

Greater Milwaukee 2026 Synod Assembly Proposed Rules and Procedures

Overview

The Greater Milwaukee Synod Council recommends to the Synod Assembly the following Rules and Procedures for 2026.

These will be formalized by the Assembly at the First Plenary Session of the Assembly but will be followed prior to that action.

Please note that in extreme circumstances, the Synod Council may approve, upon the recommendation of the bishop, that a meeting of the Synod Assembly take place by means of an online meeting platform (such as Zoom webinar). This platform must allow that all participants who are entitled to voice and vote can communicate with others in the meeting, in accordance with the Synod's governing documents and Illinois State Statutes.

I. Memorials and Resolutions

- A. Deadlines for submission of memorials and resolutions:
- March 31, 2026 by congregations, committees, or conferences.
 - May 15, 2026 for Synod Council-initiated resolutions.
- B. Memorials and resolutions may only be submitted by vote of a conference, a committee of the synod, or a congregation (by council or congregational vote), or by action of the Synod Council. If more than one conference, committee, or congregation wishes to put forth a resolution, it must be submitted by each individual conference, committee, or congregation.

Should multiple similar or identical resolutions or memorials be submitted, the Reference and Counsel Committee may, with discretion, combine them into one resolution or memorial.

Memorials and resolutions that conflict with the governing documents of the ELCA or Greater Milwaukee Synod are “improper motions” and will not be considered.

Memorials and/or resolutions that meet these criteria are included in the Pre-Assembly materials. Anyone seeking to have additional memorials or resolutions considered may only do so by moving a suspension of the rules for the purpose of considering that memorial or resolution. Such a motion requires a two-thirds majority vote to carry.

- C. By Synod Council action (**SC98.05.02**), memorials or resolutions, when called onto the agenda, must be moved by a member of the Assembly acting as a sponsor, who would then be the first individual to speak in favor of the memorial or resolution after its reading by the chair of the Reference and Counsel Committee.
- D. ~~All resolutions submitted by the deadline will be reviewed for editing, clarity and consistency prior to submission to the Reference and Counsel Committee.~~
All memorials and resolutions shall be reviewed by the synod for editing, clarity

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and consistency. The Reference & Counsel Committee has primary responsibility for this review, supported by synod staff and/or volunteers, and may make recommendations to the authors prior to action by the Assembly. The Committee may also, in its sole discretion, make recommendations to the Assembly regarding disposition of any memorial or resolution. Those submitting resolutions should avoid, if at all possible, the use of footnotes or links to the internet, which may be removed at the discretion of the Reference and Counsel Committee.

Entities submitting resolutions requesting synod action should be aware that, given limited resources, some detailed plans for action may not be feasible, and may not be supported by the Reference and Counsel Committee. Resolutions that would have the effect of increasing budgetary items without recommending corresponding decreases in other budgetary items will require a two-thirds majority vote, consistent with Rule XI below.

- E. A voting member wishing to present an amendment or substitute motion shall present the exact wording in writing to the designated assembly official *prior to moving the amendment*. This shall be submitted electronically by e-mail to: assembly@gmselca.org.
- F. Resolutions not addressed by the Synod Assembly shall be forwarded to the Synod Council for further action.

II. Registration

- A. The Synod Council shall also establish a registration deadline in advance of the meeting, providing sufficient time for meeting information and voting registration credentials to be distributed.
Pre-registration for the 2026 Synod Assembly shall close at 11:59 p.m. on May 15, 2026. Walk-in registrations will be accepted at the Assembly.

III. Agenda

- A. The business of the assembly shall be conducted during plenary sessions held on May 29-30, 2026. The chair shall have authority to call items of business before the assembly in whatever order is most expedient for conducting assembly business. Resolutions or other business not addressed by the Synod Assembly shall be forwarded to the Synod Council.
- B. The agenda shall be presented and adopted at the beginning of the first plenary session. If any voting member desires to add any item of new business to the agenda after the initial adoption of the agenda by the assembly, the voting member shall present such item of business to the chair. A two-thirds majority vote of the voting members present and voting shall be required to add the item of new business to the agenda.

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IV. **Quorum**

Fifty percent (50%) of voting members who have confirmed registration upon the beginning of the assembly shall constitute a quorum as required by constitution (S7.14.).

V. **Floor Procedures**

- A. Registered voting members and advisory members shall have equal privilege of addressing the assembly. Advisory members will have voice but no vote on matters before the assembly. They shall include: lay members of committees, leadership teams, task forces and work groups; lay members of synod assembly committees; lay members of the synod staff; representatives of synod partners in ministry; and representatives from ELCA synodical, and churchwide offices.
- B. Voting or advisory members with a procedural question or issue may seek to be recognized at a microphone, with a white card indicating a procedural question.
- C. When an item of business is opened by the chair for discussion, those voting or advisory members wishing to speak shall indicate their preference to do so with green (in favor) or red (opposed) cards at the microphone. When indicating their preference to speak, voting or advisory members must specify if they are speaking for or against the item under consideration.
- D. Once recognized by the chair, each speaker will state their name, pronouns, and congregational membership. No person may speak more than once on an item of business until all others who wish to speak have had opportunity to do so.
- E. Speeches from the floor during debate shall be limited to three (3) minutes. Those whose primary language is not English may exceed the limit for translation purposes with the discretion of the chair.
- F. The chair will rotate speaking privileges between proponents and opponents of a measure, as indicated by card color. Debate will terminate when three speakers have been heard on each side of the issue on the floor, unless otherwise determined by a majority vote of voting members present and voting.
- G. If a voting member recognized by the chair desires to make a motion, the motion is to be made first, before the voting member speaks to it. Once a motion is made, if there is a second the voting member may then speak in support of the motion made.
- H. The chair may recognize an individual(s) to provide pertinent background information regarding a resolution. Such speakers shall be limited to four (4) minutes.

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- I. Following the reading of the resolution or the introduction of the item of business, discussion on any item of business shall be limited to thirty (30) minutes. This rule may be suspended by a two-thirds majority vote of voting members present and voting.

VII. Voting

- A. Voting, except for contested elections, may, at the discretion of the chair, be conducted either by voice or using color-indicated cards, which will be held aloft to vote in favor or in opposition to a motion, as directed by the chair. Voting for contested elections shall be by paper ballot.
- B. When a division of the house is ordered, the vote shall be taken by counting raised color-indicated cards or by written ballot as directed by the chair. No division of the house is in order when a vote has been taken by paper ballot.
- C. To be eligible to cast ballots, voting members shall check-in and receive credentials before the beginning of a Plenary Session. No voting member shall be eligible to vote unless they have checked in at the registration table at the Brookfield Conference Center.

VIII. Elections

- A. Nominees for the offices to be filled by Assembly action are listed in the Pre-Assembly materials.
- B. At-large floor Nominations will be accepted by the Assembly Manager until 9 p.m. Friday evening, May 29, 2026.**
 1. Anyone wishing to nominate an individual other than themselves must have the nominee's consent to run and serve if elected;
 2. Required biographical data shall be submitted to the Assembly Manager or virtually at milwaukee.synod.org/nominations before the nominations deadline.
- C. Unless otherwise stated, all elections must be by a majority of legal votes cast. In the event that no majority is attained on the first ballot, the names of the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes shall be listed on the second ballot. In the case of groupings of nominees, twice the number of candidates to be elected shall advance to the next ballot.

IX. Privilege of Voice

Guests may be accorded the privilege of voice by a majority vote. Voice may also be granted to those persons designated by the Synod Council, as provided for in **S7.23.** of the Synod's Constitution.

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X. Distribution of Materials

No materials may be distributed to the Synod Assembly without the advanced approval of the bishop or the Reference and Counsel Committee of the Assembly.

XI. Changing Synod Budget Amounts on Assembly Floor

Any proposal increasing of any line item in the proposed 2026-2027 Budget or amended 2025-2026 Budget shall normally indicate from which line or lines an equal amount is to be subtracted. Proposals that do not comply with this rule shall require a two-thirds majority vote to be adopted.

XII. Additional Rules

- A. A motion to adjourn shall be debatable.
- B. The chair, at any time, may declare a recess of the assembly for purposes of addressing technical issues.
- C. All matters not governed by rules of this assembly or by specific assembly action shall be governed by Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, in its most current edition.

Memorials and Resolutions in Greater Detail

Memorials and resolutions enable this church to address broad policy issues or issues important to God's mission in the world. *Memorials* address broad policy issues; *resolutions* have a narrower focus, requesting consideration or action by individual offices or units, or the ELCA Church Council. (A resolution can be the preferred method when an issue requires a timely response.) The churchwide organization and synods of the ELCA use a process to bring forth memorials and resolutions. Memorials and resolutions are one way this church addresses broad policy issues or important issues for God's mission in the world.

There are three different avenues of communication between the expressions of the ELCA:

1. Synod assemblies to the Churchwide Assembly (**S12.21.c**)
2. Synod councils to the Church Council (**S14.21.11**)
3. Synod councils to a churchwide unit or office, through the Executive Committee of the Church Council. (**S14.41.01.b**)

Synod assemblies may pass memorials to the Churchwide Assembly.

A Memorials Committee, appointed by the ELCA Church Council, receives memorials from synod assemblies and makes appropriate recommendations for assembly action. The Memorials Committee meets after all synod assemblies are over and approximately six to eight weeks before a Churchwide Assembly, which is held every three years.

Synods councils may pass resolutions to the Church Council.

They may also seek to address churchwide units and offices through resolutions. These must be submitted to the Executive Committee of the Church Council for appropriate referral. Either synod assemblies or synod councils may originate resolutions, but only synod councils can forward resolutions to the Church Council.

Frequently, synod councils pass resolutions between meetings of the synod assemblies and forward them directly to the Church Council for consideration, or to the Executive Committee of the Church Council if the desired action involves referral to a unit or office of the churchwide organization.

Resolutions requesting synod action are also in order at the Synod Assembly.

These generally will address policy concerns, where the entity presenting the resolution is asking for a particular policy or action by the synod.