

FAQ's



Why do we need a new Constitution?

Every few years, the ELCA Governing Body (the “Church”) publishes an updated Model Constitution. It is expected that individual congregations will update their own constitutions to comply with the mandated changes in the Model Constitution. Trinity has not updated their constitution since 2001.

What kind of changes does the Church make?

The updated Model Constitutions have a variety of changes. Some are a result of the changes in technology allowing notifications to be by email and snail mail rather than just snail mail. Some are changes and modernization in terminology, such as referring to a Deacon as Minister of Word and Service and an ordained minister as Minister of Word and Sacrament. Changes have also been made in the order of chapters and removal and insertion of various sections.

What does it mean if the Chapter/Section Number has a * in front of it?

Those sections preceded by a * are required and cannot be changed for any reason.

Why are we voting on 2 Resolutions?

The Constitution states the changes “Conforming” to the Model Constitution only require one vote of the congregation. The Model Constitution has many places that allow for fill-in-the-blank (e.g. definition of a quorum), select one of multiple wordings (who elects Council officers), and optional sections. Conforming to the model constitution means filling in the blanks, making the wording selection that fits the church and choosing which optional sections to include. The major document is Conforming to the most current Model Constitution.

“Nonconforming” changes are all other changes to the Model Constitution. This includes additions to sections and rewording sections to fit the specific congregation’s needs and situations. These changes require two congregational votes. All future changes we make to the constitution will be “Nonconforming” as we will be adding additional sections.

What about the Bylaws?

The Bylaws are considered a subset of the Constitution. They contain guidance on how to carry out the constitution section. We are working on revising them, and some of them will be ready for a vote by the next congregational meeting. Our current Bylaws were written in 2004 and many duplicate wording in the 2001 constitution. The Bylaws only require one Congregational Vote.

Questions have been raised which will be clarified in the bylaws. Some of these points are not appropriate to include in the constitution itself. For example, a question regarding the term of the treasurer was asked.

Why aren't we getting the complete revised Constitution and Bylaws all at once?

This is not a simple process and updating our Constitution to comply with the current ELCA Model Constitution is the first step. Adding additional constitution sections and bylaws requires ensuring that they are in accordance with the constitution and are in line with our current practices as well as the guidance of the greater Church. For example we need to add sections about the Nursery School and Memorial Garden. These are required by the Synod. All changes to the Constitution and Bylaws must be close to final form at least 3 months prior to a Congregation Meeting, as the documents must be reviewed and approved by the Congregation Council and a Synod Committee prior to presenting to the Congregation, 30 days before the meeting.

Answers to questions expressed by church members.

In the past, Trinity has not followed our current constitution/bylaws. Does that invalidate the way we did certain things?

No. It will be the Council's responsibility to ensure that we are following the current constitution going forward. We will look forward and not backward.

Amount of time a member may serve on council

In Resolution 2, Sections C12.01 and C12.03. we will be bringing the constitution in line with our current practice. The practice is as follows:

A member of the congregation may serve as a regular voting member of the Congregation Council for 2 terms, or 6 years (Model Constitution). In addition, we elect alternate council members for one year terms as non-voting members (Trinity practice). In the event of the resignation of a council member, an alternate council member becomes a voting council member for the remainder of their one-year term. They then may choose to run again and be elected to a maximum of two terms as a regular voting member. Currently we do not limit how many terms a member can serve as an alternate councilor. This could be addressed in the bylaws.

Nominating Committee

Two members of the nominating committee are outgoing council members, as specified in Section C13.02. of the Constitution. Although the President of the council is an *ex-officio* member of most committees, they are not of the Nominating Committee (Section 13.08.) This committee is independent of the council and only reports the suggested ballot to the council.