

Structural Renewal Implementation Guide



Back in February of 2009, the officers of the National Church, along with the officers of all five synods, including the National and Synod Bishops, met in Winnipeg to look at the current challenges facing our church. Everyone at that meeting agreed that over the next few years, these challenges would become more severe and that major changes to the overall structure of the church would be required to enable the ELCIC to live out our call to be a church *In Mission for Others*.

Much work has been done since that initial meeting four years ago. Change of this magnitude is not something that is done overnight, nor should it be done in a silo. This is the reason we are sharing this Structural Renewal Implementation Guide with you now and asking for your assistance.

The structural renewal strategy comes following years of work at the national and synod levels with various implementation teams and lots of church-wide consultation. Throughout this process it has become clear that there is a strong desire for:

- a National Church that works internationally and ecumenically on behalf of all members of the ELCIC;
- Synods that support congregations in ministry; and,
- the ELCIC to be a church *In Mission for Others* through a structure that is flexible, affordable and sustainable.

What IS structural renewal?

What is involved in the implementation of structural renewal?

First of all, structural renewal implementation currently involves only those items that relate to the National Church. There were previous recommendations relating to restructuring at the synod level, but these were dealt with at the Synod Conventions this past summer. Specifically, this means that the structural renewal proposals coming to the 2013 Joint Assembly involves the following areas:

Constitutional and Administrative Bylaw Changes:

The proposed changes to these important governance documents will help our church function efficiently and effectively. The proposed changes reflect that constitutions should be contained to “who and what” the ELCIC is; other items, the “how to” are moved to the Administrative Bylaws where they belong. This results in a leaner/meaner constitution and a bulked up set of bylaws. The proposed changes allow us more flexibility. Moving more items to the bylaws allows us as a church to be able to adapt more quickly to our changing environment and landscape, since bylaws are easier to amend.

The proposed changes help us reduce duplication between the constitutions of the National Church and Synods. Items that are within the jurisdiction of the synods (such as the seminaries) would be removed from the national constitution.

Synodically Recognized Ministries:

The structural renewal strategy proposes the creation of a new category of church membership called Synodically Recognized Ministries. Currently, the only way you can be a member of the ELCIC is to be a member of an ELCIC congregation. The Constitution and Administrative By-laws, along with the Model Constitution for Congregations, set out expectations that define how a congregation needs to function. By having a new option for church membership, Synodically Recognized Ministries, we will be able to help out ministries on two ends of the spectrum:

- Congregations that are declining in membership and unable to meet the basic expectations of a congregation will have the option of becoming Synodically Recognized Ministries. This will allow the members the option of staying together and remaining as members of the ELCIC.
- It is increasingly difficult for new worshipping communities to be able to afford our current practice of mission starts – buying land and putting up a building. Now new worshipping communities will be able to begin as Synodically Recognized Ministries and their members will be members of the ELCIC.

National Convention Changes:

Some of the specific changes in the Constitution and Administrative Bylaws relate to National Convention.

- *Change from having National Conventions take place every two years to having them take place every three years.* Moving the National Convention to a triennial cycle will help the whole church save money as conventions are a very costly item, and having less frequent conventions will free up important resources to do mission and ministry.
- *Elect delegates to National Convention at Synod Conventions.* Currently delegates are elected through a combination of synod conference conventions and congregational meetings. This change reflects an understanding that Synods relate to congregations, and the National Church relates to synods as well as internationally and ecumenically. The proposed election process mirrors the way that the funding of the National Church takes place—from synods. Some members of our church may regret the loss of the principle that each parish is represented at National Convention. However, in reality that has not been the practice for some time. What the new election of delegates at Synod Conventions ensures is that there will be a majority of laypersons at National Convention, a founding principle of the ELCIC that has been lost over time.
- *With National Convention delegates elected from synods, a smaller number of delegates overall would be elected.* The biggest factor for this recommendation is that again, it will save money that can be spent on mission and ministry. Part of the change is that Synods will now be responsible for the costs for delegates to the National Convention – another reason to keep both delegate numbers and associated costs lower!

National Church Council Changes:

Another of the major areas of change in the proposed amendments to the Constitution and Administrative Bylaws relate to National Church Council (NCC). Changes to NCC include:

- *Reducing the size of the council* which provides cost savings while ensuring representation among synods.
- *Changing the term of NCC members to be in line with National Conventions*; instead of the current four-year term, renewable once, NCC members will be elected to three-years terms, renewable twice.
- *Changes to the officers' positions.* To ensure a high lay representation at NCC, the positions of Vice-Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer will all be lay positions. Terms for these offices will be three years and, like now, there will be no term limits. Similar to the current election of the Treasurer, NCC will bring forward a nomination for Secretary to the National Convention to ensure the necessary skill set is met.
- *Changes to the position of National Bishop.* Terms for the National Bishop will be for six years and, like now, there will be no term limit. In addition, in cases where the National Bishop is eligible for re-election, the convention first ballot shall contain one name only in a yes or no vote on election of the incumbent. Election would require a two-thirds majority. Should the election fail, the voting process would continue with an ecclesiastical ballot.

Other enhancements that will be made possible through the implementation of structural renewal include changes to the name and function of the Court of Adjudication—which will see it become a true appeal body named the Court of Appeal.

What is the timeline for Structural Renewal Implementation?

NCC approves a draft constitution which will come to the 2013 convention for first reading. Accompanying draft administrative bylaws are for information only.

If approved at the 2013 National Convention, the draft constitution will be presented to the 2015 National Convention for second reading.

At that time, the Administrative Bylaws will also be presented for adoption. Adjustments may be made to the Administrative Bylaws before they are officially presented to the 2015 convention.



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What does structural renewal implementation mean to me and my congregation?

Overall, the impact of structural renewal implementation is focused on the national expression of the ELCIC in the areas of National Convention, National Church Council, and by refining our Constitution and Administrative Bylaws. The addition of Synodically Recognized Ministries enhances our ability to be in mission and ministry in a changing environment.

Structural renewal allows the ELCIC to be a National Church that works internationally and ecumenically on behalf of all members of the ELCIC; enables our Synods to more fully support congregations in ministry; and enhances our ability to be a church *In Mission for Others* through a structure that is flexible, affordable and sustainable.

How can I help my church move forward in implementing structural renewal?

We hope that you will take the time to review this document and the attached information on Constitutional and Administrative Bylaw changes, and:

- Have a discussion at your Conference Convention about this.
- Bring this information back to your congregation, and share it with your church council, delegate(s) to National Convention, and church membership.
- Tell us what you think! Please share your feedback, comments, questions and concerns with us. You can contact us by emailing [**structuralrenewal@elcic.ca**](mailto:structuralrenewal@elcic.ca).