

THE CONSTITUTION
Of
PEACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod

PREAMBLE

The Word of God requires that a Christian congregation shall conform to this Divine Word in doctrine and practice (Ps. 119:105; Matt. 28:18-20; Gal. 1:6-8; 2 Tim. 4:1-5) and that all things be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40). Therefore we, the members of Peace Lutheran Church, accept and subscribe to the following Constitution and Bylaws, in accordance with which all spiritual and material affairs of our congregation shall be governed.

ARTICLE I

NAME

The name of this congregation shall be PEACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, located at Alma, Michigan.

ARTICLE II

PURPOSE

The purpose of this congregation shall be to serve its members and to spread the kingdom of God by preaching of the Word of God, by the administration of the Sacraments, and by the religious instruction of youth and adults, according to the confessional standard of the Lutheran Church (Article III), and to foster Christian fellowship and charity.

ARTICLE III

CONFESSIONS

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 doctrines of the Bible. These Confessional Writings are the three Ecumenical Creeds (Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian), the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, Luther's Large and Small Catechisms, and the Formula of Concord.

ARTICLE IV

MEMBERSHIP

The Membership of this congregation includes the following:

A. Baptized Membership

Baptized members are all members who have been baptized, including

the children on the membership rolls who have not yet confirmed their baptismal vows.

B. Communicant Membership

Communicant members are those:

1. Who are baptized in the name of God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; and
2. Who accept all canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the only divine rule and standard of faith and life; and
3. Who are familiar at least with Luther's Small Catechism and declare their acceptance of it; and
4. Who attend divine services faithfully; and
5. Who lead Christian lives and do not live in manifest works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21); and
6. Who partake of the Lord's Supper frequently after their confirmation; and
7. Who contribute regularly and faithfully, as God has prospered them toward the building of Christ's kingdom in the congregation and throughout the world; and
8. Who devote their time and talents to the extension of the kingdom of God; and
9. Who permit themselves to be fraternally admonished and corrected when they have erred; and
10. Who are not members, affiliates, or supporters of organizations, the doctrines and practices of which are in conflict with the Word of God.

C. Voting Membership

All communicant male members who have reached their twenty-first year, have been accepted by the Voters' Assembly, and have read and signed the Constitution and Bylaws of the congregation shall be entitled to vote and hold office.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT CHANGE, VOTED ON AND PASSED –
JANUARY 24, 1972

C. Voting Membership

All communicants who have reached their eighteenth year, have been accepted by the Voters' Assembly, and have read and signed the Constitution and Bylaws of the congregation shall be entitled to vote and to hold offices except as limited in the Bylaws.

ARTICLE V

THE OFFICES OF PASTOR AND TEACHER

The pastoral office of this 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 III 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.

ARTICLE VI

POWERS OF THE CONGREGATION

A. General

The congregation as a corporate body, through the voting members, shall have supreme power to administer and manage all its external and internal affairs. This corporate body shall have the right to acquire, own, hold title to, manage, and sell such real estate and other property as shall be necessary and desirable to carry out the purpose of his congregation; and this corporate body shall have all the rights and powers that are granted by the State of Michigan to religious corporations.

Any member of the church may appeal to the congregation in regard to any matters relating to the affairs and government of said church, or the activities of its members, or its pastor, and decisions of the congregation in regard to these matters shall be final and binding, but such decisions shall always be in accord with the Word of God and unless it is so, shall be null and void.

The establishments and conduct of all institutions and societies within the congregation, such as the parochial school, Sunday School, youth societies, ladies organizations, choir, etc., 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 III), and any such decisions shall be null and void.

B. Right of Calling

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

C. Decisions

Matters of doctrine and conscience shall be decided by the Word of God; other matters shall be decided by the Voters' Assembly by a majority voted unless otherwise specified by the Constitution of Bylaws.

D. Powers 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.

E. Removal from Office

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: persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, and inability to perform his official duties or willful neglect of them.

ARTICLE VII

OFFICERS

The officers of this congregation shall be such officers, boards, or committees as the Bylaws of this congregation may prescribe.

ARTICLE VIII

PROPERTY RIGHTS

If at any time a separation should take place on account of doctrine, the property of the congregation and all benefits therewith connected 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 totally disband, the property and all rights connected therewith shall be transferred to the Michigan District of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.

ARTICLE IX

DOCTRINAL LITERATURE

Only such hymns, prayers, and liturgies shall be used in the public services of the congregation and in all ministerial acts as 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 in The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. It shall be the duty of the congregation and its individual members to support the work of Synod and it shall send its pastor and a lay delegate to the District convention of Synod.

ARTICLE XI

BYLAWS

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

ARTICLE XII

CHANGING THE CONSTITUTION

A. Unalterable Articles

The following articles of this Constitution or sections thereof shall be unalterable and irrevocable:

1. Article III
2. Article V
3. Article IX

B. Amendments

Amendments to this Constitution and the Bylaws may be adopted at a regular Voters' Assembly, provided:

1. That they do not conflict with the provision laid down in Article III or with any section of any other article that pertains to Scriptural doctrine and practice; and
2. That the proposed amendment has been submitted in writing at a previous Voters' Assembly.
The Affirmative vote of a two-thirds majority of the voting membership present at the Voters' Assembly shall be required for adoption of an amendment.

THE BYLAWS
OF
PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
Alma, Michigan

ARTICLE I

MEMBERSHIP

Admission into Membership

A. Communicant Membership

1. By Confirmation –Confirmation itself being a reception into church membership, all who are thus received by this sacred act become communicant members.
2. 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 membership of this congregation, shall. Be received by the pastor or elders, whose action is to be accepted in a subsequent meeting of the Voters’ Assembly.
3. By Profession of Faith – Other persons shall submit their application to the pastor or an elder; and having given satisfactory evidence of qualifications for communicant membership to the pastor. They shall be received as communicant members, to be accepted in a subsequent meeting of the Voters’ Assembly.

B. Voting Membership

1. Reception – An applicant for voting membership shall give notice of his intention to the pastor or one of the elders and shall read a copy of the Constitution and Bylaws of the congregation, which shall be furnished him. At a subsequent constitutional meeting of the Voters’ Assembly and in the presence of the applicant, the pastor or an elder shall present such application. Upon unanimous vote of the voting members present he shall sign the Constitution and Bylaws of the congregation and be declared a voting member.
2. Duties – It shall be the duty of every voting member to attend Voters’ Assemblies. By failing to attend such meetings a member wives the right to cast his vote during that meeting. He shall accept nomination for office, committee appointments, etc. if possible, and generally participate in the business activities of the Voters’ Assembly.
3. Women – Women who have reached the age of eighteen 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, the 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, a president or vice-president of the congregation.

Termination of Membership

A. Communicant Membership

1. Transfer to Other Congregations – Communicant members desiring to join a congregation in church fellowship shall present their request for transfer to the pastor or elders, to whom authorization is granted to issue such transfers. Such transfer of membership shall be approved by the Voters' Assembly in a subsequent meeting.
2. Joining Other Churches – In cases where communicant members have joined another congregation outside our own fellowship, the shall, upon the recommendation of the pastor or elders, be considered such s terminated their membership, and their names shall be removed from the membership list by a resolution of the Voters' Assembly.
3. Whereabouts Unknown – The names of members whose whereabouts are unknown and cannot be established shall be removed by the Voters' Assembly, and forthwith such membership terminated.
4. Excommunication and Self-Exclusion – Any member who conducts himself in an unchristian manner shall be admonished according to Matt 18:15-20. If he refuses to amend his sinful life after proper admonition, he shall be excommunicated. If the member refuses to attend the Voters' meeting to discuss his case, he has thereby excluded himself. A unanimous vote shall be required for every resolution by the Voters' Assembly for excommunication or self-exclusion. Excommunication or self-exclusion terminates membership.
5. Status – A person whose communication membership has been terminated has forfeited all rights of a member of this congregation and all claims upon the property of the congregation as such, or upon any part thereof, so long as he is not reinstated into membership.

B. Voting Membership

A voting member who is absent from the meetings of the Voters' Assembly for a full year without valid excuse shall have his name removed from the roster of voting members; however, he may be reinstated by re-applying for voting membership.

ARTICLE II

MEETINGS

- A. Regular meetings of the Voters' Assembly shall be held the 4th Sunday of January, April, July and October.
- B. The Annual meeting of the Voters' Assembly shall be held the 4th Sunday of October.
- C. Special and emergency meetings of the Voters' Assembly may be called by the pastor, Board of Elders, or president of the congregation.
- D. Every regular voter's meeting shall be announced (by word or in the bulletin) at a Sunday service prior to it. Whenever a meeting has been thus announced, and at least one-fourth of the voting members of the congregation, a quorum, are in attendance, it shall be considered a properly convened and legal meeting capable of transacting business. However, for amending the Articles of Incorporation, the Constitution, and Bylaws, the erection of buildings, the purchase or sale of

property, or the removal of a pastor or teacher or some other member from office, a quorum of on-third of the voting members is necessary, and a two-thirds majority of those present shall be required for adoption of a resolution, unless otherwise provided by state law.

E. In the event an emergency voters' meeting shall be required, it shall be the responsibility of the person or persons calling said meeting to notify the voting membership. The attendance requirements of paragraph D (above) would apply.

ARTICLE III

CALLING OF PASTORS AND TEACHERS

A. Nominations – At a meeting of the Voters' Assembly properly convened, the list of candidates having been received from the District President and presented candidates for the office of pastor or teacher shall be submitted by the nominating committee. Any voter is entitled to make additional nominations from the floor.

B. Elections – The election of a pastor or a teacher from the list of candidates chosen by the congregation shall be by ballot. The candidate receiving the majority of all votes cast shall be considered elected. The election shall, if possible, be made unanimous by a rising vote, and the call shall be sent to the pastor or teacher elect.

ARTICLE IV

ELECTION OF CONGREGATIONAL OFFICERS

A nominating committee consisting of the Pastor, president, chairman of the Boards of Elders and Trustees shall present a slate of candidates at the October meeting of the Voters' Assembly. The slate proposed by the nominating committee shall consist of at least two names for each office which shall be published at least one week prior to the October meeting. Additional nominations may be made from the floor. The October election shall be by ballot and shall take place at the October meeting. The Officers-elect shall assume their respective duties on January 1. In the event of a vacancy in any office, the president shall appoint a successor to serve until the next election. Officers shall be permitted to hold the same office for two consecutive terms only. Officers shall be elected for the terms specified in these Bylaws and shall hold office until their successors shall have been elected. An individual shall not hold more than one elective office at a time.

ARTICLE V

ELECTIVE OFFICERS

The elected officers of this congregation shall be:

- A. President
- B. Vice-president
- C. Secretary

- D. Treasurer
- E. Financial Secretary
- F. Board of Elders
- G. Board of Trustees
- H. Board of Christian Education

ARTICLE VI

APPOINTED OFFICES

- A. Boards of Missions and Stewardship shall be appointed by the president with the advice and counsel of the pastor.
- B. A Youth Counselor shall be appointed by the president with the advice and counsel of the pastor.

ARTICLE VII

TERMS AND DUTIES OF ELECTIVE OFFICERS

- A. President and Vice-president
 - 1. The term of office of the President and of the Vice-president shall be two years. The President shall preside at all meetings of the Voters' assembly and shall perform other duties in keeping with his office. In his absence the Vice-president shall perform the duties of the office. In the event of a vacancy in the office of President, the Vice-president shall succeed to the office of President for the remainder of the term.
- B. Secretary
 - 1. The term of office of the Secretary shall be two years. The Secretary shall keep accurate minutes of the meetings of the Voters' Assembly for permanent records of the congregation and shall perform other duties in keeping with the office.
- C. Treasurer
 - 1. The term of office of the Treasurer shall be two years and shall not run concurrently with that of the Financial Secretary.
 - 2. He shall pay all bills authorized by the congregation. He shall keep accurate records of the receipts and disbursements of the congregation in books which shall be and remain the property of the congregation. All of these books shall be audited annually, and a report of such audit shall be submitted to the congregation. The audit shall be arranged by the president.
 - 3. The Treasurer shall be responsible for all financial papers.
 - 4. The Treasurer shall submit a report at each Voters' Assembly. Such report shall show actual receipts and disbursements compared with budgeted amounts.
- D. Financial Secretary
 - 1. The term of office of the Financial Secretary shall be two years and shall not run concurrently with that of the Treasurer.
 - 2. It shall be his duty to receive, record in books kept for such purpose, and deposit in the congregation's designated depository, all congregational monies, including offerings, contributions, special collections, loan subsidies, bequests, etc. A report of all receipts shall

be submitted to the officers at monthly intervals. An annual report shall be prepared showing the contributions made by each communicant member, and he shall notify each communicant member of the amount of his contribution annually. Interim quarterly reports maybe prepared upon request.

3. The congregation may elect as many assistants to the Financial Secretary as necessary. With the Financial Secretary, they shall constitute the Board of Finance.
4. All offerings shall be counted in the presence of at least two members of the congregation.
5. The books and records of the Financial Secretary shall be audited annually. The audit shall be arranged for by the president.

E. Board of Elders

1. The Board of Elders shall consist of a minimum of three members. Their term of office shall be three years. At least one of the elders shall be elected each year. They shall organize annually and elect a chairman.
2. They shall:
 - a. Assist the pastor in all matters pertaining to the spiritual welfare of the congregation.
 - b. Consider complaints and grievances of members of the congregation if Matt. 18:15-20 has been fully observed and they shall report to the congregation those which cannot be otherwise adjusted, in accordance with Matt 18:17-18.
 - c. Make every effort to induce members who have been negligent in their attendance of service and in the use of the Sacraments, to mend their sinful ways and fully enjoy the rights and privileges of their membership.
 - d. 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.
 - e. Assist the pastor in arranging for pulpit assistance, special services, and guest speakers.
 - f. Appoint and supervise ushers.
 - g. Prepare a list of candidates when the congregation is to call a pastor or other professional church workers.
 - h. Be an example of Christian conduct and conversation.

F. Board of Trustees

1. This board shall consist of a minimum of three members whose term of office shall be three years. At least one of the trustees shall be elected each year.
2. It shall be the duty of the trustees to administer all property belonging to the congregation and transact all the business of the congregation assigned to them by the Voters' Assembly. They shall organize themselves annually and elect a chairman.

G. Board of Christian Education

1. The Board of Christian Education shall consist of a minimum of three elected members who shall serve three-year terms. At least one member shall be elected each year. They shall organize annually and elect a chairman.
2. They shall:
 - a. Supervise all educational agencies of the congregation including, Sunday school, Vacation Bible School, and other special organized educational programs.
 - b. Necessary meetings may be called by the chairman or a majority of the Board. The majority of the Board shall consist of a quorum.
 - c. Submit regular reports and recommendations to the Church Council and Voters' Assembly as related to educational matters.
 - d. Execute such resolutions as are passed by this Board, the Council, and the Voters' Assembly s related to educational matters.
 - e. Appoint such officers as are necessary to carry out their duties (e.g., Sunday School Superintendent, Vacation Bible School Director, etc.).
 - f. Consider financial matters and make recommendations for the general budget concerning the congregation's educational agencies.

ARTICLE VIII

CHURCH COUNCIL

- A. The following officers and pastor shall constitute the church Council:
 1. President;
 2. Vice-president;
 3. Secretary;
 4. Treasurer;
 5. Financial Secretary;
 6. Chairman of the Elders;
 7. Chairman of the Trustees; and
 8. the Chairmen of all other committees.
- B. The Council shall meet once a month to administer normal church business not requiring the formal action of the Voters' assembly.

ARTICLE IX

PLANNING COUNCIL

The chairmen of all boards and committees, the pastor, the president of the congregation and presidents of all auxiliary organizations in the congregation, shall the Planning Council, which shall meet at the call of the pastor to plan the parish program.

ARTICLE X

AMENDMENTS

These Bylaws may be amended as provided for in Article II, section D of the Bylaws and Article XII of the Constitution.

Bylaw revisions from 1/23/67; 2/24/72; 10/27/80; 7/26/87; 4/25/93; 7/27/93. All revisions written into the Bylaws.

retyped 1/20/05
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