

## **Congregation Constitutions and Bylaws**

### **Is it time to review them?**

I am Rev. Rollie Bockbrader. I am the person in our synod who reviews constitutions and bylaws for congregations. My answer to the question above is, "Yes, it is time!"

At the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in August, the assembly voted on a number of changes to the ELCA governing documents including changes to the *Model Constitution for Congregations of the ELCA*. It is a great time to review your congregation's constitution and bylaws.

The changes to the *Model* fall into three categories. The first category involves the changes made to the rosters of the ELCA and synod. There are now two rosters: ministers of Word and Sacrament and ministers of Word and Service. The second roster combines the previous three lay rosters of Deaconesses, Associates in Ministry, and diaconal ministers, into one. There are many changes to the *Model Constitution* because of these roster changes.

The second group is the typical changes made to language and wording, clarification of constitutional items.

The third group is a new item that may be of interest to some congregations in the synod. This change adds a new classification of membership called *seasonal members*. It allows a voting member in one ELCA congregation to have "seasonal membership" in another ELCA congregation. It gives the seasonal member some voting privileges. Please see the actual provision (\*C8.02.e.) for more details.

You may download a copy of the 2016 edition of the *Model Constitution for Congregations* and/or the nine pages of the actual changes by going to the ELCA website; look for the Office of the Secretary (see list at the bottom of the homepage), and then looking for constitutions sidebar tab.

If your current constitution does not reflect the 2013 edition, my suggestion is to download the current 2016 edition, print it out and compare it with your current constitution. It will take more work but it will bring your governing documents up to date!

I am available to answer questions regarding your congregation's constitution and bylaws. I am best reached by email at [Rollie.Bockbrader@q.com](mailto:Rollie.Bockbrader@q.com).

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