

To: 2021 CELC Convention Participants
From: CELC Planning Committee
Date: April 2021 (originally distributed in May 2019)

Proposed Constitution Change #1 – Travel Fund/Expenses

Proposal

- 1) To establish a CELC Travel Assistance Fund separate from the regular CELC Operating Fund.
- 2) To clarify other aspects of the Planning Committee’s administration of funds.

Rationale

The original CELC constitution stipulated that there would be one fund administered by the Planning Committee. This fund was to be used for the expenses of the Planning Committee, but also to help pay travel expenses for delegates who needed financial assistance.

Since the Planning Committee needs a substantial amount of money to cover its expenses, especially for the triennial conventions, the Planning Committee has understandably been reluctant to use money from its fund to offer travel assistance to individuals. Very little CELC money has been used for travel assistance in connection with the past several triennial conventions.

It has become apparent, however, that there is a legitimate need for travel assistance on the part of some delegates. Some churches were not represented at the 2017 convention in Grimma simply because of a lack of funds for travel.

The Planning Committee thinks it would be wise, therefore, to establish a “CELC Travel Assistance Fund,” separate from the “CELC Operating Fund,” to which special gifts could be encouraged. The Planning Committee could generously expend this fund to help as many delegates as possible attend the triennial conventions, without worrying about draining the operating fund. In this way, we may have more delegates from more countries attend the conventions, and the intention of the original constitution could be better realized.

The Current Constitution

ARTICLE XI Expenses

Section 1. Each member church shall pay the expenses of its own delegates to meetings of the Conference.

Section 2. A special fund shall be established to which members of CELC churches are invited to contribute. Member churches which need help in paying the expenses of their delegates may apply to the Planning Committee for assistance from this CELC fund. The expenses of the Planning Committee shall also be paid from this fund. The fund shall be administered by the Planning Committee through a person it appoints for

a renewable term of three years. The Planning Committee's administration of the CELC fund shall be ratified by the plenary assembly.

The Proposed Change

ARTICLE XI
Expenses

Section 1. Each member church shall pay the expenses of its own delegates to meetings of the Conference.

Section 2. The Planning Committee shall administer a CELC Operating Fund, from which the expenses of the CELC will be paid. All member churches shall be encouraged to contribute to this fund, in keeping with their abilities. The Planning Committee shall also administer a CELC Travel Assistance Fund, to be funded by special gifts. Member churches that need help in paying the expenses of their delegates may apply to the Planning Committee for assistance from this fund.

Section 3. The CELC funds shall be managed by a treasurer, who shall be appointed by the Planning Committee for a renewable term of three years, subject to ratification at the plenary meeting. The treasurer shall provide financial reports for ratification at each plenary meeting.

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Proposed Constitution Change #2 – THETA Commission

Proposal

To remove the sections of the Bylaws that deal with the Theological Education—Transfer and Augmentation (THETA) Commission and replace them with bylaws describing a new Global Theological Education Commission (GTEC).

Rationale

The 2017 CELC convention considered a recommendation from THETA Commission Chairman Kenneth Cherney, supported by the majority of THETA members, that the THETA Commission be disbanded with thanks because it is redundant and not needed. According to Cherney's report, the goal of providing accreditation for advanced programs of study through the THETA Commission is not realistic, and the other goals of the THETA Commission are being adequately realized in other ways.

In response to this recommendation, the 2017 convention resolved that the THETA Commission, the Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, and the CELC Planning Committee together consider the future of the THETA Commission.

When following through on this convention resolution, the CELC Planning Committee came to realize that PSI members and others favor the continuation of a CELC commission dealing with global education—but with a different name, makeup, and list of duties.

In collaboration with the WELS PSI and the ELS BWO, the Planning Committee offers this proposed constitution change, which would provide a fresh start for CELC global theological education efforts with a new name, new participants, and new duties.

If this proposed change is approved, we suggest that three members initially be appointed for six years and three members for three years. Then the terms of the initial appointees will not all end at the same time.

The Proposed Change

BYLAWS

~~2.1 There shall be Theological Education—Transfer and Augmentation (THETA) Commission consisting of five members. The members of the commission shall be appointed by the CELC president, subject to ratification by the convention. The term of the office shall be six years. Initially, three members shall be appointed for six years and two members for three years. Members will be eligible for appointment for a maximum of two terms. The president of the Conference shall be an *ex officio* member of the commission.~~

2.1 There shall be a Global Theological Education Commission (GTEC) consisting of six members: one representative of WELS, one representative of the ELS, and one theological education leader from each

of the four other CELC regions (Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America). The members of the commission shall be appointed by the Planning Committee, subject to ratification by the convention. The term of the office shall be six years. Members will normally be eligible for appointment for a maximum of two terms. The president of the Conference shall be a non-voting member of the commission.

~~2.2 The THETA Commission shall investigate and coordinate global theological education in the CELC at the seminary and post-seminary levels, serve as a clearinghouse of information, identify needs and resources for seminaries, and help sister churches find ways to meet their professor training needs through post-seminary study. The Commission shall report its activities to each convention.~~

2.2 The GTEC shall facilitate the discussion of Lutheran theological education in and among CELC churches at pre-seminary, seminary, and continuing education levels. It shall facilitate and promote the sharing of curricula, Lutheran materials, and sound pedagogical practices between CELC seminaries worldwide. The GTEC, as funds are available, shall conduct theological education conferences, provide a website for sharing resources, and oversee other activities for the improvement of theological education in the CELC. The Commission shall report its activities to each convention.

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Proposed Constitution Change #3 – Associate Membership

Proposal

To remove the distinction between “full” and “associate” membership in the CELC “Guidelines.”

Rationale

The distinction between full and associate membership was adopted in 2002. At that time, there was a concern about churches joining the CELC that were too small or insufficiently developed to be regarded as legitimate, independent church bodies (hence, the “full” membership criteria). There also was a desire to see small, immature churches participate in the meetings of the CELC (hence, the “associate” membership category).

Now that we have seen what has happened in the past fifteen years, the CELC Planning Committee feels that the CELC would be better served by eliminating the distinction and having one category of membership. Reasons for the change are the following.

- 1) The concerns that prompted the distinction have not happened. Since 2011, all the churches that have joined the CELC have joined as associate members. But all of these churches have been developed to such a degree that it would make sense to grant them full membership. They all have national clergy, an established doctrinal position, and established congregational life.
- 2) Fairness. At CELC conventions, it seems unfair to grant two votes to some of the small, full member churches, but no votes to associate member churches that are just as large if not larger.
- 3) Respected leaders. There are respected national leaders in the associate member churches, and the CELC would benefit from their input and participation.
- 4) Regional meetings. The distinction between full and associate members is not recognized in CELC regional meetings. If it is not recognized in regional meetings, why should it be recognized at triennial conventions?
- 5) Simplicity. Removing the two tiers of membership would simplify the organization, which would be good since the CELC deals with a wide variety of people from a wide variety of places.
- 6) In reality, we have not been following the Guidelines. At Grimma, the membership applications of the three associate member churches were presented by the CELC Commission on Theology, and the Commission on Theology provided evidence for the doctrinal integrity of the churches. Intuitively, this seems to be a good way of operating, but it is not the process spelled out in the current Guidelines. Perhaps it would be good to bring the Guidelines into agreement with what we have been doing.

Guidelines for Churches Seeking Membership in the CELC

A. Full Membership

1. Prerequisites

a. The respective church body should:

- have member congregations and trained national clergy to share the Gospel
- show organization, such as officers, constitution, etc.
- have an officially adopted doctrinal statement
- have a doctrine commission/committee in operation
- have a church budget and demonstrated support of it

b. The respective church body seeking membership is expected to be in formal church fellowship with at least one of the churches of the CELC before making application for membership.

2. Procedure

In conjunction with its application for membership, the respective church seeking membership in the CELC should, prior to its formal application,

- be encouraged to attend at least one convention as an invited guest/observer
- obtain recommendation for membership from two existing member churches
- submit its constitution and doctrinal statement(s) to the CELC Planning Committee and the CELC Theological Commission for the church's membership recommendation at least one year before the triennial convention at which its membership will be considered.

B. Associate Membership

1. Prerequisites

The respective church body should

- be in doctrinal and communion fellowship with the CELC
- be interested in developing a closer organizational relationship with the CELC
- be comprised of organized congregation(s) with regular worship, with lay leadership, and with members providing support for the work of the church

2. Procedure

The church seeking Associate Membership status with the CELC should make its desire and request known through a letter sent to the CELC President.

C. Rights and Privileges

1. Voting rights and holding offices are limited to full member churches.
2. Associates have rights of participation in all sessions and may serve as presenters.

D. Responsibility

Full member churches should assume some appropriate level of financial support for the ongoing operations of the CELC.

The Proposed Change to the Guidelines

Appendix #1

Guidelines for Churches Seeking Membership in the CELC

A. Prerequisites for Membership

1. A church seeking membership in the CELC is expected to be in formal church fellowship with at least one of the churches of the CELC before making application for membership.
2. A church seeking membership in the CELC should have:
 - national clergy,
 - organized congregations with regular worship, with lay leadership, and with members providing support for the work of the church,
 - a constitution or other written document that provides for church organization and governance, and
 - an officially adopted doctrinal position.

B. Procedure for Attaining Membership

1. A church seeking membership in the CELC should:
 - request membership through a letter to the CELC President,
 - obtain a recommendation for membership from at least one CELC church that is in formal church fellowship with it, and
 - submit its constitution and doctrinal statement(s) to the CELC President at least one year before the triennial convention at which the membership request will be considered.
2. The CELC President will inform all CELC churches about the membership request and will make the required membership documents available for all CELC churches to review prior to the triennial convention at which the membership request will be considered.
3. The CELC Commission on Theology will officially evaluate the membership application together with any comments submitted by member churches and will bring a recommendation to the triennial convention.

An Accompanying Addition to the Bylaws

BYLAWS

1.1 There shall be a Commission on Theology consisting of five members. The members of the commission shall be appointed by the Planning Committee, subject to ratification by the convention. The term of the office shall be six years. Initially, three members shall be appointed for six years and two members for three years. Members will be eligible for appointment for a maximum of two terms. The president of the Conference shall be an *ex officio* member of the commission.

1.2 The commission shall prepare a position paper on the theological topic treated by the last convention. This statement shall be submitted for ratification by the CELC in convention.

1.3 The commission shall evaluate all requests for membership and shall bring membership recommendations to the triennial conventions.

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Proposed Constitution Change #4 – Membership: Remove Phrase

Proposal

To eliminate an unnecessary phrase under “Article IV Membership.”

Rationale

As far as the Planning Committee knows, the phrase under question has not actually been practiced in recent history. The membership of new churches has not been “subject to ratification” by all the other member churches at their next meetings, as if the membership of new churches is only valid after an additional process. To implement a requirement like this would be very cumbersome, now that the CELC has 32 churches. Since the CELC has functioned well without the implementation of this requirement, the Planning Committee recommends that it be removed from the constitution.

When a new church is received into CELC membership, it is understood that all the other churches of the CELC will consider themselves to be in fellowship with the new church, simply as a result of the acceptance of the church into the CELC.

If there are concerns about a new church, the concerns should be expressed prior to the vote at the CELC convention where the membership application is considered. This will be possible according to the new “Guidelines for Churches Seeking Membership in the CELC,” since the membership documents of churches applying for membership will be made available to all CELC churches for review prior to the convention when the membership application is considered.

The Proposed Change

ARTICLE IV Membership

Section 1. Membership in the Conference may be acquired and held only by such Lutheran churches which have accepted without reservation the doctrinal and confessional basis of the Conference described in Article II and which are not in fellowship with churches that in their doctrine or practice deviate from the confessional standard of the Conference.

Section 2. Churches applying for membership in the Conference may be received at any convention of the Conference by an affirmative vote of two thirds of the delegates present and voting, ~~subject to ratification by all the member churches at their next meeting.~~

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Proposed Constitution Change #5 – Termination of Membership

Proposal

To add something about how the membership of churches in the CELC could be terminated.

Rationale

Termination of membership in the CELC is not something that we like to think about, but the Planning Committee feels that the CELC constitution should identify the process for how it would be done. Given the nature of things in this sinful world, someday a CELC church may very well deviate from its scriptural position and may need to have its membership terminated.

In actuality, a two-thirds majority vote is already in effect for the CELC by default, since the CELC is registered in the State of Wisconsin and the statutes of the State of Wisconsin require a two-thirds vote for the termination of membership, unless something else is stipulated in an organization's articles of incorporation or bylaws. The two-thirds majority requires a broad consensus for such an important decision.

The Planning Committee is reluctant to spell out more in the way of detail for the process. Undoubtedly, such an action would be preceded by much admonition and discussion.

The Proposed Change

ARTICLE IV Membership

Section 1. Membership in the Conference may be acquired and held only by such Lutheran churches which have accepted without reservation the doctrinal and confessional basis of the Conference described in Article II and which are not in fellowship with churches that in their doctrine or practice deviate from the confessional standard of the Conference.

Section 2. Churches applying for membership in the Conference may be received at any convention of the Conference by an affirmative vote of two thirds of the delegates present and voting.

Section 3. A church may voluntarily withdraw its membership in the CELC, making known its desire through a letter to the CELC president.

Section 4. If a church departs from the doctrinal and confessional basis of the Conference in spite of admonition, its membership may be terminated by an affirmative vote of two thirds of the delegates present and voting at a plenary meeting.

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Proposed Constitution Change #6 – Representation at Meetings

Proposal

To eliminate the stipulation about four advisory delegates, and to be less specific in what is said about the two voting delegates.

Rationale

Sometimes churches have not been able to send two delegates, and sometimes churches have sent church members other than the “president” or “leader” as their CELC voting delegates.

Since 2008, we have not identified convention participants as “advisory delegates” or “official guests.” We have identified “voting delegates” for the purpose of conducting the official business of the conference. But beyond that, we have allowed all who are present to participate in the discussion. We have been happy to have wide participation from local church members in places like Peru and Germany. Since this arrangement has worked well, we recommend that we bring the CELC constitution into line with what we have been doing.

The Current Constitution

ARTICLE VI Representation

Section 1. Each member church of the Conference shall be represented at the regular meetings of the Conference by two voting delegates: the president or leader of the church and another representative chosen by the church.

Section 2. Each member church may send up to four additional delegates who shall serve as advisory, non-voting representatives in meetings of the Conference.

The Proposed Change

ARTICLE VI Representation

Section 1. Each member church of the Conference shall be encouraged to send two male voting delegates to the regular meetings of the Conference.

Section 2. Other delegates are welcome at CELC meetings and may participate in the discussion, but they are not allowed to vote on matters of CELC business.

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Proposed Constitution Change #7 – Nominations for CELC Offices

Proposal

To change what is said about nominations to bring it in line with what we have been doing.

Rationale

According to CELC minutes, nominations were received “by ballot” only at the 1993 and 1996 conventions. For the last seven conventions, the Planning Committee has provided a ballot of candidates, with opportunity given for additional names to be added from the floor. Since this procedure has worked well, we recommend that it be included in the constitution.

The Current Constitution

ARTICLE VIII Officers

Section 1. Officers of the Conference shall be a president, vice president, and secretary.

Section 2. The officers of the Conference shall be elected from a slate of candidates nominated by ballot. Voting shall be by ballot. A majority is necessary for election.

The Proposed Change

ARTICLE VIII Officers

Section 1. Officers of the Conference shall be a president, vice president, and secretary.

Section 2. The officers of the Conference shall be elected from a slate of candidates presented by the Planning Committee, with opportunity for additional nominations from voting delegates at the meeting. Voting shall be by ballot. A majority is necessary for election.

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Proposed Constitution Change #8 – World Regions

Proposal

To update and expand Article IX dealing with CELC regions.

Rationale

Things are happening in CELC regions that go beyond the current constitution. Some regions are starting to do joint church work, especially in missions and theological training. Some regions are taking steps to organize more formally.

The CELC Planning Committee is delighted to see this increase in regional activity, since much good can be accomplished as believers in a particular area of the world gather to strengthen each other. The Planning Committee feels that the CELC constitution should be updated and expanded to allow for this increase in regional activity.

The Planning Committee also feels that the relationship between the regions and the international CELC should be clarified in the constitution. The Planning Committee feels that it is appropriate for these three parameters to be established for the CELC world regions:

- 1) Constitutions that are drafted in the CELC regions should be shared with the CELC Planning Committee for approval and for circulation throughout the CELC.
- 2) Membership issues—both applications and (God forbid) terminations—should be handled at plenary meetings, and not by the regions.
- 3) CELC funds should not be used for regional activities.

Finally, the Planning Committee has been asked to change the name of one of the regions—from “South” America to “Latin” America. The people meeting in this region include people from Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean.

Current Constitution

ARTICLE IX Regional Meetings

For various purposes the Conference shall be divided into five world regions: North America, South America, Asia, Europe, and Africa. In the interval between meetings of the plenary assembly, member churches in these regions may meet to receive reports on the plenary meetings and to consider matters of common interest and concern.

The Proposed Change

ARTICLE IX
World Regions

Section 1. For various purposes the Conference shall be divided into five world regions: North America, Latin America, Asia, Europe, and Africa. Church bodies in these regions are encouraged to meet together for mutual support and for joint work, especially in missions and theological training.

Section 2. These regions may elect officers to oversee their activities, and they may choose to organize further. If regional constitutions are produced, these constitutions shall be shared with the CELC Planning Committee for approval and for circulation throughout the CELC.

Section 3. CELC membership issues—both applications and (God forbid) terminations—shall not be considered at regional meetings. The entrance point into the CELC shall be through the plenary meeting, since membership in the CELC involves membership in the entire world-wide fellowship.

Section 4. Funding for CELC regional activities shall be procured through the regions themselves. The CELC Operating Fund and the CELC Travel Assistance Fund shall not be used for regional purposes.

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Proposed Constitution Change #9 – Commission on Theology

Proposal

To make three little changes to the Bylaws about the Commission on Theology:

- 1) To remove an unnecessary sentence.
- 2) To add the word “normally” to state that “members will normally be eligible for a maximum of two terms.” This would make these Bylaws consistent with the proposed Bylaws for the new Global Theological Education Commission (Proposed Constitution Change #6).
- 3) To say that the president will be a “non-voting member” rather than an “*ex officio* member.” This would make these Bylaws consistent with the proposed Bylaws for the new Global Theological Education Commission (Proposed Constitution Change #6).

Rationale

- 1) Now that the Commission on Theology has been functioning for many years, the sentence that talks about its initial appointees is no longer necessary.
- 2) It happened once that a Commission on Theology member was asked to continue beyond two six-year terms for the good of the commission. Lyle Lange served an additional three years from 2008-2011. The Planning Committee thinks that it would be wise to allow for this possibility, when there are extenuating circumstances.
- 3) The term “*ex officio*” does not make clear whether or not the president has voting privileges. People often assume that an *ex officio* member does not vote, but according to *Robert’s Rules of Order*, an *ex officio* member can vote unless an institution’s bylaws state otherwise. Perhaps the CELC bylaws should make the matter clear by calling the president a “non-voting member.” This is how the CELC president has been functioning in recent memory.

The Proposed Changes

BYLAWS

1.1 There shall be a Commission on Theology consisting of five members. The members of the commission shall be appointed by the Planning Committee, subject to ratification by the convention. The term of the office shall be six years. ~~Initially, three members shall be appointed for six years and two members for three years.~~ Members will normally be eligible for appointment for a maximum of two terms. The president of the Conference shall be ~~an *ex officio*~~ a non-voting member of the commission.