

**CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS and  
OTHER RESOLUTIONS OF ONGOING IMPACT  
*Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA***

**CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS**

- S9.01.A08. The Synod Council Executive Committee shall provide for background checks for persons nominated for synodical office prior to the Synod Assembly at which the election will take place or as soon as possible after the Synod Assembly for newly elected officers nominated from the floor who were not identified as nominees prior to the assembly. 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 officers 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 and prior to installation for newly elected officers, if possible.
  - c. The Synod Council's Executive Committee shall designate one Executive Committee or Synod Council member to obtain the background checks.
  - d. All background checks for nominees and newly elected officers will entail a criminal background check. A financial background check will be completed for nominees for treasurer. The Executive Committee shall decide whether additional types of background checks are appropriate for each officer position.
  - e. The background check results shall be provided to that nominee or elected officer and to the Synod Council's Executive Committee, which shall then take action as deemed appropriate. Further disclosure of the results may be determined by the Executive Committee.
  - f. The Executive Committee may adopt other procedures or protocols as are necessary to provide for background checks for nominees and newly elected synodical officers and shall report such actions to the Synod Council.
- S11.01.A13. There shall be seven Ministry Teams: 1) Worship, 2) Spirituality, 3) Witness and Service, 4) Youth, Young Adult, and Family, 5) Faith Formation, 6) Connection Building, and 7) Leadership Development.
- a. It shall be the duty of each Ministry Team to oversee the development of programs which will further the achievement of the purposes established by the Synod Council and the Synod Assembly. The Ministry Teams shall also carry out further tasks that may be assigned by the Synod Council.

- 1) The Witness and Service Team, in consultation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit (CSM), shall be responsible for identification and review of new and renewing ministries in this Synod that are supported by CSM grants.
- b. The Ministry Teams may appoint task groups as necessary to carry out programs in their areas of concern and shall assure the necessary coordination and communication among these committees.
- c. Each Ministry Team shall recommend to the Synod Council an annual budget for that Team's area of concern. In preparing this budget recommendation, it will consult with its task groups concerning the needs and plans in each area of its concern. It shall also include in its budget request an amount for new programs that the Team will identify and fund during the budget year.
- d. The Teams shall report regularly and at least annually to the Synod Council and annually to the Synod Assembly.

S11.01.B13.a. There may be support committees to provide for the other ministry functions of this Synod and to assure the availability of resources to meet these needs.

- b. With the exception of the Committee of Deans, the Consultation Committee, and the Committee on Discipline, support committees will be appointed by the Synod Council on nomination by the Bishop, and their duties shall be determined by the Synod Council.

S11.01.C13.a. There shall be a Cabinet composed of the Bishop and Vice President of the Synod, the chairs of the Ministry Teams and the staff persons relating to the Ministry Teams. The function of the Cabinet shall be to provide coordination and communication among the Teams.

- b. The Cabinet shall report to the Synod Council after each Cabinet meeting.

## **OTHER RESOLUTIONS OF ONGOING IMPACT**

### **CHAPTER I – Synod Policy, Officers, Elections, Leadership**

1. This synod may adopt continuing resolutions by action of the Synod Assembly or by action of the Synod Council (S18.31). The assembly or council may also adopt other resolutions that have an ongoing impact on the life of the synod. All of these resolutions shall be included in the synod's list of Continuing Resolutions and Other Resolutions with Ongoing Impact until action is taken to rescind them.
2. All Continuing Resolutions and Other Resolutions with Ongoing Impact then in force shall be published immediately following the Constitution and Bylaws as part of the minutes of each annual Synod Assembly. Included with each continuing resolution and other resolution with ongoing impact shall be notice of the year in which it was adopted and by which governing authority.

3. The responses of the ELCA Churchwide Assembly or of the Church Council of the ELCA to memorials initiated in this synod shall be reported to the next Synod Assembly through the report of the Synod Council.
4. In keeping with Chapter 6 of its constitution, this synod is committed to encountering and sharing God's word of love given in Jesus Christ and to encouraging all people to engage in lives of service. To accomplish these goals, the synod's strategic directions are as follows:
  - Deepen the spiritual lives of people to help them see God at work and help others see that too.
  - Build a network that uses our gifts, skills, and resources to maximize what we can do together and strengthen congregations in their ministry.
  - Develop leaders, both lay and ordained, who are equipped and engaged in God's mission in daily life.
  - Enhance lives of service to deal with social needs and issues that arise in local communities or across the synod.
  - Strengthen the work being done with children, youth, and families to support ministries as they engage their communities.
5. Those who serve on the bishop's executive staff shall be required to complete the Child Abuse History Check and the PA State Police Criminal Record Check every 36 months, as required by law; and the Criminal Record Check shall be required of support staff as well, with the synod paying the cost.
6. Prior to the assembly at which a bishop of the synod is to be elected, the Synod Council shall appoint a task force to ascertain and define the needs, concerns, and priorities of the synod. The report of the Synod Council or appointed task force shall be disseminated prior to the spring mission district assemblies. Following the report of the second ballot for the office of bishop, a period of not less than three (3) hours shall be set aside for the purpose of the discussion of issues, mission district caucuses, presentations by the nominees, and prayer.
7. Service of an unexpired term, or a partial term, of two years or more in duration, shall count as a full term in determining eligibility for any election or appointment which is subject to limitation of terms.
8. At least one youth below the age of 21 shall be included in each of the lay male and lay female categories on the ballot for voting members of the ELCA churchwide assemblies.
9. Voting members, congregations, mission districts, and ministry teams presenting issues to the Committee of Reference and Counsel shall be urged to submit these issues in writing at least 45 days prior to the assembly. The Committee of Reference and Counsel is urged to mail a report of its recommended actions on those issues to voting members at least 30 days prior to the assembly.
10. Resolutions received by the Committee of Reference and Counsel less than two weeks before the opening of the Synod Assembly will be brought before the assembly to decide

whether or not they should be considered. Such resolutions will be considered only if the assembly votes by a simple majority to consider them.

11. A missionary serving under a call from the Global Missions Program Unit who is unable to attend assemblies of the synod shall be regarded by the Committee on Registration and Excuse as excused.
12. It is the policy of this synod that display space and forum time at synod assemblies are available only to
  - a. congregations, mission districts, ministry teams, committees, task forces and teams of the synod;
  - b. those agencies and institutions which are a direct outreach ministry of the ELCA and/or the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA educational institutions or those of our full communion partners, and the Pennsylvania Council of Churches;
  - c. Lutheran fraternal benefit societies; and
  - d. 1517 Media, which is the only group with permission to sell goods or services.

Other church-related groups and individuals may apply to the Synod Council for a one-time exception to the policy on displays or forums at an assembly. The decision of the council is final.

13. The following guidelines will apply to all displays and forums:
  - a. Displays and forums are to be related to the ELCA and the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod or their ministries.
  - b. Personal attacks and defamation are prohibited. In presenting a point of view, civil and respectful language must be used.
  - c. Displays and forums are not to promote ideas or activities in opposition to provisions of the ELCA, Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, or congregational constitutions.
14. The synod calls upon each member of the synod to exercise his or her own political responsibility, as his or her own faith and conscience demand, including learning how to be involved in the political decision-making process
15. The synodical bishop may, at his or her discretion, provide legal assistance and/or bail for pastors and members of congregations who, for reason of Christian concern for human rights and eschewing violence, are subject to arrest and/or incarceration.
16. Recognizing the variety of opinions within this synod with regard to matters of human sexuality and same-gender relationships, the synod asks its rostered leaders, congregations, and social ministry organizations to commit themselves to the action of the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly “to bear one another’s burdens, love the neighbor, and respect the bound consciences of all” for the sake of the unity of this church.
17. The synod asks its rostered leaders, congregations, and social ministry organizations to commit themselves to live in ways that preserve and protect God’s creation, utilizing the information and assistance that is available through ELCA ministries that support the care of creation.

18. The synod encourages its rostered leaders, congregations, and social ministry organizations to enter into partnerships to address the prevention of bullying, harassment, and related forms of violence.

## **CHAPTER II – Financial Matters**

1. The Synod Council shall seek at least two bids for any project costing more than \$5,000.
2. The investment philosophy of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod shall be follows:
  - a. Investment in the ELCA Mission Investment Fund shall be continued. The amount of the commitment shall be reviewed annually by the Finance Committee of the Synod Council.
  - b. Pennsylvania's Prudent Investor Rule shall apply. Exceptions may be authorized by the Synod Council.
  - c. Investment decisions shall reflect the social concerns and policy statements of the synod and the ELCA.
3. The "Declaration of Trust" here following shall be the synod's *Church Loan Development Fund*. All assets currently held in the Church Loan Development Fund, including income earned on these assets, will be used to provide loans to congregations and to assist in the purchase or improvement or capital repair of real estate and to assist mission congregations. A representative of the Synod's Witness and Service Ministry Team shall meet with the congregation to discuss their needs and appropriateness of a loan from these funds and to recommend terms to be reviewed and approved by the Finance Committee before submission to Synod Council for authorization. The amount of any loan should not exceed 15% of the assets of the fund, including principal balances on other outstanding loans, as determined at the time of the loan. The interest rate shall be zero for new mission congregations up to 1% below the Federal Reserve prime rate for all other loans. Each loan is to be secured by a judgment note or real estate mortgage maturing in not more than seven years.
4. Any bequest to the synod, to any of its program units, or to any cause administered by the synod, shall be applied to a synod endowment fund unless otherwise designated by the terms of the bequest.
5. Except where the donor specifies otherwise, a bequest naming the Eastern Pennsylvania Synod or the Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania shall be allocated to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA, or the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA, according to the place of probate of the person's will, subject to these further rules:
  - a. Should the decedent be a resident of neither synod, the allocation shall be made to the synod in which the person last resided.
  - b. Should a case arise which is not covered by the foregoing rules or in which their literal application would frustrate the probable intent of the decedent, the officers of the two synods shall resolve the matter according to their best judgment of the probable intent.
6. The treasurer shall be authorized to place earned income that has not otherwise been designated for spending into a common fund (currently the Prosser, Pahse, Mission

Fund) to be used for special projects or for synod budget items as designated from time to time by the Synod Council. Should an emergency arise between meetings of the Synod Council, the treasurer shall be authorized to expend up to \$5,000 from the fund upon unanimous consent of the other officers and the chairperson of the Finance Committee.

7. The assets from dissolving congregations, including the proceeds from selling their real estate holdings, shall be added to the Prosser, Pahse, Mission Fund with the exception that the Synod Council may entertain requests by the congregation councils of dissolving congregations that a portion of their assets be directed to other specific benevolent causes related to the ministries of the Synod and the ELCA.
8. The Synod Council shall set an annual spending policy for the Prosser, Pahse, Mission Fund, the Student Education Fund, the Leadership Development Fund, and the Social Ministry Fund based on the percentages of the funds' average asset values over the previous five-year period.
9. All income and appreciation from the Clyde Kelchner II Fund (the corpus of which represents the original bequest) shall be deposited in the Clyde Kelchner I Fund. The Finance Committee shall establish a spending proposal each year based on a percentage of the three-year rolling average of the sum of the two funds. The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia or its successor shall be advised each year after the audit what amount will be available for scholarships in the forthcoming year.
10. To ensure the participation of the synod bishop in the annual ELCA Bishop's Academy, each year the bishop shall contribute up to \$500 from his or her continuing education funds toward the Academy expenses. Any expense above \$500 will be charged to the staff travel budget line in the synod's spending plan.
11. When studies are requested in this synod, the request shall be accompanied by an estimate of the cost and a recommendation regarding the source of the funds needed to conduct the study.

### **CHAPTER III – ELCA/Synod Related Organizations, Committees, Ministry Teams**

1. The Constitution Committee shall review annually the Continuing Resolutions and Other Resolutions with Ongoing Impact and recommend to the Synod Assembly the repeal or replacement of any resolutions that the committee deems no longer applicable to the life of the synod.
2. The Leadership Development Ministry Team shall annually determine and publish guidelines for minimum base salaries for clergy and other rostered leaders.
3. It is the goal of this synod that at least 10% of the membership of the Synod Assembly, councils, ministry teams, and other organizational units be persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English.
4. The leaders of the synod shall promote youth activity in synodical functions, including membership in the synod's ministry teams and organizations.

5. The following expectations shall inform the synod's ongoing relationship with the ELCA's social ministry organizations on its territory:
  - a. The synod shall provide moral and financial support to the ELCA agencies and institutions on its territory.
  - b. The social ministry organizations shall seek to coordinate their programs and ministry with the total ministry of the church on this territory.
  - c. The social ministry organizations shall report annually to the Synod Assembly.
  - d. The social ministry organizations shall seek the approval of the synod prior to any financial appeals among the congregations of the synod.
  - e. The social ministry organizations shall consult with the bishop of the synod concerning the employment of any rostered person whose call shall be issued by the Synod Council.
6. This synod shall be a member of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches. The bishop shall be authorized to appoint the required representatives.
7. The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA recognizes Muhlenberg College as an ELCA church-related educational institution and affirms and supports its ministry as integral to the ministry of this synod. Further, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod calls upon its members to support Muhlenberg College with their prayers and gifts.
8. The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod recognizes the Good Shepherd Home Rehabilitation Network, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries, and Lutheran Congregational Services as social ministry organizations affiliated with the ELCA. Further, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod affirms the caring ministry of these agencies and institutions and calls upon its members to support that ministry through their prayers and gifts.
9. The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA authorizes its participation as the corporate member of the Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Network.
10. Specialized ministries of the synod, the ELCA, or its partners that request to do so shall be given the opportunity to share their stories with the Synod Assembly in a brief manner.
11. The synod, its members, congregations, and related institutions are urged to consider 1517 Media resources as a source for worship, educational, and other church supplies.
12. The Lutheran Archives Center in Philadelphia shall be allowed to contact potential donors (congregations and individuals) for donations. All such contacts shall be in the form of a targeted appeal for assistance, not a general solicitation
13. A special offering to benefit the ELCA's World Hunger Appeal shall be received at the annual Synod Assembly.

#### **CHAPTER IV – Judicatories and Ecumenical Partners**

1. The synod is committed to working together with judicatories and congregations of the ELCA's ecumenical partners, wherever possible, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication, gain strength in shared resources, provide more effective ministry, and gain visible expression to the unity we have in Christ, and to that end we will strive faithfully to
  - a. engage in mutual prayer for the life and ministry of our respective judicatories and to encourage our congregations in every community to pray for each other;
  - b. encourage and support congregations in like spirit to form covenant relationships on a local level by which they commit themselves to common worship, study, and mission;
  - c. provide opportunities on judicatory levels for God's people to worship, study and do mission together, deepening our understanding of historical and theological traditions;
  - d. encourage committees, task forces, agencies, and institutions of our judicatories with similar ministry concerns to provide for liaisons from the respective denominations and to share with these people all committee or task force communications;
  - e. invite official observers to all the conventions, assemblies, and meetings of our governing boards;
  - f. encourage a continued close working relationship between the bishops, executives, staff, and ecumenical committees of our judicatories;
  - g. consider joint use of physical facilities; and
  - h. review periodically our commitments to one another.

## **CHAPTER V – Congregations, Mission Districts, Clusters**

1. The synod is a “Book of Faith” synod, committing us to live in and from the Word of God in all our meetings, assemblies, and events. To do so, we regularly and increasingly hear, read, study, share, and are engaged by God’s Word. The bishop of our synod, who “as its pastor, shall be a teacher of the faith of this church and shall provide leadership for the life and witness of this church,” shall lead this initiative personally and through collaborative programmatic work with congregations of the synod. We celebrate and continue to support and strengthen those places where Scripture is already taught and engaged. We encourage all congregations to explore new opportunities for engaging the Bible, send members to synodical events for training as Bible study leaders, and include biblical study as an integral part of all meetings and groups in order to become more fluent in the first language of faith – the language of scripture – that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered, and sent by the Word.
2. Each congregation on the roster of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod is urged to adopt a constitution based on the latest edition of the ELCA’s Model Constitution for Congregations.



3. Congregations of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod are urged to commit themselves to the following:
  - Pray for the renewal of this church.
  - Prepare and renew evangelical leaders.
  - Teach discipleship.
  - Start and renew congregations.
  
4. Congregations of this synod are called upon to
  - lift up in prayer all those living in poverty and struggling for dignity;
  - use ELCA study resources pertaining to these issues, including relevant social statements and messages; and
  - exercise responsible consumerism as a way to live out our commitment to justice
  
5. The synod urges its congregations and rostered leaders to affiliate with and actively support their local ministeriums and regional or county conferences of churches.
  
6. Each congregation council shall submit a report annually to the bishop regarding compensation of rostered leaders, paying particular attention to the section related to steps that will be taken to raise compensation to minimum levels if they are not currently being met. The bishop and his/her associates shall consult with congregation councils where minimums are not being met. Consultation will automatically occur after the filing of the annual “Report for Ordained Minister Under Call From A Congregation” or the “Report for Associate in Ministry Under Call From A Congregation.” All consultation shall be handled through the Office of the Bishop. With the goal of developing a process to achieve just and equitable compensation, the bishop may appoint, or the congregation council or rostered leader may request, specially trained consultants to facilitate continuing discussion. The bishop or his/her designee shall remind congregation councils of the importance of the housing equity allowance as a benefit to pastors in parsonages.
  
7. In accordance with S14.05. of the Synod Constitution, all rostered leaders shall complete the annual report for the bishop. This report lists compensation.
  
8. Congregation councils and rostered leaders shall develop an annual covenant of mutual goals, expectations, and responsibilities. The Mutual Ministry/Staff Support Committee will have, among its duties, the responsibility to review and evaluate the implementation of the covenant and to recommend appropriate compensation for rostered leaders. [Note: the synod council acted on January 18, 2017, to amend this item so that the second sentence will be replaced by “Appropriate processes will be developed to review and evaluate the implementation of the covenant.” In future printings of this document, the synod council’s wording will be shown as the adopted wording.]
  
9. Every candidate considering a call to a congregation in this synod shall be given a copy of the last annual meeting report of that congregation.

10. The Synod Council, through the appropriate synod committee, shall enter annually into consultations between the synod and its congregations to determine congregational mission support commitment goals for support of the synod's spending plan in the coming fiscal year.
11. Congregations of this synod considering a major capital expenditure are advised to consult with the bishop's designated representative before starting a major project involving capital expenditures.
12. Congregational leaders are encouraged to educate members as to how mission support funds are used, employing print and media resources created by the synod and the ELCA.
13. The bishop and his/her associates shall raise the issue of compensation publicly (at Synod Assemblies, mission district meetings, etc.) and give testimony to it as a matter of economic justice for those who serve the church.
14. The bishop or his/her designee shall provide an opportunity for education and discussion about compensation packages with new rostered leaders, emphasizing the leader's role in the process of compensation negotiation.
15. In arriving at a salary and benefits package, additional consideration shall be given to (a) prior work experience, especially in the case of "second career" leaders; (b) size and complexity of the employing congregation; (c) cost of living in different areas of the synod; and (d) performance and achievement factors.
16. Congregations of the synod are urged to review annually the wages and benefits provided to lay employees, seeking to ensure that
  - wages are commensurate with skills, expectations and responsibilities;
  - the possibility of offering health benefits is explored when needed and possible;
  - opportunities to gain new skills are provided; and
  - a forum for addressing concerns or grievances is made available.

Congregations are also urged to provide unemployment insurance for their lay employees.

17. Recognizing that we are all "blessed to be a blessing," congregations of the synod are urged to make the ministry of stewardship a high priority. Especially in times of pastoral transition, congregations are urged to review their current stewardship ministries, develop stewardship plans, and draw upon the resources offered by the ELCA and the synod to grow in the theology and practice of stewardship.
18. For a congregation in which the pastor(s) live in church-owned housing, the congregation council should review periodically the residential facilities to determine their safety and adequacy for the achievement of the purpose of the congregation in the community.
19. The synod encourages all congregations that enter a dissolution process to set aside an amount at least equal to the contribution requested by the Lutheran Archives Center at

Philadelphia, the interest of which will be utilized to provide perpetual care for these records. If the assets of said congregations and agencies should come to the treasury of the synod without a grant to the Lutheran Archives Center having been made, the synod will forward the appropriate amount to the Lutheran Archives Center provided that the congregation's assets are sufficient to cover such a grant.

20. The synod calls upon all pastors and members of our congregations to support open occupancy in housing in their neighborhoods and to assist every sound and reasonable effort to end the exclusion of any person from equal opportunity to rent, lease, or purchase living accommodations with all facilities and services at equitable cost. Further, we call upon all members as well as pastors of our congregations to visit in Christian love all newcomers to their neighborhoods and to invite them into full participation in community affairs. Further, we call upon all members of our congregations, when selling real estate, to make it available for sale to all qualifying purchasers, and to this end to exercise great care in the selection of real estate agents who will handle such transactions in accordance with the wishes of the seller. And further, the synod extends to all its pastors and congregations the assurance of its continuing approval and support in the implementation of these principles.
21. The synod calls upon its congregations to include in their evangelism visitations all persons in their communities without distinction as to nationality race, color, language, sexual orientation, age, or religious experience in order to invite all people to experience God's grace through the ministries of the congregation. Further, the synod calls upon its members, congregations, and institutions to continue to be led by faith, the Scriptures, and church resources in order to address the racial barriers that have made the vision of a more multicultural church so difficult to achieve, while also recommitting to seek out, raise up, and support young people from all races, ethnic groups, and cultures for public leadership in the church.
22. Functions and events of this synod, its mission districts, and congregations shall be planned in such a manner and conducted in such places that physically, mentally, and sensory challenged persons can be included.
23. Congregations of this synod shall be safe environments for all children and their families and caregivers by
  - building Christ-centered, positive trusting relationships that nurture the healthy growth of children and strengthen families;
  - using our resources to provide a sanctuary for children;
  - creating a Gospel-centered, faith-based teaching and learning environment of hospitality that welcomes all children with their families and caregivers;
  - developing programs and places that help children to flourish;
  - collaborating with other faith communities, agencies, and service organizations that work for the well-being of children in our community;
  - working with the government for more public measures that support the well-being of children;
  - supporting the efforts of the ELCA to meet the basic needs of children through Lutheran social ministry organizations as they provide caring services for children, and through the ELCA World Hunger Program, which carries our concerns for children through the world; and

- encouraging all congregations to have adults working with children to undergo appropriate background checks.
24. Congregations of this synod are encouraged to engage in education and conversations to discern where God is leading them regarding the welcoming of and providing pastoral care for LGBT people and their families.
25. Congregations of this synod are encouraged to allow same-gender marriages within their facilities, providing the same resources and following the same criteria they use for different-gender marriages.
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In addition to the above resolutions, the following policies approved by the Synod Assembly or Synod Council are in effect until revised, replaced, or withdrawn:

- Policy on Sexual Misconduct (Synod Council 2018.10.14, revised 2019.01.09)
- Procedure for Congregations Considering Withdrawal from the ELCA (Synod Council 2007.6.9)
- *Personnel Manual*
- *Call Process (PT03)*
- *Procedures for Congregations that are Closing or Merging*
- *Policy on Synodical Administration*