

How Do We Make Changes in Our Congregation's Constitution?



Type of Change	Who Initiates the Change?	Purpose of the Change	Congregational Announcement	Initial Approval	Final Ratification	Confirming Action
Updating a congregational constitution following ELCA Churchwide Assembly (*C16.04.)	Congregation council <u>or</u> when requested by <u>NN</u> ¹ voting members to <u>update</u> their church constitution to conform to required or optional sections of the current ELCA Model Constitution	Comply with required or recommended sections of the current ELCA Model Constitution	<u>30 days</u> prior to a legally called congregational meeting, the council submits proposed updates by mail or electronic means to all voting members. The meeting should be announced at services on the preceding two consecutive Sundays ²	Majority vote of those voting members present and voting (50% + 1)	Not required. Constitutional changes conforming to the required or optional sections of the ELCA Model are effective upon initial approval.	The congregation secretary will submit a copy of the updated constitution to the synod office.
Adding, changing, or deleting a constitutional amendment³ (*C16.01.-03.)	Proposed by <u>NN</u> ¹ voting members <u>or</u> by congregation council <u>60 days</u> before initial approval by congregation	Establish significant changes in a document that guides the operation of the congregation	<u>30 days</u> prior to a legally called regular or special congregational meeting, voting members are notified by mail or electronic means of the proposed amendment and the council's recommendation	Majority vote of those voting members present and voting	Ratified without change at the next annual meeting by <u>2/3</u> vote of voting members present and voting.	The congregation secretary will submit a copy of approved and ratified amendments to the synod office for review and approval.
Adding, changing, or deleting a bylaw³ (*C17.01.-04.)	Proposed by any voting member and submitted in writing to the congregation council 60 days before a regular or special congregation meeting called for that purpose	Add, modify, or delete a statement that describes a facet of how the congregation will operate as an organization	<u>30 days</u> prior to a legally called regular or special congregation meeting, voting members are notified by mail or electronic means of the proposed bylaw and the council's recommendation	2/3 vote of those voting members present and voting	Not required	The congregation secretary will submit a copy of new or revised bylaw to the synod office.

Adding, changing, or deleting a continuing resolution³ (*C18.01.-02.)	Proposed by the congregation council <u>or</u> members of the congregation	Administrative procedures required for efficient church operations	During congregation council meetings <u>or</u> at any legally called congregation meeting	2/3 vote of all voting members of congregation council <u>or</u> majority vote of a congregation meeting	Not required	Noted in the minutes of the congregation council or a congregation meeting
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Notes

1. The congregation’s constitution specifies the minimum number (NN) of members who must request that their congregation council revise that document to comply with the current ELCA Model Constitution.
2. While section C10.01.-07. describes the general process for legally calling a regular or special congregation meeting (announced at services on two consecutive Sundays prior to the meeting and notification to all voting members by mail or electronic methods at least 10 days prior to the meeting), changes in a congregation’s constitution require additional steps to encourage notification of all voting members.
3. While the ELCA Model Constitution provides for a congregation’s adoption of amendments, bylaws, and continuing resolutions (standing rules) that enhance its mission and effectiveness, none may conflict with that model (ELCA provision 9.25.b.; Model Constitution *C17.01.; *C18.01.).

Related Information

Continuing resolutions describe the specific facets of the congregation’s operations. Also called standing rules, they “are of a continuing (or standing) nature” and “deal only with administrative matters and function under the umbrella of the organization’s bylaws. Standing rules are administrative and establish specifics for conduct, such as the time, date and frequency of committee meetings or the use of petty cash.”

Bylaws are the operating rules of the congregation as an organization that “often address the authorized number of board members and terms, voting rights and privileges, approved business activities, appointment of officers and establishment of committees, quorum percentages, annual meeting frequency, procedure for amending the bylaws and for dissolving the organization, and other issues that are part of the management of the organization as a whole.

Examples

- *Constitutional Amendment*: This congregation shall establish a mission endowment fund to advance the mission of this congregation. (C5.05.)
- *Bylaw*: Three voting members of the congregation will be elected to serve as members of an endowment committee with responsibility for managing the congregation’s endowment fund. Members may serve more than one term.
- *Continuing Resolution*: The endowment committee will meet on the first Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the church library.