

Sample Constitution and Bylaws for LCC Congregations

Article I Name

The name of this congregation shall be _____ (Evangelical) Lutheran Church of

Article II Mission

The mission of this congregation shall be to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all the world, to manifest the unity of our faith in Jesus Christ as God and Saviour, to foster Christian fellowship and love, to extend a helping hand in human need, and to achieve our objectives by the preaching of the Word of God, by the administration of the sacraments, and by the religious instruction of all its members according to the confessional standard of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Article III Confessional Standard

This congregation accepts without reservation the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice; all the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God, namely, the three Ecumenical Creeds (the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed), the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles; the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope; the Large and Small Catechisms of Dr. Martin Luther; and the Formula of Concord.

Article IV Membership

The membership of this congregation includes the following:

1. *Baptized* members are all who have been baptized in the name of the Triune God and who are under the spiritual care of the pastor of this congregation, including the children who have not yet confirmed their baptismal vows.
2. *Communicant* members are those who have been baptized in the name of the Triune God; have been confirmed in the Lutheran faith and are familiar with the contents of *Luther's Small Catechism*; commune regularly; accept the Confessional Standard of Article III of this constitution; and are not members of organizations whose principles and conduct conflict with the Word of God.
3. *Voting* members are communicant members who have reached the age of 18 years, have been received by the Voters' Assembly, and have signed the constitution of the congregation.

Article V Called Church Workers

This congregation has the exclusive right to call pastors and deacons who profess and adhere to the confessional standard set forth in Article III of this constitution, who are deemed

qualified for this work by the synod, who are members or have applied for membership in the synod, and have been properly called by the congregation.

Article VI Authority of the Congregation

1. General

The voters' assembly shall be the governing body of this congregation and shall be empowered to administer and manage all its affairs. The establishment and conduct of all committees and societies within the congregation or related directly to it shall be subject to the approval and supervision of the voters' assembly.

2. Decisions

All matters of doctrine and conscience shall be decided only on the basis of the Word of God. Other matters shall be decided by a majority vote of the voters' assembly unless otherwise specified by this constitution and bylaws.

3. Right of Calling

The right of calling pastors and deacons shall be vested in the voters and shall not be delegated to a small group or individual from the congregation. Candidates for the office of the ministry or the diaconate are called by the congregation and received through the placement committee of the synod. The calling of pastors and deacons is to be coordinated through the Regional Pastor.

4. Powers of Officers

Congregational officers, boards or committees, whether elected or appointed by the voters, shall have no authority beyond that which has been conferred upon them, and whatever power may have been delegated to them may, at any time, be altered or revoked by the voters.

5. Removal from Office

Any pastor, deacon, or officer of the congregation may be removed from office in Christian and lawful order by the voters' assembly by a two-thirds majority ballot vote for one of the following reasons: persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, inability to perform the duties of the office or willful neglect of them.

Article VII Officers and Boards

The officers, boards, and committees of this congregation shall be prescribed in the bylaws. There shall be a Church Council, the membership and duties of which shall be prescribed in the bylaws.

Article VIII Property

If, at any time, a division should take place within the congregation, causing it to split for doctrinal or other reasons, the property of the congregation and all benefits connected therewith shall remain with those voting members who continue to adhere in confession and practice to Article III of this constitution. In the event the congregation should disband, the property and all rights connected therewith shall be transferred to Lutheran Church-Canada.

Article IX Doctrinal Literature

Only such hymns, prayers, and liturgies shall be used in the public worship of this congregation and in all ministerial acts as to conform to the confessional standard of Article III. Likewise, in all classes for instruction in Christian doctrine, only such books shall be used as conform to this standard.

Article X Synodical Membership

This congregation shall hold membership with Lutheran Church-Canada as long as the confessions and constitution of that synod are in agreement with Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, and the constitution of this congregation as described in Article III. A change in affiliation shall require a three-quarters majority ballot vote at a properly called voters' meeting.

Article XI Bylaws

This congregation may adopt such bylaws as may be required in order to accomplish its mission.

Article XII Amendments

1. Amendments to the provisions of this constitution, except Articles III, V, VIII, IX, XII 1, may be adopted by a two-thirds majority ballot vote at a properly called voters' meeting.
2. The proposed amendment to this constitution is to be submitted in writing at a previous meeting of the voters' assembly. It is then to be published in the congregation's bulletin/ newsletter, announced verbally, or sent by mail to all communicant members of the congregation at least one week prior to the meeting at which the proposed amendment will be acted upon. Amendments to the constitution are to be submitted to the synod for review by its Congregation Constitutions Committee, and approval by the Board of Directors before being implemented by the congregation.

The Bylaws

Article I Membership

- 1.1 Admission into Baptized Membership
 - 1.1.1 By Baptism

A person baptized with water "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" will be received into baptized membership.
 - 1.1.2 By Transfer

Baptized persons presenting a letter of transfer from a congregation in fellowship with this congregation shall be received into baptized membership.
 - 1.1.3 By Request

Baptized persons who have no church affiliation and who have come under the spiritual care of this congregation, including the children who have not yet been confirmed, may be received into baptized membership.

- 1.1.4 All receptions of baptized members shall be approved by the church council and reported to the voters' assembly.
- 1.2 Admission into Communicant Membership
 - 1.2.1 By the Rite of Confirmation (or First Communion) after having been instructed, examined, and absolved.
 - 1.2.2 By Transfer

Persons coming with a communicant letter of transfer from a congregation in fellowship with this congregation shall be received into communicant membership.
 - 1.2.3 By Profession of Faith

Applicants for communicant membership, whose membership in a Lutheran church has been affiliated with a congregation that is not in fellowship with this congregation, shall give satisfactory evidence of their qualification for membership in an interview with the pastor, and if necessary, receive instruction in the chief parts of Christian doctrine.
 - 1.2.4 All receptions into communicant membership shall be approved by the voters' assembly.
- 1.3 Privileges and Duties of Membership

Members of the congregation shall conform their entire lives to the rule of God's Word and to that end make diligent use of the means of grace, exercise faithful stewardship of God's many gifts and talents, impart and accept fraternal admonition as the need of such admonition becomes apparent, and be readily available for service in the kingdom of Christ within and beyond the congregation.
- 1.4 Termination of Membership
 - 1.4.1 Transfer to Other Congregations

Communicant members desiring to join a congregation in church fellowship with this congregation shall present their request for transfer to the pastor. Such transfer of membership shall be announced at a subsequent regular meeting of the voters' assembly.
 - 1.4.2 Joining Other Churches

In cases where members have joined another congregation not in fellowship with this congregation, they shall, upon the recommendation of the pastor, be considered as having already terminated their membership and their names shall be removed from the membership list by action of the voters' assembly.
 - 1.4.3 Whereabouts Unknown

After a reasonable time, the names of members whose whereabouts are unknown shall be removed from the membership list by action of the voters' assembly.
 - 1.4.4 Self-Exclusion

If members cease to take advantage of being spiritually fed through the congregation's ministry of Word and Sacrament, the pastor and elders shall visit

them. If they still do not avail themselves of the means of grace after such a time of counseling, their membership in the congregation shall be terminated.

1.4.5 Excommunication

All members who conduct themselves in an unchristian manner shall be admonished according to our Lord's instruction in Matthew 18:15-20, as well as I Corinthians 5:1-15. If they refuse to amend their sinful lives after proper admonition, they shall be excommunicated. If they refuse to attend the voters' meeting to discuss their case, or if they refuse to meet with a few members officially designated to discuss their case, they have thereby been excluded from membership. Excommunication requires a unanimous vote of the eligible voters present at the voters' meeting.

Article II Meetings of the Congregation

2.1 Regular Meetings

Regular meetings of the voters' assembly shall be held at least two times a year. The Church Council shall set dates and times of all voters meetings. All communicant members of the congregation who are not voting members may attend the meetings of the voters' assembly. They may, with the consent of the voting membership present, participate in the discussion of any item of business. Every meeting of the voters' assembly shall be announced at least two Sundays prior to the date of the meeting.

2.2 Annual Meeting

An annual congregational meeting shall be held to approve the budget, receive reports of committees and organizations, and approve the ongoing mission of the congregation. All baptized and communicant members are encouraged to attend.

2.3 Special Meetings

The Church Council will call a special meeting having received a written request signed by at least one-third of the voting members of the congregation. Notice of the date and time of such meeting, and of the nature of the business to be transacted, shall be announced at least two Sundays prior to the meeting.

2.4 Order of Business at Regular Voters' Meetings

1. Devotion
2. Call to order
3. Roll call
4. Reception of new voting members
5. Minutes of previous meeting (as well as any special meetings)
6. Approval of minutes
7. Pastor's parish report
8. Financial report
9. Reports of boards and committees
10. Unfinished business
11. New business
12. Adjournment
13. Closing prayer

The chairman, with the consent of the voters present, may vary the above order in the interest of efficiency. For purposes of order, normal parliamentary procedure (*Robert's Rules of Order*) shall be followed. In the event of a tie vote, the chairman shall cast the deciding ballot.

2.5 Quorum

Those voters in attendance at a properly called voters' meeting shall constitute a quorum. When dealing with special situations, exceptions to the quorum are specifically mandated in this constitution and bylaws. For the purchase or disposition of property, or the erection of buildings, a three-quarter-majority ballot vote at a properly called voters' meeting shall be necessary.

Article III The Pastoral Office

3.1 Calling a Pastor

After consultation by the Church Council with the Regional Pastor or his representative, names of pastors shall be obtained. Names of pastoral candidates suggested by congregational members are to be cleared with the Regional Pastor in advance of the meeting. The election of a pastor from the names provided shall be by ballot. The pastor receiving the majority of votes cast shall be considered elected. The election may be made unanimous. The chairman and elders shall see that the call documents are completed and sent promptly to the pastor-elect.

3.2 Pastoral Duties

In the name of the Triune God and by His authority, the congregation authorizes and obligates the pastor:

To administer to us the Word of God in its full truth and purity as contained in the Sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and as set forth in the confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as found in the Book of Concord;

To administer the holy sacraments in accordance with their divine institution;

To perform the functions of a pastor in an evangelical manner; to aid, counsel, and guide members of all ages and social conditions; to visit the sick and the dying; to admonish the indifferent and the erring;

To guard and promote faithfully the spiritual welfare of the members of this congregation, in particular to instruct the catechumens, both children and adults, in the Word of God and thus prepare them for communicant membership in the church;

To guide the congregation in applying the divinely ordained discipline of the church according to the Word of God;

To promote and guide the mission activity of the congregation as it is related to the local community and to endeavours of the Synod, in particular to train workers and guide them in evangelism and to enlist the support of the congregation for mission work;

To assist the congregation in adopting administrative policies and procedures that will help it carry out the mission of a Christian congregation;

To serve the congregation as an example of Christian conduct; to endeavour earnestly to live in Christian unity with the members of the congregation, fellow workers, and sister congregations in the Synod; and by the grace of God to do

everything possible for the edification of the congregation and upbuilding of the church in Christ.

To enable you to do this, we hereby obligate ourselves:

To receive you as a servant of Jesus Christ, to give you the honour and love and obedience that the Word prescribes, to aid you by word and deed, and to support you with our diligent, faithful assistance and prayers;

To make faithful and regular use of the means of grace, that God's enabling power may have free course among us to the end that we may carry out our God-given ministry to the glory of God and for the welfare of all;

To make appropriate arrangements for your continuing education as a professional person in the ministry of the Gospel;

To provide for your proper maintenance according to our ability and to review your salary, housing arrangements, and all allowances periodically.

3.3 Calling a Deacon

As the congregation expands its mission and ministry, it will call deacons as it sees fit to assist with the pastoral office. After consultation by the Church Council with the Regional Pastor or his representative, names of deacons shall be obtained. Names suggested by congregational members are to be cleared with the Regional Pastor in advance of the meeting. The election of a deacon from the names provided shall be by ballot. The deacon receiving the majority of votes cast shall be considered elected. The election may be made unanimous. The chairman and elders shall see that the call documents are completed and sent promptly to the deacon-elect.

Article IV Officers and Boards

This congregation shall have the following officers and boards in addition to any which the congregation shall authorize from time to time:

4.1 Officers:

- 4.1.1 A chairman, who shall conduct the meetings of the voters' assembly....
- 4.1.2 A vice-chairman, who is to fill the role in the chairman's absence or inability to act,
- 4.1.3 A recording secretary, who shall keep the minutes of the voters' assembly....
- 4.1.4 A treasurer, who shall be responsible for the financial records of the congregation....
- 4.1.5 A financial secretary, who shall oversee the receipt of all monies and deposit the same in an account established in the name of the congregation....
- 4.1.6

4.2 Boards:

- 4.2.1 A board of elders, consisting of... which shall assist the pastor in the spiritual care of the congregation.
- 4.2.2 A board of trustees or property, consisting of... which shall be responsible for the physical properties of the congregation.
- 4.2.3 A board of Christian education, consisting of... which shall be responsible for the nurture and Christian growth of the members of the congregation.
- 4.2.4 A board for evangelism, consisting of... which shall lead the members of the congregation in outreach to others in the community.

4.2.5 A board for stewardship, consisting of... which shall be charged with the stimulation of the people to a proper stewardship of time, talents, and treasures.

4.2.6

Article V Nominating Committee

The Church Council shall appoint a nominating committee consisting of the pastor and at least two voting members. They shall provide a slate of voting members willing to serve as officers, as well as those willing to serve on the boards and committees of the congregation. Any voting member present may make additional nominations from the floor. The consent of those nominated will be secured before being placed on the ballot.

Article VI Election and Term of Officers and Boards

All officers shall be elected by majority ballot vote and voting shall continue until a clear majority has been established after candidates receiving the lowest number of votes have been eliminated in each succeeding ballot. Officers and board members shall be inducted into office in a public worship service of the congregation. In case of a vacancy in an elective office, the voters' assembly shall elect a successor to fill the unexpired term.

7.1 Officers

- 7.1.1 The term of office for the chairman shall be two years with the term expiring at the end of odd years.
- 7.1.2 The term of office for the vice-chairman shall be two years with the term expiring at the end of odd years.
- 7.1.3 The term of office for the recording secretary shall be two years with the term expiring at the end of even years.
- 7.1.4 The term of office for the treasurer shall be two years with the term expiring at the end of odd years.
- 7.1.5 The term of office for the financial secretary shall be two years with the term expiring at the end of even years.

7.2 Boards

- 7.2.1 The board of elders shall consist of no less than three members. Members shall be elected for three years. One-third of the members are to be elected each year.
- 7.2.2 The board of trustees shall consist of no less than three members. Members shall be elected for three years. One-third of the members are to be elected each year.
- 7.2.3 The board of Christian education shall consist of no less than three members. Members shall be elected for three years. One-third of the members shall be elected each year.
- 7.2.4 The board for evangelism shall consist of no less than three members. Members shall be elected for three years. One-third of the members shall be elected each year.
- 7.2.5 The board for stewardship shall consist of no less than three members. Members shall be elected for three years. One third of the members are to be elected each year.

Article VII Limitations on Holding Office

Women who have reached the age of majority may hold voting membership in the congregation and serve as officers and as members of boards and committees as long as these positions are not directly involved in the specific functions of the pastoral office (preaching, public administration of the sacraments, church discipline) and as long as this service does not violate the order of creation (usurping authority over men). Accordingly, they shall not serve as pastor, as a member of the board of elders, as chairman or vice-chairman of the congregation.

Article VIII Amendments to the Bylaws

These bylaws may be amended in a properly convened meeting of the voters' assembly by a majority of all voting members present, provided the proposed change has been announced in a previous meeting or has been submitted in writing to all communicant members at least one week prior to the meeting. Amendments to these bylaws are to be submitted to the synod for review by its Congregation Constitutions Committee, and approval by the synod's Board of Directors before being implemented by the congregation.