



South Dakota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Effects of Canceling the Synod Assembly of the South Dakota Synod

In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Synod Council of the South Dakota Synod decided to cancel the Synod Assembly scheduled for June of 2020. This document seeks to address the consequences of that decision for our joint ministry. Sections of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions* that outline the roles and responsibilities of the Synod Assembly are presented below. Only matters that would be affected by the canceling of the 2020 assembly have been placed for consideration. For example, no officer of this synod is up for election; therefore, it is not of concern at this moment to address those duties of the assembly. I don't presume to have all the correct answers here or that I have considered every possible implication.

Resolutions and Memorials:

The Synod Assembly has the sole authority to act on Resolutions from Conference Assemblies and to adopt Memorials to be submitted to the Churchwide Assembly. Many of the Conference Assemblies were not able to meet, so were not able to submit resolutions. If a matter were to come forward, depending on the nature and scope of a response, it might be in order for the Synod Council to address. Any matter requesting action from the Churchwide Assembly must be adopted by the Synod Assembly as a Memorial. However, since the next Churchwide Assembly will not meet until 2022, there is no urgency.

Elections:

A prime function of the Synod Assembly is the election of the Synod Council, committees, boards, and partner ministries.

Synod Council: Members of the Synod Council are nominated from conferences and elected by the Synod Assembly to a four-year term. In general, when persons are elected, they serve their term or until a successor is elected. This will give us a grace period to allow current members to continue to serve until their successor is elected. There are several complicating factors. First, assuming that current members are willing to serve an extra year, at the 2021 Synod Assembly, 1/2 of the Synod Council would be up for election. This causes problems in staggering term-limits into the future and to ensure that there is not too much turnover in one year. Another option is to have the Synod Council fill vacancies. If a Synod Council member whose turn is expiring were to resign, the Synod Council could vote to fill the position. S10.03.f. states that vacancies are filled until the next regular meeting of the Synod Assembly. However, to fill a vacancy, the position still needs to be nominated by the appropriate conference. Some conferences have already met, and this would fulfill the letter of the provisions. We still have the same problem with 1/2 of the council being elected at one assembly.

Board for LSS: S9.01.11. stipulates that the Synod Assembly elects members to the Board of Directors for LSS. This was a new provision in 2019, and the assembly elected members to staggered terms. Because this provision serves the needs of LSS, we should check with Betty Oldenkamp about what they need moving forward.

Other Committees: the Mutual Ministry, EOC, and MCC, vacancies are filled by the conferences. Although reading the Constitution more in-depth with election questions in mind, I wonder if our practice in electing these committees matches what the Constitution says. Thoughts for later.

Consultation Committees and Discipline Committee: are filled by the Synod Council until the next Synod Assembly. We can argue the same points as the Synod Council.

Synod Related Ministries not specified in the governing documents

The Synod Assembly has, in the past, also elected the Board of Directors for the Chapel on the Hill and the Augustana Association. If they need offices filled, I assume the same authority granted the Synod Council would work, but we should check with them as well.

Budget and allotment to Churchwide:

S15.13. Based on estimated income, the Synod Council shall authorize expenditures within the budget for the fiscal year. Expenditure authorizations shall be subject to revision, in light of changing conditions, by the Synod Council. We would need to tread carefully if the Synod Council wanted to act in ways counter to the will of the Synod Assembly. For example, approving a 3rd Associate to the Bishop or changing the funding model used for supported ministries. The Synod Council cannot change the percent allocation that is directed to the churchwide organization.

Amending the Constitution:

We will have to wait until the next regular Synod Assembly to adopt changes.