
CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS
OF
ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN CHURCH
2019

Constitution

PREAMBLE

SINCE, ACCORDING TO GOD'S WORD ALL THINGS IN A CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION ARE TO BE DONE IN DECENCY AND ORDER, THEREFORE, WE THE UNDERSIGNED LUTHERANS, HAVE RESOLVED TO ORGANIZE AN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CONGREGATION OF THE UNALTERED AUGSBURG CONFESSION UNDER THE COMMAND OF OUR LORD JESUS TO MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS, Matthew 28:18-20, AND IN THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENT HAVE SET DOWN THE ARTICLES AND RULES ACCORDING TO WHICH WE HAVE ORGANIZED, AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH WHICH ALL THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS OF THIS CONGREGATION SHALL BE GOVERNED.

Article I: Name

The name of this congregation shall be St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lovell, Big Horn County, Wyoming.

Article II: Purpose

1. To have the Word of God preached among us in all truth and purity.
2. To have the Sacraments administered according to divine institution.
3. To give all the benefits of Christian education.
4. To administer charity according to the confessional standards of the Lutheran Church.

Article III: Doctrinal Standard

1. This congregation acknowledges and accepts all the canonical books of the Old Testament and the New Testament as the revealed and inerrant Word of God, verbally

inspired, and submits to them as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life.

2. This congregation acknowledges and accepts all the confessional writings of the evangelical Lutheran Church, contained in the Book of Concord of the year 1580, as true and genuine expositions of the doctrines of the Bible. These confessional writings are the three Ecumenical Creeds (Apostle's [sic], Nicene, and Athanasian), the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, Luther's Large and Small catechisms, the Formula of Concord.

Article IV: Membership

The membership of this congregation includes the following:

1. Baptized Membership (Soul Membership)

- a. *Definition:*

Baptized members are all members who have been baptized in the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and who are under the spiritual care of the pastor of this congregation, including the children who have not yet confirmed their baptismal vow.

- b. *Reception:*

Baptized members are received through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, through transfer, or with the consent of one or both parents or guardians in the case of children who have been baptized in another Christian congregation.

- c. *Duties:*

Baptized members shall conform their lives to their baptismal vow.

- d. *Termination:*

Baptized members who have not been received as communicant members shall have their membership terminated for the same reason that communicant membership in [sic] terminated insofar as these reasons are applicable.

2. Communicant Membership

a. *Definition:*

- i. Who are baptized in the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who have been confirmed in the Lutheran faith;
- ii. Who accept all canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the only divine rule and standard of faith and life;
- iii. Who are familiar at least with Luther's Small Catechism and declare their acceptance of it;
- iv. Who attend divine services faithfully;
- v. Who are not members, affiliates, or supporters of secret societies or other organizations conflicting with the Word of God.

b. *Reception*

- i. By confirmation, which is itself being a reception into church membership, all who are thus received by this sacred act become communicant members;
- ii. By transfer: persons coming with a communicant letter of transfer from a congregation in church fellowship, provided they conform in all respects to the requirements of the congregation shall be received by the pastor and the elders.
- iii. Through confession or reaffirmation of faith. Other persons shall submit their application to the pastor and elders; and having given satisfactory evidence of qualification for communicant membership to the pastor and elders shall be received as communicant members.

c. *Duties of Communicant Members*

It shall be the duty of ALL communicant members of this congregation to:

- i. Lead Christian lives and not live in manifest works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21);
- ii. Partake of the Lord's Supper frequently after their confirmation;
- iii. Contribute regularly and faithfully as God has prospered them, toward the building of Christ's Kingdom in the congregation and throughout the world;
- iv. Devote their time and talents to the extension of the Kingdom of God;
- v. Admonish erring members and permit themselves to be fraternally admonished and corrected when they have erred (Matthew 19:15-20);
- vi. Bring their children to baptism at an early date and commit all unconfirmed children under their care to the Christian Day School or otherwise provide for their training;
- vii. In all other respects, comply with the provisions of the constitution.

d. *Termination of Membership*

- i. Communicant members desiring to join a congregation in church fellowship shall present their request for transfer to the pastor and elders to whom authorization is granted to issue such transfers;
- ii. Joining other churches. In cases where communicant members have joined another congregation outside of our own fellowship, they shall upon recommendation of the pastor and elders be removed from the membership list by a vote from the Voter's [sic] Assembly;
- iii. Whereabouts unknown: the name of members whose whereabouts are unknown and cannot be established shall be removed by the Voter's Assembly, and such membership shall forthwith be terminated;
- iv. Excommunication and Self-Exclusion: Any member who conducts himself or herself in an un-Christian manner shall be admonished according to Matthew 18:15-20. If he/she refuses to amend his/her sinful life after proper admonition, he/she shall be excommunicated. If the member refuses to attend the Voter's [sic] Assembly at which his/her case is to be discussed, he/she has thereby excluded himself/herself. A unanimous vote shall be required for every resolution by the Voter's [sic] Assembly for excommunication or self-exclusion. Excommunication or Self-Exclusion terminates membership.

3. Voting Membership

a. *Definition*

All confirmed communicant members who have reached their legal voting age, have read and signed the constitution and By-laws of the congregation, and have been accepted by the Voter's [sic] Assembly shall be entitled to vote and hold office.

b. *Reception*

Applicants for voting membership shall be received as voting members by resolution of the Voter's [sic] Assembly, provided they meet the requirements for such membership in the congregation.

c. *Duties*

Voting members shall attend the meetings of the Voter's [sic] Assembly regularly, participate in the work of the congregation, and willingly accept responsibility according to ability.

d. *Termination*

A voting member who is absent from the meetings of the Voter's [sic] Assembly for a full year without offering a valid excuse shall automatically be dropped from the voting membership.

Article V: The Offices of pastor and Teacher

The pastoral office of the congregation as well as that of a called teacher in the parochial school shall be conferred upon such ministers, teachers, and candidates only as profess and adhere to the confessional standard set forth in Article Three of this constitution and are well qualified for their work. Pastors and teachers shall, in the call extended to and accepted by them, be pledged to this confessional standard.

1. General

The congregation as a body, through the voting members, shall have the supreme authority to administer and manage all its external and internal affairs. The establishment and the conduct of all institutions and societies within the congregation, such as Parochial Schools, Sunday School, youth Societies, men's and women's organizations, Choir, etc. shall be at all subject to the approval and supervision of the congregation. The congregation, however, shall not be empowered to decide anything contrary to the Word of God and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church (Article III), and any such decision shall be null and void.

2. Right of Calling

The right of calling pastors or teachers shall be vested in the congregation and shall never be delegated to a small body or an individual.

3. Decisions

The matters of doctrine and conscience shall be decided by the Word of God; other matters shall be decided by the Voter's [sic] Assembly by a majority vote unless otherwise specified by the Constitution or By-Laws.

4. Removal From office

- a. Any officer, pastor, or teacher may be removed from office by the congregation by ballot, in Christian and lawful order, for one of the following causes:
 - i. Persistent adherence to false doctrine
 - ii. Scandalous life
 - iii. Inability to perform his official duties or

- iv. Willful neglect of them

Article VI: Officers

1. The officers of this congregation shall be such officers, boards, or committees as the By-Laws of this congregation may prescribe, and the pastor is an advisor member of all the boards and committees.
2. All board members shall serve a three-year term of office unless otherwise specified in the By-Laws. Any individual joining the Voter's [sic] Assembly may immediately be appointed to serve on one of the Board or Committees for the balance of the year.
3. Congregational officers 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.
4. Women may hold voting membership and serve as officers and members of Boards and committees except:
 - a. When the position is directly involved in the specific functions of the pastoral office: preaching, the public administration of the Sacraments or church discipline;
 - b. When the service does not violate the order of creation usurping the authority over men; and
 - c. That they shall not serve as Pastor, as an Elder, or as President or Vice President of the Voter's [sic] Assembly.

Article VII: Division

If at any time a division should take place on account of doctrine, the property of the congregation and all benefits connected therewith shall remain with those communicant members who continue to adhere in confession and practice to Article Three of this Constitution. If division takes place for any other reason, the property shall remain with the majority of the communicant members. In the event the congregation should totally disband, the property and all rights connected therewith shall be transferred to the District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod of which the congregation has been a member at the time of disbanding.

Article VIII: Doctrinal Literature

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

Article IX: Synodical Membership

1. This congregation shall hold membership in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod as long as this Synod remains true to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions. It shall send its pastors, called teachers, and a lay delegate to the District Convention of the Synod.
2. It shall be the duty of the congregation and its individual members to support the work of the Synod since they thereby support their own Christ-appointed work.

Article X: By-Laws

This congregation may adopt such By-laws as may be required for the accomplishment of its purpose.

Article XI: Changing the Constitution

1. Unalterable articles

The following articles of this Constitution or sections thereof shall be unalterable and irrevocable: Two, Three, Five, and Nine.

2. Amendments

- a. Amendments to this Constitution and the By-Laws may be adopted at a regular Voter's [sic] Assembly, provided:
 - i. That they do not conflict with the provisions laid down in Article Three or with any section of any other Article that pertains to Scriptural doctrine and practice;
 - ii. That the proposed amendment has been submitted in writing at a previous Voter's [sic] Assembly.
 - iii. Send Constitution to Wyoming District for Approval (Handbook page 14)
 - iv. The affirmation of a two-third majority of the voting membership present at the Voter's [sic] Assembly shall be required for the adoption of an amendment.

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By-Laws

Article I: Voter's [sic] Assembly

1. Regular meetings of the Voter's [sic] Assembly shall be held quarterly.
2. The Annual Meeting of the Voter's [sic] Assembly shall be held the third week of January.
3. Special Voter's [sic] Assembly may be called by the Pastor, President, or by a Trustee, or any 5 voting members.
4. Notification must be given to the voting membership before any regular voting meeting. When a meeting has been constitutionally announced, the Voters present shall constitute a quorum and it shall be considered a properly convened and legal meeting capable of transacting business. However for the amending of Articles of incorporation, the Constitution and By-Laws, the erection of buildings, the purchase or sale of property or the removal of a pastor or teacher, or some other member from office, majority of the voting members shall constitute a quorum, and a two-thirds majority of those present shall be required for the adoption of a resolution unless otherwise required by the state.
5. Questions of minor importance may be acted upon at a special Voter's [sic] meeting after Worship Service.

Article II: Calling of Pastors or Teachers

1. Nominations

When a pastor or teacher is to be called, every member of the congregation should have the privilege of making one or more nominations. The congregation shall also ask the President of the Wyoming District for recommendations.

2. Screening Process

In the Screening process the Voter's [sic] Assembly shall submit all names to the Wyoming District President for information and evaluation. After receiving information and recommendations from the District President the Voter's [sic] Assembly shall present to the congregation, by means of a public announcement, the preferred candidates, together with a biographical sketch of each.

3. Elections

At the Voter's [sic] meeting, called for the purpose of electing a new pastor or teacher, the candidate list may be amended by means of a two-thirds vote of those

present. At that point the Voter's [sic] Assembly shall be asked to agree to be satisfied with whatever selection is finally made by the congregation. Balloting shall proceed by means of a secret ballot vote. A majority is needed in order to determine the disposition of the call. The election shall be unanimous by a rising vote, and the call shall be sent to the pastor or the teacher elect.

Article III: Election of Congregational Officers

A nomination committee appointed by the President at the October meeting shall present a slate of candidates for the various offices. A special election meeting shall be held prior to January 1. The annual election shall be by ballot. The officers-elect shall assume their respective duties on January 1 of that year. In the event of a vacancy in any office, the Voter's [sic] shall elect a successor to serve the unexpired term, at the next meeting of the Voter's [sic] Assembly. Officers shall be elected for the terms specific in their By-Laws and shall hold office until their successors shall have been elected and qualified. No officer shall serve more than 5 consecutive terms in office.

Article IV: Officers

1. The elected officers of this congregation shall be
2. President
3. Vice President
4. Secretary
5. Treasurer
6. Financial Secretary/Recorder
7. Elders
8. Trustees

Article V: Terms and Duties of Elected Officers

1. President

The term of office of the President shall be 2 years. The president shall preside at all meetings of the Voter's [sic] Assembly, appoint committees according to the instructions of the By-Laws or the resolutions of the Voter's [sic] Assembly, and be responsible in seeing that the resolution of the Voter's [sic] Assembly are carried out.

2. Vice President

The term of office shall be 2 years and the vice [sic] President shall succeed to the office of President. In the President's absence, the Vice President shall perform the duties of the office. In the event of a vacancy of the office of President, the Vice President shall succeed to the office of the President for the remainder of the term. It shall be the duty of the Vice President to preside over the Church Council meetings and supervise the work of publicity and the Church historian.

3. Secretary

The term of office of the Secretary shall be two years. The secretary shall keep accurate minutes of the meetings of the Voter's [sic] Assembly and the Council for the permanent records of the congregation. The secretary is to register all members attending the meeting and submit his/her minutes for adoption at the following regular meeting. He/She shall be the custodian of all church records pertaining to his/her office and at the expiration of his/her term of office shall deliver them to his/her successor. He/she shall perform such other duties as may be delegated to him/her.

4. Treasurer

The term of office of the Treasurer shall be 2 years. He/she shall pay all bills authorized by the congregation. He/she shall keep accurate records of the receipts and disbursements of the congregation in books, which shall be provided and remain in the property of the congregation. All these books shall be received annually by the committee appointed by the President, and reports shall be submitted to the congregation. He/she shall submit a report of [sic] the Voter[s] [sic] Assembly, showing actual receipts and disbursements with budget amounts.

5. Financial Secretary/Recorder

The term of office of the Financial Secretary/Recorder shall be two years. It shall be his/her duty to receive, record in books for this purpose, and deposit in the congregation's designated depository, all congregational monies, including offerings, contributions, special collections, loans, subsidies, bequests, etc. A report of all receipts shall be submitted to the Treasurer at regular intervals. It shall be his/her duty to count and provide for the counting of al monies in the presence of an usher for that service or another office of the congregation. It shall also be his/her responsibility to ensure that the church secretary keeps an accurate record of individual contributions in the books provided for this purpose and to

mail out semiannual statements to all members, providing them with a record of their gifts.

6. Elders

- a. The Elders shall consist of not more than three voting members and shall be elected for a 3-year term. Each year at least one person shall be elected. Aside from the duties listed below, it shall be the specific duty of the Elders to work with and decide cases of discipline.
- b. Duties of the Elders Shall Be To:
 - i. Assist the Pastor in all matters pertaining to the spiritual welfare of the congregation;
 - ii. Consider the complaints and grievances of members of the congregation if Matthew 18:15-20 has been fully observed, and they shall report to the congregation those which cannot be otherwise adjusted, in accordance with Matthew 18:17-18'
 - iii. Make every effort to induce members who have been negligent in their attendance of services, in the use of Sacraments, and the financial support of the church, to amend their sinful ways and to fully enjoy the rights and privileges of their membership;
 - iv. To see to it that all services are conducted in such a manner as to avoid needless disturbance and to foster an attitude conducive to worship among those in attendance.
 - v. Assist the Pastor in arranging for pulpit assistance, special services, guest speakers, etc.;
 - vi. Be an example of Christian conduct and conversation;
 - vii. Be responsible for maintaining an official membership list and be responsible to check all official acts and documents of the congregation;
 - viii. Arrange for a mission festival in conjunction with the LWML;
 - ix. Appoint a head usher who will make monthly usher schedules and is directly responsible to the Elders through the Pastor;
 - x. Be responsible for the use of proper music by the organists, who are responsible to the Elders through the Pastor.

7. Trustees

- a. The trustees shall consist of up to three members whose term of office shall be 3 years. One Trustee shall be elected each year. It shall be the duty of the Trustees to:
 - i. Make minor repairs and improvements, with the help of the congregation;
 - ii. Inspect the insurance program of the congregation annually;
 - iii. Carry out all other tasks and duties assigned to them by the congregation;

- iv. Oversee the work of the building custodian, as well as the outdoor custodian.

Article VII: Order of Business for Regular Voter's [sic] Assembly

1. Devotions
2. Roll Call
3. Admission of new Members
4. Reading of Minutes
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Reports of Officers and Boards
7. Unfinished Business
8. New Business
9. Adjournment
10. Prayer

Article VIII: Committees

1. The committees of the congregation shall include
2. A financial review committee, consisting of three members, appointed by the President. The financial review committee shall review the books and records fo the Treasurer, of the Financial Secretary/Recorder, and of such other financial records of the church, which the congregation may assign to it. It shall make its report to the Voter's [sic] Assembly at the earliest possible date after the close of the fiscal year;
3. A nomination committee consisting of up to five members, appointed by the President of the congregation. The Pastor shall be an advisory member of the nomination committee;
4. Such other committees as may be authorized or created by the congregation , the members of which shall be appointed by the President, unless a different method of selection is authorized by the voting members. These committees may include Stewardship, Evangelism, Young People, Social Welfare, or others as may be required.

Article IX: Amendments

These By-Laws may be amended in a properly convened meeting of the Voter's [sic] Assembly by a majority of all voting members present, provided the proposed change has been announced at least once week prior to the meeting in which the amendment is voted upon.