

MEMORANDUM

TO: SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD ASSEMBLY VOTING MEMBERS
FROM: Committee on Reference and Counsel
SUBJECT: Understanding the Purpose and Function of Reference and Counsel

A. THE PURPOSE OF REFERENCE AND COUNSEL

1. To assist the Synod Assembly in dealing with material that does not come to the Assembly through regular reports, committees, agencies, Synod Council, etc.
2. To prepare responses so that memorials and resolutions are handled in an appropriate way by the church in light of its constitution, organization, and previous history.
3. In response to memorials and resolutions, Reference and Counsel may exercise one of the following options as it deems appropriate:
 - (a) Recommend adoption.
 - (b) Offer a substitute.
 - (c) Recommend that the proposed matter not be adopted.
 - (d) Refer the matter to appropriate committees, boards, agencies, etc. for further consideration.
 - (e) Offer a synodical or Church minute of previous action as a response.
 - (f) Commend the resolution.
 - (g) Recommend no action.
 - (h) Recommend or reject the distribution of materials.

B. LANGUAGE OF RESOLUTIONS AND MEMORIALS

1. Normally, the "Whereas" clause(s) describe the issue, concern, problem, or basis of the resolution. "Whereas" material is not acted upon by the Assembly.
2. "Resolved" clause(s) point to proposed solutions and define requested action. "Resolved" clauses should be clearly defined. What should be done? To whom should the request for action be addressed? What the action may cost and how it is to be funded? When the action should be done? To whom the results should be reported?
3. It is important to understand that a resolution of a Synod Council can not direct the Church Council to take a specific action. Likewise, a memorial from a Synod Assembly can not order that the Churchwide Assembly vote in a particular way. A memorial, by definition, is a petition appealing for action.
4. Basically, the best resolutions and memorials are simple and direct. They contain a minimum of adjectives and adverbs. They avoid inflammatory words and generalized statements. They clearly and accurately state facts. They are built on straightforward nouns and verbs.
5. Good resolutions and memorials say, in essence, "please, this is why we think this is important and this is the action that we believe should be undertaken."

C. COMMUNICATIONS FROM SYNODS TO THE ELCA

1. Synod Assemblies address the Churchwide Assembly through Memorials.
2. Synod Councils address the ELCA Church Council through Resolutions.
3. Synod Councils address churchwide units through the ELCA Church Council's Executive Committee, including forwarding actions of the Synod Assembly.
4. Resolutions follow a more direct route than memorials, which must go to the Churchwide Assembly, and await the assembly's response. Memorials should be reserved, insofar as possible, for broader policy issues that belong in the Churchwide Assembly. By contrast, resolutions may receive more immediate attention.

NOTE: The synod in Assembly may address the synodical organization or civil authorities directly and through the Synod Council and Bishop.

D. REMEMBER...

...The Synod Assembly is a democratic process involving approximately 500 voting members.

RESOLUTIONS/MEMORIALS FOR REFERENCE AND COUNSEL
SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD, ELCA
2026 MEETING OF THE SYNOD ASSEMBLY

	NAME	CONGREGATION/LOCATION
Names of Person(s) or Group submitting resolution/memorial (please include name of congregational membership)		

CONTACT PERSON:		
ADDRESS:		
EMAIL ADDRESS:		
TELEPHONE:		DATE:

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Please type or print legibly.
2. All background material should be listed prior to the resolution/memorial. Such information should begin with *"Whereas"*.
3. The resolution/memorial should follow the *"Whereas"* clause, beginning with, *"Therefore, be it resolved..."*.
4. Please keep a copy of the resolution/memorial for your reference.
5. Attach the resolution/memorial to this cover form and submit it by **April 29, 2026** to couterbridge@sepa.org or via US Mail:

Committee on Reference and Counsel
 Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod
 Wiedemann Center
 7241 Germantown Avenue
 Philadelphia, PA 19119
6. Contact Rev. Jenn Casey (631) 421-1575 or via email at pastorjennccasey@comcast.net with any questions.

PLEASE NOTE: All resolutions/memorials must be received by the committee by April 29, 2026 in order to guarantee consideration by the Assembly!

Resource Impact of Memorials and Resolutions

(Please attach this form to each memorial or resolution submitted)

Whenever we ask the churchwide organization to act, there will be both financial and personnel resource implications in order to carry out the action. Before you submit your memorial or resolution, we ask you to spend some time reflecting on the potential resource impact your request might require. For example, creating a social statement involves a years-long process of study, multiple drafts of a proposed statement, a listening process to allow congregations and individuals to react to drafts, meetings of an advisory panel, editorial development and publication, communication of the process to the various expressions of this church, and staff to coordinate the effort.

We do not expect you to be an expert in process, nor do we ask you to estimate dollar expenditures. Rather, we ask you to consider what might be necessary resource expenditures in order to carry out the action you are requesting.

Memorial Title _____

Anticipated financial implications of memorial if adopted for:

Churchwide Organization:

Synods:

Congregations:

Anticipated staff or personnel implications of memorial if adopted for:

Churchwide Organization:

Synods:

Congregations: