

Congregational Meeting Forum Summary

On Saturday, December 12, 2020 the Ministry Support Committee of the Northern Illinois Synod held a forum on How to Conduct an Annual Meeting in a Pandemic. Here is a brief summary of the discussion and recommendations:

- 1) The first source for determining what and how you can have an Annual Meeting is the Congregation Constitution. It is important to follow all of the procedures set out in this document to make sure there are no issues later.
- 2) The 2019 ELCA Model Constitution includes a provision for a “virtual meeting.” Unless your Constitution specifically prohibits a virtual or electronic meeting, you can hold a meeting that way, as long as it provides for simultaneous aural communication.
- 3) If your Constitution is silent -- does not mention something -- it is permissible to the extent that the Illinois state law is followed. See 3) above -- Illinois law permits virtual meetings of corporations.
- 4) If holding a meeting in a format other than in person, all attendees need to be able to hear and speak to what is being said.
- 5) If your Constitution requires a written ballot for specific actions, you need to conduct that written ballot for those actions. This may mean having people drive to the church or designated place during the meeting and/or having a team member go to a shut-in’s home to collect a ballot.
- 6) The number of people making up a quorum does not change for a virtual meeting. You need to make provisions to accurately record the names of everyone who is present.
- 7) If you do not have a quorum, you can still hold a meeting and not take any action on business. This satisfies the Illinois state law requirement for an Annual Meeting. Business must then be conducted at a specially called Congregation Meeting.
- 8) It is important to follow your Constitution so that there can be no questions about the meeting being legally held.

For assistance, you can reach out to Rev. Pat Esker -- pesker@nisynod.org -- at the Northern Illinois Synod Office.