

Writing an Effective Resolution or Memorial

Is there something you would like to see the synod do on a bigger or more public scale? A policy or practice that you would like to recommend? Your best approach is to write a **resolution** for consideration at the next Synod Assembly. In the ELCA, we make a lot of decisions communally, or, as an assembly. This document is intended to help you present your ideas effectively so that the assembly can make an informed vote which may lead to a clear action.



Before you start writing, consider the following carefully:

WHAT do you want done?

HOW will it be accomplished?

WHO will do it?

WHY is this important?

Resolutions vs. Memorials

Resolutions are *not* the best way to inform or encourage the assembly on a particular topic. They are the best way to **work toward a specific action**. Therefore, they need to be **concrete recommendations** (such as a change to a synod bylaw, etc). This action may be on the part of all of our congregations, a particular committee or task force, the Synod Council, rostered ministers or the bishop. The action must be within the power of the Synod Assembly to implement.

If your recommendation is for the ELCA in general, you are writing a memorial. Memorials are adopted by synods at their assemblies and passed on to the Churchwide Assembly. As such, they are most effective *in the same year* as a Churchwide Assembly (which take place triennially: the next one is in 2019, then 2022, 2025, etc.) and they recommend a **specific, concrete, allowable** action for the entire ELCA. *It is not good stewardship of assembly time to bring memorials in 2017.*

Who Can Submit One?

The Proposed Rules of Procedure for our Synod Assembly allow for resolutions to be written and submitted by:

1. Congregations;
2. Constitutionally defined committees (Executive, Consultation, Discipline, Finance, Constitution Review, Iringa, Candidacy);¹
3. Conferences (must be presented and receive affirmative vote at Conference Assemblies);
4. The Synod Council²

¹ See *Synod Constitution and Bylaws*, chapter 11.

² According to the Proposed Rules of Procedure, other than any presented by Synod Council, resolutions and memorials must first be reviewed by the Reference and Counsel Committee (§F1).

What is the Process?

1. Review existing ELCA Social Statements or Assembly actions pertinent to your issue/cause and refer to these as appropriate in your writing;
2. Read the Proposed Rules of Procedure (distributed in the Pre-Assembly materials) so you know what to expect;
3. Draft your text using clear, concise language, limiting it to one page if possible, using the template on the last page of this document;
4. Submit the resolution to the synod by the deadline (email a Word document of it to anna.grunner@spas-elca.org).³
5. The Reference and Counsel Committee will review the resolution for accuracy, viability and consistency with the governing documents of the synod and ELCA. The committee may request clarifications or changes be made;
6. The Reference and Counsel Committee will make a recommendation to the Assembly;
7. In most cases, the Assembly will vote on the resolution.⁴ However, the Assembly may address the matter at hand in a different way, which might include discussion, an action-strategy session or other format.

What Makes a Good Resolution?

- Information that is complete and accurate
- Background research which provides reference to existing ELCA statements and policies;
- Action that is relevant and in-line with the mission of the synod
- Allowable according to the governing documents of the synod
- Significant for this year or an upcoming Churchwide Assembly
- Clear action steps that can be implemented: "each congregation of the Saint Paul Area Synod shall _____", "request that the bishop write a letter to local representatives encouraging _____".
- If a bylaw or continuing resolution is being recommended/amended, the full text must be provided
- Not too long: one-page, single-sided should be enough
- Formatting: single-spaced with a full line between sections; careful attention paid to spelling and factual accuracy

If Not a Resolution, Then What?

After reading this, perhaps you have decided that the issue or cause you feel so passionately about is not the best fit for a resolution or memorial. This does not mean that it is not important and cannot be of concern to the synod more broadly. There are a number of ways that you can educate, encourage and advocate for matters about which you care deeply, and the synod can help!

³ For the procedure of submitting resolutions past the deadline, see the Proposed Rules of Procedure §F.VI.

⁴ The Reference and Counsel Committee makes this determination (see Proposed Rules of Procedure §F.I). However, any voting member may move to have the resolution considered for a vote; such a motion suspends the Rules of Procedure and thus will require a two-thirds vote.

2017 Deadline: April 7

At the Synod Assembly:

- If you are part of an organization that would be a good addition to the vendors hall at Synod Assembly, contact Alicia Rodriguez (alicia.rodriguez@spas-elca.org) to inquire about having a table at the assembly;
- Propose a workshop/ministerium for rostered ministers or lay leaders in the synod, and offer to lead or help plan it;
- Ask if a handout or brochure on the topic could be included in the voting member packets

Beyond the Synod Assembly:

- Host a workshop in your congregation and ask the synod to help you promote it, opening up attendance to members of other congregations
- If the topic would be of particular interest to lay leaders, ask to lead a workshop on it at the next year's Toolkit for Congregational Leaders
- Form a work group as a part of the Committee for Public Witness (see more information on the synod website: <http://www.spas-elca.org/mission/public-witness/>).

Resolution Template

[Resolution TITLE]

WHEREAS, ____; and

WHEREAS, ____; and

WHEREAS, ____; and

WHEREAS, ____; and...

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul Area Synod, in assembly, _____; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that _____; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, _____; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that _____.

Submitted by:

Many thanks to the staff of the Minneapolis Area Synod for allowing us to adapt this memo!