



Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church
43 Meadowlands Drive West
Ottawa, Ontario
K2G 2R5

January 28, 2020

Dear fellow members of Faith Lutheran:

Re: Proposed New Constitution for Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church (FELC)

In November 2015, the National Church Council (NCC) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) approved the formation of a task force to review the then-existing “ELCIC Model Constitution for Congregations”. That model had been adopted by the ELCIC in 2010.

Following the 2015 review and final legal vetting, a new model constitution for congregations was adopted by the NCC in September 2017. The most significant change in the new model was a considerable downsizing from twelve articles to three, accompanied by a commensurate broadening of the content of the model bylaws. The result was a much clearer division between the “constitution”, a document that names the organization and defines its purpose and objectives, and the “bylaws”, which define the mechanisms and processes by which the congregation works to achieve those objectives.

Following its adoption, all ELCIC congregations were asked to undertake a review of their constitution and bylaws and to begin the process of transitioning to the recommended model. Since the summer of 2018, the members of your Council and a small number of additional Faith members have worked to develop a new FELC constitution document based on the ELCIC model. A resulting draft is now ready for consideration and approval by the congregation at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) on February 23, 2020.

A copy of the proposed text is attached hereto (Attachment 2). A summary of some of the main changes resulting from adherence to the ELCIC model is also attached (Attachment 1). A comparison of the two documents (i.e., the draft FELC document and the ELCIC model) shows that the vast majority of the ELCIC model provisions have been incorporated into the FELC draft text. The main differences relate to the designation of church “officers” (Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Secretary) as well as certain finance-related provisions. These differences were considered necessary in order to reflect actual practice in these areas at Faith.

Once the proposed new constitution is approved by the congregation, it will need to be submitted to the Eastern Synod office of the ELCIC for final ratification.

On behalf of the congregation, I would like to thank the following individuals for the time and effort that they have devoted to this project:

- Carol Essenburg, who undertook an initial line-by-line comparison between the provisions of the current FELC Constitution (dated June 10, 2012) and those of the 2017 ELCIC model;
- Melvin Schwalm and Rolf Meier, who worked with me as part of an ad hoc committee appointed by Council to develop the new draft constitution;
- Ken Roeske, Council Representative for Finance, who liaised with the Eastern Synod office (namely, Rev. Wendell Caron Grahlman, Eastern Synod Secretary, and Keith Myra, Eastern Synod Treasurer) on the finance-related provisions of the new FELC constitution;
- Brian Wirth, who helped produce and format the final document; and
- the members of Council, who oversaw the development and review of multiple drafts of the document.

It is my hope that we can have a productive discussion of this proposed document at the AGM that will result in the finalization of a new Constitution and Bylaws for the future governance of our congregation and its mission.

In Christ's service,



Randy Rodgers

Vice-Chairperson
Congregational Council

Attachments (2)

Main Changes to FELC's Constitution and Bylaws to Conform with the 2017 ELCIC Model

1. Bylaws – PART I – Membership – Section 5

A mechanism is introduced to trigger an annual review of the membership roster, including placement of members on a responsibility list and removal of members from the membership roster. The responsibility list is seen as means for tracking members' activity.

2. Bylaws – PART II – Reconciliation and Discipline of a Member

“Reconciliation using restorative practices” is considered the primary goal when attempting to resolve strife or other matters as a first alternative before considering disciplinary action.

3. Bylaws – PART III – Authority

Section 6 outlines threshold levels for determining the viability of congregations and a process to be followed when a congregation falls below those thresholds.

4. Bylaws – PART VI – Section 5 – Notice of Meetings

In order that information about upcoming congregational meetings reaches all eligible voting members, notice of said meetings must be communicated by mail or electronic mail. By making meeting dates and times known to all members, as opposed to only those who happen to be present when verbal announcements are made, congregations may be able to increase attendance.

5. Bylaws – PART VI – Congregational Meeting - Section 1 – Voting age

The age a member must attain to be granted voting rights at congregational meetings. **The Council is proposing an age of 14.**

6. Bylaws – PART VI – Congregational Meeting - Section 6 - Quorum

In defining quorum, it is recommended that congregations use an absolute number as opposed to a percentage-based definition. Congregations should also consider choosing a number for quorum that negates the possibility that the members of the congregational council could themselves represent a majority of those in attendance at a properly called congregational meeting. To this end, it is suggested that quorum be at least two times the number of council members plus one (e.g., if council has six members, the quorum for a congregational meeting would be set at 13). **The Council is proposing thirty (30) members as a minimum to form a quorum (as in our existing constitution).**

7. Bylaws PART VI – Congregational Meeting - Section 7 – Proxy or Absentee Voting

The ELCIC model permits proxy or absentee voting in some circumstances. **Council has proposed that proxy or absentee voting not be permitted under FELC's new constitution.**

8. Bylaws – PART VII – Section 1 – Election of Congregational Council Members

The number of Congregational Council members recommended in the model is no fewer than six. **The Council is proposing nine (9) members for Council membership (as in our existing constitution).**

The recommended length of council terms is two years but this may be adjusted to suit local needs. In choosing the number of council members and the length of terms, consideration should be given to succession planning. At an inaugural meeting of a congregation, it is recommended that terms of office be staggered to avoid scenarios in which more than a majority of council members have their terms expire at the same time. **The Council is recommending a maximum of two consecutive three-year terms (as in our current constitution).**

9. Bylaws – PART IX – Duties of the Treasurer and the Financial Secretary

The draft FELC constitution adds a new Part IX to outline the duties and responsibilities of both the Treasurer and the Financial Secretary in order to reflect the actual experience of these positions at Faith. In contrast with the ELCIC model (Bylaws, PART VII), the FELC Treasurer is not considered an officer of the congregation.

10. Bylaws – PART X – Section 2 – Amendments

With the transfer of all logistical aspects of congregational operations to bylaws from the constitution, bylaw amendments will now be subject to approval by the congregation's synod.