

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SYNODICAL SECRETARIES

by the Reverend Lowell G. Almen, secretary
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

(February 1, 2002)

These recommendations are offered to assist you in your responsibilities as synodical secretary. As you carry out your duties, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of the Secretary when you may wish to do so. My telephone number is 773.380.2801. My office address is: Office of the Secretary, 8765 West Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631. My individual e-mail address is: lalmen@elca.org. The e-mail address for the Office of the Secretary is: sec@elca.org. The Web address is: elca.org/os.

A. *Responsibilities of Synodical Secretaries:* Under required provision †S8.32. in the *Constitution for Synods* of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

The secretary shall:

- a. **Keep the minutes of all meetings of the Synod Assembly and the Synod Council, be responsible for the printing and distribution of such minutes, and perform such other duties as this synod may from time to time direct.**
- b. **Be authorized and empowered, in the name of this synod, to attest all instruments which require the same, and which are signed and sealed by the bishop.**
- c. **In consultation with the bishop, classify and arrange all important papers and documents and deposit them in the archives of this synod.**
- d. **Submit to the secretary of this church at least nine months before each regular Churchwide Assembly a certified list of the voting members elected by the Synod Assembly.**

B. *Minutes of Synod Assemblies:* One of your strategic and comprehensive responsibilities as synodical secretary is to keep an eye on history. That is, prepare the minutes and other synod documents from the perspective that those written chronicles are crucial for the permanent historical record of your synod.

1. ***Coding of actions:*** Your predecessor may have established a coding system for actions of the Synod Assembly, Synod Council, and Synod Council Executive Committee. If that has not been done already, please consider this possibility for use in your synod.

Recommended is the following: **A TWO-LETTER code; followed by YEAR of action; then MONTH of action; and NUMBER of action** in the calendar year.

The letter code for the Synod Assembly could be "SA"; for the Synod Council, "SC"; and for the council's Executive Committee, "EC/SC". "EC" serves as an extension of the "SC" two-letter code because the Executive Committee is a part of the Synod Council.

► Using this pattern, the tenth action of the Synod Assembly in June of 2002 would be: **SA02.06.10**. Then the **text** of the completed action would follow the number, **preferably in bold face type**, if possible. For example,

VOTED:

SA02.06.10 To adopt the projected 2003 budget of the Great Vision Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in the amount of \$2,589,445.

► Under this numbering system, the twenty-fourth action of your Synod Council in November of 2001 would be: **SC01.11.24**.

► The Synod Council's Executive Committee is not a separate entity but is under the council. Therefore, an alternate coding related to the council is suggested. As a result, the sixth action of your Synod Council's Executive Committee in March of 2002 would be: **EC/SC02.03.06¹**.

2. **Content of minutes:** For the sake of archival and historical needs as well as an accurate legal and corporate record, the synod's annual report or directory needs to be comprehensive. Such a report of the Synod Assembly and synodical activity should include:

- a. **Agenda of the Synod Assembly;**
- b. **Minutes of the Synod Assembly;**
- c. **Adopted budget;**
- d. **Financial reports and audit statements for previous year;**
- e. **Election report, including terms of elected persons;**
- f. **Complete list of members of the Synod Council, boards, and committees, including terms of office;**
- g. **Ordinations and installations, with dates and places;**
- h. **Commissionings and installations of associates in ministry and consecrations and installations of deaconesses and diaconal ministers, with dates and places;**
- i. **Complete listing of all rostered persons in the synod;**
- j. **Other information on rosters of synods, including necrology of pastors and those on the official lay rosters;**
- k. **Updated synod roster of names and addresses of congregations;**
- l. **Parochial reports and statistics;**
- m. **Complete text of resolutions and other actions of the assembly;**
- n. **Reports of synod bishop and other officers;**
- o. **Text of salary guidelines for the year; and**
- p. **Possibly current edition of synod constitution, unless published separately.**

3. **Size and suggestion on binding:** Follow the established (year-after-year) format on the

¹Note that the numbering sequence for actions of the Executive Committee is separate from the numbering sequence for actions of the Synod Council. "SC" action numbers follow one another numerically throughout the year. Likewise, "EC/SC" action numbers follow one another numerically throughout the year.

page size for your synod's minutes. Some synods have established a pattern of a 6" by 9" page size; other synods use a 5 ½" by 8 ½" page size; still others employ an 8 ½" by 11" page size.

If the minutes booklet, as the annual report of your synod, is thick enough for "perfect binding," a term that refers to binding with flat space on the spine, type on the spine should read downward and identify the year, name of the document, and name of the synod. This information also should be on the cover, of course. "Saddle stitching" does not offer spine space, but for documents of a limited number of pages, this usually is less expensive than perfect binding.

4. ***Copies of Synod Assembly minutes:*** When printed minutes are available after each Synod Assembly, please send ***five copies*** to me. Of these five,

- a. one copy is kept in the Office of the Secretary in your synod's file,
- b. two copies are kept in this church's archives, and
- c. two copies are placed in the Lutheran Center's library for reference use by staff of units of the churchwide organization².

C. ***Synod Council Minutes:*** The Office of the Secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is no longer collecting for this office's files minutes of the Synod Council and the council's Executive Committee. Therefore, Synod Council minutes do not need to be sent to this office.³

Please be certain, however, to ensure that copies of the MINUTES OF SYNOD ASSEMBLIES ARE SUBMITTED promptly upon completion. Five copies of the assembly minutes are needed, as indicated above (see B.4).

D. ***Remember the synodical archives:*** Under †S8.32.c., each synod secretary is assigned the responsibility, in consultation with the bishop, to "classify and arrange all important papers and documents and deposit them in the archives of the synod." This needs to be an ongoing process so that materials are not lost for the historical record.

1. ***Legal Records:*** Official records are required at times for legal purposes and, therefore, must be accurate and complete.
2. ***For Sake of History:*** Records must be complete for the sake of history and the work of those who follow us. For advice, you may consult the synodical records-retention document (www.elca.org/os/records.html) under "Guidelines for Synods."

E. ***Prompt Reporting:*** As the secretary of the synod, you are responsible to ensure prompt reporting to the Office of the Secretary—immediately following the Synod Assembly—of the full,

²In this way, we are trying to avoid duplicate requests from various churchwide units for copies of your synod's minutes. Through access and use by churchwide units of the copies in the Lutheran Center library, we hope to reduce the number of copies sought from you and thereby cut costs for both your printing and our storage.

³Obviously, care must be taken by you to make certain that the minutes of all Synod Council meetings and of the council's Executive Committee are filed properly in the synod office and in the synod's archives.

adopted text of any resolutions or memorials addressed to the churchwide organization, the results of any election or reelection of officers, the adoption of any amendments to the synod's constitution, bylaws, or continuing resolutions, and, on a biennial basis, the names and addresses of persons elected to serve as voting members of the Churchwide Assembly. As stipulated in †S18.13., constitutional amendments, apart from those provided by the Churchwide Assembly for the *Constitution for Synods* under †S8.11. and †S8.12., are subject to ratification by the Church Council.

F. Memorials and Resolutions: The following pattern for submission must be observed for submission of the texts of memorials and resolutions.

NOTE: For recording and proper disposition, *ALL* resolutions and memorials⁴ are to be submitted by synods only to the secretary of this church, and not directly to churchwide units.

This pattern is designed to assure proper handling and is in keeping with the bylaws on such matters in our church.

Keep in mind the *distinction between memorials and resolutions*:

1. **MEMORIALS** are transmitted by Synod Assemblies ONLY to the Churchwide Assembly.
2. **RESOLUTIONS** may be submitted by a Synod Assembly through the Synod Council to the Church Council or the council's Executive Committee for referral to a churchwide unit.

Therefore, ***a memorial must be a separate action from a resolution***, even on the same subject. A resolution to the Church Council and a memorial to the Churchwide Assembly cannot be combined into one action of the Synod Assembly.

In considering whether a matter should be handled as a memorial or a resolution, it will be helpful for you to assist your synod in noting appropriately that:

1. *Memorials should be reserved, insofar as possible, for broader policy issues that belong in the Churchwide Assembly.*
2. *Resolutions may be passed that are addressed to a specific churchwide unit or to units that relate to a given concern.* In the final "resolved" of such an assembly action should be this provision:
 - a. ON THOSE FOR REFERRAL TO A CHURCHWIDE UNIT:

RESOLVED, that the _____ Synod Assembly direct the _____ Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council's Executive

⁴This means resolutions intended for the Church Council or for referral through the council's Executive Committee to churchwide units; memorials, as used here, means those actions of Synod Assemblies addressed to the Churchwide Assembly.

Committee for proper referral and disposition under the bylaws and continuing resolutions of this church.

or

b. ON THOSE FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE CHURCH COUNCIL:

RESOLVED, that the _____ Synod Assembly direct the _____ Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council for consideration and possible action.

3. Resolutions follow a more direct route than memorials. Memorials must go to the Churchwide Assembly, and await the assembly's response. By contrast, resolutions receive more immediate attention from appropriate churchwide units.

The experience of our Churchwide Assemblies has demonstrated the danger of voting members being submerged in a sometimes turbulent sea of memorials, few of which can receive extensive discussion. Experience has demonstrated that the leadership practiced by the synodical bishop and the synodical secretary is crucial in this regard.

Please encourage—as you have opportunity—your assembly's Committee of Reference and Counsel or resolutions committee to use the resolution route through the Synod Council either to the Church Council or to the Church Council's Executive Committee for referral to a churchwide unit.

4. The Church Council voted in November 1988 "that future communications from synods will be dealt with according to ELCA constitutional and bylaw provisions 12.21.c., 12.51.21., 14.21.11., and 14.41.11."⁵ This affirms that:
 - (1) **Synod Assemblies address the Churchwide Assembly;**
 - (2) **Synod Councils address the ELCA Church Council;** and
 - (3) **Synod Councils address churchwide units through the ELCA Church Council's Executive Committee, including forwarding actions of the Synod Assembly.**

Besides Synod Assembly actions, as noted, Synod Councils may pass *resolutions* to the Church Council. "The Church Council shall act on resolutions from synod councils," according to ELCA 14.21.11. Synod Councils also may seek to address churchwide units through resolutions. These must be submitted to the Church Council's Executive Committee for appropriate referral, according to ELCA 14.41.11., which specifies that the council's Executive Committee "shall transmit resolutions from synods to the appropriate unit or units of the churchwide organization." Synods also may forward resolutions emerging from the Synod Council for attention by the Church Council or referral to churchwide units by the Church Council's Executive Committee.

⁵ Synod Assemblies pass Memorials to the Churchwide Assembly. This is in keeping with ELCA 12.21.c., which declares, "The Churchwide Assembly shall...receive and consider proposals from synod assemblies." In preparation for the Churchwide Assembly, a "Memorials Committee, appointed by the Church Council, shall review memorials from synodical assemblies and make appropriate recommendations for assembly action" (ELCA 12.51.21.).

5. For the text of resolutions, your assembly's Committee of Reference and Counsel or resolutions committee may find some basic information on the proper language of resolutions and memorials in *Robert's Rules of Order*.

▸ Normally, the "Whereas" clauses describe the issue, concern, problem, and basis for or need of the resolution. They state the case, but technically are not part of the resolution. They should be accurate and factual, and should not misrepresent the issue being addressed or offer a false foundation for the proposed action.

▸ "RESOLVED" clauses point to proposed solutions and define requested action.

"Resolved" clauses should clearly define: To whom is the request for action addressed? What should be done? What may the action cost and how is it to be funded? When should the action be done? To whom should the results be reported?

Obviously, a resolution of a Synod Council cannot direct the Church Council to take a specific action. Likewise, a memorial from a Synod Assembly cannot order that the Churchwide Assembly vote in a particular way. A memorial, by definition, is a proposal appealing for action.

Clarity in the text of any resolution or memorial is important. We have received a few over the years that were absolutely puzzling as to what was being asked. A good test is, "Does this statement in the resolution make any sense?" Will the resolution be understandable apart from its discussion in your assembly?

G. Planned Themes: In response to requests from congregations and synods, as well as from the stewardship team and other program planners, a theme committee was directed to undertake long-range planning for future themes. These themes will inform planning for churchwide assemblies and program resources in the coming years.

▸ **2002:** For A.D. 2002, the recommended theme for synodical assemblies is: "**Making Christ Known: Promise for a New Day.**"

▸ **2003:** For A.D. 2003, the projected theme for synodical assemblies and the Churchwide Assembly is: "**Making Christ Known: For the Healing of the World.**" This is the theme also for the tenth assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in July 2003.

▸ **2004:** For A.D. 2004, the recommended theme for synodical assemblies and churchwide programs is: "**Making Christ Known: Let None Be Forgotten.**"

▸ **2005:** For A.D. 2005, the projected theme for synodical assemblies and the Churchwide Assembly is: "**Making Christ Known: Through the Word Inviting.**"

Thank you for your conscientious service on behalf of this church as secretary of your synod. The staff of the Office of the Secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is committed to supporting and assisting you as you fulfill your strategic responsibilities as synodical secretary.