

2023 Policies and Procedures of The Minneapolis Area Synod Reference & Counsel Committee

PURPOSE OF THE REFERENCE AND COUNSEL COMMITTEE

1. The purpose of the Reference and Counsel Committee (RCC) of the Minneapolis Area Synod (MAS) is to facilitate the mission of the MAS and the greater church by organizing the actions of the Synod meeting in Assembly, as outlined in these policies and procedures.

APPOINTMENT AND MEMBERSHIP

2. An RCC, consisting of not fewer than six members, nor greater than eight members, will be appointed annually by the Minneapolis Area Synod Council (MAS Council). The MAS Council sometimes appoints one of its members to serve on the RCC in order to foster full and complete communication and coordination prior to the Assembly.
3. Its membership will strive to approximate an equitable distribution of lay people and rostered ministers within the MAS. Effective RCC members possess significant written communication skills and the capacity to respect positions different from their own on issues to be brought before the Assembly.
4. The RCC will elect a chairperson at its first regularly scheduled meeting.
5. The appointed Parliamentarian (appointed by the MAS Council) serves as a non-voting, advisory member of the RCC.
6. The RCC encourages the Bishop to appoint a member of the MAS staff to serve as a member of the RCC by no later than six months before the Assembly, and sooner if possible.

DUTIES OF THE REFERENCE AND COUNSEL COMMITTEE

7. The RCC will prepare Guidelines for Resolutions and Memorials, and proposed Rules of Procedure for the purpose of encouraging and promoting effective preparation, consideration, and action concerning all resolutions and memorials properly brought to the Minneapolis Area Synod meeting in Assembly.
8. The RCC will receive all submitted resolutions and take one of four actions:
 - i. Accept for consideration by the Assembly;
 - ii. Redirect to another body within the MAS;
 - iii. Return to the author/contact person without further action; or
 - iv. Recommend the concerns/issues identified by the resolution be engaged in a manner that does not include a vote. Such engagement may be in the form of group presentation/discussion, action-strategy sessions, or other means.
9. The RCC is responsible for submitting the Proposed Rules of Procedure and the Guidelines for Resolutions and Memorials to the MAS Synod Council.
10. The RCC will determine the deadline by which all resolutions intended for consideration by the Assembly must be submitted to the RCC for consideration and review. Such deadline must be consistent with the Synod Constitution.

PROCEDURES FOR WORKING WITH RESOLUTIONS AND MEMORIALS

11. All properly submitted resolutions and memorials accepted by the RCC for referral to the Assembly will be considered and reviewed by the RCC in order to assist the author/contact person with revising such resolutions as necessary to ensure clarity, succinctness, and consistency with the intended purpose of the resolution or memorial in order that such resolutions and memorials receive a fair hearing before the Assembly. In order to do so, the RCC may contact such author/contact person in order to render such assistance or to gather relevant information.

12. The RCC, after discussion with the author/contact person, and the agreement of the majority of the RCC members present, may redirect/return/make other recommendations for any resolution or memorial in accordance with #8 above.
13. The RCC will evaluate resolutions and memorials for acceptance using the following criteria:
 - a. Action by the Assembly on a resolution or memorial must be consistent with the Constitution, Bylaws, existing social statements of the ELCA, and all other governing documents of the MAS and the churchwide expression of the ELCA.
 - b. A resolution or 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 or memorial must be accurate and respectful, and should inform the readers' understanding of the resolution or memorial.
14. In reviewing resolutions and memorials, the RCC will adhere to the standards set forth in the Constitution, specifically noting that all resolutions requiring an expenditure of funds must contain an estimate of fiscal impact and that any proposal to appropriate funds, whether by amendment to the budget or otherwise, which is presented to a meeting of the Synod Assembly without the approval of the MAS Council shall require a two-thirds vote of the Assembly for adoption (S10.04.).
15. The RCC will provide a short summary, one paragraph in length, of each resolution or memorial brought to the Assembly for consideration.
16. Resolutions or memorials not accepted by the RCC for consideration by the Assembly or another body will be returned to the author/contact person with an explanation of the RCC's decision.
17. The RCC will also receive, review, and act upon all other items brought to the Assembly that are not contained in the Assembly agenda. Such RCC actions may include a decision that any such item should properly be brought to the Assembly, referred to another body for consideration, or that such item is not eligible for Assembly consideration in the form offered.
18. Any RCC decision to refer or return a resolution or memorial may be reversed by a two-thirds majority vote of the Assembly, following a motion initiated from a Voting Member who has gathered at least 25 signatures of support from credentialed Voting Members.
19. The RCC may, in consultation with the Bishop, group resolutions together in a consent agenda. Items may be removed from a consent agenda block by a vote of the Assembly following the procedures in the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order.
20. A resolution or memorial received after the submission deadline will not be accepted by the RCC for consideration, unless the RCC, by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of its members, determines that it (1) is of immediate, urgent, and overriding importance related to an issue that could not have been anticipated prior to the deadline; or (2) addresses a previously accepted resolution or memorial.

OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMITTEE

21. The RCC will report on the status of the previous Assembly's adopted resolutions and memorials during each Assembly, based on information provided to the RCC by the Synod Staff person serving on the RCC no later than one month prior to the Assembly. A report on the status of these resolutions will be posted on the synod's website prior to the current year's Assembly.
22. The RCC will review and approve all materials proposed for distribution to the Assembly's voting members that are consistent with the standards for resolutions and memorials established in this document.
23. The RCC is available to advise the bishop on amendments to resolutions or memorials at the assembly.