

CONSTITUTION CHANGES

At a Special Meeting held on 29 October, the Congregation voted on amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws recommended by Council. As further explained below, for some changes the vote was a final vote and for other changes the vote was a preliminary vote that must be ratified at the Annual Meeting later this month.

It was Council's expectation that the proposed amendments be reviewed by the Congregation in advance of the Special Meeting, and that questions or comments be brought to that Meeting. Council is concerned that this expectation was not adequately communicated. While some attendees had reviewed the documents and had comments, some attendees did not have access to the documents or have the opportunity to review the proposed changes. A mark-up of the Constitution and Bylaws has been placed on the Trinity website www.trinitywexford.org. If you do not have access to the document electronically and/or would like a copy mailed to you please contact Beth in the Church office at 724-935-2746. There will also be some copies in the narthex on Sunday the 14th and Sunday the 21st.

When reviewing the document you will see that the "track changes" feature and some color coding were used. The blue underlined portions are additions and the red-strike through are deletions. In some cases you will see large sections of strike through -- not because those sections were removed entirely, but rather because they were moved to a different section or document. The red and blue changes with no other color coding are changes that were required to bring our Constitution into conformance with the 2016 ELCA model constitution. Those sections with an * cannot deviate from the model language. No discussion was had at the Special Meeting on these changes as they are not within our discretion. Changes with green highlighting are additional changes that were recommended by Council that also conform to language in the model constitution. According to section 16.04, these amendments can (and were) approved by a majority vote at the Special Meeting. Similarly, the amendments proposed to the Bylaws, shown in blue underline/red strike through, can (and were) approved by a majority vote at the Special Meeting per section 17.02 of the constitution. **Although they are already approved, if anyone has any questions or comments on these changes, please contact a Council Officer.**

The final group of changes are those shown in blue underline/red strike through and highlighted in yellow. These are discretionary changes proposed by Council. These changes must be approved by a majority vote (which they were at the Special Meeting), ratified **without change** at the Annual Meeting by two thirds of the voting members present, and further sent to the synod to either approve or disapprove. These changes only go into effect upon notification of approval by the synod. While we are not in a position to undertake **additional** changes at this time, these changes can be discussed at the Annual Meeting if questions/comments are raised.

A few comments on the discretionary changes, which include the green changes, the Bylaw changes and the yellow changes – these changes primarily reflect a more realistic approach to governing the church given our size and also give the Council some flexibility going forward to make certain changes without changing the constitution. Many of the changes relate to the committees and their responsibilities, and provide us with some flexibility to organize in a way that will best fulfill the mission and vision of the Church. For example, section 13.08 previously stated that ministries and committees may be formed by

decision of Council; the proposal is that we indicate that such ministries and committees may be “formed, merged or discontinued....” Other proposed changes relate to the number of members on the various committees; in some cases these numbers were made smaller and in some cases a range was inserted.

Please keep in mind that while we only amend our Constitution every three years, we can amend the Bylaws at any legally called meeting and the Continuing Resolutions at any such meeting or at a Council meeting. Moreover, changes to Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions do not require synod approval. Some of the proposed changes and “moves”, therefore, give us a greater ability to make relatively quick changes to our governing documents when the circumstances arise.

On the subject of Continuing Resolutions, the 2017 Council undertook a major project to review all of the Continuing Resolutions in place and revoke those that were no longer relevant or that were not appropriately included as Continuing Resolutions. Per the ELCA, “Continuing resolutions are intended to provide description of operational patterns and practices or of the ongoing responsibilities of committees or other units within the organizational structure of the congregation.” Council’s review identified a number of items in the Continuing Resolutions that frankly did not belong there. For example, a list of the confirmands from 2016, while an important Church record that is recorded in Church Windows and Council minutes, is not a continuing resolution, nor is the purchase of candles, staff changes and job descriptions, which belong in minutes of Council or the appropriate committee. The descriptions of committee responsibilities, however, do belong in the Continuing Resolutions and will be located there going forward. So while these descriptions appear to be stricken from the Bylaws, it is because they have been moved from that document and will be added to Continuing Resolutions.

Upon ratification and approval by the synod, the Constitution, as well as the now amended Bylaws and the Continuing Resolutions, will be placed in the Church office and available for review by any member of the Congregation, as will future updates to the Continuing Resolutions.