

Reference & Counsel

**YOU  
CAN  
CHANGE  
THE  
CHURCH**



# What exactly is Reference & Counsel?

## **Purpose**

Through memorials and resolutions, issues can be raised for specific action to be taken by a body of the Church (*Synod/Churchwide*).

The Reference and Counsel Committee of each synod assists writers of Resolutions and Memorials by providing structure and format prior to Synod Assembly.

Additionally, Reference and Counsel serves Synod Assembly by bringing Resolutions and Memorials to the floor and making recommendations regarding their adoption.

# Memorials and Resolutions - What's the difference?

## **MEMORIALS**

Synod Assemblies ask Churchwide Assembly to pay attention to something.

Synod Assemblies can't tell Churchwide to do something.

Broad Topics

## **RESOLUTIONS**

Synod Assemblies ask/direct Synod to do something.

Synod Assemblies ask Synod Council to reach out to Churchwide Organization or Church Council

Specific or local requests

# Memorials & Resolutions

What are they and what's the difference?

## **MEMORIALS**

- Synod Assemblies address Churchwide Assembly through Memorials.
- Address broad policy issues (World Hunger)
- Considered for action every three years by the Churchwide Assembly.

# Memorials & Resolutions

What are they and what's the difference?

## **RESOLUTIONS**

- Synod Assemblies address Synod (*Office of the Bishop/Synod Council*)
- Synod Assemblies wanting to address ELCA Church Council / Churchwide Units must go through Synod Council by means of a resolution
- Synod Assemblies wanting to address ministry partners must go through Synod Council by means of a resolution
- Have a narrower focus (Parental Leave Policy)
- Quicker response time

# I have a concern I would like addressed, now what?

## Questions to ask:

- Does my concern or issue relate to the life and ministry of this church?
- Is this a broad topic/concern or more narrow in focus?
- Am I seeking action from Churchwide Assembly (memorials) or Church Council (resolutions)?
- Am I seeking action from Synod Assembly or Synod Council (resolutions)?
- Does the Assembly or Council have the authority to honor the request according to governing documents?
- Is the action feasible, e.g. are there significant financial and staffing implications?
- What research do I need (social statements, policy documents, org charts)?

# How do I write a Resolution or Memorial?

## **Title**

Focused title that describes the subject of the resolution or memorial.

## **Whereas Clauses**

The whereas clauses are the reasoning for the request. They are direct statements used to build a case for the action requested. You want to build the case and set the stage without writing a dissertation. The clauses must be factual and sourced. (*The Assembly does not vote on the whereas clauses.*)

## **Resolved Clauses**

The resolved clauses, on which the Assembly votes, state the action desired. What should be done, how it should be done (all necessary actions), who should do it, and when it should be done.

\*\*If there are financial considerations, the source of funding must be identified

# What Does Reference and Counsel Do After They Receive a Memorial or Resolution

The committee reads through all submitted Memorials and Resolutions.

Researches all available governing documents, policies, and previous Synodical and Churchwide actions..

Prior to making a recommendation, they may be in conversation with the author(s).

# Reference and Counsel Responds to a Memorial or Resolution

- a) Recommend adoption
- b) Offer a substitute
- c) Recommend to not adopt
- d) Refer to appropriate committee,  
board, church partner etc.

# Sample Memorial

## Sample Memorial:

### ELCA World Hunger and Child Nutrition

WHEREAS, "Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty'" (John 6:35); and

WHEREAS, 2016 is the within *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA* that is focused on ELCA World Hunger; and

WHEREAS, we live in a world where more than 800 million people—one in eight people in our world today—are hungry; and

Whereas, in the United States, more than 50 million people do not know where their next meal will come from and 15.8 million children live in households that struggle with hunger; therefore be it

...

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to urge the Congress of the United States to renew and strengthen our nation's child nutrition programs by passing the Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR) bill in 2016 and bring the "Improving Child Nutrition Integrity and Access of 2016" to the Senate floor for a vote.

Note: All memorials will be examined for potential financial and staff implications. A summary of potential financial and staff implications will be provided in background information to the Churchwide Assembly.

## Consider

- *Whereas* clauses provide background information and are not a part of the action. Each clause should state a reason for the resolution or memorial.
- *Whereas* clauses should be used sparingly. It is encouraged to submit just the resolved clauses as the resolveds contain the action for consideration.
- *Resolved* clauses must clearly and concisely state the desired action:
  - *What should be done?*
  - *How should it be done?*
  - *Who should do it?* (Churchwide Assembly or Church Council)
  - *When should it be done?* (timeline)

# Sample Resolution

03-16

1     **RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT ELCA WORLD HUNGER**

2

3     WHEREAS, 795 million people around the world – 1 in 10 – cannot access the food  
4             they need to live active, healthy lives.<sup>[1]</sup> One billion people, or 14.5% of the  
5             world's population, live in extreme poverty on less than \$1.25 a day.<sup>[2]</sup> At  
6             some point in 2014, more than 48 million people in the United States were  
7             unsure where their next meal might come from;<sup>[3]</sup> and 46.7 million  
8             Americans were living in poverty. For a family of four, this means that their  
9             annual household income was below \$23,850,<sup>[4]</sup> and

10    WHEREAS, ELCA World Hunger responds to hunger and poverty in the United States  
11            and around the world by addressing root causes through a comprehensive  
12            program of relief, education, advocacy, sustainable development,  
13            community organizing and networking by which people are connected to  
14            the resources they need to lift themselves out of poverty; and

15 WHEREAS, in 2014 the Metropolitan Chicago Synod gave \$520,595, and in 2015  
16 gave \$627,616 to ELCA World Hunger; and

17 WHEREAS, in 2016 the focus of the Campaign for the ELCA will be ELCA World  
18 Hunger; and

19 WHEREAS, 2017 is the commemoration of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation,  
20 reminding us again of how the church continues to be involved with the  
21 needs of society; be it

22 RESOLVED, that the congregations of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod accept the  
23 challenge to raise one million dollars for ELCA World Hunger between  
24 June 1, 2016, and October 31, 2017; and be it further

25 RESOLVED, that 100% of the offerings from the 2016 and 2017 Metropolitan Chicago  
26 Synod Assembly worship services be designated for ELCA World Hunger.  
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29 Submitted by:

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31 The Metropolitan Chicago Synod Council

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34 [1] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2015

35 [2] The World Bank, 2015

36 [3] USDA, 2015

37 [4] US Census Bureau, 2015

# April 29

Deadline for submitting memorials and resolutions  
that will be considered by the Assembly.

Synod Assembly: May 29-30, 2026

What if I don't get my resolution in by April 29?

A  $\frac{2}{3}$  vote by the Assembly is necessary to bring a Resolution to the floor after the April 29 deadline. The Assembly will vote on the title only to bring to the floor.

After May 22, no late Resolutions will be considered.

# References and Additional Documents

[SEPA Submission Form & Resource Impact Form](#)

[Memorials and Resolutions Churchwide Resources](#)

[ELCA Social Statements](#)

[ELCA Resolutions and Memorials Flowchart](#)

[Churchwide and Synod Constitutions](#)

[ELCA Resources and Policies](#)

[SEPA Constitution and Policies](#)

# Q &A

- What questions do you have?
- What topics are you currently working on?

# Sources

Sample Resolution & Memorial from:

[2021 ELCA Webinar and Slideshow for Synod Assemblies](#)

Additional Information from:

[ELCA Office of the Secretary Website](#)

[Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Website, Assemblies/Reference and Counsel](#)