

GUIDELINES FOR MEMORIALS AND RESOLUTIONS

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A “MEMORIAL” AND A “RESOLUTION”?

Although both memorials and resolutions are requests for action by a synod assembly, they are addressed to different bodies and are processed differently.

MEMORIALS.

Memorials seek action on broad policy issues and are used to request consideration by the Churchwide Assembly. Only a Synod Assembly may address a memorial to the Churchwide Assembly. Synod Councils may not adopt memorials.

Once a memorial has been adopted by a Synod Assembly, it is forwarded to the ELCA Office of the Secretary so it can be submitted to the Churchwide Assembly. Received memorials are referred to the Memorials Committee, which is appointed by the ELCA Church Council to review and make recommendations to the Churchwide Assembly. The Memorials Committee meets after all synod assemblies are over in the year of a churchwide assembly.

RESOLUTIONS.

Resolutions have a narrower focus than memorials and are requests for consideration or action by the congregations of the synod, the synod council, offices of the synod, the ELCA Church Council or by individual units or offices of the churchwide organization.

For example, a request for the ELCA Church Council to recommend a parliamentary rule or some action by a unit of the churchwide organization would be the subject of a resolution, but a request to change an ELCA policy should be a memorial.

A resolution and a memorial *may not be combined* in one document. In addition, a synod should not address both the ELCA Church Council and the Churchwide Assembly on the same subject.

DRAFTING MEMORIALS AND RESOLUTIONS.

Resolutions and memorials frequently contain both “resolved” clauses and “whereas” clauses. “Resolved” clauses state the action being requested to be taken by the assembly; “whereas” clauses provide the rationale supporting the proposed action.

If “whereas” clauses are used, there should be as few as necessary. They should be succinct and factual and should not be argumentative. The Reference and Counsel Committee should ensure that any “whereas” clauses comply with *Robert’s Rules of Order* and do not contravene the Constitution and Bylaws of the ELCA or the synod.

The “resolved” clauses represent the actual motion being voted upon. “Resolved” clauses, if adopted, become the official request for action to be taken by the synod or congregations. Thus, these clauses should be concise, accurate, and complete.

Memorials must include a final “resolved” clause requesting the Churchwide Assembly to act (or refrain from acting) in a particular way. Here is a sample final paragraph of a memorial from a Synod Assembly:

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to *[clearly describe the proposed course of action]*.

For **resolutions**, the final “resolved” clause will differ, depending upon whether they are intended for the action by the synod council, the ELCA Church Council or a churchwide unit or office. Here are sample final clauses for resolutions:

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council/urge congregations of the synod to *[clearly describe the proposed course of action]*.

Or

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this request the ELCA Church Council to *[clearly describe the proposed course of action]* or forward this resolution to the ELCA Church Council’s Executive Committee for referral and disposition to the appropriate unit or office of the churchwide organization in accordance with the bylaws and continuing resolutions of this church.

THE REFERENCE AND COUNSEL COMMITTEE.

The scope of authority of Reference and Counsel is given the task of working with the sponsor(s) to bring properly submitted memorials and resolutions to the synod assembly in such form the motion will receive a fair and honest hearing. They make sure the motion does not violate constitutional provisions or established policy positions, and are factual in nature. In all cases, the committee must report all motions referred to it, although the committee can report motions without a recommendation.

Interdependence, as well as stewardship of resources, requires that care be taken to avoid resolutions and memorials whose effect would be to impose unreasonable financial demands on the churchwide organization, synods, or congregations. If a proposed resolution or memorial will impose an unfunded mandate if adopted, synod councils are requested to consider the proposed action *before* it is submitted to a Synod Assembly. Synods also are requested to advise their synod councils and synod assemblies that the churchwide organization may not be able to support requested resolutions or memorials for budgetary reasons and that, if adopted, such proposed actions may have adverse consequences on existing programs or ministries

Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod Reference and Counsel Committee is chaired by the Rev. Mark Edwards. For questions or other items of information, he may be contacted at mark.d.edwards79@gmail.com.

