

SECTION 4

RESOLUTIONS & MEMORIALS



Allegheny Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Resolution SA21.06.01

Allegheny Synod Bishop's Sabbatical

Whereas "Throughout Holy Scripture, from Genesis' beginnings to Jesus' ministry and the church's witness, accounts of holy activity are clearly set apart by rest, quiet places, and time for restoration. God has given us, God's people, the Sabbath pattern as a time of renewal, a time to be reminded of whose we are and what we are called to do, a time of rest that refreshes us for life."¹, and

Whereas we recognize the potential for the schedule and demands of the Office of the Bishop to negatively impact the well-being and ministry of the individuals called to serve the Allegheny Synod, and

Whereas we trust that a time of renewal and/or professional growth for our leaders has potential for a strong positive impact on the ministries of the Allegheny Synod and the individuals called to serve as synod staff, and

Whereas the Allegheny Synod has already established *Guidelines for Sabbaticals*, in which we encourage a sabbatical of at least three months for rostered ministers who have served in the same setting for 5-7 years, and the bishop should model adherence to these guidelines,

Be it resolved that the bishop of the Allegheny Synod shall be granted, and encouraged to utilize, a sabbatical of eight weeks to be taken in the fifth year of the first term of service following guidelines established in the Allegheny Synod *Guidelines for Sabbaticals*, and

Be it further resolved that the bishop of the Allegheny Synod shall be granted, and encouraged to utilize, a sabbatical of twelve weeks to be taken in the fourth or fifth year of any subsequent terms of service following guidelines established in the Allegheny Synod *Guidelines for Sabbaticals*, and

Be it further resolved that any rostered minister called to serve the Allegheny Synod as Assistant to the Bishop or Director for Evangelical Mission shall be granted, and encouraged to utilize, a sabbatical of eight weeks every five years of service as synod staff following guidelines established in the Allegheny Synod *Guidelines for Sabbaticals*, not to be taken concurrent with the sabbatical of the Bishop, and

Be it further resolved that the Synod Council of the Allegheny Synod undertake a process of revision of the Allegheny Synod *Guidelines for Sabbaticals* to include sabbatical guidelines specific to the Bishop and Synod staff.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Laurel Highlands Conference & the Nittany Conference

¹ Allegheny Synod Guidelines for Sabbaticals, 2004.

Memorial to Restructure the Governance of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Whereas, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was formed in 1988 from three Lutheran church bodies, i.e., the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), the American Lutheran Church (ALC), and the American Evangelical Lutheran Church (AELC), with 5.2 million members and 11,133 congregations; and

Whereas, the Commission for a New Lutheran Church, envisioning stability and anticipating growth, developed a structure and polity with three interdependent entities, i.e., the churchwide organization, 65 synods, and 11,133 congregations, organized for the realities of the time; and

Whereas, the leadership of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church expressed an eagerness to form “a new Lutheran church truly committed to the Gospel and organized for effective mission in today’s world;” and

Whereas, over the last 34 years, the ELCA has decreased in size to 3.3 million members and 8,972 congregations; and

Whereas, the governing documents, constitutions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of the ELCA do not allow these interdependent entities to reorganize quickly to meet the changing realities for effective mission in today’s world; and

Whereas, the churchwide organization as well as many synods and many congregations, having decreased significantly in size and resources, struggle to meet the expected work as assigned by the governing documents; and

Whereas, the Church Council of the ELCA, through its adoption of Strategic Directions 2025, has called for a “well-governed, connected, and sustainable church;

Whereas, it is critical that the stated mission of the ELCA be not only consistent with Lutheran expectations for the institutional church but also realistic with respect to human and fiscal resources; and

Whereas, it is critical that the structure of the ELCA meet the needs of effective mission in today’s changing world; therefore, be it

Resolved, that the Lower Susquehanna Synod in assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Church in America to direct the Church Council to establish a Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church that, working in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council, shall reconsider the Statements of Purpose for each of the expressions of this church, the Principles of Organization, and all matters pertaining thereunto, presenting its findings to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly in preparation for a reconstituting convention to be called under the rules for a special meeting of the Churchwide Assembly.

Submitted by: Bishop James Dunlop, Lower Susquehanna Synod, ELCA

Memorial to Recommend a Structured Process for the Pre-Assembly Identification of Nominees for the Election of a Presiding Bishop

Whereas, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) elects a Presiding Bishop to serve a six-year term; and

Whereas, the responsibilities of the Presiding Bishop are extensive, as outlined in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions* of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in 13.21.; and

Whereas, these responsibilities are of singular importance in guiding the work of the ELCA as a vital and growing communion of faith with impact on the lives of many in this country and around the globe; and

Whereas, the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions* require the first ballot in the election of the Presiding Bishop to be an ecclesiastical ballot¹, but allow for a pre-assembly identification process for the election of officers including the Vice President and Secretary (19.01.A21.); and

Whereas, the next election of a Presiding Bishop is scheduled for the 2025 Churchwide Assembly; and

Whereas, many synods have developed pre-assembly identification processes for nominees to the Office of Synod Bishop that allows persons to agree to stand for election, to complete a background check and other screening prior to the synod assembly, and to share an overview of gifts, experiences, and vision with voting members prior to the synod assembly at which the election will occur; and

Whereas, many synods have found that a pre-assembly identification process provides meaningful additional time for candidates and voting members to prayerfully discern the needs of the synod and how each candidate's gifts, experiences, and vision would advance the ministry of the synod, all of which helps voting members cast a better informed first ballot; therefore be it

Resolved, that the Allegheny Synod in assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to direct the ELCA Church Council (Church Council) to establish a structured process for the pre-assembly identification of nominees for the Office of Presiding Bishop in a way that allows identified candidates to complete a background check and appropriate screening, and become publicly known prior to the Churchwide Assembly; and be it further

Resolved, that the Church Council be directed to create an advisory committee of both lay and rostered minister members to design such a pre-assembly identification process that includes several members of the Church Council, several bishops, and representatives of Full Communion Partners that elect their Presiding Bishop or Presiding Officer through a different process of pre-identification, reporting the structure of that pre-assembly identification process to all synods by November 2023.

¹ The ecclesiastical ballot is noted as a procedural requirement in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Constitution in 19.01.C19 without reference to the prayerful and spiritual discernment suggested by the term *ecclesiastical ballot*.