

1 **Report of the 2019 Res. 9-17 Committee on Voting Privilege in the LCMS**
2 **Historic and Current Voting Practice**
3 **in the Conventions of the Synod and of the Districts**
4 **with Reference to the Representation of Advisory Members of the Synod**
5 **March 9, 2021**

6 **Introduction**

7 2019 Res. 9-17, “To Study Voting Privilege in the LCMS,” charged “the Commission on Constitutional Matters
8 (CCM), in conjunction with the Council of Presidents (COP), including a number of commissioned ministers
9 chosen by the COP, [to] prepare a report regarding the historic and current voting privileges in the Synod,” to be
10 made available to the Synod at least 18 months prior to the 2022 Synod convention. This resolution bore special
11 reference to the service of commissioned ministers and to the fact that “the current structure of the Synod does
12 not allow for a third category of voting delegates at district and Synod conventions,” which “third category” might
13 be understood to consist either of commissioned ministers specifically or advisory individual members in general.

14 In order to fulfill this assignment, a study group was appointed in part by the CCM and in part by the COP,
15 consisting of: Rev. Dr. George Gude, CCM Chairman; Rev. Dr. John Sias, LCMS Secretary; Rev. Derek Lecakes,
16 Atlantic District President; Rev. Dr. Michael Gibson, Pacific Southwest District President; Rev. Dr. John
17 Wohlrabe, Second Vice-President (Great Lakes Region); Teacher Wendy Morris (Missouri District); Teacher
18 Chris Cody (South Wisconsin District); and Teacher Zachariah Schnare (Southern Illinois District), all but the
19 first two appointed by the COP. The committee met twice, by electronic means, in June 2020 and January 2021.
20 The final draft report was circulated and approved for publication on March 9, 2021, concluding the committee’s
21 assignment.

22 At its first meeting, the committee dealt chiefly with the extensive historical background assembled by Drs. Gude
23 and Sias, this question having been explored repeatedly in conventions reaching back to the very roots of the
24 Synod. At its second meeting, the committee treated in more detail the present role of individual advisory members
25 in the conventions of the Synod and, to this end, invited Rev. Dr. Allan Buss, Northern Illinois District President,
26 to share his district’s unique practice of advisory delegate polling. At this meeting and afterwards, the committee
27 also considered roster and statistical information, provided by Secretary Sias and Dr. Gude, treating the
28 distribution of advisory individual members in the Synod and their representation at conventions, including on
29 their floor committees. Some of that material is reflected here, in order to assess or to assist districts with assessing,
30 in a Synodwide context, how effectively the principle of advisory representation is being realized, both in their
31 districts and at the Synod level.

32 The committee limited itself principally to its explicit assignment—namely, documenting the historic and present
33 voting practice in the conventions of the Synod, as well as the many unadopted proposals, over the years, to change
34 it—but understood its task also to relate to the long-standing, historical *advisory* role afforded commissioned and
35 other advisory, individual members, and to how it is functioning in the conventions of the districts and of the
36 Synod. The committee offers, in that regard, observations for further consideration by the congregations, circuits,
37 conferences, and district conventions of the Synod, with the hope that these will renew appreciation for the
38 prominent role Synod’s polity gives advisory members—both on the part of the individual members who have
39 this opportunity and for the conventions they are intended to advise. Perhaps these observations may also lead to
40 the development of proposals, whether by way of encouragement, standing rule, or convention overture, district
41 or Synod, for improvement in the actual realization and implementation of this role.

42 The Synod and its districts are not able to adjust their voting representation without a convention of the Synod
43 amending its Constitution. This report is intended to be helpful to congregations, circuits, and districts that might
44 be contemplating such a proposal to the Synod convention, so that they might do so cognizant of the significant
45 amount of study these questions have received many times before and the close relation of these issues to
46 fundamental polity of the Synod. It is also intended to assist congregations, circuits, districts, and the Synod in
47 assessing how well the ideal of advisory representation is presently being achieved. Improvements in this area,
48 many details of which are not dictated in the Constitution or Bylaws of the Synod or of the districts, may be much
49 more readily achievable, and may also well serve the Synod and its members, both congregational and individual.

PART I: Franchise in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Principle of franchise in the Synod: the *Pfarrgemeinde* concept

The basic principle of franchise in the Synod at the time of its formation in 1847 involved two essential components. The first essential component was that the Synod consisted of equal congregations or parishes (*Pfarrgemeinden*),¹ no matter their numerical size, and it was these that held the franchise. The second essential component was the maintaining of a “balance of power” in the conventions of the Synod between the clergy and the laity. To accomplish this principle of franchise, the 1847 Constitution of the Synod assigned the franchise to each member *Pfarrgemeinde* (“pastor-congregation” or “parish”) of the Synod, with each *Pfarrgemeinde* to receive two votes, one to be cast by its pastor and the other, by the lay delegate accredited by the parish.²

This arrangement developed during the course of the discussions that led to the founding of the Synod. The initial impetus for the formation of the Synod came from the men Pastor Wilhelm Löhe had sent to the United States to provide spiritual care for its many German immigrants. Löhe had instructed them to join one of the established synods in their new land. They did so but were not satisfied with the theology they found in those synods. In December 1844, Pastors Wilhelm Sihler and Adam Ernst sent a letter to C.F.W. Walther, the pastor of Trinity, St. Louis, asking if it would be possible to form an organized union with the Saxons.

In his January 2, 1845, response, Walther expressed a desire for unity, but at the same time he noted that among the Saxon immigrants there was a great fear of clergy domination.³ A meeting was scheduled in Cleveland in September 1845, to which Walther was invited; his health, however, did not allow him to attend.

The meeting was held September 13–18, 1845, in Cleveland for the purpose of proposing a constitution for a Synod with the doctrine and polity taken from the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions. While a rough draft of a constitution was produced, no copy of it has survived. However, Pastor Wilhelm Sihler published a series of articles following the meeting, in which he laid out his ideas regarding the nature of such a Synod. After showing how it would be impossible to copy the organization of the Church as it was in Europe on the American soil, Sihler states his ideas how such a Synod could be organized:

According to Sihler a synod should not merely be advisory, but it should be a body, or corporation, which would in the name of the Church, i.e., the whole number of the adult and confirmed members, direct, watch over, and administer the Church. The synod should not be simply a ministerium, composed of members of the clergy only, but worthy members of the laity would be elected by their congregations to synodical membership. These laymen, together with the clergymen, would constitute the synod. This synod would then regulate, direct, and administer all matters pertaining to the doctrine, life, worship, and discipline of the Church. To quote Sihler: “All means, therefore, which would in any way preserve and further the Church according to its essence and purpose, the synod, according to its ability, would have to inaugurate energetically and watch over its harmonious and active co-operation.” This conception of a synod and its jurisdiction was radically different from that held by Walther in St. Louis.⁴

¹ The German term used, *Pfarrgemeinde*, is defined in a footnote to the 1847 Constitution as “either one single congregation or the sum of the individual congregations which the pastor serves [*bedient*], as, in Germany, the territory in which he serves is called *Kirchspiel* or *Kirchensprengel*. The pastor may serve 3 or 4 or more congregations, locally separated; they are in relation to him essentially only one congregation.” When the Constitution was translated from the German in 1924, *Pfarrgemeinde* was translated as “congregation or parish” to reference situations where a pastor served either one or more than one congregation. Hereafter “parish” is generally used as shorthand for “congregation-or-parish” or *Pfarrgemeinde*, not to exclude single-congregation parishes.

² At its founding and for about the first 120 years, it was an assumption of the Synod that each *Pfarrgemeinde* (pastor/congregation) had a single pastor who was responsible for its spiritual care (was “in charge of” the congregation). If a congregation had more than one clergyman, one was considered the *Prediger* (we would say “sole or senior” pastor) and the others were *Hilfsprediger* (we would say helper pastors or assistant pastors). In the Trinity Congregation meeting of May 18, 1846, drafters of the LCMS Constitution definitively established the rule that only one pastor per *Pfarrgemeinde* could vote for the congregation, and that others sent were only advisory, under the name of *Stimmgleichheit* (“equality of votes”) (Carl S. Munding, *Government in the Missouri Synod* [St. Louis: CPH, 1947], 178). At Fort Wayne, the rule was established that multiple congregations under one *Pfarrgemeinde* could send only one lay delegate, conserving the *Stimmgleichheit* in another respect (id., 181–83).

³ C.F.W. Walther, Carl S. Meyer ed., *Walther Speaks to the Church: Selected Letters* (St. Louis: CPH, 1973), 15.

⁴ Carl S. Munding, *Government in the Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: CPH, 1947), 175 (note).

1 During much of May 1846 the pastors held a series of meetings in St. Louis at which the voters of Trinity
2 congregation were also involved. By the end of this meeting a complete draft of the constitution was formulated.
3 Sihler and the other eastern pastors had, in their time with Walther and Trinity, St. Louis, been won over to the
4 potential of a fundamentally congregational, yet confessional, polity in which the laity had an equal part.
5 Naysayers of Trinity, St. Louis, still smarting from the Stephan affair, were also convinced that the rights of
6 congregations and of the priesthood of all believers would, under such a polity, be preserved.⁵ The Constitution
7 would be put into its final form at a meeting in Fort Wayne in July 1846 and adopted at the formation of the Synod
8 in Chicago in April 1847.

9 It is important to note that this polity's basic franchise principle, while an *adiaphoron*, was totally consistent with
10 concepts Walther had presented in the Altenburg Theses as he led the Saxon immigrants out of the chaos that
11 followed the debacle with Martin Stephan. The church consists in the community of believers and all ecclesiastical
12 authority resides in the congregation. This was later developed in greater detail in *Kirche und Amt*.⁶ Since it is
13 each congregation that possesses all ecclesiastical authority, each parish possesses an equal vote (the equality of
14 congregational votes is known as "*Stimmengleichheit*"). The office of pastor is a divine institution, and this office
15 is conferred through the congregation as the possessor of all ecclesiastical authority. The pastor is charged to
16 exercise spiritual care of the parish. At the same time the parish is primarily the members, the lay people.
17 Therefore, it was concluded that each parish received two votes, one by its pastor and the other by its lay delegate.

18 *Kirche und Amt* was affirmed in 1851 and reaffirmed in 2001 as the official position of the Synod, the "definitive
19 statement under Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions of the Synod's understanding on the subject of
20 church and ministry" (2001 Res. 7-17A). The *Pfarrgemeinde/Stimmengleichheit* trans-parochial polity of the
21 Synod can be seen to align logically with the Scriptural and dogmatic foundations of the Synod, especially in
22 relation to "Church" Theses VI–VIII and "Ministry" Theses III, V–X. The trans-parochial polity of the Synod
23 also aligns with Walther's further practical development of intra-congregational polity in his 1864 book, *The Right*
24 *Form of a Christian Congregation*, especially with its parts VI and VII.⁷

25 The Synod is conceived as an aid and extension of such congregations, and not of any other constituencies or units
26 of the Church (not individual believers, estates, or vocations). Believers, estates, and vocations relate to one
27 another in their respective congregations. These congregations relate to and work with each other through the
28 Synod. Though other forms of church polity are possible within the freedom the Church enjoys, it would be
29 difficult to conceive of a form flowing more naturally from the doctrine of *Kirche und Amt* than a polity based
30 upon equal representation of parishes by their basic constituent elements: their preachers and the priesthood-of-
31 all-believers.

32 **Individual membership and advisory delegates; nineteenth-century proposals of teacher franchise**

33 While *Pfarrgemeinden* (pastor-congregations) were designated as the only *voting* members, membership in the
34 Synod was not limited to them. The 1847 Constitution of the Synod established three categories of individuals
35 who were designated as advisory members. The first category included pastors not authorized by their
36 congregations to vote;⁸ the second, candidates for the office of pastor; and third, teachers of the parochial schools
37 of congregations of the Synod.

38 In 1854, when the Synod divided into districts, the wording of Chapter III regarding voting did not change and
39 was applicable to both district and Synod conventions. When delegate conventions for the Synod were begun in
40 1872, the Synod again did not change this wording. The practice for conventions of the Synod would simply

⁵ Idem, 178–79.

⁶ C.F.W. Walther, *Church and Ministry: The Voice of Our Church on the Question of Church and Office*, St. Louis: CPH, 2012.

⁷ C.F.W. Walther, *The Right Form of a Christian Congregation*, ed. J.T. Mueller, St. Louis: CPH, 2005 (published with *The True Visible Church*).

⁸ The men in this category primarily consisted of men who were pastors of congregations that had not yet joined the Synod. However, it did include others as well, such as professors. The 1847 convention of the Synod lists ten Advisory Members in attendance. Nine of these were pastors of congregations which were not members of the Synod. The other individual is described as assisting with the instruction at the Fort Wayne Institution.

1 henceforth be that each pair of delegates, one a pastor of a *Pfarrgemeinde* and the other a layman, now came from
2 a group of congregations.

3 Apparently some congregations were interested in their parochial school teachers or instructors at the institutions
4 of the Synod being allowed to vote in place of a lay delegate at district conventions. The question came to the
5 1874 Synod convention, and it was resolved that no district may seat these individuals as a lay delegate at one of
6 its conventions.⁹ To do this would have violated the principle of equality between the clergy and the laity.

7 The matter of allowing teachers (today, commissioned ministers) to vote was discussed at the 1887 convention.
8 The proposal was to allow teachers to vote in the election of officers, but not in financial matters. The convention
9 rejected the proposal noting that the proposal would drastically change the representative principle on which the
10 Synod had been founded. In addition, it observed that it would be too difficult to distinguish what was a financial
11 matter and what the impact might be on a vote that was neither an election of officers nor a financial matter.¹⁰

12 The matter was also a topic of discussion at the 1893 convention of the Synod, though the report of the committee
13 assigned to consider the matter and bring proposals was essentially the same as in 1887. The committee stated
14 that the question of allowing teachers (today, commissioned ministers) to vote could not be separated from a
15 fundamental principle of the structure of the Synod. From the beginning there was a distinction between voting
16 and advisory members, and the reason for this distinction was that the Synod was constituted by equal
17 congregations which had freely joined together for ecclesiastical purposes. It was these member congregations
18 alone which had the right to vote, and the committee stated that these principles are best be carried out when each
19 parish sends two delegates: one, the pastor, and the other a properly accredited lay delegate.¹¹

20 To grant franchise even in a restricted sense, limiting it to the election of officers, it was determined, would violate
21 this fundamental principle. If this were enacted the result would be that some congregations would have restricted
22 voting powers while others would have too much power. In addition, were the right of voting to be granted to
23 teachers, it could equally be argued that it should be given to other advisory members as well. In such a case this
24 group of advisory members could ultimately be the determining factor in any election, contradicting what might
25 have been the will of the congregations. Upon these considerations, the Synod adopted a resolution, in view of
26 the reasons presented, to retain the present well-established order and not grant the vote to the teachers.¹²

27 **Twentieth-century proposals of teacher and other advisory franchise**

28 Following the 1893 convention the topic of teachers voting does not occur again in the *Proceedings* of the Synod
29 until 1962. In response to a memorial requesting that the right of franchise by members of the Synod be
30 reconsidered, the Synod declared simply that the Synod was organized on a congregational basis with each
31 congregation or parish limited to two votes, namely its pastor and a layperson, and that giving the right to vote to
32 advisory members of the Synod would alter the representative structure of the Synod. It therefore resolved to
33 decline the memorial.¹³

34 Several overtures were submitted to the 1969 convention of the Synod regarding the right of franchise, and the
35 floor committee was of the opinion that it did not have sufficient time to thoroughly consider all of the
36 implications, so it presented a resolution to the Synod calling for the President of the Synod to appoint a special
37 committee to consider the question and present a report to the following convention. This resolution was
38 adopted.¹⁴

39 Regarding the franchise of teachers, the Committee on Organization that had been appointed reported to the 1971
40 convention of the Synod. It pointed out that the topic had frequently been raised before in the Synod, and that the
41 Synod had always consistently answered, maintaining the principle that the vote belonged only to the
42 congregations with each congregation or parish having two votes, one its pastor and the other a layman, in order

⁹ 1874 *Proceedings*, 79.

¹⁰ 1887 *Proceedings*, 85.

¹¹ 1893 *Proceedings*, 124.

¹² 1893 *Proceedings*, 125.

¹³ 1962 *Proceedings*, 129.

¹⁴ 1969 *Proceedings*, 117–18.

1 to maintain a balance between clergy and laity. The report continued by referencing in detail the action of the
2 1893 convention of the Synod. The report concluded that no changes should be made in the right to vote at
3 conventions.¹⁵ Resolution 5-09, however, which indicated that the Committee on Organization appointed
4 following the 1969 convention had not been able to complete all of the tasks assigned to it, placed the remainder
5 of the items into the hands of a new Committee on Organization.¹⁶

6 The 1973 report of this Committee on Organization included several topics pertaining to the organization of
7 conventions of the Synod. Pertaining to voting rights, the topics covered by their report did not specifically deal
8 with teachers voting at conventions, but with other aspects. The questions considered were a more equitable
9 division of delegates among districts, allowing large congregations more than one lay vote, giving a second and
10 third lay vote to the other congregations of a dual parish, and allowing advisory pastors and campus pastors, too,
11 to vote. The committee rejected all as incompatible with the essential principles of voting rights in the
12 Constitution: that the Synod consists of equal congregations or parishes, no matter the size, which possess the
13 franchise, and that there be a balance of lay and clergy vote.¹⁷ Two overtures were also submitted calling for an
14 expansion of voting rights. In response the floor committee submitted two resolutions to the Synod stating that
15 the current practice be retained and that the current practice be clarified. These were placed in an omnibus
16 resolution referring them to the Board of Directors of the Synod.¹⁸

17 A task force had been established by the 1975 Anaheim convention which was to study and propose revisions to
18 the Constitution, Bylaws, and organization of the Synod. Several overtures to change the franchise within the
19 Synod were submitted to the 1977 convention of the Synod. Two new issues were added to the charge given to
20 the task force formed in 1975: one was to consider the way delegates were elected, and the other was to consider
21 allowing advisory delegates to vote, with a proportional increase in the lay votes.¹⁹

22 The task force in 1979 proposed significant wording changes to several articles of the Constitution of the Synod,
23 and in addition proposed changes to the eligibility of the delegates who would cast the two votes of the
24 congregation or parish. One vote was to be cast by a pastor or teacher who is in full time office in the congregation,
25 and the other by a duly elected lay delegate of the congregation.²⁰ A congregation also presented an overture
26 requesting that teachers be given a vote. The convention responded by simply adopting a resolution to retain the
27 Constitution in its present form, and to defer allowing teachers to vote.²¹

28 At the 1981 convention the President of the Synod in his address to the convention recommended a change to
29 allow teachers to vote.²² Resolution 2-14 proposed that the delegates of an electoral circuit be a pastor and anyone
30 else from a congregation of that circuit. Preferably it should be a layman, but any teacher or ordained minister
31 who was not the pastor of one of the congregations would also be eligible. After lengthy discussion this was
32 referred to a committee to be appointed by the President of the Synod for a report to the 1983 Synod convention.²³

33 In its report to the 1983 convention, the task force formed by the 1981 convention gave a report detailing the
34 length of its research. It identified the various possibilities that have been suggested and discussed the advantages
35 and disadvantages of each. In the end it concluded that the disadvantages of any of the suggested ways to change
36 the exercise of the franchise in the Synod outweighed what would be gained by such a change. It termed the
37 current exercise of franchise a long-established and well-working procedure.²⁴ The floor committee's Resolution

¹⁵ 1971 *Convention Workbook*, 218.

¹⁶ 1971 *Proceedings*, 155.

¹⁷ 1973 *Convention Workbook*, 208–9.

¹⁸ 1973 *Proceedings*, 168–69.

¹⁹ 1977 *Proceedings*, 166.

²⁰ 1979 *Convention Workbook*, 59–63.

²¹ 1979 *Proceedings*, 111, 137.

²² 1981 *Proceedings*, 64.

²³ 1981 *Proceedings*, 141.

²⁴ 1983 *Convention Workbook*, 213–15.

1 5-23 resolved that no change be made in the Constitution or Bylaws pertaining to the franchise. However, no
2 action was taken, and it was apparently not brought to the floor of the convention.²⁵

3 A congregation submitted an overture to the 1995 convention of the Synod calling for all ordained and
4 commissioned ministers to be eligible to vote.²⁶ The convention addressed this by placing it in its “Omnibus B
5 Resolution,” declining to act on it and referencing the past action of the Synod, specifically that of 1983.²⁷

6 **Twenty-first century proposals of commissioned minister franchise**

7 2001 Res. 8-10 referred the matter of equitable representation at conventions of the Synod to the Commission on
8 Structure. While the commission was directed to look at various aspects of representation, one of these was the
9 inability of commissioned ministers to vote. The overture presented by the Commission on Structure, after noting
10 that any change allowing the commissioned ministers to vote would change the basic franchise principles of the
11 Synod, called for the elimination of delegate conventions. Instead of delegate conventions, each congregation of
12 the Synod would send two delegates. One was to be a rostered member of the Synod, and the other was to be a
13 lay person.²⁸ The floor committee essentially ignored the suggestion of the Commission on Structure, instead
14 bringing a resolution proposing a Blue-Ribbon Committee be formed to study the structure of conventions,
15 including whether to allow commissioned ministers to vote. This resolution was declined by the convention.²⁹

16 Resolution 8-04A, developed by the floor committee assigned to the material from the Blue Ribbon Task Force
17 on Structure and Governance, would have essentially allowed congregations to send whomever they saw fit as
18 their voting delegates at district conventions.³⁰ Resolution 8-04A was not presented to the convention for action.

19 The 2016 convention of the Synod amended the Constitution, eliminating the category of assistant pastors from
20 the list of “advisory members *only*” in the Constitution.³¹ The effect of this change was that any pastor who is
21 called by the congregation, full time or part time, is eligible to cast the pastoral vote of a congregation. In addition,
22 an overture was submitted calling for a discussion, culminating with action by the 2019 convention of the Synod
23 to allow the franchise of commissioned ministers at future district and Synod conventions. This was placed in the
24 convention’s Omnibus B, assigning the topic to the President of the Synod and the CCM.³²

25 Several overtures related to this question were submitted to the 2019 convention. The result was the adoption of
26 Resolution 9-17. This called for the formation of this committee by the Commission on Constitutional Matters
27 and the Council of Presidents, which was to study the current and historic voting practices and prepare a report
28 prior to the 2022 convention.³³ This report is submitted in fulfillment of this resolution’s assignment.

29 **Conclusions to Part I**

30 The basic principle of the polity on which the franchise within the Synod was established is that the Synod consists
31 of an organization of equal congregations (*Pfarrgemeinden*), which are the possessors of all ecclesiastical power,
32 and the franchise belongs to these equal congregations or parishes (*Pfarrgemeinden*). To maintain the balance in
33 authority in the Synod between the pastor, resident in a divinely instituted office, and the laity, who make up the
34 substance of the church in each place, the priesthood of all believers, each of these congregations or parishes
35 (*Pfarrgemeinde*) received two votes. One was given to the pastor of the congregation and the other the lay delegate
36 of the congregation. While our particular mechanisms of church polity are *adiaphora*, neither commanded nor
37 forbidden by the Scriptures, the *Pfarrgemeinde* polity does reflect the fact that the church is where the marks of

²⁵ 1983 *Proceedings*, 190.

²⁶ 1995 *Convention Workbook*, 23–31.

²⁷ 1995 *Proceedings*, 160.

²⁸ 2004 *Convention Workbook*, 264–65.

²⁹ 2004 *Proceedings*, 157–58.

³⁰ 2010 *Today’s Business* (Sunday), 2:379–81.

³¹ 2016 *Proceedings*, 202–3.

³² 2016 *Proceedings*, 269.

³³ 2019 *Proceedings*, 201.

1 the church are: Word and Sacrament. There may be other aspects of the church’s work, but the center is the
2 congregation, and the Synod is “for and on behalf of” the congregation (Bylaw 1.1.1).

3 Essentially all proposals to broaden the franchise to include teachers (commissioned ministers) have floundered
4 because they would have negated this basic principle, which is consistent with our understanding of Church and
5 Office. Unless and until it can be demonstrated that this basic principle is inadequate or unworkable in terms of
6 enabling the Synod to function, or some other form of organization is proposed that can be demonstrated to enable
7 the Synod to function better, it is far better to leave this basic principle of franchise intact.

8 At the same time, there may be room for improvement in how this franchise is carried out. The committee has
9 heard and acknowledges a significant feeling of “disenfranchisement” among a very significant part of the
10 individual roster of the Synod, as expressed in some emotional remarks at the 2019 Synod convention. Is the
11 advice of the advisories being welcomed and given full consideration, by those who do exercise the franchise?
12 Are their voices afforded opportunities and consideration commensurate with the importance of the auxiliary
13 offices they hold and with the immense value to the church of the servants holding them?

14 In the *Pfarrgemeinde* polity, the votes belong to the congregation and are cast, in one part by the preachers and in
15 the other by the hearers, as an act not of power but of service. The ordained and the laity are not represented as
16 two voting blocs, but the voting power of each congregation (or group of congregations) is exercised, in one part,
17 by the one responsible for the total office of the ministry and in the other part by one representing the laity, for
18 and on behalf of whom the ministry is carried out in their place. Voting in the church is not to be understood as
19 the exercise of individual or class power, over against that of others, but an exercise of care for the whole, that
20 common goods may be for the common benefit (1 Cor 12:4–31; Const. Preamble).

21 The voice of advisories—the scope of which category goes far beyond simply teachers or commissioned
22 ministers—is intended to inform such a vote, to be heard, carefully considered, and taken into account at every
23 level, with those who exercise the vote on behalf of the member congregations as fully informed of the needs and
24 insights of the whole church, including its auxiliary offices and candidates for and emeriti of ordained and
25 commissioned ministry. As with many aspects of Synod’s polity, there is probably a significant opportunity for
26 the broad re-engagement of Synod’s member congregations and their delegates in this listening and reflecting
27 process—and, as we shall see, for the broad re-engagement of Synod’s advisory members, as well.

28 **PART II: Realization of the Synod’s Concept of Advisory Member Input**

29 As noted in the first part of this report, the Synod has from its inception welcomed the participation of advisory
30 individual members, originally including those pastors who had joined the Synod but were not voting
31 representatives of member congregations, candidates for the ministry, and teachers. These came to include, as the
32 various other categories of commissioned ministry developed over time, all members in these categories, as well.

33 **Taking stock of the individual (advisory) membership of the Synod**

34 In considering the roles of advisory members of the Synod³⁴ in relation to district and Synod conventions, it is
35 instructive to consider how many there are and how widely they are distributed in the Synod. The table below
36 shows the number of congregational voting delegates (pastor and lay) and the number of individual advisory
37 delegates of the various types in each district. Three columns provide ratios at the far right: the ratio of individual
38 advisory to voting delegates, as well as the ratios of all commissioned to all advisory delegates, both for all
39 advisories and for all *actively serving* advisories.

40 Taking all district conventions collectively, there are 1.77 potential individual advisory delegates for each voting
41 delegate in the Synod, 70% of which advisories are commissioned ministers (and of the advisory ministers actively
42 in service, commissioned ministers constitute 82%). Note, however, that these ratios vary widely from district to

³⁴ That is, individual members of the Synod who are not the voting pastoral delegate of a parish/circuit. No individual member possesses a vote in his own right. One pastor of each parish/circuit casts one of the parish/circuit’s two votes. At the district level, all individual members of the Synod, all ordained and commissioned ministers, active, candidate, and emeritus, are intended to attend the district convention apart from a valid excuse (Bylaw 4.2.3). At the Synod level, such individual members not eligible to be voting pastoral delegates and not eligible to be selected as advisory representatives (Bylaws 3.1.4–3.1.4.6) are represented at the Synod convention by advisory delegates, selected on a proportional basis (one per sixty) from each district (Bylaws 3.1.3–3.1.3.1).

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1 district. South Wisconsin District has 3.12 potential advisory delegates per voting delegate, 80% of which are
 2 commissioned; North Dakota has 0.57 and only 53% of these are commissioned. In considering proposals for
 3 changes to how commissioned ministers interact with their district conventions, it will be important to take this
 4 degree of variation into account. In districts with very large numbers of advisory ministers and very low advisory
 5 member attendance at present, it has been suggested that a scheme for designating certain specific representatives
 6 to attend on a proportional basis (like that used for the Synod convention, Bylaw 3.1.3.1) may be preferable to the
 7 current arrangement, but this may not be necessary or desirable in many districts with fewer advisories and
 8 relatively higher participation rates. Circuits, too, are not likely a good “unit” for commissioned representation,
 9 given the very uneven distribution of commissioned ministers across the circuits of the Synod.

10 While district convention advisory delegate attendance rates were not readily available to the committee, the
 11 following table will provide each district a means of evaluating the rate of attendance of its advisory members,
 12 active, candidate, and emeritus, commissioned and otherwise, at its conventions. It is suspected to be the case that
 13 at least in districts with many potential advisories, relatively few regularly attend. While there may be reasons for
 14 this, Synod Bylaws do expect the participation, apart from a valid excuse, of all advisory members of the districts
 15 in their district conventions (Bylaw 4.2.3). If the advisories—especially those active in ministry, principally in the
 16 district’s schools—are not in attendance, why not? What can be done to engage the teachers and other
 17 commissioned ministers in what is hoped and intended to be a time of vital importance for life together in Word,
 18 confession, and mission (Bylaw 4.2.1)?

Estimated District Convention Delegations as of January 2021
 Sorted by ratio of individual advisory delegates to voting delegates

District	Parishes	Congregational Delegates			Individual Advisory Delegates						TOTAL	Indiv. Advisory / Vot. Del.	Comm. frac. of Adv. Del.	
		Pastor	Lay	Adv.* Lay	Active**	Ordnained Candidate	Emeritus	Active	Candidate	Emeritus			Total	Active
TOTAL	5280	4455	5280	542	1458	374	3333	6474	1859	3773	17271	1.77	0.70	0.82
SW	185	168	185	21	72	9	141	555	84	241	1102	3.12	0.80	0.89
NI	198	166	198	3	72	10	106	471	160	280	1099	3.02	0.83	0.87
MO	264	227	264	25	199	19	207	575	95	344	1439	2.93	0.70	0.74
IN	221	193	221	6	109	20	187	481	111	286	1194	2.88	0.74	0.82
PSW	265	223	265	5	92	32	204	568	162	277	1335	2.74	0.75	0.86
TX	324	272	324	19	146	30	217	647	104	222	1366	2.29	0.71	0.82
MI	336	288	336	16	102	19	213	549	76	427	1386	2.22	0.76	0.84
NEB	194	165	194	43	56	18	95	301	112	192	774	2.16	0.78	0.84
MNS	212	191	212	27	60	20	148	317	96	199	840	2.08	0.73	0.84
SI	82	70	82	12	17	4	30	145	31	80	307	2.02	0.83	0.90
RM	159	131	159	13	35	16	94	189	115	100	549	1.89	0.74	0.84
FG	185	161	185	0	43	14	195	162	110	118	642	1.86	0.61	0.79
CI	137	109	137	13	15	8	63	154	34	99	373	1.52	0.77	0.91
CNH	163	128	163	10	36	17	106	141	40	72	412	1.42	0.61	0.80
NW	169	137	169	45	30	9	102	188	32	70	431	1.41	0.67	0.86
NOW	248	206	248	8	22	19	185	161	87	142	616	1.36	0.63	0.88
SE	206	168	206	3	41	29	167	128	45	88	498	1.33	0.52	0.76
OH	149	126	149	7	28	10	84	115	32	77	346	1.26	0.65	0.80
KS	140	112	140	19	27	4	70	77	61	52	291	1.15	0.65	0.74
AT	92	62	92	4	35	5	34	56	20	25	175	1.14	0.58	0.62
EN	158	136	158	5	40	6	87	64	34	82	313	1.06	0.58	0.62
MDS	116	99	116	6	33	5	69	52	19	38	216	1.00	0.50	0.61
SD	68	59	68	38	16	5	46	27	14	19	127	1.00	0.47	0.63
IE	96	89	96	19	13	3	39	64	19	40	178	0.96	0.69	0.83
SELC	51	41	51	2	20	4	23	25	7	8	87	0.95	0.46	0.56
EA	107	84	107	16	13	6	63	40	20	27	169	0.88	0.51	0.75
OK	77	62	77	2	5	4	30	45	18	14	116	0.83	0.66	0.90
SO	137	109	137	14	15	4	74	45	21	45	204	0.83	0.54	0.75
MT	47	42	47	21	8	3	21	19	6	14	71	0.80	0.55	0.70
NE	62	53	62	5	1	3	42	8	17	19	90	0.78	0.49	0.89
IW	136	122	136	30	21	4	54	41	23	30	173	0.67	0.54	0.66
WY	45	43	45	15	9	1	26	8	9	6	59	0.67	0.39	0.47
MNN	158	131	158	37	8	5	81	39	23	31	187	0.65	0.50	0.83
NJ	45	37	45	1	5	8	20	3	10	7	53	0.65	0.38	0.38
ND	48	45	48	32	14	1	10	14	12	2	53	0.57	0.53	0.50

* congregations of a multi-congregation parish other than the one supplying the lay voting delegate may elect and depute an advisory lay delegate.

21
22

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1 ** includes parish pastors in multi-pastor parishes other than the voting pastor and ordained in extra-parochial service.

2 For total number of active ordained, add the "Voting Pastor" column to the left.

3 It was also noted in the committee's discussions that approximately 28% of teachers in Synod schools are presently
4 rostered; including emeriti, rostered teachers comprise approximately 49% of teachers related to the schools. The
5 majority of teachers are lay (i.e., not commissioned) and therefore have the opportunity (if members of Synod
6 member congregations) to serve as delegates, which commissioned teachers do not—part of the conundrum of
7 commissioned teachers' "advisory-only" status.

8 **Parish and circuit**

9 Constitutionally, the lay and pastoral delegates together represent each parish (*Pfarrgemeinde*) and its total
10 ministry in a manner that reflects the connection of Synod's polity with the Synod's doctrines and principles of
11 Church and Ministry. A school or other parish ministry involving commissioned workers is an extension of that
12 congregation's ministry. The existing parish voting delegates should be representing the interests of the school
13 and the school's workers. How often do the delegates meet, before and after district conventions, with those
14 represented, to discuss issues in ministry in general and issues before the convention in particular? At least for
15 district conventions, where representation is on a direct parish basis, that ought to be the case.

16 The voting representatives of a parish might well be expected to represent the needs of their commissioned
17 workers at the convention; at the same time, commissioned workers may be called by non-parish entities (of
18 current commissioned minister assignments, 30% of those for teachers, 40% for deaconesses, 11% for directors of
19 Christian education, and 14% for other commissioned are with calling entities other than a congregation or
20 congregationally-governed school). This is not to mention the diminished and further diminishing proportion of
21 Synod-related teaching positions filled by installed, commissioned ministers—another issue entirely.

22 Beyond the parish, commissioned ministers don't have frequent circuit conferences ("winkels"), as pastors do,
23 though they do, like their ordained brothers, have less frequent official district or sectional conferences (Bylaws
24 4.8.1–2) which are able to adopt and submit overtures to district and Synod conventions (Bylaw 4.8.3). Circuit
25 forums can allow for additional advisory participation (Bylaw 5.3.2 [a]). In meetings related to representation of
26 the circuit at the Synod convention, especially those at which the circuit interact—either before or after the
27 convention—with representation of member congregations or with the congregations themselves (Bylaw 3.1.2.2
28 [d]), as infrequent as such meetings seem to be, care can be taken that individual advisory members have an
29 opportunity to participate, or that the voting forum representatives of the congregation take into consideration and
30 represent their needs and insights.

31 **Floor committees (district and Synod conventions)**

32 Advisory members appointed to floor committees at either the district or the Synod level have voice *and vote* and
33 serve in a capacity where more thoughtfully substantive change can be made, typically, than on the convention
34 floor. This is probably one of the most significant opportunities, besides having a voice on the floor, to allow
35 advisory members very significant potential impact on the convention process.

36 Dr. Gude prepared a report on bylaws governing advisory participation in Synod convention floor committees and
37 statistics on that participation. From 1924 on, lay persons were required to be appointed to floor committees; from
38 1969 on, teachers and then, from 1986, commissioned ministers were also to be included on all committees. A
39 general revision of bylaws in 1981 made explicit the advisories' right to vote when serving on floor committees
40 in the district. At the same time, it also reduced by half, from one-in-thirty to one-in-sixty, the ratio of advisory
41 representation at the Synod convention.

42 Each convention since 1924 had some teachers on some floor committees, sometimes apparently depending on
43 topics treated; since 1969, teachers and then commissioned members have been required on all floor committees.

44 In the early conventions, the number of committees was significantly larger and some committees were very large.
45 There was a predominance of pastors and district presidents. There were also a large number of faculty from the
46 educational institutions of the Synod and quite a high percentage of these were on floor committees. In the later
47 years, faculty of the institutions of the Synod were not included on floor committees with one or two possible
48 exceptions. In the early years a fairly high percentage of the teachers who were delegates to the convention would

1 up also serving on the floor committees. There were also many districts that did not send teacher delegates to the
2 Synod convention, or not as many as they were allowed.

3 The total number of advisory teacher and advisory pastor delegates was fairly consistent throughout the
4 conventions studied. In the early years of the Synod, the majority of the advisory pastor delegates would have
5 been pastors who were members of the Synod, serving independent congregations. In the period reviewed this
6 would not have been the case. Prior to the 1970s, the majority of advisory pastors would have been assistant
7 pastors with some emeritus pastors. From the 1980s forward, the majority would have probably been emeritus or
8 with *candidatus reverendi ministerii* (CRM) or candidate status.

9 The number of voting delegates attending conventions rose for most of the period but recently has declined. The
10 number of Floor Committees also declined in the later period considered, as did the number of people on the
11 various committees. Given that the number of district presidents and vice-presidents of the Synod has remained
12 constant, and the committees have grown smaller more recently, there has come to be a higher percentage of
13 Synod and or district officials on the floor committees. Compounding this effect, some of the advisory delegates
14 (commissioned and ordained) are also executives of the districts or officers of the district representing the various
15 district boards of directors. (It is also apparent that the percentage of lay delegates, in relation to the total number
16 of lay delegates on the Floor Committees has decreased. In 1983 there were 87 rostered church workers and 59
17 laity on Floor Committees. In 2016 there were 129 rostered church workers and 44 laity.)

18 The committee noted that the full and active involvement of advisory delegates in the floor committees is an
19 already-available measure that should be emphasized. In a day of fast-paced conventions with relatively little
20 substantive debate, floor committees are where the “deep work” happens—and here, if they are included in the
21 composition of the committees, advisory delegates have both voice and vote. (Convention time also needs to be
22 allotted to issues of primary relevance to the work of commissioned ministers; one committee member noted
23 extensive work on 2019 Floor Committee 12, dealing with important matters for schools and families, that seemed
24 to receive only “short shrift” at the end of the convention.)

25 **District convention**

26 Time and expense should be allowed for significant advisory delegate input at the conventions, for a sense of true
27 inclusion and valued voice. Their input is constitutional and important. Nonetheless, in many districts, their
28 attendance is low. Some district conventions align poorly with school year events or occur on a weekend during
29 the school year when time away is especially valued. In other cases, the value or purpose of attendance may be
30 questioned, or the cost of attendance prove an obstacle. Anecdotally, participation often tends to be by
31 commissioned ministers that are personally interested in Synod or district affairs, and not to be a priority or
32 practical possibility for most potential advisory delegates.

33 A district doesn't typically cover the attendance cost of advisories, which may vary greatly depending on the
34 geography of district and setting of the convention. While a congregation or other entity served might reasonably
35 be expected to help bear attendance costs for those individual members (including advisories) actively serving it,
36 such support does not seem generally to be provided for the bulk of active commissioned ministers, and schedules
37 may not even be adjusted to accommodate their convention attendance. Moreover, many advisories are not
38 presently serving in an installed position. It was suggested that financial support of advisory attendance could
39 make a significant difference in their attendance rate.

40 President Allan Buss shared with the committee a practice of the Northern Illinois District, started some 18–20
41 years ago, of having an “advisory poll” prior to the vote of voting delegates on key convention business. Originally
42 advisory members attending the convention received green and red cards to display to the body prior to significant
43 non-election votes. Today, those advisories (typically 30–35 wishing to participate) register in advance and the
44 district provides them with polling devices for this purpose. The advisory delegates who register and receive
45 devices are polled and the result displayed prior to assembly votes on motions to close debate, on resolutions, or
46 on substantial amendments thereto. There is some cost to the district of the additional voting devices, but very
47 little impact on convention pace. The advisory delegates participating are primarily commissioned ministers, active
48 and emeritus, though some ordained emeriti may also participate. The practice is thought to have increased
49 somewhat the participation of commissioned ministers in the convention. With approximately 180–200 voting
50 delegates attending, “somewhat more than 30” commissioned register and participate (not by way of formal

1 representation, but those who choose to do so) in the advisory poll. Buss noted that this “creates good will with
2 advisories and a more formal opportunity to share opinions.”

3 It was noted that Northern Illinois District, with 198 active parishes, each representable by a pastor and a lay
4 delegate (c. 364 voting delegates, accounting for pastoral vacancies), presently has 354 ordained rostered (238
5 active, 21 of which are SMP; 10 candidates; and 106 emeritus) and 911 commissioned rostered (471 active, 160
6 candidate, and 280 emeritus). This makes for a theoretical total of 198 lay delegates, up to 198 ordained ministers
7 voting on behalf of parishes and, theoretically, 1,065 advisory ordained and commissioned delegates.
8 If 30–35 typically register for and attend the district convention as active participants, this indicates by how
9 much—at least in some places—reality falls short of the ideal of Bylaw 4.2.3, that “all...shall, unless they present
10 a valid excuse, serve as advisory delegates” and—at least in a larger district—how impractical that ideal might
11 prove if achieved. Northern Illinois happens to be the district with the highest ratio of commissioned to
12 ordained ministers (2.57:1, compared to a Synod-level statistic of 1.26:1) and proportion of individual members
13 that are advisory delegates (81%, Synod: 72%).

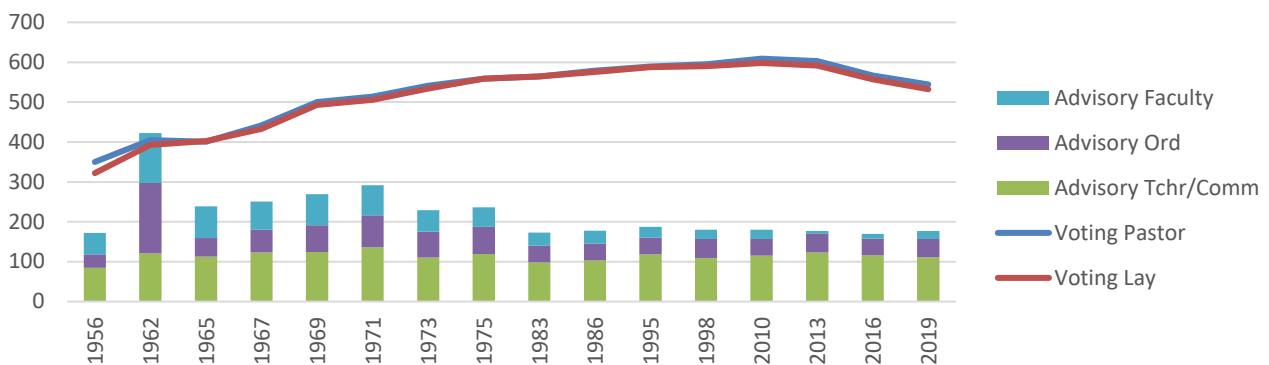
14 Granting each advisory member a voice allows, theoretically, an equal opportunity to be heard, but only so many
15 get to speak or are inclined to do so, especially at a national convention. A displayed, pre-vote advisory poll may
16 offer a broader opportunity for input. There is a feeling that commissioned ministers (and other advisories) have
17 been “left behind,” especially in an age of little in-depth debate and rapid machine voting. In Northern Illinois
18 District, the advisory poll has given those advisories inclined to participate some form of tangible input.

19 **Synod convention**

20 The committee discussed the participation of the advisory delegates in conventions of the Synod. Dr. Gude’s
21 historical survey also examined their numbers between 1956 and 2019, which have, apart from a couple of
22 exceptional years, remained remarkably stable throughout the period, though the number of rostered Synod
23 educational institution faculty has declined significantly. It is noted that the roster of commissioned ministers has
24 expanded over time, from male teachers only to include women (allowed to be called, 1965; allowed to be on
25 roster of Synod, 1973; first listed on roster, c. 1975; included by rule, even if still contracted by member
26 congregation, 1981) and other categories of commissioned ministry besides *teacher*. Before 1981, they were
27 represented at a one-to-thirty ratio; after, by a one-to-sixty ratio. In 1981, 149 teachers attended the Synod
28 convention as advisory delegates; in 1983, 98 did so (a reduction by one third, not one half, indicating that not all
29 districts were making full use of the one-in-thirty ratio before 1983); today 110–120 commissioned ministers
30 attend as advisory delegates, of which (in 2019) 78% were active (87% of those, teachers), 7% were candidates,
31 and 16% were emeritus.

32 The chart below shows, for Synod conventions between 1956 and 2019, the number of advisory delegates,
33 commissioned and ordained (in modern terms), and educational institution representatives (three stacked bars)
34 relative to the number of pastoral and lay voting delegates (two lines).

Synod Convention Delegate and Faculty Representative Attendance

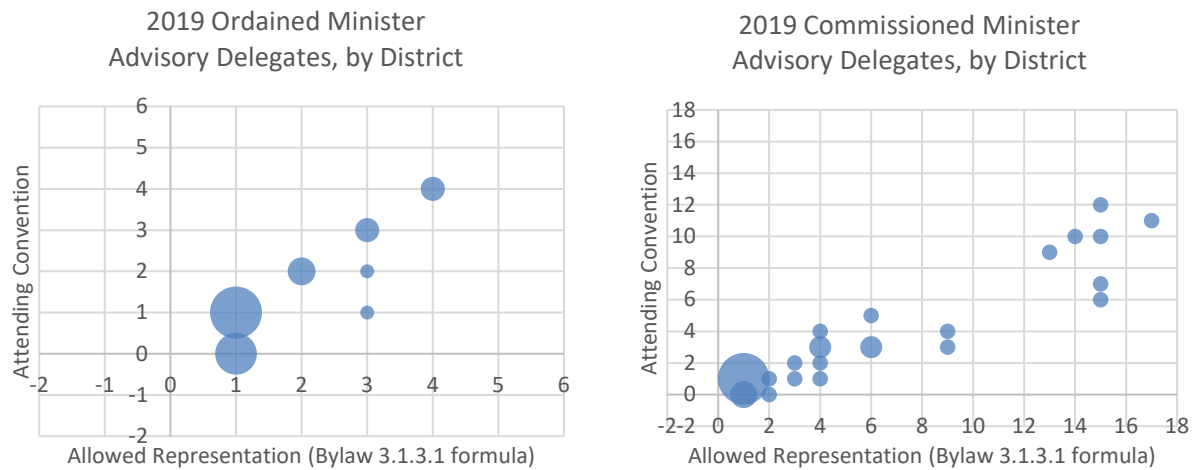


35
36 In addition to the important opportunities involving floor committees, it was suggested that there should be more
37 common and more formal “listening sessions” to ensure elected delegates are prepared to represent the concerns,

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1 needs, and insights of all represented congregations, and of all their ministries and workers. Perhaps this could be
2 codified in the bylaws for circuit meetings as a mandated process for lay and pastoral delegates to sit with
3 advisories and discuss issues of interest or coming before the convention. (Of course, it might be cautioned that
4 many things—like the post-convention report to the circuit of the delegates—are codified in bylaws but are not
5 pursued uniformly or even generally in the Synod. Previous attempts at “grassroots listening” have not succeeded
6 in general practice.)

7 Some districts send fewer than the allotted number (Bylaw 3.1.3.1) of advisory delegates to the Synod convention.
8 In 2019, 184 commissioned and 58 ordained advisory delegates were permitted by the proportional formula; 111
9 commissioned and 46 ordained advisory delegates attended the convention. The chart below shows how many
10 advisory delegates districts sent (y-axis) relative to how many they were entitled to send (x-axis). (In both charts,
11 ideally, the points would all be on the x-y diagonal.) Does this reflect lack of interest on the part of commissioned
12 ministers, an estimation that participation is not “worth it,” a poor process for selecting representatives, or lack of
13 support of the role, or some combination thereof? This seems a valuable conversation to suggest in each district
14 and in commissioned and ordained minister district conferences.



15

16 **Conclusions to Part II**

17 In evaluating how well the constitutional concept of having advisory members offering advice to the conventions
18 is realized, the committee noted that the voice afforded to advisories is significant, but not ideally implemented
19 or utilized. Conversations need to be had—perhaps in a more formal, structured, or expected way—so that voting
20 representatives in fact are equipped to represent the “total ministry.” It must be acknowledged that we are sinners;
21 voices may be permitted but not listened to or even treated in a way that encourages and builds up.

22 Several voiced a desire to ensure that commissioned workers “feel valued.” Commissioned ministers, who
23 outnumber ordained ministers Synod-wide, care about being regarded as “valued partners in ministry.” Some are
24 “pretty passionate about the vote.” Some feel they are “second-class citizens” without a say in Synod or district.
25 There is a feeling that “we struggle to engage lay people, too” in the collective impact of what happens at
26 convention. “How do we make conventions edifying for the church and make it visible that kingdom things are
27 happening here?”

28 It was felt that one of the best existing opportunities is to encourage more participation of commissioned ministers
29 on floor committees. Both commissioned and lay participation seem to have been declining over time, with district
30 presidents and Synod representatives seeming to play an increasingly dominant role. Asked whether floor
31 committee roles are perceived as important by advisory delegates, a commissioned minister noted that “committee
32 work affords much more than what’s on the floor.” Increasing the number of commissioned ministers involved in
33 the “back and forth” of committee work would be very valuable, and this is probably the most readily achievable
34 and potentially richest opportunity for meaningful and influential input from advisory members of the Synod.

1 With regard to the “advisory poll” idea practiced in the Northern Illinois District, or a simpler “red/green” version,
2 this may be an easy enough thing for a district to try. At the Synod level, the simply “red/green” system would
3 not work well and there would probably be significant technical hurdles with a first implementation, which could
4 probably be (apart from likely implementation hurdles) by an amendment of the standing rules. Preparations would
5 have to be made, with extra polling devices and technical preparation required in advance.

6 Regarding such mechanisms, however, a danger was noted, even if remote or secondary—like a danger perceived
7 by some in the posting of pro/con voting queues at the Synod convention—that the custom of regular polling in
8 an environment of inadequate debate can result in the diminution of important minority voices. Of course,
9 parliamentary law is intended to protect both the rights of the minority (and the character of a deliberative
10 assembly) and right of the majority’s mostly-agreeable business not to be stymied by a dilatory minority. The
11 conventions of the district and Synod are, however, not simply vehicles for expeditious majority rule or for testing
12 the waters of various constituencies and then voting, but of study and persuasion in the Word of God, for the
13 building of true and churchly consensus. Numerical polling can give the impression that a collective voice has
14 been heard, possibly at the expense of more important individual minority voices.

15 **Overall Conclusions**

16 Ultimately, the exercise of the franchise in the Synod is not intended to be simply for the decision of issues by the
17 prevalence of political power, but the means—once the Word of God and conscience have had all necessary
18 opportunity to hold sway, and the needs and concerns of the whole Synodical union, including its advisory
19 individual membership, have been adequately heard and considered, for the body to vote for the good of the
20 churches and the furtherance of their mission. Only then, in the design of our Synodical polity, is it time for a
21 matter to be decided by majority vote.

22 Votes change things, but voices change minds. Votes often divide, a fit word rightly spoken can unite. How,
23 indeed, can the voting assembly of a district or a Synod know how to serve and supervise ministry if it doesn’t
24 hear from all its ministers, to understand not only what they want but how they think? It is thus the committee’s
25 hope that their report will be useful to the Synod, not only in reviewing the historical and theoretical foundations
26 of its franchise, but also in recognizing and revitalizing for all it is the “voice, not vote” role—which may not be
27 less than vote, but more—that advisory individual members, including commissioned ministers, have always been
28 intended to have in the mechanisms for governance of the Synod.

29

1 **Appendix: 2019 Res. 9-17, “To Study Voting Privilege in the LCMS”**

2 **To Study Voting Privilege in the LCMS**

3 **RESOLUTION 9-17**

4 **Overture 9-22 (CW, 501)**

5 WHEREAS, The Synod celebrates the ministry contributions of teachers, directors
6 of Christian education, directors of Christian outreach, directors of family life ministry,
7 directors of parish music, deaconesses, parish assistants and certified lay ministers
8 (directors of church ministries) through their inclusion as ministers of religion—
9 commissioned; and

10 WHEREAS, The Synod highly values commissioned ministers for their eagerness
11 to serve the Lord and His Church; and

12 WHEREAS, The Synod recognizes the voices and wisdom of our commissioned
13 ministers as gifts from the Lord; and

14 WHEREAS, The Synod appreciates and gives thanks to God for the unique
15 vocations of ordained ministers, commissioned ministers and lay people alike; and

16 WHEREAS, Historically, the structure of the Synod is based on the franchise
17 belonging to the *Pfarrgemeinde*, maintaining a balance of clergy and lay voting; and

18 WHEREAS, The current structure of the Synod does not allow for a third category
19 of voting delegates at district and Synod conventions; and

20 WHEREAS, Commissioned ministers from across the Synod seek to use their gifts
21 and serve the Church in the fullest way possible; therefore be it

22 *Resolved*, That the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) in conjunction
23 with the Council of Presidents (COP), including a number of commissioned ministers
24 chosen by the COP, prepare a report regarding the historic and current voting
25 privileges in Synod; and be it further

26 *Resolved*, That this report be made available to the Synod at least 18 months prior
27 to the 2022 Synod convention.

28 **Action:** Adopted as read (7)

29 Res. 9-17 was read and introduced by the committee, removing the first resolved (lines 20–21), which
30 erroneously remained in the draft. During discussion by the assembly, the orders of the day were called;
31 closure of debate carried [Yes: 727; No: 188]. Res. 9-17 was adopted as read [Yes: 669; No: 251].