



North Carolina Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Process for Submission of Changes to Congregation Constitution

To expedite and make the process uniform, the following procedure for approval of changes to congregation constitutions has been established by the NC Synod Legal Committee and approved by the NC Synod Council:

1. Call or email Jenny Ramos, Administrative Assistant for the NC Synod. The number is 704-633-4861. Her email is: jramos@nclutheran.org. She will forward your information/questions to the Legal Committee. Describe where you are in the process: thinking about updating our constitution; ad hoc committee already working on revisions; congregation council is ready to approve it, etc.
2. The congregation council or designated committee should acquire the 2025 revision of the Model Constitution for Congregations from the synod website: <https://nclutheran.org/?s=model+constitution> or the ELCA website: <https://resources.elca.org/office-of-the-secretary/model-constitution-for-congregations-2025/>. The simplest method for updating the constitution is to download the latest Model Constitution for Congregations and insert items specific to the congregation into the document. Using the Microsoft WORD document as your starting document, rather than your existing constitution, will eliminate many of the problems which arise during the review process.
3. All starred (*) items in the Model Constitution for Congregations must be included in the congregation's constitution without omission or change, and asterisks must appear in the congregation's constitution as they are in the Model.
4. Any non-starred items from the Model and/or the current constitution items specific to the congregation should be included in the newly revised constitution.
5. The entire constitution, bylaws and continuing resolutions with changes so noted should be sent in Microsoft WORD format via email to jramos@nclutheran.org. She will forward the draft to the Legal Committee for review. It is suggested that the changes be submitted for approval after being voted upon by the congregation council, but before being submitted for congregational vote.

6. The Legal Committee will review the changes and will assist the congregations in creating a final draft. Once the final draft is approved by the Legal Committee, the constitution will be forwarded to the Synod Council for approval at its next regularly scheduled meeting. Criteria for approval are that:
 - a. The latest edition of the Model Constitution for Congregations was used,
 - b. All starred items from the Model Constitution for Congregations are included without omission or change, and
 - c. The non-starred items do not conflict with the NC Synod or ELCA Constitutions and Bylaws.
 - d. All bylaws and continuing resolutions are in the corresponding chapter, under the constitutional provision they relate to, and are numbered correctly. Please do not create a separate document for bylaws or continuing resolutions.
7. Written or email notification of the Synod Council action will be sent to the congregation council.
8. After Synod Council Approval:
 - a. The congregation must vote to approve the constitution exactly as it was approved by the Synod Council. A ratification vote must happen at the congregation's next regularly scheduled annual meeting. The first vote to approve may be done at any special called congregation meeting.
 - b. A copy of the constitution as approved, including the DATE OF THE CONGREGATION'S APPROVAL and DATE OF RATIFICATION must be sent to the synod office to be filed.
9. If updates to your church's constitution only include changes made by ELCA to the Model Constitution for Congregations at an ELCA triennial assembly, the Office of the Secretary has stated the congregation's constitution must still be sent to the Legal Committee for review and to gain approval. Only one vote by the congregation is required to accept and ratify. If further local changes are made, the two votes by the congregation to accept and to ratify are required (see 8a).

Voting to Approve and Ratify Your Constitution

1. Voting for your constitution is done as one document. You should not vote on each change individually
2. Amendments to constitutional provisions specific to the congregation require 2 votes. The first vote (majority required) and the ratification vote (two-thirds required) for all non-starred amendments to your constitution.
3. To amend a bylaw, a single vote (two-thirds required) is required at either a special called congregational meeting or the annual congregational meeting and those changes take effect immediately unless noted differently in the motion.
4. To amend a continuing resolution, the congregation or the congregation council may vote (majority required) to do this and the change takes effect immediately unless noted differently in the motion.

Examples of Placing and Numbering Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions into the Constitution

The following are examples of how bylaws and continuing resolutions should be codified within the congregation's constitution:

[IF THIS IS THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION]

C11.01. The officers of this congregation shall be a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.

- a. Duties of the officers shall be specified in the bylaws.
- b. The officers shall be voting members of this congregation.
- c. Officers of this congregation shall serve similar offices of the Congregation Council and shall be voting members of the Congregation Council.
- d. If the Congregation Council elects its officers, the president, vice president, and secretary shall be selected from the elected membership of the Congregation Council.

[THESE ARE SUPPORTING BYLAWS]

C11.01.01. The president shall preside at meetings of the congregation and the Congregation Council.

C11.01.02. In the event of the president's inability to serve, the vice president shall preside.

C11.01.03. The secretary shall keep accurate minutes of all meetings of the congregation and of the council in a volume provided by the congregation, which shall be preserved permanently in its archives.

C11.01.04. The treasurer shall be appointed annually by the Congregation Council and shall receive and keep records of all income from contributing members and other sources.

[IF THIS IS THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION]

C13.07. Duties of committees of this congregation shall be specified in the continuing resolutions.

[THESE ARE SUPPORTING CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS]

C13.07.A96. The Congregation Council shall see to it that at the end of each year, committees are...

C13.07.B96. Education Ministry - This committee shall plan and coordinate the educational activities of this congregation. It shall develop...

C13.07.C96. Evangelism - Sharing and spreading the Good News of God's love in Christ is the responsibility of each member of the congregation. This committee shall develop...