

PROPOSED STANDING RULES
2025 Synod Assembly

1. Authority of the Synod Assembly (†S7.01).

The Synod Assembly is the highest legislative authority of the Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The powers of the Synod Assembly are limited only by the provisions of the synod's Articles of Incorporation, constitution, and bylaws, the assembly's own resolutions, and the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

2. Voting Members of the Assembly (†S7.21).

The membership of the Synod Assembly, of which at least 60 percent of the voting members shall be composed of lay persons, shall be constituted as follows:

- a. All ministers of Word and Sacrament under call on the roster of this synod in attendance at the Synod Assembly shall be voting members.
- b. All ministers of Word and Service, under call, on the roster of this synod shall be voting members.
- 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, typically one of whom shall be a man and one of whom shall be a woman, shall be voting members. congregations with more than 400 baptized members (as determined by the congregation's Parochial Report the prior year) shall send two voting members, one female and one male, and may send one additional lay voting member. The Synod Council shall seek to ensure that at least 45 percent of the lay members of the assembly shall be women and at least 45 percent shall be men.
- d. The goal of this synod is for at least 10 percent of the voting members of the Synod Assembly to be youth and young adults. To accomplish this goal one extra voting member, above and beyond what is already constitutionally provided, is allowed for a congregation as long as that voting member fits the definition of "youth" or "young adult." Therefore, congregations with fewer than 400 baptized members would be allowed three (3) lay voting members and congregations over 400 baptized members would be allowed four (4) lay voting members.
- e. Voting membership shall include the officers of the synod.
- f. With the exception of ordained ministers on the roster of this synod who reside outside the territory of this synod, each member of the Synod Assembly shall be a voting member of a congregation of this synod. (†S7.25)
- g. 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. (S7.27)
- h. (S7.22; SC15.05) Up to 5 percent of the total number of Rostered Ministers Not Under Call on the rosters of the synod will be selected to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, with voice and vote. (For ease of reference, rostered persons in the synod (Retired, On Leave from Call, on Disability) are referred to below as a "Rostered Ministers Not Under Call" or "RMNUC" and collectively as "Rostered Leaders Not

Under Call” or “RMNUCs.” The persons to serve in that capacity will be selected as follows:

1. All RMNUCs will be contacted by mail on or about February 1 of that assembly year to determine their willingness to serve as voting members, and advising them of the process of selection, including the deadline for responses.
2. Any RMNUC who is a Minister of Word and Sacrament serving under at least a one-year contract with a congregation, agency or institution recognized by this synod and desires to serve, or who is serving as a Dean or Ministry Team Chair within this synod, will automatically be included in the total number of RMNUCs serving as voting members. If the total number of such persons exceeds the 5 percent limit, the persons selected to serve will be chosen from among those persons desiring to serve by random drawing conducted by the Executive Committee or at its direction.
3. If the number of persons selected under the paragraph above is less than the total number of RMNUCs authorized to serve as voting members for the assembly, the remaining positions will be filled from among those who indicated their desire to serve by random drawing conducted by the Executive Committee or at its direction.
4. The RMNUCs chosen to serve as voting members will be notified of their selection as soon as practicable before the assembly.
5. In the event a voting member selected under this process is unable to attend the assembly, or no longer qualifies as a RMNUC, the Executive Committee may appoint a substitute to serve in his or her place from among those who previously indicated their desire to serve but were not selected.
6. Registration fees for the assembly will be waived for RMNUCs serving as voting members under this process. Any travel, housing, meal or other expenses incurred are the responsibility of the RMNUC.

Full Communion Partners

Persons who are not on the roster of the ELCA, but who are serving Southwestern Texas Synod congregations/worshiping communities/Campus Ministries by special appointment and are ordained ministers of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by a Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA shall be given voice and vote during the Assembly.

Synod Authorized Ministers

- a. A Synod Authorized Minister in attendance at the Synod Assembly who is serving within a congregation under an authorization of at least one year in duration shall be a voting member of the Synod Assembly, with voice and vote.
- b. Synod Authorized Ministers serving as voting members under this process will be counted as lay persons for purposes of satisfying the requirements of S7.21.
- c. Synod Authorized Ministers serving as voting members under this process will not be counted as a lay voting member from the congregation they serve for purposes of determining the number of lay voting members to be elected by the congregation.
- d. Registration fees, travel, housing, meal and other expenses incurred in attending the Synod Assembly are the responsibility of the congregation served by the Synod Authorized Minister.

General

If the selection of voting members of the Synod Assembly under the processes above results in additional lay voting members being needed to meet the requirement that at least 60% of voting members of the assembly be lay persons, additional lay voting members from congregations will be selected in accordance with the process adopted by the Synod Council under S7.21.c.

3. Advisory Members of the Assembly (S7.23).

The following, if not otherwise voting members of the Synod Assembly, have the privilege of voice, but not vote:

- a. All ministers of Word and Sacrament and ministers of Word and Service who are on leave from call or retired and seminary interns not elected as members, all of whose names appear on the rosters of this synod.
- b. The 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.
- c. Chairpersons of the Ministry Teams and Committees of this synod.
- d. Members of Synod Assembly committees.
- e. Invited ecumenical representatives.
- f. Such other persons as may be designated by the Synod Assembly or Synod Council from time to time.

4. Quorum (S7.14).

One-third of the members of the Synod Assembly shall constitute a quorum.

5. Proxy Voting (†S7.31).

Proxy and absentee voting shall not be permitted in the transaction of any business of this synod.

6. Parliamentary Procedure (S7.32).

Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition, shall govern parliamentary procedure of the Synod Assembly.

7. Agenda.

Before its adoption, the agenda for the Synod Assembly may be amended by a majority vote of the Assembly. After the adoption of the agenda, a 2/3 vote of the Assembly shall be required to amend the agenda. With the consent of the Assembly, the chair shall have the authority to call items of business in whatever order the chair considers most expedient for the conduct of the Assembly's business.

8. Committee on Reference and Counsel (S7.11.03).

The bishop shall appoint a Committee on Reference and Counsel to provide such assistance to the bishop as may be desired during the course of the Assembly. Resolutions of a general character that are not germane to the pending question or report shall be given by the proposer to the committee which shall report thereon to the Synod Assembly with its recommendations. Other duties of the committee shall be (a) to recommend special orders

for the hearing of a representative, (b) to grant or deny permission to distribute printed matter not issuing from the office of the secretary.

9. Elections (*S 9.02)

Nominees from the floor must have a Nomination Form ready to submit immediately upon nomination by the nominee. Nomination Forms will be available in the pre-Assembly electronic mailing to voting members, on the Assembly Page on the Southwestern Texas Synod's website. (www.swtsynod.org) and from the Synod Secretary.

10. Motions and Resolutions.

- a. All motions for Assembly consideration shall be submitted on the forms available on the synod website. and from the Synod Secretary. All resolutions for consideration by the Assembly shall be submitted on the forms included on the synod website.
- b. Motions related directly to matters being debated by the Assembly may be made from the floor, after recognition from the presiding officer, with a legible copy submitted in writing to the secretary.
- c. (Bylaw S7.11.04) Resolutions shall be addressed by the Synod Assembly according to the following procedure:
 - 1) Any resolution, memorial or other main motion not germane to the matter before a regular meeting of the Synod Assembly or on the assembly agenda shall be submitted in writing, supported by the signatures of at least two voting members, to the secretary of this synod no later than **60 days (March 2, 2026)** before the beginning of the meeting of the Synod Assembly. Such matter shall be referred as required by the chapter to the Committee on Reference and Counsel or Synod Council, which shall report such matters and their recommendations thereon to the voting members of the Synod Assembly in writing at least 10 days before the beginning of the meeting of the Synod Assembly.
 - 2) Any matter not submitted in advance as required by subsection (1) of this bylaw shall not be considered or acted on by that meeting of the Synod Assembly except with
 - (a) the recommendation of the Synod Council;
 - (b) the recommendation of the Committee on Reference and Counsel; or
 - (c) a majority vote of the Synod Assembly.
 - 3) Any matter required by this bylaw to be submitted in advance that is not submitted at least 7 days prior to the beginning of the meeting of the Synod Assembly shall only be considered and acted upon by that meeting of the Synod Assembly where there is a substantial need to act on the matter without the opportunity for deliberation as contemplated by this bylaw, as determined by a 2/3 vote of the Synod Assembly.
- d. Any matter required to be submitted in advance that was not submitted on or before **April 17, 2026** shall only be considered and acted upon by the Synod Assembly where there is a substantial need to act on the matter, as determined by a 2/3 vote of the Synod Assembly.
- e. In considering motions and resolutions that are not germane to a pending question or report, the Committee on Reference and Counsel may recommend approval, recommend rejection, recommend referral to a unit of this synod or of this church, or recommend a substitute motion to the Assembly.

- f. The Committee on Reference and Counsel will report to the Assembly at the times indicated on the agenda. The committee's report, which shall include those motions and resolutions submitted timely and the committee's recommendations, will be distributed to members of the Assembly. When the committee has recommended either the approval or rejection of a motion or resolution, such motion or resolution shall be the main motion before the Assembly and the committee's recommendation shall be received as information. When the committee has made a recommendation (other than merely recommending approval or rejection) concerning a motion or resolution, the recommendation of the committee shall be the main motion before the Assembly.
- g. Authors of resolutions or representatives of groups that submit resolutions are strongly encouraged to attend any hearings scheduled prior to the assembly for discussion of their resolution.
- h. A non-germane motion or resolution submitted by a voting member will not be considered to be before the Synod Assembly until it has been reported to the Synod Assembly by the Committee on Reference and Counsel or the Synod Council, as the case may be. Until reported during a business session of the Synod Assembly, a motion or resolution may be withdrawn by the person who submitted it, with the consent of the Committee on Reference and Counsel and/or the Synod Council to which it was referred. If a motion or resolution is withdrawn before being reported to the Synod Assembly, the withdrawal will be reported to the Synod Assembly, and the motion or resolution will not come before the Synod Assembly for consideration unless otherwise properly brought before the Synod Assembly.
- i. *En Bloc* Consideration of Resolutions. Action on Proposed resolutions, as recommended by the Committee on Reference and Counsel in a report distributed to assembly members prior to, or at, the first business session of the assembly, may be approved by *en bloc* resolution when so proposed by the Committee on Reference and Counsel.
 - 1) If a voting member desires the assembly to discuss a resolution or the Committee of Reference and Counsel's recommendation on a resolution that is proposed for *en bloc* consideration, she or he may request that it be removed from the proposed *en bloc* resolution, provided the member's request is supported by ten other voting members. Such request shall be made in accordance with the following paragraph. The assembly then will consider and vote separately on the proposed resolution or the recommendation of the Committee on Reference and Counsel, as provided for above. After removals, the *en bloc* resolution shall be voted upon without amendments or debate.
 - 2) To call for such separate consideration, a voting member must submit written notification on the form available at the facilitators' table to the Secretary of the synod or to the chair of the Committee on Reference and Counsel no later than before **5 pm. on Friday, May 1, 2026.**

11. Proposed Budget.

The proposed budget along with the rationale shall be presented to the Assembly during the afternoon plenary session **Friday May 1, 2026.** Debate and adoption of the budget shall take place during the afternoon plenary session on **Saturday, May 2, 2026.** **A budget hearing will be held on electronically prior to the Assembly on Tuesday, April 28, 2026 at 7 pm for any voting members who are interested in discussing the budget details.** Any voting

member desiring to attend the hearing shall notify the Assembly Manager, Deanna Zitelman (dzitelman@swtsynod.org) to request access to the electronic meeting.

- a. Any motion for expenditure of funds or proposed amendment to the budget as presented by the Synod Council shall be submitted in writing to the Secretary or the Vice-President **before 5 pm. on Friday, May 1, 2026** for review and recommendation by the Synod Council. Any such motion or proposed amendment shall contain a statement setting out the probable fiscal impact of the proposal, and the suggested source of any required additional funds.
- b. 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. (S10.04)

12. Constitution and Bylaw Amendments.

- a. Any proposal for amendment of the Synod Constitution at the next Synod Assembly shall include the signatures of at least 30 voting members of the Assembly. The proposed amendment shall be submitted in writing to the Secretary or the Vice-President **before 5 pm. on Friday, May 1, 2026**, for review and recommendation by the Synod Council. (†S18.13.a)
- b. The bylaws of this synod may be amended by a two-thirds vote of voting members of the Assembly present and voting. (†S18.21.) Any proposal for amendment of the Synod bylaws shall be submitted in writing to the Secretary or the Vice-President **before 5 pm. on Friday, May 1, 2026**, for review and recommendation by the Synod Council. (S18.21.01)
- c. The constitution and bylaws may be amended by en bloc resolutions (adoption of several motions by a single resolution) unless a voting member objects to the inclusion of any particular provision. Any objection of a voting member to the inclusion of a particular provision in the en bloc resolution shall be submitted in writing to the Secretary or the Vice-President **before 5 pm. on Friday, May 1, 2026**. Particular provisions to which objection is so noted shall be considered separately and all other provisions not objected to will be considered as part of the en bloc resolution.

13. Debate.

- a. All speeches in general debate and discussion shall be limited to three minutes unless otherwise determined by a majority vote of the Assembly.
- b. No person may speak more than twice to the same issue without the consent of the Assembly and only after all others wishing to speak have had the opportunity to do so.
- c. In so far as is possible during discussion, a speaker on one side of the question shall be followed by a speaker on the other side.
- d. A motion to close debate (moving the previous question) is not in order until at least three persons favoring and three persons opposing the matter under discussion have been heard, as long as there are voting members still wishing to speak to the issue.
 - e. In the give and take of debate on issues before the Assembly, members and visitors should refrain from applause or other expressions of support or dissent.
 - f. A member who has just spoken on the pending question may not move the previous question, if there are other members who wish to speak to the issue.

14. Distribution of Material.

Any request to distribute printed material or other items at the Assembly shall require the approval of the Committee of Reference and Counsel (S7.11.03).

15. Unfinished business.

When the orders of the day are called for adjournment of the Synod Assembly, all remaining unfinished items of business shall be referred to the Synod Council for disposition.

16. Bounds of the Assembly

A person will be admitted to restricted seating areas only upon display of proper credentials.