



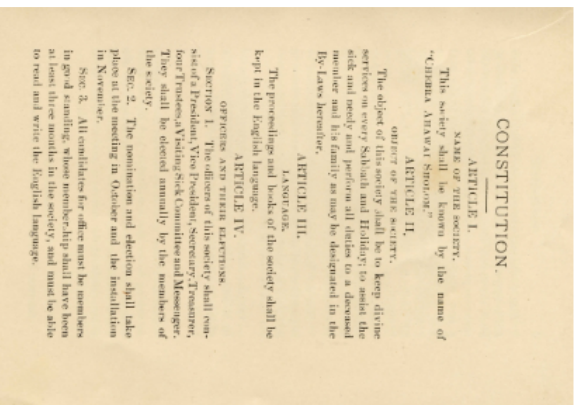
New Jersey Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Constitution Workshop

October 6, 2025 | 7:30 PM



Your Constitution

- When was it last revised?
- Is it in a Word document?
- Does it reference years starting with 19__?

*Chances are, it's time to revise
your Congregation's Constitution*

ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations

- Every congregation's constitution **MUST** be in compliance with the current Model Constitution for Congregations
- Model Constitution can only be modified by the action of a Churchwide Assembly and ratified at the subsequent CWA
- Every three years new required and recommended provisions come following CWA



2025 Churchwide Assembly

2025 Model Constitution for Congregations

Your Constitution needs to be updated!





www.elca.org/About/Churchwide/Office-of-the-Secretary

or

Google: ELCA Secretary

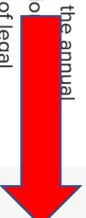


Office of the Secretary

The Office of the Secretary provides administrative services and tools for ELCA leaders who are serving this church in their congregations, synods and the churchwide organization, especially those given responsibility for governance of the ELCA.

The secretary interprets the constitutions and other governing documents of this church and is responsible for maintaining its rosters, the ELCA archives, and the minutes and records of certain meetings. The Office of the Secretary receives the annual report of the congregations, provides travel and physical arrangements for meetings of the churchwide organization information for the online ELCA Directory, staffs the nominating processes of this church and coordinates the use of legal counsel.

Deacon Sue E. Rothmeyer was elected to serve a six-year term as ELCA secretary by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly in Milwaukee. Previously, [Secretary Rothmeyer](#) served as assistant to the secretary and executive for Office of the Secretary administration from 2012 to 2019. She has worked for the churchwide organization in Chicago in various roles, including youth and young adult and campus ministry, since 1995.



Churchwide Organization

Office of the Presiding Bishop

Office of the Secretary

Constitutions

Congregations

Synods

Rostered Ministers

Legal Issues

Risk Management, Loss Prevention and Insurance

Archive of the ELCA

Nominations Process

Memorials and Resolutions



 ELCA GOOD GIFTS

GIVE

Search...

Constitutions

Each of this church's expressions—congregations, synods and the churchwide organization—has a constitution.

- [Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continual Resolutions of the ELCA](#)

Synods

- [2025 Constitution for Synods](#)

Congregations

- [2025 Model Constitution for Congregations](#)
- [2025 Constitución Modelo para Congregaciones](#)

Amendments

Each churchwide assembly has amended the constitutions.



Office of the Secretary

Constitutions

- Congregations
- Synods
- Rostered Ministers
- Legal Issues
- Risk Management, Loss Prevention and Insurance
- Archive of the ELCA
- Nominations Process
- Memorials and Resolutions

Constitutional

2025 Amendments and Rationales

Each of this church's expressions—congregations, synods and the churchwide organization—has a constitution.

- [Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA](#)

Synods

- [2025 Constitution for Synods](#)

Congregations

- [2025 Model Constitution for Congregations](#)
- [2025 Constitución Modelo para Congregaciones](#)

Amendments

Each churchwide assembly has amended the constitutions.

- [2025 Amendments to the Model Constitution for Congregations](#)
- [2025 Enmiendas a la Constitución Modelo para Congregaciones](#)
- [2025 Amendments to the Constitution for Synods](#)
- [Rationale for the 2025 Amendments](#)



Office of the Secretary

- Constitutions**
- Congregations
- Synods
- Rostered Ministers
- Legal Issues
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Congregation Constitutional Amendments

Select archived Congregation Constitutional Amendments from the list below.

**2025 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY AMENDMENTS TO THE
MODEL CONSTITUTION FOR CONGREGATIONS OF THE
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA®**

[WITH RATIONALES]

Prepared by the Office of the Secretary
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
August 2025

Following are amendments to the *Model Constitution for Congregations* that were approved by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. Additions are underlined; deletions are ~~struck through~~; all changes are **highlighted**.

Provisions within the *Model Constitution for Congregations* are of two types:

- **Those provisions marked with an asterisk (*) are required when a congregation amends its governing documents.** They must be used without alteration or amendment of the text in any manner (i.e., neither additions nor deletions are permissible). Such provisions go into effect immediately upon approval by a majority vote of those voting members present and voting at any legally called meeting of the congregation, provided that they have been presented to the congregation at least 30 days prior to the meeting.
- **Provisions not marked with an asterisk are non-required provisions.** These provisions represent wording recommended by the Churchwide Assembly. If the congregation chooses to incorporate them into the congregation's constitution exactly as presented here, these provisions require a majority vote of those voting members present and voting at any legally called meeting of the congregation, provided that they have been presented to the congregation at least 30 days prior to the meeting.

If the wording of non-required provisions is altered or amended in any way from the text presented



**MODEL CONSTITUTION
FOR
CONGREGATIONS
OF THE
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN
CHURCH IN AMERICA®**



Current as of August 2025

Required Provisions



***PREAMBLE**

We, baptized members of the Church of Christ, responding in faith to the call of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, desiring to unite together to preach the Word, administer the sacraments, and carry out God's mission, do hereby adopt this constitution and solemnly pledge ourselves to be governed by its provisions. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Marked with *

MUST be printed

exactly as in

Model Constitution

including the *



Chapter 1. NAME AND INCORPORATION

- C1.01. The name of this congregation shall be ____.
- C1.02. For the purpose of this constitution and the accompanying bylaws, the congregation of ____ *(insert full legal name)* is hereinafter designated as "this congregation."
- C1.11. This congregation shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of ____.

Chapter 2. CONFESSION OF FAITH

- *C2.01. This congregation confesses the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- *C2.02. This congregation confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.
- a. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God fashions a new creation.

Recommended Provisions

These are recommended by the ELCA but NOT required

*C5.04.

This congregation shall elect from among its voting members laypersons to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly as well as persons to represent it at meetings of any conference, cluster, coalition, or other area subdivision of which it is a member. The number of persons to be elected by this congregation and other qualifications shall be as prescribed in guidelines established by the *insert name of synod* of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

This congregation shall have a mission endowment fund that will operate as specified in this congregation's [bylaws] [continuing resolutions]. The purpose of the mission endowment fund is to provide for mission work beyond the operational budget of this congregation.

C5.05.



Local Congregation Decisions

In some cases a decision
from among several options
MUST be made
by the local congregation

Choose ONE

*C8.02.

Members shall be classified as follows:

- a. *Baptized* members are those persons who have been received by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism in this congregation, or, having been previously baptized in the name of the Triune God, have been received by certificate of transfer from other Lutheran congregations or by affirmation of faith.
- b. *Confirmed* members are baptized persons who have been confirmed in this congregation, those who have been received by adult baptism or by transfer as confirmed members from other Lutheran congregations, or baptized persons received by affirmation of faith.
- c. *Voting* members are confirmed members. Such confirmed members, during the current or preceding calendar year, shall have communed in this congregation and shall have made a contribution of record to this congregation. Members of this congregation who have satisfied these basic standards shall have the privilege of voice and vote at every regular and special meeting of this congregation as well as the other rights and privileges ascribed to voting members by the provisions of this constitution and its bylaws. They shall not have voted as a seasonal member of another congregation of this church in the previous two calendar months.
- d. *Associate* members are persons holding membership in other [ELCA] [Lutheran] [Christian] congregations who wish to retain such membership but desire to participate in the life and mission of this congregation. These individuals have all the privileges and duties of membership except voting rights or other rights and privileges



C11.02.

The [congregation][Congregation Council] shall elect its officers and they shall be the officers of this congregation. The officers shall be elected by written ballot and shall serve for one year or until their successors are elected. Their terms shall begin at the close of the annual meeting at which they are elected.

or

Another
example of local
decision needed

or

The officers shall be elected by the [congregation] [Congregation Council] by written ballot and shall serve for one year. The term shall begin on ____ (month and day) and end on ____ (month and day).

Choose ONE
from among the
options

or

The pastor shall be *ex officio* president of this congregation and the Congregation Council. The [congregation][Congregation Council] shall elect by written ballot the other officers of this congregation who shall serve for one year or until their successors are elected. Their terms shall begin at the close of the annual meeting at which they are elected.

The pastor shall be *ex officio* president of this congregation and the Congregation Council. The [congregation][Congregation Council] shall elect by written ballot the other officers of this congregation who shall serve for one year or until their successors are elected. Their terms shall begin on ____ (month and day) and end on ____ (month and day).

The Church vs. this church



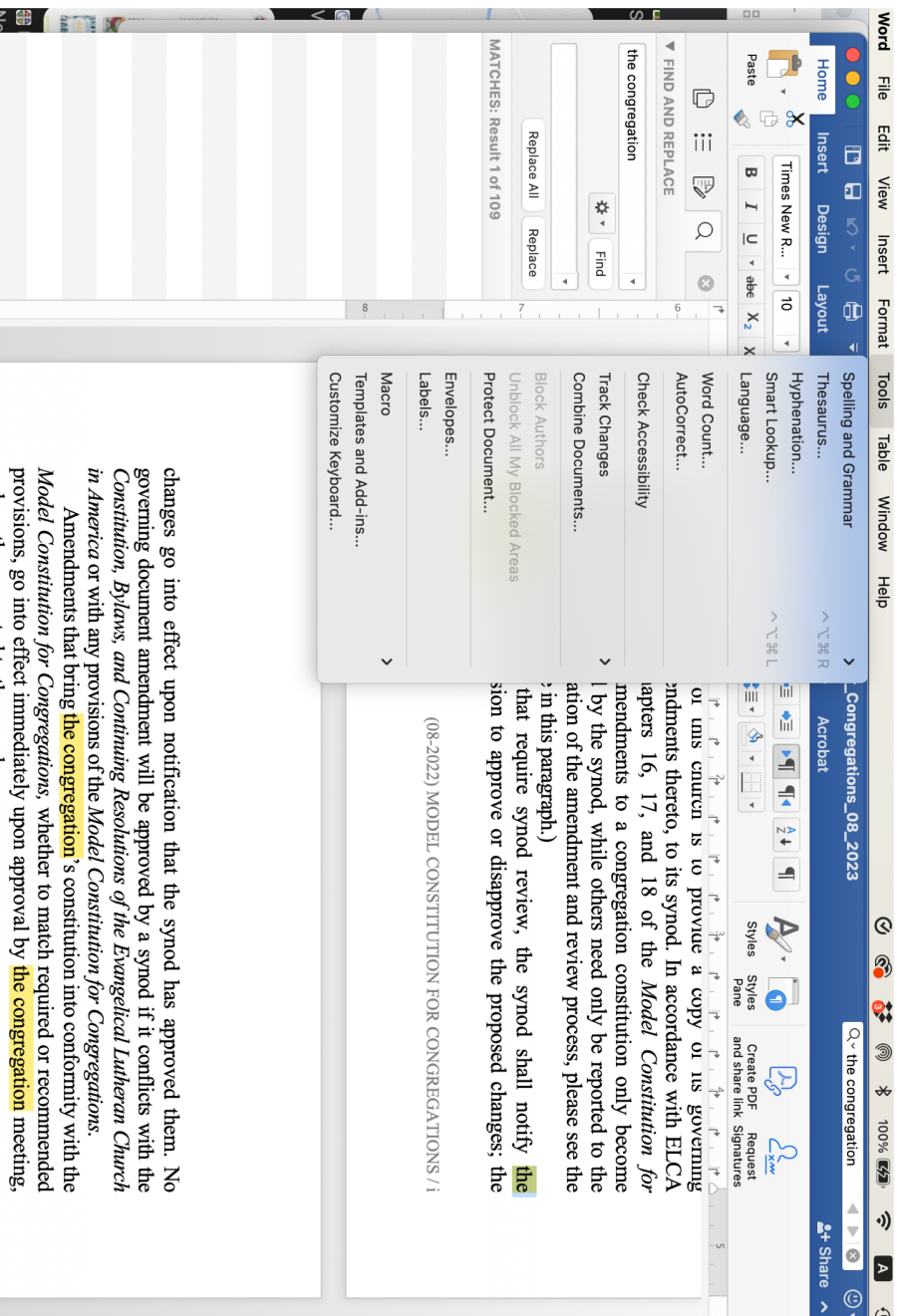
This congregation & the congregation



NEVER the church
NEVER this church
NEVER our church



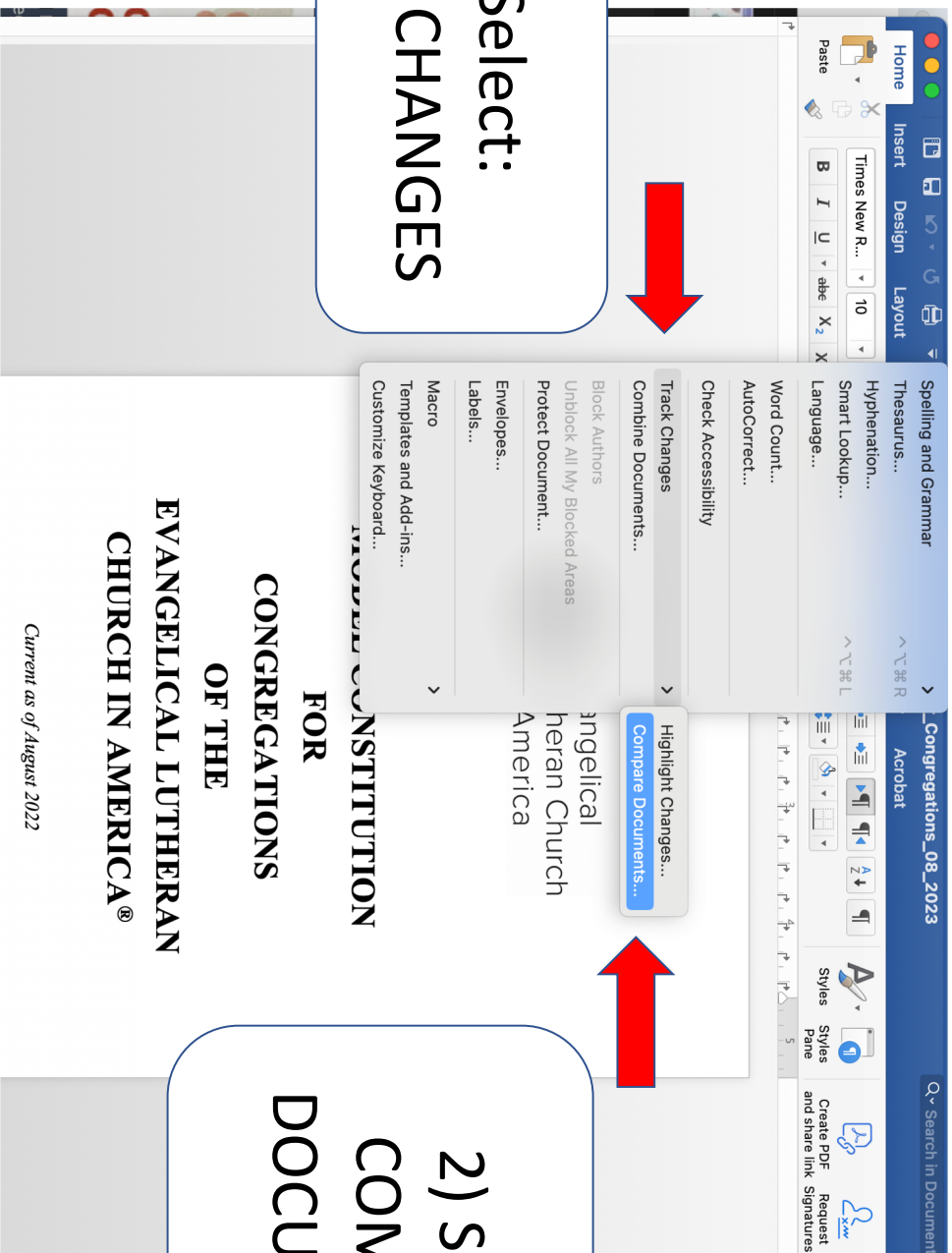
↓ For Mac: Word--Tools



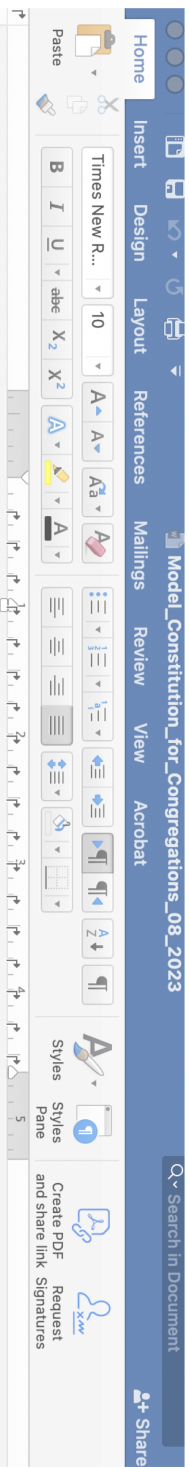
changes go into effect upon notification that the synod has approved them. No governing document amendment will be approved by a synod if it conflicts with the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* or with any provisions of the *Model Constitution for Congregations*.

Amendments that bring the **congregation**'s constitution into conformity with the *Model Constitution for Congregations*, whether to match required or recommended provisions, go into effect immediately upon approval by the **congregation** meeting.

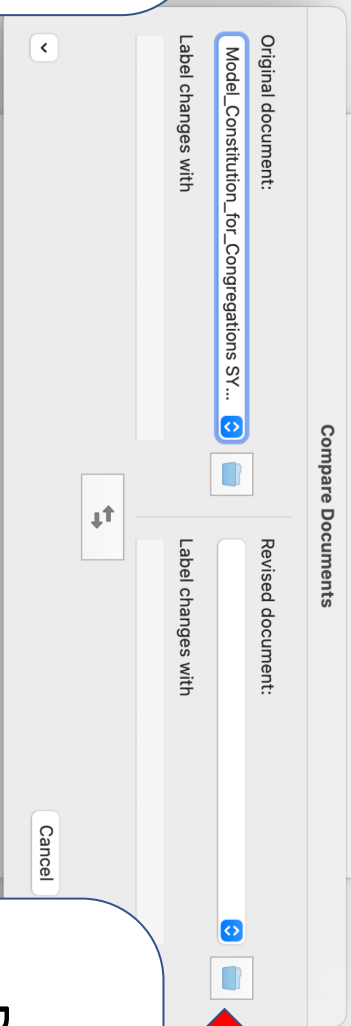
1) Select:
TRACK CHANGES



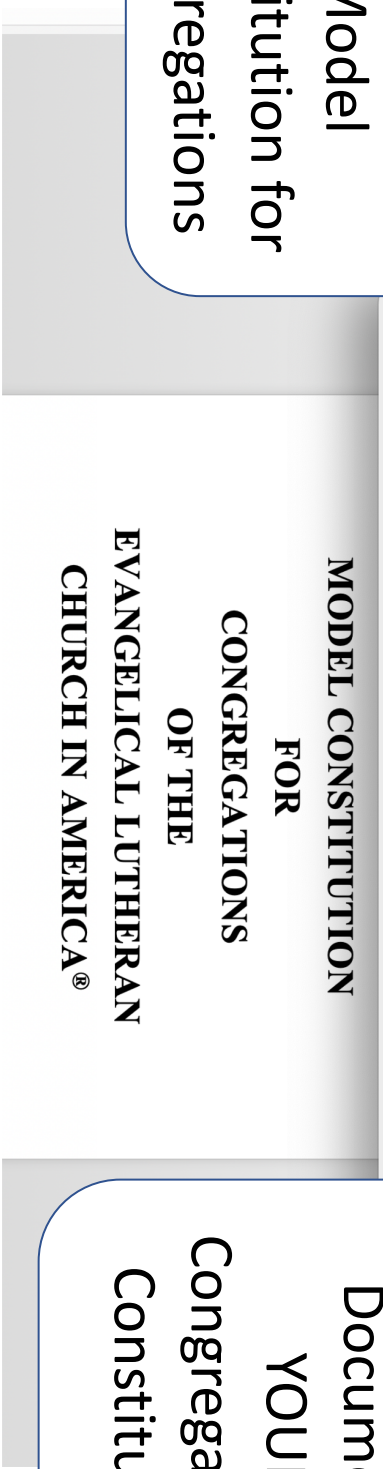
2) Select:
COMPARE
DOCUMENTS



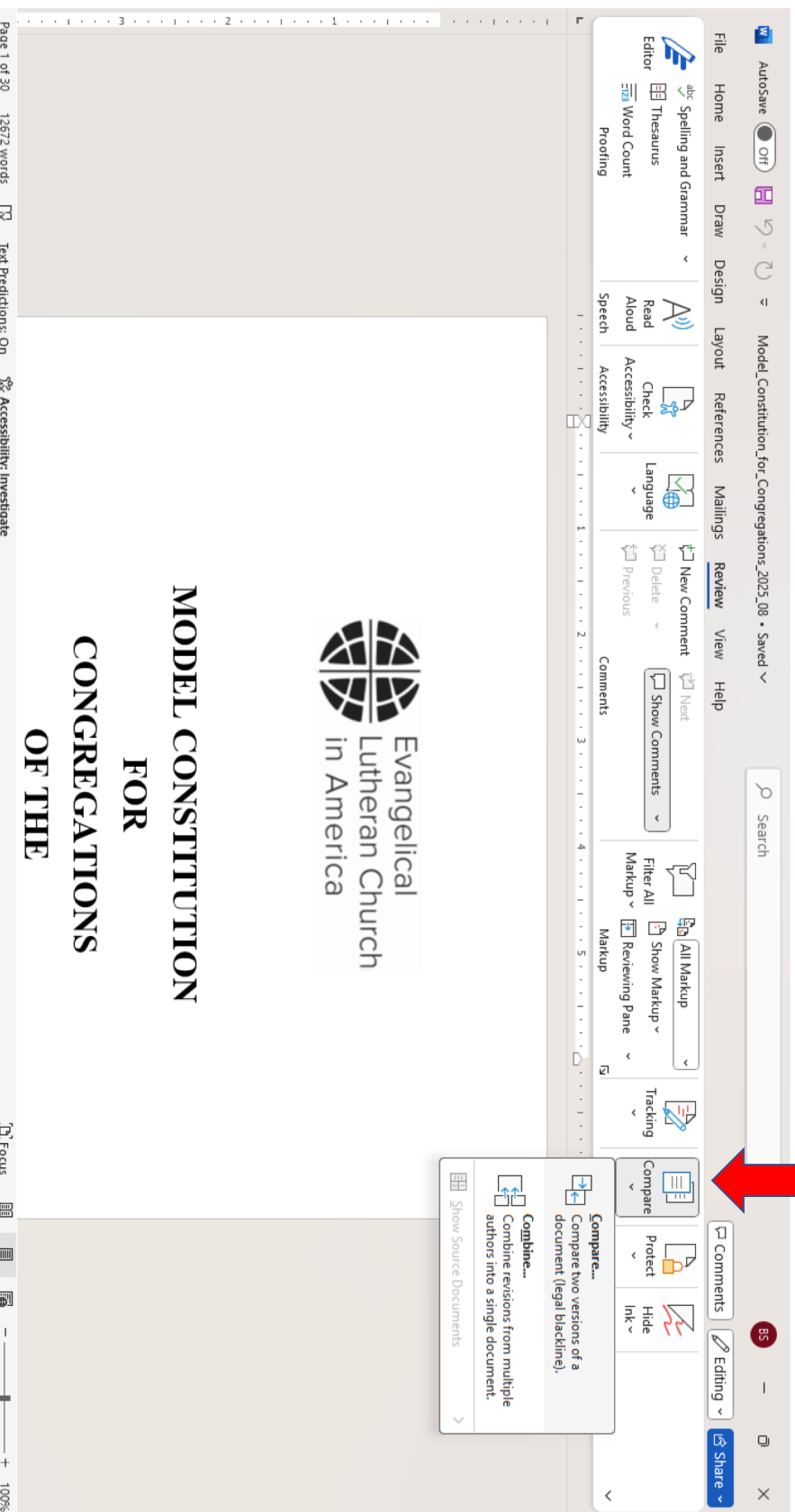
Original
Document:
Model
Constitution for
Congregations



Revised
Document:
YOUR
Congregation's
Constitution



For Windows: Word--Review



Review your “Compared Document” against the Model Constitution

*PREAMBLE	STLC STLC	Formatted	↗
We, baptized members of the Church of Christ, responding in faith to the call of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, desiring to unite together to preach the Word, administer the sacraments, and carry out God’s mission, do hereby adopt this constitution and solemnly pledge ourselves to be governed by its provisions. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.	STLC STLC	Formatted	↗
Chapter 1. NAME AND INCORPORATION	STLC STLC	Formatted	↗
C1.01. The name of the congregation shall be <u>St. Thomas Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brick Township</u> .	STLC STLC	Formatted	↗
C1.02. For the purpose of this constitution and the accompanying bylaws, the congregation of <u>St. Thomas Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brick Township</u> is hereinafter designated as “this congregation.”	STLC STLC	Formatted	↗
C1.11. This congregation shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of <u>New Jersey</u> .	STLC STLC	Formatted	↗
C1.12. The seal of this congregation presents a Cross surrounded by rays around which is the legend “The St. Thomas Ev. Lutheran Church, Brick Town, N.J. Organized Feb. 23, 1961”.	STLC STLC	Formatted	↗
Chapter 2. CONFESSION OF FAITH	STLC STLC	Formatted	↗
*C2.01. This congregation confesses the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.	STLC STLC	Formatted	↗
*C2.02. This congregation confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the	STLC STLC	Formatted	↗

Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions

One Unified Document: Constitution, Bylaws, (Continuing Resolutions)

- Bylaws give further specification and detail in how the congregation will enact the constitution/function as an institution in the local context
- Bylaws are inserted after their relevant Constitutional Provision
- Bylaws are codified using the relevant Constitutional Provision codification then adding two-digit sequential numerals followed by a dot.

i.e. C10.01. is the Constitutional provisions for an Annual Meeting of the Congregation

A related Bylaw might be: This congregation shall hold it's annual meeting of the congregation on a Sunday in the month of January.

C10.01.

This congregation shall have at least one regular meeting per year. The regular meeting(s) of the congregation shall be held at the time(s) specified in the bylaws. Consistent with the laws of the State of _____, the bylaws shall designate one regular meeting per year as the annual meeting of this congregation.

The Bylaw would codified as: C10.01.01.

Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions

One Unified Document: Constitution, Bylaws, (Continuing Resolutions)

- Continuing Resolutions are meant to offer further definition and detail for function as an institution
- Continuing Resolutions are meant to be frequently reviewed, revised, and adopted/removed
- Continuing Resolutions are placed after their relevant Constitutional Provision and/or Bylaw
- Continuing Resolutions are codified using the relevant Constitutional Provision or Bylaw using alphabetical listing followed by the two-digit year the Continuing Resolution was adopted, such as C10.01.A25 or C10.01.01.A25



MOTION: To bring [*name of congregation*] congregation constitution into conformity and compliance with all required provisions of the Model Constitution for Congregations.

You really can do this!

We're here to help.

secretary@njsynod.org

