
Constitution of Faith Lutheran Church

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Constitution of Faith Lutheran Church

Approved by the Evangelical Church in America and adopted in September, 2005.

***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.

Chapter 1. NAME AND INCORPORATION

- C1.01.** The name of this congregation shall be Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church.
- C1.02.** For the purpose of this constitution and the accompanying bylaws, the congregation of Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church is hereinafter designated as "this congregation."
- C1.03.** This congregation shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of Illinois.
- C1.04.** The seal of this congregation presents the symbol of the cross.

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.
 - b. The proclamation of God's message to us as both Law and Gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy through word and deed, beginning with the Word in creation, continuing in the history of Israel, and centering in all its fullness in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
 - c. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. Inspired by God's Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God's revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them God's Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.
- *C2.03.** This congregation accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life.
- *C2.04.** This congregation accepts the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of this congregation.
- *C2.05.** This congregation accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to the Gospel, acknowledging as one with it in faith and doctrine all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.
- *C2.06.** This congregation accepts the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise, the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, as further valid interpretations of the faith of the Church.

- ***C2.07.** This congregation confesses the Gospel, recorded in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain the Church for God's mission in the world.

Chapter 3. NATURE OF THE CHURCH

- ***C3.01.** All power in the Church belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ, its head. All actions of this congregation are to be carried out under his rule and authority.
- ***C3.02.** The Church exists both as an inclusive fellowship and as local congregations gathered for worship and Christian service. Congregations find their fulfillment in the universal community of the Church, and the universal Church exists in and through congregations. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, therefore, derives its character and powers both from the sanction and representation of its congregations and from its inherent nature as an expression of the broader fellowship of the faithful. In length, it acknowledges itself to be in the historic continuity of the communion of saints; in breadth, it expresses the fellowship of believers and congregations in our day.

Chapter 4. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

- ***C4.01.** The Church is a people created by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, called and sent to bear witness to God's creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world.
- ***C4.02.** To participate in God's mission, this congregation as a part of the Church shall:
 - a. Worship God in proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments and through lives of prayer, praise, thanksgiving, witness, and service.
 - b. Proclaim God's saving Gospel of justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith alone, according to the apostolic witness in the Holy Scripture, preserving and transmitting the Gospel faithfully to future generations.
 - c. Carry out Christ's Great Commission by reaching out to all people to bring them to faith in Christ and by doing all ministry with a global awareness consistent with the understanding of God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of all.
 - d. Serve in response to God's love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity and justice for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, and standing with the poor and powerless, and committing itself to their needs.
 - e. Nurture its members in the Word of God so as to grow in faith and hope and love, to see daily life as the primary setting for the exercise of their Christian calling, and to use the gifts of the Spirit for their life together and for their calling in the world.
 - f. Manifest the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives.
- ***C4.03.** To fulfill these purposes, this congregation shall:
 - a. Provide services of worship at which the Word of God is preached and the sacraments are administered.

- b. Provide pastoral care and assist all members to participate in this ministry.
 - c. Challenge, equip, and support all members in carrying out their calling in their daily lives and in their congregation.
 - d. Teach the Word of God.
 - e. Witness to the reconciling Word of God in Christ, reaching out to all people.
 - f. Respond to human need, work for justice and peace, care for the sick and the suffering, and participate responsibly in society.
 - g. Motivate its members to provide financial support for the congregation's ministry and the ministry of other parts of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
 - h. Foster and participate in interdependent relationships with other congregations, the synod, and the churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
 - i. Foster and participate in ecumenical relationships consistent with churchwide policy.
- *C4.04.** This congregation shall develop an organizational structure to be described in the bylaws. The Congregation Council shall prepare descriptions of the responsibilities of each committee, task force, or other organizational group and shall review their actions. Such descriptions shall be contained in bylaws in the section on the Congregation Council (C12.13).
- *C4.05.** This congregation shall, from time to time, adopt a mission statement which will provide specific direction for its programs.

Chapter 5. POWERS OF THE CONGREGATION

- *C5.01.** The powers of this congregation are those necessary to fulfill its purpose.
- *C5.02.** The powers of this congregation are vested in the Congregation Meeting called and conducted as provided in this constitution and bylaws.
- *C5.03.** Only such authority as is delegated to the Congregation Council or other organizational units in this congregation's governing documents is recognized. All remaining authority is retained by the congregation. The congregation is authorized to:
- a. Call a pastor as provided in Chapter 9;
 - b. Terminate the call of a pastor as provided in Chapter 9;
 - c. Call or terminate the call of associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers in conformity with the applicable policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;
 - d. Adopt amendments to the constitution, as provided in Chapter 17, and amendments to the bylaws, as specified in Chapter 16;
 - e. Approve the annual budget;
 - f. Acquire real and personal property by gift, devise, purchase, or other lawful means;
 - g. Hold title to and use its property for any and all activities consistent with its purpose;
 - h. Sell, mortgage, lease, transfer, or otherwise dispose of its property by any lawful means;
 - i. Elect its officers, Congregation Council, boards, and committees, and require them to carry out their duties in accordance with the constitution and bylaws; and
 - j. Terminate its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as provided in Chapter 6.

- ***C5.04.** This congregation shall choose 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 the congregation and other qualifications shall be as prescribed in guidelines established by the Northern Illinois Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Chapter 6. CHURCH AFFILIATION

- ***C6.01.** This congregation shall be an interdependent part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or its successor, and of the Northern Illinois Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This congregation is subject to the discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- ***C6.02.** This congregation accepts the Confession of Faith and agrees to the Purposes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and shall act in accordance with them.
- ***C6.03.** This congregation acknowledges its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in which:
 - a. This congregation agrees to be responsible for its life as a Christian community.
 - b. This congregation pledges its financial support and participation in the life and mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
 - c. This congregation agrees to call pastoral leadership from the clergy roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in accordance with its call procedures except in special circumstances and with the approval of the bishop of the synod.
 - d. This congregation agrees to consider associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers for call to other staff positions in the congregation according to the procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
 - e. This congregation agrees to file this constitution and any subsequent changes to this constitution with the synod for review to ascertain that all of its provisions are in agreement with the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and with the constitution of the synod.
- ***C6.04.** Affiliation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may be terminated as follows:
 - a. This congregation takes action to dissolve.
 - b. This congregation ceases to exist.
 - c. This congregation is removed from membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America according to the procedures for discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
 - d. This congregation follows the procedures outlined in *C6.05.
- ***C6.05.** This congregation may terminate its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by the following procedure:
 - a. A resolution indicating the desire of this congregation to terminate its relationship must be adopted at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this congregation by a two-thirds majority of the voting members present.
 - b. The secretary of this congregation shall submit a copy of the resolution to the synodical bishop and shall mail a copy of the resolution to voting

members of this congregation. This notice shall be submitted within 10 days after the resolution has been adopted.

- c. The bishop of the synod shall consult with this congregation during a period of at least 90 days.
- d. If this congregation, after consultation, still desires to terminate its relationship, such action may be taken at a legally called and conducted special meeting by a two-thirds majority of the voting members present, at which meeting the bishop of the synod or an authorized representative shall be present. Notice of the meeting shall be mailed to all voting members at least 10 days in advance of the meeting.
- e. A certified copy of the resolution to terminate its relationship shall be sent to the synodical bishop, at which time the relationship between this congregation and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall be terminated.
- f. Notice of termination shall be forwarded by the synodical bishop to the secretary of this church and published in the periodical of this church.
- g. Since this congregation was a member of the Lutheran Church in America, it shall be required, in addition to the foregoing provisions in *C6.05., to receive synodical approval before terminating its membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

***C6.06.** If this congregation considers relocation, it shall confer with the bishop of the synod in which it is territorially located before any steps are taken leading to such action. The approval of the Synod Council shall be received before any such action is effected.

Chapter 7. PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

- *C7.01.** If this congregation ceases to exist, title to undisposed property shall pass to the Northern Illinois Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- *C7.02.** If this congregation is removed from membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America according to its procedure for discipline, title to property shall continue to reside in this congregation.
- *C7.03.** If a two-thirds majority of the voting members of this congregation present at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this congregation vote to transfer to another Lutheran church body, title to property shall continue to reside in this congregation. Before this congregation takes action to transfer to another Lutheran church body, it shall consult with representatives of the Northern Illinois Synod.
- *C7.04.** If a two-thirds majority of the voting members of this congregation present at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this congregation vote to become independent or relate to a non-Lutheran church body, title to property of this congregation shall continue to reside in this congregation only with the consent of the Synod Council. The Synod Council, after consultation with this congregation by the established synodical process, may give approval to the request to become independent or to relate to a non-Lutheran church body, in which case title shall remain with the majority of this congregation. If the Synod Council fails to give such approval, title shall remain with those members who desire to continue as a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Chapter 8. MEMBERSHIP

***C8.01.** Members of this congregation shall be those baptized persons on the roll of this congregation at the time that this constitution is adopted and those who are admitted thereafter and who have declared and maintain their membership in accordance with the provisions of this constitution and its bylaws.

***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 and made a contribution of record to this congregation.
- d. **Associate** members are persons holding membership in other Christian congregations who wish to retain such membership but desire to participate in the life and mission of this congregation, or persons who wish to retain a relationship with this congregation while being members of other congregations. They have all the privileges and duties of membership except voting rights and eligibility for elected offices or membership on the Congregation Council of this congregation.

***C8.03.** All applications for confirmed membership shall be submitted to and shall require the approval of the Congregation Council.

***C8.04.** It shall be the privilege and duty of members of this congregation to:

- a. make regular use of the means of grace, both Word and sacraments;
- b. live a Christian life in accordance with the Word of God and the teachings of the Lutheran church; and
- c. support the work of this congregation, the synod, and the churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America through contributions of their time, abilities, and financial support as biblical stewards.

***C8.05.** Membership in this congregation shall be terminated by any of the following:

- a. death;
- b. resignation;
- c. transfer or release;
- d. disciplinary action by the Congregation Council; or
- e. removal from the roll due to inactivity as defined in the bylaws.

Such persons who have been removed from the roll of members shall remain persons for whom the Church has a continuing pastoral concern.

C8.05.01 Confirmed members who have neither received Holy communion nor made a contribution of record in the preceding year shall be classified as inactive.

C8.05.02 Continuing pastoral care shall be given along with the concern of the congregation so that inactive members will be restored by the Congregation Council. Restoration to active membership shall occur following reception of Holy Communion and a contribution of record.

C8.05.03 Inactive members, after continuing concern has been extended to them, may by their action remove themselves from the roll of the congregation.

Chapter 9. THE PASTOR

- *C9.01.** Authority to call a pastor shall be in this congregation by at least a two-thirds majority ballot vote of members present and voting at a meeting legally called for that purpose. Before a call is issued, the officers, or a committee elected by the Congregation Council to recommend the call, shall seek the advice and help of the bishop of the synod.
- *C9.02.** Only a member of the clergy roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or a candidate for the roster of ordained ministers who has been recommended for the congregation by the synodical bishop may be called as a pastor of this congregation.
- *C9.03.** Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,
 - a. Every ordained minister shall:
 - 1) preach the Word;
 - 2) administer the sacraments;
 - 3) conduct public worship;
 - 4) provide pastoral care; and
 - 5) speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world.
 - b. Each ordained minister with a congregational call shall, within the congregation:
 - 1) offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead;
 - 2) supervise all schools and organizations of this congregation;
 - 3) install regularly elected members of the Congregation Council; and
 - 4) with the council, administer discipline.
 - c. Every pastor shall:
 - 1) strive to extend the Kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad;
 - 2) seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel;
 - 3) impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through distribution of its periodicals and other publications; and
 - 4) endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to the work of the churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and of the Northern Illinois Synod of the ELCA.
- *C9.04.** The specific duties of the pastor, compensation, and other matters pertaining to the service of the pastor shall be included in a letter of call, which shall be attested by the bishop of the synod.
- *C9.05.** a. The call of a congregation, when accepted by a pastor, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment, which, except in the case of the death of the pastor, shall be terminated only following consultation with the synodical bishop and for the following reasons:
 - 1) Mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term;
 - 2) Resignation of the pastor, which shall become effective, unless otherwise agreed, 30 days after the date on which it was submitted;

- 3) Inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in the congregation in view of local conditions, without reflection on the competence or the moral and spiritual character of the pastor;
- 4) The physical or mental incapacity of the pastor;
- 5) Disqualification of the pastor through discipline on grounds of doctrine, morality, or continued neglect of duty;
- 6) The dissolution of the congregation; or
- 7) Suspension of the congregation as a result of discipline proceedings.
 - b. When allegations of physical or mental incapacity of the pastor or ineffective conduct of the pastoral office have come to the attention of the bishop of the synod, the bishop in his or her sole discretion may, or when such allegations have been brought to the synod's attention by an official recital of allegations by the Congregation Council or by a petition signed by at least one-third of the voting members of the congregation, the bishop shall, investigate such conditions personally in company with a committee of two ordained ministers and one layperson.
 - c. In case of alleged physical or mental incapacity, competent medical testimony shall be obtained. When such disability is evident, the bishop of the synod with the advice of the committee shall declare the pastorate vacant. Upon the restoration of a disabled pastor to health, the bishop of the synod shall take steps to enable the pastor to resume the ministry, either in the congregation last served or in another field of labor.
 - d. In the case of alleged local difficulties that imperil the effective functioning of the congregation, all concerned persons shall be heard, after which the bishop of the synod together with the committee described in *C9.05.b. shall decide on the course of action to be recommended to the pastor and the congregation. If they agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action shall be taken by the synod. If either party fails to assent, the congregation may dismiss the pastor at a legally called meeting after consultation with the bishop, either (a) by a two-thirds majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee did not recommend termination of the call, or (b) by a simple majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee recommended termination of the call.
 - e. If, in the course of proceedings described in *C9.05.d., the committee concludes that there may be grounds for disciplinary action, the committee shall make recommendations concerning disciplinary action to the synodical bishop who may bring charges, in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the constitution of this synod.
 - f. If, following the appointment of the committee described in *C9.05.b. or d., it should become apparent that the pastoral office cannot be conducted effectively in the congregation(s) being served by the ordained minister due to local conditions, the bishop of the synod may temporarily suspend the pastor from service in the congregation(s) without prejudice and with pay provided through a joint synodical and churchwide fund and with housing provided by the congregation(s).

- ***C9.06.** At a time of pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor shall be appointed by the bishop of the synod with the consent of this congregation or the Congregation Council.
- ***C9.07.** During the period of service, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties in the congregation of a regularly called pastor and may delegate the same in part to a supply pastor with the consent of the bishop of the synod and this congregation or Congregation Council. The interim pastor and any ordained pastor providing assistance shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor.
- ***C9.08.** This congregation shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former pastor before calling a successor. A pastor shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to this congregation before beginning service in a call to another congregation or employment in another ministry setting related to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- ***C9.09.** When a pastor is called to serve in company with another pastor or pastors, the privileges and responsibilities of each pastor shall be specified in documents to accompany the call and to be drafted in consultation involving the pastors, the Congregation Council, and the bishop of the synod. As occasion requires, the documents may be revised through a similar consultation.
- ***C9.11.** With the approval of the bishop of the synod, the congregation may depart from *C9.05.a. and call a pastor for a specific term. Details of such calls shall be in writing setting forth the purpose and conditions involved. Prior to the completion of a term, the bishop or a designated representative of the bishop shall meet with the pastor and representatives of the congregation for a review of the call. Such a call may also be terminated before its expiration in accordance with the provisions of *C9.05.a.
- ***C9.12.** The pastor of this congregation:
 - a. shall keep accurate parochial records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, members dismissed, or members excluded from the congregation;
 - b. shall submit a summary of such statistics annually to the synod; and
 - c. shall become a member of this congregation upon receipt and acceptance of the letter of call. In a parish of multiple congregations, the pastor shall hold membership in one of the congregations.
- ***C9.13.** The pastor(s) shall submit a report of his or her ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.
- ***C9.14.** The parochial records of this congregation shall be maintained by the pastor and shall remain the property of the congregation. The secretary of this congregation shall attest in writing to the bishop of this synod that such records have been placed in his or her hands in good order by a departing pastor before the installation of that pastor in another field of labor or the granting by the synod of retired status to the pastor.

Chapter 10. CONGREGATION MEETING

- C10.01.** The semi-annual meeting of this congregation shall be held at a time specified in the bylaws.
 - C10.01.01** The congregational meeting shall be held at a time and place to be determined by the Congregation Council, usually in June and January.

- C10.01.02** The president, as a representative of the Congregation Council; the pastor; the parish associate; the treasurer; the chairs of the submit written reports.
- C10.02.** A special Congregation Meeting may be called by the pastor, the Congregation Council, or the president of this congregation, and shall be called by the president of the congregation upon the written request of ten percent of the voting members. The call for each special meeting shall specify the purpose for which it is to be held and no other business shall be transacted.
- C10.03.** Notice of all meetings of this congregation shall be given at the services of worship on the preceding two consecutive Sundays and in the newsletter sent by mail to all voting members in advance of the date of the meeting, and to the last known address of such members.
- C10.04.** Ten (10) percent of voting members shall constitute a quorum.
- C10.05.** Voting by proxy or by absentee ballot shall not be permitted.
- C10.06.** All actions approved by the congregation shall be by majority vote of those members present and voting, except as otherwise provided in this constitution or by state law.
- C10.07.** Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition, shall govern parliamentary procedure of all meetings of this congregation.

Chapter 11. OFFICERS

- C11.01.** The officers of this congregation shall be a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.
- Duties of the officers shall be specified in the bylaws.
 - The officers shall be voting members of the congregation.
 - Officers of this congregation shall serve similar offices of the Congregation Council and shall be voting members of the Congregation Council.
- C11.01.01** The duties of the president shall be to preside at meetings and to serve as liaison between the council and committees, church groups, or chairs of special events. The president shall be responsible for representing the congregation at civic and/or synodical events.
- C11.01.02** The duties of the vice-president shall be to preside in the absence of the president; to serve as liaison between the council and committees, church groups, or chairs of special events; and to chair the Personnel Committee.
- C11.01.03** The duties of the treasurer shall be to manage church funds; to keep the financial records; to provide monthly reports to the council; to prepare the annual report to the congregation; and to attend the audit meeting.
- C11.01.04** The duties of the secretary shall be to keep accurate minutes of meetings; to publish the minutes of meetings; and to attend to correspondence as directed.
- C11.02.** The congregation shall elect its officers and they shall be the officers of the 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.
- C11.03.** No officer shall hold more than one office at a time, nor chair any of the standing committees.

Chapter 12. CONGREGATION COUNCIL

- C12.01.** The voting membership of the Congregation Council shall consist of the pastor, the officers of the congregation and five (5) members of the congregation. Any voting member of the congregation may be elected, subject only to the limitation on the length of continuous service permitted in that office. Each of the five members shall be responsible for oversight of one of the following areas: Education, Property, Resources, Service, and Worship. The Congregation Council members will serve as liaisons between committees functioning in their designated areas and the Congregation Council. A member's place on the Congregation Council shall be declared vacant if the member ceases to be a voting member of this congregation. If a member is absent from three consecutive meetings of the Congregation Council, the issue of vacancy will be determined by the Executive Committee. Consistent with the laws of the state in which this congregation is incorporated, the congregation may adopt procedures for the removal of a member of the Congregation Council in other circumstances.
- C12.02.** The five members of the Congregation Council shall be elected by written ballot to serve for two (2) years or until their successors are elected. Their terms shall begin at the close of the annual meeting at which they are elected.
- C12.03.** Vacancies on the Congregation Council shall be filled according to the following procedures:
- a. Should the office of the president become vacant, the vice-president shall assume the office of the president.
 - b. Should the office of the vice-president, secretary, or treasurer become vacant, the president shall appoint an interim officer until a successor officer can be elected to the remainder of the term at the next congregational meeting.
 - c. Should the offices of president and vice-president become vacant, the Congregation Council shall elect, by majority vote, successors until the next congregational meeting.
 - d. Should a member's place on the Congregation Council be declared vacant, the Congregation Council shall elect, by majority vote, a successor until the next congregational meeting.
- C12.04.** The Congregation Council shall have general oversight of the life and activities of this congregation, and in particular its worship life, to the end that everything be done in accordance with the Word of God and the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The duties of the Congregation Council shall include the following:
- a. To lead this congregation in stating its mission, to do long-range planning, to set goals and priorities, to evaluate and to communicate its activities in light of its mission and goals.
 - b. To seek to involve all members of this congregation in worship, learning, witness, service, and support.
 - c. To oversee and provide for the administration of this congregation to enable it to fulfill its functions and perform its mission.
 - d. To maintain supportive relationships with the pastor(s) and staff and help them annually to evaluate the fulfillment of their calling or employment.
 - e. To be examples individually and corporately of the style of life and ministry expected of all baptized persons.
 - f. To promote a congregational climate of peace and goodwill, and, as differences and conflicts arise, to endeavor to foster mutual

understanding.

- g. To arrange for pastoral service during the sickness or absence of the pastor.
- h. To emphasize partnership with the synod and churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as well as cooperation with other congregations, both Lutheran and non-Lutheran, subject to established policies of the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- i. To recommend and encourage the use of program resources produced or approved by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- j. To seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel.

C12.05. The Congregation Council shall be responsible for the financial and property matters of this congregation.

- a. The Congregation Council shall be the board of directors of this congregation, and as such shall be responsible for maintaining and protecting its property and the management of its business and fiscal affairs. It shall have the powers and be subject to the obligations that pertain to such boards under the laws of the State of Illinois, except as otherwise provided herein.
- b. The Congregation Council shall not have the authority to buy, sell, or encumber real property unless specifically authorized to do so by a meeting of the congregation.
- c. The Congregation Council may enter into contracts of up to \$2,500 for items not included in the budget. Any amount over that figure will require congregational approval.
- d. The Congregation Council shall prepare an annual budget for adoption by this congregation, shall supervise the expenditure of funds in accordance therewith following the budget's adoption, and may incur obligations of more than five percent in excess of the anticipated receipts only after approval by a congregation meeting, except in the case of dire emergency.
- e. The Congregation Council shall ascertain that the financial affairs of this congregation are being conducted efficiently, giving particular attention to the prompt payment of all obligations and to the regular forwarding of benevolence monies to the synodical treasurer.
- f. The Congregation Council shall be responsible for this congregation's investments and its total insurance program.

C12.06. The Congregation Council shall see that all the provisions of this constitution and its bylaws are carried out.

C12.07. The Congregation Council shall provide for an annual review of the membership roster.

C12.08. The Congregation Council shall be responsible for the employment and supervision of the salaried lay workers of this congregation.

C12.09. The Congregation Council shall submit a comprehensive report to this congregation at the annual meeting.

C12.11. The Congregation Council shall normally meet once a month. Special meetings may be called by the pastor or the president, and shall be called by the president at the request of at least one-half of its members. Notice of each special meeting shall be given to all who are entitled to be present.

C12.12. A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of a majority of the

members of the Congregation Council.

C12.13. Committee Responsibilities

C12.13.01 Education.

Sunday School:

- a. Shall recruit and train Sunday School teachers, approve curriculum, provide recognition for students and teachers, and supervise Sunday School for ages three through high school.
- b. Shall provide for an annual Christmas program for Sunday School.
- c. Shall present bibles to third graders.

Adult Education:

- a. Shall provide Sunday School for adults.
- b. Shall provide weekday Bible opportunities and encourage participation in the educational activities of the congregation.

Confirmation:

- a. Shall provide for confirmation instruction, establish policies, and authorize confirmation in consultation with the pastor.
- b. Shall plan a special event for the newly confirmed.

Youth:

- a. Shall prepare and implement an annual program of youth ministry in consultation with the other committees and the pastor.
- b. Shall provide organizations and activities that meet the needs of the congregation's youth based on age appropriate grouping

General:

- a. Shall provide a cradle roll, and follow up on newborns until baptism.
- b. Shall provide for an annual Vacation Bible School.
- c. Shall supervise and assist with communion preparation classes.
- d. Shall promote and encourage participation in educational events for families, the congregation, and congregational leadership.
- e. Shall encourage Bible study in adult and youth groups.
- f. Shall provide for and cultivate use of the church library.
- g. Shall promote educational activities and opportunities, including subscribing to *The Lutheran*.
- h. Shall encourage qualified persons to pursue church vocations.

Additional Responsibilities:

The chair of any sub-committee shall provide input to the chair of the Education Committee so that the following duties may be completed:

- a. Shall prepare a committee budget.
- b. Shall publicize the work of the committee.
- c. Shall make an annual report to the congregation.
- d. Shall maintain records which include guidelines and documentation of the procedures/activities of the committee.
- e. Shall submit a written monthly report to the Congregation Council

C12.13.02 Property.

- a. Shall make annual inspection of church property, perform minor upkeep and make recommendations to the congregation for major repairs.
- b. Shall maintain an inventory of church property.
- c. Shall change exterior signs as necessary.
- d. Shall coordinate scheduled use of the building with renters, church-sponsored groups, and community groups.
- e. Shall enlist work crews.
- f. Shall provide input to the Congregation Council regarding the

- g. setting of policies for use of building and equipment.
- g. Shall provide input to the Congregation Council regarding the setting of rental policies.
- h. Shall care for the church grounds and oversee planning of the ground's aesthetics.
- i. Shall coordinate all non-liturgical decorating and general maintenance work.
- j. Shall, in conjunction with the Resources Committee, review and coordinate purchase of items for which it has responsibilities for maintenance.
- k. Shall provide input to the Congregation Council regarding the disposal of non-consumable church property.
- l. Shall provide input to the Congregation Council and the Personnel Committee regarding the job description, compensation, and employment of the custodian.

Additional Responsibilities:

The chair of any sub-committee shall provide input to the chair of the Property Committee so that the following duties may be completed:

- a. Shall prepare a committee budget
- b. Shall publicize the work of the committee
- c. Shall make an annual report to the congregation
- d. Shall maintain records which include guidelines and documentation of the procedures/activities of the committee
- e. Shall submit a written monthly report to the Congregation Council

C12.13.03 Resources.

- a. Shall prepare the draft budget for the church for the succeeding year, including the congregation's full indicated share in support of the church-wide ministry, and submit the draft budget to the Congregation Council for its action and later presentation to the congregation at a congregational meeting.
- b. Shall provide for the safekeeping and deposit of offerings
- c. Shall provide for the counting and posting of offerings and reporting of offerings to contributors
- d. Shall maintain, with Congregation Council approval, the investments for the congregation
- e. Shall explore alternate ways of giving
- f. Shall screen all external appeals for funds and make recommendations to the Congregation Council relative to such appeals
- g. Shall evaluate the financial status of the congregation regularly and report to the congregation
- h. Shall administer scholarship funds
- i. Shall provide for an annual audit of financial records
- j. Shall contact all new members to solicit pledges and a talent and interest sheet, and to recruit them for work in the church
- k. Shall maintain and update at least annually a congregational talent/interest file
- l. Shall conduct an annual stewardship campaign
- m. Shall seek throughout the year to encourage good stewardship, particularly proportionate giving
- n. Shall encourage estate planning
- o. Shall encourage memorial and estate giving to the endowment fund

- p. Shall foster support for ELCA benevolence
- q. Shall foster support for Lutheran World Relief projects
- r. Shall provide offering envelopes
- s. Shall review all offers of non-solicited gifts and make recommendation to the Congregation Council to accept or decline the offer
- t. Shall develop and regularly update operational guidelines which define the procedures for expending funds
- u. Shall be responsible for all the insurance programs for the church
- v. Shall supervise the membership list in accordance with requirements of the constitution
- w. Shall engage in continual review of worship participation

Additional Responsibilities:

The chair of any sub-committee shall provide input to the chair of the Resources Committee so that the following duties may be completed:

- a. Shall prepare a committee budget
- b. Shall publicize the work of the committee
- c. Shall make an annual report to the congregation
- d. Shall maintain records which include guidelines and documentation of the procedures/activities of the committee
- e. Shall submit a written monthly report to the Congregation Council

C.12.13.04 Service

- a. Shall maintain and provide for a nursery
- b. Shall provide for fellowship opportunities such as a church picnic and potluck dinners
- c. Shall provide a pictorial directory as needed
- d. Shall investigate and recommend to the Congregation Council providing help to families with special financial needs
- e. Shall provide for transportation to worship for those who desire it
- f. Shall promote the congregational goal of feeding the hungry through such things as the maintenance of a food pantry, the provision of holiday food baskets, and the support of the World Hunger Relief program
- g. Shall encourage participation in worship and Sunday School by uninvolved members of the congregation as well as provide for calls on inactive members
- h. Shall support and encourage the development of small or special interest groups within the congregation
- i. Shall maintain and promote a prayer chain
- j. Shall encourage the development and the implementation of an annual non-financial every-member visit
- k. Shall provide for calls on first-time visitors to worship
- l. Shall invite to worship new people in the community and make calls on prospective members
- m. Shall be responsible for the reception, orientation, and integration of new members into the congregation
- n. Shall assist the pastor in recruiting prospective participants for membership classes
- o. Shall maintain a current brochure describing the congregation
- p. Shall encourage members of the congregation to witness to people in their communities, schools, and work places
- q. Shall advertise and publicize the work of the congregation
- r. Shall develop and maintain information packets for new members

- s. Shall contact former members returning to the area seeking their return to membership
- t. Shall establish and implement a process which will encourage dialogue with people when they leave the church in an attempt to gain an understanding of the reason(s) for their leaving, particularly if there have been problems or conflicts
- u. Shall provide opportunities to the congregation to assist those in need

Additional Responsibilities:

The chair of any sub-committee shall provide input to the chair of the Service Committee so that the following duties may be completed:

- a. Shall prepare a committee budget
- b. Shall publicize the work of the committee
- c. Shall make an annual report to the congregation
- d. Shall maintain records which include guidelines and documentation of the procedures/activities of the committee
- e. Shall submit a written monthly report to the Congregation Council

C12.13.05 Worship

- a. Shall ensure that services are conducted regularly and in accordance with the liturgies of the ELCA
- b. Shall assist the pastor in planning worship services
- c. Shall provide input to the Congregation Council for the establishment of wedding and funeral policies
- d. Shall coordinate seasonal decoration of the church with the Altar Guild
- e. Shall be responsible for the organization and development of the choir(s)
- f. Shall provide for, support, and encourage the program of home distribution of Holy Communion
- g. Shall be responsible for the implementation of lay participation in the worship experience which shall include but not be limited to greeters, assisting ministers, communion assistants, lectors, presenters, ushers, acolytes, crucifers, and cantors.
- h. Shall provide for, support, and encourage the Altar Guild program
- i. Shall provide input to the Congregation council and the Personnel Committee regarding the job description, compensation, and employment of the organist and/or other church musicians

Additional Responsibilities:

The chair of any sub-committee shall provide input to the chair of the Worship Committee so that the following duties may be completed:

- a. Shall prepare a committee budget
- b. Shall publicize the work of the committee
- c. Shall make an annual report to the congregation
- d. Shall maintain records which include guidelines and documentation of the procedures/activities of the committee
- e. Shall submit a written monthly report to the Congregation Council

Chapter 13. CONGREGATION COMMITTEES

C13.01. The officers of this congregation and the pastor shall constitute the **Executive Committee**, which has the responsibility of setting the agenda

for Congregation Council meetings and congregational meetings and for appointing ad hoc committees as needed.

- C13.02.** A **Personnel Committee** shall include the Executive Committee and the chair of the Resources Committee. The committee is responsible for establishing job descriptions, reviewing performance, making recommendations for employment to the Congregation Council, and making compensation considerations for all non-rostered support staff. The committee may also recommend to the Congregation Council salary increases for the pastor. The vice-president shall chair the committee. Other Congregation Council members shall be invited to participate on an as-needed basis.
- C13.03.** A **Nominating Committee** of from four to six voting members of this congregation, at least two of whom, if possible, shall be outgoing members of the Congregation Council, shall be appointed by the Executive Committee in April and shall secure nominees and prepare the ballot for the congregational meeting at which elections are held.
- C13.04.** An **Audit Committee** of at least three voting members shall be appointed by the Executive Committee and shall serve with approval of the Congregation Council. Members of the Audit Committee shall not be members of the Congregation Council. The treasurer and the Resources Committee chair will provide information for the Audit Committee. The report of the Audit Committee will be included in the annual report presented at the Congregational Meeting at which the budget is adopted.
- C13.05.** A **Pastor-Parish Relations Committee** of six members shall be appointed jointly by the pastor and the Congregation Council. Term of office shall be two years, with three members to be appointed each successive year.
- C13.06.** When a pastoral vacancy occurs, a **Call Committee** of six voting members shall be selected by the Congregation Council. Term of office will terminate upon installation of the newly called pastor.
- C13.07.** Other committees of this congregation may be formed, as the need arises, by decision of the Congregation Council.
- C13.08.** Duties of committees of this congregation shall be specified in the bylaws.

Chapter 14. ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION

- C14.01.** All organizations within this congregation shall exist to aid in ministering to the members of this congregation and to all persons who can be reached with the Gospel of Christ. As outgrowths and expressions of this congregation's life, the organizations are subject to its oversight and direction. This congregation at its meeting shall determine their policies, guide their activities, and receive reports concerning their membership, work, and finances.
- C14.02.** Special interest groups, other than those of the official organizations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, may be organized only after authorization has been given by the Congregation Council.

Chapter 15. DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS AND ADJUDICATION

- *C15.01.** Denial of the Christian faith as described in this constitution, conduct grossly unbecoming a member of the Church of Christ, or persistent trouble-making in this congregation are sufficient cause for discipline of a member. Prior to disciplinary action, reconciliation will be attempted following Matthew 18:15-17, proceeding through these successive steps:

a) private admonition by the pastor, b) admonition by the pastor in the presence of two or three witnesses, and c) citation to appear before the Congregation Council. If for any reason, the pastor is unable to administer the admonitions required by a. and b. hereof, the president or vice president shall administer such admonitions.

- *C15.02.** The process for discipline of a member of the congregation shall be governed as prescribed by the chapter on discipline in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. If discipline against a member proceeds beyond counseling and admonition by the pastor, charges against the accused member(s) that are specific and in writing shall be prepared by member(s) of the congregation who shall sign the charges as the accuser(s). The written charges shall be filed with the pastor, who shall advise the Congregation Council of the need to issue a written citation to the accused and the accusers that specifies the time and place of the hearing before the Congregation Council. The written charges shall accompany the written citation to the accused. A member charged with the offense shall appear before the Congregation Council after having received a written citation, at least ten days prior to the meeting. If the member charged with the offense fails to appear at the scheduled hearing, the Congregation Council may proceed with the hearing and may pass judgment in the member's absence.
- *C15.03.** Members of the Congregation Council who participate in the preparation of the written charges or who present evidence or testimony in the hearing before the Congregation Council are disqualified from voting upon the question of the guilt of the accused member. Should the allegations be sustained by a two-thirds majority vote of the members of the Congregation Council who are not disqualified but who are present and voting, and renewed admonition prove ineffectual, the council shall impose one of the following disciplinary actions:
- a. censure before the council or congregation;
 - b. suspension from membership for a definite period of time; or
 - c. exclusion from membership in this congregation. Disciplinary actions b. and c. shall be delivered to the member in writing.
- *C15.04.** The member against whom disciplinary action has been taken by the Congregation Council shall have the right to appeal the decision to the Synod Council. Such right may not be abridged and the decision of the Synod Council shall be final.
- *C15.05.** Disciplinary actions may be reconsidered and revoked by the Congregation Council upon receipt of a) evidence that injustice has been done or b) evidence of repentance and amendment.
- *C15.06.** For disciplinary actions in this congregation, "due process" shall be observed as specified in 20.41.04. in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.
- *C15.07.** No member of a congregation shall be subject to discipline for offenses that the Congregation Council has previously heard and decided, unless so ordered by the Synod Council after an appeal.
- *C15.10. Adjudication**
- *C15.11.** When there is disagreement among factions within this congregation on a substantive issue that cannot be resolved by the parties, members of this congregation shall have access to the synodical bishop for consultation after informing the chair of the Congregation Council of their intent. If the consultation fails to resolve the issue(s), the Consultation Committee

of the synod shall consider the matter. If the Consultation Committee of the synod shall fail to resolve the issue(s), the matter shall be referred to the Synod Council, whose decision shall be final.

Chapter 16. BYLAWS

- *C16.01.** This congregation may adopt bylaws. No bylaw may conflict with this constitution.
- *C16.02.** Bylaws may be adopted or amended at any legally called meeting of this congregation with a quorum present by a majority vote of those voting members present and voting.
- *C16.03.** Changes to the bylaws may be proposed by any voting member provided, however, that such additions or amendments be submitted in writing to the Congregation Council at least 60 days before a regular or special Congregation Meeting called for that purpose and that the Congregation Council notify the congregation's members by mail of the proposal with the council's recommendations at least 30 days in advance of the Congregation Meeting.
- *C16.04.** Approved changes to the bylaws shall be sent by the secretary of this congregation to the synod.

Chapter 17. AMENDMENTS

- *C17.01.** Those sections of this constitution that are not required, in accord with the *Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, may be amended in the following manner. Amendments may be proposed by at least five (5) voting members or by the Congregation Council. Proposals must be filed in writing with the Congregation Council 60 days before formal consideration by this congregation at a regular or special Congregation Meeting called for that purpose. The Congregation Council shall notify the congregation's members by mail of the proposal together with the council's recommendations at least 30 days in advance of the meeting.
- *C17.02.** An amendment to this constitution, proposed under *C17.01., shall:
 - a. be approved at a legally called Congregation Meeting according to this constitution by a majority vote of those present and voting;
 - b. be ratified without change at the next annual meeting by a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting; and
 - c. have the effective date included in the resolution¹ and noted in the constitution.
- *C17.03.** Any amendments to this constitution that result from the processes provided in *C17.01. and *C17.02. shall be sent by the secretary of this congregation to the synod. The amendment shall become effective within 120 days from the date of the receipt of the notice by the synod unless the synod informs this congregation that the amendment is in conflict with the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or the constitution of the Northern Illinois Synod of the ELCA.
- *C17.04.** Whenever the *Model Constitution for Congregations* is amended by the Churchwide Assembly, this constitution may be amended to incorporate any such amendment by a simple majority vote of those voting members

¹ *Such an effective date must be stated in relation to the requirements of *C17.03. to allow time for synodical review of the amendment.*

present and voting at any subsequent meeting of the congregation without presentation at a prior meeting of the congregation, provided that the Congregation Council has submitted by mail notice to the congregation of such an amendment or amendments, together with the council's recommendations, at least 30 days prior to the meeting. Following the adoption of an amendment, the secretary of the congregation shall submit a copy thereof to the synod. Such provisions shall become effective immediately following a vote of approval.

Chapter 18. CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS

- ***C18.01.** The Congregation Council may enact continuing resolutions. Such continuing resolutions may not conflict with the constitution or bylaws of this congregation.
- ***C18.02.** Continuing resolutions shall be enacted or amended by a two-thirds vote of all voting members of the Congregation Council.

Chapter 19. INDEMNIFICATION

- ***C19.01.** Consistent with the provisions of the laws under which this congregation is incorporated, this congregation may adopt provisions providing indemnification for each person who, by reason of the fact that such person is or was a Congregation Council member, officer, employee, agent, or other member of any committee of this congregation, was or is threatened to be made a party to any threatened, pending, or completed civil, criminal, administrative, arbitration, or investigative proceeding.

Chapter 20. PARISH AUTHORIZATION

[Required provisions when congregation is part of a parish]*

- ***C20.01.** This congregation may unite in partnership with one or more other congregations recognized by the synod named in *C6.01. to form a parish. Except as provided in *C20.02. and *C20.03., a written agreement, developed in consultation with the synod and approved by the voting members of each congregation participating in the parish, shall specify the powers and responsibilities that have been delegated to a Parish Council.
- ***C20.02.** Whenever a letter of call is being recommended for extension to an ordained minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or a candidate for the roster of ordained ministers who has been recommended to the congregation by the synodical bishop to serve the congregations of a parish, such letter of call shall be first approved by a two-thirds vote at congregational meetings of each of the congregations forming the parish. If any congregation of the parish should fail to approve extending this call, the other congregation(s) in the same parish shall have the right to terminate the parish arrangement.
- ***C20.03.** Any one of the congregations of a parish may terminate the call of a pastor as provided in †S14.13.d. of the synodical constitution of the synod named in *C6.01. In such case, the other congregation(s) in the same parish shall have the right to terminate the parish arrangement.

Our Mission:

Sharing The Love Of God

Our Vision Goals:

- **Feed The Hungry • Connect with New Neighbors • Grow Caring Relationships • Engage Adults in Christian Education**
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