

THE CONSTITUTION OF
GOOD HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH
Bucyrus, Ohio

PREAMBLE

We, the baptized members of the Church of Christ, responding in faith to the call of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, desiring to unite together to preach the Word, administer the sacraments, and carry out God's mission, do hereby adopt this constitution and solemnly pledge ourselves to be governed by its provisions in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 1

NAME AND INCORPORATION

- C1.01 The name of this congregation shall be Good Hope Evangelical Lutheran church of Bucyrus, Ohio.
- C1.02 For the purpose of this constitution and the accompanying bylaws, the Good Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bucyrus, Ohio is hereinafter designated as "this congregation."
- C1.03 This congregation shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of Ohio, as a not-for-profit organization.

Chapter 2

CONFESSION OF FAITH

- C2.01 This congregation confesses the Triune God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- C2.02 This congregation confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.
 - a. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God fashions a new creation.
 - b. The proclamation of God's message to us as both Law and Gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy through word and deed, beginning with the Word in creation, continuing in the history of Israel, and centering in all its fullness in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
 - c. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. Inspired by God's Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God's revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through

them God's Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.

- C2.03 This congregation accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith and life.
- C2.04 This congregation accepts the Apostles' Creed, Nicene and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of this congregation.
- C2.05 This congregation accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to the Gospel, acknowledging as one with it in faith and doctrine all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.
- C2.06 This congregation accepts the other confessional writings in the book of Concord, namely, the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, the *Smalcald Articles and the Treaties*, the *Small Catechism*, the *Large Catechism*, and the *Formula of Concord*, as further valid interpretation of the faith of the Church.
- C2.07 This congregation confesses the Gospel, recorded in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain the Church for God's mission in the world.

Chapter 3

NATURE OF THE CHURCH

- C3.01 All power in the Church belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ, its head. All actions of this congregation are to be carried out under his rule and authority.

Chapter 4

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

- C4.01 The Church is a people created by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, called and sent to bear witness to God's creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world.
- C4.02 To participate in God's mission, this congregation as a part of the Church shall:
 - a. Worship God in the proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments and through lives of prayer, praise, thanksgiving, witness, and service.

- b. Proclaim God's saving Gospel of justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith alone, according to the apostolic witness in the Holy Scripture, preserving and transmitting the Gospel faithfully to future generations.
- c. Carry out Christ's Great Commission by reaching out to all people to bring them to faith in Christ and by doing all ministry with a global awareness consistent with the understanding of God as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier of all.
- d. Serve in response to God's love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity and justice for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, and standing with the poor and powerless, and committing itself to their needs.
- e. Nurture its members in the Word of God, so as to grow in faith and hope and love, to see daily life as the primary setting for the exercise of their Christian calling, and to use the gifts of the Spirit for their life together and for their calling in the world.
- f. Manifest the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives.

C4.03 To fulfill these purposes, this congregation shall:

- a. Provide services of worship at which the Word of God is preached and the sacraments are administered.
- b. Provide pastoral care and assist all members to participate in this ministry.
- c. Challenge, equip, and support all members in carrying out their calling in their daily lives and in their congregation.
- d. Teach the Word of God.
- e. Witness to the reconciling Word of God in Christ, reaching out to all people.
- f. Respond to human need, work for justice and peace, care for the sick and suffering, and participate responsibly in society.
- g. Motivate its members to provide financial support for the congregation's ministry and the ministry of other parts of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- h. Foster and participate in interdependent relationships with other congregations, the synod, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- i. Foster and participate in ecumenical relationships consistent with church-wide policy.

C4.04 This congregation shall develop an organizational structure to be described in the bylaws. The Congregation Council shall prepare descriptions of the responsibilities of each committee, task force, or other organizational groups and shall review their actions. (Such description shall be contained in continuing resolutions of the Congregation Council.)

C4.05 This congregation shall, from time to time, adopt a mission statement which will provide specific direction for its programs.

Chapter 5

POWERS OF THE CONGREGATION

- C5.01 The powers of this congregation are those necessary to fulfill its purpose.
- C5.02 The powers of this congregation are vested in the Congregational Meeting called and conducted as provided in this constitution and bylaws.
- C5.03 Only such authority as is delegated to the Congregation Council or other organizational units in the congregation's governing documents is recognized. All remaining authority is retained by the congregation. The congregation is authorized to:
- a. call a pastor
 - b. terminate the call of a pastor
 - c. appoint or terminate the appointment of associates in ministry in conformity with the applicable policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 - d. approve the annual budget
 - e. acquire real and personal property by gift, devise, purchase, or other lawful means
 - f. hold title to and use its property for any and all activities consistent with its purposes.
 - g. sell, mortgage, lease, transfer, or otherwise dispose of its property by any lawful means
 - h. elect its (officers), Congregation Council, boards, and committees, and require them to carry out their duties in accordance with the constitution (and) bylaws, (and continuing resolutions); and
 - i. terminate its relationships with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as provided in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6

CHURCH AFFILIATION

- C6.01 This congregation shall be an interdependent part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or its successor, and of the Northwestern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This congregation is subject to the discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- C6.02 This congregation accepts the Confession of Faith and agrees to the Purposes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and shall act in accordance with them.

- C6.03 This congregation acknowledges its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in which:
- a. This congregation agrees to be responsible for its life as a Christian community.
 - b. This congregation pledges its financial support and participation in the life and mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 - c. This congregation agrees to call pastoral leadership from the clergy roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in accordance with its call procedures except in special circumstances and with the approval of the bishop of the synod.
 - d. This congregation agrees to consider associates in ministry for appointment to other staff positions in the congregation according to the procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
 - e. This congregation agrees to file this constitution and any subsequent changes to this constitution with the synod for review to ascertain that all its provisions are in agreement with the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or with the constitution of the synod.
- C6.04 Affiliation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may be terminated as follows:
- a. This congregation takes action to dissolve.
 - b. This congregation ceases to exist.
 - c. This congregation is removed from membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America according to the procedures for discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
 - d. This congregation follows the procedures outlined in C6.05.
- C6.05 This congregation may terminate its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by the following procedure:
- a. A resolution indicating the desire of this congregation to terminate its relationship must be adopted at a legally called and conducted special meeting of the congregation by a two-thirds majority of the voting members present.
 - b. The secretary of this congregation shall submit a copy of the resolution to the synodical bishop and shall mail a copy of the resolution to voting members of the congregation. This notice shall be submitted within 10 days after the resolution has been adopted.
 - c. The bishop of the synod shall consult with this congregation during a period of at least 90 days.
 - d. If this congregation, after consultation, still desires to terminate its relationship, such action may be taken at a legally called and conducted special meeting by a two-thirds majority of the voting members present, at which meeting the bishop of the synod or an authorized representative shall be present. Notice of the meeting shall be mailed to all voting members at least 10 days in advance of the meeting.

- e. A certified copy of the resolution to terminate its relationship shall be sent to the synodical bishop, at which time the relationship between this congregation and the ELCA shall be terminated.
- f. Notice of the termination shall be forwarded by the synodical bishop to the secretary of this church and be published in the periodical of this church.

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

Chapter 7

PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

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

Chapter 8

MEMBERSHIP

- C8.01 Members of this congregation shall be those baptized persons on the roll of the congregation at the time this constitution is adopted and those who are admitted thereafter and who have declared and maintained their membership in accordance with the provisions of this constitution and its bylaws.
- C8.02 Members shall be classified as follows:
- a. Baptized members are those persons who have been received by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism in this congregation, or having been previously baptized in the name of the Triune God, have been received by certificates of transfer from other Lutheran congregations or by affirmation of faith.
 - b. Confirmed members are baptized persons who have been confirmed in this congregation, those who have been received by adult baptism or by transfer as confirmed members from other Lutheran congregations, or baptized persons received by affirmation of faith.
 - c. Voting members are confirmed members. Such confirmed members shall have worshipped, communed, or made a contribution of record during the preceding year.
 - d. Associate members are persons holding membership in other Lutheran (Christian) congregations who wish to retain such membership but desire to participate in the life and mission of this congregation. They have all the privileges and duties of membership except voting rights and eligibility for elected offices or membership on the Congregation Council of this congregation.
- C8.03 All applications for confirmed membership shall be submitted to and shall require the approval of the Congregation Council.
- C8.04 It shall be the privilege and duty of members of this congregation to:
- a. make regular use of the means of grace, both Word and sacraments
 - b. live a Christian life in accordance with the word of God and the teachings of the Lutheran church; and
 - c. support the work of this congregation and of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America through contributions of their time, abilities, and financial support as biblical stewards.
- C8.05 Membership in this congregation shall be terminated by any of the following:
- a. death
 - b. resignation
 - c. transfer or release
 - d. disciplinary action by the Congregation Council; or

- e. removal from the roll due to inactivity as defined in the bylaws. Such persons who have been removed from the roll of members shall remain persons for whom the church has a continuing pastoral concern.

Chapter 9

THE PASTOR

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

- 3) inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively (*within*) ~~in~~ the congregation in view of local conditions, without reflection on the competence or the moral and spiritual character of the pastor;
 - 4) the physical or mental incapacity of the pastor;
 - 5) disqualification of the pastor through discipline on grounds of doctrine, morality, or continued neglect of duty; or
 - 6) the dissolution of the congregation.
- b. In the event of alleged physical or mental incapacity, competent medical testimony shall be obtained. When such disability is evident, the bishop of the synod, with the advice of the committee, shall declare the pastorate vacant. Upon the restoration of a disabled pastor to health, the bishop of the synod shall take steps to enable the pastor to resume the ministry either in the congregation last served or in another field of labor.
- c. In the case of alleged physical or mental incapacity, of the pastor or ineffective conduct of the pastoral office, it shall be the responsibility of the bishop of the synod, when such difficulties are personally known or have been brought to the synod's attention by an official recital of allegations by the Congregation Council or by a petition signed by at least one-third of the voting members of the congregation, to investigate such conditions personally in company with a committee of two ordained ministers and one lay person.
- d. In the case of alleged local difficulties which imperil the effective functioning of the congregation, all concerned persons shall be heard, after which the bishop of the synod together with the committee described in C9.05b shall decide on the course of action to be recommended to the pastor and the congregation. If they agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action will be taken by the synod. If either party fails to assent, the congregation may dismiss the pastor by a two-thirds majority vote of the voting members present at a regularly called meeting, after consultation with the bishop.
- e. The foregoing procedure shall never be invoked when questions of doctrine, morality, or continued neglect of duty are involved, all such cases being treated as disciplinary matters.
- f. If in the course of the proceedings, it should become apparent that the pastoral office cannot be conducted effectively in the congregation being served by the ordained minister, due to local conditions, the bishop of the synod may temporarily suspend the pastor from service in the congregation, without prejudice, and with pay provided through a joint churchwide/synod fund and with housing provided by the congregation.

C9.06 At a time of pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor may be appointed by the bishop of the synod with the consent of this congregation or the Congregation Council.

C9.07 During the period of service, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties of a regularly called pastor and may delegate the same in part to a supply pastor with the consent of the bishop of the synod or this congregation or Congregation Council. The interim pastor or any ordained pastor providing assistance shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor.

- C9.08 This congregation shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former pastor before calling a successor. A pastor shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to this congregation.
- C9.09 When a pastor is called to serve in company with another pastor or pastors, the privileges and responsibilities of each pastor shall be specified in documents to accompany the call and to be drafted in consultation involving the pastors, the Congregation Council, and the bishop of the synod. As occasion requires, the documents may be revised through a similar consultation.
- C9.10 With the approval of the bishop of the synod, the congregation may depart from C9.05a. and call a pastor for a specific term of years. Details of such call shall be in writing setting forth the purpose and conditions involved. Prior to the completion of a term, the bishop or a designated representative of the bishop, shall meet with the pastor and representatives of the congregation for a review of the call. Such call may also be terminated before its expiration in accordance with the provisions of C9.05a.
- C9.11 The pastor shall keep accurate parochial records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, members dismissed, or members excluded from the congregation, and shall submit a summary of such statistics annually to the synod.
- C9.12 The pastor(s) shall submit a report of his or her ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.

Chapter 10

CONGREGATION MEETING

- C10.01 The annual meeting of this congregation shall be held at a time specified in the bylaws.
- C10.02 A special congregational meeting may be called by the pastor, the Congregation Council, or the president of the congregation, and shall be called at the written request of 50 voting members. The call for each special meeting shall specify the purpose for which it is to be held and no other business shall be transacted.
- C10.03 Notice of all meetings of this congregation shall be given at the services of worship on the preceding two consecutive Sundays and by mail to all (voting) members at least 10 days in advance of the date of the meeting. The posting of such notice in the regular mail, with the regular postage affixed or paid, sent to the last known address of such members shall be sufficient.

- C10.04 Fifty voting members shall constitute a quorum.
- C10.05 Voting by absentee ballot shall be permitted upon request of a voting member.
- C10.06 All actions by the congregation shall be by majority vote, except as otherwise provided in this constitution.
- C10.07 Roberts Rules of Order, latest edition, shall govern parliamentary procedures of all meetings of this congregation.

Chapter 11

OFFICERS

- C11.01 The officers of this congregation shall be a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and (**financial secretary**).
- a. Duties of the officers shall be specified in the bylaws.
 - b. The officers shall be voting members of the congregation.
- C11.02 The Congregation Council shall elect from its own membership a president, vice-president, and a secretary who shall be president, vice-president, and secretary of the congregation; and elect a treasurer and a financial secretary of the congregation, who need not be members of the Congregation Council. The duties of the officers of the congregation shall be those provided in the bylaws.
- C11.03 No officer shall hold more than one office at a time. No elected officer shall be eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office.

Chapter 12

CONGREGATION COUNCIL

- C12.01 The membership of the Congregation Council shall consist of not more than 19 and not less than 12 voting members of the congregation. Any voting member of the congregation may be elected subject to the limitation on the length of continuous service permitted in that office. The pastors of the congregation may attend all Congregation Council meetings and advise the Council, but have no vote on the Council. A member's place on the Council shall be declared vacant if the member a) ceases to be a voting member of this congregation or b) is absent from four successive regular meetings of the Congregation Council without cause.
- C12.02 The members of the Congregation Council shall be elected by written ballot on the first and second Sundays in December, before and after worship, to serve for

three years or until their successors are elected. Such members shall be eligible to serve no more than two full terms consecutively. Their terms shall begin at the December Congregation Council meeting. The Congregation Council terms shall end at the December Congregation Council meeting, before the election of officers.

- C12.03 Should a member's place on the Congregation Council be declared vacant, the Congregation Council shall elect, by majority vote, a successor, until the next annual election.
- C12.04 The Congregation Council shall have general oversight of the life and activities of this congregation, and in particular, its worship life, to the end that everything be done in accordance with the word of God and the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The duties of the Congregation Council shall include the following:
- a. To lead this congregation in stating its mission, to do long-range planning, to set goals and priorities, and to evaluate its activities in the light of its mission and goals.
 - b. To seek to involve all members of this congregation in worship, learning, witness, service, and support.
 - c. To oversee and provide for the administration of this congregation to enable it to fulfill its functions and perform its mission.
 - d. To maintain supportive relationships with the pastor(s) and staff and them annually to evaluate the fulfillment of their calling, appointment or employment.
 - e. To be examples individually and corporately of the style of life and expected of all baptized persons.
 - f. To promote a congregational climate of peace and goodwill and, differences and conflicts arise, to endeavor to foster mutual understanding.
 - g. To arrange for pastoral service during the sickness or absence of the pastor.
 - h. To emphasize partnership with the synod and church-wide units of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, as well as cooperation with other congregations, both Lutheran and non-Lutheran, subject to established policies of the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
 - i. To recommend and encourage the use of program resources produced or approved by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- C12.05 The Congregation Council shall see that the provisions of this constitution (and) its bylaws (and the continuing resolutions) are carried out.
- C12.06 The Congregation Council shall provide for an annual review of the membership roster.
- C12.07 The Congregation Council shall be responsible for the appointment and supervision of the salaried lay workers of the congregation.

- C12.08 The Congregation Council shall submit a comprehensive report to this congregation at the annual meeting.
- C12.09 The Congregation Council shall normally meet once a month. Special meetings may be called by the pastor or the president, and shall be called at the request of at least one-half of its members. Notice of each special meeting shall be given to all who are entitled to be present.
- C12.10 A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of a majority of the members of the Congregation Council, including the pastor or interim pastor, except when such person requests or consents to be absent and has given prior approval to an agenda or routine matters which shall be the only business of the meeting.

Chapter 13

DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS

- C13.01 Denial of the Christian faith as described in this constitution, conduct grossly unbecoming a member of the Church of Christ, or persistent trouble-making in this congregation are sufficient cause for discipline of a member. Prior to disciplinary action, reconciliation will be attempted following Matthew 18:15-17, proceeding through these successive steps: a) private admonition by the pastor, b) admonition by the pastor in the presence of two or three witnesses, and c) citation to appear before the Congregation Council.
- C13.02 A member charged with the offense shall appear before the Congregation Council having received a written notice, specifying the exact charges that have been made against the member at least 10 days prior to the meeting.
- C13.03 Should the allegations be sustained by a two-thirds majority vote of the Congregation Council, the council shall impose one of the following disciplinary actions:
- a. censure before the council or congregation;
 - b. suspension from membership for a definite period of time; or
 - c. exclusion from membership in this congregation. Disciplinary actions b. and c. shall be delivered to the member in writing.
- C13.04 The member against whom disciplinary action has been taken by the Congregation Council shall have the right to appeal the decision to the Synod Council. Such right may not be abridged and the decision of the Synod Council shall be final.
- C13.05 Disciplinary action may be reconsidered and revoked by the Congregation Council upon receipt of a) evidence that injustice has been done or b) evidence of repentance and amendment.

Chapter 14

BYLAWS

- C14.01 This congregation may adopt bylaws. No bylaw may conflict with this constitution.
- C14.02 Bylaws may be adopted or amended at any legally called meeting of this congregation by a 2/3 vote of those voting members present and voting.
- C14.03 Approved changes to the bylaws shall be sent to the synod.

Chapter 15

AMENDMENTS

- C15.01 Amendments to this constitution may be proposed by at least 50 voting members or by the Congregation Council. Proposals must be filed in writing with the Congregation Council 60 days before formal consideration by this congregation at its regular or special meeting called for that purpose.
- C15.02 A proposed amendment to this constitution shall
- a. be approved at a properly called (*congregational*) meeting according to this constitution by a majority vote of those present and voting.
 - b. be ratified without change at the next annual meeting by a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting; and
 - c. have the effective date included in the resolution and noted in the constitution.
- C15.03 Any amendments to this constitution shall be sent by the secretary of this congregation to the synod. The amendment shall become effective within 120 days from the date of the receipt of the notice by the synod, unless the synod informs this congregation that the amendment is in conflict with the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or the constitution of the Northwestern Ohio Synod.

BYLAWS
PART I – COMMUNION PARTICIPATION

1. This congregation invites all of its members who have prepared to receive the Sacrament to participate regularly in Holy Communion.
2. Preparation for Holy Communion will normally be provided for persons as young as ten years of age.
3. Participation in Holy Communion shall be open to members of other congregations who accept the Lutheran teaching in regard to this Sacrament.
4. It shall be made known to prospective participants that the belief of this congregation is:

Participation in the Lord’s Supper is the reception of “the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ given with bread and wine, instituted by Christ himself, for us to eat and drink.” (From *The Small Catechism* in Contemporary English, 1968, Augsburg Publishing House)

We hold that a “person is well prepared and worthy who believes these words, ‘given and shed for you and for the remission of sins.’ But anyone who does not believe these words, or doubts them, is neither prepared nor worthy, for the words ‘for you’ require simply a believing heart,” (From *The Small Catechism* in Contemporary English, 1968, Augsburg Publishing House)

5. Record of participation in Holy Communion shall be maintained. If a member of another congregation communes, notice shall be sent to the home congregation.

PART II -- CONFLICTING LOYALTIES

Ceremonies of any secret organization shall not be permitted in the buildings or premises of the congregation; nor shall its pastor(s) take part in any such ceremonies wherever they are conducted.

PART III – MEMBERSHIP

1. Transfers: A confirmed member in good standing, desiring to change membership to another Lutheran congregation, shall upon request receive a Letter of Transfer.

The congregation shall, in the event of the removal of a member from the community it serves, encourage the member to request a transfer to a Lutheran congregation which can serve the member effectively. Should the member fail to request a transfer, a Lutheran congregation in the community of residence shall be notified.

2. Resignation: Shall be accomplished by notifying the church office in writing.

3. Release: When a member joins a non-Lutheran congregation, membership shall be terminated in this congregation and the name of the member removed from the membership list.
4. Whereabouts Unknown: A member whose whereabouts is unknown and cannot be established within one year shall be removed from the membership list.
5. Self-Exclusion:
 - a) A confirmed member who could but does not for a period of three (3) months partake of Holy Communion, support the church with offerings, and does not appear to desire to participate in the life and worship of the congregation shall be visited by a pastor and/or designated visitation team from the congregation, and encouraged to active membership and a return to Christ and His Word.
 - b) If, after six (6) months, such a member has not communed, contributed, or worshipped, another visit shall be made.
 - c) If, after twelve (12) months, the member has not responded, the member's name shall be transferred to an "inactive file" for special prayer and concern by the congregation and Outreach Committee. The individual shall be notified of such action. (Such a person will always be welcome to attend worship services in our church at any time.)
 - d) Persons who have removed themselves from active membership shall be restored with all the rights and privileges when they commune, contribute, or participate in the life and worship of the congregation. Removal and restoration of members will be made known to the congregation and Congregation Council.

PART IV—THE PASTOR

If a pastor receives a Call to another ministry, the pastor shall consult the Congregation Council, or, if desired, the congregation before reaching a decision. The pastor shall announce a decision as quickly as possible, normally within three weeks. The pastor shall notify the synod bishop of a decision. When a Call has been accepted, the pastor shall terminate the current call as soon as feasible, normally within a month.

PART V—MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION

1. The annual meeting shall receive reports from all the organizations of the congregation. Such reports, including a financial statement, shall be submitted in writing to the pastor not less than 14 days before the meeting.

2. The congregation at the annual meeting shall receive reports from all the organizations of the congregation. Such reports, including a financial statement, shall be submitted in writing to the pastor not less than 14 days before the meeting.

PART VI—ELECTIONS

A. Nomination Procedure

1. The Nominating Committee shall nominate from the voting membership of the congregation at least two more candidates than vacancies to be filled.
2. The list of nominees shall be announced to the congregation in conjunction with the announcements of the election by the congregation.
3. The Nominating Committee shall have investigated the status of proposed candidates and found them spiritually eligible for office and willing to serve.

B. Election Procedure

1. The Nominating Committee in preparing the ballot will observe an alphabetical arrangement of candidates' names from A to Z for elections held in even years and Z to A in odd numbered years.
2. The Congregation Council shall be elected by ballot on the first and second Sundays in December, before and after worship services.
3. Each voter shall have the right to insert additional names on the ballot at the time of the election.
4. Voting by absentee ballot shall be permitted.

PART VII—OFFICERS, CONGREGATION COUNCIL DIVISIONS AND COMMITTEES

A. ELIGIBILITY AND DUTIES OF OFFICERS

1. The president shall preside at the meetings of the Congregation Council and of the congregation.
2. The vice-president shall preside at the meetings of the Congregation Council and of the congregation in the absence of the president, and shall be available for whatever duties are assigned to the vice-president.
3. The secretary shall keep the permanent minutes of the Congregation Council and of the congregation, have custody of the archives of the congregation, conduct all

official correspondence of the Congregation Council, and perform duties normally pertaining to the office of secretary.

4. The treasurer shall be responsible for disbursement of funds in accordance with the decisions of the congregation and committees, present a written, duplicated financial report to the Congregation Council and the congregation as required by the Congregation Council, receive a report of all income, sign all checks, and serve as assistant chairperson of the Finance Committee.
5. The financial secretary shall be responsible for maintaining records of all contributions, make regular reports to the Congregation Council and to the congregation as required by the Congregation Council, and shall serve as chairperson of the Finance Committee.
6. The five officers of the Congregation Council shall form the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall be responsible for the welfare of the pastors, supervision of the planning, evaluation, coordinating functions of Council, and overseeing the administration of the parish.

B. MEMBERSHIP AND MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION COUNCIL

1. Should the unexpired term be one year or less, it shall not be considered in determining eligibility for succession.
2. Notice of a special meeting provided for in the constitution under (C12.09) shall be given not less than five days prior to the meeting and announced.

C. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CONGREGATION COUNCIL

1. The Congregation Council shall be responsible for the financial and property matters of the congregation.
 - a. Congregation Council shall be the board of (trustees/directors) of this congregation, and as such shall be responsible for maintaining and protecting its property and the management of its business and fiscal affairs. It shall have the powers and be subject to the obligations that pertain to such boards under the laws of the State of Ohio, except as otherwise provided herein.
 - b. The Congregation Council shall not have the authority to buy, sell, or encumber real property unless specifically authorized to do so by a meeting of the congregation.
 - c. The Congregation Council may enter into contracts of up to \$10,000 for items not included in the budget.

- d. The Congregation Council shall prepare an annual budget for adoption by this congregation, shall supervise the expenditure of funds in accordance therewith following its adoption, and may incur obligations more than \$10,000 in excess of the anticipated receipts only after approval by a Congregation Meeting. The budget shall include this congregation's full indicated share in support of the wider ministry being carried on in partnership with the synod and church wide organization.
 - e. The Congregation Council shall ascertain that the financial affairs of this congregation are being conducted efficiently, giving particular attention to the prompt payment of all obligations and to the regular forwarding of benevolence monies to the synodical treasurer.
 - f. The Congregation Council shall be responsible for this congregation's investments and its total insurance program.
2. When a pastoral vacancy occurs, a Call Committee shall be appointed by the Congregation Council. Term of office will terminate at installation of the newly-called pastor.
 3. Review annually the salary of the pastor(s) and make adjustments from time to time within the limits of the budget approved by the congregation.
 4. Review the budget prepared by the Finance Committee and submit it to the annual meeting of the congregation with recommendations.
 5. Elect upon nomination of the Education Committee a superintendent of the Sunday Church School.
 6. Special interest groups, other than those of the official organizations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, may be organized only after authorization has been given by the Congregation Council (and specified in a continuing resolution)
 7. Report its activities to the annual meeting of the congregation and at such other times as the congregation may decide.
 8. Have authority between meetings of the congregation to choose delegates to any group or meeting in which the congregation is entitled to representation.
 9. Identify and clarify the direction and purpose of the congregation.
 10. Appoint annually an auditing committee of three persons who shall audit the fiscal records of the congregation and report its findings in writing to the annual meeting. Such audits shall include examination of existing insurance coverage.

11. Appoint a nominating committee of five members, including chairperson. The pastor shall serve as convener and as an advisory member. The term of office of the members of the nominating committee shall be one year. The Congregation Council shall fill vacancies on the nominating committee.
12. Determine whether to approve or disapprove recommendations of the property care committee as to the use of the church property by groups or individuals not associated with the congregation.

D. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STANDING COMMITTEES

Responsibilities and authority for administration of congregational affairs shall be delegated to the following committees:

1. Education Committee

The Education Committee shall:

- a. Include two Congregation Council members who shall serve as chairperson and assistant chairperson.
- b. Appoint from its own membership a secretary to keep a permanent set of minutes for each meeting.
- c. Conduct regular meetings at such time and place as the committee may determine. Special meetings may be called by the committee chairperson, council president, or advisory pastor at any time. Each committee member shall be notified of date, time, and purpose of special meetings.
- d. Plan, develop, implement, and evaluate an effective teaching ministry which includes the training of teachers and leaders, and provide opportunity for study by every member of the congregation through its teaching agencies.
- e. Nominate candidates for Sunday Church School superintendent to the Congregation Council.
- f. Report its activities to the Congregation Council, the annual meeting of the congregation, and at other such times as the congregation may decide.

2. Youth Committee

The Youth Committee shall:

- a. Include two Congregation Council members who shall serve as chairperson and assistant chairperson.

- b. Appoint from its own membership a secretary to keep a permanent set of minutes for each meeting.
- c. Conduct regular meetings at such time and place as the committee may determine. Special meetings may be called by the committee chairperson, council president, or advisory pastor at any time. Each committee member shall be notified of date, time, and purpose of special meetings.
- d. Plan, develop, implement, and evaluate an effective youth ministry which includes the guidance, supervision, facilities, and equipment for youth programs.
- e. Report its activities to the Congregation Council, the annual meeting of the congregation, and at other such times as the congregation may decide.

3. Worship-Music Committee

The Worship-Music Committee shall:

- a. Include two Congregation Council members who shall serve as chairperson and assistant chairperson.
- b. Appoint from its own membership a secretary to keep a permanent set of minutes for each meeting.
- c. Conduct regular meetings at such time and place as the committee may determine. Special meetings may be called by the committee chairperson, council president, or advisory pastor at any time. Each committee member shall be notified of date, time, and purpose of special meetings.
- d. Plan, develop, implement, and evaluate programs relating to worship and music of the congregation.
- e. Report its activities to the Congregation Council, the annual meeting of the congregation, and at other such times as the congregation may decide.

4. Property Care Committee

The Property Care Committee shall:

- a. Include two Congregation Council members who shall serve as chairperson and assistant chairperson.
- b. Appoint from its own membership a secretary to keep a permanent set of minutes for each meeting.

- c. Conduct regular meetings at such time and place as the committee may determine. Special meetings may be called by the committee chairperson, council president, or advisory pastor at any time. Each committee member shall be notified of date, time, and purpose of special meetings.
- d. Be responsible for the buildings and premises of the congregation so that their use is normally limited to the functions of the congregation. Should groups or individuals not associated with the congregation desire to use such property, application shall be made to the Property Care Committee. The Property Care Committee shall make recommendations to the Congregation Council for approval or disapproval of requests to use church property. The decision of the Congregation Council shall be final with respect to property use.
- e. Be responsible for all other property owned by the congregation.
- f. Plan, develop, implement, and evaluate the maintenance of all property owned by the congregation.
- g. Report its activities to the Congregation Council, the annual meeting of the congregation, and at other such times as the congregation may decide

5. Finance Committee:

The Finance Committee shall:

- a. Include ~~two Congregation Council members~~ (**the financial secretary and treasurer**) who shall serve as chairperson and assistant chairperson.
- b. Appoint from its own membership a secretary to keep a permanent set of minutes for each meeting.
- c. Conduct regular meetings at such time and place as the committee may determine. Special meetings may be called by the committee chairperson, council president, or advisory pastor at any time. Each committee member shall be notified of date, time, and purpose of special meetings.
- d. Receive reports monthly to ascertain that the expenditures are within the budget approved by the congregation. Any expenditures in excess of the total voted budget must be approved by the congregation, except in an emergency which affects the well-being of person and property.
- e. Prepare a budget for review by the Congregation Council, which shall make a recommendation for submission to the annual meeting of the congregation.
- f. Assure itself that the treasurer and others who have access to the funds of the congregation are adequately bonded.

- g. Report its activities to the Division of Church Management, the annual meeting of the congregation, and at other such times as the congregation may decide
- h. Plan, develop, implement, and evaluate the legal, monetary, and corporate affairs of the congregation.

6. Outreach Committee

The Outreach Committee shall:

- a. Include two Congregation Council members who shall serve as chairperson and assistant chairperson.
- b. Appoint from its own membership a secretary to keep a permanent set of minutes for each meeting.
- c. Conduct regular meetings at such time and place as the committee may determine. Special meetings may be called by the committee chairperson, council president, or advisory pastor at any time. Each committee member shall be notified of date, time, and purpose of special meetings.
- d. Plan, develop, implement and evaluate programs of outreach and pastoral care for the congregation.
- e. Initiate and implement effective witness and service in the community.
- f. Report its activities to the Congregation Council, the annual meeting of the congregation, and at other such times as the congregation may decide.

7. Public Relations Committee

The Public Relations Committee shall:

- a. Include two Congregation Council members who shall serve as chairperson and assistant chairperson.
- b. Appoint from its own membership a secretary to keep a permanent set of minutes for each meeting.
- c. Conduct regular meetings at such time and place as the committee may determine. Special meetings may be called by the committee chairperson, council president, or advisory pastor at any time. Each committee member shall be notified of date, time, and purpose of special meetings.

- d. Plan, develop, implement and evaluate programs of communication that will bring the Gospel to as many people as possible through the printed word and other mass media.
- e. Interpret the mission of the Church to the members and general public through appropriate media.
- f. Appoint the editor of the church newsletter.
- g. Report its activities to the Congregation Council, the annual meeting of the congregation, and at other such times as the congregation may decide.

8. Stewardship Committee

The Stewardship Committee shall:

- a. Include two Congregation Council members who shall serve as chairperson and assistant chairperson.
- b. Appoint from its own membership a secretary to keep a permanent set of minutes for each meeting.
- c. Conduct regular meetings at such time and place as the committee may determine. Special meetings may be called by the committee chairperson, council president, or advisory pastor at any time. Each committee member shall be notified of date, time, and purpose of special meetings.
- d. Plan, develop, implement and evaluate methods to interpret the mission and total program of this church to the members.
- e. Assist members of the congregation in achieving fuller understanding of and greater commitment to their call as stewards of God.
- f. Stimulate members of the congregation to provide support for the mission of the church through their time, abilities, and possessions.
- g. Interpret and implement the mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the congregation so that gifts reflect love and generosity.

PART VIII

The records of the congregation shall be and remain the property of the congregation. The pastor shall be responsible for the maintenance of the records, except as otherwise provided herein. Upon the termination of service to the congregation, the pastor shall have brought the records up to date prior to departure. The records shall consist of:

- 1) The roster of baptized, confirmed, and voting members
- 2) The ministerial acts performed by the pastor
- 3) The minutes and reports of the Synod and *The Handbook of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.
- 4) The minutes of the meetings of the congregation and the Congregation Council for which the secretary of the congregation shall be responsible.
- 5) The financial records of the congregation for which the treasurer of the congregation shall be responsible.

The pastor shall report to the secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America such statistics as may be requested and shall annually report to the congregation a summary of ministerial acts.

Should the congregation be dissolved, the official records of the congregation shall be deposited in the archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or its successor.