



July 28 – August 2
PHOENIX, ARIZONA



2025 Churchwide Assembly Report of the Reference and Counsel Committee – Report 2

Wednesday, July 30, 2025

Motion A

Submitted by: Rev. Susan Salomone [Upstate New York Synod, 7D]

Motion A proposes to amend 5.01.e, as removed from *en bloc*, as well as other sections of the church's governing documents. The motion proposes that in the church's governing documents, wherever the wording, "shall be persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English" appears, add, "shall be all person(s) who are/is a member of a historically underrepresented group."

Recommendation of the Reference and Counsel Committee

To refer Motion A to the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee of the Church Council, the proposal to amend 5.01.e. in the ELCA Constitution and all model constitutions.

Rationale

This proposed amendment as presented requires significant work and clarity to achieve the presenter's intended goals. As written, the proposed changes open up unintended consequences in representation. The current work of the Church Council includes deep work on this language, including integration of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (CRLC) work and the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) audit. The Church Council is best equipped to review this proposal as part of its ongoing work in implementing recommendations from the CRLC and the DEIA audit.

Motion B

Submitted by: Rev. Pablo Quinones [Caribbean Synod, 9F]

Motion B proposes to amend both 5.01.e and 12.41.11, both removed from *en bloc*. The amendments, as presented to the committee, proposed adding "members of historically underrepresented groups as established in 5.01.I24." to constitutional provision 5.01.e and adding "from groups 2 through 5 as established in 5.01.I24. This additional member may be a person of color and/or a person whose primary language is other than English" to bylaw 12.41.11.

Recommendation of the Reference and Counsel Committee

To refer Motion B to the Legal and Constitutional Review Committee of the Church Council, proposed amendments for both 5.01.e and 12.41.11.

Rationale:

This proposed amendment as presented requires significant work and clarity to achieve the presenter's intended goals. As written, the proposed changes open up unintended consequences in representation. The current work of the Church Council includes deep work on this language, including integration of the CRLC work and the DEIA audit. The Church Council is best equipped to review this proposal as part of its ongoing work in implementing recommendations from the CRLC and the DEIA audit.

Motion C

Submitted by: Rev. Matthew Riegel [West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod, 8H]

Motion C proposes to amend 22.11.b, as removed from *en bloc*, by striking “or a subsequent two-thirds of the members of the Church Council... [through the end of the paragraph].”

Recommendation of the Reference and Counsel Committee

To decline the proposal to amend 22.11.b.

Motion D

Submitted by: Ms. Hannah Peterson [Chicago Metropolitan Synod, 5A]

The proposal would amend continuing resolution to include the goal of this church to be at least 20 percent of the voting members of Churchwide Assembly, Church Council, and churchwide boards and committees be youth and young adults.

Recommendation of the Reference and Counsel Committee

To recommend a substitute motion as follows:

1. To amend 5.01.E19. to increase the percentage goal of youth and young adult voting membership of Churchwide Assembly, Church Council, and churchwide boards and committees from 10 percent to 20 percent, as follows:

5.01.E19. *It is the goal of this church that at least 20 ~~10~~ percent of the voting members of the Churchwide Assembly, Church Council, and churchwide boards and committees be youth and young adults. The Church Council shall establish a plan for implementing this goal. For purposes of the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA, 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.*

2. To direct the Church Council to develop and present a plan for implementation of this continuing resolution at its April 2026 meeting that also addresses barriers to youth and young adult participation.

Rationale

The Reference and Counsel Committee recommends approval of the proposal to increase the goal and is adding a directive to the Church Council to provide for an intentional strategy for implementation and to allow for examination of specific implementation issues, including issues related to scheduling of meetings, time commitment, legal liability and personnel issues, and existing barriers to youth and young adult participation.

Motion E

Submitted by: Rev. Matthew Riegel [West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod, 8H]

Recommendation of the Reference and Counsel Committee

To approve amending bylaw 14.32.01. by striking “four-year” and inserting “three-year” in its place.

- 14.32.01. The Church Council shall have as liaison members nine synod bishops, each elected by the Conference of Bishops to one ~~four-year~~ three-year term. One bishop shall be elected from each region.

Motion F

Submitted by: Mr. Brandon Graves [Northern Illinois Synod, 5B]

Recommendation of the Reference and Counsel Committee

To approve adding an additional bylaw, 13.22.03, stating the following:

13.22.03. The Presiding Bishop may serve no more than two terms.

Motion G

Submitted by: Mr. Brandon Graves [Northern Illinois Synod, 5B]

Recommendation of the Reference and Counsel Committee

To approve adding an additional bylaw, 13.42.03, stating the following:

13.42.03. The Secretary may serve no more than two terms.

Motion H

Submitted by: Ms. Rebecca Bass [Florida-Bahamas Synod, 9E]

Recommendation of the Reference and Counsel Committee

To approve amending bylaw 19.04.02a by striking “, with the recognition that such a person shall reside within the territory of the synod or in the area immediately adjacent to the territory in the case of border areas” from the text.

19.04.02. For purposes of nomination to and service on the Church Council, a committee of the churchwide organization, or a board of a separately incorporated ministry, “synod membership” shall be defined as follows:

- a. A layperson shall be recorded in the synod that includes the congregation in which such a person holds voting membership, ~~with the recognition that such a person shall reside within the territory of the synod or in an area immediately adjacent to the territory in the case of border areas.~~**

...

Motion I

Submitted by: Rev. Kari Niedermairer [Florida-Bahamas Synod, 9E]

Recommendation of the Reference and Counsel Committee

To adopt a substitute motion as follows:

That bylaw 7.31.02.a.8. strike “embracing and welcoming racially and ethnically diverse populations.” And replace it with the following language: “embracing and welcoming members of historically underrepresented groups.”

7.31.02. Responsibilities. Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,

- a. Every minister of Word and Sacrament shall:**

...

8) ... working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, caring for the marginalized, and embracing and welcoming ~~racially and ethnically diverse populations~~ members of historically underrepresented groups.

And that the same substitution is done in the following locations: 7.61.02.c., †S14.12.a.8., †S14.32.c., *C9.03.a.8., *C9.23.c.