



Northern Illinois Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Northern Illinois Synod 2020 Revised Constitution Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is the Synod Constitution changing now?

Answer: Every three years the ELCA makes changes to constitutional language that affects both synods and congregations' constitutions. Some of those changes are required and some are recommendations. In the fall of 2019, the ELCA released those changes, so it is the perfect time to not only come into compliance with the ELCA's synod model constitution, but to review our whole document to make sure it accurately reflects the work of the Northern Illinois Synod.

2. What changes are being made?

Answer: The majority of the changes are house-keeping changes that correct coding errors, grammar, provide greater clarity or correct spelling. Several changes are required ELCA changes and those codes marked with a † indicate which provisions are required. Several other changes include recommended language by the ELCA but are not required. A few changes were made to accurately reflect the current work we do in the synod. Four changes that are new language altogether are:

S11.01.08. Involves the election of members to the Jenny Lind board. It changes the length of term of office from 3 years to 6 years.

S11.06. Moves Candidacy Committee from working as a sub-committee to making it a standing committee of the synod.

S11.14. Allows the bishop or the Synod Council to appoint taskforces.

S12.03. Changes the way the Conference Deans are selected and increases the possible responsibilities of deans.

3. Why was it necessary to change the length of term for the Jenny Lind board members?

Answer: It is becoming increasingly more difficult to find new members to sit on the Jenny Lind board who have the specific skill set to meet the demands of the work of the board. Reducing the frequency of turn-over of board members assists in providing stability over the long term.

4. Why was it important to make the Candidacy Committee a standing committee of the synod?

Answer: This change reflects the importance this synod places on the work of the Candidacy Committee in the life of the synod. Finding and working with candidates for rostered ministry, is a high priority as we seek to provide pastoral and deacon leaders for our congregations. It does not change how the Candidacy Committee is currently functioning, just merely changes its status.

5. Why do we need to change how taskforces are appointed?

Answer: Taskforces are usually appointed for a short term and for a specific task that needs to be accomplished. This provision allows the bishop the opportunity to appoint a taskforce if needed between Synod Council meetings. Synod Council meets only four times a year, so this provision would greatly improve on efficiency in completing the work of the synod.

6. Why is the way Conference Deans are selected and their respective responsibilities changing?

Answer: Like our congregations, the synod is experiencing a significant reduction in Mission Support income. It has become increasingly clear that sometime in the future there is a very good chance that synod staff reductions will take place in response. The synod remains constitutionally responsible for several tasks that require a great deal of time, and the current staff configuration is stretched thin. With that in mind, this proposed change is proactive and allows the bishop the ability to find rostered ministers with the unique skill set to complete work in conferences that currently is being done by synod staff. The deans would receive special training and would serve as a sort of adjunct synod staff if in the future the synod finds itself coping with a reduction in current staff. The list of responsibilities included may be part of what deans would be asked to do, but not necessarily, as the context will dictate what will need to be done. In addition, these changes are a reflection of our new mission statement that calls for innovation in a changing world and strengthening our partnerships among our conferences and congregations. It will also increase and help solidify communication between conferences and the office of bishop. This language does not preclude the offering of a stipend or honorarium by the synod if the workload of the dean becomes significant within the conference context where they are serving. This revision would be implemented incrementally as current deans complete their term of office.

