

Northwestern MN Synod of the ELCA

Congregation Checklist for a Simple Update to the congregation Constitution

This document is a step-by-step checklist for a congregation constitution revision committee to use when they have determined that the congregation's constitution will include new or updated provisions that are not found in the Model Constitution for Congregations. If the committee decides only to update using required and non-required provisions of the model constitution, please use the "Simple Update" checklist.

Expanded Update Process (C.16.01-03)¹

Follow these steps when only using required and non-required provisions of the Model constitution for congregations.

- ☐ Congregation Committee Creates an amended constitution draft (**Glossary 9**)
 - ☐ Find or create a digital copy of congregation's current constitution (**Glossary 10**)
 - ☐ Using current constitution committee creates a copy of the current constitution
 - ☐ Rename copy similar to: [Insert Congregation name] Amended Constitution Draft
 - ☐ Using the Model Constitution for Congregations:
 - ☐ Update changes to required provisions (**Glossary 11**)
 - ☐ Add any new required provisions
 - ☐ Determine which, if any, non-required provisions (**Glossary 12**) to update or add
 - ☐ Update or add those non-required provisions to add
- ☐ Once draft is complete, committee reviews draft
- ☐ Committee Chair submits draft to Liaison

*Wait for Liaison to return draft with report. If the Liaison Report (**Glossary 13**) includes mandatory corrections (**Glossary 14**) or suggested corrections (**Glossary 15**) follow the "With Corrections" step below. Once you receive report from the liaison without mandatory corrections and with pre-approval (**Glossary 16**) (or suggested corrections which you chose not to include) skip to the "Pre-Approved" Step Below.*

¹ Chapter 16 Sections 1-3 of the Model Constitution for Congregations describes the process by which a congregation can amend a constitution if they are updating or including provisions that are not within the model constitution.

With Corrections

☐ Update draft to:

☐ Include any mandatory corrections by the Liaison²

☐ Include any suggested corrections by the Liaison³

☐ Re-submit newly updated draft to the liaison

Wait for the Liaison to return updated draft with report. If more corrections, repeat the previous steps until you are given pre-approval. Once you receive pre-approval continue to “Pre-Approval Granted” Steps Below.

Pre-Approval

☐ Committee Chair submits pre-approved amended draft to the congregation council

☐ Council schedules a special meeting⁴ (**Glossary 18**) of the congregation (or waits for next regular meeting of the congregation)

☐ Committee Chair must file Proposal of Recommendations with the church council 60 days prior to the special meeting.

☐ At least 30 Days prior to meeting council provides Proposal of Recommendations (**Glossary 19**) to the congregation

☐ At the Special Meeting, the congregation votes to approve the draft constitution as amended (majority vote necessary to approve)

If approved the congregation must ratify the constitution at the next regular meeting

☐ Council ensures ratification (**Glossary 20**) is on the agenda for the next regular meeting (Two-thirds majority necessary to ratify)

☐ The congregation votes to ratify at the next regular meeting

² Mandatory corrections must be made, if they are not included the synod will not approve the constitution. If you want to dispute a mandatory correction. Please contact the Synod Revision Committee Chair (**Glossary 17**)

³ Suggested corrections need not be included in future drafts of the amended constitution. They are simply corrections suggested by the liaison to include added clarification to language, formatting, or to ensure ambiguity or clarity about a provision. Suggested Provision may also include recommendations around provisions that are repetitive or may be interpreted to conflict with mandatory provisions or other provisions. It is up to the Congregation Committee’s discretion whether to include suggested provisions in the draft amended constitution. If a suggested correction is not included, the synod will likely still approve the constitution.

⁴ If a special meeting is called the only order of business is to approve the amended constitution draft, **no other business** can be conducted. If the vote is held during a regular meeting, other business can be conducted.

Approval

☐ Once ratified: Congregation the church secretary, president, Constitution committee chair, or someone else submits the approved constitution to the Liaison.

The Liaison will submit the constitution to the Synod Council, the council will either approve or disapprove the constitution. If disapproved begin again at the beginning of this checklist. If approved, follow the next step.

☐ Synod council (**Glossary 21**) approved your congregation

After the Synod Council approves your amended constitution draft, the draft is no longer an amended draft, but an official constitution and governing document of the congregation.