Southwestern Minnesota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Understanding the Ecclesiastical Ballot

2027 Bishop Election | Southwestern Minnesota Synod

The Southwestern Minnesota Synod will elect a bishop by ecclesiastical ballot at the June 11–13, 2027 Synod Assembly. This process allows voting members to prayerfully identify eligible pastors and elect a bishop under the synod's governing documents.

1. **The first ballot is open.** Each voting member may write the name of one ELCA Minister of Word and Sacrament in good standing. Individuals identified before the assembly must also be named on this ballot to enter the assembly election process.
2. **An election can occur on any ballot.** A person receiving the required share of legal votes cast is elected. The first and second ballots require three-fourths; the third requires two-thirds; the fourth requires 60 percent; and the fifth and subsequent ballots require a majority, meaning more than half.
3. **There are no spoken nominations from the floor.** Names are submitted through the first ecclesiastical ballot.
4. **The first ballot becomes the nominating ballot if no one is elected.** If no person receives three-fourths of the legal votes cast, the election continues with a second ballot.
5. **No new names may be added after the first ballot.** The first ballot establishes the full slate of nominees eligible to continue, subject to eligibility and withdrawal.
6. **Nominees may withdraw before the second ballot is cast.** After the first-ballot results are reported, those who do not wish to continue must withdraw before the second ballot is cast.
7. **Names may not be withdrawn after the second ballot is cast.** Nominees then remain in the balloting process, subject to the candidate limits for each successive ballot.
8. **The assembly may adopt rules for candidate presentations.** Such rules may provide a defined time for speeches or a question-and-answer forum involving nominees or their representatives. The adopted assembly rules govern these opportunities.
9. **The number of candidates narrows after the second ballot.** The third ballot includes the seven persons receiving the most legal votes on the second ballot; the fourth includes the three receiving the most on the third; and each subsequent ballot includes the two receiving the most on the preceding ballot. Each cutoff includes ties in the final qualifying position.

Adapted from the ELCA Church Council's 1994 definition of an ecclesiastical ballot and the Southwestern Minnesota Synod Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions, S9.04.01 and S9.04.04, including S9.04.04.A19.