

Keeping Your Synod Constitution Up to Date

Keeping your synod constitution up to date is an important task that often is assigned to the secretary. This task is made more complicated by the fact that your synod constitution can be amended by your Synod Council, your Synod Assembly, or the Churchwide Assembly.

The Churchwide Assembly and the *Constitution for Synods*

The Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA meets every three years and is the highest authority in this church. The Churchwide Assembly affects synod constitutions by amending and updating the *Constitution for Synods*, the basis for synod constitutions. The *Constitution for Synods* contains two different types of provisions and bylaws.

- **Required provisions and bylaws** are marked with a dagger (†). Every synod constitution must contain all required provisions and bylaws exactly as they are presented in the *Constitution for Synods*.
- **Non-required provisions and bylaws** do not have a dagger (†). As the name implies, non-required provisions and bylaws are merely recommended language. A synod may choose to incorporate non-required provisions and bylaws in its constitution or not.

Following each Churchwide Assembly, the Office of the Secretary of the ELCA notifies synods of amendments to the *Constitution for Synods* approved by the Churchwide Assembly.

- **Amendments to required provisions and bylaws:** Because each synod constitution must match required provisions and bylaws in the *Constitution for Synods* exactly, *you should introduce all changes to required provisions and bylaws approved by the Churchwide Assembly into your synod constitution immediately*. There is no need to wait for a Synod Assembly to approve these changes because they have already been approved by the Churchwide Assembly. This is explained in †S18.11. in your synod constitution.
- **Amendments to non-required provisions and bylaws:** Because the synod can choose whether to adopt non-required provisions and bylaws in the *Constitution for Synods*, *changes to non-required provisions and bylaws in the Constitution for Synods should be entered into your synod constitution only if the Synod Assembly votes to include the changes* in the synod constitution. Your Synod Assembly may choose to approve any, all, or none of these changes. This is explained in †S18.12. in your synod constitution.

The Synod Assembly and the Synod Council

Amendments to the synod constitution other than those authorized by the Churchwide Assembly are handled differently depending on whether the article changed is a **provision**, a **bylaw**, or a **continuing resolution**.

- Changes to **provisions** of the synod constitution must be approved by the Synod Assembly in accord with †S18.13. in your synod constitution and ratified by the Church Council of the ELCA before they are entered into the synod constitution. A change to a provision of the synod constitution that has been approved by the Synod Assembly should be entered into the synod constitution *only after* it is approved by the ELCA Church Council.
- **Bylaws and continuing resolutions** in your synod constitution can be changed solely by action of the Synod Assembly or the Synod Council as explained in articles †S18.21. and †S18.31. in your synod constitution. As soon as a change to a bylaw or continuing resolution has been approved by the appropriate synod authority, the change should be entered into the synod constitution.

Sharing the updated synod constitution with the churchwide organization

Any time the synod constitution is changed, two copies of the new synod constitution should be sent to the churchwide organization.

- One copy of the updated synod constitution should be sent to the Office of the Secretary using the following email: daniel.eppley@elca.org.
- One copy of the updated synod constitution should be sent to the Synod Online Digital Archives (SODA) accessible through the [ELCA Community website](#). If you need assistance with SODA or the ELCA Community website, please contact Cathy Lundeen at catherine.lundeen@elca.org.