



To: Ordained and Commissioned Ministers of the Texas District

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings to each of you in the saving Name of Jesus! Thank you for your valued partnership in sharing Jesus with those in your classrooms, congregations, and communities!

You have not received a letter from my office before, addressed to every rostered member of the Synod in the Texas District, but the importance of what I must share with you requires that I communicate with you. It is necessary that I personally make you aware of the significant changes to the process of ecclesiastical supervision in our church body. The Board of Directors of the Synod has adopted bylaw changes that give the ultimate responsibility for your (and your congregation's) ecclesiastical supervision to the President of the Synod. In other words, if charges are brought against you or your congregation in the area of doctrine or practice, the President of the Synod has been given ultimate authority to determine whether those charges can be substantiated and whether suspension is warranted. Although the Synod's Commission on Constitutional Matters has given the opinion that these changes are consistent with the Constitution of the Synod, I have held, and continue to believe, that these changes are unconstitutional.

Below, please find two bullet lists, one outlining the process *before* the bylaw changes and one outlining the process *after* the bylaw changes, which are now in effect. These lists are abbreviated and do not include every step in the process.

#### Previous Bylaws

- Accuser presents charge to district president (DP).
- DP investigates and reviews facts.
- DP determines whether the facts form a basis for expulsion.
- If DP concludes that the facts form a basis for expulsion, he is required to suspend the member. The accused member may request a hearing before a Hearing Panel to appeal the suspension. If no appeal is made, the accused is deemed to consent to the suspension and is expelled from membership in the Synod.
- If DP determines that the facts do not form a basis for expulsion, the matter is terminated.

#### New Adopted Bylaws

- Accuser presents charge to district president (DP).
- DP investigates and reviews facts.
- DP determines whether the facts form a basis for expulsion.
- If DP concludes that the facts form a basis for expulsion, he is required to suspend the member. The accused member may request a hearing before a Hearing Panel to appeal the suspension. If no appeal is made, the accused is deemed to consent to the suspension and is expelled from membership in the Synod.
- If DP determines that the facts do not form a basis for expulsion and DP has not received "concurrence" from the President of the Synod (SP), the accuser may appeal to SP.
- If SP determines that the facts do not form a basis for expulsion, the matter is terminated.
- If SP concludes that the facts form a basis for expulsion, he is required to suspend that member. The member may request a hearing before a Hearing Panel to appeal the suspension. If no appeal is made, the accused is deemed to consent to suspension and is expelled from membership in the Synod.

So, unless the DP suspends a member, the SP will decide whether or not to do so, assuming that the accuser appeals the case to the President of the Synod.

It is interesting that if charges are brought against a person for his lifestyle (drunkenness, pornography, etc.), the DP makes the final determination, and the accuser may not appeal the DP's decision. The person accused may appeal a suspension, but the accuser may not appeal to the President of the Synod.

You will read articles that will declare that the SP has always had this responsibility for every member of the Synod. People might tell you that there's nothing new about this, but that is not true. This significant change represents a centralization of power and control in one office - that of the President of the Synod. Our church body has historically been congregationally based. Now the power is moving away from the grass roots to the national church body office.

Since more and more power is being given to the SP, you and your congregation might want to give special attention to the nomination and election process for electing the President of the Synod. This process will take place at the end of 2018 and the beginning of 2019. You might also want to make sure that you participate in the nomination of the next Texas District President. The election will happen at the June 2018 District Convention.

Thank you for reading this message! You might receive other communications from me sharing some of the history of Synod regarding ecclesiastical supervision over the years.

God bless you with the Holy Spirit, making you a blessing to many. You remain in my prayers, praying that you will be filled with all the fullness of God.

Your partner in missions,



Rev. Ken Hennings

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