

The Alaska Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Alaska Synod, ELCA Constitution

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PREAMBLE

We the People of the Alaska Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, in order to nurture our members and others in the Word and Sacraments, and to encourage our Alaska Congregations in their worship, learning, witness, support, and service; and to,

Witness to our Lutheran understanding of the dynamic Word of God in the risen and living Christ Jesus to all people throughout this Great Land, including all cultures, both native people and foreign immigrants, pioneers and migrants from other States; and to,

- a) Work in the partnership of the Gospel with other Christian churches in our State; and to,
- b) Participate in the church regionally, nationally and worldwide do ordain and establish this constitution for the Synod of Alaska.

Introduction to the Alaska Synod Constitution

Placement together of those constitutional provisions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions that pertain to the same matter is used in this document.

Each is separately codified, but all are preceded by the letter “S”, denoting that they are part of the Synodical constitution.

- a) Constitutional provisions are codified by the two sets of numbers, as in S9.08. or S 10.01.
- b) A bylaw related to S9.08. is called S9.08.01., and to S10.01. as S10.01.01. A bylaw under a required provision would not carry the dagger “†”, that designates a required constitutional provision.
- c) Continuing resolutions also are codified by three sets of numbers, except that the third set is preceded by a capital letter. Thus, a continuing resolution might be numbered S10. to designate the chapter; S10.07. to designate the subject matter within the chapter; and the third set might be numbered A01. as in the codification S10.07.A01. to indicate by the “A” that it is the first continuing resolution regarding that subject and by the “01” that it was adopted in 2001.

Types of constitutional provisions

Three types of constitutional provisions are found within the Alaska Synod’s constitution:

- a) Required provisions are designated by a dagger “†”. Such required provisions:
 1. may only be adopted or amended by the Churchwide Assembly;
 2. may not be altered or amended by the Synod Assembly; and
 3. are to be introduced “at once” into the synod’s constitution upon notification of the amendment or adoption of the provision (†S18.11.).
- b) Recommended provisions for this constitution were provided by the Constitution for Synods as approved by the Churchwide Assembly. Such recommended provisions were adopted by majority vote at a meeting of the Alaska Synod Assembly (†S18.12.).
- c) Other provisions may be and have been initiated in and adopted by the synod (†S18.13.), but such provisions may not conflict with required constitutional provisions or with churchwide constitutional provisions and bylaws. Synodical constitutional amendments become effective upon ratification by the Church Council or Churchwide Assembly.

Chapter 1. NAME AND INCORPORATION

- †**S1.01.** The name of this synod, as determined by the Churchwide Assembly, shall be Alaska Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- †**S1.02.** For the purposes of this constitution and the accompanying bylaws, the Alaska 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 shall be affixed to this Synod Constitution and designed to symbolically reflect Lutheranism in Alaska. The Seal of The Alaska Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is a circle circumscribed around a cross radiating out from the North Star above the Big Dipper suspended over mountains with a white field of snow. The date 1988 is inset at the bottom of the mountains. This is surrounded by the words, ALASKA SYNOD, EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA at the perimeter of the circle.

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 state of Alaska.

†S3.02. “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.

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.
- †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: 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.
- a) 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.
 - b) 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.
 - c) Worship God in proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments and through lives of prayer, praise, thanksgiving, witness, and service.
 - d) 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.
 - e) 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:
 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 of Word and Sacrament on behalf of this church; and,
 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, 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;
- 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.
- †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 *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions 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. The time and place of the Alaska Synod Assembly shall be determined by the Synod Council. The time and place for the next regular Assembly normally shall be announced 60 days prior to 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.
- 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.
- S7.13.01. Notice of all regular meetings of the Synod Assembly shall be given to all congregations and to all other persons entitled to a vote or voice at the Assembly not less than thirty (30) days in advance of the meeting.
- S7.13.02. Notice of all special meetings shall be given to all congregations and to all other persons entitled to a vote or voice at the Assembly not less than seven (7) days in advance of the meeting.
- S7.13.03. Deposit of the notice of meeting in the United States mail, first class, postage prepaid, three days in advance of the specified time period to the last known address of the congregation or other person shall constitute notice for all Synod Assembly.
- S7.14. One-third of the members of the Synod Assembly 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.
 - b) 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. 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 through the Congregation Council may elect new members who shall continue to serve until the next regular Synod Assembly.
- S7.21.03.** No ministers of Word and Sacrament, retired ministers of Word and Sacrament, ministers of Word and Service on the rosters of this synod may serve as a congregation lay voting member as provided in item †S7.21.c.
- S7.21.04.** Groups of members of the Churchwide organizations who have not yet obtained congregational status may petition the Synod Council for the privilege of sending one representative from each group to the Synod Assembly. Upon Approval of Synod Council such representative shall have voice but no vote at Synod Assembly.
- S7.21.A87.** A travel equalization fund will be created as follows, in order to insure appropriate representation from throughout the synod, independent of the location of the meetings of the Synod Assembly. The total estimated travel costs, according to synod guidelines, of all ministers of Word and Sacrament under call, the lay voting members, the voting members of the ministers of Word and Service, and the official voting members of groups of Lutherans who have not yet attained congregational status per (S7.21.03.) will be obtained by the treasurer prior the Assembly. This figure will be divided by the total number of persons listed above, and the resultant average cost charged to each such person attending the Synod Assembly. From this fund, travel expenses will be reimbursed. Any shortfall will be made up from general synod revenues; any overpayment will go into the Synod Assembly restricted account.
- S7.22.** This synod may establish processes that permit retired rostered ministers, 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.** Retired ministers of Word and Sacrament and rostered lay leaders who were under call on the roster of this synod or its predecessor district or synod organization prior to retirement for a period of one (1) year and who are residents of the State of Alaska shall have voice and vote at the Synod Assembly.
- 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.
- S7.24.** 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.
- †**S7.25.** Except as otherwise provided in this constitution or 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.
- S7.26.** This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council that permit lay representatives of congregations under development and authorized worshipping 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.
- S7.27.** This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council to grant minister of Word and Sacrament 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 minister's service in a congregation of this church.
- 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.
- S7.32.01.** Any and all business may be brought before the Synod Assembly at the regular triennial meetings, according to the pleasure of the Synod Assembly. No business excepting that specified in the agenda with particularity may come before any special meeting of the Synod Assembly. The agenda for special meetings shall be included with the call of the special meeting and forwarded with the notice of meeting by the secretary of the synod.
- S7.33.** "Ex officio" as used herein means membership with full rights of voice and vote unless otherwise expressly limited.