

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN SYNOD CONSTITUTION

Through the Vision Passion Action process the Rocky Mountain Synod committed to this vision: *Every person, every congregation, every ministry, boldly serving God's mission in Christ*. With this vision in mind, we are now considering ways we can live it out, and we have determined that our governing documents no longer reflect a structure that supports our vision. By changing our synod's constitution we will create an environment that is more flexible, while maintaining appropriate accountability. Therefore, we propose changes to our organizational structure and election procedure. This summary highlights the recommended changes that will be presented for approval at the 2010 Synod Assembly.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The original constitution reflected a committee structure that was tied to that of the ELCA at its formation in 1988. Since that time churchwide structure has changed as has our own synod's understanding of how it works. Some boards or committees in the constitution do not exist in practice, and others question their relevance and effectiveness. Therefore we propose that our constitution names three kinds of ministry teams: **Oversight**, **Catalyst** and **Self-Organizing**. "Ministry Team" includes any group (committee, task force, board, etc.) working as a ministry of the synod.

- **Oversight** ministry teams work on behalf of the synod. These are initiated by the ELCA, synod council or synod assembly. (e.g. Candidacy, Campus Ministry, Synod Council, Mission Outreach)
- **Catalyst** ministry teams connect ELCA, Synod and Congregations. These groups are initiated by the synod council or synod assembly. (e.g. Congregational Ministries, Global Missions, Hunger Network, Advocacy Ministries)
- **Self-Organizing** ministry teams are people with passion for an issue who connect and collaborate throughout the synod. They are initiated by volunteers and recognized by synod council as a synodical self-organizing ministry teams. (e.g. Health Ministries, Creation Care)

Our intent is for many of these ministry teams to be formed as continuing resolutions so that synod council may make changes as circumstances change. Different types of ministry teams would have different levels of accountability and support. **Oversight** and **Catalyst** teams will have leaders who are typically elected or appointed. Council will be responsible for ensuring that each of these teams has the members and resources it needs to complete its work.

Self-Organizing teams that are recognized by council as a synodical ministry may use synod communications as resources allow, host events under the synod name, partner with other synodical ministries, request dollars from synod or through grants, and dissolve when appropriate. We believe that distinguishing between these kinds of ministry teams creates accountability for core synodical functions while allowing other important ministries to be created and function as need and passion dictates.

Many of our current constitutional boards/committees (ministry teams) are no longer appropriate. The following changes to ministry teams are recommended.

- Remain in the constitution but make any changes as recommended by those groups: Campus Ministry, Candidacy, Congregational Ministries, Mission Outreach, Global Missions, and Finance Committee.
- Removed from our constitution because they are not currently in existence and/or they have requested this action: Board for Church in Society, Commission on Multicultural Ministries, Outdoor Ministries, Continuing Education, Leadership Support, and Development.
- Add to the constitution as **Oversight** or **Catalyst** groups: Congregation & Leader Wellness (new group established to address this synodical priority), Audit Committee (required by churchwide action), Hunger Network, and Lutheran Advocacy Ministries (formerly described under Board for Church in Society).

ELECTIONS, APPOINTMENTS AND REPRESENTATION ON MINISTRY TEAMS

The ELCA and synod constitutions state that ministry teams should include people of many groups representing geography, lay/rostered, gender, race/ethnicity and age. While these principles are stated as goals, our synod has used them as the primary means of identifying candidates for elected positions with a secondary concern for the qualifications of the candidate. This has resulted in large committees with frequent turn over and members who were not always well qualified to serve on those specific committees. Some ministry teams have moved to have members appointed rather than elected so that they are not subjected to this regimen.

Recommended changes to Synod Council.

The ELCA constitutional requirement is for a synod council of 10-24 people. The Rocky Mountain Synod presently has a council comprised of 24 people: 4 officers, 10 conference representatives, and 10 at large positions for lay male, lay female, rostered leaders, youth, and ethnic minorities. A council of 24 is not an ideal size for meaningful discussion and decision-making. We propose that council be comprised of 18 elected positions: one per conference, 4 officers, and 4 at large positions with one each for lay male, lay female, rostered, and youth.

Election, Appointment and Mixed Membership of Ministry Teams

The proposed changes will describe the functions of each of the **Oversight** and **Catalyst** teams as well as how vacancies are to be filled. The recommended changes to each team were determined by the chairs and committees themselves. Two ministry teams requested a combination with some elected members and some appointed members. Those groups are Campus Ministry and Global Missions. The details are in process.

Proposing a new approach to Geographic Representation

As a synod of considerable geography, geographic representation on ministry teams is critical to ensure that the diverse issues of our synod are understood. This has been achieved by including one person from each of the 10 conferences as specified in the constitution. Because we also desire at large members, the result was committees with over 10 people. Several boards/committees desire smaller ministry teams to be more effective. They are also easier and less expensive to gather. To balance the need for geographic representation and the desire to have qualified/passionate people, we propose the following. Elected boards would include 6-10 members. Six of those would be selected by geography: one member each from the Border Conference, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming, and two from Colorado (one from Denver Metro and one from outside.) Other members (up to 4) would be at large. The goal of this structure is to bring a variety of perspectives to the table, not to have a geographically representative body. There is also a likelihood that the at large members would come from the more populated areas of the synod. These principles would apply to all Oversight and Catalyst ministry teams unless otherwise specified. However, Synod Council would still include members from each conference.

Maintaining Gender, Rostered/Lay and Ethnic representation

In the past we insured representation by following a strict rotation that dictated which kinds of candidates were eligible for which positions (i.e. lay woman from X conference, Clergy from another). This forced qualified candidates off boards while eliminating others from consideration. While the constitution will continue to hold up the importance of representation we propose moving away from the rotation as a means of achieving this goal. Instead the Nominating Committee will be charged with seeking candidates with particular qualities as well as appropriate qualifications. As ministry team members change, new members with complementary qualities will be sought out. If this does not produce adequate diversity among ministry teams a rotation pattern may be brought back.

Council Liaisons

The current constitution specifies that every board/committee must have a council liaison with voice but not vote. Our experience is that liaisons are not always necessary and that having no vote, their presence seems unimportant. We recommend that Synod Council assign liaisons to ministry teams as necessary and that those members may have a vote. This will help create a stronger and more accountable relationship between ministry teams and Synod Council.