

# ASSEMBLY EXTENDED ANSWER Q&A FACT SHEET



## **When will the synod assembly be held?**

The synod assembly is now scheduled for Friday, September 11, 2020, starting at 1:00 pm, until approximately 6:00 pm; then continuing on Saturday, September 12, from 9:00 am until approximately 4:00 pm.

## **Why were these dates chosen?**

The dates are the best available combination of times that the John S. Knight Center\* would be available on a weekend. The Friday schedule was timed as much as possible to allow those who may have 9/11 commemoration services either that morning or that evening to be able to attend both functions.

*\*The John S. Knight Center will be used as a central broadcast location for a virtual synod assembly.*

## **How will the assembly be held?**

This will be a virtual assembly, with a central point (the John S. Knight Center in Akron) for a small group of people who are needed to produce the assembly – presenters, technical people, various credentials and election committee members, and other support people; plus on the second day, the seven (plus ties) bishop nominees for the third ballot and additional support people.

All other voting members of the assembly will attend through a Zoom meeting.

Visitors and guests will be able to view the assembly via live stream on the synod YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/NEOSynod>.

## Who can serve as a voting member?

The *requirements*\* to be a voting member of the assembly remain the same as for an in-person assembly, subject to provisions in the governing documents. Voting members will need to be ready to use some different ways and methods as they participate.

We do not usually think about the inherent needs or issues that affect the ability of individuals to attend an in-person assembly – getting to and from the Knight Center, mobility issues (even though the Knight Center is ADA accessible), etc. The virtual assembly removes those considerations, but others arise.

### Virtual Meeting Considerations:

Voting members must be able to participate via Zoom, and to vote from a valid email address for security. This means that participants must have access to a unique email address; and to a device which is 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.

#### \*NOTICE OF VOTING MEMBERSHIP

##### VOTING MEMBERS

- *Ministers of Word and Sacrament (Clergy) on the roster of the Northeastern Ohio Synod and ordained ministers from a church body with which a relationship of full communion exists and are under service in a congregation of this synod in accordance with S7.27.A13*
- *Ministers of Word and Service (Deacons) on the roster of the Northeastern Ohio Synod*
- *Synod officers and voting members of synod council*
- *Two lay voting members from each congregation, congregation under development, or synodical authorized worshipping community*
- *One additional lay voting member, for a maximum total of three lay voting members, from each congregation, congregation under development, or synodical authorized worshipping community provided that one such additional member qualifies as a youth (under age 18), young adult (age 18-30), person of color, LGBTQ+, or person whose primary language is other than English.*

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## How is registration for the assembly being done?

Previous **registrations from the spring are void**, and will not be carried forward. All who registered previously **MUST** register anew for the September 11-12, 2020 virtual assembly.

Online registration for the assembly **will open on July 19, 2020 and will close on August 13, 2020**. Because of the need to register specific email addresses to each individual, and to convey various security codes and voting information to individuals, there will be ***NO*** late registration. If an *emergency* substitution of a lay voting member is *necessary*, there will be some ability to do so after the registration deadline; however, there will not be any ability to do so after August 31, 2020.

## How much does the assembly cost?

The base registration fee has been reduced from \$150 to \$75, reflecting changes in cost. The registration fee for retired rostered leaders who are not currently serving a congregation remains at \$10.

If you already paid for the originally scheduled spring assembly:

- If you previously **paid by debit/credit card** a full refund will be processed to your original debit/credit card, and you will need to re-register and pay for the assembly under the new registration process. Unfortunately the online processing system does not allow us to provide partial refunds.
- If you **sent a check** to the synod office for the originally scheduled spring assembly registration, upon re-registration, a check for the excess collection will be mailed to you. If you wish to completely cancel your original registration, and not re-register, please contact the synod office by email at [assembly@neos-elca.org](mailto:assembly@neos-elca.org) and ask for a refund.

## How do we meet the technical participatory requirements?

- This is a process, since it does involve several considerations. **We urge congregations to consider methods of helping their members to meet these issues.** The synod will also have volunteers available to help with these issues, will produce some training videos, and will be conducting some live test sessions to familiarize people with the systems. More information with specifics will be updated when available.
- **As a minimum**, voting members will need to be able to connect to a Zoom meeting during the assembly, to be able to receive and read emails in real time, and to log into a web browser and/or phone app to allow for secure voting.
- We encourage people to attend the assembly from a place where there is solid internet service with good connections. If there is sufficient bandwidth in a particular congregation, perhaps the congregation's voting members could safely congregate at the church for the assembly, to enable watching the live stream together, and to provide some opportunity for discussion during breaks. This also may be a way of sharing or extending available devices to enable voting members to have a better experience.
- There is obviously 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, so that transferring among the various operations is easier.

## What are the required websites/app specifics?

- The entire Assembly will be live streamed and available for viewing on the synod's Website (<https://neos-elca.org/>) and YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/NEOSynod>). This stream is available to anyone, and because it is higher quality than the video provided through Zoom, it is recommended that it be watched by all voting members – **but that is not a requirement.**
- **All voting members must connect to a Zoom meeting** during the assembly. This provides proof of presence in the “room” at the time of a vote. While it is possible to connect to a Zoom meeting via phone instead of app or web browser, this is discouraged. Anyone connecting via phone should remember that limited plans may consume minutes and/or long distance charges.
- Pending approval by the ELCA Office of the Secretary the first ecclesiastical ballot will be conducted using either SurveyMonkey or Turning Technologies.
  - SurveyMonkey: When the ballot is declared, an email will be sent to each voting member with a unique link to log into the SurveyMonkey website and vote, so **all voting members must be able to open their email and a web browser** at this point.
  - Turning Technologies: Voting will need to be done at a website, using a unique security code, or a phone app (Android or iOS). **Voting members will need to be appropriately logged in** at the time the vote is declared open to participate.
- All other voting will take place through either a phone app or website from **Turning Technologies** (the company that has provided the voting machines at previous assemblies.)

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*Please note that all of these voting methods do require registration and disclosure of email address information to third-party vendors. While all those vendors have privacy policies prohibiting use or disclosure of information, data breaches do occur. Individuals who are concerned about this either should not participate as voting members, or should create a “throwaway” email address to use for registration purposes.*

## **How do I get more information and help on these issues?**

There will continue to be additional information sheets developed that will offer more specific details on various subjects. Additionally, there will be some video recordings for advance review, as well as a couple of live Zoom “practice meetings” so that people can get used to the virtual meeting format. There will also be some volunteer helpers available, both in advance via email, and during the assembly via email, phone, and Zoom chat to help resolve problems. Continue to watch email and check the assembly page on the synod website and social media sites for updated information.

## **Other than the fact that the assembly is a virtual meeting, what will be different?**

The answer is both as little as possible, and a great deal. The format obviously requires considerable difference in presentation. A few things include:

- The first (general) ecclesiastical ballot for Bishop will occur Friday, September 11 in the afternoon. There will be a briefer period than usual for withdrawals before the second ballot, which means that Ministers of Word and Sacrament whose names appear on the first ballot and who cannot easily and quickly be contacted may not have an opportunity to withdraw and thus have their names appear on the

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second ballot. The second ballot will also be taken on Friday, so that the seven final nominees (plus ties) will be known for overnight review, and so that these ministers can be at the John S. Knight Center for the presentations and for the Question & Answer sessions that are scheduled before the three final ballots, all of which will occur on Saturday, September 12.

- Nominations from the floor for additions to the Nominating Committee slate will be accepted, but will need to be submitted electronically by the time that the chair asks for them to be made. Since floor nominations can be submitted any time after the assembly is called to order, voting members will be encouraged to do so as soon as possible on Friday afternoon, to avoid delays and allow for efficiency.
- Amendments to the budget will have an early deadline, before the assembly, so that the finance committee can consider them and include recommendations in their report.
- There were no general Resolutions for Assembly action received prior to the original deadline. Only a resolution of an *emergency* nature will be considered for action at the assembly. All other resolutions will be referred to the synod council.
- Requesting the floor during the assembly will require submission of a Zoom chat to a specific address. Requests will be sorted by volunteers in order of receipt, and also by category (priority point; point of order, etc.; for; against; amend, etc.), so that recognitions can be made in appropriate sequence in accordance with *Robert's Rules of Order*.

Some of these changes are subject to assembly votes as special rules of procedure that the assembly adopts as part of its initial administrative opening items. Others are administrative procedures.

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## What are some things that will be omitted?

Much of the general atmosphere and many of the features of an in-person assembly will not occur. A few of these include:

- No workshops, displays, or other breakout sessions.
- No coordination with the (also canceled) Summer NEOS Lutheran Youth Gathering
- The Celebratory Dinner on Friday, September 11, and the 50/40/10 Reception also scheduled for Friday evening, have both been canceled.

## Website / Links / Contact Information / Social Sites #synodhappenings

2020 Synod Assembly Webpage: <https://neos-elca.org/2020-synod-assembly>

Northeastern Ohio Synod Website: <https://neos-elca.org/>

NEOSynod YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/NEOSynod>

Northeastern Ohio Synod, ELCA Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/neoselca/>

NE Ohio Synod Twitter Account: <https://twitter.com/NEOSELCA>

Northeastern Ohio Synod Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/synodhappenings/>

Assembly Email Address: [assembly@neos-ela.org](mailto:assembly@neos-ela.org)

Northeastern Ohio Synod Office Phone Number: 330-929-9022

Assembly Emergency Phone Number: 330-422-3922