Report of the Constitution Committee

The constitution committee of the Southeastern Iowa Synod ensures the currency, accuracy and integrity of the Southeastern Iowa Synod Constitution and the constitutions of its congregations.

One of the committee’s responsibilities is to review amendments and revisions to congregational constitutions to check for conformity with the ELCA’s Model Constitution for Congregations, where applicable, and to identify internal conflicts within the documents as they are amended. Congregations are encouraged to make these changes to their constitutions, especially as amendments to required sections of the Model Constitution are binding on congregations. It is helpful for the constitution committee to review the constitution prior to a congregational meeting. Members of this committee are available to help congregations in this process. Contact Pastor Eric Carlson at carlson@seiasynod.org to begin the process.

The committee also will continue to review the Synod Constitution with an eye toward clarifying points that need clarification, and to keeping the document updated as per action by both the Synod and Churchwide Assemblies. In preparation for the 2018 Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly, the committee reviewed the proposed amendments that align with the proposed synod governance restructuring proposal.

The members of the constitution committee are: Pastor T. Edwards Breed (chair), Sheri Gustafson, Lois Lembke, Pastor Tim Olson, Pastor Duane Miller (synod parliamentarian) Bishop Michael Burk, ex officio; and Assistant to the Bishop, Pastor Eric Carlson, advisor.

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor T. Edwards Breed, Chair
Southeastern Iowa Synod Governance Restructuring
A Proposal for Revision

The mission goals of this synod now and in the future, are grounded in the call to provide a shared witness to God’s saving action in and through Jesus Christ. While this proposal is chiefly about improving the governance of the Southeastern Iowa Synod, the ability to address the current emphasis on Leadership and Vital Congregations will be enhanced, thereby bolstering our gospel witness.

In summary, the proposal creates:

- a nomination process that intentionally considers a variety of gifts to achieve balance on the Synod Council, enriching deliberation and decision making.
- the move to 4-year terms on the Synod Council that are not renewable will lead to more people serving in positions of leadership, expanding engagement throughout the synod.
- the combination of conference chaplains, with their attention to peer relationships, and synod deans who collaborate in ways that push one another and the bishop to explore and try new things, contributes to the vitality of this synod. Leaders are supported and creative attention is given to enhancing the vitality of congregations, ministry partners, and the synod.
- possibilities yet to be envisioned are more likely to be raised with more people fully engaged. The freedom to do more than is prescribed and the freedom from structures or practices that are no longer effective sets the stage for more adaptive ministry.

Background

The Synod Council convened a task force in September 2016 to consider and prepare a proposal to restructure the synod, giving particular attention to improving governance. A draft proposal was reviewed by the Synod Council in December 2016. In February 2017, the council voted to forward the Southeastern Iowa Synod-Structural Revision to the 2017 Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly for introduction, with an invitation to consider and offer feedback prior to acting on a proposal at the 2018 Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly.

A year of conversation and shared discernment included listening posts in the fall of 2017, conversations in deans’ meetings, conference gatherings, and other colleague groups, together with web-based responses to resources. This approach provided a variety of opportunities for people to “weigh in.”

The timing of this proposal anticipates a shift in leadership in 2020 with the election of a new bishop. Our shared goal is to do our best to assure that this synod is in the best possible position for future-oriented ministry. More importantly - the proposed shifts seek to be responsive to current realities, including some of the significant challenges we face together today.
The following components of governance are the focus of this proposal.

**Synod Council**

The proposal facilitates the election of a Synod Council that will more accurately reflect the population distribution of the synod. Elections to fill council vacancies will occur at the synod assembly every other year (the even-numbered years, beginning in 2018).

The primary make-up the council will be tied to area subdivisions within the synod. This shift provides for a council that more closely corresponds to the distribution of congregational membership throughout the synod. The Synod Council will always include at least one lay member from each of the area subdivisions and a pastor from each of at least three area subdivisions.

Council membership will total eighteen (18) and shall include:

- **Bishop**
- **Vice President**
- **Secretary**
- **Treasurer**
- **Clergy – Area Subdivision 1 OR 2**
- **Clergy – Area Subdivision 3 OR 4**
- **Clergy – Area Subdivision 5 OR 6**
- **Clergy – At-Large**
- **Lay – Area Subdivision 1**
- **Lay – Area Subdivision 2**
- **Lay – Area Subdivision 3**
- **Lay – Area Subdivision 4**
- **Lay – Area Subdivision 5**
- **Lay – Area Subdivision 6**
- **Lay – Youth Male At-Large**
- **Lay – Youth Female At-Large**
- **Lay – At-Large**

The terms of office for council members (with the exception of the bishop) shall begin on the first day of the month following the month in which the synod assembly occurs.

- The bishop serves a six-year term and is eligible for re-election.
- The vice president and the secretary serve four-year terms and are eligible to serve up to two full consecutive terms.
- The treasurer, elected by the Synod Council rather than by the synod assembly, serves a four-year term and is eligible for re-election.
- Youth council members serve a two-year term and are not eligible for re-election.
- All other members serve a four-year term and are not eligible for re-election.

**The Nominating Process**

The Southeastern Iowa Synod Nominating Committee is elected by the synod assembly, consisting of one member from each of the area subdivisions. The Synod Nominating Committee is responsible for providing a full slate of candidates for Synod Council and other leadership positions to the synod assembly. Nominations from the floor of the assembly are also in order.

The Nominating Committee is required to nominate at least one person for each position for which the Synod Assembly will hold an election. Though not required, it is expected that in most cases, the nominating committee will nominate two qualified persons for each position on the synod council.
The Synod Nominating Committee will provide a slate of candidates to become Churchwide Assembly voting members to the Synod Assembly in the year prior to a Churchwide Assembly in accordance with the criteria provided by the ELCA governing documents and the Office of the Secretary. Again, nominations from the floor of the assembly are in order.

**Synod Deans**

Synod deans will serve on behalf of the entire synod rather than on behalf of a subset of congregations and rostered ministers within the synod. To increase the likelihood of reflecting an understanding of different settings or contexts throughout the synod, the six synod deans will be selected from among pastors and deacons serving in each of the six area subdivisions.

Each dean will be elected to a 3-year term by the Synod Council upon the recommendation of the bishop and are eligible to serve two consecutive terms. Initially, these terms may be staggered.

The deans, as a group and individually, are collaborative partners with the Office of the Bishop on behalf of the whole synod. Pastors and deacons who are respected by and well connected to their peers will be sought for the position of dean. These are leaders who have the ability to think and act strategically, and are willing to be advocates for goals and initiatives that will enhance our shared mission to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ and to assist one another in this proclamation. In advising the bishop, the deans are intentionally positioned to enhance connections with the Office of the Bishop, leaders and communities of faith.

This model allows a bishop to utilize synod deans as an extension of the bishop’s staff in times when essential needs of the synod cannot be met by current staffing. As an example, should such a need arise, a dean that has been recommended by the bishop and has participated in strategic planning with the Office of the Bishop may be called upon to facilitate a call process in a congregation. Such use of a dean requires consultation with the congregation served by that dean (or other employer, in the case of specialized ministry settings), and a stipend for these activities would be paid.

**Area Subdivisions**

Area subdivisions have no programmatic function. The six area subdivisions are simply geographic areas from which nominees for synod leadership positions are identified. Most of the area subdivisions consist of the combined territory of two conferences.

**Conferences and Conference Chaplains**

Eleven conferences will continue to be comprised of the communities of faith and ministry partners within their defined boundaries. The specified purpose of the conference has less to do with all of these partners and more to do with the pastors and deacons serving within the conference, or who are retired on the territory of the conference. These rostered ministers will select from among themselves a person to serve as conference chaplain for a period of three years. A conference chaplain may be reelected.
The role of the conference chaplain is to be an intentional colleague to pastors and deacons within the conference. To support their work and to enhance the sense of connection with the Office of the Bishop, conference chaplains will meet periodically (at least three times per year) with the bishop. Between meetings, chaplains are expected to be in touch with the bishop with news or concerns about colleagues that the chaplain thinks important to share. The Office of the Bishop will strive to keep the chaplain apprised of transitions occurring in the conference or with information that should be shared with the pastors and deacons of the conference.

While there are no additional expectations of the conference or of the conference chaplains, there is freedom for the pastors and deacons of a conference to engage in additional shared activities that enhance ministry and collegial relationships within the conference.

**Implementation**

The Synod Nominating Committee is prepared to introduce a full slate of candidates to meet the expectations of this proposal.

Upon the adoption of the proposed Synod Governance Restructuring, persons who have been serving as the dean of the conference prior to the adoption shall convene a gathering of conference pastors and deacons no later than October 1, 2018, for the purpose of electing from among themselves a person to serve a 3-year term as conference chaplain. The initial 3-year term shall conclude on September 30, 2021.

In those conferences where monies are held in common (a conference “treasury”), the meeting at which the conference chaplain is elected shall also include an action by the rostered ministers gathered regarding the disbursement or retention of such funds. This meeting will be held no later than October 1, 2018.

The bishop will recommend to the Synod Council six potential synod deans, (pastors or deacons), one from each of the area subdivisions. The Synod Council will act on the recommendations at their September 2018 Synod Council meeting. Should any recommendations fail to be ratified, the bishop shall bring new recommendations for consideration to the next meeting of the Synod Council. Recommendations will include a rationale for consideration.
Proposed Amendments to the
CONSTITUTION, BYLAWS and CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS
of the Southeastern Iowa Synod of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Proposed Amendment to the Southeastern Iowa Synod Constitution. For this assembly, a two-thirds vote will be taken to satisfy the above requirements in +S18.13.

+S10.01. The Synod Council consisting of the four officers of the synod, 10 to 24 other members, and at least one youth and at least one young adult, shall be elected by the Synod Assembly.
   a. ...
   b. The term of office of members of the Synod Council, with the exception of the officers and the youth members, shall be three years.

Proposed Amendments to the Southeastern Iowa Synod Bylaws.
This synod may amend its bylaws at any meeting of the Synod Assembly by a two-thirds vote of voting members of the assembly present and voting. (+S18.21)

S7.51.04. The committee of reference and counsel shall consist of six people, who shall be nominated by the Secretary of this Synod and appointed by the Synod Council to three-year staggered terms. The chairperson shall be appointed by the Synod Council to a term of one year and shall be eligible for reappointment as chairperson. Conference deans are encouraged to nominate individuals for this committee. All terms shall begin January 1. [with the balance of this bylaw remaining unchanged]

S9.03.01. There shall be a Nominating Committee consisting of five persons representing the broad constituency of the synod, one from each of the six area subdivisions of the synod. They shall be appointed by the Synod Council elected by the Synod Assembly. The secretary of this synod shall act as convener of the Nominating Committee.

S9.03.01. There shall be a Nominating Committee consisting of six persons, one from each of the six area subdivisions of the synod. They shall be elected by the Synod Assembly. The secretary of this synod shall convene the Nominating Committee.
The function of the Nominating Committee will be to receive the names and information about nominees provided by the conferences for offices for which there are elections, to provide additional nominees in cases in which a conference does not provide the number of nominees required by the constitution or bylaws, and to obtain nominees for the at-large positions as a means to ensure obtaining inclusive goals. Information about nominees should thus be made available in adequate time for publication in the pre-assembly report.

The function of the Nominating Committee will be to receive the names and information about nominees for offices for which there are elections required by the constitution or bylaws. Information about nominees should be made available in adequate time for publication in the pre-assembly report.

Each conference shall nominate at least one person for the Synod Council. The Nominating Committee shall nominate at least one person for each position of the Synod Council except that of the bishop. Nominees shall be either clergy or lay as determined by a schedule established by the Synod Council. From these nominees, and any others nominated from the floor, the Synod Assembly shall elect one person to represent each conference.

The Nominating Committee shall nominate at least one person for each position of the synod council except that of the bishop. Nominees shall be either clergy or lay as determined by a schedule established by the Synod Council.

The Nominating Committee shall nominate at least one person for each of the four at-large positions on the Synod Council. From each of these nominees, the Synod Assembly shall elect one at-large member to serve a staggered term on the Synod Council.

The Nominating Committee shall nominate at least one person for each of two youth positions, one male and one female, as those positions become open on the Synod Council. From these nominees, the Synod Assembly shall elect one in each category to serve on the Synod Council, each of whom is a voting member of a congregation in this synod and who has not reached the age of 18 at the time of election.

In consultation with the Synodical Women’s Organization, the Nominating Committee shall nominate at least one person for one Synodical Women’s Organization position, and the Synod Assembly shall elect one.
In accordance with ELCA constitutional provision 12.41., Southeastern Iowa Synod constitutional provision +S6.04., and Southeastern Iowa Synod continuing resolution +S6.04.A01., members of the Churchwide Assembly shall be selected as follows:

a. Each conference shall nominate one clergy. This nomination shall be accomplished and communicated to the secretary of this synod no later than December 1 prior to the Synod Assembly at which the election will occur. The Nominating Committee shall, if necessary, nominate sufficient clergy so that there are at least two nominees for each clergy position. All of these nominees and any additional nominees from the floor shall be submitted to the Synod Assembly on a single ballot and not in pairs, and the Synod Assembly shall elect the number of clergy members of the Churchwide Assembly allotted to this synod.

b. The Nominating Committee shall nominate two lay male at-large nominees and two lay female at-large nominees. The Synod Assembly shall elect one male at-large member and one female at-large member from these nominees.

c. Each conference shall nominate one lay person, who may be either male or female. This nomination shall be accomplished and communicated to the secretary of this synod no later than December 1 prior to the Synod Assembly at which the election will occur. The Nominating Committee shall, if necessary, nominate sufficient additional lay persons so that there are at least two nominees for each of the remaining possible male lay positions and at least two nominees for each of the remaining possible female lay positions. All of the male nominees and any additional lay male nominees from the floor shall be submitted to the Synod Assembly on a single ballot and not in pairs, and the Synod Assembly shall elect the required number of lay male members to the Churchwide Assembly. All of the female nominees and any additional lay female nominees from the floor shall be submitted to the Synod Assembly on a single ballot and not in pairs, and the Synod Assembly shall elect the required number of lay female members to the Churchwide Assembly.

There shall be one Southeastern Iowa Synodical Women’s Organization position on the Synod Council for a term of three years.
The Synod Council shall be composed of three clergy from three of the six area subdivisions of the synod, one lay member from each conference of the six area subdivisions of the synod, four three at-large members (one two lay male, one lay female, and two one clergy), the officers of this synod, two youth members, and any additional members as prescribed in the bylaws.

The Synod Council shall be composed of three clergy from three of the six area subdivisions of the synod, one lay member from each of the six area subdivisions of the synod, three at-large members (two lay and one clergy), the officers of this synod, two youth members, and any additional members as prescribed in the bylaws.

Except for the officers bishop and youth members, terms of members on the Synod Council shall be three four years in length. Members who are not officers of this synod shall be eligible for consecutive reelection once to a second full term. The youth members shall not be eligible for reelection.

Except for the bishop and youth members, terms of members on the Synod Council shall be four years in length. Members who are not officers of this synod shall not be eligible for reelection.

The Synod Council shall be elected in even-numbered years. Terms of office will be staggered so that approximately one-half of the members nominated by conferences shall be elected each even-numbered year in which a Synod Council election occurs, and so that at least one at-large member shall be elected each year.

The Synod Council shall be elected in even-numbered years. Terms of office will be staggered so that approximately one-half of the members shall be elected each even-numbered year in which a Synod Council election occurs.

The representation on Synod Council from each of six particular conference shall rotate among lay female, clergy and lay male. Clergy shall be elected from three of the six area subdivisions of the synod, alternating terms with the other three area subdivisions. The Synod Council shall, by continuing resolution, adopt a rotation plan which will implement this bylaw and permit each member of the Synod Council to serve out the balance of the two terms one term permitted to that member or that member and the member’s immediate predecessor. The Synod Council may adjust the rotation plan from time to time to respond to gender balance and diversity considerations.

The representation on Synod Council from each of six area subdivisions of the synod shall rotate between lay female and lay male. Clergy shall be elected from three of the six area subdivisions of the synod, alternating terms with the other three area subdivisions. The Synod Council shall, by continuing resolution, adopt a rotation plan which will implement this bylaw.
S11.01.11. There shall be an Executive Committee, chaired by the bishop of the synod, consisting of the four synod officers, plus one additional clergy member appointed by the Synod Council upon the recommendation of the bishop and vice president. The additional clergy member will serve for one year and shall be chosen from the Synod Council, and is eligible to serve consecutive years.

S11.01.11. There shall be an Executive Committee, chaired by the bishop of the synod, consisting of the four synod officers, plus one additional member appointed by the Synod Council upon the recommendation of the bishop and vice president. The additional member is appointed for one year and is eligible to serve consecutive years.

S12.01.11. This synod shall establish eleven conferences within the territory of this synod.

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S12.20. Area Subdivisions

S12.01.21. This synod shall establish six area subdivisions within the territory of this synod from which nominees are identified for synod leadership positions.

S12.01.12. Each conference shall, at an annual assembly of the conference, elect a dean (clergy), a secretary (lay) and any other officers deemed necessary, for three-year terms to serve no more than two consecutive terms. When a conference assembly is scheduled to elect a dean, the bishop may recommend for consideration a pastor serving within the conference.

S12.01.14. Each conference shall have at least one assembly per year with voting representation established by each conference.

S12.01.16. In the event of a vacancy in the office of dean, the bishop shall appoint a pastor from the conference to serve until the next conference assembly.
Proposed Amendments to the Southeastern Iowa Synod Continuing Resolutions.
This synod may amend its continuing resolutions at any meeting of the Synod Assembly by a majority vote of voting members of the assembly present and voting or by a two-thirds vote of the Synod Council. (+S18.31)

**S10.03.A18.** The Synod Council shall elect one synod dean from each of the area subdivisions of the synod to a three-year term upon the recommendation of the bishop. Synod deans are eligible to serve two consecutive terms.

**S10.07.A12.** For the purpose of determining conference representation on the synod council, of identifying nominees for the Synod Council from area subdivisions, the rotation reflected by S10.07.05. shall be extended until such time that another method is adopted.

**S10.07.A12.** For the purpose of identifying nominees for the Synod Council from area subdivisions, the rotation reflected by S10.07.05. shall be extended until such time that another method is adopted.

**S12.01.A18.** The Synod Council shall determine the boundaries of the eleven conferences within the territory of this synod.

**S12.01.B18.** The rostered ministers of the conference shall elect from among their members a conference chaplain to a three-year term. Conference chaplains are eligible for reelection.

**S12.01.C18.** The Synod Council shall designate six area subdivisions within the territory of this synod.
Preliminary Proposal for Synod Area Subdivisions

Area Subdivision 1

Area Subdivision 2

Area Subdivision 3

Area Subdivision 4

Area Subdivision 5

Area Subdivision 6