

A Sample Timeline for Ratification of a Congregational Constitution

There are 3 phases to revising your congregation's constitution. You can do this quickly (fast track) or take a bit more time with it (moderate pace)

		Fast Track (3-6 months)	Moderate Pace (6-12 months)
Before the Vote	<p>CREATE A REVISED DRAFT of your constitution. This can take anywhere from a few weeks to...a lot longer. Here are some hints to help this go smoothly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Locate your current constitution (plus bylaws and continuing resolutions) ● Download most recent version of Model Constitution from www.elca.org (or find the link on the synod website) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If it is a Churchwide Assembly year, wait for the new model constitution to become available (early-to-mid September) ● Decide when you want to vote on the revised constitution (*C16.01a); work backwards from that date ● <u>Contact the synod office!</u> You can get help during the drafting process that will prevent problems and frustrations later on! ● Ask committees to review their portions of the constitution (chapter 13) and update them; <u>set a deadline!</u> ● Meanwhile, your review team can work on the rest of the document 	September-October	June-October
	<p>COUNCIL REVIEWS THE REVISED DRAFT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 60 days before the congregational vote, the council should see the draft and have an opportunity to ask questions and provide comments (*C16.01) 	October 15 (or earlier)	October 15 (or earlier)
	<p>CONGREGATION REVIEWS THE REVISED DRAFT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 30 days before the congregational vote, the entire congregation should get access to the revised draft (*C16.01). This can be by mail, email or posted to your website ● Include the council's recommendation in the announcement 	November 15	November 15
Congregational Vote	<p>CONGREGATION VOTES ON REVISED DRAFT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This can happen at any legally called congregation meeting (*C16.02a) 	December 15	December 15

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A simple majority is required to pass 		
After the Vote	SYNOD REVIEW OF APPROVED REVISION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The synod will review your approved revision and send any suggestions within 30 days (*C16.03) • If no changes are recommended, <u><i>your new constitution goes into effect!</i></u> • Note the effective date on the cover of your constitution document (*C16.02c) • If changes are recommended, make them and schedule another vote (go back to second phase)¹ 	December 15-January 15	December 15-January 15
	At your next <i>regular congregational meeting</i> , RATIFY the new constitution (*16.02b) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratification must be at a “regular” (read: annual) meeting and the ratified version must be without change from the version approved at the vote • Give notice as required in chapter 10 of your constitution • You need a two-thirds vote to ratify 	Following January	Following January
	RECORD KEEPING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • File the constitution (hard copy and print) with your church records • Send an updated copy to the synod office; we will add it to your congregation’s file 		
	SHARING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide all new leadership (council members, officers, staff) with a copy of the constitution • Make a practice of discussing various parts of the constitution at council retreats 		

¹ If changes are needed following the synod review, you will need to revise the draft and vote on it again; the synod will review a second time (and so on). Once the congregation and synod agree on a revised constitution, *it goes into effect*. Ratification is a formality that follows. This potential delay is a good reason to work with the synod’s CRC in advance of your congregational vote so that you know you are voting on a draft that the synod can approve.