

Proposed Amendments to Saint Luke Constitution
Explanation Prepared by the Secretary of the Congregation

At its October 5, 2020 meeting, the Congregation Council voted to recommend that the Congregation approve several amendments to the constitution of Saint Luke Lutheran Church. The full text of the proposed amendments is set forth in a separate document.

Amendments to Model Constitution

The Model Constitution for Congregations of the ELCA includes many provisions that are mandatory for all congregations as well as recommended or optional provisions. (In the copy of the full text of the proposed amendments, the mandatory provisions are designated with an asterisk at the beginning, for example, *4.03.) Most of the amendments that were adopted by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly affected the mandatory provisions, but the greatest number of these consisted of changing “the congregation” to “this congregation,” “synodical bishop” to “synod bishop,” or other stylistic changes.

Significant Policy Changes

Congregation Council recommends two changes to non-mandatory provisions of the constitution regarding membership on the Council and the revision of an existing provision regarding formation of a call committee.

C12.01 Deacons as members of the Congregation Council. Churchwide Assembly recommended an optional provision that any deacon called to serve the congregation would be a voting member of Congregation Council. This is consistent with a general change in the status of deacons in the church, who are now treated similar to pastors in both ordination and calls to service in congregations. In the Saint Luke constitution, this section currently provides that called pastors are voting members of the Congregation Council, so the proposed change would add **called** deacons to Council.

Recommendation: Council recommends amending our constitution to provide that a deacon called to ministry at Saint Luke will be a voting member of Congregation Council. This includes a matching amendment to **C12.02** that the pastors and deacons are excepted from the requirement for election to Council.

C12.01 Young Adult member of Congregation Council -- As recommended by Churchwide Assembly, this section also includes a requirement that at least one member of Congregation Council be a Young Adult.

The parallel provision in the Saint Luke constitution specifies that the Young Adult member be “under the age of 30 years at the time of election.” The Nominating Committee had earlier reported that at times it has been difficult to identify a qualified person in this age bracket.

Recommendation: Council recommends that we delete from this provision the phrase “at least one of whom shall be a young adult under the age of 30 years at the time of election” and add to the Nominating Committee Guidelines a goal of including on Council at least one person in this age range. NOTE: Because this proposed change differs from the ELCA model constitution, it will not take effect in the Saint Luke constitution unless it is approved at both the upcoming November 22 meeting and also ratified at the next regular meeting of the congregation by a two-thirds vote.

C13.05 Call Committee – This section currently states that when a pastoral vacancy occurs, a Call Committee shall be formed. Churchwide Assembly recommends that this be amended to refer to “a position for which this congregation calls a rostered minister” so that it would apply to the calling of a pastor or a deacon.

Recommendation: Council recommends adoption of this provision.

Additions to and Revisions of Policies of Lesser Significance

The following proposed amendments would add new policies or change existing policies that would have less impact on existing practices.

Election of Voting Members of Synod Assembly -- *C5.04 A requirement that the Congregation “shall choose” laypersons to serve as voting members of Synod Assembly is changed to “shall elect” such laypersons. (In the recent past, the voting members have been elected by the congregation council, but this phrasing appears to require that they be elected by the congregation.)

Synod control of property upon disbanding of congregation -- *C6.04(d) Adds a provision that the Metropolitan Washington DC Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may take control of the property under section 13.24 of the synod constitution. The congregation may appeal such a decision to the next Synod Assembly. (The referenced provision of the synod constitution governs situations where a congregation has disbanded or otherwise ceased to exist, has abandoned its property, or the Synod Council determines that the congregation has become so diminished that it can no longer function.)

Responsibility of congregation secretary -- *C6.05(e) is revised to specify that the secretary of the congregation shall notify the Synod of the congregation’s decision on the question of terminating its relationship to the ELCA. (The previous language used passive voice that the synod should be notified, but was not clear as to who had responsibility to do so.)

Seasonal Members -- *C8.02(c) adds a new sentence providing that a person who has voted as a seasonal member in another congregation in the past two months may not vote in a meeting of this congregation.

Pastors moving to ministries outside the ELCA -- *C9.08 requires a pastor to resolve any financial obligations before beginning in another congregation or setting, and it is amended to delete “related to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America” so that this would apply wherever the pastor was moving.

Resolving financial obligations of departing deacon - *C9.26 requires a deacon to resolve any financial obligations with the congregation before beginning another call or otherwise transferring out of that position with the congregation. The proposed amendment requires both congregation and deacon to resolve any financial obligations in those situations.

Stylistic Changes

The remaining changes set forth in the proposed amendments to the constitution are of a stylistic nature and do not appear to change any policies or practices of the congregation.