



The Evangelical Covenant Church

ECC Church Name Change Process

When a church desires to change its name in the ECC, the guidelines below are to be followed. While the ECC, SSC, and Regional Conferences do not originate or directly control the names of individual churches within the denomination, each party has a role in the name change process in making sure that all appropriate steps have been followed and that all Federal, State, and Denominational requirements have been fulfilled. The ECC in particular has standards for church names that can be used in determining continuing eligibility for 501c3 inclusion and denominational membership.

It's important that churches follow the steps in the options below for several reasons. The first is that because there are standards in place from both the Denomination and the Regional Conferences on naming conventions, we don't want churches to get too far along in the process if the new proposed name isn't going to work for everyone. The last thing we want is for a church to take their new name to a vote only to have to restart the entire process because of lack of input from the Denomination and the Regional Conference. The second reason is just as important, but is even more difficult for churches to accomplish fully and correctly without the steps listed below: the church's state and the IRS have specific steps that need to be followed and requirements that need to be met in name changes within 501c3 organizations. The steps in this document will help churches avoid many common pitfalls when dealing with state and IRS processes.

If any questions arise during the name change process, please reach out to Start and Strengthen Churches (SSC) at sscadmincore@covchurch.org OR 773-907-7267.

Option 1 - Official and Lasting Name Change - *This option is preferable because although there is more work upfront, once the name change takes place, there is no other upkeep needed. Please do these steps in order.*

- The church changes its organization's name officially by changing its name with their state (and also later with the IRS)
 - The church can get started by informing Start and Strengthen Churches AND their ECC Regional Conference that they intend to change their name, and let both parties know what their current name is and what they would like it to be changed to. Contacting SSC can be done via email (sscadmincore@covchurch.org).
 - The church can either consult with an attorney, or if they feel comfortable enough, attempt the name change themselves with some administrative (non-legal) assistance from Start and Strengthen Churches. *Please keep in mind that Start and Strengthen Churches does not provide legal counsel, and neither this document, nor any verbal or written correspondence from Start and Strengthen Churches during the name change process should be considered legal advice.*
 - The church should go to their state's website and look for a form to AMEND their Articles of Incorporation. NOTE: It's important to remember that the church IS NOT filing or re-filing their Articles of Incorporation, but they are AMENDING their existing Articles.
 - Once the church has amended their Articles of Incorporation, turned in the amended articles to their state, and received a notification from their state that the amended articles have been approved and filed, they should send SSC a copy of their Articles



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and the approval letter from their state. Please understand that any change to Articles of Incorporation needs to follow the proper procedure outlined both in the existing Articles of Incorporation themselves and in the church's Constitution and Bylaws. Failure to follow these procedures will result in the need to restart the process, and in some states failure to follow these procedures is a criminal offense.

- Once Start and Strengthen Churches has verified that the name on the approved Articles is the EXACT same as the name the church wants to be known as officially in the Covenant (no abbreviations, different spellings, or additional or missing words), an internal name change memo will be written, and ECC Operations/Governance will make sure that the name has been changed in all relevant systems.
- Once the name change is complete with the State, the ECC, and the Regional Conference, the church is responsible for notifying the IRS of the change. Instructions on how to do so can be found at the following link:
<https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/change-of-name-exempt-organizations>

Option 2 – DBA (or “Assumed Name”) Name Change - *This option has less work upfront, but requires a renewal every few years (the length of time is determined by the laws of the state in which the church is located). Please do these steps in order.*

- The church changes its organization's name through a doing-business-as form or "DBA Form" (in some states this is called an “assumed name”)
 - The church can get started by informing Start and Strengthen Churches AND their ECC Regional Conference that they intend to change their name, and let both parties know what their current name is and what they would like it to be changed to. Contacting SSC can be done via email (sscadmincore@covchurch.org).
 - The church can either consult with an attorney, or if they feel comfortable enough, attempt the name change themselves with some administrative (non-legal) assistance from Start and Strengthen Churches. *Please keep in mind that Start and Strengthen Churches does not provide legal counsel, and neither this document, nor any verbal or written correspondence from Start and Strengthen Churches during the name change process should be considered legal advice.*
 - The church should go to their state's website and look for a doing-business-as form or "DBA Form" (also known as an “assumed name” form in some states)
 - Once the church has filled out the DBA/Assumed Name Form, turned it in to their state, and received a notification from their state that the DBA/Assumed Name form has been approved and filed, they should send SSC (sscadmincore@covchurch.org) and their Regional Conference a copy of their DBA/Assumed Name form and the approval letter from their state.
 - Once Start and Strengthen Churches has verified that the name on the approved DBA/Assumed Name Form is the EXACT same as the name the church wants to be known as officially in the Covenant, an internal name change memo will be written, and ECC Operations/Governance will make sure that the name has been changed in all relevant systems.