

## **NWOS Guidelines for Constitutional Updates and Approval**

1. Congregations updating their Constitution should form a taskforce of 3 to 5 people prepare updates to the Constitution. Before you begin, your taskforce should carefully review the following documents available through the **NWOS website**:
  - a. Introduction to Congregational Model Constitution
  - b. Use of the Model Constitution for Congregations 2013
  - c. ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations 2022
  - d. Your own congregation's constitution
2. After reviewing the documents, please inform the NWOS Governance and Policy Specialist that they have begun the review process (email [jacob.henry@nwos-elca.org](mailto:jacob.henry@nwos-elca.org)). The Specialist will then answer any preliminary questions and can provide you with current trends in congregational constitutions.
3. You can begin to draft changes to the constitution. Changes should **not conflict** with the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations and **required provisions must be included**. Please contact the Specialist at any time with questions. You can certainly consult your congregational council and members to receive feedback as you prepare updates.
4. When you have finished drafting changes and updates, they should be submitted to the Specialist for review. Please submit **via email** your updated constitution and **please note your updates by highlighting them**. The Specialist will review to ensure there are no conflicts with the Model Constitution and will also provide general feedback/suggestions. Please allow **4 weeks** for review.
5. The Specialist will contact you with preliminary approval or recommend changes. Once everything has been approved, you may present the updates to your congregational council/congregation for debate and when you are ready, you may hold a congregational vote to approve the updates.

6. Congregational Vote and Approval Process. The vote and approval process for updates differs based on what is being updated: constitutional provisions, bylaws, or continuing resolutions.
  - a. Per C16.04 of the model constitution, updates to constitutional provisions do not require a ratification vote or approval by the Synod Council **provided the updates are identical to the language found in the model constitution**. If you are updating constitutional provisions with language not found in the model constitution, then you will need to hold a ratification vote (a second congregational vote) for those *specific provisions* at your next annual meeting. After the ratification vote, you then need to request formal approval by the Synod Council. These updates will not come into effect until Synod Council has voted to approve.
  - b. Per C17.01 and 02, Updates to bylaws **do not** require a ratification vote or formal Synod Council approval. Updates to bylaws come into immediate effect when your congregation votes to approve.
  - c. Per 18.01 and 02, updates to continuing resolutions **do not** require a ratification vote or formal Synod Council approval. Updates to continuing resolutions come into immediate effect when your congregation votes to approve.
  - d. If you are unsure which updates will require a ratification vote, please contact Jacob Henry the NWOS Governance and Policy Specialist.