Annual Congregation Reporting FAQs

FAQs for Congregation Issues

Some congregations are receiving a message that says, "Please enter valid numbers," on the finance pages of the form. What is going on?

An increasing number of congregations have indicated they are receiving a message that says "Please enter valid numbers" when they click the Save & Continue button on the financial pages. This message appears when there are blank spaces in one or more of the fields. The only way to see these spaces is to highlight all the text in the field. This will show if there is a blank space before or after a number. After the blank spaces are removed, the person completing the report will be able to click the "Save & Continue" button. If you or a congregation need help finding the blank spaces, please let me know.

How does a congregation make updates to its report after it has been submitted?

Because the button on the final page does not have an obvious Submit button—rather, the button says, "Save & Continue"—some congregations have submitted their reports prematurely. Once a report has been submitted, neither congregations nor synods can access or edit it.

In these cases, all edits must be sent to our office (research@elca.org). We will update the data and send a revised report to the congregation.

Some people need to file reports for more than one congregation. When they try to do this, they receive a message that says, "You have either already completed the survey or your session has expired." How do they enter data for more than one congregation?

If an individual needs to submit reports for multiple congregations, the only solution we have found is to use incognito mode. You can access instructions on how to access incognito mode here: https://portal.elca.org/apps/support.aspx. After accessing incognito mode, the person completing the form can go to www.elca.org/congregationreport to enter data. If the login is not successful from incognito mode, a report for this congregation was likely already submitted.

Why are congregations not able to download a PDF report from the system as they have in the past?

The default report provided by the new platform is 10 pages long. As this report seemed too lengthy, we made the decision to provide the email report that will print on 3 pages. Congregations can print this email, save it as a PDF, or copy and paste the content into a document to save or print. If requested, we are also happy to download and email the report within the system that is available to us and synod staff. We are working with our colleagues in IT to be able to provide a similar downloadable version of the report that congregations have been accustomed to.

Why are some congregations getting an "{Invalid Expression}" message in their reports?

When congregations receive their report via email after submitting it, some indicate they are seeing an "{Invalid Expression}" message. Even though the churchwide organization has received all the data a congregation submits, congregations are, understandably, concerned when they see this message.

To avoid it, zeroes must be entered in fields that would otherwise be left blank. In an attempt to address this issue before it happens, we have included instructions to those completing the form not to leave blank spaces. We also included a note on the email report, letting folks know that even if this message appears, their data has been submitted.

FAQs for Synod issues

In my role, I frequently need to file reports for congregation in my synod. How do I enter data for more than one congregation?

Thank you for taking the time to submit reports on behalf of congregations in your synod. Unfortunately, the issue with submitting reports for multiple congregations (noted above) also applies to synods. If you bookmark www.elca.org/congregationreport you can easily access the login screen after you enter incognito mode. While having to close and reopen a new incognito window between each form is admittedly tedious, creating this bookmark eases the process a bit.

The synod dashboards look and function much differently than what we have used in the past. What resources are available to help understand how to navigate them?

On ELCA Community, in the Synod Portal, there is a video overview of the new dashboards. If you have not yet viewed this video, please do so as we hope it will make navigating and using the dashboards an easier experience for you. After viewing this video, if you need help using the dashboards, please reach out and we can schedule a time to meet.

When are congregations' reports considered final, and when will be the best time to download them?

Recently, several synod staff members mentioned to our team that they were unaware that data initially submitted by a congregation might not be the final accurate data for that congregation. We want to clarify that the information submitted by a congregation can be changed at a later date, either by the congregation itself or through the data cleaning process conducted by the churchwide organization in consultation with congregations. Even though the platform has changed this year, this process has not. As a result, congregation reports that you download now may become out of date.

Unless you need to download these reports before summer, we advise waiting to do so. We are currently working with our colleagues in IT to produce a single report that will contain a finalized data in a 2-page format for each congregation that has submitted a report. This report will be made available to you this summer through the synod portal.