

2021 Online Synod Assembly FAQ

Who should participate in the Online Synod Assembly?

Everyone! The congregation elects voting members to carry out the synod's business, including elections, budget, and policy approvals. However, the assembly is also an opportunity for education and fellowship. Anyone is welcome to register as a visitor and enjoy the presentations, worship, and business.

What important dates do I need to keep in mind?

Monday, March 15	Registration Opens
Monday, April 19	Early Bird Registration Closes
Wednesday, May 12	Standard Registration Closes
Wednesday, May 12	Reports Due to be included in the Bulletin of Reports. (If received after this date, it will not be included in the Bulletin of Reports but in a later supplement)
Wednesday, May 12	Resolution Form Deadline Lay Voting Credential Form Due Ministry Display Form Due Congregation Significant Event Form Due Nomination Form Due
Wednesday, June 2	Lay Voting Credential Form Deadline (Under our Constitution, Lay Voting Credentials must be received for each lay voting member ten days before the Assembly's beginning. If a Lay Voting Credential is not received and confirmed by the office, you will not be able to vote.) Event Registration Closes

VOTING INFORMATION

How many voting members can my congregation send?

The Synod Constitution outlines this in S7.21. All ministers of Word and Sacrament and Word and Service under call on the roster of this synod shall be voting members. Congregations may elect two lay members if they have fewer than 400 baptized members, one of whom shall be a male and one of whom shall be a female. For more information on lay voting members, [click here](#).

Additional lay member representation from each congregation is as follows:

401-600 baptized members: 1 additional

601-800 baptized members: 2 additional

801-1,000 baptized members: 3 additional

1,001-1,200 baptized members: 4 additional

Do Synod Council Members count toward my congregation's total number of voting members?

No. Since the assembly elects them, they attend as a synod council member without changing the number of eligible lay voting members from a congregation.

Can my congregation elect a pastor or deacon to serve as a lay voting member?

No. Since pastors and deacons are rostered ministers, they cannot be elected as lay members.

What does a Voting Member need to have for our Online Assembly?

Voting members must participate via [Zoom](#) and vote from a valid email address for security. This means that participants must have access to a unique email address; and a device capable of connecting to the internet, operating the Zoom client or web browser Zoom connection, and connecting via a web browser or app to vote.

About the Positions Being Elected

What is the Virginia Synod Council?

The Virginia Synod Council serves a visionary role in the Virginia Synod. In conjunction with the Bishop's Office, the Council reviews and coordinates all planning proposals and establishes synod priorities. The Synod Council members share their various gifts for the purposes of God's mission and ministry through the Virginia Synod and the churchwide organization of the ELCA.

The Synod Council also serves as the Virginia Synod board and meets quarterly to supervise the Synod administration. The Synod Assembly elects these leaders. The Synod Council is composed of congregations members from across the Virginia Synod, including rostered ministers (pastors and deacons) and laypeople (those not ordained).

What is the Churchwide Assembly?

The ELCA Churchwide Assembly, the primary decision-making body of the church, is a process of communal spiritual discernment that happens every 3 years. This event is invitation-only, but always available via live stream for the general public. The next one will take place in Columbus, Ohio on August 12-18, 2022.

What are the Disciplinary Committee's Responsibilities?

The Virginia Synod Committee on Discipline serves the Consultation and Discipline Process in this church. The consultation and discipline process assures due process and due protection for the accused, other parties, and this church in the discipline process, which governs officers, rostered ministers, congregations, and members of congregations.

[For more information see our Roles to be elected at the 2021 Synod Assembly.](#)

What are the conference partnerships in the Virginia Synod?

In January 2019, Synod Council approved the following conference partnerships:

- Coastal (Tidewater and Peninsulas Conferences)
- Piedmont (Richmond and Germanna Conferences)
- Valley (Northern Valley, Central Valley, and Page Conferences)
- Blue Ridge (Southern Valley and Southern Conferences)
- Appalachia (New River and Highlands Conferences)

To see a map of our conferences and partnership, [click here](#).

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

How is registration for an online assembly different?

Online registration for the assembly will open on March 15, 2021, and closes on June 2, 2021. Because of the need to register **unique email addresses to each individual**, a voter id number, and other voting information to individuals, there will be **NO registration after June 2, 2021**.

If an emergency substitution of a lay voting member is necessary, there may be some ability to do so after the registration deadline; however, there will not be any ability to do so after June 7, 2021.

If I am registering someone else or a group of people, what do I need to know before I start the registration process?

Each registrant needs to supply the following information:

- Registrant Unique Email Address
- Prefix (e.g. Rev., Deacon, Mr., Ms.)
- Name
- Registrant Preferred Mailing Address (*If you select to receive a mailed copy of the Bulletin of Reports this is the address it will be mailed to*)
- Registrant Preferred Phone (*the number we can reach you at during the assembly if necessary*)
- Inclusivity Goals (*The next three questions help us determine if the Virginia Synod is meeting its goals for inclusivity.*)
 - Gender
 - Age at Assembly
 - Racial/Ethnic Background
- Name of Congregation and Location (*or Organization*)
- Do they need to receive a paper copy of the Bulletin of Reports mailed before the event? (*The Bulletin of Reports will be emailed to all registrants, available in the Assembly App, and our webpage*)
- Lay Voter Credential Form (if registering as a lay voter member)
- You will also need to know what type of registration to choose for each person.
 - Lay Voting Member
 - Rostered Ministers (retired, on leave from call, or under call)
 - Synod Council (lay voting member or rostered minister)
 - Seminarian (Invited by Virginia Synod)

- Official Visitor (Invited by Virginia Synod)
- Ecumenical Guest
- Visitor
- Form of payment (credit/debit card) to cover registration costs

What is covered in the registration fees?

The cost of assembly reflects the real costs of holding the event, including program fees, administrative costs, and more. We make every effort to bring you a quality program and balance rising costs by utilizing volunteers, soliciting sponsors and donations, and decreasing paper usage.

Do rostered ministers who are retired or on leave from call get a discount?

Yes, registration for rostered ministers who are retired or on leave from call already has a discount applied. Still, they must complete their registration before April 19 to receive the early bird discount.

How do I know I am registered?

When your registration is complete, you will receive a confirmation email. If you did not receive a confirmation email, please check your spam or junk mail. If you are still unsure, contact Tammy Kasper at kasper@vasynod.org or 540-855-7455/540-389-1000 to confirm your registration.

How do I know if the lay voting credential form is received?

When the lay voting credential form is submitted the email typed in the form will receive a confirmation email with a copy of the completed form attached. If you did not receive this confirmation email, please check your spam or junk mail. If you are still unsure, you can contact the synod office.

ASSEMBLY APP

What is the Assembly App?

To be the best stewards of our resources, we strongly encourage you to use our assembly app. The app will include ALL information on the assembly. The Bulletin of Reports, worship services, nominations received, schedule, etc., will all be available. All those resources will also be available on our website. If you desire a paper copy of the Bulletin of Reports, you will need to communicate that when you register. Anyone can use the Assembly App with a Wi-Fi-enabled device. It is easier to read the reports and information if using a tablet or computer in place of a phone.

What device do I need to access the app?

The Assembly App supports iOS and Android. It is a free download for smartphones or tablets. All our Synod Assembly resources will also be available on [our website](#).

Please make sure your device is charged and ready before plenary sessions.

How do I download the Assembly App?

1. Go to <https://guidebook.com/g/#/guides/2021vasynod> or scan this code:
2. Tap the download button to get the free app.
3. Open the ELCA app and look for the guide: 2021 Virginia Synod Assembly.



Can I use the Assembly App on a computer?

Yes, the app has a desktop version that you can access at <https://guidebook.com/guide/174251>.

TECHNOLOGY INFORMATION

How do we meet the minimum technical requirements?

As a minimum, voting members will need to be able to connect to a Zoom meeting for the assembly, to be able to receive and read emails in real-time, and to log into a web browser to allow for secure voting. We encourage people to attend the assembly from a place where there is reliable internet service with strong connections. If there is sufficient bandwidth in a particular congregation, perhaps the congregation's voting members could safely gather at the church for the assembly, enable watching the live stream together, and provide some opportunity for discussion breaks. This also may be a way of sharing or extending available devices to allow voting members to have a better experience. There is coordination involved in this, but it can all be done on one device, as long as there are continuing internet connections during the assembly. For a better experience, however, we recommend that two devices be available/used to transfer among the various operations.

We urge congregations to consider methods of helping their members to meet these issues. The synod will also have volunteers available to help answer questions, produce some training videos, and conduct some live information sessions to familiarize people with the systems. More information with specifics will be updated when available.

EVENT INFORMATION

Will Synod Assembly be Livestreamed?

The Synod Assembly will be available by live streaming on [our YouTube channel](#). Stay up to date with videos as they happen to live, or you can also watch the videos following the Synod Assembly.

What if I have other questions about assembly?

Look at our assembly webpage at vasynod.org/synod-assembly-2021 or the Assembly App as updated information will be added to both places. You may also contact the synod office, 540-855-7455/540-389-1000 or 757-622-9421.

- **Registration Questions:** Tammy Kasper at kasper@vasynod.org or 540-389-1000
- **Nomination/Election Questions:** Rev. Kelly Bayer Derrick at bayerderrick@vasynod.org or 540-389-1000
- **Constitution Questions:** Rev. Kelly Bayer Derrick at bayerderrick@vasynod.org or 540-389-1000
- **Assembly Form Questions:** Lenae Osmondson at osmondson@vasynod.org or 757-622-9421
- **Assembly App Questions:** Lenae Osmondson at osmondson@vasynod.org or 757-622-9421