



2026 Synod Secretaries Orientation

Oct. 22, 2026



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America





ELCA

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America





Secretary CeCee Mills



Evangelical
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in America



WHO WE ARE

The Office of the Secretary is led by **Secretary Lucille CeCee Mills** and is comprised of six teams that support the mission of the ELCA through:

- Administration
- Governance
- Legal and Risk Management
- Meeting management
- Research and Evaluation
- Synod Relations



WHAT WE DO

The Office of the Secretary provides administrative services and tools for ELCA leaders who are serving this church in their congregations, synods and the churchwide organization, especially those given responsibility for governance of the ELCA.

The secretary interprets the constitutions and other governing documents of this church and is responsible for maintaining its rosters, the ELCA archives, and the minutes and records of certain meetings.

The Office of the Secretary receives the annual report of the congregations, provides travel and physical arrangements for meetings of the churchwide organization, compiles information for the online ELCA Directory, staffs the nominating processes of this church and coordinates the use of legal counsel.

Administration

Executive, Deacon Katharyn Wheeler



- Archives - *Cathy Lundeen*
- Congregation Support
- Document Management - *Dan Eppley*
- Constitutions
- Roster Minister Support
 - ECIS/Portals - *Lauren Gioe*
- Staffing Nominating Process



Governance

Executive, Jodi Slattery

- Church Council
- Executive Committee



Legal and Risk Management

General Counsel, Thomas Cunniff

- Interpreting ELCA Constitutions and Legal Documents
- Coordinating Legal Counsel Use
- Providing 501c3 Group Ruling Exemption Letters 501c3@elca.org
- Risk Management Rob Thoma



Meeting Management

Director, Dana Adams

- Meetings and Events
- Coordinating travel and logistics



Research and Evaluation

Senior Director, Adam DeHoek



- Annual Congregation Report (Form A)
 - Deadline March 1st
 - Extended deadline
 - Later deadlines are just to get content not to be included in synod CWA representation numbers
- Congregational Pulse Surveys



Synod Relations

- Conference of Bishops
- Systems Academy
- Support for Synod Assemblies
- Listserves
 - Synod Administrators
 - Synod Secretaries
 - Bishop Assistants
 - Conference of Bishops
 - Synod VPs



Duties of the Synod Secretary

†S8.32. in the *Constitution for Synods* states:

The secretary shall:

- a. Keep the minutes of all meetings of the Synod Assembly and Synod Council, be responsible for 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.



ELCA Resource Library

Welcome to the downloadable resources web page of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

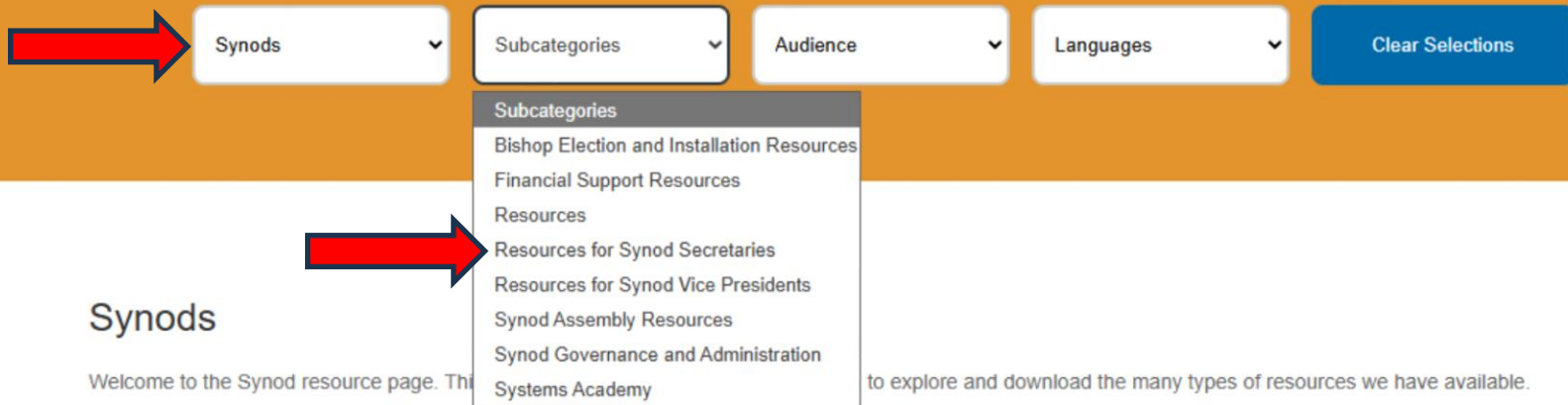
- **Resources are available online to help synod secretaries with:**
 - Taking minutes
 - Reporting synod activities to the churchwide organization
 - Updating the synod constitution
 - Creating, approving, and reporting synod memorials and resolutions

ELCA Resource Library

Welcome to the downloadable resources web page of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

If you're interested in ordering resources, we invite you to explore our [ELCA eStore Catalog](#).

To start a new search, use the "Clear Selection" button and select a new topic.



Synods Subcategories Audience Languages Clear Selections

Subcategories

- Bishop Election and Installation Resources
- Financial Support Resources
- Resources
- Resources for Synod Secretaries
- Resources for Synod Vice Presidents
- Synod Assembly Resources
- Synod Governance and Administration
- Systems Academy

Synods

Welcome to the Synod resource page. This page is designed to help you explore and download the many types of resources we have available.

[The ELCA resources page at Resources.ELCA.org](https://Resources.ELCA.org)

Questions? Contact: Daniel.Eppley@elca.org

Annual Congregation Report

Email communication: ELCA

December 9, 2026

congregations, SAWCs and new starts receive communication via email about the annual report process

Congregational letter: Congregations, SAWCs and new starts will receive a letter containing their ID and password.

Mailed early January 2027

Online submission of annual report forms

System opens mid-January

Submission date

March 1, 2027

Online resources

Informational videos

Reminders via email and *Seeds Monthly*

Winter/Spring 2027



Annual Congregation Report

New platform launched in January 2025



Pre-populated data from most recent submission



Embedded instructions and definitions



Delivery in multiple languages



Ability for congregations to update contact information directly

New this year: New questions – Age and Historically Underrepresented Groups

Questions?

Contact: Adam.DeHoek@elca.org or Destiny.Hisey@elca.org



Updating Your Synod Constitution

- **Mandatory** changes following a Churchwide Assembly
*(Amendments to **required** [†] provisions) see †S18.11.*
- **Optional** changes following a Churchwide Assembly
*(Verbatim amendments to **recommended** provisions) see †S18.12.*
- Other changes to **Provisions**
(Two-step approval. If presented by voting members, two votes of the Synod Assembly; if by Synod Council, one vote of the Synod Assembly. Church Council or Churchwide Assembly ratifies) See †S18.13.
- Changes to **Bylaws** see †S18.21.
- Changes to **Continuing Resolutions** see †S18.31.

Report all changes to Office of the Secretary and send an updated copy of your synod's constitution to Daniel.Eppley@elca.org

Amending Congregation Constitutions

See *Model Constitution for Congregations*, chaps. 16, 17, & 18

- Updates to comply with the *Model Constitution*

- Simplified path to update
- One congregation meeting
- No synod review, merely notification

- Other provisions

- Two-meeting process
- Synod ratification necessary

- Bylaws and continuing resolutions

- One-meeting process
- No synod ratification, merely notification



[More detailed information is available at this link.](#)

Corporate Filings

- Where is the synod incorporated?
- Are corporate filings up to date?
 - State of incorporation
 - State(s) of operation
- Who is the registered agent?
- Questions? Contact Your Synod Attorney

Terms and Election Timing for Officers, Synod Council, and Committees

Questions to ask:

- What is the term length?
- When do terms expire?
- Who is eligible for reelection?

(Which offices have term limits?)

For the answers, check your
synod's constitution: †S8.51, †S8.52,
†S10.01., and chapter 11



Keeping Track of Terms and Election Timing for Officers, Synod Council, and Committees

- Suggested Processes:
 - Build a spreadsheet
 - Schedule appropriate elections for the Synod Assembly
 - Ensure that the Synod Council promptly fills vacancies

Timely Meeting Notices

Be sure to:

- Comply with your synod constitution
- Comply with state law



Archiving

- The *Constitution for Synods* states (†S8.32) that “*The secretary shall...:*”
 - c. In consultation with the bishop, classify and arrange all important papers and documents and deposit them in the archives of this synod.”



Your Synod Archives

- The ELCA has a network of regional/synod archives that extend throughout the 9 geographic regions that make up the ELCA.
- Each Regional/Synod Archives is responsible for collecting the historical records of the synod, as well as records of closed ELCA congregations located in that region or synod.
- [This online resource](#) provides contact information for Regional/Synod Archives.
- The “Records Retention Schedule for Synods” has current retention recommendations for records generated and/or retained by the synod. It is available on [elca.org](#) [Follow this link to the site](#).
- Questions? Contact your synod office or Archives@elca.org.

SODA

(Synod Online Digital Archives)

- What is SODA?
 - A digital document repository/archive for synods that is accessed via ELCA Community. SODA is found on the synod portal page of ELCA Community.
- How do we access SODA?
 - Access SODA with your ELCA Community account after it has been given rights to access SODA by your synod's Synod Role Manager.





More SODA

- What is uploaded to SODA?
 - Synod Assembly minutes and reports; Synod Council agendas, minutes, exhibits; executive committee agendas, minutes, exhibits; synod constitutions; insurance policies; and synod policies and procedures.
- Exception: DO NOT upload executive session minutes.
- Who can see our SODA holdings?
 - Any synod staff or officer with rights to access SODA; the regional archivist for the region in which your synod is located; the manager for official documentation in the Office of the Secretary; ELCA archivists in the Office of the Secretary.

Memorials vs Resolutions

Memorials are adopted by your **Synod Assembly** and are addressed to the **Churchwide Assembly**. These address broad policy issues or programs in the churchwide organization. They are acted on every 3 years at the Churchwide Assembly.

Resolutions are adopted by your **Synod Council** or Synod Assembly and are addressed to the **Church Council**. Resolutions recommend a specific action and may be more time-sensitive as they can be addressed more quickly.

Memorials and Resolutions

Formatting

“WHEREAS” clauses come first. These present background information supporting the memorial or resolution; they should be accurate, clear, concise, and non-controversial. They are not technically part of the resolution or memorial and may be omitted.

“RESOLVED” clauses are the heart of the memorial or resolution. They present the action(s) the synod is asking the Churchwide Assembly or Church Council to take.

Reporting Synod Activities

Report Synod Assembly actions using the [Synod Assembly Report Form at this link](#)

A screenshot of a web-based form titled "Report of Synod Assembly Actions". The interface has a teal header bar with a "Forms" menu icon on the left, the title "Report of Synod Assembly Actions" in the center, and a "Saved" status on the right. On the far right of the header are icons for "Preview", "Theme", and a "Collect responses" button. Below the header, the form is divided into two main sections: "Questions" on the left and "Responses" on the right, which shows a count of "57". The "Questions" section contains the title "Report of Synod Assembly Actions" with a share icon, followed by the text "If you have any difficulties with this form, please contact Daniel.Eppley@elca.org". Below this is a section labeled "Section 1". The background of the form is decorated with colorful mosaic patterns.

Send memorials, resolutions, and updates to your synod constitution to Daniel.Eppley@elca.org

ANY
QUESTIONS?

