

Telling It Like It Is: Meeting Minutes

A key part of your job as secretary is keeping accurate records of the business of the synod. Following each meeting of the Synod Assembly, Synod Council, or Executive Committee of the Synod Council you should create a record of the meeting that includes:

- **the agenda** for the meeting, listing items discussed at the meeting;
- additional materials distributed at or before the meeting, often referred to as **exhibits**; and
- **the minutes** of the meeting.

Meeting minutes

The heart of the meeting record is the minutes of the meeting. The purpose of the minutes is to record the official actions of a meeting so absent members know what happened and the official actions of the meeting will be remembered accurately in the future.

Taking minutes like a pro

According to the National Association of Parliamentarians, when it comes to taking minutes, **less is more**. Meeting minutes **should** include the following items:

- the name of the group that is meeting, along with the date, time, and place of the meeting;
- the names and offices of the people who attended the meeting;
- the names and offices of people who presented reports;
- the name of any guest speaker and the subject of their presentation (not a summary of the presentation itself);
- the names of people who made important motions;
- the wording of motions brought before the group, whether the motion passed or not;
- a record of what happened to each motion (was it passed, defeated, postponed, etc.); and
- the time at which the meeting adjourned.

Meeting minutes **should not** include the following *unless the group explicitly tells the secretary to include them*:

- personal opinions, including adjectives like “great report,” or “intense debate”;
- what was said when debating motions (although the minutes might note that debate occurred);
- the names of people who seconded motions;
- the names of people who made minor motions (like calling the question or postponing the question);
- summaries of officer reports, committee reports, or presentations by guest speakers.

Keeping track of Synod Assembly, Synod Council, and Executive Committee actions

A key purpose of minutes is recording actions taken by the group. To make it easier to refer to actions in later minutes, agendas, or reports, it is important to have a system for coding Synod Council and Synod Assembly actions.

Your synod may already have a coding system that works for you. The following four-part system is recommended if you are looking for a coding system:

- **a code that identifies the group taking action:** Synod Assembly = “SA,” Synod Council = “SC,” and Synod Council Executive Committee = “SCEC,” followed by
- **a number indicating the year in which the action was taken**, followed by a period,
- **a number indicating the month in which the action was taken**, followed by a period, and
- **a number indicating how many actions have been taken by the group during the current year**. This number restarts at 01 each January but should not restart at 01 each month.

For example, the sixth action taken by the Synod Council in 2026, if it occurred in May, would be codified:

