

Constitution Task Force Summary

The Immanuel Lutheran Church Constitution is based largely on the Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Most of the provisions of the Model Constitution are required in congregational constitutions although some provisions may be adapted to fit the needs of a particular congregation. Periodically, the ELCA reviews its Model Constitution and disseminates amendments to be incorporated into congregational constitutions.

In April 2014 the Immanuel Council approved the formation of a Constitution Review Task Force to review Immanuel's constitution and to bring it into line with several amendments provided by the ELCA. Immanuel last updated the constitution 14 years ago and the ELCA has made several updates to the model constitution language. The Task Force was charged with reviewing each of the changes.

The Constitution Review Task Force has developed a document that clearly details the recommended changes, you can read that document [HERE](#) (link to PDF). Many of the updates simply correct typographical errors in previous versions of the constitution, or add clarifying language, but some updates reflect changes within the ELCA over the last decade.

Some specific areas of major changes that the Task Force would like to bring to your attention to are as follows¹:

- Section 2.06 – Adds documents to the list of documents accepted by the congregation as those that explain Lutheran beliefs
- Section 6.05 – an extensive revision of the requirements for a congregation to leave the ELCA
- Section 7.03 to 7.05 – an extensive revision of the process for a congregation to become independent or part of another church body
- Section 9.05 – an extensive revision of the process to call, retain and remove a pastor by the congregation
- Section 10 – language for congregation meetings has been slightly modified, including the allowance of notification of congregation members by electronic communications
- Section 12.01 – defines voting membership of the Congregation Council to include pastors and provides for removal of Council members who are no longer members or for absence from regular Council meetings
- Section 12.06 – gives the Council authority to enter into contracts that are not in the budget with a cap on the authority of \$75,000
- Section 12.13 – provides that a pastor must be present in order for the Council to transact business of the church, unless the pastor requests to be absent
- Section 15.1 to 15.11 – extensive revisions regarding removal or discipline of members adding additional steps and procedures
- Section 17.3 – contains changes for amending Constitution and Bylaws. Immanuel Council added language that maintains a time frame for the Synod to respond.

The recommendation of the task force is to hold informational sessions in March in advance of a congregation vote on the changes on April 26, 2015.

¹ References to “congregation” mean Immanuel Lutheran Church; references to “Church” or “church” mean the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.