

2021 Montana Synod Assembly
Proposed Rules of Organization and Procedure - Updated

Part one - Authority and Duties

S. 7.01 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.

S7.11.11. The Synod Assembly shall meet annually at a time and place set by the Synod Council in consultation with the bishop.

S7.11.12. Biennially, the Synod Assembly shall meet in conjunction with the Synod Theological Conference. On these years the business conducted by the Synod Assembly shall be limited to elections, approval of a budget, oral reports by the bishops of the ELCA and the synod, reception and/or approval of written reports, and any other business considered essential by the Synod Council, synod bishop, or a majority of the members of the Synod Assembly present and voting.

S7.11.13. The Synod Theological Conference shall meet biennially in conjunction with the Synod Assembly. Notice of the Theological Conference shall be included with the notice of the Synod Assembly. Planning for the Synod Theological Conference shall be the responsibility of the Synod Council.

Additional Rules for the 2021 Digital Assembly:

1. Due to the risks imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 Assembly of the Montana Synod of the ELCA shall be held virtually, live online.
2. The Assembly will meet by using digital means. The procedures for claiming the floor for speaking or motions, and other technical features of the digital meeting and voting will be announced prior to the meeting to all registered voting members. All voting members will be required to attend a minimum of one pre-assembly training online before the Assembly.
3. Participation as a voting member in the assembly will require the following:
 - Ability to watch the assembly in real time via a desktop computer, laptop, tablet, or smartphone.
 - An internet connection stable enough to livestream from Youtube.
 - A device on which to vote in a browser based voting platform in real time, without cutting off the livestream. Voting members are expected to have this solution prepared before the assembly.
4. If intending to speak at the assembly, participants will need:
 - A webcam and microphone, previously tested and insured to provide a clear audio/video connection to video conferencing software.
 - An internet connection that can sustain both the livestream and a connection to the live video conference simultaneously
 - The speaker will need to insure that their audio is free of echo, feedback, or external noise in order to be heard clearly and not delay the assembly.
5. Contingencies for technical difficulties
 - There will be a backup site prepared in the case of power or internet outage. If either of these events affects the main site, the Youtube stream will go down but the meeting will stay active with the main host being transferred to one of the enabled co-hosts. That co-host will re-initiate the stream and give pre-planned instructions to the voting members. During pre-assembly training, all delegates will be informed concerning what to do in the event of the stream dropping, and how to get back to it.

Part two - Members of the Assembly

S. 7.21 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 ordained ministers under call on the roster of this synod in attendance at this Synod Assembly shall be voting members.
- b. All deacons of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, under call, on the official lay roster of this synod shall have both voice and vote as lay voting members in the Synod Assembly, in addition to the voting membership of lay members of congregations provided in item *S7.21c.
- c. A minimum of one lay member elected by each congregation with fewer than 175 baptized members and a minimum of two lay members elected by each congregation with 175 or more baptized members related to this synod, normally one of whom shall be male and one of whom shall be female, shall be voting members. The Synod Council shall establish a formula to provide additional lay representation from congregations on the basis of the number of baptized members in the congregation. The Synod Council shall seek to ensure that, as nearly as possible, 50 percent of the lay members of the assembly shall be female and 50 percent shall be male. Additional members from each congregation normally shall be equally divided between male and female.
- d. Voting membership shall include the officers of this synod.

S 7.22 The synod may establish processes that permit retired ordained ministers, retired deacons on the roster of this synod to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, consistent with *S7.21.c. above.

S 7.22.01 All retired ordained ministers, retired deacons on the roster of this synod shall be voting members of the Synod Assembly.

S 7.23 All ordained ministers and all deacons on leave from call, not elected as members, all of whose names appear on the rosters of this synod, shall have the privilege of voice but not vote at all meetings of the Synod Assembly. The presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and such other official representatives of this church as may be designated from time to time by the Church Council shall also 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.

S 7.26 This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council that permit representatives of mission settings formed with the intent of becoming chartered congregations and authorized worshiping communities of the synod, which have been authorized under ELCA bylaw 10.02.03., to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, consistent with *S7.21. Authorized worshiping communities, acknowledged under criteria, policies, and procedures approved by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, shall accept and adhere to the Confession of Faith and Statement of Purpose of this church, shall be served by leadership under the criteria of this church, and shall be subject to the discipline of this church.

S 7.27 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.

Credentials

The Credentials Committee shall report at the beginning of each plenary session. NOTE: This rule is needed so that the voting member count can be used for the determination of the maximum number of voting members who are eligible to vote. This is especially important when votes have to be counted.

Votes for a majority or a 2/3rds majority shall be based on the number of legal votes cast of those who are eligible to vote. NOTE: the number of legal votes cast cannot exceed the number of voting members reported by the Credentials Committee.

Part three - Procedure

Parliamentary Procedure

S 7.32 The Synod Assembly shall use parliamentary procedures in accordance with *Robert's Rules of Order*, latest edition, unless otherwise ordered by the assembly.

(Note: the 12th edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, is, therefore, the governing parliamentary law of this church, except as otherwise provided). No motion shall be out of order because of conflict with federal, state, or local constitutions or laws.

Proxy and Absentee Voting

S 7.31 Proxy and absentee voting shall not be permitted at a Synod Assembly.

Obtaining the Floor

In plenary sessions of the Synod Assembly, the voting members, including the *ex officio* members, have prior right to obtain the floor, unless the chair determines that it is in the best interests of the assembly to call upon an advisory member, a resource member, or another individual with voice.

A voting member will obtain access to the digital floor by following this process:

To make an oral motion: The voting member will email the designated person indicated in the assembly correspondence for voting members. Include in your email: Your name, congregation, city, your phone number, your motion and if you wish to present the motion yourself or wish the chair to present it (if the latter, see below regarding written motions). When admitted to the Zoom meeting, you will be muted automatically. Please do not unmute until you are called upon to speak.

To make a written motion: email the motion to the email indicated in assembly correspondence and it will be read by the chair. **Please be sure that your motion is clear, succinct and appropriate to the discussion.**

To discuss a motion on the floor, to make a point of order or to ask a question: The voting member will email the designated person indicated in the email correspondence for voting members. Include in your email: Name, congregation, city, and whether the member will speak for or against the motion under consideration, ask a question, or make a point of order (name the point of order). When admitted to the Zoom meeting, you will be muted automatically. Please do not unmute until you are called upon to speak. You will have 3 minutes to speak to the motion.

Addressing the Assembly

Voting members who wish to address the assembly must contact a designated person who will help them be admitted into the meeting to speak. The speaker shall be introduced by the chair using the language : "NAME, voting member from _____ Lutheran Church of _____."

NOTE: unless permitted by the chair, only voting members will be granted speaking privileges at the assembly. Obviously, only voting members will be granted voting privileges. The Constitution for the Montana Synod (S7.27) permits members of the Synod Council, who are not otherwise voting members of the Synod Assembly, to be granted the privilege of both voice and vote as members of the Synod Assembly.

Motions and Nominations

Making a motion: If the delegate wishes to make an oral motion after obtaining the floor following the instructions listed above, the spoken motion must be made to the chair and accepted before offering

explanation of the motion. Written motions will be collected by a designated council member through email or other forum and announced by the chair. The delegate making the written motion should inform the elections committee representative who is helping them be admitted to the floor (see above) that they have already submitted a motion in writing and plan to make their motion.

Nominations from the floor: Due to the difficulty of obtaining consent in real time using the digital format, nominations from the floor for elected positions will not be accepted. However, written nominations may be sent to the assigned email address containing the name of the nominee, their location (congregation and city), which position they are being nominated for, and if possible a note from them indicating their agreement to be nominated. Nominations must be received before Plenary II on Friday, June 4, 2021 at 2:30 p.m.

Write-ins candidates: Once the voting has opened on a particular ballot, you may choose to write in a candidate by text (to the number given) and NOT on the actual ballot. Please only text the name of the person for the position for which to write in.

Speeches

Unless otherwise determined by a majority vote of the assembly, all speeches during discussion shall be limited to three minutes. A signal shall be given one minute before the speaker's time ends. A second signal shall be given one minute later, and the speaker shall then leave the "digital floor" or be removed.

It is the speaker's responsibility to be unmuted and have clear audio before speaking to the assembly. In the event of audio/video interference, they will be removed to the waiting room until the issue is resolved.

Alternating Speeches

Insofar as is possible during discussion, a speaker on one side of the question shall be followed by a speaker on the other side. To facilitate alternating speeches, assembly members waiting to speak shall inform the elections committee representative whether they are speaking for, against, or are undecided.

Purpose and Use of 'White Card'

Those wishing to offer an amendment to the pending matter, or some other motion that would be in order shall inform the elections committee representative of their intention. Those who wish to make a comment or ask a question not for or against may also indicate their wish to the rep.

Suspending or Revising the Rules

After the adoption of the Rules of Organization and Procedure and any amendments thereto offered prior to the adoption of the Rules, any further amendment to, revision in, or suspension of, the Rules shall always require for adoption a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting.

Moving the Previous Question

A member who has spoken on the pending question(s) may not move the previous question(s).

Applause

In the give-and-take of debate on issues before the Synod Assembly, members of the assembly and visitors shall refrain from applause.

Departing from Agenda

With consent of a majority of the voting members, the chair shall have the authority to call items of business before the assembly in whatever order he or she considers most expedient for the conduct of the assembly's business. A motion to alter the agenda shall require for adoption a two-thirds vote of the voting members present and voting.

Unfinished Business

Upon adjournment of the Synod- Assembly all remaining unfinished items of business shall be referred to the Synod Council of the Montana Synod.

Part four - Resolutions and Memorials

Resolutions submitted by the April 1st deadline will be considered by the Resolutions Committee and presented to the Synod Assembly, if appropriate. Due to the time constraints of a virtual assembly, resolutions and memorials will not be accepted from the floor of the assembly. Only resolutions and memorials submitted in writing by April 1, 2021 will be considered for presentation to the assembly. The Memorial and Resolutions Committee will only consider those resolutions and memorials which are critical importance to the Montana Synod or ELCA over the next year.

Regarding communication with Churchwide

The Montana Synod Assembly may only address the ELCA Churchwide Assembly by means of a **memorial**. References: ELCA Constitution 12.11.c and ELCA Bylaw 12.51.21. This bylaw states that a Memorials Committee shall review memorials from synodical assemblies and make appropriate recommendations for assembly action.

The Montana Synod Council may only address the ELCA Church Council by means of a **resolution**. ELCA Bylaws 14.21.11 and 14 pertain to resolutions sent to the Church Council (which involves a report to the Churchwide Assembly). ELCA Bylaw 14.41.11 pertains to resolutions sent to the Executive Committee of the Church Council with referral to, and additional action to be taken by, the appropriate churchwide unit.

The memorial route is the most direct route to the churchwide assembly, but, at the same time, it is perhaps the least effective route. The churchwide Memorials Committee has to work through hundreds of memorials from synod assemblies. Consequently, most memorials (especially if they are poorly written) wind up with a “do not pass” recommendation. However, reworked resolutions from the ELCA Church Council or a churchwide unit have a tendency to meet with a much more favorable review.

Part five - Amendments to Governing Documents

S 18.10 Amendments to the Constitution

S 18.11 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 this church, 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.

S 18.12 Whenever the secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America officially informs this synod that the Churchwide Assembly has amended the *Constitution for Synods*, this constitution may be amended to reflect any such amendment by a simple 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.

S 18.13 Other amendments to this constitution may be adopted by this synod through either of the following procedures:

- a. An amendment may be adopted by a two-thirds vote at a regular meeting of the Synod Assembly after having been presented in writing at the previous regular meeting of the Synod Assembly over the signatures of at least 20 members and having been approved by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present and voting at such a 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.

S 18.21 This synod may adopt bylaws not in conflict with this constitution nor with the constitution and bylaws of this church. 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.

Approved by Synod Council 6/2/21