



Northeastern Ohio Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

REVISED Call and Notice – Special Conference Meetings

In light of state and federal guidance and requirements against mass gatherings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I hereby provide notice that the Northeastern Ohio Synod conference meetings called for Sunday April 26, 2020 at 2:00pm **are cancelled**. Instead of in-person gatherings, the voting members of the conference gatherings shall provide their recommendations by mail (see below), which must be returned to the Synod office on or before Monday, April 27, 2020. Voting membership will be determined in accordance with the prior Call and Notice without change. A special mailing will be coming from the Synod office in early April, containing background information about the Synod that would have been shared at the in-person conference meetings and ballots to be used for the recommendations.

In place of the mass conference gatherings, the Bishop Election Committee has now set Tuesday, April 28, 2020 at 11:00am at the Synod Office at 1890 Bailey Road, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio as the date and location for all conference meetings. Instead of in-person attendance by all voting members of each conference, a quorum of the Bishop Election Committee, which represents each conference, will appear at the meeting on behalf of his or her conference and will participate in the opening of the sealed envelopes containing ballots that have been received by the Synod Office.

--David Lenz, Northeastern Ohio Synod Secretary

Procedural note:

I note that under †S7.31., “Proxy and absentee voting shall not be permitted in the transaction of any business of the Synod Assembly.” However, our Synod Assembly Parliamentarian, John Sleasman, ruled on March 20, 2020 that if the Bishop Election Committee (a) provided for and approved balloting by mail, (b) declared all seven conference meetings to be officially held at a single time and place, and (c) determined how to meet and count the ballots at least 45 days before the synod assembly as currently scheduled, conducting the ballots by mail would comply with the provisions of the governing documents and Ohio law. The Bishop Election Committee took all of these actions on March 21, 2020. Mr. Sleasman notes:

“It is important to recognize that the ecclesiastical ballots cast at the conference meetings are for the purpose of identifying potential nominees, and are not formal election voting ballots. The governing documents explicitly identify that the names that come forward from the conference meetings are for information, and that the official ballots for the purposes of election are cast at the synod assembly.

This is obviously a technical, but very important, distinction. Since the ballots from the conference level are not official votes that enter into the official acts of the synod, and simply become reference material toward the full ecclesiastical voting process at the assembly, this does give flexibility in the way that the votes can be cast/counted.”