

INTRODUCTION OF PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

1. Background

In July 2024, members appointed by each Presbytery and Synod around the country gathered for the 17th Assembly Meeting. They adopted a **Vision of Life-giving Communities of Discipleship and Mission**,[∅] envisaging these communities flourishing, and subsequently commissioned the Assembly Standing Committee (ASC) to develop options for 'fit-for-purpose' governance arrangements for local communities of faith. This work forms Stream A of the ongoing ACT2 journey.

The ASC identified the need to amend the Regulations with the **purpose** of enabling local communities of faith in their "worshipping, witnessing and serving as a fellowship of the Spirit in Christ." (Basis of Union, para. 15) They met for the first time in August 2024 and passed a number of resolutions, which can be understood as setting out the following **two principles** for amending the Regulations:

- (1) **greater flexibility** and **reduced burden** for local communities of faith; and
- (2) **clearer mechanisms and more pathways** for Presbyteries to support local communities.

2. Process Since August 2024

The ASC, Assembly Resourcing Unit (ARU) and a Reference Group with members from different Synods developed proposals for amending the Regulations and sought **formal legal advice** on these changes. It was advised that the proposed changes would require **constitutional change**.

The current Exposure Draft contains the **proposed constitutional changes** approved by the ASC at their July 2026 meeting, **for consultation** across the wide Church. The current process (to June 2027) is focused on constitutional changes in order to enable amendments to the Regulations.

From **now until 31 October 2026** the Assembly will **receive feedback** from Synods & Presbyteries. The Assembly will review **all received feedback** and make available final proposed changes to the Constitution by March 2027.

A **three-month voting period** (from March 2027) will enable full Presbytery meetings, and Synods (Standing Committees) to vote on the proposed constitutional changes. Constitutional change requires a majority of Synods and two-third of all Presbyteries (Constitution, Para. 72).

[∅] The Vision envisages that local communities of faith will sustain a life of worship, build one another up in love, grow disciples of Jesus and participate in God's mission. These diverse communities of faith will shape their life in response to God's call in their context and deepen their relationship with God, one another, the wider church and the world.

3. Key Amendments to Regulations

If the proposed constitutional changes are approved, then the Regulations would be amended according to the following key directions (*for a fuller **illustrative** example of the proposed amendments to the Regulations please refer to the [full Exposure Draft document](#)*).

(a) Varying Responsibilities of Local Communities of Faith

Allowing Presbyteries to vary the responsibilities of a Congregation (Regulations 3.1.1) and Church Council (Regulation 3.1.2), so that they are required to meet **some but not all** of the responsibilities in the Regulations. This is intended to enable Presbyteries to support congregations to better align their life to the vision of the Basis of Union. For some Congregations with limited resources this will mean continuing their life of worship, witness and service with less regulatory burden. For some Faith Communities this will mean being recognised as a Congregation before they have enough resources to fulfil all of the responsibilities in the Regulations.

(b) Various Types of Communities of Faith to be Governed by a Common Church Council

The current Constitution upholds the principle of **one Congregation, one Church Council**. While multiple Congregations may form a Joint Church Council, the Regulations limit other forms of communities or agencies (local expressions of mission) being included in this kind of governance arrangement. Moving away from “one Congregation, one Church Council” would allow various types of communities of faith to be governed collectively and enable greater collaboration.

For example, several Congregations, together with a community of faith, may wish to form a Common Church Council, in which an appointee of a local Uniting Church school could be a member. There is limited provision in the Constitution and Regulations to enable a Presbytery to support this governance arrangement.

4. Transitional Period for Amended Regulations

The Assembly intends to enable a transition period — for example, two years — for the implementation of new Regulations by applying Regulation 3.10.1 (Alternative Regulations). This would allow a Synod or Presbytery the freedom to adopt the amended Regulations immediately, or at any point during the transition period.

5. Proposed Amendments to Constitution

The proposed constitutional amendments involve **ONLY two** sections of the Constitution. The first relates to the definition of a Church Council, and the second relates to Paragraph 24, Councils of the Congregation (legally referred to as Clause 24), as shown in the following page using tracked changes.

CONSTITUTION

DEFINITIONS

3. In this Constitution unless the context or subject matter otherwise indicates or requires:

Church Council means the body established as approved by the Presbytery in each Congregation to have oversight of its-the total life and mission of one, or more than one, Congregation.

COUNCILS OF THE CONGREGATION

24. For the effective exercise of their responsibilities and for the better ordering of the life of the Congregations and the Church:-

(a) as authorised by the Presbytery:

(i) each Congregation shall form and be under the oversight of a Church Council; or

~~(b)(ii)~~ where authorised by the Presbytery, more than one Congregation may jointly form and be under the oversight of a joint-common Church Council; and

(b) ~~(e)~~ one, or more than one, Congregation may:

(i) where approved by the Church Council responsible for oversight of each such Congregation, form such other committees or agencies as may be necessary or desirable; and

(ii) where authorised by the Presbytery, be grouped with one or more than one, other Congregation, committee, agency, organisation, body or group.

The Church Councils and Congregations, other committees, or agencies, organisations, bodies or groups shall have such membership, responsibilities and relationships to one another as may be prescribed.

DEFINITION:

The Church Council can be formed by one or more than one congregation, under the support of the Presbytery.

PARA. 24:

1. More than one Congregation can now jointly form a common Church Council.

2. The grouping of congregation(s), agencies, and other bodies is now possible, subject to the approval of the Presbytery.

3. "Agencies" is the term used in Constitution 15(a) to refer to small expressions of mission overseen by a local Church Council (e.g. music centre, food pantry, or op shop).