



Instructions to Congregations Regarding Ratification of the 2012 NALC Convocation Action Regarding Full Membership within the Lutheran World Federation

All member congregations of the NALC have the chance to participate fully in important decisions of our church body. In addition to the participation of voting delegates at convocation, congregations will be asked, at times, to ratify the action of the annual convocation. As a result of the action of the 2012 NALC convocation, each congregation is being asked to schedule a duly called congregational meeting for the purpose of voting “yes” or “no” on the convocation action to apply for full membership within the Lutheran World Federation. Each congregation has one vote, either “yes” or “no.” No amendments or changes may be made to the resolution passed by the convocation. To explain this process in detail and to answer questions, we are providing the following information:

Why do congregations have to vote on ratification?

Congregational participation is a cornerstone of NALC governance. One element of this participation is ratification. By requiring congregational ratification of certain key decisions, the NALC ensures that NALC members are aware of and broadly support those decisions. Participation in the ratification process is an important right and responsibility. By participating fully in the ratification process, every congregational member has the opportunity to be fully involved in the mission and ministry of the NALC.

What matters require ratification?

The Constitution identifies the matters that require congregational ratification. Notably, under Section 17.03 of the Constitution, all Constitutional Amendments require ratification to take effect. In addition, Section 13.03 subjects all “inter-Lutheran and ecumenical church-to-church relationships of an official character” to the Section 17.03 ratification process.

What specific matters are subject to ratification this year?

The annual Convocation approved one item that requires ratification: a resolution to apply for full membership in the Lutheran World Federation. A copy of that approved resolution is included in this packet of materials, together with related informative materials.

How do we prepare our congregation to vote on ratification?

Each congregation should plan its own process of information sharing, conversation and deliberation prior to the congregational meeting to vote on ratification. Many have two or more informational meetings prior to the congregational meeting. Some have open forums. Some mail all informative materials to member households prior to the vote. Some have “temple talks” before worship prior to the vote. Each congregation knows what works best within their respective congregation. However, this important right and responsibility deserves our intentional effort at full and open communication and deliberation prior to congregational voting.

Do we need to have a special congregational meeting for ratification?

Under Section 17.03 of the Constitution, a congregation’s ratification vote must be taken “in and through properly called congregational meetings.” Congregational ratification may happen at any congregational meeting, in accordance with the congregation’s constitutional requirements. Normally, a simple majority is required for ratification by the congregation, unless the congregation’s constitution stipulates otherwise. Ratification may

only happen through congregational action at a congregational meeting. Congregations cannot delegate responsibility to their councils, pastors, or any other persons or groups.

What is the deadline for voting on ratification?

Under Section 17.03, congregations could vote any time within six months from the close of the 2012 NALC convocation. However, congregations are asked to vote on ratification as soon as possible, perhaps at a brief, specially called meeting. Ideally, congregations are asked to vote on ratification prior to December 31, 2012.

Are congregations required to use a particular form of resolution or ballot?

The short answer is “no.” However, in creating its ratification process, a congregation must take care to ensure that its members have a clear way to express their preference for having the congregation vote either “yes” or “no.” The best way to accomplish this is probably to use a paper ballot that asks the following question: “How should Congregation X vote on whether to ratify?” It should permit members to vote “yes” or “no.” By using the included model ballot—and treating the matter as an election between two choices—congregations will avoid the confusion that could arise from voting on ratification by resolution.

Which congregations are entitled to vote?

All congregations that belonged to the NALC at the time of the 2012 NALC convocation are entitled to vote on ratification.

How does a congregation submit its ratification vote?

A form is included for congregations to use, which may be returned via U.S. Mail or by fax as indicated on the ratification report form. Congregations MUST use the prepared form to report their ratification vote. E-mail communications and phone call messages are not acceptable.

How many congregations must vote “yes” in order for ratification to be effective?

Because the LWF resolution is considered a church-to-church agreement, ratification requires a two-thirds majority. Thus, ratification will be fully accomplished once two-thirds of the congregations voting have voted “yes”. A quorum for a valid ratification vote is 50% of NALC congregations voting.

How will we know the status of the vote on ratification?

Regular updates will appear on the NALC web site.

Should our congregation vote even if more than two-thirds of the congregations already have voted to ratify (or more than one-third already have voted against ratification)?

Yes. Ratification is the responsibility of every NALC congregation. By taking the time to deliberate and vote, a congregation keeps its members well informed. Moreover, the congregation claims ownership for the decision-making process. It should be added that the earlier a congregation votes on ratification, the better.

What happens if a congregation does not vote on ratification?

Ratification will be based on the results of those congregations voting within six months after the close of the 2012 NALC convocation.

Can a congregation enact amendments to the measures before it?

No. Congregations can only vote “yes” or “no” on the resolution as approved by the 2012 NALC convocation.