

CALC

Model Constitution for Congregations

CONSTITUTION

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Preamble

Recognizing our unity in Christ and our common practice in the Christian faith, desiring to express our fellowship in worship and work, knowing our spiritual needs, being mindful of our Christian privileges and duties, desiring to unite as a congregation in our common Confession of Faith, and wishing to observe orderly cooperation, we adopt this constitution and pledge ourselves to be governed by its provisions.

I. Name

The name of this congregation, residing in _____, _____, shall be _____. This congregation is incorporated under the laws of the Province of _____ and is a member of the Canadian Association of Lutheran Congregations, hereafter referred to as CALC.

II. Purpose

As a religious society, this congregation shall be in harmony with Article III (Confession of Faith) of this constitution (below).

III. Confession of Faith

1. *The Bible*

This congregation accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as a whole and in all their parts as the divinely inspired, revealed, and inerrant Word of God, and joyfully submits to this as the only infallible authority in all matters of life and faith.

2. *Faith in the Triune God*

This congregation is built upon faith in the ever-living Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – as revealed in the Holy Scriptures; to Whom be the glory for ever and ever (see the three Ecumenical Creeds).

3. *God the Father*

1. Almighty God, Creator of the universe, Who formed man in His own image, Who from the beginning loved goodness and hated evil, desires that the children of His creation live in eternal fellowship with Him. We hold to the creation as described in the first chapters of Genesis, not as myth, but as historic facts.
2. Therefore, the Creator gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16) to be the Savior of the world, that people might be set free from the bondage of sin, and become joint heirs with Christ of eternal life.

4. *Jesus Christ, God's Son and Our Savior*

1. At the heart and center of this faith is confidence in Jesus Christ and love for Him, true God and true man, the eternal Word of God, the only Son of God, and the only Savior of the world.
2. To proclaim salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ is our reason for being as a congregation

5. *Dependence upon the Holy Spirit*

We also acknowledge dependence upon the Holy Spirit working solely through the Means of Grace (Word and Sacraments) to call unbelievers into saving faith in Jesus Christ; to empower believers to grow in faith, to bestow His gifts for the ministry of the Church locally and universally, to inspire love for one another, and to bring glory to the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Head of the Church.

6. *Symbols (Creeds): Basic and Required*

As brief and true statements of the doctrines of the Word of God, this congregation accepts and confesses the following Symbols, subscription to which shall be required of all its members.

1. The ancient ecumenical Creeds: The Apostolic, The Nicene, and the Athanasian;
2. The Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism.

7. *Book of Concord: Normative*

As further elaboration of and in accordance with these Lutheran Symbols, this congregation also receives the other documents in the Book of Concord of 1580: the Apology, Luther's Large Catechism, the Smalcald Articles, and the Formula of Concord; and recognizes them as normative for its theology.

8. *Pure Doctrine*

The Congregation accepts without reservation the symbolic books of the Lutheran Church, not insofar as but because they are the presentation and explanation of the pure doctrine of the Word of God and a summary of the faith of the evangelical Lutheran Church.

9. This Confession of Faith shall be unalterable.

IV. Upon Dissolution

In the event that membership in the congregation so diminishes as to render it impossible or impractical for the congregation to function according to its constitution and bylaws, the remaining members shall call a Special Meeting to vote to dissolve the congregation. Upon dissolution of the congregation and after payment of all debts and liabilities, the remaining property of the congregation, including any accumulated money, shall be distributed or disposed of to such other charitable organization in Canada, the objects of which exist for religious or charitable purposes, and in the opinion of the congregation most closely resembles those of the congregation; this provision shall be unalterable.

BY-LAWS OF _____ LUTHERAN CHURCH

PART 1. THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

- 1.1 Jesus Christ is the living Lord and head of the Church, His Body in the world.
- 1.2 The Church is the assembly of saints in which the Gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly. This one holy, Christian and apostolic church is to continue forever
- 1.3 Through the Word and the Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given and the Holy Spirit produces faith, where and when it pleases God, in those who hear the Gospel.
- 1.4 We believe that through these Means of Grace the Spirit of God produces His fruit, bestows His gifts, and unites the whole Christian Church on earth with Jesus Christ.
- 1.5 This proclamation and the Holy Spirit's activity, rather than organizational union, constitute the true unity of His Church. We believe that this true Church eagerly identifies such unity and promotes and rejoices in fellowship and cooperation with all members of Christ's Body everywhere.

PART 2. PURPOSE

- 2.1 **Witness to Christian Faith**
This congregation is a fellowship of believers to which the Gospel of reconciliation has been given. It seeks to focus and coordinate the purposes and resources of these believers so that the Triune God may be more fully known through a faithful ministry of God's Word and the Sacraments. This congregation dedicates itself to bear witness to the eternal Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in its fullness and purity, and to preserve and extend the unity of that faith as revealed in God's Holy Word.
- 2.2 **Proclamation and Propagation**
Through the Means of Grace, the specific purpose of this congregation is to proclaim and propagate this eternal Gospel to the lost and weary of this world and to provide for daily renewal and sanctification of the same.
- 2.3 **Emphasis**
The emphasis of the Congregation shall be evangelism, missions, prayer, proclamation of the Word and study of the Holy Scriptures and the application of these to daily living and caring ministries.
- 2.4 **Statement of Mission**
The mission of this congregation is to turn eternally lost people into maturing Priests (followers of Jesus Christ), with the help of the Holy Spirit.

PART 3. MEMBERSHIP

- 3.1 The membership of this congregation consists of those baptized persons who:
1. Have been baptized in this congregation, or
 2. Have been previously baptized in the name of the Triune God, have been received either by:
 - i. Transfer from another Lutheran congregation,
 - ii. Confirmation, or
 - iii. Affirmation of faith.

- 3.2 Members of this congregation may also be classified as confirmed and voting.
1. Confirmed members are baptized members who have been:
 - i. Confirmed in this congregation,
 - ii. Received by adult baptism,
 - iii. Received by transfer as confirmed members from another Lutheran congregation,
 - iv. Received by affirmation of faith as baptized adults.
 2. Voting members are those confirmed or otherwise designated members who are members in good standing and have attained the age of 18 years.

3.3 United in one Lord, one faith and one Baptism, the members of this congregation are to be constant in worship and in the study of the Holy Scriptures, regularly nourishing their life in Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar, presenting their children for Holy Baptism and providing for their Christian instruction.

The members are called by the Spirit to lead godly lives, to promote the unity and welfare of the congregation in the bond of peace, to proclaim the Gospel and to renounce the evil one. The commitment of each baptized member to this call is to be expressed through a life of repentance, faith, prayer and the sharing of resources.

- 3.4 Membership in this congregation shall be terminated by any of the following:
- a. Death,
 - b. Resignation,
 - c. Transfer or release,
 - d. Dismissal,
 - e. Inactivity.

3.5 A confirmed member who does not, for a period of one year, partake of Holy Communion, support the church with offerings and participate in the life and worship of the congregation should be visited or an attempt-visit should be made by the pastor or the congregation's officers and be encouraged by them to active membership. If, during the second year, the confirmed member does not actively participate, the member's name may be removed from the membership roster of the congregation, but it shall be retained on a responsibility list as one who is in special need of the congregation's prayer and concern.

3.6 A member who advocates doctrines which are contrary to the Holy Scriptures and the congregation's Confessions of Faith (article III) or who is guilty of conduct that is grossly unbecoming a member of the body of Christ shall be subject to discipline.

3.7 Discipline in the congregation shall be exercised in accordance with Matthew 18:15-18.

3.8 Discipline shall be administered by the Congregational Council. A person who is requested to appear before the Congregational Council shall be advised in writing no less than ten days prior to the hearing. The written notice shall include the time and place of the hearing and shall specify the exact reason for the hearing. Members of the Church Council who participate in the preparation of the written charges or who present evidence or testimony in the hearing before the Church Council are disqualified from voting upon the question of the guilt of the accused member. If a person fails to appear at the time and place without valid excuse, the Council may proceed with the hearing and may reach its conclusion in the member's absence. Should the allegations be sustained by a two-thirds majority vote of the members of the Congregational Council who are not disqualified but who are present and voting, and renewed admonition prove ineffectual, the Council shall impose one of the following disciplinary actions:

- a. Suspension from membership until evidence is given of sufficient repentance and amendment,
- b. Exclusion from membership and denial of the Sacraments.

In the event of the imposition of (a) and (b) above, the action of the Council shall be delivered to the member in writing.

3.9 The member against whom disciplinary action has been taken by the Congregational Council shall have the right to appeal to a Congregational Meeting, which may revise or overturn the Congregational Council's decision by a majority vote. Any such vote will be by secret ballot.

4.0 Disciplinary actions may be reconsidered and revoked by the Congregational Council upon receipt of (a) evidence that injustice has been done or (b) evidence of repentance and amendment.

PART 4 AUTHORITY

4.1 All power in the congregation has its source in the Word of God, which is the norm for its faith and life. All individuals and groups within the congregation shall submit to the authority of the Word; and the life and activity of the congregation and its organizations shall conform to it.

4.2 The powers of the congregation shall be those necessary to fulfill its purposes, as set forth in this constitution.

4.3 The powers of the congregation shall be vested in the congregational meeting, called and conducted in such manner as is provided in this constitution, and, to the extent conveyed by this constitution or as assigned from time to time by the congregational meeting, in the boards elected by the congregation.

4.4 In the fulfillment of its purpose, the congregation is empowered to:

- a. Acquire real and personal property by gift, devise, bequest, purchase, or other lawful means;
- b. Hold title to and use its property for any and all activities consistent with its purpose;
- c. Sell, mortgage, lease, transfer, or otherwise dispose of its property by any lawful means;
- d. Enter into contract;
- e. Sue and be sued;
- f. Elect officers and boards for the exercise of their powers and authority and require them to conduct their affairs in accordance with this constitution and its bylaws, and the resolutions of the congregation.

4.5 Real property shall not be purchased, disposed of, encumbered in any manner except by resolution adopted by not less than a two-thirds majority vote of the members, present and voting, at a legally called meeting of the congregation.

4.6 In case of strife and division in the congregation, the Council may seek the advice of the President of CALC.

PART 5 RELATIONSHIP TO THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONS (CALC)

5.1 For the better attainment of its purpose, this congregation shall be a member of the Canadian Association of Lutheran Congregations or its successor. It shall be subject to the policy and discipline of the Canadian Association of Lutheran Congregations.

5.2 This congregation subscribes to CALC's constitution and will act in accordance with it.

5.3 The congregation claims for itself all the rights and privileges and accepts all the duties and obligations connected with such membership.

5.3 The congregation covenants to support with prayer, personal service, and offerings, the common work of CALC.

5.4 This constitution and all amendments thereto, shall be transmitted to the President of CALC for review to ascertain that none of its provisions are in conflict with the constitution and bylaws of CALC.

5.5 Severance of membership in the Canadian Association of Lutheran Congregations shall require a [*insert percentage if greater than simple majority*] majority vote of all voting members present and voting at a legally called and conducted meeting. If this congregation adopts a resolution withdrawing from CALC, all provisions of this constitution binding this congregation to the CALC shall be immediately ineffective. The congregation shall promptly deliver a copy of the withdrawal resolution to the President of CALC.

5.6 This congregation prohibits any corporate worship with any organization which practices the forms of religion without confessing faith in Triune God and in Jesus Christ, the eternal and incarnate Son of God, as our only Savior.

PART 6 THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY

6.1 A pastor of the congregation shall be a person who accepts and adheres to the Confession of Faith of this church, and who strives in life and conduct to be above reproach.

6.2 Authority to call a pastor shall rest in the congregation. Such authority to call shall be exercised by not less than a two-thirds majority vote of members present and voting at a meeting legally called for that purpose. Throughout the call process the Congregational Council, or a committee authorized by the congregation, may choose to seek the advice and counsel of the President of CALC and utilize CALC's available resources to assist with the call process.

6.4 Every pastor shall:

- a. Through the power of the Word of God continue a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as one's personal savior as first priority, develop your relationship with your spouse and family as second priority and fulfill your duties and responsibilities to the congregation as pastor as third priority;
- b. Preach the Word, administer the Sacraments and conduct public worship in harmony with the faith and doctrine of this church;
- c. Baptize, confirm and marry in accordance with the teaching of CALC and with the laws of the province or territory, visit the sick and distressed and bury the dead;
- d. Encourage faith active in love, in personal and family life and provide pastoral leadership to all schools and auxiliary organizations of the congregations;
- e. To comfort the mourning, to console the depressed, to bring the promise of redemption to those who seek redemption, to carry forth into the world the Word of the merciful God with its promise of salvation.
- f. To encourage and empower through God's Word every Christian as a spiritual priest to work for mutual edification, each in his or her own station and in accordance with the opportunity and gifts which God has bestowed upon him or her, either individually, person to person, or in assemblies of the congregation.
- g. Install members of the Congregational Council
- h. 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, at home and abroad;

- i. Encourage the members to be generous in support of the ministry of the congregation and the Church;
- j. Keep accurate membership records including baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials and communicants. The parish records shall be kept in a separate book, which shall remain the property of the congregation.
- k. Commend members who move to the pastoral care of the parish in which their new home is located.

6.5 In order that a pastor of this congregation may be devoted fully to the duties of the office, adequate compensation shall be provided, paid in semi-monthly or monthly installments. Expenses incident to attendance at conventions of this church and at meetings otherwise required by the pastor's office shall be defrayed by the congregation, except where other provisions are made.

6.6 The regular call of this congregation when accepted by a pastor shall constitute a relationship, which shall be terminated only for the following causes:

1. mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term;
2. resignation of the pastor, which shall become effective, unless otherwise agreed, 30 days after the date on which it was submitted;
3. inability to conduct the pastoral office satisfactorily in the parish in view of local conditions, without reflection on 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;
6. the dissolution of the congregation.

Such authority to dismiss shall be exercised by a majority of not less than 50% of the voting members present at a congregational meeting legally called for that purpose.

6.7 In the event of alleged defection in doctrine or alleged conduct unbecoming a pastor, the matter shall be referred by the Congregational Council to the President for action as provided in the constitution and bylaws of the Canadian Association of Lutheran Congregations.

6.8 At a time of pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor may be appointed by the Congregational Council. The interim pastor shall have the responsibility of a regularly-called pastor. All interim and supply pastors shall refrain from exerting influence in the call process of the congregation.

PART 7 CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

7.1 An annual congregational meeting shall be held every year, no later than _____ to obtain approval for the year's annual operating budget and to elect new Council members. The newly-elected Council members take their positions at the next regular Council meeting.

7.2 Special congregational meetings may be called by the Congregational Council and shall be called at the written request of one-tenth of the 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.

7.3 Notice of all congregational meetings shall be given at the services of worship on the preceding two consecutive Sundays or by mail to all voting members at least ten days in advance of the date of the meeting.

7.4 [*Number or percent*] of voting members shall constitute a quorum.

7.5 Voting by proxy or by absentee ballot shall not be permitted.

7.6 All actions approved by the congregation shall be by majority vote of those voting members present and voting, except as otherwise provided in this constitution or by applicable law.

7.7 Bourinot's Rules of Order, latest edition, shall be the governing parliamentary law of this congregation, except as otherwise provided in this constitution or its bylaws.

PART 8 CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL AND ITS OFFICERS

8.1 At its annual meeting the congregation shall elect a Congregational Council of not less than ___ nor more than _____ members for terms of three years each with approximately one-third of the terms expiring annually.

8.2 Members shall be eligible to serve no more than two full terms consecutively.

8.3 The [senior] pastor shall be an *ex officio* member of the Congregational Council and all its committees and shall be notified of all regular or special meetings of the Congregational Council.

8.4 All elected members of the Congregational Council shall be installed by the pastor according to the prescribed order of the church at the next public service following their election or as soon thereafter as convenient.

8.5 At its first meeting following the annual meeting of the congregation the Congregational Council shall elect from its own membership a chairperson and a vice-chairperson who shall be the chairperson and vice-chairperson of the congregation. A secretary elected either from the membership of the Council or as a non-elected member of Council shall serve as the secretary of the congregation. In the latter case, the secretary will have voice but not vote at Congregational Council meetings. The Council shall also elect a treasurer who need not be a member of the Congregational Council. A treasurer so selected shall have voice but not vote at the meetings of the Congregational Council.

8.6 The Congregational Council shall be the trustees of the congregation and shall have general oversight of the life and activities of the congregation ensuring that everything is done in accordance with the Word of God and the faith and practice of the Canadian Association of Lutheran Congregations. The Congregational Council shall exercise such authority as is delegated to it by this constitution, the bylaws and the resolutions of the congregation.

8.7 A majority shall constitute the quorum for transacting the business of the Congregational Council.

8.8 If a vacancy occurs on the Congregational Council, the Council shall fill the vacancy until the next annual meeting of the congregation. Should the unexpired term be one year or less, it shall not be considered in determining eligibility for succession.

8.9 A member of the Congregational Council who is absent from two consecutive regular meetings shall be contacted by the chairperson of the congregation; if the member is absent from three consecutive regular meetings without valid excuse, the Council may declare the position vacant.

9.0 A special meeting may be called by the pastor, the chairperson or any three members of the Congregational Council. Notice of such meeting shall be given not less than three days prior to the meeting and shall be announced at a public service if one is held during that period.

PART 9 DUTIES OF THE CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL AND ITS OFFICERS

9.1 The chairperson shall preside at all meetings of the Council and the congregation. The agenda shall be prepared in consultation with the pastor.

9.2 The vice-chairperson shall reside at the meetings of the Council and of the congregation in the absence of the chairperson.

9.3 The secretary shall keep the minutes of the Council and of the congregation in a volume provided by the congregation, which shall be permanently preserved in the congregational archives.

9.4 The treasurer shall have custody of all funds of the congregation and shall receive and disburse such funds in accordance with the decision of the congregation and of the Council.

9.5 The financial secretary shall maintain records of and issue receipts for all contributions.

9.6 The treasurer and the financial secretary shall make written report of all financial transactions to the Council monthly and to the congregation at the annual meetings.

9.7 The Congregational Council shall:

- a. Lead the congregation in stating its mission, in doing long-range planning, in setting goals and priorities and in evaluating its activities in the light of its mission and goals;
- b. Seek to involve all members of the 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. Provide support for the pastor(s) and other professional leaders, assist them to review and evaluate their ministry and review annually their financial compensation making adequate adjustments;
- e. Exemplify for the congregation the life that is worthy of the high calling in Christ;
- f. Promote congregational unity and good will, fostering mutual understanding in times of conflict and exercising discipline, when necessary, under the provision of this constitution;
- g. Arrange for pastoral service during the sickness or absence of the pastor;
- h. Appoint or elect all staff, voluntary or salaried, for the effective administration of all aspects of parish life.
- i. Appoint such committees as may be necessary or advisable;
- j. Normally meet once a month;
- k. Be responsible for maintaining and protecting the property of the congregation;
- l. Prepare an annual budget, supervise the expenditure of funds and ensure that the financial affairs of the congregation are conducted efficiently.
- m. Distribute the annual report and proposed budget to the congregation at least one week before the annual general meeting.

PART 10 ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION

10.1 All auxiliaries and organizations within the congregation shall exist to aid it in ministering to its members and to all whom it can reach with the Gospel of Christ. Regular reports concerning the program and work of these organizations and auxiliaries shall be made to the Congregational Council and congregational meetings.

PART 11 AMENDMENTS

11.1 Amendments to this constitution and by-laws may be proposed by the Congregational Council and shall be proposed by the Council at the request of five voting members. Such proposed amendments shall be:

- a. Read at a public service of the congregation or mailed to the voting members, not less than thirty days before the congregational meeting at which it is to be considered;
- b. Approved with or without change at the congregational meeting following its announcement, by a majority vote of those present and voting;

- c. Ratified without further change at a second congregational meeting held no less than thirty days later, by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting.

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