

## 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.

Many of our NGLS congregations have constitutions that haven't been updated for over 10-20 years. Changes in congregation membership can leave a congregation with a quorum requirement that is difficult to meet or council or committee organization that requires too many volunteers for the congregation's current size.

Our NGLS 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 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	January - March	April - July	August - November
Deadline to send constitution for review	February 6, 2026	May 30, 2026	September 18, 2026
Committee Meeting	March 9, 2026	July 13, 2026	November 9, 2026
Committee response to congregation by	March 27, 2026	July 25, 2026	November 21, 2026

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

Nancy Heykes, (*Synod Secretary and Constitution Committee chair*); Chuck Thomas (*Synod VP*), Gabriel Lannet (*Synod Council member*), Richard Reitz (*volunteer from Trinity, Rhinelander*), Pastor Paul Heykes (*retired clergy and volunteer from Calvary, Minocqua*) and Pastor Sharolyn Swenson, (*Assistant to the Bishop/DEM*).