

**MINUTES**  
**COMMISSION ON HANDBOOK**  
**Internet Conference (Zoom.us)**  
**June 26, 2024**

**32. Opening Prayer and Adoption of Agenda**

With all voting members present except for Heidi Abegg, who called away by other responsibilities, and all advisory members present, Chairman Schurb, noting the commemoration of the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession the day before, opened with prayer from Psalm 119 *Waw* and introduced the agenda, as reflected below, which had been shared by email. The commission adopted the agenda, as follows:

**33. Eligibility for Initial Membership and Qualification for First Call (19-025; Bylaw sections 2.7–8; CCM Op. 22-2977)**

The commission reviewed draft language prepared during the previous triennium but tabled due to then-pending proposals (ultimately embodied in 2023 Res. 7-04B) touching on the related sections. The proposal is to expand existing “graduate” language to clearly include non-degree certification programs and to make clearer the correspondence between Bylaw sections 2.7 and 2.8, especially to clarify the relation of a particular faculty to a given declaration of qualification and recommendation for first call.

Certain bylaws are reorganized to provide a more logical progression of Bylaw sections 2.6–8, the first dealing with admission to the roster; the second, with mechanisms of declaration of qualification and recommendation for first call; and the third, with the qualifications themselves.

The language was updated and corrected by the Secretary to reflect 2023 bylaw changes. After some revision by the commission during this meeting, including to address, at Bylaw 2.7.3 (as renumbered) the question of whether commissioned ministers on a seminary faculty could participate in the qualification and recommendation of deaconesses for first calls, the proposal reads as follows:

**2.6 Individual Membership**

- 2.6.1 “Ministers of the Gospel,” designated by the Synod as “ministers of religion—ordained” (ordained ministers) or “ministers of religion—commissioned” (commissioned ministers), are eligible for membership in the Synod.
- 2.6.1.1 The roster of commissioned ministers shall admit eligible teachers, directors of Christian education, directors of Christian outreach, directors of family life ministry, directors of parish music, deaconesses, parish assistants, and directors of church ministries.
- 2.6.2 Individuals who have been declared qualified for a first call and assigned first calls in accordance with Bylaw sections 2.7–2.9 shall, by the rites of both ordination or commissioning and installation in accordance with Bylaw section 2.10, become members of the Synod.
  - The following bylaw is relocated from subsection 2.7, as it reflects a unique route for admission to the roster:*
- ~~2.7.53~~ A pastor emeritus from another church body, after having completed an approved colloquy program of the Synod, may be placed on the roster of the Synod without call by action of the Council of Presidents on the basis of policies adopted by the Council of Presidents.
  - (a) Such placement shall be acknowledged by a rite of recognition in a worship service preferably of the congregation of the Synod where he holds membership.
  - (b) Such rite is to be authorized by the district president.

- 2.6.34 There is no inherent right to membership in the Synod, and the decision as to qualification for a first call and the assignment of first calls shall be at the sole discretion of the Synod.
- 2.6.45 Transfers of an individual member to or from the roster of a partner church shall be conducted according to the operating agreement established between the Synod and that partner church, and as further implemented in policies of the Council of Presidents. A former member of the Synod who, having transferred to a partner church, applies for re-rostering with the Synod shall, provided the member remained continuously in good standing on the roster of a partner church, and insofar as agreements and policies allow, be handled by transfer and shall not require reinstatement (Bylaw section 2.18).

## **2.7 Eligibility for Individual Membership**

### **Declaration of Qualification and Recommendation for First Call**

- 2.7.1 Prior to the effective date of the first call to service in the church as assigned by the Council of Presidents as the Board of Assignments as provided in Bylaw section 2.9, each candidate shall be declared qualified and recommended for a first call.
- 2.7.2 The authority and responsibility to declare a candidate qualified and recommend a candidate for a first call (and thereby, for initial membership in the Synod) as described in Bylaw section 2.8 shall:
- 2.7.1 ~~—(a) A graduate for a candidate graduating or receiving a certificate by satisfactory completion of an authorized ministry-qualifying program of an educational institution seminary, college, or university of the Synod, must be declared qualified for a first call and recommended by, rest with the faculty of the respective educational institution of the Synod before the effective date of the first call to service in the church, as assigned by the Council of Presidents acting as the Board of Assignments as provided in Bylaw section 2.9.~~
- 2.7.2 ~~—(b) Candidates for a candidate who have has satisfactorily completed an approved colloquy program of the Synod for the ordained or commissioned ministry, must be declared qualified for a first call and be recommended by rest with the appropriate colloquy committee (see Bylaws 3.10.2ff. and 3.10.3ff.) or, subject to the policies of the Colloquy Committee for Commissioned Ministry and within programs for which its respective institution is currently affirmed by the Synod, the faculty of the facilitating educational institution of the Synod authorized to do so by the committee before the effective date of the first call to service in the church as assigned by the Board of Assignments as provided in Bylaw section 2.9.~~
- 2.7.3 ~~Candidates who have satisfactorily completed an approved educational program of the Synod for the ordained or commissioned ministry involving extensive use of distance learning and/or a mentoring system must be declared qualified for a first call and recommended by the faculty of one of the seminaries, colleges, or universities of the Synod before the effective date of the first call to service in the church, as assigned by the Board of Assignments as provided in Bylaw section 2.9.~~
- The following are relocated from subsection 2.8:*
- 2.8.23 ~~It shall be the responsibility of colloquy committees or the faculties of educational institutions of the Synod to declare colloquy candidates qualified for first calls. For purposes of declaring candidates qualified for placement and recommending them for membership in the Synod, the Synod considers a “faculty” to be defined as follows:~~

- (a) Seminaries with regard to candidates for the ordained ministry: all full-time seminary faculty members who are in good standing on the Synod's roster of ordained ministers.
- (b) Colleges and universities with regard to candidates for commissioned ministry: all full-time faculty members who are in good standing as individual members of the Synod or are members in good standing of a member congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.
- 2.87.4 The faculty of a Synod college or university may declare qualified and recommend candidates for first calls only while affirmed by the Concordia University System, and only with regard to programs leading to candidacy for commissioned ministry (Bylaw 2.6.1.1) for which the college or university is specifically and currently affirmed by Concordia University System.
- 2.87.4.1 A graduate of such a program that was affirmed by Concordia University System at the time of matriculation but no longer affirmed or no longer in existence at the time of qualification for a first call may apply to the Colloquy Committee for Commissioned Ministry for examination, any necessary remediation, and certification. The institution offering such a program shall share records with the Colloquy Committee as necessary to assess the candidate's preparation and fitness for commissioned ministry.
- 2.7.45 Graduates of one of the colleges, universities, or seminaries of the Synod who desire to continue their professional studies after they have completed the prescribed ~~undergraduate~~ curriculum, or who for any other valid reason are not ready for first calls to service in the church, shall continue to be eligible for unqualified recommendation for first calls as long as they can be recommended by the faculty of the educational institution of the Synod from which they have graduated. The respective faculty shall annually ascertain through personal interviews with the candidate or through satisfactory testimonials that each candidate so classified is still qualified for recommendation for a first call to serve in the church.

## 2.8 Qualification for First Call

- 2.8.1 Candidates shall be declared qualified for first calls by those with authority and responsibility to do so under Bylaw 2.7.2.
- (a) They are those who before the effective date of the first calls will have satisfactorily completed the prescribed courses of studies and will have received diplomas or certificates from their respective seminaries of the Synod or in Synod-affirmed programs of colleges or universities of the Synod or have fulfilled the requisites of a colloquy or other approved education program of the Synod leading to qualification for ordained or commissioned ministry ~~(Bylaws 2.7.2 and 2.7.3).~~
- (b) In addition, they must have indicated complete dedication to the ministry and evidenced a readiness for service in the church.
- (c) Finally, to be declared qualified and recommended by the faculties or colloquy committees for their specific types of service in the church, the appropriate faculty or colloquy committee must be satisfied that the individual will meet all attendant personal, professional, and ~~theological requirements of those who hold the office of ministry to which the individual aspires.~~
- (d) In addition, an academic year of supervised internship (vicarage) is required of all seminary students before graduation, ordinarily in the second year before graduation.

The commission, having revised the draft to this point, referred it to the Secretary for further revision of Bylaw 2.7.2, so that it should read more smoothly and connect, in the two subcases, the authority and responsibility conferred more closely with those responsible for carrying it out.

**34. Exclusion of All Bylaw Subsection 3.1.4 Representatives from Advisory Delegation (23-001; Const. Art. IX 2–3; Bylaw subsections 3.1.3–4)**

The commission discussed an issue noted in development of 2023 Res. 9-02 [B], namely, whether it makes sense, as is presently the case, for a commissioned minister (for example) on a district board of directors to be excluded from eligibility to be an advisory delegate of the commissioned ministers simply because he or she *could be* an advisory *representative* of the district board). To modify this exclusion would require a constitutional amendment.

The commission discussed this item. Having determined the issue to be not sufficiently weighty to call for a constitutional amendment, the commission declined the action item.

**35. Review of Doctrinal Review Bylaws (23-003; Bylaw section 1.9, subsection 3.9.3; CCM Op. 23-3014, 23-3010, 23-3004, 17-2869; 2023 Overture L9-51)**

The commission discussed a new item touching on clarity and perhaps procedure, arising from CCM Op. 23-3014, 23-3004, and 17-2869. The 2023 convention, via omnibus resolution, referred to the President a late overture (L9-51) from the Board for National Mission, calling upon the President to take up a thorough review of bylaws related to doctrinal review, a prospect raised by the CCM toward the end of its Op. 23-3010. The Secretary, from consultation with the President, understands that the President is not planning himself to prompt a revision and will be pleased for the Commission on Handbook to review this issue and make a recommendation, keeping his office apprised and giving the opportunity for input.

The commission reviewed a memorandum by its chairman, which summarized consultation with chairmen of the Commissions on Doctrinal Review and Theology and Church Relations. Discussed especially were:

- the distinct standards of Bylaws 1.9.2 (e–g) and 3.9.3.2.2 (a) and the scope described in 3.9.3.2.2 (f).
- the category of “study documents and exploratory material” treated at length in CCM Op. 23-3010.
- the lack of clear connection between Bylaw section 1.9’s treatment of initial review and Bylaw subsection 3.9.3’s treatment of appeals. It was suggested that language and vocabulary of the two sections be compared, and that additional cross-references be considered. The possibility was also raised of relocating Bylaws 3.9.3.2.1–2 to Bylaw section 1.9.
- the fact that items treated by agencies with their own responsibility for review can be referred to the Commission on Doctrinal Review on appeal following publication, as clarified in CCM Op. 23-3014.

The item was assigned for further development to the Secretary, to begin with the proposed relocation of Bylaws 3.9.3.2.1–2.

**36. Discussion, Plan for Next Meeting, and Adjournment**

With the commission’s agenda concluded, the meeting was adjourned with the apostolic benediction.

The Office of the Secretary was asked to send a poll as to availability of commission members for another internet conference meeting in the first two weeks of August.

John W. Sias, *Secretary*