolution from Hearts across the Heartland**
- C2. To publicly affirm the divinely-created goodness and beauty in all transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit, and genderqueer people of all ages, races, ethnicities, abilities, religions, and beliefs**
- C3. To direct the Synod Council, in consultation with Hearts across the Heartland, to identify and allocate resources that will enable strengthening partnerships with ReconcilingWorks, Kansas Interfaith Action, and PROMO Missouri with goals toward training and equipping the synod for public witness concerning diversity**
- C4. To request congregations and congregation members of the Central States Synod speak out against policies and language harmful to people of the LGBTQIA2S+ community wherever encountered**
- C5. To request synod committees, teams, tables, and other units to seek input and guidance from LGBTQIA2S+ leaders when developing policy, advocacy plans, or other proposals for action within the synod.**

²⁸ "Synods will assist congregations in participating in training on transforming white privilege, internalized racial oppression, and cultural humility. This training needs to happen intersectionally to include gender, sexuality, and class, ability, documented status, etc. in a way that is holistic, comprehensive and mutual," *How Strategic And Authentic Is Our Diversity: A Call for Confession, Reflection, and Healing Action* (adopted by the ELCA Churchwide Assembly on August 9, 2019), 11.

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Section V - Resolutions

Recommendation SA26.D: GIVE THANKS FOR CONCLUDED STAGES OF MINISTRY

1. Central States Synod Resolutions Committee

Thanksgiving for Ministry

Baptized, we welcome one another as fellow members of the Body of Christ and workers with us in the reign of God. Our merciful God gives us particular companions to know and to love in our pilgrimage here on earth. Since the last assembly, the following rostered ministers, whom we remember with thanksgiving and reverence, have died:

The Rev. Vance Eckstrom of Lindsborg, KS (June 8, 2025)
The Rev. Sharon Bockelman of Lone Jack, MO (August 3, 2025)
The Rev. Gerhard Kraus of Fenton, MO (September 3, 2025)
The Rev. Timothy (Tim) Leaf of McPherson, KS (January 3, 2026)
Deacon Carolyn Wilson of Overland Park, KS (February 18, 2026)
Deacon Edgar (Ed) Kruse of La Crescent, MN (April 13, 2026)

The following persons have served the Church faithfully, using their gifts and abilities to build up the Body of Christ, and have now retired from active ministry on the roster of the Church since the last Central States Synod Assembly:

The Rev. Jonathan (Jon) Anderson, from Prairie Faith Shared Ministry Parish (July 1, 2025)
The Rev. Winston Persaud, from Wartburg Seminary (July 1, 2025)
The Rev. Susan Candea, from Bishop, Central States Synod (September 1, 2025)
The Rev. David (Dave) Whetter, from Bishop's Associate, Central States Synod (September 1, 2025)
The Rev. Bradford (Brad) Bray, from disability status (January 1, 2026)

The body of Christ gathers as congregations to proclaim the gospel, share the means of grace, and empowered to carry out God's mission in the world. The following congregation(s) withdrew from the ELCA, discerning that they were called to participate in God's mission through other denominations:

Hope Lutheran Church, Rolla, MO (2nd vote to withdraw on October 5, 2025)
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Lucas, KS (2nd vote to withdraw on December 21, 2025)

THEREFORE, be it resolved that this Assembly recognizes and gives thanks for the ministry of these ministers and these congregations.

Recommended for assembly action:

D1. To receive with gratitude and approve the resolution from the Central States Synod Resolutions Committee

CONSTITUTION, BYLAWS and CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS

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:

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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 worshiping 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 worshiping 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 ~~S~~synod-~~A~~a authorized ~~M~~m inister serving under a covenant by authority of the ~~B~~b ishop 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-a~~Authorized worshiping communities and outreach ministries of the Synod ~~shall may have~~ elect one two lay members to serve as ~~their representative and~~ voting members s 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.

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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~~lected 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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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CONSTITUTION, BYLAWS, and CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS
Central States Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

*Amended at Synod Assembly on June 3, 2023,
with required changes from the 2025 Churchwide Assembly
and with further amendment to continuing resolutions
on March 14, 2026, by the Synod Council.*

Chapter 1.

NAME AND INCORPORATION

- †S1.01. The name of this synod, as determined by the Churchwide Assembly, shall be the Central States Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- †S1.02. For the purposes of this constitution and the accompanying by-laws, the Central States Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is hereafter designated as “this synod” or “the synod.”
- †S1.11. This synod shall be incorporated. Amendments to the articles of incorporation of this synod shall be submitted to the Church Council for ratification before filing.
- S1.21. The seal of this synod is a 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 form the circular outer edge of the seal.

Chapter 2.

STATUS

- †S2.01. This synod possesses the powers conferred upon it, and accepts the duties and responsibilities assigned to it, in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, which are recognized as having governing force in the life of this synod.
- †S2.02. The name Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA or “this church”) as used herein refers in general references to this whole church, including its three expressions: congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization. The name Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is also the name of the corporation of the churchwide organization to which specific references may be made herein.
- †S2.03. No provision of this constitution shall be inconsistent with the constitution and bylaws of this church.

Chapter 3.

TERRITORY

- †S3.01. The territory of this synod, as determined by the Churchwide Assembly, shall be the States of Missouri and Kansas.
- S3.01.01. The exceptions shall be those congregations which are assigned to an adjacent synod and including those congregations from an adjacent state which are assigned to this synod, all in accordance with the constitution and bylaws and continuing resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- †3.02. “Determined by the Churchwide Assembly” as stipulated by †S3.01., is understood to include the reported changes in synod relationship made by any congregation in a border area agreed under ELCA bylaws 10.01.01 and 10.01.03

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Chapter 4.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

- †S4.01. This synod confesses the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- †S4.02. This synod confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.
- a. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God fashions a new creation.
 - b. The proclamation of God's message to us as both Law and Gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy through word and deed, beginning with the Word in creation, continuing in the history of Israel, and centering in all its fullness in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
 - c. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. Inspired by God's Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God's revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them God's Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.
- †S4.03. This synod accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life.
- †S4.04. This synod accepts the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of this synod.
- †S4.05. This synod accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to the Gospel, acknowledging as one with it in faith and doctrine all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.
- †S4.06. This synod accepts the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise, the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, as further valid interpretations of the faith of the Church.
- †S4.07. This synod confesses the Gospel, recorded in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain the Church for God's mission in the world.

Chapter 5.

NATURE OF THE CHURCH

- †S5.01. All power in the Church belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ, its head. All actions of this synod are to be carried out under his rule and authority.
- †S5.02. This church confesses the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church and is resolved to serve Christian unity throughout the world.
- †S5.03. The Church exists both as an inclusive fellowship and as local congregations gathered for worship and Christian service. Congregations find their fulfillment in the universal community of the Church, and the universal Church exists in and through congregations. This church, therefore, derives its character and powers both from the sanction and representation of its congregations and from its inherent nature as an expression of the broader fellowship of the faithful. In length, it acknowledges itself to be in the historic continuity of the communion of saints; in breadth, it expresses the fellowship of believers and congregations in our day.

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†S5.04. This church, inspired and led by the Holy Spirit, participates in the Lutheran World Federation as a global communion of churches, engaging in faithful witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ and in service for the sake of God's mission in the world.

Chapter 6.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

†S6.01. The Church is a people created by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, called and sent to bear witness to God's creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world.

†S6.02. To participate in God's mission, this synod as a part of the Church shall:

- a. Proclaim God's saving Gospel of justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith alone, according to the apostolic witness in the Holy Scripture, preserving and transmitting the Gospel faithfully to future generations.
- b. Carry out Christ's Great Commission by reaching out to all people to bring them to faith in Christ and by doing all ministry with a global awareness consistent with the understanding of God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of all.
- c. Serve in response to God's love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity, justice, and equity for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, caring for the marginalized, embracing and welcoming racially and ethnically diverse populations, and standing in solidarity with the poor and oppressed and committing itself to their needs.
- d. Worship God in proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments and through lives of prayer, praise, thanksgiving, witness, and service.
- e. Nurture its members in the Word of God so as to grow in faith and hope and love, to see daily life as the primary setting for the exercise of their Christian calling, and to use the gifts of the Spirit for their life together and for their calling in the world.
- f. Manifest the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives.

†S6.03. This synod, in cooperation with the churchwide organization, shall bear primary responsibility for the oversight of the life and mission of this church in its territory. In fulfillment of this role and consistent with policies and procedures of this church, the synod shall:

- a. Provide for pastoral care of congregations and rostered ministers in the synod;
- b. Plan for, facilitate, and nurture the mission of this church through congregations;
- c. Strengthen interdependent relationships among congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization, and foster relationships with agencies and institutions affiliated with or related to this church as well as ecumenical partners.
- d. Interpret the work of this church to congregations and to the public on the territory of the synod.

†S6.03.01. The responsibilities of the synod include the following:

- a. providing for pastoral care of congregations, ministers of Word and Sacrament, and ministers of Word and Service in the synod, including:

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Section VI - Constitution

- 1) approving candidates for rostered ministry in cooperation with the appropriate seminaries of this church, which may be done through multi-synod committees;
 - 2) authorizing ordinations and ordaining rostered ministers on behalf of this church;
 - 3) consulting in the call process for rostered ministers.
- b. providing for leadership recruitment, preparation, and support in accordance with churchwide standards and policies, including:
- 1) nurturing and supporting congregations and lay leaders;
 - 2) seeking and recruiting qualified candidates for the rostered ministries of this church;
 - 3) making provision for pastoral care, call review, and guidance;
 - 4) encouraging and supporting persons on the rosters of this church in stewardship of their abilities, care of self, and pursuit of continuing education to undergird their effectiveness of service; and
 - 5) supporting recruitment of leaders for this church's colleges, universities, seminaries, and social ministry organizations.
- c. providing for discipline of congregations, ministers of Word and Sacrament and ministers of Word and Service: as well as for termination of call, appointment, adjudication, and appeals consistent with Chapter 20 of this church's constitution.
- d. providing for archives in conjunction with other synods.

†S6.03.02. In planning for, facilitating, and nurturing the mission of this church through congregations, the responsibilities of the synod include the following:

- a. developing of new ministries, redevelopment of existing ministries, and support and assistance in the conclusion, if necessary, of a particular ministry;
- b. leading and encouraging of congregations in their evangelism efforts;
- c. assisting members of its congregations in carrying out their ministries in the world;
- d. encouraging congregations to respond to human need, work for justice and peace, care for the sick and the suffering, and participate responsibly in society;
- e. providing resources for congregational life;
- f. grouping congregations in conferences, clusters, coalitions, or other area subdivisions for mission purposes.

†S6.03.03. In strengthening interdependent relationships among congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization, and in fostering relationships with agencies and institutions affiliated with or related to this church as well as with ecumenical partners, the responsibilities of the synod include the following:

- a. promoting interdependent relationships among congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization, and entering into relationships with other synods in the region;

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- b. fostering organizations for youth, women, and men, and organizations for language or ethnic communities;
- c. developing relationships with social ministry organizations and ministries, participating in their mission planning, and providing supportive funding;
- d. supporting relationships with and providing supportive funding on behalf of colleges, universities, and campus ministries;
- e. maintaining relationships with and providing supportive funding on behalf of seminaries and continuing education centers;
- f. fostering supporting relationships with camps and other outdoor ministries;
- g. fostering supporting relationships with preschools, elementary schools, and secondary schools operated by congregations of the synod;
- h. fostering relationships with ecumenical and global companions;
- i. cooperating with other synods and the churchwide organization in creating, using, and supporting regions to carry out those functions of the synod which can best be done cooperatively with other synods and the churchwide organization.

†S6.03.04. In interpreting the work of this church on the territory of the synod, the responsibilities of the synod include the following:

- a. encouraging financial support for the work of this church by individuals and congregations;
- b. participating in churchwide programs;
- c. interpreting social statements in a manner consistent with the interpretation given by the churchwide unit or office which assisted in the development of the statement, and suggestion of social study issues;
- d. providing ecumenical guidance and encouragement.

†S6.04. Except as otherwise provided in this constitution and bylaws, the Synod Council shall establish processes that will ensure that at least 60 percent of the members of the synod assemblies, councils, committees, boards, and other organizational units shall be laypersons; and that, as nearly as possible, at least 45 percent of the lay members of assemblies, councils, committees, boards, or other organizational units shall be women and, as nearly as possible, at least 45 percent shall be men; and that, where possible, the representation of rostered ministers shall include both men and women. This synod shall establish processes that will enable it to reach a minimum goal that 10 percent of its assemblies, councils, committees, boards, or other organizational units be persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English.

†S6.04.01. 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 youth and young adults. The Synod Council shall establish a plan for implementing this goal. For purposes of the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of this synod, the term “youth” means a voting member of a congregation who has not reached the age of 18 at the time of election or appointment for service. The term “young adult” means a voting member of a congregation between the ages of 18 and 30 at the time of election or appointment for service.

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- †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.
- †S6.05.** Each assembly, council, committee, board, commission, task force, or other body of this synod or any synod units shall be conclusively presumed to have been properly constituted, and neither the method of selection nor the composition of any such assembly, council, committee, board, commission, task force, or other body may be challenged in a court of law by any person or be used as the basis of a challenge in a court of law to the validity or effect of any action taken or authorized by any such assembly, council, committee, board, commission, task force, or other body.
- †S6.06.** References herein to the nature of the relationship between the three expressions of this church—congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization—as being interdependent or as being in a partnership relationship describe the mutual responsibility of these expressions in God’s mission and the fulfillment of the purposes of this church as described in this chapter, and do not imply or describe the creation of partnerships, co-ventures, agencies, or other legal relationships recognized in civil law.

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. A regular meeting of the Synod Assembly shall be held annually. The time, place, and format of the Synod Assembly shall be determined by the Synod Council.

S7.11.B18. TRAVEL EQUALIZATION

That the Central States Synod at its 1991 Synod Assembly approves the following plan for travel equalization among Congregations who send official voting members to Synod Assemblies beginning in 1992.

- a. All congregations shall be treated the same; any congregation further than 100 miles (one way) from the Assembly site is eligible to submit a voucher for travel equalization.
- b. An Equalization Fund be established for each Assembly by adding a specified amount to each congregational voting member’s registration fee. This fee will vary, depending upon Assembly site.
- c. Reimbursement will be at the Synod Rate or (if the Fund does not permit) at a rate calculated by the total Fund divided by the total miles submitted.
- d. Reimbursement will be for travel by one car per congregation or by other public conveyance at the same rate as a car.
- e. The Travel Equalization sheet must be signed at the end of the Assembly’s closing worship, and checks made out to congregations which qualified and signed for the equalization reimbursement will then be processed following the Assembly.

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S7.11.H26. RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE

The Synod Council shall appoint a Resolutions Committee.

- a. The Committee shall consist of 6 persons.
 - 1) Members of the Committee need not be voting members of the corresponding Synod Assembly.
 - 2) One person will be appointed from each Conference, in consultation with that Conference's leadership.
 - 3) One additional person shall be an at-large appointment with preference toward a youth, young adult, or a member of a historically underrepresented group.
 - 4) One of the six members of the Committee shall be appointed as chair of the Committee.
 - 5) Appointments shall be by the synod council for three-year terms to begin in March, Members shall be limited to no more than two consecutive terms on the Committee.
 - 6) Following consultation with Conference leadership as appropriate, any vacant terms on the committee shall be filled annually in March by appointment of the Synod Council to begin new three-year terms.
 - 7) Members of the Committee who are not voting members of the Synod Assembly shall have voice, but not vote, at corresponding Synod Assemblies.
- b. The functions of the Resolutions Committee are to:
 - 1) Ensure that resolutions submitted for consideration to the Synod Assembly are in the proper form;
 - 2) Eliminate duplication when similar resolutions are offered; and
 - 3) Present resolutions in a logical sequence to allow adequate consideration of each; and
 - 4) Except as the rules may provide otherwise, report all resolutions referred to the Committee with a recommendation.
- c. Resolutions for consideration by the Synod Assembly will be regarded as properly received when:
 - 1) The resolution is submitted by a synod committee, team, or conference of the Central States Synod; by an individual who is a voting member of a congregation of this Synod; or by an agency or institution recognized by the Synod.
 - 2) The resolution is received in the Synod office:
 - a) No less than 45 days prior to the opening of the Assembly; or
 - b) No less than seven days prior to the opening of the Assembly if it directly relates to an item of business on the published proposed Assembly agenda; or
 - c) No less than seven days prior to the opening of the Assembly if it is of such an urgent nature that it clearly cannot be postponed until the next Assembly.

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- d. Properly received resolutions will be considered by the Committee.
- 1) The Resolutions Committee will convene after the 45-day deadline to consider all properly received resolutions. The meeting will be scheduled to ensure that the resolutions will be available to Assembly voting members as part of the pre-Assembly material.
 - 2) The Resolutions Committee may meet prior to the beginning of the Assembly to consider resolutions that were properly received according to c.2).b). and c.2).c).
 - 3) The Resolutions Committee may meet during the Assembly to serve the Assembly as directed by the Assembly or the officers of the Synod.
 - 4) All those submitting resolutions will be contacted by a member of the resolutions committee to address any concerns or questions regarding the resolution.
- e. The Resolutions Committee will take action on every properly received resolution. The Committee may take the following actions:
- 1) The Committee may report the resolution to the Assembly as submitted.
 - 2) By a three-quarters majority vote of the Committee, the Committee may act to not report the resolution (withholding it from consideration by the Assembly). The properly received resolution will be made available to the Assembly members, and the Committee chair will announce that the resolution is not reported. The Assembly may direct the Committee to report the resolution according to the provisions of *Robert's Rules of Order*.
 - 3) Where more than one properly received resolution deals with the same concern, the Committee may consolidate the substance of the resolutions in one resolution. In doing so, the original resolutions will be included as background. By a majority vote, the Assembly may direct the Committee to present the originally submitted resolutions rather than considering the consolidated resolution.
 - 4) The Committee may submit an alternative resolution or may choose to make substantive changes to the submitted resolution. In doing so, the original resolution(s) will be included as background. By a majority vote, the Assembly may direct the Committee to present the originally submitted resolution(s) rather than considering the alternative resolution.
 - 5) The Committee Chair may present the resolution to the Assembly and move that the matter be referred by the Bishop to an appropriate synod committee, team, or task force, or that it be referred to legal counsel.
 - 6) In fulfilling its role, the Committee may deem it necessary to present a resolution drafted by the Committee. The Assembly, Committees of the Assembly, or the Presiding Officer of the Assembly may direct the Committee to present a resolution drafted by the Committee.
 - 7) Together with one of the other allowed actions, by a three-quarters majority vote of the Committee, the Committee chair may move to limit debate on a specific resolution.

S7.11.121. On those years when the assembly is held in person, planning for Synod Assemblies will provide opportunities for the youth voting members to get together for fellowship, be oriented to the purpose and procedures of the assembly, and be fully engaged in the assembly.

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

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- 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-third of the voting members of the Synod Assembly, as defined by †S7.21., S7.24., S7.27., 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 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. Lay voting members shall be elected by each congregation or its council as follows: A minimum of one lay member elected from each congregation with fewer than 175 baptized members and a minimum of two lay members elected from each congregation with 175 or more baptized members, typically one of whom shall be a man and one of whom shall be a woman. 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 or its council may elect new members who shall continue to serve until the next regular Synod Assembly.

S7.21.03. The formula established by the Synod Council to provide additional lay representation from congregations on the basis of the number of baptized members in the congregation shall be as follows:

- a. A minimum of two lay members elected by each congregation related to this synod, shall be voting members. Additional lay representation from congregations shall be on the basis of the number of baptized members as reported in the most recently published parochial reports. Congregations having 500-1500 baptized members shall have 4 voting members; 1501-2500 baptized members shall have 6 voting members; and over 2500 baptized members shall have 8 voting members. No more than 50 percent of the voting members from a congregation shall be of the same gender.
- b. In the event that a congregation is unable to adhere to S.7.21.03a at their annual meeting, the congregation may request a waiver to be filed with the Synod Office by March 1. Such a request for waiver must state in detail the process followed to elect the voting members and the reasons for

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requesting a waiver. The Synod Council shall rule upon the request at their spring meeting. The Synod Council in acting on these waiver requests shall seek to ensure that no more than 50 percent of the lay members of the assembly shall be of the same gender. The Synod Council will report their decision back to the congregation in a timely manner.

- c. Any congregation may elect an additional lay voting member from its membership to the Synod Assembly provided that the person is a person of color or whose primary language is other than English.
- d. Any congregation may elect a youth from its voting membership as an additional lay voting member to the Synod Assembly provided that the person has not yet reached their 18th birthday at the time of election and otherwise meets the requirements to be a voting member.

- S7.22.** This synod may establish processes that permit retired or those designated as disabled 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.
- S7.22.01.** All retired ministers, those designated as disabled on the rosters of this synod, and all rostered ministers who are on leave from call may serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, consistent with †S7.21. All registration fees (not including housing and meals) will be waived for all retired ministers on the rosters of this synod. In the event at least 60 percent of the assembly membership is not lay, the retired ministers, those designated as disabled on the rosters of this synod, and the rostered ministers on leave from call will caucus together and elect the appropriate representation.
- †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.A18.** A rostered minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church who is rostered in a synod other than the Central States Synod who is serving as interim pastor in a congregation of the Central States Synod, shall have the privilege of voice, but not vote, at the Central States Synod Assembly. This pastor shall have the privilege of sitting on the floor with the voting members of the congregation the pastor is serving.
- S7.24.** Ministers under call 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 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.
- S7.24.A21.** A Synod Authorized Minister serving under a covenant by authority of the Bishop of the Central States Synod shall have the privilege of voice and vote at assemblies of the Central States Synod.
- †S7.25.** Except as otherwise provided 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 or a confirmed member of a synod-authorized worshiping community of this synod.
- †S7.26.** This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council that permit lay representatives of congregations under development and 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.

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- S7.26.01.** Synod Authorized Worshiping Communities of the Synod, shall have one lay member as their representative and voting member at the Synod Assembly.
- S7.27.** This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council to grant an ordained minister 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 ordained minister's service in a congregation of this church.
- S7.27.01.** Consistent with the language of 8.72.14 of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, an ordained minister from a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by a Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will be granted the privilege of both voice and vote in the Synod Assembly during the period of that ordained minister's service in a congregation of this synod, in accord with ELCA churchwide by-law 8.72.12.
- 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 8. OFFICERS

- †S8.01.** The officers of this synod shall be a bishop, a vice-president, a secretary, and a treasurer.
- S8.10. Bishop**
- †S8.11.** The bishop shall be elected by the Synod Assembly. The bishop shall be a minister of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- †S8.12.** As this synod's pastor, the bishop shall l:
- a. Preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in accord with the Confession of Faith of this church.
 - b. Have primary responsibility for the ministry of Word and Sacrament in this synod and its congregations, providing pastoral care and leadership for this synod, its congregations, its ministers of Word and Sacrament and its ministers of Word and Service.
 - c. Exercise solely this church's power to ordain (or provide for the ordination by another synodical bishop of) approved candidates who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call for the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament (and as provided in the bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America).
 - d. Ordain (or provide for the ordination of) approved candidates who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call for service as ministers of Word and Service.

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- e. Attest letters of call for persons called to serve congregations in this synod, letters of call for persons called by the Synod Council, and letters of call for persons on the rosters of this synod called by the Church Council.
- f. Install (or provide for the installation of) rostered ministers whose calls the bishop has attested.
- g. Exercise leadership in the mission of this church and in doing:
 - 1) Interpret and advocate the mission and theology of the whole church;
 - 2) Lead in fostering support for and commitment to the mission of this church within this synod;
 - 3) Coordinate the use of the resources available to this synod as it seeks to promote the health of this church's life and witness in the areas served by this synod;
 - 4) Submit a report to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly concerning the synod's life and work; and
 - 5) Advise and counsel this synod's related institutions and organizations.
- h. Practice leadership in strengthening the unity of the Church and in so doing:
 - 1) Exercise oversight of the preaching, teaching, and administration of the sacraments within this synod in accord with the Confession of Faith of this church;
 - 2) Be responsible for administering the constitutionally established processes for the resolution of controversies and for the discipline of rostered ministers and congregations of this synod;
 - 3) Be the chief ecumenical officer of this synod;
 - 4) Be a member of the Conference of Bishops and Consult regularly with other synod bishops;
 - 5) Foster awareness of other churches throughout the Lutheran world communion and, where appropriate, engage in contact with leaders of those churches;
 - 6) Cultivate communion in faith and mission with appropriate Christian judicatory leaders functioning within the territory of this synod, and
 - 7) Be *ex officio* a member of the Churchwide Assembly.
- i. Oversee and administer the work of this synod and in so doing:
 - 1) Serve as the president of the synod corporation and be the chief executive and administrative officer of this synod, who is authorized and empowered, in the name of this synod, to sign deeds or other instruments and to affix the seal of this synod;
 - 2) Preside at all meetings of the Synod Assembly and provide for the preparation of the agenda for the Synod Assembly, Synod Council and the council's Executive Committee;
 - 3) Ensure that the constitution and bylaws of this synod and the churchwide organization are duly observed within the synod, and that the actions of this synod in conformity therewith are carried into effect;

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- 4) Direct and guide the work of the other officers;
- 5) Exercise supervision over the work of all synod staff members;
- 6) Appoint all committees for which provision is not otherwise made;
- 7) Be a member of all committees and any other organizational units of this synod, except as otherwise provided in the constitution;
- 8) Provide for preparation and maintenance of synod rosters containing the names and addresses of all rostered ministers of this synod and a record of the calls under which they are serving or the date on which their retired or disability status took effect:
- 9) Annually bring to the attention of the Synod Council the names of all rostered ministers on leave from call or engaged in approved graduate study in conformity with the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of this church and pursuant to prior action of this synod through the Synod Council;
- 10) Provide for prompt reporting to the secretary of this church:
 - a) additions to and subtractions from the rosters of this synod,
 - b) the issuance of certificate of transfer for rostered ministers in good standing who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested, regular letter of call under the jurisdiction of another synod; and
 - c) the entrance of the names of such persons for whom proper certificates of transfer have been received;
- 11) Provide for preparation and maintenance of a roster of the congregations of this synod and the names of the laypersons who have been elected to represent them; and
- 12) Appoint a statistician of the synod, who shall secure the reports of the congregations, and make the reports available to the secretary of this church for collation, analysis, and distribution of the statistical summaries to this synod and the other synods of this church.

†S8.13. The synod bishop may appoint an attorney, admitted to the bar within the territory of the synod or the state where the synod is located, to be Synod Attorney. The appointment must be approved by the Synod Council and reported to the Synod Assembly and to the secretary of this church. The appointment continues until resignation or until a successor is appointed. The Synod Attorney provides legal advice and counsel to the synod-officers and the Synod Council. The Synod Attorney is expected to be familiar with the governing documents and policies of the synod and, as necessary, to attend meetings of the Synod Council. The Synod Attorney serves without salary but may be retained and compensated for specific legal services requested by the synod.

S8.14. The bishop may have such assistants as this synod shall from time to time authorize.

†S8.15. The presiding bishop of this church, or the appointee of the presiding bishop, shall install into office, in accord with the policy and approved rite of this church, each newly elected synod-bishop.

†S8.16. Conflicts of Interest

†S8.16.01. The following procedures shall govern matters of potential conflicts of interest for synodical bishops:

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- a. Whenever a synod-bishop determines that a matter of the kind described in †S8.16.01.b. may require the bishop's determination or action with respect to a related individual as defined in †S8.16.01.c., the synod bishop shall withdraw from personal involvement in such matter and shall so notify the presiding bishop. The presiding bishop shall then appoint another synod bishop from the same region to handle the matter to conclusion. In dealing with such matter, the appointed bishop shall exercise all of the functions and authority to the same extent as if the appointed bishop were the elected bishop of the withdrawing bishop's synod.
- b. Matters include any proceedings under Chapter 20, proceedings under provisions 7.46 and 7.75. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* (†S14.18. and †14.43.), candidacy, reinstatement, and similar matters where determinations or actions by the synod-bishop could change, limit, restrict, approve, authorize, or deny the related individual's ministry on one of the official rosters of this church.
- c. A related individual is one who, with respect to the synod bishop, 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).

S8.20. Vice President

- †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.
- S8.22. The vice president shall chair the Synod Council.
- S8.22.01. The vice president shall chair the Executive Committee.
- S8.22.02. The vice president is an *ex officio* member of synod teams, committees, and task forces. "Ex officio" as used herein means membership with full rights of voice and vote unless otherwise expressly limited.
- S8.22.A25. The vice president shall be a voting member of the Churchwide Assembly. In the event that the vice president is unable to attend the Churchwide Assembly, the Synod Council may, during the allowable period specified by the ELCA Constitution, appoint a replacement voting member, or in the 30 days prior to the assembly or during the assembly, the synod bishop may appoint a replacement.
- ### **S8.30. Secretary**
- †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.
- †S8.32. The secretary shall:
- a. Keep the minutes of all meetings of the Synod Assembly and Synod Council, be responsible for distribution of such minutes, and perform such other duties as this synod may from time to time direct.
 - b. Be authorized and empowered, in the name of this synod, to attest all instruments which require the same, and which are signed and sealed by the bishop.

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- c. In consultation with the bishop, classify and arrange all important papers and documents and deposit them in the archives of this synod.
- d. Submit to the secretary of this church at least nine months before each regular Churchwide Assembly a certified list of the voting members elected by the Synod Assembly.

S8.32.01. The secretary shall provide information to the Synod Council and the Nominating Committee regarding positions to be elected and goals for ensuring diversity in filling elected positions (cf. S9.03.02. and S10.07.05.).

S8.40. Treasurer

†**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 worshipping community of this synod. The treasurer may be either a layperson or a rostered minister.

S8.42. The treasurer shall provide and be accountable for:

- a. Management of the monies and accounts of this synod, its deeds, mortgages, contracts, evidences of claims and revenues, and trust funds, holding the same at all times subject to the order of this synod.
- b. Investment of funds upon the authorization of the Synod Council.
- c. Receipt and acknowledgment of offerings, contributions, and bequests made to this synod, collecting interest and income from its invested funds, and paying regular appropriations and orders on the several accounts as approved and directed by the Synod Council. The treasurer shall transmit each month to the treasurer of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America the funds received by this synod for the general work of this church as well as any funds to support restricted programs of this church.
- d. Maintenance of a regular account with each congregation of this synod and informing the congregation, at least quarterly, of the status of this account.
- e. Rendering at each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly a full, detailed, and duly audited report of receipts and disbursements in the several accounts of this synod for the preceding fiscal year, together with the tabulation, for record and publication in the minutes, of the contributions from the congregations.

S8.50. General Provisions

†**S8.51.** The terms of office of the officers of this shall be as follows:

- a. The bishop of this synod shall be elected to a term of six years and may be reelected.
- b. The vice president and secretary of this synod shall be elected to a term of four years and may be re-elected. The officer shall serve until a successor takes office.
- c. The treasurer of this synod shall be elected or appointed to a term of four years and may be 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 the third month following election or, in special circumstances, at a time designated by the Synod Council.

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- †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.
- †S8.54.** Should the bishop die, resign, or be unable to serve, the vice president, after consultation with the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, shall convene the Synod Council to arrange for the appropriate care of the responsibilities of the bishop until an election of a new bishop can be held or, in the case of temporary disability, until the bishop is able to serve again. Such arrangements may include the appointment by the Synod Council of an interim bishop, who during the vacancy or period of disability shall possess all of the powers and authority of a regularly elected bishop. The term of the successor bishop, elected by the next Synod Assembly or a special meeting of the Synod Assembly called for the purpose of election, shall be six years with the subsequent election to take place at the Synod Assembly closest to the expiration of such a term and with the starting date of a successor term to be governed by constitutional provision S8.52.
- S8.55.** Should the vice president, secretary, or treasurer die, resign, or be unable to serve, the bishop, with the approval of the Executive Committee, shall arrange for the appropriate care of the responsibilities of the officer until an election of a new officer can be held or, in the case of temporary disability, until the officer is able to serve again. The term of the successor officer, elected by the next Synod Assembly, shall be four years.
- †S8.56.** The Executive Committee of the Synod Council shall determine whether an officer is unable to serve; the officer may appeal the decision of the Executive Committee by requesting a hearing before the Synod Council. A meeting to determine the ability of an officer to serve shall be called upon the request of at least three members of the Executive Committee and prior written notice of the meeting shall be given to the officer in question at least ten calendar days prior to the meeting.
- †S8.57.** The recall or dismissal of an officer and the vacating of office may be effected for willful disregard or violation of the constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of this church; for such physical or mental disability as renders the officer incapable of performing the duties of office; for such conduct as would subject the officer to disciplinary action as a rostered minister of as a member of a congregation of this church.
- a. Proceedings for the recall or dismissal of a synod bishop shall be instituted by written petition by:
- 1) the Synod Council on an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of its elected members present and voting;
 - 2) the Synod Assembly on an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of its members present and voting;
 - 3) at least 10 synodical bishops; or,
 - 4) the presiding bishop of this church.
- b. Proceedings for the recall or dismissal of an officer of a synod, other than the synod-bishop, shall be instituted by written petition by:
- 1) the Synod Council on an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of its elected members present and voting;
 - 2) the Synod Assembly on an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of its members present and voting;
 - 3) the synod bishop.

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- c. The petition shall be filed with the chair of the committee on Appeals (in care of the secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 8765 West Higgins Road, Chicago, Illinois 60631) and shall set forth the specific charge or charges.
- d. Upon the filing of a written petition, the Executive Committee of the Synod Council may temporarily suspend the officer from service in the synod without prejudice, but with continuation of compensation, including benefits, if the officer is a salaried employee of the synod.
- e. In the case of alleged physical or mental incapacity of an officer of the synod, the procedures outlined in †S8.56 shall be followed and such officer shall comply with the decision of the Synod Council. If such officer fails or refuses to comply, the Synod Council may proceed to petition for recall or dismissal as follows:
 - 1) the Synod Council will submit a written report of their findings and the basis of their decision to the Committee on Appeals,
 - 2) the Committee on Appeals, exclusive of any members who are disqualified, shall review the findings and decision of the Synod Council and by an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of those present and voting may adopt the findings and grant the petition.
- f. If the synod officer is a minister of Word and Sacrament, grounds for recall or dismissal include those set forth in ELCA bylaws 20.22.01 and as defined under the process described in the ELCA constitutional provisions 20.21 and 20.22 as grounds for discipline. If the officer is a minister of Word and Service grounds for recall or dismissal include those set forth in ELCA bylaw 20.23.01 and as defined under the process described in the ELCA constitutional provisions 20.21 and 20.22 as grounds for discipline.
- g. If the officer is a layperson, grounds for recall or dismissal includes those set forth in the ELCA bylaws 20.41.01. as grounds for discipline.
- h. In the case of alleged and willful disregard or violation of the constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions or of alleged conduct as would subject the officer to disciplinary action, the following procedures shall apply:
 - 1) the petition shall be referred to the Committee on Appeals, which shall function as the discipline hearing committee that shall conduct a hearing in accordance with the rules provided for in the ELCA bylaw 20.22.14 except to the extent that those rules are in conflict with the provisions of this bylaw; and,
 - 2) the members of the Committee on Appeals, other than those who are disqualified, may grant the petition by an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of those present and voting.
- i. Written notice of a decision by the Committee on Appeals that the charges have been sustained shall be given to the affected officer and to the Synod Council and the office shall be vacated.

†S8.58.

If the bishop is to be temporarily absent from the synod for an extended period not to exceed 90 days, the bishop, after consultation with the presiding bishop and with the consent of the Synod Council, may appoint as acting bishop for such period a minister of Word and Sacrament of this church. Except as limited by action of the Synod Council, an acting bishop shall possess all of the powers and authority of a regularly elected bishop other than authority to ordain or to authorize the ordination of properly approved candidates for ordination.

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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.
- S9.02. 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 consisting of not less than five or more than fifteen members 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.
- S9.03.01. The Nominating Committee shall consist of five members with one member from each conference. One of the members will serve as chair of the Nominating Committee.
- S9.03.02. At the time of the appointment and acceptance of the members of the Nominating Committee, the Secretary of this Synod shall cause the following information to be published in the publication(s) of this Synod:
- a. the names, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, and conference of each member of the Nominating Committee;
 - b. the positions open for nomination/election with the specific characteristics and term of office of each.
- S9.03.03. At the first meeting of the Nominating Committee, the Secretary of this Synod shall provide the chairperson of the Nominating Committee with a list of all positions open for nomination/election and the specific category, conference and characteristics for each position.
- S9.03.04. Every attempt shall be made by the Nominating Committee to obtain at least one nominee for each open position on the Synod Council and other elective positions. In no case where the plan for inclusive representation lists specific characteristics shall nominees with differing characteristics be placed in nomination for the same position in order to fill this requirement.
- S9.03.05. Persons may be nominated from the floor of the Assembly for all positions on the ballot providing:
- a. the person nominated fulfills the specific characteristics for that position;
 - b. the nominee has consented to nomination in writing and that written consent is submitted at the time of nomination.
- S9.03.06. Should the Nominating Committee be unable to find a candidate for a position that meets all of the requirements for that position, the Nominating Committee shall:
- a. search for a person of the other gender to fill the position,
 - b. search for a person of the same gender but with a differing racial characteristic.
- 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

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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 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 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 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.
- S9.06.** 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.
- †S9.12.** 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.
- S9.12.A21.** The Synod Council Executive Committee shall provide for background checks for persons nominated, including nominations for an additional term, for positions as synod-officers and Synod Council members, with the exception of youth members or nominees who are still regarded as minors or juveniles according to prevailing law, prior to the Synod Assembly at which the election will take place or as soon as possible after the Synod Assembly for newly elected synod officers and Synod Councils members nominated from the floor. The process shall be as follows:
- a. Prior to the Synod Assembly appropriate notice of the background check requirement and protocol will be provided to voting members, potential nominees, and others as directed by the Synod Council.
 - b. Nominees and newly elected synod officers and Synod Council members are required to provide written consent to a background check and all information necessary to complete a background check, which should be completed prior to the Synod Assembly with respect to nominees identified before the assembly and prior to installation for newly elected synod officers and Synod Council members and officers nominated from the floor, if possible.
 - c. All records regarding elected officers and Synod Council members shall be maintained for at least five years following the person's leaving office or no longer serving on the Synod Council. Records may be retained longer as determined by the Synod Council Executive Committee on an individual basis. One synod staff person may be designated to assist in obtaining and maintaining records as directed by the designated Synod Council Executive Committee member.

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- d. All background checks for nominees and newly elected synod officer and Synod Council members will entail a criminal background check. A financial background check will be completed for nominees for treasurer and newly elected bishops. The Executive Committee shall decide whether additional types of background checks are appropriate for each synod officer and Synod Council member position.
- e. The background check results shall be provided to that nominee or elected synod officer or Synod Council member and to the Synod Council's Executive Committee. Further disclosure of the results may be determined by the Executive Committee but should ordinarily be restricted to matters of public record.
- f. The Synod Council Executive Committee may adopt other procedures or protocols as are necessary to provide for background checks for nominees and newly elected synod officers and newly elected Synod Council members and shall report such actions to the Synod Council.

Chapter 10.

SYNOD COUNCIL

- †S10.01.** The Synod Council consisting of the four officers of the synod and 10 to 24 other members, at least one young adult and with a goal of at least one 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 worshipping 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.
 - b. The term of office of members of the Synod Council, with the exception of the officers and the youth members, shall be three years.
- S10.01.01.** For the purposes of this chapter, "youth" and "young adult" are defined as stated in †S6.04.02. One youth and one young adult shall be elected as members of the Synod Council.
- S10.01.02.** The youth member shall be elected for a term of two years.
- †S10.02.** The Synod Council shall be the board of directors of the synod and shall serve as its interim legislative authority between meetings of the Synod Assembly. It may make decisions which are not in conflict with actions taken by the Synod Assembly or which are not precluded by provisions of this constitution or the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- S10.03.** The functions of the Synod Council shall be to:
- a. Exercise trusteeship responsibilities on behalf of this synod.
 - b. Recommend program goals and budgets to the regular meetings of the Synod Assembly.
 - c. Carry out the resolutions of the Synod Assembly.
 - d. Provide for an annual review of the roster of ministers, receive and act upon appropriate recommendations regarding those persons whose status is subject to reconsideration and action under the constitution and bylaws of ELCA, and make a report to the Synod Assembly of the Synod Council's actions in this regard.

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- e. Issue letters of call to rostered ministers as authorized by Chapter 7 of the constitution and bylaws of ELCA.
- f. Fill vacancies until the next regular meeting of the Synod Assembly except as may otherwise be provided in the constitution or bylaws of this synod, and determine the fact of the incapacity of an officer of the synod.
- g. Report its action to the regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.
- h. Perform such other functions as are set forth in the bylaws of this synod, or as may be delegated to it by the Synod Assembly.

- S10.03.01.** The Synod Council shall provide for review of constitutions and bylaws of congregations in accord with †C17.03 and †C17.04 of the *Model Constitution for Congregations* and for review of area ministry constitutions. Similar review of constitutions shall be made available to auxiliary organizations.
- S10.04.** Any proposal to appropriate funds, whether by amendment to the budget or otherwise, which is presented to a meeting of the Synod Assembly without the approval of the Synod Council, shall require a two-thirds vote for adoption.
- S10.05.** No elected member of the Synod Council shall receive compensation for such service.
- S10.06.** If a member of the Synod Council ceases to meet the requirements of the position to which she or he was elected, the office filled by such member shall at once become vacant.
- S10.06.01.** When a Synod Council member has been absent without valid reason from two consecutive meetings of the Synod Council, a member of the Executive Committee shall contact that member. If it is determined that the Synod Council member is unable to carry out the term of office, a letter of resignation shall be requested. If a resignation is not submitted, the Executive Committee can, through vote, take action to dismiss the member. The Executive Committee shall, in writing, inform the individual of the formal action.
- S10.07.** The composition of the Synod Council, the number of its members, and the manner of their selection, as well as the organization of the Synod Council, its additional duties and responsibilities, and the number of meetings to be held each year shall be set forth in the bylaws.
- ~~**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. (Superseded by new required provision †S10.09.01.)~~
- S10.07.02.** Members of the Synod Council (other than the officers) shall begin their terms at the close of the Synod Assembly at which they are elected. Members of the Synod Council (other than the officers and youth) shall serve for three years or until their successors are elected, and may be re-elected for one consecutive term.
- S10.07.03.** Terms of two years or more shall be considered as a full term.
- S10.07.04.** One of the 10-24 members shall be a minister of word and service.
- S10.07.05.** The 10 to 24 members of the Synod Council who are not elected officers of the Synod and who are not elected to youth positions as provided in S10.01.02. shall be:
- a. One rostered minister or one layperson from each conference
 - b. An additional 5 to 7 members elected at large by the Synod Assembly

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will include one youth, one young adult, one minister of word and service, and two persons of color or primary language other than English.

- c. At any given time, at least 60 percent of the members (other than officers) so elected shall be laity, at least 45 percent of the lay members shall be women and at least 45 percent shall be men.

S10.07.06. The Secretary of this Synod, in consultation with the Synod Council, shall maintain a chart of the individual characteristics of each position on the Synod Council and shall instruct the Nominating Committee of the characteristics of each position open for nomination and election.

S10.07.07. The Synod Council shall meet at least twice a year.

S10.07.08. In the situation of a vacancy on the Synod Council, the Executive Committee is empowered to appoint a person to fill that vacancy using the guidelines set forth in †S6.04 and S11.11. At the Synod Council meeting following such an appointment, the Council shall vote to ratify the appointee to fill the unexpired term.

S10.07.09. The following procedures shall apply to appointment to vacated positions on the Synod Council:

- a. Where the person elected fits all of the characteristics of that position as detailed by the plan for inclusive representation:
- 1) the person(s) on the original ballot shall be approached first;
 - 2) should a.1) be ineffective, the appointed personnel shall have the same characteristics as the person vacating the position;
 - 3) should a.1) and 2) prove impossible, any person may be appointed within the restrictions of rostered minister of word and sacrament or layperson as they apply to the position.
- b. Where the person occupying the position does not fit the characteristics for that position as detailed by the plan for inclusive representation;
- 1) the original characteristics for that position shall be in force;
 - 2) should b.1) be ineffective, the procedure outlined in a. shall apply.
- c. Following appointment and completion of a single term, a position shall revert to the original characteristics for that position in the nomination/election process.

†S10.09.01. 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. To the extent permitted by state law, notice of all meetings may be provided electronically.

Chapter 11. COMMITTEES

†S11.01. There shall be an Executive Committee, a Consultation Committee, a Committee on Discipline, an Audit Committee, and such other committees as this synod may from time to time determine. The duties and functions of such committees or any other organizational units created by this synod, and the composition and organizational structure of such units, shall be as set forth in this constitution or in the bylaws or continuing resolutions and shall be subject to any applicable provisions or requirements of the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

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- S11.01.01.** The Executive Committee shall be composed of the four elected officers plus three others ratified by the Synod Council from its body.
- a. The Executive Committee shall serve as the interim authority for the Synod Council between meetings of the Synod Council. It may make decisions which are not in conflict with the actions taken by the Synod Council or by the Synod Assembly or which are not precluded by provisions of this constitution or the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
 - b. The Executive Committee may act on other specific issues when given authority to do so by the Synod Council.
 - c. The Executive Committee shall execute its responsibilities as found elsewhere in this constitution, which are required by the ELCA Model Constitution. These are specified in the following paragraphs; †S6.03.e (8), S.8.22.02., S8.55, †S8.56, S10.06.01, S10.07.04, †S11.01, †S11.04, †S17.01, †S17.02, †S17.03, and †S17.04.
- S11.01.A18.** The Synod Council shall establish and appoint such teams and committees as deemed necessary to carry out the mission and ministry of this synod.
- a. As much as possible, the composition of all teams or committees shall conform to †S6.04 of this constitution.
 - b. The terms of office, normally 2 to 5 years, shall be determined by the Synod Council. Members of teams and committees may be re-appointed unless otherwise directed by this constitution.
 - c. The Bishop shall assign staff responsibility for each team or committee to provide advice, support and counsel.
 - d. Meetings of the teams and committees shall be public and ordinarily notice of each meeting shall be published in advance of the meeting date.
 - e. Each team and committee shall report annually to the Synod Council.
- †S11.02.** The Consultation Committee of this synod shall consist of at least 6 persons and not more than 12 persons, of whom half shall be rostered ministers and half shall be laypersons, who shall each be elected by the Synod Assembly for a term of six years without consecutive reelection. The functions of the Consultation Committee are set forth in Chapter 20 of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* and in Chapter 17 of this constitution. The size of the Consultation Committee, in accord with this provision, shall be defined in this synod's bylaws.
- S11.02.01.** The Consultation Committee shall consist of six persons.
- †S11.03.** The Committee on Discipline of this synod shall consist of 12 persons of whom 6 shall be rostered ministers and 6 shall be laypersons, who shall each be elected by the Synod Assembly for a term of six years without consecutive reelection.
- a. The functions of the Committee on Discipline of this synod are set forth in Chapter 20 of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.
 - b. The terms of committee members shall be staggered so that the terms of four committee members (2 clergy and 2 lay) expire every two years.
 - c. The Synod Council shall fill vacancies on the Committee on Discipline for any unexpired term.

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- S11.04.** The Mutual Ministry Committee shall be appointed by the Executive Committee of the Synod Council to provide support and counsel to the bishop.
- S11.04.01.** The Executive Committee may act as the Mutual Ministry Committee.
- †S11.05.** The Audit Committee of this synod shall consist of three to six persons, none of whom is a member of the synod staff. Up to half of the committee members may be Synod Council members. The Audit Committee members shall be elected by the Synod Council for a term of three years and be eligible for re-election to a second consecutive three-year term. The terms of the Audit Committee members shall be staggered. The Audit Committee shall be responsible for assisting the Synod Council in fulfilling its general oversight of the synod's accounting, financial reporting, internal control systems, and external audit processes as provided in †S15.31.
- †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 ordained ministers on the roster 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 12.

CONFERENCES, CLUSTERS, COALITIONS, OR OTHER AREA SUBDIVISIONS

- †S12.01.** This synod may establish conferences, clusters, coalitions, area subdivisions, and networks as appropriate within its territory and in collaboration with other synods and entities, as specified in the bylaws and continuing resolutions. The purpose of such groupings shall be to foster interdependent relationships for missional purposes among congregations, synods, the churchwide organization, and other affiliates.
- S12.01.A18.** Beginning July 1, 2018, the synod shall be divided into five Conferences
- a. The purposes of the Conference are to:
- 1) Strengthen each congregation's mission in its setting.
 - 2) Encourage cooperation among congregations within each conference.
 - 3) Strengthen the care and nurture of rostered persons and their families.
 - 4) Connect congregations, synod ministries, and churchwide resources to one another in order to equip laity and rostered ministers for ministry.
- b. All congregations, synod agencies and institutional ministries are encouraged to relate to any or all Conferences as best serves this church's mission. Rostered ministers serving a specialized ministry will associate with the Conference of the congregation where they hold membership.

The names of the conferences and the congregations and ministry sites within each conference are:

1) **Western Kansas**

Albert, KS (Peace); Brewster, KS (Our Savior); Dorrance, KS (First); Ellis, KS (St. John); Galatia, KS (St. Paul); Garden City, KS (Iglesia Luterana Sagrado Corazon de Jesus); Garden City, KS (St. James); Garfield, KS (Garfield); Great Bend, KS (St. Mark); Hays, KS (Trinity); Hoisington, KS (Emmanuel); Kensington, KS (St. John); Lincoln, KS (Denmark); Oberlin, KS (Faith); Phillipsburg, KS (Zion); Rush Center, KS (Hope); Russell, KS (St. John); Sharon Springs, KS (Sharon); Smith

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Center, KS (American); Stuttgart, KS (Emmanuel); WaKeeney, KS (Bethlehem); WaKeeney, KS (Emanuel); Wilson, KS (Excelsior); Wilson, KS (Immanuel); Winona, KS (Bethesda).

2) Central Kansas

Assaria, Ks (Assaria); Belleville, KS (American); Burdick, KS (Hebron); Concordia, KS, (Concordia); Courtland, KS (Ada); Eureka, KS (Christ); Falun, KS (Falun); Glasco, KS (St. Paul), Greenleaf (Trinity); Hanover, KS (St. John); Hanover, KS (Zion); Haysville, KS (Resurrection); Herington, KS (St. Paul); Hutchinson, KS (Emanuel); Junction City, KS (Camp Toma Shinga); Junction City, KS (Faith); Leonardville, KS (Walsburg); Lindsborg, KS (Bethany); Lindsborg, KS (Bethany College); Lindsborg, KS (Messiah); Manhattan, KS (First); Manhattan, KS (KSU Campus Ministry); Manhattan, KS (Peace); Marquette, KS (Elim); McPherson, KS (New Gottland); McPherson, KS (Trinity); Olsburg, KS (Olsburg); Onaga, KS (New Hope); Peabody, KS (St. Paul); Salina, KS (Immanuel); Salina, KS (Redeemer); Salina, KS (St. John); Scandia, KS (Amana); Smolan, KS (Salemsborg); Tescott, KS (St. Paul); Washington, KS (Good Shepherd); Waterville, KS (St. Mark); Wellington, KS, (St. John) White City, KS (Marion Hill); Wichita, KS (Christ); Wichita, KS (Gloria Dei); Wichita, KS (Partners); Wichita, KS (Reformation); Wichita, KS (St. Paul); Windom, KS (Andover).

3) Border

Atchison, KS (St. Mark); Belton, MO (Lord of Love); Bendena, KS (St. John); Blue Springs, MO (All Saints); Emporia, KS (St. Mark); Kansas City, KS (Hollis Renewal Center); Kansas City, KS (St. Martin); Kansas City, MO (Gloria Dei); Kansas City, MO (Immanuel); Kansas City, MO (Oasis on the Boulevard); Kansas City, MO (St. James); Kansas City, MO (St. Mark Hope and Peace); Lancaster, KS (St. John); Lawrence, KS (KU Campus Ministry); Lawrence, KS (Good Shepherd); Lawrence, KS (Trinity); Lee's Summit, MO (Martin Luther); Lenexa, KS (Kaw Prairie); Lenexa, KS (Salem); Liberty, MO (Hosanna!); Mission Hills, KS (First); Olathe, KS (Advent); Olathe, KS, (St. Mark); Osage City, KS (Grace); Overland Park, KS (Atonement); Overland Park, KS (Holy Cross); Overland Park, KS (Overland Park); Prairie Village, KS (Lutheran Church of Resurrection); Robinson, KS. (Upper Wolf); Saint Joseph, MO (First); Saint Joseph, MO (South Sudanese); Topeka, KS (First); Topeka, KS (Our Savior); Topeka, KS (Trinity); Valley Falls, KS (St. Paul).

4) Osage

Butler, MO (St. Matthew American); Camdenton, MO, (Our Savior); Cole Camp, MO (Immanuel Brauersville); Cole Camp, MO (St. Paul); Columbia, MO (St. Andrew); Eagle Rock, MO (Community); Hollister, MO (Peace); Jefferson City, MO (Our Savior); Joplin, MO (Peace); Lohman, MO (St. Paul); Nevada, MO (St. Paul); Pittsburg, KS (St. John); Russellville, MO (Trinity); Salem, MO (Our Savior); Salisbury, MO (Peace); Sedalia, MO (Christ & Trinity); Springfield, MO (Messiah); Springfield, MO (Prince of Peace); Stover, MO (Pyrmont Trinity); Sunrise Beach, MO (Kent Memorial); West Plains, MO (St. Paul).

5) Eastern Missouri

Bel-Nor, MO (Unity); Bridgeton, MO (Shepherd of the Hills); Cape Girardeau, MO (St. Mark); Chesterfield, MO (Trinity); Clayton, MO (St. Mark); Creve Coeur, MO (Holy Cross); Desoto, MO (Redeemer); Ferguson, MO (Zion); Florissant, MO (Lutheran Church of the Atonement); Florissant, MO (Lutheran Church of the Living Christ); Hazelwood, MO (Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd); Imperial, MO (Family of Christ); Kirkwood, MO (Trinity); Lake St. Louis, MO (Living Lord); Manchester, MO (Good Shepherd); Poplar Bluff, MO (St. Andrew); St. Charles, MO (Hope); Saint Louis, MO (Bethel); Saint Louis, MO (Gethsemane); Saint Louis, MO (LuMin St. Louis Campus Ministry); St. Louis, MO (St. Phillip); Saint Louis, MO (St. Thomas-Holy Spirit); Sedgewickville, MO (Sargent's Chapel); Sedgewickville, MO (Sedgewickville); Washington, MO (Peace); Webster Groves, MO (Christ).

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- c. Each Conference shall organize itself to plan and implement its mission purposes, and in consultation with the Bishop's office to develop a plan to strengthen pastoral care for rostered ministers and their families.
 - 1) The conference deans shall be ministers of word and sacrament appointed by the bishop. The Conference Deans shall:
 - a) communicate with the bishop and/or synod staff regarding pastoral care needs and emergencies among rostered persons and their families;
 - b) meet with the bishop and other deans at least once per year; and,
 - c) communicate with conference congregations, agency and institutional ministries and rostered ministers regarding synod and-conference events and programs.
 - 2) Conference synod council members shall be lay or rostered ministers elected by the Synod Assembly and serve terms as specified in the synod constitution. Conference Synod Council Member shall:
 - a) fulfill the responsibilities of a synod council member; and,
 - b) communicate between the synod council and the conferences their respective mission needs and challenges.

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, which is not in contradiction to the constitution and bylaws of the ELCA.

- a. **New Congregations.** A congregation newly formed by this church and any congregation seeking recognition and reception by this church shall:
 - 1) Accept the criteria for recognition and reception as a congregation of this church, fulfill the functions of the congregation, and accept the governance provisions as provided in Chapter 9 of the constitution and bylaws of this church.
 - 2) Adopt governing documents that include fully and without alterations the Preamble, Chapter 1, where applicable, and all required provisions of Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 in the *Model Constitution for Congregations* consistent with requirements the constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of this church. Bylaws, appropriate for inclusion in these chapters and not in conflict with these required provisions in the *Model Constitution for Congregations*, the constitution of this synod, or the *Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, may be adopted as described in Chapter 16 and 18 of the *Model Constitution for Congregations*.
 - 3) Accept the commitments expected of all congregations of this church as stated in *C6.01., *C6.02., and *C6.03. of the Model Constitution for Congregations.
- b. **Congregations from another church body.** 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

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of the congregation should contact the ELCA synod bishop or staff where the congregation is located. 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 this church.

- c. **Recognition and reception.** Recognition and reception of additional congregations into this church is based upon the judgment of the synod that the congregations satisfy the criteria of 9.21. and 9.25. 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.

- †S13.02. It shall be the responsibility of each congregation of this synod to elect from among its voting members laypersons to serve as members of the Synod Assembly as well as persons to represent it at meetings of any conference, cluster, or coalition of which it is a member. Normatively, congregations should hold elections prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly. The number of persons to be elected by each congregation and other qualifications shall be as prescribed in guidelines established by this synod.
- S13.11. When a rostered minister resigns, the Congregation Council shall receive the letter of resignation, report it to the congregation, and at once notify the bishop of this synod.
- S13.12. A congregation under financial obligation to its former rostered minister shall make satisfactory settlement of the obligation before calling a successor.
- †S13.20. A congregation considering a relocation shall confer with the bishop of the synod in which it is territorially located and the appropriate unit of the churchwide organization before any steps are taken leading to such action. The approval of the Synod Council shall be received before any such action is effected.
- †S13.21. A congregation considering development of an additional site to be used regularly for worship shall confer with the bishop of the synod in which it is territorially located and the appropriate unit of the churchwide organization before any steps are taken leading to such action.
- †S13.22. Each congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America within the territory of this synod, except those which are in partnership with the Slovak Zion Synod, shall establish and maintain a relationship with this synod.
- †S13.23. Provision 9.71. of the constitution of this church shall govern the relationship of this synod and a congregation of this synod regarding the property of the congregation. This synod may transfer or convey property to a congregation of the synod, subject to restrictions accepted by the congregation, including provision that if the Synod Council, in its sole and exclusive discretion, determines (1) that the property is not

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being used to serve the missions and ministry needs of this church, or (2) that the congregation has transferred, encumbered, mortgaged, or in any way burdened or impaired any right, title, or interest in the property without prior approval of the Synod Council, then title to the property shall revert to the synod, and the congregation, upon written demand, shall reconvey the property to the synod.

†S13.24. The Synod Council, itself or through trustees appointed by it, may take charge and control of the property of a congregation of this synod to hold, manage, and convey the same on behalf of this synod, if any of the following apply:

- a. The congregation has disbanded, ceased to worship, or otherwise ceased to exist as a congregation.
- b. The congregation has abandoned its property.
- c. The remaining members of the congregation decide that it is no longer possible to function as a congregation or that they are unable to provide required governance.
- d. The Synod Council determines that the membership of a congregation has become so scattered or so diminished in numbers that it cannot provide required governance or that it has become impractical for the congregation to fulfill the purposes for which it was organized.
- e. The Synod Council determines that it is necessary for this synod to protect and preserve the congregation's property from waste and deterioration.

The congregation shall have the right to appeal any such decision to the next Synod Assembly.

S13.25. This synod may temporarily assume administration of a congregation upon its request or with its concurrence.

S13.30. Discipline

†S13.31. Congregations and members of congregations are subject to discipline in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 20 of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. The synod's involvement in and responsibility for such disciplinary processes shall be as set forth in that chapter.

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.

Chapter 14.

ROSTERED MINISTERS

S14.10. MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

†S14.11. The time and place of the ordination of those persons properly called to ministry in this synod shall be authorized by the bishop of this synod.

†S14.12. Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,

- a. Every minister of Word and Sacrament shall:

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- 1) preach the Word;
- 2) administer the sacraments;
- 3) conduct public worship;
- 4) provide pastoral care;
- 5) seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel;
- 6) impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through available channels of effective communication;
- 7) witness to the Kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad; and,
- 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.

b. Each pastor with a congregational call shall, within the congregation:

- 1) offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead;
- 2) relate to all schools and organizations within the congregation;
- 3) install regularly elected members of the Congregation Council; and
- 4) with the council, administer discipline
- 5) endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to the work of the ELCA churchwide organization and of this synod and
- 6) encourage adherence to covenantal relationship with this church as expressed in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.

S14.13. The pastor shall keep accurate records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, members dismissed, or members excluded from the congregation, and shall submit a summary of such statistics annually to this synod. The pastor shall be a member of the congregation that has extended the letter of call. In a parish of multiple congregations, the pastor shall hold membership in one of the congregations.

S14.14. Whenever members of a congregation move to such a distance that regular attendance at its services becomes impractical, it shall be the duty of the pastor to commend them, upon their consent, to the pastoral care of a Lutheran congregation nearer to their place of residence.

S14.15. Each minister of Word and Sacrament 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.

†**S14.16.** When a congregation of this church desires to call a pastor or a candidate for the ministry of Word and Sacrament of this church:

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- a. Each congregation of this synod shall consult the bishop of this synod before taking any steps leading to the extending of a call to a prospective pastor.
- b. For issuance of a letter of call to a pastor or pastoral candidate by a congregation of this synod in accord with ELCA constitutional provision 7.41., a two-thirds vote shall be required of voting members of the congregation present and voting at a meeting regularly called for the purpose of issuing such a call.
- c. When the congregation has voted to issue a call to a prospective pastor, the letter of call shall be submitted to the bishop of the synod for this bishop's signature.

S14.17. No minister of word and sacrament shall accept a call without first conferring with the bishop of this synod. A minister of Word and Sacrament shall respond with an answer to acceptance or declination to a letter of call within thirty days of receipt of such call. In exceptional circumstances with the approval of the bishop of this synod and the chair of the Congregation Council of the congregation issuing the call, an additional fifteen days may be granted to respond to a letter of call.

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

- a. The call of a congregation, when accepted by a pastor, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment which shall be terminated only by the pastor's death or, following consultation with the synod bishop, for the following reasons:
 - 1) mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term;
 - 2) resignation of the pastor, which shall become effective, unless otherwise agreed, no later than 30 days after the date on which it was submitted;
 - 3) inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in that congregation in view of local conditions;
 - 4) inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in view of disability or incapacity of the pastor;
 - 5) suspension of the pastor through discipline for more than three months;
 - 6) resignation or removal of the pastor from the roster of ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church;
 - 7) termination of the relationship between this church and the congregation;
 - 8) dissolution of the congregation or the termination of a parish arrangement; or
 - 9) suspension of the congregation through discipline for more than six months.
- b. When allegations of disability or incapacity of the pastor under paragraph a.4) above, or ineffective conduct of the pastoral office under paragraph a.3) above, have come to the attention of the bishop of this synod,
 - 1) the bishop, who has sole discretion, may investigate such conditions personally together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one layperson, or

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- 2) when such allegations have been brought to the synod's attention by an official recital of allegations by the Congregation Council or by a petition signed by at least one-third of the voting members of the congregation, the bishop personally shall investigate such conditions together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one layperson.
- c. In case of alleged disability or incapacity under paragraph a.4) above, the bishop's committee shall obtain and document competent medical opinion concerning the pastor's condition. When a disability or incapacity is evident to the committee, the bishop of this synod may declare the pastorate vacant. When the pastorate is declared vacant, the Synod Council shall list the pastor on the roster of ministers of Word and Sacrament with disability status. Upon resumption of the ability to conduct the office effectively, the bishop shall take steps to enable the pastor to resume the ministry, either in the congregation last served or in another appropriate call.
- 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.
- e. If either party fails to assent to the recommendations of the bishop's committee concerning the pastor's call, the congregation may dismiss the pastor only at a legally called meeting after consultation with the bishop, either (a) by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee did not recommend termination of the call, or (b) by a majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee recommended termination of the call.
- f. If, in the course of proceedings described in paragraph c. or paragraph d. above, the bishop's committee concludes that there may be grounds for disciplinary action, the committee shall make recommendations concerning disciplinary action in accordance with the provisions of this church's constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions.

†S14.19. Ministers of Word and Sacrament shall respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they do not serve and shall not exercise ministerial functions therein unless invited to do so by the pastor, or if there is no duly called pastor, then by the interim pastor in consultation with the Congregation Council.

†S14.21. The records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, members transferred or dismissed, members who have become inactive, or members excluded from the congregation shall be kept accurately and permanently, They shall remain the property of each congregation. At the time of the closure of a congregation, such records shall be sent to the regional archives. The secretary of the congregation shall attest to the bishop of this synod that such records have been placed in the secretary's hands in good order by a departing pastor before:

- a. installation in another call, or
- b. approval of a request for change in roster status.

†S14.22. The pastor shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former congregation before:

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- a. installation in another call, or
- b. approval of a request for change in roster status.

†S14.23. During service to a congregation, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties in the congregation of a regularly called pastor. The interim pastor may delegate the same in part to an interim supply pastor with the consent of the bishop of this synod. The interim pastor and any rostered minister who may assist shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor. Upon completion of service, the interim pastor shall certify to the bishop of this synod that the congregation records, for the period for which the interim pastor was responsible, are in order.

†S14.24. With the approval of the synod-bishop expressed in writing which sets forth a clear statement of the purpose to be served by such a departure from the normal rule of permanency of the call as expressed in †S14.18., a congregation may call a pastor for a specific term of years. Details of such calls shall be in writing setting forth the purpose and conditions involved. Prior to the completion of a term, the bishop of this synod or a representative of the bishop shall meet with the pastor and representatives of the congregation for a review of the call. Such call may also be terminated before its expiration in accordance with the provisions of †S14.18.

S14.25. All ministers of word and sacrament under a call shall attend meetings of the Synod Assembly, and the pastors of congregations shall also attend the meetings of the conference, cluster, or coalition, to which the congregation belongs.

S14.30. Ministers of Word and Service

†S14.31. The time and place of the ordination of those persons properly called to ministry in this synod shall be authorized by the bishop of this synod.

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

- a. Be rooted in the Word of God, for proclamation and service;
- b. Advocate a prophetic diakonia that commits itself to risk-taking and innovative service on the frontiers of the Church's outreach, giving particular attention to the suffering places in God's world;
- 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;
- d. Equip the baptized for ministry in God's world that affirms the gifts of all people;
- e. Encourage mutual relationships that invite participation and accompaniment of others in God's mission;
- f. Practice stewardship that respects God's gift of time, talents, and resources;
- g. Be grounded in a gathered community for ongoing diaconal formation;
- h. Share knowledge of this church and its wider ministry of the gospel and advocate for the work of all expressions of the church; and,
- i. Identify and encourage qualified persons to prepare for ministry of the gospel.

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- 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.
(Recommended by 2016 Churchwide Assembly; overlooked at 2018 Synod Assembly; pending approval at 2026 Synod Assembly.)
- 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.
(Recommended by 2016 Churchwide Assembly; overlooked at 2018 Synod Assembly; pending approval at 2026 Synod Assembly.)
- †S14.41.** When a congregation of this church desires to call a minister of Word and Service or a candidate for the ministry of Word and Service of this church:
- a. Each congregation of this synod shall consult the bishop of this synod before taking any steps leading to the extending of a call to a prospective minister of Word and Service.
 - b. For issuance of a letter of call to a minister of Word and Service or candidate by a congregation of this synod in accord with ELCA constitutional provision 7.71., a two-thirds vote shall be required of members of the congregation present and voting at a meeting regularly called for the purpose of issuing such a call.
 - c. When the congregation has voted to issue a call to a prospective minister of Word and Service, the letter of call shall be submitted to the bishop of this synod for the bishop's signature.
- 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.
(Recommended by 2016 Churchwide Assembly; overlooked at 2018 Synod Assembly; pending approval at 2026 Synod Assembly.)
- †S14.43.** The provisions for termination of the mutual relationship between a minister of Word and Service and a congregation shall be as follows:
- a. The call of a congregation, when accepted by a minister of Word and Service, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment which shall be terminated only by the deacon's death or, following consultation with the synod bishop, for any of the following reasons:
 - 1) mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term;
 - 2) resignation of the minister of Word and Service, which shall become effective, unless otherwise agreed, no later than 30 days after the date on which it was submitted;
 - 3) inability to conduct the office effectively in that congregation in view of local conditions;
 - 4) inability to conduct the office effectively in view of disability or incapacity of the minister of Word and Service;
 - 5) suspension of the minister of Word and Service through discipline for more than three months;
 - 6) resignation or removal of the minister of Word and Service from the roster of ministers of Word and Service of this church;

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- 7) termination of the relationship between this church and the congregation;
 - 8) dissolution of the congregation or the termination of a parish arrangement; or
 - 9) suspension of the congregation through discipline for more than six months.
- b. When allegations of disability or incapacity of the minister of Word and Service under paragraph a.4) above, or ineffective conduct of the pastoral office under paragraph a.3) above, have come to the attention of the bishop of this synod,
- 1) the bishop, who has sole discretion, may investigate such conditions personally together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one layperson, or
 - 2) when such allegations have been brought to the synod's attention by an official recital of allegations by the Congregation Council or by a petition signed by at least one-third of the voting members of the congregation, the bishop personally shall investigate such conditions together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one layperson.
- c. In case of alleged disability or incapacity under paragraph a.4) above, the bishop's committee shall obtain and document competent medical opinion concerning the minister of Word and Service's condition. When a disability or incapacity is evident to the committee, the bishop of this synod may declare the position vacant and the minister of Word and Service shall be listed on the roster of ministers of Word and Service with disability status. Upon resumption of the ability to conduct the office effectively, the bishop shall take steps to enable the minister of Word and Service to resume the ministry, either in the congregation last served or in another appropriate call.
- 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 minister of Word and Service and then to the congregation. The recommendations of the bishop's committee must address whether the minister of Word and Service'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 minister of Word and Service, if appropriate. If the minister of Word and Service and congregation agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action need be taken by the synod.
- e. If either party fails to assent to the recommendations of the bishop's committee concerning the minister of Word and Service's call, the congregation may dismiss the minister of Word and Service only at a legally called meeting after consultation with the bishop, either (a) by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee did not recommend termination of the call, or (b) by a majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee recommended termination of the call.
- f. If, in the course of proceedings described in paragraph c. or paragraph d. above, the bishop's committee concludes that there may be grounds for disciplinary action, the committee shall make recommendations concerning disciplinary action in accordance with the provisions of this church's constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions.

†S14.44. Ministers of Word and Service shall respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they do not serve and shall not exercise ministerial functions therein unless invited to do so by the Congregation Council.

†S14.45. The minister of Word and Service shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former congregation before:

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- a. installation in another call, or
- b. approval of a request for change in roster status.

†S14.46. With the approval of the synod bishop expressed in writing which sets forth a clear statement of the purpose to be served by such a departure from the normal rule of permanency of the call as expressed in †S14.43., a congregation may call a minister of Word and Service for a specific term.. Details of such calls shall be in writing setting forth the purpose and conditions involved. Prior to the completion of a term, the bishop of this synod or a representative of the bishop shall meet with the minister of Word and Service and representatives of the congregation for a review of the call. Such call may also be terminated before its expiration in accordance with the provisions of †S14.43.

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. *(Recommended by 2016 Churchwide Assembly; overlooked at 2018 Synod Assembly; pending approval at 2026 Synod Assembly.)*

Chapter 15.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

†S15.01. The fiscal year of this synod shall be February 1 to January 31.

†S15.11. Since the congregations, synods, and churchwide organizations are interdependent expressions that share in God's mission, all share in the responsibility to develop, implement, and strengthen the financial support of the whole church. The gifts and offerings of the members of ELCA are given to support all parts of this church; thus the unity of this church should be evidenced in determining each part's share of the gifts and offerings. Therefore:

- a. The mission of this church beyond the congregation is to be supported by such a proportionate share of each congregation's annual budget as each congregation determines. This synod shall develop guidelines for determining "proportionate share," and shall consult with congregational leaders to assist each congregation in making its determination.
- b. This synod shall receive the proportionate share of the mission support from its congregations, and shall transmit that percentage or amount of each congregation's mission support as determined in consultation with the churchwide organization and approved by the Synod Assembly as part of its budget consideration.
- c. Should the Synod Assembly not approve the proportionate share of mission support determined in consultation with the churchwide organization, a new consultation with the churchwide organization shall take place. The Synod Council is authorized to amend the budget adopted by the Synod Assembly to reflect the results of this consultation.

†S15.12. The annual budget of this synod shall reflect the entire range of its own activities and its commitment to supportive funding with other synods and the churchwide organization.

S15.13. On the basis of estimated income, the Synod Council shall authorize expenditures within the budget for the fiscal year. Expenditure authorizations shall be subject to revision, in light of changing conditions, by the Synod Council.

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†S15.31. This synod shall arrange to have an annual audit of its financial records conducted by a certified public accountant firm recommended by the synod Audit Committee and approved by the Synod Council. The audited annual financial report shall be submitted by this synod to the churchwide Office of the Treasurer and to the congregations of this synod.

†S15.32. This synod shall maintain adequate, continuous insurance coverage in accordance with standards recommended by the churchwide organization. Insurance programs offered or endorsed by the churchwide organization shall be deemed to fulfill this obligation.

Chapter 16.

INDEMNIFICATION

†S16.01. Subject to the limitations and duties imposed by law, each person who is or was made or threatened to be made a party to any proceeding by reason of the present or former capacity of that person as a Synod Council member, officer, employee, or committee member of this synod shall be indemnified against all costs and expenses incurred by that person in connection with the proceeding. Indemnification of any person by reason of that person's capacity as a director, officer, employee, or committee member of any other organization, regardless of its form or relationship to this synod, is subject to the provisions of †S16.02.

- a. The term "proceeding" means a threatened, pending, or completed lawsuit, whether civil or criminal, an administrative or investigative matter, arbitration, mediation, alternative dispute resolution, or any other similar legal or governmental action. Except as otherwise required by law, the term "proceeding" does not include (a) any action by this synod against the individual seeking indemnification, or (b) subject to †S16.04., a disciplinary hearing or related process described in Chapter 20 of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.
- b. The term "indemnification" includes reimbursement and advances of costs and expenses for judgments, penalties, fines, settlements, excise taxes, reasonable attorneys' fees, disbursements, and similar required expenditures.

†S16.02. Whenever a person who, while a Synod Council member, officer, committee member, or employee of this synod, is or was serving at the request of this synod as (or whose duties in that position involve or involved service in the capacity of) a director, officer, partner, trustee, employee, or agent of another organization, is or was made or threatened to be made a party to a proceeding by reason of such capacity, then such person shall be entitled to indemnification only if (a) the Synod Council has established a process for determining whether a person serving in the capacity described in this section shall be entitled to indemnification in any specific case, and (b) that process has been applied in making a specific determination that such person is entitled to indemnification.

†S16.03. This synod may purchase and maintain insurance on behalf of itself or any person entitled to indemnification pursuant to this chapter against any liability asserted against and incurred by this synod or by such other person in or arising from a capacity described in †S16.01. or †S16.02.

†S16.04. When written charges against a rostered minister of this church are made in disciplinary proceedings under Chapter 20 of the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by the synod bishop or when written charges against a congregation are made in disciplinary proceedings by the Synod Council or the synod bishop, and the discipline hearing committee determines that no discipline shall be imposed, then if such determination is not reversed or set aside on appeal, indemnification shall be made by the synod to the accused for reasonable attorney's fees and other reasonable expenses related to the defense of the charges. The determination of the reasonableness of such fees and expenses shall be made by the Synod Council.

Chapter 17.

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ADJUDICATION

- †S17.01. The synod bishop and the Executive Committee of the Synod Council shall be available to give counsel when disputes arise within this synod.
- †S17.02. The synod bishop and the Executive Committee of the Synod Council shall receive expressions of concern from rostered ministers, 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 vice-president will lead the Executive Committee's efforts at resolving the matter. When the matter at issue cannot be resolved in this manner, the applicable procedures for investigation, decision, appeal, and adjudication shall be followed. Allegations or charges that could lead to the discipline of a rostered minister shall not be addressed by the Executive Committee but shall be resolved through the disciplinary process set forth in the *Constitution and Bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.
- †S17.03. When there is disagreement between or among congregations of this synod on a substantive issue that cannot be resolved by the parties, the council of an affected congregation may petition the synod bishop for a consultation after informing the other affected congregation(s) of its intent to do so. If this 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. If the Consultation Committee's efforts fail to resolve the issue(s), the entire matter shall be referred to the Synod Council for adjudication by whatever process the council deems necessary. The decision of the Synod Council shall be final.
- †S17.04. When conferences, clusters, coalitions, or area subdivisions of this synod have a disagreement on a substantive issue that they cannot resolve, the aggrieved party or parties may petition the synod bishop and the Executive Committee of the Synod Council requesting a consultation after informing the other affected parties of their intent to do so. In this case the decision of the Executive Committee shall prevail, except that, upon the motion of a member of the Synod Council, the decision shall be referred to the Synod Council for final action.
- S17.10. **Adjudication in a Congregation**
- †S17.11. 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. The synod bishop shall seek a timely resolution of the dispute. If the issue relates directly to the pastor, the bishop may begin the process in †S14.18.d. In all other matters, if 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. If the Consultation Committee's efforts fail to resolve the dispute, the entire matter shall be referred to the Synod Council for adjudication by whatever process the council deems necessary. The Synod Council's decision shall be final.

Chapter 18.

AMENDMENTS, BYLAWS, AND CONTINUING RESOLUTION

- †S18.10. Amendments to Constitution
- †S18.11. Certain sections of this constitution incorporate and record therein required provisions of the constitution and bylaws of this church. If such provisions are amended by the Churchwide Assembly, corresponding amendments shall be introduced at once into this constitution by the secretary of this synod upon receipt of formal certification thereof from the secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

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- †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:
- a. Introduced with the support of at least 15 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 ratified 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.
- †S18.20. **Amendments to Bylaws**
- †S18.21. This synod may adopt bylaws not in conflict with this constitution or with the constitution and bylaws of the churchwide organization. This synod may amend its bylaws at any meeting of the Synod Assembly by a two-thirds vote of voting members of the assembly present and voting. Newly adopted bylaws and amendments to existing bylaws shall be reported to the secretary of this church.
- †S18.30. **Amendments to Continuing Resolutions**
- †S18.31. This synod may adopt continuing resolutions not in conflict with this constitution or its bylaws or the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of the churchwide organization. Such continuing resolutions may be adopted or amended by a majority vote of the Synod Assembly or by a two-thirds vote of the Synod Council. Newly adopted continuing resolutions and amendments to existing continuing resolutions shall be reported to the secretary of this church.