

# A Proposal for Changes to the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Greater Milwaukee Synod

November 2019

## *A Brief History*

Over the past few years, the Synod Council and Bishop's Office have been in conversation about the process of recruiting, nominating, and electing members for both Synod Council and Churchwide Assembly voting members.

At the 2019 GMS Assembly, a statement of "Vision, Mission, Values, and Practices" was adopted, which included the following core value:

***Collaboration.** We believe that, just as God walks with us in our journey of faith, God invites us to walk with and work with each other and with our neighbors in relationships of authentic mutuality and equity. (Ephesians 4:1-16)*

We also adopted that one of our common practices would be:

***Innovation.** We know that the Church and our world are changing, and we need to take risks and explore new ways of being faithful, building relationships, and organizing our life together.*

As we live into these commitments, we are seeking to establish structures that promote collaboration while encouraging creative and innovative responses to our changing contexts.

Conversations including the synod council, cluster deans, and others have considered various proposals for amendments to our organizational structure. Changes to the synod bylaws need to be acted on no later than the November meeting of the Synod Council. **(This is a hard deadline, given the needed timing for Constitutional and bylaw changes and the schedule necessary to elect voting members to the 2022 Churchwide Assembly).**

When the Greater Milwaukee Synod was formed in 1988, the synod adopted the following provisions in its governing documents:

S12.01.A12. There shall be ten mission clusters in this synod which shall be constituted as set forth in Appendix 3, which is incorporated herein by reference.

S12.01.01. Each congregation of this synod shall belong to a mission cluster and shall be represented at meetings of such cluster. A congregation may change its membership from one mission cluster to another upon approval of the Synod Council, provided, however, that the Synod Council shall ensure that the mission clusters remain primarily geographic in nature. In the event of an approved change in a congregation's membership in a mission cluster, the Synod Council is hereby authorized to amend Appendix 3 to reflect such change.

S12.01.02. Each mission cluster shall:

- a. Select its own name.
- b. Prepare a mission statement.
- c. Choose leadership for planning.
- d. Provide regular opportunities for meetings, the exchange of ideas and concerns, and the nurturing of collegiality.
- e. Nominate persons from its cluster according to Appendix 1 & 2 to serve (1) on the Synod Council; and (2) to be a voting member of the Churchwide Assembly.

The establishment of clusters, per the Synod Constitution (S12.01) and other documentation has 4 main objectives/functions.

- The purpose of such groupings shall be to foster interdependent relationships among congregations, institutions, and synodical and churchwide units for mission purposes.
- To join in the work of common mission endeavors.
- Sharing ideas and concerns and mutual collegial support
- Selecting the representation to synodical positions.

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### *Summary of Proposed Changes*

1. The proposal changes the structure from 10 geographic mission clusters to 7 geographic conferences. (The membership of the 7 conferences and schedule for representational rotation will be presented in advance of the February Together in Mission event. These are governed by a continuing resolution of the synod council and will be adopted after the bylaws are changed.)
2. The proposal increases the number of at-large seats for synod council representation from 3 to 6, keeping the total membership of the synod council at 18.
3. Since the current constitution allows for the formation of networks to foster innovation and collaboration, there is not a need to establish new constitutional provisions to enable this work.

The proposed amendments to the governing documents would look as such:

S12.01.A12. There shall be **seven conferences** ~~ten mission clusters~~ in this synod which shall be constituted as set forth in Appendix 3, which is incorporated herein by reference.

S12.01.01. Each congregation of this synod shall belong to a **conference** ~~mission cluster~~ and shall be represented at meetings of such **conference**. A congregation may change its membership from one **conference** to another upon approval of the Synod Council, provided, however, that the Synod Council shall ensure that the **conferences** remain primarily geographic in nature. In the event of an approved change in a congregation's membership in a **conference**, the Synod Council is hereby authorized to amend Appendix 3 to reflect such change.

S12.01.02. ~~Each mission cluster shall:~~

- ~~a.—Select its own name.~~
- ~~b.—Prepare a mission statement.~~
- ~~c.—Choose leadership for planning.~~
- ~~d.—Provide regular opportunities for meetings, the exchange of ideas and concerns, and the nurturing of collegiality.~~

Each conference shall:

- a. Elect a dean, who shall serve a two-year term. Deans may be re-elected once, serving a total of four years. Conference Deans are expected to:
  - 1. Meet regularly with synod leadership.
  - 2. Assist the bishop as needed in providing pastoral care and support to the congregations and rostered leaders of the synod
  - 3. Convene regular opportunities for meetings of rostered ministers and lay leaders for the exchange of ideas and concerns and the nurturing of collegiality.
- b. Nominate persons from its ~~cluster~~ conference according to Appendix 1 & 2 to serve (1) on the Synod Council; and (2) to be a voting member of the Churchwide Assembly.

Other constitutional and bylaw changes would need to be approved in conjunction with these structural changes:

S9.01.01. The Synod Assembly shall elect the synod's representatives to the Churchwide Assembly including those nominated by individual ~~clusters~~ conferences, ~~the synod's representatives to the steering committee of the region,~~ and the members of the Synod Council, including those nominated by individual ~~clusters~~ conferences. The Nominating Committee shall nominate candidates for these positions, except those nominated by individual ~~clusters~~ conferences to positions on the Synod Council or as representatives to the Churchwide Assembly. Except as otherwise provided in the constitution or bylaws of this church or the constitution of this synod or these bylaws, all other representatives, officers, or other persons may be elected by either the Synod Assembly or the Synod Council.

S9.03. There shall be a Nominating Committee consisting of ~~at least seven~~ ~~thirteen~~ members (including one member from each of the ~~mission clusters~~ conferences in the synod) who shall be appointed by the Synod Council to serve for each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly. Additional nominations may be made from the floor for all elections for which nominations are made by the Nominating Committee.

S10.01.01. The Synod Council shall be composed of the four officers of the synod, one youth member and at least one young adult, elected by the Synod Assembly, one member nominated by each of the ~~mission clusters~~ conferences in the synod, and ~~three~~ ~~six~~ at-large members all elected by the Synod Assembly.

S10.01.04. Should a member of the Synod Council nominated by a ~~mission cluster~~ conference die, resign, or be unable to serve, a successor shall be nominated as soon as practicable by such

~~conference mission-cluster~~, and appointed by the Synod Council, to complete the term of such member. Should an at-large member of the Synod Council die, resign, or be unable to serve, the Synod Council may appoint a person to serve until a successor can be elected and assume the position. A successor shall be elected by the next Synod Assembly to complete the term of such member unless such term expires on the August 31 following the successor's election, in which event the successor shall be elected to a term of four years.

S10.06.01. A Synod Council member position shall be declared vacant if the member has three unexcused absences from properly called meetings of the Synod Council, whether the member be ~~rostered ordained~~ or lay, elected from a ~~conference~~ cluster, or at-large.