



Resurrection Lutheran Church
740 W 10th Street, Juneau, AK 99801 | 907 586 2380 | 907 586 6225 fax
rlcjuneau.org | juneaulive.org | showrunnercamp.org | rlcnorishes.org | [Zoom](#)
[Juneau Live! Studio on YouTube](#)

Synod Assembly 2025 Resolutions and Reports

*Position Statement in the Conflict with the Alaska Synod Bishops
of the Congregation Council of Resurrection Lutheran Church, Juneau, Alaska*

Overview

The 2025 Alaska Synod Assembly includes two items that require urgent clarification and response from the elected leadership of Resurrection Lutheran Church (RLC), Juneau:

- A resolution to confer the honorary title of “Bishop Emerita” on the Rev. Shelley Wickstrom;
- A detailed and one-sided account by Bishop Timothy Oslovich of the conflict at RLC, presented in his official Bishop’s Report.

These items, though styled as routine or celebratory, serve as strategic instruments to entrench a disputed narrative, mislead voting members of the Synod Assembly, and prejudge issues pending before the Alaska Superior Court.

Resolution Conferring Title of Bishop Emerita (Resolution 2025-2)

We affirm the value of honoring faithful service. However, the proposed timing and framing of this resolution must be understood in the context of the unresolved legal and constitutional crisis within the Synod precipitated by Bishop Wickstrom’s unprecedented and unlawful interference in the governance of RLC.

- In 2023 and 2024, Bishop Wickstrom took actions beyond her constitutional authority, including unilaterally appointing congregational officers and calling congregational votes without valid Council authorization.
- Her actions led directly to the current litigation, a deep division within the congregation, and the destabilization of multiple RLC ministries.
- The honorary resolution makes no mention of these events, instead portraying her tenure as uniformly wise, humble, and faithful—an incomplete and misleading record.

By advancing this resolution at this time, the Synod Assembly risks adopting a hagiographic portrayal of a figure whose legacy is the very subject of judicial scrutiny. We believe this resolution is being used to insulate her conduct from legitimate inquiry.

Bishop Oslovich’s Report on Resurrection Lutheran Church

The Bishop’s official report to the Assembly singles out RLC in a manner that is both unprecedented in scope and deeply biased in tone.

- The report presents as settled fact that Pastor Karen Perkins' call was properly ended, despite ongoing legal proceedings that challenge the legitimacy of that action.
- It fails to mention multiple constitutional violations: lack of quorum, absence of notice, exclusion of voting members, and improperly seated officers—all documented and submitted to the Court in affidavits.
- It suggests a unified congregation under an appointed interim pastor, ignoring that the lawfully elected Council continues to function, maintain ministries, and hold regular meetings.
- It characterizes the ongoing conflict in language that erases the voice of RLC's duly elected leaders, and reframes constitutional governance as mere dissent.

This use of an official Synod report to cast judgment on a matter under active litigation is wholly inappropriate and potentially prejudicial. Karen Lawfer presented a statement before Bishop Oslovich's Report to the 2025 Alaska Synod Assembly. (See Addendum [President Karen Lawfer's Statement Read at the 2025 Synod Assembly](#).)

Recent Development Regarding Legitimacy of Actions taken Lisa Brendle

A recent development raises serious concerns about the legitimacy of actions taken RLC congregation member (and improperly appointed 2025 Synod Assembly voting member at an alleged "annual meeting" – see RLC Council Position Statement [What Happens Next and Your Involvement](#)) Lisa Brendle, acting as president of RLC. Under the RLC Constitution (C12.02), no member may serve on the council for more than six consecutive years. Ms. Brendle exceeded this term limit in 2024 and, as such, was not eligible to serve on council during the past year and a half years—let alone as its president.

The record shows she was aware, or should have been aware, of this disqualification. Notably, her own relative, Mr. McMullen, previously advised Ms. Lawfer to step down after reaching her term limit in 2022. Ms. Brendle's continuation on council and her assumption of the presidency despite these restrictions directly violate the RLC Constitution and render subsequent actions—including the filing of this lawsuit—unauthorized and ultra vires. (See Addendum [Exhibit D Lawfer Affidavit](#))

Conclusion and Call to Action

The RLC Council urges Synod Assembly participants to:

- Read all RLC Council Position Statements and supporting affidavit linked below.
- Reject attempts to pre-empt judicial process with honorary resolutions and biased narratives.
- Defend the constitutional rights of congregations under ELCA polity.
- Pray for honest discernment, accountability, and healing within the Alaska Synod.
- Contact RLC Council President Karen Lawfer, klawfer@gci.net, (907) 723-2123.

Prepared by Congregation Counsel of Resurrection Lutheran Church Council and reaffirmed as an official position statement by the Council on September 18, 2025, on information and belief, subject to reasonable amendment by Counsel, with concurrence of the Congregation President.

Addendums

[President Karen Lawfer's Statement Read at the 2025 Synod Assembly](#)

[Exhibit D Lawfer Affidavit](#)

[Helpful Summaries to the RLC Council Position Statements](#)

[Index to RLC Council Position Statements and Addendums](#)

Links to RLC Council Position Statements

[Understanding Constitutional Violations](#)

[Authoritarianism, Secrecy and Complicity](#)

[Challenge to Act Justly, Seek Truth and Fulfill Fiduciary Duty](#)

[What Happens Next and Your Involvement](#)

Addendum

President Karen Lawfer's Statement Read at the 2025 Synod Assembly

Karen Lawfer presented this statement before Bishop Oslovich's Report to the 2025 Alaska Synod Assembly (speaking notes in italics, non-italics words were read).

1. *Opening (tone: calm, respectful, firm):*

- *I am Karen Lawfer, a congregation member of Resurrection Lutheran Church in Juneau.*
- *Thank you for the opportunity to briefly address you before the Bishop's report.*

2. *A Simple Request: Respect the Constitution*

- Resurrection Lutheran Church has operated under the ELCA Model Constitution faithfully for decades.
- Our current conflict is not about personalities — it is about constitutional governance.
- When constitutional procedures are not followed — by bishops or councils — real harm is done to congregations and ministries.

3. *A Constitutional Crisis Ignored*

- In 2024, our council corrected improper officer elections caused by documented bullying.
- Instead of supporting the congregation's constitutional correction, the then-Bishop overruled us — without authority — to force a congregational vote she herself had no power to call.
- That vote, conducted at a rushed meeting with inadequate notice and the wrong voting thresholds, became the basis for removing our pastor — and fracturing our church.

4. *Deep Harm to Ministries*

- Resurrection was thriving: growing ministries with Native Alaskan peoples, expanding community services, reaching younger participants through Juneau Live! Studio.
- The aftermath of these actions has gutted much of that momentum, deprived hundreds of services, and left loyal members marginalized.
- Despite this, Resurrection remains committed to ministry, justice, and love.

5. *Financial Concerns and Misuse of Authority*

- Funds meant for critical community programs were improperly seized — without congregational or council authorization.
- \$205,000 disappeared — including grant money that must be used by June 30 or lost — while leaders who acted constitutionally were locked out of financial records.

6. *Ongoing Legal Proceedings*

- These matters are now before the Alaska Superior Court in a lawsuit brought by a congregation member without congregation or council authorization, where constitutional—not theological—questions are properly being addressed.
- The Court has retained jurisdiction, recognizing that these are matters of civil corporate governance, not internal religious dispute.

President Lawfer's allocated two-minutes ended and she was not able to complete the remainder of her planned statement – included here for sake of completeness.

7. *A Request to You, the Assembly*

- As you listen today, please remember:
- There is another side to this story, backed by documents, affidavits, and court filings.
- Please do not allow our situation to be mischaracterized as simply a “dispute” between factions.
- This is about the constitutional life and witness of a congregation.
- Resurrection Lutheran Church remains committed to ministry, justice, transparency, and truth.

8. *Closing*

- I ask for your prayers, your open hearts, and your commitment to integrity — in the Synod and in every congregation.
- Thank you for hearing me.