

# 7 Standing Rules

Standing Rules of Order for Assemblies

Assembly Vocabulary

Voting Member in Action

**SIERRA PACIFIC SYNOD  
STANDING RULES OF ORDER for ASSEMBLIES**

**I. MEMBERSHIP AND CREDENTIALS**

- A. Voting and non-voting membership shall be as stated in the Constitution and Bylaws.
- B. Every congregation shall send the credentials of its lay voting members, duly elected, to the Registrar at least thirty 30 days prior to the opening of the Assembly.
- C. The Credentials Committee, consisting of three (3) persons appointed by the Assembly Planning Committee, shall be responsible for the certification of all clergy and lay members and shall maintain a record of their attendance at the Assembly.

**II. FLOOR SEATING**

- A. All members shall record their presence upon arrival at the Assembly site, and be identified throughout the Assembly by wearing the appropriate member badge. Badges are non-transferable and must be worn at all times.
- B. Seating of voting members on the convention floor shall be at designated tables. Members must be at their proper seats in order for their vote to be counted. Voting members at other tables or standing in the aisles or doorways will not be included in any count.
- C. Tables for members with voice only will be identified and are for these persons only. Other members will be seated in chairs located at either end of the meeting hall.
- D. Visitors shall be permitted to sit at main meeting hall tables with voting members.

**III. RESOLUTIONS**

As the highest legislative body of the Sierra Pacific Synod, the Synod Assembly requests action by the three expressions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (congregations, synod, or churchwide) through resolutions. Therefore, the resolution process is an integral component of the business of the Assembly.

**A. Submission of Resolutions**

- 1. Resolutions submitted by the Synod Council or the Bishop shall be presented directly to the Assembly without change.
- 2. Resolutions proposed or endorsed by synod congregations, conferences, discipling teams, task forces, affiliated organizations and institutions, or at least fifteen voting members of the Assembly shall be submitted to the Resolutions Committee for presentation to the Assembly.

3. Resolutions to be presented to the Assembly through the Resolutions Committee shall be reviewed by the Synod Council prior to the Assembly, and the Council may recommend action to the Assembly.

4. Only the bishop and groups and organizations listed in subsections 1, 2, and 3 above may submit resolutions for presentation to the Assembly.

#### B. Resolutions Committee

1. There shall be a Resolutions Committee consisting of seven (7) persons, appointed by the Synod Council for staggered, non-renewable three year terms; the Council shall designate the committee chairperson.

2. The committee shall receive, review and prepare resolutions, in consultation with the submitters of resolutions, for presentation to the Synod Assembly, and may edit or consolidate resolutions for clarity and procedural purposes. A voting member of the Assembly may move to substitute the original resolution in place of the committee's revised version of the resolution.

3. The committee may recommend action on any resolution that the committee presents to the Assembly, including the adoption or rejection of the resolution, or a referral of the proposed action to another synodical entity; and, the committee may state its rationale for the recommendation.

4. If the Resolutions Committee is of the opinion that a resolution is unconstitutional, it shall note that opinion when the resolution is presented to the Assembly.

5. The Resolutions Committee may present multiple resolutions to the Synod Assembly en bloc for consideration, provided notice is given to the Voting Members of the Assembly prior to the adoption of the Agenda. A voting member of the Assembly may request that an individual resolution be removed from en bloc consideration by notifying the Synod Secretary before the close of the first plenary session of the Assembly.

#### C. Time Table

1. The deadline for resolutions to be received in the Synod Office shall be February 1 of each year. The purpose of this provision is to have materials distributed to voting members approximately thirty (30) days prior to the Assembly.

2. Resolutions not meeting this deadline, resolutions that are the direct result of the Assembly's response to items that are listed on the Assembly agenda, and resolutions that address issues of such an immediate and urgent nature that they clearly cannot be postponed until the next Assembly, shall be placed on the agenda **ONLY AFTER SUBMISSION TO THE COMMITTEE ON RESOLUTIONS AND A 2/3 AFFIRMATIVE VOTE OF THE ASSEMBLY**. With the exception of resolutions of courtesy and thanks, no resolutions other than those submitted for consideration under these guidelines shall be introduced from the convention floor.

3. Resolutions submitted to the Synod Office after the February 1st deadline and up to three (3) weeks before the start of the Assembly shall be referred to the Committee on Resolutions for expeditious preparation. Those resolutions, as amended with the consent of the submitter(s) or together with any amendment to be proposed by the Committee on Resolutions, and a transmittal letter from the Resolutions Chair shall then be distributed to the voting members of the Assembly by the submitter(s). If sufficient time remains for distribution by mail through the congregations, the Synod Office shall supply mailing labels for the Synod's congregations, and the transmittal letter shall ask the recipient congregations to copy and distribute the urgent late resolution to the Assembly voting members. If time is too short for mailing, the submitter(s) shall deliver sufficient copies of the proposed late resolution and transmittal letter to the Assembly site during the day prior to the start of the Assembly and the materials will be included in the voting members' packets. Resolutions submitted within three (3) weeks of the start of the Assembly or during the Assembly shall first be referred to the Committee on Resolutions, and then to the Synod Secretary for permission to distribute on the floor of the Assembly. Upon receiving permission, submitter(s) shall provide sufficient copies of the prepared late resolution for distribution by Assembly distributors. Submitters of ALL distributed late resolutions shall also provide sufficient additional copies of the resolution for supplemental distribution on the floor of the Assembly. All costs of duplicating and mailing late resolutions and related required documents shall be borne by the submitter(s).

#### **IV. DEBATE**

A. Members wishing to address the Assembly shall proceed to one of the designated floor microphones and wait until recognized by the Chair. During debate on any issue, the Chair shall, in so far as possible, alternate between those speaking in favor and those speaking against the motion on the floor.

B. All speakers, when recognized by the Chair, shall state their name and the congregation or organization which they represent or other capacity which entitles them to speak.

C. All motions and amendments (except those of a procedural nature) to be considered by the Assembly shall be delivered to the Chair in writing at the time of presentation. Motion forms must be completed, signed and sent to the platform in order to receive consideration.

D. During floor debate, no person shall speak more than two (2) minutes or more than twice on the same motion. The Chair may rule additional time for purpose of information or clarification. Floor debate on any one resolution normally shall be limited to fifteen (15) minutes and may be extended at the discretion of the Chair.

E. A member obtaining the microphone for the purpose of debate may not at the same time "move the previous question" or make another incidental motion.

F. All incidental and procedural motions (e.g. "move the previous question", etc.) must be made at a microphone.

G. No part of this section shall be construed to apply to messages and reports by agencies, officers of the synod, or to guest speakers to whom special time has been allotted.

## **V. APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS**

A. Any proposal to appropriate funds 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, except that amendments to the proposed budget which do not change the budget total may be approved by a simple majority of the Synod Assembly. (S10.04)

## **VI. NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS**

A. There shall be a Nominating Committee as defined in the Constitution and Bylaws.

B. The following procedures shall apply to all nominations:

1. Polaroid pictures of all candidates shall be displayed in a primary place at the first session of the Synod Assembly.

2. All candidates shall wear ribbons or other accoutrements provided by the synod designating them as candidates.

3. Each candidate shall introduce him/herself during a ten-second appearance on stage, giving: name, congregation, conference, and one position of service.

4. Each candidate shall have a vita in the Bulletin of Reports.

5. The initial ballot for each office shall list the names of candidates in alphabetical order; each succeeding ballot shall list the names by order of votes received, with the highest number listed first.

6. No reference to incumbency, racial or ethnic background, language, or any other distinction shall be noted on the ballot.

C. There shall be an Elections Committee, consisting of one representative of the Nominating Committee (appointed by that Committee), and three other persons appointed by the Synod Council. This Committee shall supervise all elections at the Assembly.

D. All elections shall be in accordance with Chapter 9 of the constitution of the Sierra Pacific Synod.

E. The elections for all positions in the Synod shall be by written ballot. Unless otherwise stipulated, the Nominating Committee shall nominate at least two names for each position to be filled, and further nominations may be made from the floor with the consent of the nominee.

F. Nomination from the floor may be accepted in writing from any voting member at a Nomination Center which shall be open during the registration and remain open until at least 30

minutes following the close of the first business session of the Assembly, except that nominations for the Council at Large position may be accepted until 30 minutes following the close of the session in which the election of other Council members is reported. Such nominations shall include a statement that consent to serve if elected has been given by the nominee, as well as any other materials necessary to fulfill requirements for nomination included in these rules. Acceptance of a nomination by the Nominations Center places a candidate in nomination; agenda time need not be provided for verbal nominations. The Nominations Center shall be established and supervised by the Nominating Committee.

G. Unless otherwise stipulated, a majority of the votes cast shall be necessary for election in all elections by the Assembly; the names of the persons receiving the highest number of votes, but not elected by a majority of the votes cast on a preceding ballot, shall be entered on the next ballot to the number of two for each vacancy unfilled.

H. The Election for Bishop shall be governed by the provisions of the Constitution and Bylaws. The Assembly agenda shall include time for those candidates receiving at least 5% of the votes on the third ballot to address the Assembly prior to the fourth ballot: provided, however, that if fewer than three candidates receive 5% on the third ballot, the top three candidates on that ballot shall address the Assembly. The agenda may also include other opportunities for delegates to meet or hear from such candidates. The specific plans for such interaction (including time allowed, format, etc.) shall be approved by the Synod Council and adopted by the Assembly as part of the agenda.

## **VII. ISSUES OF CONSCIENCE**

A. The agenda of the Synod Assembly may allow up to one hour for the voicing of issues of conscience and concern. Each person speaking shall be allowed 5 minutes to voice a concern. There shall be no response to any speaker nor discussion of any issue following the presentations.

B. AN ISSUE OF CONSCIENCE OR CONCERN MAY BE PRESENTED BY ANY PERSON WHO IS CERTIFIED AS A VOTING MEMBER OF THE SYNOD ASSEMBLY. Each person desiring to voice a concern must submit his/her name and statement of subject matter to the Synod Office at least 5 days prior to the beginning of the Assembly.

## **VIII. LITERATURE AND MATERIALS**

A. All materials for distribution to delegates at the Synod Assembly shall be in the Synod Office, or other designated place, no later than five working days prior to the opening of the Assembly.

B. Only literature and materials approved by the Synod Secretary or his/her designee(s) shall be distributed or displayed on the floor of the Synod Assembly or in the area designated for displays and exhibits.

## **IX. DISPLAYS AND EXHIBITS**

A. Authorization for setting up displays and exhibits, and for placing posters, announcements, etc., at Assemblies of the Sierra Pacific Synod shall be limited to those agencies or groups which are affiliated with the Synod or the ELCA, or are direct beneficiaries of the synodical or churchwide budget. The selling of goods or services will not be allowed, except that the ELCA Publishing House will be permitted a commercial display area. All exceptions to this rule must be approved in advance by the Secretary of the Synod or his/her designee.

## **X. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

A. The adjournment of the Assembly shall put to an end all business unfinished at the close of the session, unless delegates have specifically voted to place a given item on the agenda of the next regular Synod Assembly. Resolutions not yet considered by the Assembly shall be referred to the Synod Council, or to any committee or agency of the Synod. Such referral shall be for study only unless specifically referred for implementation.

## **XI. PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE**

A. The Bishop shall appoint one or more parliamentarians who shall give advice and assistance on matters of parliamentary procedure.

B. Unless otherwise ordered, parliamentary procedure shall be in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition.

## **XII. AMENDMENTS AND SUSPENSION**

These Rules of Order may be amended or suspended for a definite purpose by a two thirds (2/3) vote of the members.

# *Assembly Vocabulary*

Language is always changing. One of the language changes that came about for us at the birth of the ELCA was the change from the word delegate to the words voting member. An explanation of the rationale for this specific change can help us as we prepare for the 2009 Assembly.

Voting members are not delegates. The terms Synod Assembly and Churchwide Assembly and voting members were deliberately chosen for our governing documents.

These words reflect the ecclesial understanding that the three primary expressions of this church—congregation, synod, and churchwide organization—exist and serve within this one church.

The congregation does not meet in convention; the members gather in worship, carry out service, and assemble occasionally and properly for governance decisions and elections.

The people of this church in each of the 65 synods are not sent as delegates from a given caucus; they are not gathered to act or come as politicized delegates to a regional party convention. Rather, they assemble as duly selected members of this church with voting responsibilities for governance and elections on behalf of the synod. The Synod Assembly is just that, an assembly of the people of this church, some of whom have been granted the responsibility of being voting members of the Synod Assembly.

The people of this church, when gathered as voting members of the Synod Assembly, have the responsibility of electing the voting members of the Churchwide Assembly. Persons so chosen are given the responsibility for doing the work of the Churchwide Assembly; they are to serve and care for the needs and well-being of this whole church.

## **Underscores Unity**

The vocabulary that we use both shapes and reflects our understanding of this church. When we recognize and understand that our congregations find their fulfillment in the universal community of the Church, and the universal Church exists in and through congregations (ELCA Churchwide Constitution 3.02), then our awareness of the significance of being voting members in a given assembly may grow. After all, as we declare in the documents of the Church, this Church derives its character and powers both from the sanction and representation of its congregations and from its inherent nature as an expression of the broader fellowship of the faith.

We seek together to (a) understand more clearly, and (b) embrace more completely the conviction that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall seek to function as people of God through congregations, synod, and the churchwide organization, all of which shall be interdependent. Each part, while fully the church, recognizes that it is not the whole church and therefore lives in partnership relationship with the others.

Indeed we affirm and declare the primary principal of organization for our church, namely, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall be one church.

Within this one church voting members, advisory members, non-voting members, visitors, and staff will gather to carry out the work of the Synod Assembly.

# Voting Member in Action

*A voting member of the Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly is the “voice at the microphone” helping to shape important policy decisions. This guide contains a few suggestions to help you be a part of this large deliberative body and to better participate as part of your congregation, synod and the church as a whole.*

## **A Synod-wide Point of View**

*The issues affecting the church are common to all areas of the synod; but differences arise. A program that works in one area may not serve in another. The unity of ideals and diversity of tradition, so much a part of the church, appear at the Synod Assembly. In spite of a common dedication to our Lord Jesus Christ, differences of opinion on various issues are certain to appear among voting members from various areas of the synod.*

## **Participation**

*Voting members should have the Assembly Handbook available online. Please study the contents of these materials as they are the basis for all business during the Assembly sessions. Packets with materials from partners will be given out at registration.*

**Agenda**—check the agenda in the front of the Assembly Handbook for the time of plenary sessions, hearings and workshops. Concerned members attend all sessions, arrive prior to the starting time and remain to the end of the session.

The **Standing Rules of Order** are found elsewhere in the Assembly Handbook. These rules govern the conduct of business and the actions of the voting members throughout the Assembly.

*If a voting member wishes to make or amend a motion (other than of a procedural nature), a written copy **must** be presented to the Secretary on the platform before or immediately after the motion or amendment is offered. Forms are available at the front of the Assembly hall. The forms also contain information on the format of a motion for your information. The pink (third) copy is for your use.*

*Constitution and Bylaw changes, resolutions and legislative matters are important items of business. They should be studied carefully, since members will be voting on them. ( The entire **Constitution** may be downloaded from [www.spselca.org](http://www.spselca.org). )*

## **Representing Is Reporting**

*One can never convey completely to those who are not there the color and excitement of a Synod assembly. Every member of your congregation, however, should be informed of the basic decisions made by the Assembly. If a member of the Assembly can express how different points of view appeared and how matters were resolved, this will contribute to the overall understanding of the Assembly by members of your congregation.*

## **How Can Voting Members Be Heard?**

*Voting members are seated at tables reserved for them. A voting member **must** be seated at a table for the purposes of voting, speaking at a microphone and being counted in a quorum.*

*Floor microphones are numbered and placed on the Assembly floor in strategic locations. A voting member wishing to speak:*

*approaches the microphone nearest his/her assigned tables.*

*waits to be recognized by the chair (usually the bishop).*

*states his/her name and congregation, organization or other capacity which entitles him/her to speak.*

*states the purpose for speaking.*

### **What Can a Voting Member Do with a Motion?**

A voting member may debate an issue which has been properly placed before the Assembly. The maker of a motion is entitled to speak first.

When a motion has been made and seconded (if necessary), and a voting member has been properly recognized, the member may:

speaking in favor of or opposition to a motion.  
move to amend a motion and speak to the amendment.

move to postpone to a definite time.

move to refer to a committee.

ask for a point of information/point of order.

move the previous question.

Motions to amend are usually stated in one of the following forms:

**“I move to amend by striking** (deleting); **adding** (additional words at the end of a sentence or paragraph); **inserting** (new words to be included, other than at the end) ...”

**“I move to amend by substituting \_\_\_\_.”** Such motions may deal with words, sentences or paragraphs. If the amendment calls for much deletion or substitution, it is proper to move to amend “by substituting for the motion before us the following ...”

Motions will be acted upon in the following order:

1. Non-debatable motions:  
to adjourn  
to lay on the table or postpone  
to cease debate (“move the previous question”)
2. An amendment to an amendment or substitute amendment.
3. An amendment to a main motion.
4. A main motion.

Voting members shall speak to the last motion stated by the chair (main motion, amendment, substitution, etc.).

### **What is meant by ...**

**“I move the previous question.”** This is a time-honored motion to cease debate on the immediate motion. The Assembly may not debate this motion and must act on it immediately. You must have been recognized by the chair to make this motion. Simply calling out “Call for the Question!” from your table is not proper. If the motion passes (it requires a  $\frac{2}{3}$  vote), the presiding officer must next call for a vote on the motion before the Assembly. If the motion on the previous question fails, the Assembly may continue debate.

**“I move to refer to ...”** (a committee). This motion is debatable and requires a second. If it passes, the item of business is referred for whatever purpose the motion states—for study, action or presentation at a future Assembly. If this motion does not pass, the item of business is still to be acted upon by the Assembly.

**“I move to postpone ...”** (to a definite time). If seconded and passed, the item of business will be taken up at the time specified. This is used to delay action until that time.

**“I move to reconsider ...”** (a previous vote). When seconded and passed, this brings up for review an item previously decided. Only a person who voted on the prevailing side on the previous motion may make or second this motion.

**“I move to lay on the table ...”** This motion, which must be seconded, but is not debatable, is used to set aside the pending question temporarily. There is no set time for taking up the original question again, but its consideration can be resumed at the will of a majority of the Assembly. The matter dies if it is not taken up prior to the close of the Assembly.

