

# Guidelines for Resolutions and Memorials

## Greater Milwaukee Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

**Deadline for resolutions/memorials is March 22,2024.**

You've got an action plan or a policy recommendation?

A resolution or memorial can help get it done if you know: WHAT exactly you want done; HOW to get it done; and WHO can best get it done.

On the other hand, if you want to inform or encourage, a resolution or memorial isn't the most effective route. (See Appendix C, p. 6)

### **Who Should Act on This?**

Is the Synod Assembly the best group to act on your proposal, or will another group be a more direct route to your desired action? Other groups include: a Task Force, or Program Committee: e.g., Leadership Program Committee or Candidacy Committee; the Synod Council; the Synod Staff; the Executive Committee of the Synod Council

### **Resolution or Memorial?**

- A resolution calls for an action—often a policy decision—that is concrete, specific, and within the power of the Assembly to implement.
  - A memorial is a request for churchwide action involving the entire Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), made by this Synod's Assembly, and directed to the ELCA Churchwide Assembly meeting. A memorial to the Churchwide Assembly must come from a Synod's Assembly. Like a resolution, a memorial is brought to the Synod Assembly through a congregational meeting or a conference assembly, but it is sent on to churchwide only by action of the Synod Assembly.
1. Who can submit a resolution or memorial?  
All resolutions and memorials considered by the Greater Milwaukee Synod meeting in Assembly must be adopted by one of the following bodies:
    - a. a Congregation, by means of a constitutionally called Congregational Meeting or by action of the Congregation Council
    - b. a Conference, in a Conference Assembly or properly called conference meeting the Greater Milwaukee Synod Council
  2. Write the resolution or memorial so it can easily be read and understood. An effective resolution or memorial is clear and concise, one side of one-page maximum length. Use the format outlined below and use the helps in the Appendix.
    - a. **Title:** State simply what the resolution is about, e.g., "Salary Guidelines for Lay Workers" or "Creating Tuition Support Fund for Seminarians."
    - b. **Whereas (Reasons for the resolution):** State the reason(s) for the resolution simply and directly, while not presenting unnecessary whereas statement containing generally known information. Each separate reason must have a separate Whereas section. Every effort should be made to ensure the accuracy of the facts. Source citations are encouraged. The final Whereas ends with the words, therefore be it (no period)
    - c. **Resolved that:** State the precise actions desired. By whom? When? How? Where will the funding come from? Will it require synod staff time? Each separate action requires a separate Resolved paragraph. Additional paragraphs are introduced with and be it further (no period) before beginning the next Resolved paragraph.

- d. **Author:** Name the individual with primary responsibility for the form and content of the resolution or memorial. The author is the person the Reference and Counsel Committee contacts about any editorial changes. The synod secretary will provide preliminary review for clarity, prior to the Reference and Counsel Committee's review. For that reason, committees, conferences, and congregations may not be listed as authors. Include the author's cell phone number and email address.
  - e. **Adopted by:** State the name of the body that has voted to adopt the resolution and the date of the action, e.g., St. John's Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, or Central Conference.
  - f. **Contact person:** Provide the name and best phone number and email address of the person attending the Synod Assembly who is willing to speak to the resolution or memorial.
  - g. **Memo of Explanation:** A resolution is a document for a simple background, and a call for action. As such, detailed background is not always provided. While not required, a memorandum of explanation or explanatory documents makes the job of the Reference and Counsel Committee easier. Reference to the documents can also be provided to interested parties.
3. Test your idea with other people by asking more than one group to adopt it.
  4. Submit the resolution or memorial for review by the Reference and Counsel Committee (RCC) on or before the submission deadline. This committee is appointed by the Synod Council and acts according to written Policies and Procedures reviewed by the Synod Council.
    - a. **Submissions:** Email submissions are preferred to: [mary.romskog@gmselca.org](mailto:mary.romskog@gmselca.org) Otherwise, mail resolutions/memorials to: Greater Milwaukee Synod, PO Box 341695, Milwaukee, WI 53234
    - b. **Deadline:** All submissions must be received in the Synod office by **March 22, 2024**. Resolutions or memorials submitted after the deadline: These will not be considered unless two-thirds of the members of the RCC determine that the resolution or memorial is of immediate, urgent, and overriding importance related to an issue that either 1) could not have been anticipated prior to the deadline; or 2) addresses a previously accepted resolution.
  5. The RCC now goes to work, reviewing each resolution and memorial to determine whether it meets the criteria set forth in the Appendix, and working with the author to put it in its strongest, clearest form.
    - a. **Changes to a resolution or memorial:** In consultation with the author, the resolution or memorial may be edited for form or clarity, or be combined with another, substantively identical, resolution from another body. If the RCC has tried to contact an author regarding editorial changes and there has been no response after one week, the RCC may decide not to refer the resolution to the Assembly.
    - b. **Options for handling resolutions:** The RCC may seek to provide for engagement with the issues identified by the resolution or memorial in a manner that does not include a vote. Such engagement may be in the form of group presentation, assembly discussion, action-strategy sessions, referral for study, or other means. Any voting member wishing to bring to a vote a resolution or memorial that has been otherwise provided for by the RCC may move to suspend the rules for the purpose of considering the resolution for a vote.
    - c. **Resolution and memorial summaries:** The RCC provides a one-paragraph summary of each resolution or memorial brought to the Assembly. This paragraph summarizes the action being sought; it does not advocate a course of action.
  6. The RCC will evaluate resolutions for acceptance using the following criteria:
    - a. Action by the Assembly on a resolution/memorial must be consistent with the Constitution, Bylaws, existing social statements of the ELCA, and all other governing documents of the GMS and the churchwide expression of the ELCA.
    - b. A resolution/memorial will not be brought to the Assembly if the proposed action will merely inform the Assembly about an issue, organization, or event. The author/contact person of such resolutions will be directed to other more effective communication channels.

- c. All statements contained within any resolution/memorial must be accurate and respectful, and should inform the readers' understanding of the resolution/memorial.
  - d. Resolutions directed to the synod for action must follow budget impact guidelines from the Synod Assembly Rules and Procedures, Section VII, calling for no net increase in the synod's approved budget as the result of action on a resolution.
7. Resolutions and memorials accepted by the RCC will be referred to the Assembly for consideration during plenary session.
- a. **Resolutions or memorials not addressed by the end of the Assembly** are automatically referred to the Synod Council for consideration.
  - b. **Resolutions or memorials intended for churchwide (ELCA) consideration:** When there is a vote by electronic means or a Division of the House (individual votes tallied by counters), the results of the vote on each side of the issue will be sent to the Office of the Secretary of the ELCA.
  - c. **Status of resolutions report:** The RCC will report on the status of the previous Assembly's adopted resolutions, based on information provided to the RCC by the Bishop, synod staff, and Executive Committee.

## APPENDIX

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### A. Criteria for resolutions and memorials

In order to be brought before the Assembly resolutions and memorials must meet the following criteria:

1. Resolutions and memorials should be tested against questions such as:
  - a. Is the information complete and accurate?
  - b. Is this a matter that pertains to the mission and business of the Greater Milwaukee Synod (as stated in the GMS Constitution, 6.03)?
  - c. Is this a matter of significance requiring consideration by the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly this year?
  - d. Can the action requested be appropriately and effectively implemented by the Greater Milwaukee Synod?
2. The Reference and Council Committee (RCC) will review each resolution prior to the Synod Assembly. Resolutions that raise matters of concern, or encourage persons to care or get involved on behalf of an issue, will be referred by the RCC to the appropriate synod body rather than being sent on to the Assembly for action.

Before referring to another body, a member of the RCC will have a discussion with the author. A resolution may be referred to another Greater Milwaukee Synod body if the RCC determines that body is better suited than the Assembly for consideration and action upon the issue.

Any RCC decision to refer a resolution may be reversed by a two-thirds vote of the Synod Assembly initiated by a motion from a Voting Member on the floor of the Assembly.

3. The action sought by the resolution or memorial is consistent with the Greater Milwaukee Synod Constitution, Bylaws, and other governing documents. For example:

*(S10.04) Any proposal for the appropriation of funds, whether by amendment to the budget or otherwise, which is presented to a meeting of the Synod Assembly without the approval of the Synod Council shall require a two-thirds vote for adoption.*

*(S18.21) This synod may adopt bylaws not in conflict with this constitution nor with the constitution and bylaws of the churchwide organization. This synod may amend its bylaws at any meeting of the Synod Assembly by a two-thirds vote of voting members of the assembly present and voting. Newly adopted bylaws and amendments to existing bylaws shall be reported to the secretary of this church.*

4. All resolutions/memorials requiring use of GMS staff will contain an estimate of the time needed.
  5. All statements must be accurate, respectful, and necessary to an understanding of the resolution.
  6. If the Assembly votes to pass a resolution or memorial, it will become the responsibility of the Synod Council to communicate or to implement the action.
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### B. Additional tips for authors

1. **Length:** A resolution should be stated clearly and concisely and should be no more than one page, one side. Use Times Roman type face, 11 or 12 font size, and one-inch margins.

2. **Spacing:** The text is single spaced, with a full space between sections.
3. **Background Information is optional.** If the author or adopting body believes it would aid the RCC or the Assembly, a one-page statement pertaining to the context of an issue may be attached. The RCC uses its discretion in determining whether the background information will be printed and distributed to the voting members of the Assembly.
4. **Bylaw change:** If the resolution requires a change to the bylaws of the Greater Milwaukee Synod, the proposed wording should be included in the resolution.
5. Each resolution uses the same style or format:

	<b>Title</b>
<b>Whereas, ..., and</b>	
<b>Whereas....., and</b>	
<b>Whereas, ...therefore be it</b>	
<b>Resolved, that..., and be it further</b>	
<b>Resolved that...</b>	
<b>Author:</b> _____	
First Name	Last Name
Congregation	cell phone/e-mail
<b>Adopted by:</b> _____	
Congregation, conference assembly, synod committee or accompanying signature page	
<b>Contact person:</b> _____	
First Name	Last Name
Congregation	cell phone/e-mail

**C. Possibilities for Public Voice Apart from Resolutions or Memorials**

Speaking as the Church of Christ with a public voice can take many different forms, a resolution or memorial is one way to hear your voice but may not be the only way. Often congregations and members wish to open an issue for greater awareness in the church, or encourage others, or inform a broader audience about something of concern. As these guidelines suggest, such a desire may not be best suited for a resolution or a memorial, which ask for action or a change in policy.

Rather than changing the guidelines, this appendix is intended to provide common issues that create ineffective resolutions. Alternatives are available if a resolution/memorial is not your best approach. Your voice is important, so we offer other alternate courses of action which might be more effective.

***When resolutions or memorials are less effective as a means of public voice:***

1. Holding a vote doesn't give time for study and learning about the subject. Rules for debate, and the consideration of most resolutions late in the assembly, mean things are passed with little deliberation, time for discernment, or opportunity for deeper clarification of the issues.
2. However, many issues brought in resolution or memorial form are so complex that deeper study as a synod would be preferable to passing something just to be able to pass something. As an alternate, consider a group be formed to study/ discern the issue. The Reference and Counsel Committee may also recommend further study as an alternative to the Assembly taking final action.

3. Our synod's current mission and vision are intended to focus our work together as synod, and that means sometimes saying no to some work so we can say yes to other work. Voting on resolutions or memorials that are for good things but are not necessarily what we're focusing our energy and resources on can be counter-productive to working on our shared vision.
4. Issues that affect the entire nation or world are not issues on which the action of a single synod is most effective. For example, it is more effective public voice for our presiding bishop to speak to the president than for individual synodical bishops. Synod resolutions more effectively express our public voice to local and state governments.

***Some alternate ways to raise issues and use our public voice as Church***

*At Synod Assembly:*

1. Check with the Synod Assembly Planning Team to see if the information you wish to share fits into the assembly plan. Because assembly plans and activities change from year to year this might include:
  - Workshops that could teach or share information.
  - Table discussions over a lunch break.
  - Open Space Conversations
  - Informational flyers or brochures. Remember, all paper distributed at a Synod Assembly must be approved by the Reference and Counsel committee.
  - Table displays

*Apart from the Assembly:*

1. Host an event at your congregation where the synod is invited to learn about an issue or explore it more deeply. The Synod office can publicize such events if they are held at times other than Sunday mornings. This policy is intended to support each congregation's Sunday morning schedule.
2. Put together a mailing to all congregations and pastors in the synod, at your congregation's expense. The directory of congregations is available, and this could be a good way to reach many.
3. Suggest a topic for the yearly Ministerium gathering to the organizers and help with the planning.
4. Work with synod office to be a part of workshop days.