

Possible Amendments to Congregation's Constitution

These amendments address significant issues resulting from the actions of the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. They could be included in a congregation's constitution or bylaws. The numbers indicate where the amendment would go in a constitution similar to the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations.

Amendment C2.08

Accepts The Common Confession as a summary of Lutheran teaching including the following statements that directly address significant issues resulting from the ELCA actions:

- 1. Defines marriage as between a man and a woman and as created by God and clearly states that "sexual activity belongs exclusively within the biblical boundaries of a faithful marriage between one man and one woman."*
- 2. States that "The Bible is the final authority for us in all matters of our faith and life."*

Amendment C6.07

Establishes a relationship between congregation and Lutheran CORE.

Amendment C9.15

Uses language from the ELCA document, "Vision and Expectations," prior to the actions of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to state the expectation that pastors of this congregation must maintain traditional Christian teaching on marriage sexuality in their ministry actions and in their personal behavior.

Amendment C9.16

Uses language from the 1993 ELCA Conference of Bishops Statement — that was affirmed by the 2005 ELCA Churchwide Assembly — to state that the congregation will not offer same-sex marriage or blessing services.

Amendments to Chapter 12

The wording of many portions of the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations is required and may not be edited as long as congregation is in the ELCA. The exact wording of sections in Chapter 12 are not required by the ELCA. Additions are underlined and deletions are indicated by strikeouts. These significant changes could be made to Chapter 12:

C12.04 would indicate that the actions of the Congregation Council are done in accordance with the Confession of Faith of the congregation rather than the faith and practice of the ELCA.

C12.04h changes reference to the synod and churchwide organization to a reference to "other Lutherans both locally and globally" and removes the requirement that working with other congregations is "subject to established policies of the synod and ELCA."

C12.04i removes a requirement that the Congregation Council "recommend and encourage the use of program resources produced or approved by the ELCA." Given the changes in ELCA teaching and practice, congregations will want flexibility in choosing what resources to use.

C2.08. This congregation accepts The Common Confession as a summary of teachings in the Lutheran Confessions:

The Common Confession

1. The Lord Jesus Christ

We are people who believe and confess our faith in the Triune God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We trust and believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.

2. The Gospel of Salvation

We believe and confess that all human beings are sinners, and that sinners are redeemed by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God alone justifies human beings by faith in Christ — a faith that God creates through the message of the Gospel. As ambassadors for Christ, God uses us to speak his Word and build his kingdom.

3. The Authority of Scripture

We believe and confess that the Bible is God's revealed Word to us, spoken in Law and Gospel. The Bible is the final authority for us in all matters of our faith and life.

4. A Common Confession of Faith

We accept and uphold that the Lutheran Confessions reliably guide us as faithful interpretations of Scripture and that we share a unity and fellowship in faith with others among whom the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached and the sacraments are administered in accordance with the Gospel.

5. The Priesthood of All Believers

We believe and confess that the Holy Spirit makes all who believe in Jesus Christ to be priests for service to others in Jesus' name, and that God desires to make use of the spiritual gifts he has given through the priesthood of all believers.

6. Marriage and Family

We believe and confess that the marriage of male and female is an institution created and blessed by God. From marriage, God forms families to serve as the building blocks of all human civilization and community. We teach and practice that sexual activity belongs exclusively within the biblical boundaries of a faithful marriage between one man and one woman.

7. The Mission and Ministry of the Congregation

We believe and confess that the church is the assembly of believers called and gathered by God around Word and Sacrament, and that the mission and ministry of the church is carried out within the context of individual congregations, which are able to work together locally and globally.

C6.07. This congregation shall be a member of the Lutheran Coalition for Renewal (Lutheran CORE).

C9.15. Ordained ministers, whether married or single, are expected to uphold an understanding of marriage in their public ministry as well as in private life that is biblically informed and consistent with the teachings of this congregation. The expectations of this congregation regarding the sexual conduct of its ordained ministers are grounded in the understanding that human sexuality is a gift from God and that ordained ministers are to live in such a way as to honor this gift. Ordained ministers are expected to reject sexual promiscuity, the manipulation of others for purposes of sexual gratification, and all attempts of sexual seduction and sexual harassment, including taking physical or emotional advantage of others. Single ordained ministers are expected to live a chaste life. Married ordained ministers are expected to live in fidelity to their spouses, giving expression to sexual intimacy within a marriage relationship that is mutual, chaste, and faithful. Ordained ministers who are homosexual in their self-understanding are expected to abstain from homosexual sexual relationships.

C9.16. Marriage is a lifelong covenant of faithfulness between a man and a woman. There is basis neither in Scripture nor tradition for the establishment of an official ceremony by the Church for the blessing of a homosexual relationship. We, therefore, do not approve such a ceremony as an official action of this congregation's ministry either on its property or by its pastors.

12.04. The Congregation Council shall have general oversight of the life and activities of this congregation, and in particular its worship life, to the end that everything be done in accordance with the Word of God and the Confession of Faith of this congregation (Chapter 2). ~~faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.~~ The duties of the Congregation Council shall include the following: . . .

h. To emphasize partnership with other Lutherans both locally and globally ~~synod and churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America~~ as well as cooperation with other congregations, both Lutheran and non-Lutheran, ~~subject to established policies of the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.~~

~~i. To recommend and encourage the use of program resources produced or approved by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.~~

~~j. To seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel.~~

12.05. The Congregation Council shall be responsible for the financial and property matters of this congregation. . . .

d. The Congregation Council shall prepare an annual budget for adoption by this congregation, shall supervise the expenditure of funds in accordance therewith following its adoption, and may incur obligations of more than \$_____ in excess of the anticipated receipts only after approval by a Congregation Meeting. ~~The budget shall include this congregation's full indicated share in support of the wider ministry being carried on in partnership with the synod and churchwide organization.~~

e. The Congregation Council shall ascertain that the financial affairs of this congregation are being conducted efficiently, giving particular attention to the prompt payment of all obligations and to the regular forwarding of benevolence monies ~~to the synodical treasurer.~~