

## ***Leaving the ELCA Procedural Advice***

From Faithful Transitions Blog (<http://faithfultransition.blogspot.com/>) by Steven King

### **Administration of the Voting Process at Special Meetings to Disaffiliate from the ELCA**

Given that many churches are planning for important votes at upcoming congregational meetings, some have asked questions about how votes should best be conducted. Here is some advice on how your congregation can do that well:

1) For a meeting at which a major vote is scheduled, it is recommended that individual ballots be prepared in advance for each vote to be taken. The alternatives on the ballot sheets should be clearly marked and proper explanation given, so that people know what they are voting for. Tellers (vote-counters) should be elected/appointed at the meeting, according to the normal procedures of the congregation, and their names recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

2) Even if the congregation normally uses a more informal approach to voting, for meetings where significant votes of record will take place, it is recommended that members be asked to register as voting members as they enter the meeting. Official ballots are distributed only to those registered. This not only establishes the presence of a quorum (the minimum number of voting members needed to do business), it also provides a record of the total votes taken. (Note: members do not sign the ballots themselves, but are recorded on a separate sheet.)

3) The church constitution specifies the requirements for being considered a “voting member.” A list of voting members should be available at the registration table, should any questions arise. Though some congregations are better than others at maintaining accurate membership records, it is recommended that **NO CHANGES** be made to membership list of a congregation in the months prior to an important meeting, unless specifically requested by the member in question. It is **NOT** advisable for church leaders to “clean the membership rolls” just prior to a major vote, however out of date those records may be.

4) It is often the case that inactive and non-attending members will show up for a significant vote in a congregation. This may seem unfair to regular and active members; but it is the right of all eligible members to vote, and needs to be honored in good faith. (The registration table for an official congregational meeting is not the appropriate place to dispute another member’s level of participation.)

5) After the voting takes place, **DO NOT** destroy the completed ballots. They should be kept in a secure location as proof of the vote. The results of the vote should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. If any official action is taken by the

congregation concerning its denominational affiliation, that action should be reported in a letter from the Council President or Secretary to the Synod Office in the following week.

It would be appropriate to have a copies of the congregation's constitution and bylaws available for reference at (and prior to) congregational meetings for those who may have questions.