

St. Martin's Lutheran Church

2024 Constitution Revisions and Trends

*This document describes the changes to the SMLC Constitution proposed by the Church Council. The changes indicated by an * are required components of the ELCA Model Constitution. Other changes are recommendations from the model constitution or recommendations from the Council. The Bylaws are not included in the ELCA Model.*

CHAPTERS 1-7

Preamble

- Matches 100%

Chapter 1. Name and Incorporation

- Very minimal changes

Chapter 2*. Confession of Faith

- Very minimal changes

Chapter 3*. Nature of the Church

- All required
 - *C3.02 – similar context, but reworded
 - *C3.03 – very similar
 - *C3.04 & *C.05 not previously in SMLC's Constitution

Chapter 4*. Statement of Purpose

- All required
 - *C4.01 - *C4.02.a-c – very minimal changes
 - *C4.02.d – some changes – enlarges outreach to others
 - *C4.02.e-f – no changes
 - *C4.03.a-f & h-l – no changes
 - *C4.03.g – minimal changes
 - *C4.04 & *C4.05 – minimal changes
 - *C4.06 - not previously in SMLC's Constitution

Chapter 5. Powers of the Congregation (most are *)

- *C5.01 – *C5.03.a-b, f-k – very minimal (if any) changes
- C5.03.c – change in wording about calling a minister of Word and Service
- *C5.03.d – adds language about terminating call of minister of Word and Service
- *C5.03.e – minimal changes
- *C5.04 – changes that voting members to Synod Assembly shall be elected by the Congregation
- C5.05 – not required, but suggested; acknowledgement of a mission endowment fund

Chapter 6*. Church Affiliation

- All required
 - *C6.01 - *C6.03.a-b & e – no changes
 - *C6.03.c – changing terms to Minister of Word and Sacrament; adding that, under special circumstances, the congregation may call a Minister from a church body with which the ELCA has a relationship of full communion
 - *C6.03.d – changing to Minister of Word and Sacrament can be called to other staff positions (previously said appointed)
 - *C6.04 – some changes in wording on how affiliation with ELCA is terminated
 - *C6.05 – relates to congregation terminating relationship with ELCA; main change is requiring 2 meetings of the congregation instead of just 1 to approve such
 - *C6.06 – very similar
 - *C6.07 – not previously in SMLC’s Constitution

Chapter 7*. Property Ownership

- All required
 - *C7.01 - *C7.03 – very similar
 - *C7.04 – sets forth how to possibly retain property if congregation leaves ELCA
 - *C7.05 – new; deals with property received from synod if congregation leaves ELCA

CHAPTERS 8-14

General

- Council is referred to as Congregation Council
- Rostered Minister is used in addition to pastor
- Inclusive language replaces him/her type language

Chapter 8*. Membership

- All required
 - Specifies rights of Voting Members
 - Introduces the idea of Seasonal Members
 - Applications for membership are approved by the Congregation Council (previously pastor)
 - Removes duty of members to present their children for baptism, Sunday School, and confirmation instruction
 - Disciplinary action for members is now referred to the constitution and bylaws of the greater ELCA

Chapter 9. Rostered Minister (most are *)

- *The letter of call shall be attested by the bishop of the synod. This was not previously mentioned.
- *Additional language around the termination of a pastor's call due to discipline or removal from the roster of ministers or due to the congregation dissolving, leaving the ELCA, or being suspended.
- *There is no C9.10 in the model
- *Records of the church should be left to the Congregation Council secretary when a pastor leaves
- Allowance for a rostered minister of a church body with whom the ELCA has a relationship of full communion to serve as a temporary pastor. (not required)
- *Language and rules around calling a Deacon.

Chapter 10. Congregation Meeting (none *)

- Allows electronic notice of congregational meetings if requested by the member.
- Revises notification for congregational meetings to include all voting members rather than all confirmed members.
- Defines the percent of voting members that constitutes a quorum at 20%.
- Allows congregational meetings to be held by remote communication.

Chapter 11. Officers (none *)

- Officers of this congregation shall vacate their office if they wish to become an employee.

Chapter 12. Congregation Council (none *)

- It is a duty of the Congregation Council to seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel.
- Members of this Congregation Council shall vacate their office if they wish to become an employee.
- Allows Congregational Council meetings to be held by remote communication.

CHAPTERS 15-21

Chapter 15*. Disciplinary of Members and Adjudication

- All required
 - Increases the degree of conduct that triggers discipline and more specifically describes such conduct.
 - Provides for synod appointment of a disciplinary panel to decide disciplinary cases, with the church council and accused member as parties. The council must implement the synod panel's decision.
 - Adds a final disciplinary step of exclusion from church property and activities.

- Removes the possibility of the council revoking discipline upon discovering evidence that an injustice has been done.
- Allows members to petition the bishop to help resolve factional disputes within the congregation.
- Section 15.10 is a placeholder for a future section on adjudication.

Chapter 16*. Amendments

- All required
 - Renumbered from Chapter 17
 - Requires approval of constitutional amendments at two separate congregational meetings: by a majority vote at the first meeting and by a 2/3 ratification vote at the second meeting (with no changes from the first meeting).
 - Allows electronic notification of meetings wherein proposed amendments to the constitution will be considered.
 - Requires synod approval before amendments go into effect (except for amendments required to bring the church's constitution into conformity with the model constitution).

Chapter 17*. Bylaws

- Renumbered from Chapter 16
- Requires 2/3 vote of members present to adopt changes to bylaws.
- Allows electronic notification of meetings wherein proposed amendments to the bylaws will be considered.

Chapter 18*. Continuing Resolutions

- Required new section

Chapter 19*. Indemnification

- Required new section

Chapter 20. Parish Authorization

- Required new section

Chapter 21. Manual of Operations

- Renumbered from SMLC Chapter 18
- Not in model

BYLAWS

Recommended Changes

- Changes references to "Council" to "Congregation Council."
- Replaces gendered pronouns with gender-neutral terms.
- Section I: Changes the date of the annual congregational meeting from the third Sunday in January to the last Sunday in January. Permits the Council to determine the format of the meeting (e.g., in person or remote).