



2024 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 Synod Assembly is also an opportunity for education and fellowship. Anyone can enjoy the presentations, worship, and business as a visitor through the livestream online on the Synod's webpage.

What important dates do I need to keep in mind?

Tuesday, January 23	Pre-Assembly Meeting: Resolution and Memorial Writing
Wednesday, January 31	Synod Assembly registration opens, and General Arrangements are emailed
Thursday, February 29	Pre-Assembly Meeting: Virginia Synod and ELCA Churchwide Elections
Friday, March 1	Reports Due to be included in the Bulletin of Reports Congregation Significant Event Form Due (If received after this date, it will not be included in the Bulletin of Reports but in a later supplement.)
Thursday, March 7	Pre-Assembly Meeting: Investment in Ministry & Compensation Guidelines
Monday, March 18	Early Bird Registration Closes
Thursday, March 28	Resolution and Memorial Form Deadline Nomination Form Due Lay Voting Credential Form Due Digital Ministry Display Form and Mission Partner Video Submissions Due Appointed At-Large Voting Member Request Form Due
Tuesday, April 16	Pre-Assembly Meeting: How to Vote 101
Wednesday, April 17	Lay Voting Credentialing Closes (Per the Synod 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 of the Bishop, you will not be able to vote.) Event Registration Closes
Thursday, April 18	Pre-Assembly Meeting: Resolution Review

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 man and one of whom shall be a woman. 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 voting members.

Appointed At Large Lay Voting Members

The Virginia Synod Constitution authorizes Synod Council to appoint at-large voting members of the annual Synod Assembly, in addition to those elected by congregations:

1. Up to 10 at-large voting members who are **persons of color and/or whose primary language is other than English** (S7.21.A22.)
2. Up to 10 at-large members who are **youth and/or young adults (as defined in †S6.04.02.)** [18 - 30 years old at the time of the Assembly] (S7.21.B22.)

If you are interested in being appointed as an at large voting member, [please complete this form](#).

Rostered Ministers who are Retired, On Leave from Call, or on Disability Leave

Subject to †S7.22.01 and †S7.22.02 (that at least 60 percent of the voting membership of the Synod Assembly shall be composed of laypersons), all rostered ministers on the roster of this synod in attendance at the Synod Assembly who are retired, on leave from call, or have been granted disability roster status by the Synod Council shall be voting members.

What does a voting member need to have for our Online Assembly?

Voting members must participate via Zoom and vote online. Voting members will need to have 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. Congregations can participate in the assembly together by gathering in one location to view the Assembly Zoom. For congregations that participate as a group at one location, please plan on having multiple internet connected devices (computers, smartphones, etc) available for voting. While it is possible for multiple people to vote from the same internet connected device, it will be significantly easier for each individual to have their own internet connected device for voting.

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. If elected to serve on the Synod Council, all expenses (mileage, housing, and meals) to attend Synod Council meetings are covered by the Virginia Synod. The Synod Assembly elects these leaders. The Synod Council is composed of congregation members from across the Virginia Synod, including rostered ministers (pastors and deacons) and laypeople (those not ordained).

What are the Consultation Committee's Responsibilities?

The Virginia Synod Consultation Committee assists the bishop in efforts to resolve a situation - involving rostered ministers - in which there are indications that a cause for discipline may exist and before charges are made. The Consultation Committee is described by the ELCA Constitution and Bylaws in [20.22.04](#).

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 **Phoenix, Arizona, from July 28-August 2, 2025**.

What are the Responsibilities of an ELCA Churchwide Council Member?

The Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is both the board of directors of a Minnesota nonprofit corporation and the interim legislative authority of the churchwide organization, one of the three "expressions" of a denomination with deep roots in the U.S. In fulfilling its dual constitutional roles, the Church Council exercises fiduciary, strategic, and generative responsibilities to govern the ELCA churchwide organization. The full explanation of [roles and responsibilities linked here](#).

[For more information on all of the above positions, see our Roles to be elected at the 2024 Synod Assembly.](#)

What are the conference partnerships in the Virginia Synod?

- 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 partnerships, [click here](#).

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Online registration will open on Wednesday, January 31 and close on April 17, 2024. An early bird registration discount is available until March 18, 2024.

If an emergency substitution of a lay voting member is necessary, it can be done by calling the synod office (540.389.100) before April 17, 2024. After April 17, registration is closed per the Synod Constitution.

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:

- First Name and Last Name (If the person has two last names, you can not have space between them. The name field only allows for two words typed in)
- Registrant Unique Email Address (email not shared with another registered person for voting purposes)
- Registrant Preferred Phone (*The number we can reach you if necessary.*)
- Registrant Registration Type, options included are:
 - Lay Voting Member (requires a Lay Credential Form to be submitted)
 - Rostered Ministers (retired, on leave from call, disability leave, or under call)
 - Synod Council (lay voting member or rostered minister)
 - Synod Council Appointed At-Large Lay Voting Member (Approved by Synod Council)
 - Synod Authorized Minister
- Name of Congregation and Location
- Prefix/Title (e.g. Rev., Deacon, Mr., Ms., Mx., Sister, Brother, Pastor)
- Registrant Pronouns
- Inclusivity Goals (*The next three questions help us determine if the Virginia Synod is meeting its goals for inclusivity.*)
 - Gender (Woman, Man, Non-Binary, prefer not to answer)
 - Age at Assembly (Under 18, 18-30, 31 or older, or prefer not to answer)
 - Racial/Ethnic Background
- Will have an option to add another attendee to the registration and have one transaction.
- Form of payment (credit/debit card) to cover registration costs.
- Don't forget the Lay Voter Credential Form (all lay voting members need to have a form completed by the Rostered Minister or Council President on file by April 17)

What is covered in the registration fees?

The cost of the Assembly reflects the real cost of holding the event, including program fees, administrative costs, voting software, and more. We make every effort to conduct a quality Assembly and balance rising costs by utilizing volunteers, soliciting sponsors and donations, and by being good stewards of our gifts.

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

Yes, registration for rostered ministers who are retired, on leave from call, or on disability leave already has a discount applied. Still, they must complete their registration before March 18 to receive the early bird discount.

How do I know I am registered?

When your registration is complete, you will receive a confirmation email. Please check your spam or junk mail if you did not receive a confirmation email. If you are unsure or have other registration questions, contact Lenae Osmondson at osmondsoon@vasynod.org or 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. Please check your spam or junk mail if you did not receive this confirmation email. If you are still unsure, you can contact Lenae Osmondson at osmondson@vasynod.org.

PRE-ASSEMBLY MEETINGS

We will offer pre-assembly gatherings online to help you prepare for the assembly. Anyone is invited to participate, and each gathering will be recorded and shared following the event. There is no cost to attend. More information, registration, and recordings can be found at vasynod.org/2024-pre-assembly-meetings.

VOTING MEMBER ORIENTATION

If you have not participated as a voting member for a Synod Assembly, [here is a written resource](#) of information as an optional orientation for all voting members. We encourage you to participate in the pre-assembly meetings as well.

TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT

Technology support will be available during the assembly. More information will be shared closer to the event.

EVENT INFORMATION

Will Synod Assembly be Livestreamed?

The Synod Assembly will be available by live streaming on The Virginia Synod website. All visitors will participate by the livestream. Stay up to date with videos as they happen 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/2024-virginia-synod-Assembly/ for the most up to date information. You may also contact the Synod Office, 540-389-1000 or 757-622-9421.

- **General Assembly Questions:** Pastor Leslie Weber, Assembly Director at assembly@vasynod.org
- **Registration Questions:** Lenae Osmondson at osmondson@vasynod.org
- **Nomination/Election Questions:** Pastor Leslie Weber, Assembly Director at assembly@vasynod.org
- **Constitution Questions:** Skip Zubrod at zubrod@vasynod.org
- **Assembly Form Questions:** Lenae Osmondson at osmondson@vasynod.org
- **Bulletin of Reports Questions:** Lenae Osmondson at osmondson@vasynod.org
- **Mission Partner Video Questions:** Pastor Colleen Montgomery montgomery@vasynod.org
- **Technology Questions:** Pastor Colleen Montgomery montgomery@vasynod.org

