

Updating Your Congregation Constitution

Your congregation's governing documents (constitution, bylaws, continuing resolutions) are an important framework for your ministry. The ELCA maintains a *Model Constitution for Congregations* that contains required and non-required provisions that keep us up to date with changes in ministry at the churchwide level, such as new rostered ministry roles, and helpful improvements at the local level that help us address our changing congregation situations.

Some congregations used the 'down time' during the pandemic to work on constitution amendment projects. However, it appears that 20% of our NGLS congregations have constitutions that haven't been updated for over 20 years, and an additional 20% haven't been updated for 10 years.

Our NGL Synod Constitution Committee is here to help you update and improve your governance documents. Our advice to congregations who haven't updated in many years is to start fresh with the latest version of the *ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations*, posted on the Synod website in the Congregation Council Resources tab.

All changes to congregation constitutions need to be approved by the Synod before becoming effective, so we also recommend that congregations send us their draft changes before scheduling for a congregation meeting vote. Our committee reviews each submitted constitution and provides feedback on any edits that need to be made in order to achieve Synod approval and suggestions and recommendations for other sections.

The committee has set up a submission schedule so a congregation will know in advance how long it will take to receive review and feedback. As you plan your revision project, please note that it's not uncommon for major constitution rewrites to go through two cycles of review and comment before approval.

Review Cycles	December – March	April – July	August – November
Deadline to send constitution for review	December 15, 2025	April 4 2024	August 8, 2024
Committee response to congregation by	March 31, 2025	July 31, 2024	November 29, 2024

We look forward to working as your partner in your constitution update projects!

Nancy Heykes, Synod Secretary and chair of Synod Constitution Committee which also includes: Chuck Thomas (Synod VP), Gabriel Lannet (Synod Council member), Richard Reitz (volunteer from Trinity, Rhinelander), & Pastor Paul Heykes (retired clergy and volunteer from Calvary, Mincoqua).