

CONSTITUTION
CHRIST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CONGREGATION
January 2024

Preamble

Whereas, the history of the Christian Church of all times proves that certain rules and regulations are necessary to properly attain the purposes and fulfill the obligations of congregations; and whereas, the Apostle Paul sets forth, I Cor. 14:40, that all things in the Church should be done “decently and in order” therefore be it RESOLVED, that we, a congregation of Lutherans in the City of Marshfield, Wisconsin, do herewith, in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, adopt the following CONSTITUTION and BYLAWS.

Article I: Name

The name of the congregation shall be the “Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church” of Marshfield, Wisconsin.

Article II: Affiliation

This congregation shall be affiliated with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

Article III: Purpose

The purpose of this congregation shall be:

- A. To serve its members and to build the Kingdom of God by the preaching of the Word of God, by the administration of the Sacraments, by the religious instruction of youth and adults, according to the confessional standard of the Lutheran Church (Article IV), and by due application of church discipline according to Matthew 18:
- B. To share the Gospel with the unchurched of the community by an active program of local evangelism;
- C. To spread the Kingdom of God in all the world by adequately supporting the work of District and Synod (Matthew 28: 19-20).
- D. To foster Christian fellowship and charity

Article IV: Confessional Standard

This congregation acknowledges and accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the revealed Word of God, verbally inspired, and acknowledges and accepts all the Confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, contained in the book of Concord of the year 1580, to be the true and genuine exposition of the doctrine of the Bible. These Confessional Writings are the three Ecumenical Creeds (Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasian) and Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, Luther’s Large and Small Catechisms, and the Formula of Concord.

Article V: Membership

The membership of this congregation consists of the following:

A. Baptized Membership

The baptized membership includes all members who have been baptized.

B. Communicant Membership

Communicant membership in this congregation shall be restricted to such as:

1. Are baptized, have been instructed in the doctrines of the Holy Scripture and declare their adherence to the teachings of the Lutheran Church;
2. Diligently attend divine services and frequently partake of Holy Communion;
3. Willingly contribute towards the promotion of Christ's Kingdom at home and abroad according to ability;
4. Do not live in open works of flesh, but lead a Christian life;
5. Do not hold membership in anti-Christian societies, secret or otherwise;
6. Will readily submit to the rules and regulations of the congregation provided these are not contrary to the Holy Writ and the confessions mentioned in Article IV.

C. Voting membership

The voting membership consists of communicant members:

1. Who have reached the age of 18 years;
2. Who have been accepted by the Church Council or at the Congregational Meeting.

Article VI: Duties of Members

It shall be the duty of every member of this congregation:

A. To make faithful and diligent use of the Word of God and the Sacraments:

1. By attending divine services;
2. By partaking of the Lord's Supper frequently;
3. By Bible Study
4. By the use of such educational agencies as are provided by the congregation.

- B. To lead a Christian life and not to live in manifest works of the flesh.
- C. To contribute regularly and faithfully as God has prospered each, toward all that the congregation has made its concern, and in general assist in bearing all its burdens.
- D. To devote time and talent to the extension of the Kingdom of God.
- E. To attend the Congregational Meetings

Article VII: Powers of the Congregation

A. General

The congregation as a body, through the Congregational Meetings, shall have supreme power to administer and manage all its external and internal affairs. The establishment and conduct of all institutions and organizations within the congregation shall at all times be 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 IV) and such decision shall be null and void.

B. Right of Calling

The congregation as a whole has the exclusive right to call ordained and commissioned members of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and elect other officers. The pastorate of the congregation shall be conferred only upon such minister or ministerial candidate as unqualifiedly and publicly profess their acceptance of and adherence to Article IV of this call or vocation extended by the congregation.

C. Decisions

Matters of doctrine and conscience shall be decided by the Word of God; other matters shall be decided by a majority vote of those present at a Congregational Meeting unless otherwise specified by the Constitution or Bylaws.

D. Property Rights

All rights to the property of the congregation are vested in the congregation. Should dissension and strife arise which the congregation cannot bring to a peaceful conclusion, it shall seek the advice of proper Synodical officials. If even then a separation or division can not be avoided (which God may graciously prevent), the property rights of the congregation and all of its benefits shall remain with those members who adhere to this Constitution and Confessions mentioned in Article IV. In the event the congregation should totally disband, the property and all rights therewith shall be transferred to the North Wisconsin District of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod.

Article VIII: Officers

A. General

1. The officers of this congregation shall be such officers, boards or committees as the Bylaws of this congregation may prescribe.
2. Women may serve as officers and as members of boards and committees as long as these positions are not directly involved in the specific function of the pastoral office.

B. Power of Officers

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.

C. Removal from Office

Any officer, pastor or teacher may be removed from office by the congregation in Christian and lawful order. Sufficient and urgent causes for removal from office are persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life and/or willful neglect of duty.

Article IX: Doctrinal Literature

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

Article X: Amendments

Amendments to this Constitution and the Bylaws and changes in the Articles of incorporation may be adopted at a regular or special Congregational meeting providing:

- A. That they do not conflict with the provisions laid down in Article IV or with any section of any other article that pertains to scriptural doctrine and practice and:
- B. That the proposed amendment has been submitted in writing at a previous meeting of the Voters' Assembly. The Affirmative vote of a two-thirds majority of the voting membership present at the Congregational meeting shall be required for the adoption of the amendment.

Article XI: Bylaws

This congregation shall adopt such Bylaws as may be required for the accomplishment of its purpose.

BYLAWS

Article I: Membership

Admission into Membership

A. Baptized Membership

1. By Baptism - Persons received by the Sacrament of Baptism in this congregation become Baptized members
2. By Transfer - Baptized persons coming with a letter of transfer from a Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod Congregation may be received into baptized membership by the Pastor.
3. By Request - Other baptized persons who have no church affiliations and who have come under the spiritual care of this congregation may be received into baptized membership by the pastor.

B. Communicant Membership

1. By Confirmation – Persons received by the sacred act of confirmation in this congregation become communicant members.
2. By Transfer – Persons coming with a communicant letter or transfer from a Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod Congregation may be received by the pastor, whose action is to be approved in a subsequent meeting of the Church Council.
3. By Profession of Faith – Other persons shall submit their application to the pastor and having given satisfactory evidence of qualifications for communicant membership to the pastor shall be received by them as communicant members. This action is to be approved in a subsequent meeting of the Church Council.

C. Voting Membership

1. Reception – All members of the congregation who have reached their 18th birthday are voting members of the congregation.
2. Duties – It shall be the duty of every member to attend the Congregational Meetings. By failing to attend a meeting a member waives the right to cast his/her vote during the meeting.

Termination of Membership

A. Baptized and Communicant Membership

1. Transfer to Other Congregations – Members desiring to join a congregation within the Missouri Synod shall present their request for transfer to the pastor, to whom authorization is given to consider such requests and to issue a transfer. Such transfer of membership shall be reported to the Church Council in a subsequent meeting.

2. Joining Other Churches - In cases where members have joined another congregation outside the Missouri Synod they shall, upon the recommendation of the pastor be considered as such as having terminated their membership, and their names shall be removed from the membership list by a resolution of the Church Council.
 3. Excommunication and Self-Exclusion - Any member who conducts himself in an unchristian like manner shall be admonished according to Matt 18: 15-20. If after proper admonition he refuses to amend his sinful life, he shall be excommunicated. If the member refuses to appear at a Congregational Meeting or to meet with a smaller group officially acting for the Congregation, to discuss his case he has hereby excluded himself. A unanimous vote shall be required for every resolution at a Congregational meeting for excommunication or self-exclusion. Excommunication or self-exclusion terminates membership. When such excommunicated or self-excluded person repents of his sins and seeks forgiveness from God and the congregation, he shall be reinstated.
 4. Whereabouts Unknown – If members move away or leave this congregation without applying for release or transfer and no contact with them can be established within two years, their names shall be removed from the membership list by the Church Council, and forthwith such membership is terminated.
 5. Status – A person whose membership has been terminated has forfeited all rights of a member of this congregation and all claims upon the property of the congregation as
 6. such, or upon any part thereof, so long as he is not reinstated into membership.
- B. Voting Membership - Voting membership is terminated by termination of communicant membership.

Article II: Meetings

- A. The Council, boards, and committee shall meet as needed at the discretion of the board members. Board representatives on Council are required to attend their board meetings.
- B. A regular meeting of the congregation (Voter's Meeting) shall be held a minimum of two times a year.
 1. It shall be announced in all church services on the preceding two Sundays.
 2. The voting members present at this meeting shall constitute a quorum.
 3. In all matters not already decided by the Word of God the majority rules, except in the case of amendments and changes as specified in Article X of the Constitution and removal of an officer or a called staff member from their position, for which a 2/3 majority is required.
 4. In case of a paper ballot, a majority will be determined by the number of votes cast.

C. The following shall be the order of business for the regular Council and Congregational Meetings.

1. Call to Order
2. Opening Devotion
3. Congregational Comments
4. Reports of officers and boards (Council Meetings Only)
5. Reading and approval of minutes of previous meeting
6. Presentation and approval of Financial Reports
7. Presentation and approval of the new budget (Congregational Meeting)
8. Election of New Officers (Congregational Meetings)
9. Old business
10. New Business
11. Items to be added to future agendas
12. Adjournment
13. Closing Devotion

D. Special meetings of the congregation as well as special meetings of the Church Council may be called by the pastor(s) or by the President of the congregation, as the need arises. Special Congregational Meetings and their purpose shall be announced in at least two public services or by a mailing to the membership.

E. The annual budget must be presented and recommended for approval at a Congregational Meeting.

F. The budget will be finalized and approved by the Council. It will then be made available to the congregation a minimum of three weeks prior to the Congregational Meeting. Changes to the budget can be suggested to the Council and may be approved at the Congregational Meeting or referred to the Council for review.

G. Changes to the budget may be approved by the majority at a Congregational Meeting and require a paper ballot. It shall be recommended that budget changes regarding salaries and increases/decreases of more than \$5000 be brought back to Council and approved at a Special Congregational Meeting as soon as possible after the next Council Meeting.

H. Disputes and other issues regarding individual members of the congregation and/or staff shall be handled in a Biblical matter as laid out in Matthew 18: 15-17. Problems should first be addressed to the Pastor or Council President, who may bring it to the Council and, if appropriate, to the congregation.

- I. In addition to principles laid down in Scripture and in the Constitution and Bylaws of this congregation, accepted parliamentary procedures such as Robert's Rules of Order shall be followed.

Article III: Divine Call Procedure

- A. The procedures of calling as indicated in Article VII of the constitution is to be followed.
- B. In the event of a vacancy of the Senior Pastor position, the Assistant/Associate Pastor may be extended a call to become Senior Pastor if approved by a majority at a Congregational Meeting. The election shall be held by ballot.
- C. A Call Committee consisting of lay members may be convened.
 1. Members of the Committee must be approved at a Congregational Meeting. The Committee will be given authority to complete the steps necessary to call an ordained or commissioned worker in accordance with Synod and District regulations and review candidates submitted by the District Officials. Any voter is also entitled to make additional nominations of qualified candidates.
 2. A Pastor may also be called in accordance with Synod and District regulations regarding recent Seminary graduate candidates if approval is given by the voters at a Congregational Meeting.
 3. At a Congregational Meeting properly convened, the Call Committee shall submit their recommendation to the congregation for approval. Information on the candidate(s) must be available for review by any member of the congregation at least two weeks in advance of the meeting.
 4. The election of a pastor shall be a simple majority vote of those present at the meeting and retroactively declared a unanimous result by consensus of the voters present. The election shall be held by ballot. The call shall be sent to the pastor once elected.
- D. At a Congregational Meeting the Church Council shall obtain authorization for additional pastoral and staff positions.
 1. Christ Lutheran Church may have a Senior Pastor and may have one or more Associate Pastors. The Senior Pastor shall be the Pastor with the most years of service at Christ Lutheran Church unless otherwise determined by the congregation at a Congregational Meeting.
 2. Christ Lutheran Church may have a ministry of ordained or commissioned workers if authorized by the congregation at a Congregational Meeting.
 3. Duties of called and non-called staff will be determined by the Church Council or its designated committee(s) and laid out in the Employee Handbook.

Article IV: Election of Congregational Officers

- A. Each year, the Council shall request nominations from the congregation for open Council positions. Additional nominations may be made from the floor at a Congregational Meeting.

1. Nominees must be Communicant members (See Article V of the Constitution) who are 18 years of age or older.
 2. Board chairpersons must be nominated by the board they are representing on Council and approved at a Congregational Meeting. If no nomination is put forth by a Congregational Meeting, any qualified voting member may put their name forth for consideration by the voters.
- A. If there is more than one candidate for a position, the voting shall be by written ballot. A name of a candidate may appear only once on any ballot. Candidates may be asked to introduce themselves before the vote.
 - B. An individual may only occupy one elected office at a time.
 - C. The newly elected members of the Church Council shall assume their respective duties on January 1. Officers shall be elected for terms specified in these Bylaws and shall hold office until their successors have assumed their office.
 - D. If a vacancy occurs, the Council may approve an appropriate person to fulfill the duties until the next Congregational Meeting. Officers elected to fill a vacancy will assume their respective duties immediately.

Article V: Officers

- A. The Church Council shall consist of a minimum of eight (8) members.
- B. The officers of this congregation shall be:
 1. President
 2. Vice-President
 3. Secretary
 4. Financial Secretary
 5. Treasurer(s)
 6. A representative of each board may also be a voting member of the Church Council if duly elected at a Congregational Meeting. It is recommended that a representative of the Board of Elders, Property, and Education always have a representative on Council.
- C. Additional officers and boards must be approved at a Congregational Meeting

Article VI: The Church Council

- A. Just as the Twelve appointed men to take care of the distribution of food so that they could focus on prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6), the congregation appoints officers to Church Council to fulfill the following roles in order that the Pastor and other called staff can focus on the ministry of Word and Sacrament:
 1. Maintain fiduciary oversight (ie. approve financials, create a budget)
 2. Oversee the upkeep and maintenance of Church property
 3. Ensure the Church is strong and vibrant in the community
 4. Strategically plan for the future
 5. Refrain from the ordinary day-to-day operations of the Church, unless decisions are needed in an emergency.

- B. The voting members of Church Council shall consist of the officers of the congregation. (See Article V)
- C. It shall be the duty of the Church Council to meet to consider all matters pertaining to the spiritual and material welfare of the congregation. The Church Council shall act in matters committed to it by the congregation and in cases of emergency.
- D. In order for a motion to pass, a quorum (two-thirds of voting members) must be present for the vote.
- E. The Church Council shall be the legal representatives of the congregation and the custodians of its property including all valuable papers and records. They shall make loans for the congregation when authorized by the congregation to do so. The congregation is to be directly responsible for its property and whatever the Council does in conformity with its resolutions and instructions and is in no case to permit any Council member to suffer any personal loss whatever.
- F. The Church Council shall not convene to transact business without the Pastor's knowledge.
- G. The Pastor(s) and called staff shall be ex-officio members of the Church Council. Other staff members may be asked to attend.

Article VII: Terms of Officers

- A. Members of the Church Council shall be elected for a term of two years, with a three-term limit (for a maximum of six years). No Council member may be elected for a fourth consecutive term without waiting one year between terms. The Church Council may adjust terms of Council members if necessary to ensure a balance of experienced and new members.
- B. Terms run from January 1 to December 31

Article VIII: Duties of Officers

- A. President

Shall preside at all Congregational Meetings and meetings of the Church Council and see to it that all meetings are conducted in an orderly and Christian manner. They shall work closely with the Pastor, Vice President, and Head Elder to ensure that the ministry of the Church (Word and Sacrament) is carried out. It is recommended that candidates have prior experience on Council.

- B. Vice-President

Shall perform the duties of the office of President if the President is absent. In the event of a vacancy in the office of the President, the Vice-President shall succeed to the office of President for the remainder of President's term.

- C. Secretary

Shall keep accurate minutes of the meeting of the Church Council and Congregational Meetings for the permanent records of the congregation. Minutes shall be submitted for approval at the next meeting.

D. Financial Secretary

Shall review the financials each month to inform Council and the congregation of the financial state of the Church and make recommendations about management of resources. The Financial Secretary shall also chair the Budget Committee and have the authority to sign checks.

E. Treasurer(s)

Shall count and record the weekly offerings and deposit them in the bank. It is recommended that the congregation always appoint two treasurers for this task. If there is only one treasurer, Council shall appoint at least one other person to assist in the counting of the offering. The treasurer(s) shall also have the authority to sign checks. The Treasurer(s) shall submit the accounting records to an auditor every two years or when so designated by the Church Council. If there are two treasurers, one will be up for election on odd years, the other on even years.

Article IX: Duties of Boards and Committees

- A. This congregation shall have such boards as are necessary to assist the called workers, elected leaders, and members of the congregation in carrying out its mission and ministry. Specific descriptions and duties may be designated by the Church Council or congregation. Boards of the congregation may include, but are not limited to, the following. (It is recommended that the congregation always have a Board of Elders, Property, and Education).

1. Board of Education

- i. The Board of Education prayerfully plans and oversees opportunities for the members of Christ Lutheran Church and our community to grow in faith and in deeper knowledge of God's Word. Board members work together with church staff, current ministry leaders, and potential new ministry leaders to plan, implement, and evaluate events, Bible studies, Sunday School, Confirmation and Early Communion classes, and other ministries that are a part of the overall Christian Education Ministries at Christ Lutheran Church. As necessary, Board of Education members may also assist in identifying, training, and evaluating volunteers for various Christian Education ministries. Board members, together with called staff continually seek the Lord's guidance as they strive to find new opportunities to help others grow in their understanding of God's Word.

2. Board of Elders

- i. The Board of Elders shall have authority and responsibility for the spiritual welfare and activities of the congregation. They will assist the pastor in assuming the general spiritual welfare of the congregation and shall assist the pastor in difficult problems of the ministry and see to it that congregational discipline is carried out according to Matthew 18:15-20. They will also oversee the use of the Mission and Outreach fund.

3. Board of Property

- i. The Board of Property will administer and supervise the proper maintenance of all Church property, including buildings, grounds, and any equipment and contents. They shall seek bids for projects and recommend for approval by Council.

4. The congregation may also have, but are not limited to, the following boards:
 - i. Board of Stewardship to promote stewardship in the congregation
 - ii. Board of Evangelism to assist the congregation in carrying out its mission
 - iii. Board of Youth to plan and oversee the youth activities of the congregation
 - iv. Board of Social Ministries/Outreach to assist with caring for those in need
 - v. Board of Worship to assist with the planning and carrying out of the Divine Service

- B. This congregation shall also have such temporary committees as are necessary to assist the called workers, elected leaders, and members of the congregation in carrying out its mission and ministry. Specific descriptions and duties may be designated by the Church Council or congregation. Committees of the congregation may include, but are not limited to, the following.
 1. Budget Committee –
 - i. Members shall be appointed by the President and approved by Council at the July Council meeting.
 - ii. Shall be chaired by the Financial Secretary and consist of at least two other members of Council. Other members of the Congregation may also be appointed. The Pastor(s), other called workers, and office staff shall be advisory members.
 - iii. Shall convene in August/September to review the current year's budget expenditures and plan the following year's budget.
 - iv. The recommended budget shall be presented for approval by Council no later than the October Council meeting.
 - v. The budget shall be presented and approved by the congregation at a Congregational Meeting prior to the end of the current year.
 2. The Auditing Committee
 - i. Shall consist of at least two members of the congregation with accounting and financial experience as appointed by the Council.
 - ii. Shall conduct an audit of congregational funds, including general operating funds, building and memorial funds every two years or more often as the need is determined by the Council.
 - iii. At request of individual programs, ministries and agencies, or at the discretion of the Church Council, conduct financial audits of said programs, ministries and agencies (e.g. an internal audit of the Sunday School finances).
 - iv. They shall report results of financial audits to the Church Council.
 3. Ad-Hoc Committees
 - i. The Council, Council President, or boards may form Ad-Hoc Committees as needed and approved by members of the Church Council (ie. Call Committee).
 - ii. Decisions made by Ad-Hoc Committees must be approved by the Church Council and/or voters as necessary prior to commencement of action.

Approved and sent to District
February 11, 2024