

**Youth and Young Adults:  
Encouragement to Congregations to Include  
Youth & Young Adults as Voting Members of  
Church Councils and as Voting Members of  
the 2011 Rocky Mountain Synod Assembly.**



**Rocky Mountain Synod**

**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.



## **Youth and Young Adults: Expanded Roles for Youth and Young Adults**

*At the 2009 Churchwide Assembly, amendments to the constitutions, bylaws and continuing resolutions of the ELCA were adopted to allow for expanded roles for youth and young adults in the governance in all expressions of our church, including the synod assembly.\* The goal is that at least ten percent of the voting members at a synod assembly would be persons who are youth (not yet 18 when elected/appointed) and young adults (between the ages of 18 and 30 when elected/appointed.)*

As the Rocky Mountain Synod fully lives into this goal, congregations are to have conversations with the youth and young adults in their midst. Please consider electing a young person to your church council and/or appointing a young person as one of your voting members for the 2011 Synod Assembly. Lifting up and empowering young people to serve is part of the calling of every congregation!

You have the opportunity to identify youth and young adults who will represent your congregation as voting members at this year's Synod Assembly. You have the opportunity to move the Rocky Mountain Synod towards becoming more fully the body of Christ, representing all ages and generations!

Below, you will find information to assist you and your congregation in inviting, selecting and supporting your youth and young adult voting members for the 2011 Rocky Mountain Synod Assembly.

■ A youth or young adult attending the 2011 Assembly, as a voting member from your congregation, will sit with the members of your congregation and will have the same schedule as all other voting members, with a few minor exceptions:

When the Assembly is not in session, there will be several hospitality times hosted specifically for the young people. One of these times will include a Q & A with *Bishop Bjornberg* and *the person* representing the Office of the Presiding Bishop, ELCA. This schedule will be posted on the RMS web site closer to the time of the Assembly.

■ When youth arrive at the Assembly, they will check in at a special "Welcome Table" for youth and young adults who are a voting members or attending as registered visitors.

■ It is our hope that each youth/young adult voting member attending the assembly would have an adult mentor—someone who is also a voting member from your congregation and has previously attended an Assembly. This could be a rostered or lay leader. This adult's role is to support the youth during the event, answer questions, explain the business at hand, and offer encouragement for full participation.

■ Make sure ALL of your congregation's voting members have copies of the schedule, reports and documents. If possible bring the congregation's voting members together before the Assembly to review the schedule, resolutions and documents which are posted at [www.rmselca.org/assembly](http://www.rmselca.org/assembly).

■ Set a date for your voting members to present a report to the congregation following the Assembly. Include your youth and young adult members!

■ Youth who are 17 and younger are the legal responsibility of the congregation. Permission and medical forms and all other critical documents for responsible and safe participation are the responsibility of the congregation. Hotel housing is also the responsibility of the congregation. Sample forms, covenants, and guidelines for appropriate adult/youth interaction may be requested from the synod office.

## **Frequently Asked Questions Concerning Youth serving on Church Council or as Voting Members for Synod Assembly**

### **How do we select a youth or young adult voting member?**

- Follow the procedures set by your congregation. You are also encouraged to seek out and invite young persons for whom you think this would be a positive experience.
- Youth, ages 16-17, whom you might seek out to serve may not be the most “visible” persons in your youth group or congregation. Who are those young people who like sense and order, are curious about how things work, ask questions, and like to make things happen?
- Invite or nominate a young adult from your congregation who will be home from college by Assembly time. What a great way to reconnect!

### **Youth are in school and not available for meetings or the Assembly**

- Plan your own church council meetings for times that are youth and family friendly.
- Yes, our assembly falls at a time when some youth have finals or graduations. But for many, this is not true. Ask! With enough notice, many youth are willing to plan for a day away. Our young people are bright and involved in many activities that take them away from the classroom. A congregation may provide a letter on church stationary that many schools accept for an excused absence.

### **Will the youth understand the process for business?**

- Young people who are involved with the Lutheran Youth Organization's business meetings and Churchwide Assemblies are often some of the most articulate voting members, speaking with energy, insight, and passion on the issues at hand. They are up to the challenges of Robert's Rules of Order.
- All new-to-assembly voting members will be invited to watch an on-line video as one part of preparing them for the experience and understanding the process. The youth will also be invited to designate times of hospitality where they will be encouraged to ask questions and discuss the issues at hand.
- Each congregation sends *voting members* to the Assembly not *delegates*. Each voting member does not represent his/her congregation but rather comes together with others to make up an assembly of the church that votes its conscience in the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **Will the youth/young adults feel lost in the whole process of an Assembly?**

Extra care will be taken to provide hospitality for the youth, such as designated fellowship space, a Q/A time with our Synod's Bishop and the person representing the ELCA Presiding Bishop's office. Youth from our own RMS Lutheran Youth Organization will be present, as will the adult LYO advisors and our synod's Assistant to the Bishop for Youth & Household Ministry. A designated adult mentor from the same congregation is helpful for youth serving on church council or as a voting member at Synod Assembly.

### **In my former synod, the youth had their own convocation along side the Assembly. Why does the RMS not provide this type of gathering?**

- At baptism the assembled say, *"We welcome you into the body of Christ and into the mission we share: join us in giving thanks and praise to God and bearing God's creative and redeeming word into all the world."*
- Our young people, like our elders and God's children in every generation, bring unique gifts, experiences and insights to the Assembly.
- Youth are the church of today – not the church of tomorrow, just like our elders are the church of today – not the church of yesterday.
- An important part of the discipleship process is mentoring and leadership development. Being an integral part of the "Big Church" is often a faith-forming and career shaping experience.

### **Need more information or have questions?**

Contact Linda Staats, Assistant to the Bishop for Youth & Household Ministry [lstaats@rmselca.org](mailto:lstaats@rmselca.org) or call her cell phone number: 602-740-3752.

### **\*Amendments and additions to the Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions were approved at the Churchwide Assembly, August 17-23, 2009 allowing for expanded roles for youth and young adults in the governance in all expressions of this church.**

#### **S6.04.B09.**

*It is the goal of this synod that at least 10% of the voting members of the Synod Assembly, Synod Council, committees, and organizational units of this synod be youth and young adults. Then Synod Council shall establish a plan for implementing this goal. For purposes of the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of this synod, 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.*