

**Shepherd of the Lakes Evangelical Lutheran Church
Fairmont, MN**

CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

The Word of God requires that a Christian congregation shall conform to this divine Word in doctrine and practice (Psalm 119:105, Matthew 28:18-20, Galatians 1:6-8, 2 Timothy 4:1-5) and that all things should be done in a fitting and orderly way (1 Corinthians 14:40). Therefore we, the members of Shepherd of the Lakes Evangelical 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 Shepherd of the Lakes Evangelical Lutheran Church, located in Fairmont, Minnesota.

ARTICLE II - Articles of Faith

Section 1.

This congregation accepts and confesses all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the inerrant and verbally inspired Word of God and submits to this Word as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

Section 2.

This congregation accepts and confesses all the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of 1580 as true statements of scriptural doctrine. They are:

A. The three Ecumenical Creeds

- 1) The Apostles'
- 2) The Nicene
- 3) The Athanasian

B. The six Lutheran Confessions

- 1) Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism
- 2) Dr. Martin Luther's Large Catechism

- 3) The Unaltered Augsburg Confession
- 4) The Apology of the Augsburg Confession
- 5) The Smalcald Articles
- 6) The Formula of Concord

Section 3.

This congregation accepts and confesses these symbolical books without reservation, 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 held by the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Hence, no doctrine shall be taught or tolerated in this congregation which is in any way at variance with these symbolical books and the Holy Scriptures.

Likewise, all controversies which may arise in this congregation shall be decided and adjusted according to this norm of doctrine and practice.

ARTICLE III - Purpose and Objectives

Section 1.

The continuing purpose of this congregation, as a gathering of Christians, is to serve all people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ as he himself instructs us in Matthew 28:19,20.

Section 2.

The primary objectives of this congregation shall be:

- 1) To proclaim the Law and the Gospel, to lead sinners to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ for life and salvation (2 Timothy 4:2, Luke 24:26-48);
- 2) To strengthen believers in faith and sanctification through the Means of Grace (Romans 10:17); and
- 3) To equip believers as disciples, stewards, and witnesses for sharing the Gospel of Jesus with our fellowmen (Ephesians 4:11,12).

ARTICLE IV - Synodical Affiliation

This congregation shall affiliate itself only with a synod that holds to all the truths of God's Word in doctrine and practice and is bound to the confessions of faith as set forth in Article II, if, and as long as, such a synod exists.

Article V - Church Membership

Section 1. Classification

- A. Baptized members of the congregation are those who have been baptized into the Christian faith in the name of the Triune God (Matthew 28:18-20).
- B. Communicant members are those baptized souls who confess the chief parts of Christian doctrine as written in Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism and who have declared their adherence to all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, without qualification, as the only rule and norm of faith and life.
- C. Voting members are those male (1 Corinthians 14:34, 1 Timothy 2:12) communicant members who have declared their agreement with this constitution and who have applied to and who have been accepted by the voters' assembly of the congregation. These voting members shall not only have the right to vote at the voters' assemblies but also to hold office.

Section 2. Privileges and Responsibilities

"God is love" (1 John 4:8), and His love ever moves him to bless the members of His Church with innumerable physical and spiritual gifts (1 John 3:1, James 1:17). In return for all of these undeserved blessings, we can do nothing less than to strive to love Him with all our heart (1 John 4:19) and to show that love with the works that we do. The giving of such expressions we acknowledge as both a privilege and a responsibility. Some of the privileges and responsibilities to be noted are the following:

- A. Our God has given us His Word, the one thing needful (Luke 10:42), which alone can save our souls and can motivate us to live a God-pleasing life (2 Timothy 3:15-17). Consequently, a member of His Church will consider it a distinct privilege and a responsibility to:
 - 1. Hear and receive the Word of God diligently and regularly;
 - 2. Provide and promote opportunities for Christian education;
 - 3. Bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4); and
 - 4. Share the saving truth of God's Word with others (Matthew 28:19, 1 Peter 3:15).
- B. Our God has given us two sacraments: Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, which are means that our Lord together with His Word uses to bring his grace to us. Consequently, a member of His Church will:
 - 1. Have his children baptized early in life, for "Baptism now saves you" (1 Peter 3:21); and
 - 2. Frequently partake of Holy Communion (1 Corinthians 11:23-26), if he is recognized as one who can properly examine himself (1 Corinthians 11:28). Only those in confessional fellowship of faith are permitted to

commune at our altar (close communion, 2 Corinthians 6:14,15, Romans 16:17, Acts 2:42).

- C. Our God has given us the privilege of being stewards over a certain portion of his estate and of receiving the steward's rich reward of grace (Matthew 25:14-30). Consequently, a member of His Church will:
1. Continually remember that all his property, time, and talents really belong to God (Psalm 24:1);
 2. Cheerfully decide in his heart (2 Corinthians 9:7) which part of his money, time, and talents shall be devoted to that which the congregation has made its concern, not omitting the work of the synod (Mark 16:15, 1 Corinthians 9:14, 16:2, 1 Peter 4:10); and
 3. If he is a voting member, regularly attend the voters' meetings and lend the congregation his counsel and aid.
- D. Our God has implanted within us, who are Christians, the new man, who desires to live righteously (2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 4:24). Consequently, a member of His Church will:
1. Not live in obvious acts of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:19-21), but lead a Christian life (Galatians 5:22-25);
 2. When he has erred, permit himself to be fraternally admonished and corrected in the spirit of Matthew 18:15-17; and
 3. Refuse to hold membership in any organization whose teachings and practices conflict with the Word of God such as groups who have false religious confessions, services, or prayers (John 5:23, John 8:31,32, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Section 3. Church Discipline and Excommunication

Christian discipline shall be exercised in this congregation in the spirit of Matthew 18:15-20 toward those who err from the faith or who in other ways have given offense. At all times this shall be done in the spirit of the Gospel, namely, to regain the erring as brethren. Those members who finally must be excommunicated, and those who have excluded themselves from the congregation by evading Matthew 18:15-20, lose all their rights in the congregation and its property. For excommunication a unanimous vote is required. The person under discipline does not have the right to vote.

Section 4. Termination of Fellowship

Members who persist in an error that in itself does not make the presence of saving faith impossible and who otherwise are not under church discipline (cf. Article V, Section 2 D, and Section 3) may be excluded from the fellowship of this congregation

- a) after they have been evangelically admonished by their fellow Christians in the spirit of Matthew 18:15-16; and
- b) when their adherence to error becomes public and a matter of divisiveness (Titus 3:10) and thus an offense and obstacle to the truth of God's Word (Romans 16:17).

This action shall not be used for removing inactive members or as a substitute for the loving act of excommunication when impenitence is clearly evident.

Section 5. Reinstatement

When an excommunicated member by the grace of God repents of his sin, he is to be reinstated with all former rights and privileges of this congregation (2 Corinthians 2:6-8).

ARTICLE VI - Powers and Rights of the Congregation

Section 1.

The Word of God shall be the only source and norm for all matters of Christian faith and life (Psalm 119:105).

Section 2.

In all matters not decided by the Word of God, the congregation alone, as represented by the voters' assembly, shall have the right of decision (Romans 12:10, 14:19, Ephesians 5:21).

Section 3.

The church council, any other elected committee or organization within the congregation, and any of its elected or appointed officers shall have no power beyond that conferred upon them by the congregation. However, in rare occasions of emergency, the church council may act in the name and welfare of the congregation. Such action must be fully explained at the next voters' assembly and submitted for approval.

Section 4.

No group or society, either internal or external, which identifies itself with the congregation, may be organized without the approval of the voters' assembly. The congregation shall be assured that the aims of such a group are in complete harmony with the congregation's aims before the voters' assembly grants approval to organize (2 Corinthians 6:14, 15, Romans 16:17, 1 Corinthians 1:10, 12:25).

ARTICLE VII - The Public Ministry

Section 1.

The voters' assembly has the exclusive right to call pastors and teachers and to elect other officers (1 Corinthians 14:40).

Section 2.

The pastorate of this congregation shall be conferred only upon such men who are qualified for this ministry and publicly and without reservation profess their acceptance of and adherence to Article II of this Constitution, and such acceptance and adherence shall be required of them in the call of vocation extended by the congregation (Ephesians 4:11-16, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9, Colossians 4:5-6).

Section 3.

The teachers called by the congregation shall be such as are in accord with the confessional standard of the congregation (Article II) and are qualified for this field of work (Ephesians 4:11-16, Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 14:40).

Section 4.

These called servants shall be given the due respect and esteem of the congregation in the performance of their duties as God's representatives and they shall conduct themselves in a manner befitting their responsible office (1 Timothy 5:17).

Section 5.

In case of a vacancy in the position of pastor or teacher the congregation shall notify the president of the local district of the synod that he may assist in temporarily filling the vacancy and in giving his good counsel in regard to the calling of a new pastor or teacher.

ARTICLE VIII - Officers of the Congregation

Section 1.

The first New Testament congregation at Jerusalem chose men “known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom” to aid the apostles in the administration of its temporal affairs (Acts 6:1-6). Likewise the voters’ assembly shall choose officers and committee members with like qualifications to aid the pastor in administering its affairs (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

Section 2.

The listing of the officers and their duties is given in the Bylaws.

Section 3.

These officers shall be given the due respect and esteem of the congregation in the performance of their duties as God’s representatives and shall conduct themselves in a manner befitting their responsible office (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

ARTICLE IX - Removal from Office

Section 1.

If anyone who holds an office in the congregation willfully neglects his duty and upon due admonition does not amend, the voters’ assembly has the right, and eventually the duty, to remove him from office and to elect another in his place (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

Section 2.

Sufficient and urgent causes for removing a pastor or a teacher are persistent adherence to false doctrine as opposed to those set forth in Article II, scandalous life, willful neglect of duty, or established inability to perform the duties of his office (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9). The district president’s counsel shall be sought at such a tumultuous time as the removal of a called worker.

ARTICLE X - Meetings of the Voters’ Assembly

Meetings of this voters’ assembly shall be held at such times and in such manner as stated in the Bylaws. The meetings shall give the voters of this congregation the opportunity to hear, discuss, and take necessary action in matters pertaining to the welfare of this congregation and of the church at large.

ARTICLE XI - Separation or Dissolution

Section 1.

If at any time a separation should occur in this congregation – may God graciously prevent it – the property and all equipment of this congregation shall remain with that portion of the membership which adheres to this Constitution, regardless of number.

Section 2.

In the event of termination or dissolution of the congregation, the church council shall, after paying or making provision for the payment of all the liabilities of the congregation, dispose of its remaining assets, if any, exclusively for the purposes of the congregation, by distributing, at the direction of the voters' assembly, the remaining assets to (and only to) one or more organizations with which the congregation is in fellowship, which shall at the time qualify as exempt organization(s) (under section 501 (c) 3 of the Internal Revenue code of 1994 or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Code).

ARTICLE XII - Repeals and Alterations

Section 1.

Article II, Article III Section 1-2, Article IV, Article V, Article VI Sections 1-2, Article VII Sections 1-4, Article IX, and Article XII Section 1, of this constitution shall be and remain unalterable and irrepealable, inasmuch as they express clear scriptural teachings.

Section 2.

Proposals to alter or repeal any alterable or repealable article of this constitution, or to add an article, or portion thereof, shall be submitted in writing to the church council and shall be publicly announced on two Sundays immediately preceding a regular business meeting of the congregation, and posted in the church during that period.

Section 3.

Such a proposal shall be discussed in the meeting in which it is presented and voted on in the next voters' assembly.

Section 4.

A two-thirds majority vote of voting members present shall be required to alter or repeal any alterable or repealable article of this constitution, or to add an article or portion thereof thereto.

**Shepherd of the Lakes Evangelical Lutheran Church
Fairmont, MN**

BYLAWS

ARTICLE I - Meetings of the Congregation

Section 1.

At, or shortly following, the beginning of each quarter of the calendar year, a regular meeting of the voters' assembly shall be held.

Section 2.

The church council shall set the exact date, time, and place of the meetings, unless otherwise specified by the congregation. Announcement of the meetings shall be given in print and/or orally on at least two different dates prior to the time of the meeting.

Section 3.

Special meetings of the voters' assembly may be called by the church council, or the pastor, or upon written request to the church council by three voting members. As set forth in Section 2, an attempt should be made to notify all the voting members prior to the meeting as to the purpose, date, time, and place of the meeting.

Section 4.

The January meeting shall be designated as the annual meeting.

Section 5.

The order of business for the regular meetings shall be as follows:

- A. Call to Order
- B. Opening devotion
- C. Secretary's report
- D. Ratification of church council action in regard to reception of new members, transfers, releases and removals from membership
- E. Treasurer's report
- F. Pastor's report

- G. Old business
- H. New business
- I. Elections (Annual Meeting)
- J. Pastor's comments
- K. Adjournment with prayer

Section 6.

The meetings shall be conducted according to good Christian order. Robert's Rules of Order may be followed for parliamentary procedure.

Section 7.

No one shall bring to any meeting a charge or complaint against any member, or against a pastor, or a teacher, unless he has first admonished him in a Christian manner according to Matthew 18:15-20.

Section 8.

Only voting members present at the meeting shall have the right to vote.

ARTICLE II - Quorum

The voting members present at a properly announced meeting of the congregation shall constitute a quorum.

ARTICLE III - The Church Council, Boards and Committees

Section 1. Personnel of the Council

The board of trustees, board of elders, financial secretary, church treasurer, secretary, president, and pastor shall constitute the church council.

Section 2. Officers

At the annual meeting the voters shall elect by ballot from the voters' assembly a president, secretary, church treasurer and financial secretary to hold office for three years. None of these officers shall hold the same office for more than two consecutive terms.

Section 3. Board of Trustees

In accordance with the law of the state of Minnesota the voters' assembly shall elect by ballot at its annual meeting, specified in the bylaws Article I, a board of

trustees consisting of two or more voting members. The term of no more than one-half of the members of this board shall expire at the end of each year's annual meeting; such expired terms shall be filled by election at the annual meeting of the voters' assembly. The chairman of the board of trustees, in the absence of the president, shall sign all deeds, mortgages, notes, leases, and/or all legal documents directed to be executed by the corporation. No member of this board may be elected to serve more than two consecutive three-year terms.

Section 4. Board of Elders

The voters' assembly shall elect a board of elders consisting of two or more voting members. The term of no more than one-half of the members of this board shall expire at the end of each year's annual meeting; such expired terms shall be filled by election at the annual meeting of the voters' assembly. No member of this board may be elected to serve more than two consecutive three-year terms.

Section 5. Chairmanship of Boards

Chairmanship of all boards shall be determined by an internal election of the respective board's members at their first meeting of each year. He shall serve as chairman for one year, but is eligible to be chairman every year of his term. The chairmen of these boards shall:

- A. Coordinate and set priorities for the work of the board.
- B. Schedule and conduct board meetings as needed.
- C. Present the board's reports at council and voters' meetings.
- D. Provide the treasurer with budget proposals for the following calendar year by the December council meeting.

Section 6. Vacancies

Vacancies occurring in any of these offices: president, secretary, church treasurer, financial secretary, board of elders, or board of trustees may be filled through appointment by the church council at its next meeting and voted upon by the voters' assembly at the next quarterly meeting.

Section 7. Evangelism Committee

The evangelism committee shall consist of three or more members. A member of the board of elders shall become a member of this committee. The other member(s) shall be appointed by the church council to hold this position for one year.

Section 8. Worship Committee

The worship committee shall consist of three or more members. A member of the board of elders shall become a member of this committee. The other member(s) shall be appointed by the church council to hold this position for one year.

Section 9. Technology Committee

The technology committee shall consist of three or more members. A member of the church council shall become a member of this committee. The other member(s) shall be appointed by the church council to hold this position for one year.

Section 10. Nominating Committee

The nominating committee shall consist of three or more voting members to be appointed by the church council to hold office for one year.

Section 11. Constitution Committee

The constitution committee shall consist of three or more voting members to be appointed by the church council to hold office for one year.

Section 12. Number of Members

The number of members on the church council and the respective boards and committees may be increased by resolution of the voters' assembly. Temporary or permanent offices, boards and committees, in addition to those heretofore mentioned, may be established or dismissed by the voters' assembly as existing needs may warrant.

Section 13. Responsibilities

The members of the church council shall adorn their high office with a Christian way of life and be good examples to the congregation (1 Timothy 3:8-12). They shall aid the pastor in the spiritual affairs of the church. They shall be accountable for good order in the services. They shall particularly care in love for the poor, the sick, the widows, and the orphans (Galatians 6:9-10). The members of the church council shall consult together concerning the total spiritual and physical well-being of the congregation, giving due attention also to the work of the Lord in the church at large. They shall implement resolutions of the voters' assembly and carry out such assignments as are directed to them by the voters' assembly. It shall recommend to the voters' assembly the annual budget of the congregation.

Section 14. Installation

As soon as possible, after elections, new members of the church council shall be installed into office in a regular service and shall thus be presented to the congregation.

Section 15. Dismissal

If any member of the church council, boards, or committees willfully neglects their duty, and upon due admonition does not amend, the voters' assembly has the right, and eventually the duty, to remove this person from their position. Vacancies shall be filled according to the respective sections of Article III of these bylaws.

Section 16. Meetings

The church council shall meet regularly once each month. Special meetings may be called by the pastor or the president. Neither the church council nor any board shall ever convene to transact business without the knowledge of the pastor and the president.

ARTICLE IV - Duties of Officers, Boards and Committees

Section 1. President

The president shall preside as chairman of all business sessions of the voters' assembly and church council and shall perform such other duties as may be assigned to him. He shall have general supervision of the affairs of the congregation subject to the board of trustees; sign all deeds, mortgages, notes, leases, and/or all legal documents directed to be executed by the voters' assembly; and conduct all the congregation's business affairs according to established good order. The president shall also be a member of all boards by virtue of his office. In the absence of the president, the voters' assembly shall elect a temporary chairman.

Section 2. Secretary

The secretary shall record accurately the proceedings of all meetings of the voters' assembly and the church council. He shall be responsible for the legal records of the congregation. He shall have the authority to countersign all deeds, mortgages, notes, leases, and/or all legal documents executed by the voters' assembly and assist in the orderly conduct of its business affairs according to established good

order. He shall also perform such other duties as may be assigned to him by the voters' assembly.

Section 3. Treasurer

The treasurer shall receive from the financial secretary a monthly report of all monies and credit the same to the proper accounts. He shall make disbursements according to instructions from the church council. He shall make a quarterly report and also special reports whenever the church council shall so request. He shall submit his records annually for audit or at any time the voters' assembly so desires. In the absence of the secretary he shall have the authority to countersign legal documents. In the event the treasurer is unable to carry out his duties, the president or secretary will be given the authority to do so.

Section 4. Financial Secretary

The financial secretary shall receive and deposit all contributions for the congregation, keep an accurate account of the same, and deliver a report of them to the treasurer indicating the proper account to be credited. He shall assist the treasurer in preparing reports for the regular meetings of the voters' assembly. He shall submit his books for audit annually or at any time the voters' assembly so desires. He shall assist the treasurer in preparing reports of contributions for the membership of the congregation as directed by the voters' assembly. A committee of qualified individuals may be selected to work under the financial secretary and assist in the weekly execution of financial secretary duties.

Section 5. Board of Trustees

The board of trustees shall control the corporate property according to the direction given by the voters' assembly. They shall also be responsible for the legal records of the congregation. They shall also prepare a budget for the following calendar year.

Section 6. Board of Elders

The board of elders shall assist the pastor in the spiritual work of the congregation, including cases of admonition and discipline (Matthew 18:15, 16). They shall particularly care in love for the poor, the sick and needy, and the widows and orphans in the congregation (Galatians 6:9, 10). The elders shall see that the services of God's house are held regularly and conducted decently and in order, and that the Gospel is preached and the sacraments are administered in the truth and purity in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran confessions. The board shall also prepare a budget for the following calendar year.

Section 7. Evangelism Committee

The evangelism committee shall aid the congregation in establishing and maintaining an active evangelism program. The committee shall also prepare a budget for the following calendar year for the operation of the program.

Section 8. Worship Committee

The worship committee shall the aid the pastor is enhancing the worship life of the congregation and aid in the teaching of Biblical worship principles.

Section 9. Technology Committee

The technology committee shall aid the congregation with overseeing the technological needs of the congregation.

Section 10. Nominating Committee

The nominating committee will prepare a slate of candidates consisting of at least one person per vacant position for presentation at the annual voters' meeting.

Section 11. Constitution Committee

The constitution committee shall review the constitution and bylaws at least once every five (5) years. The committee shall study any changes presented to it in writing and present their findings to the church council for presentation to the quarterly voters' meeting for the appropriate action. The committee will meet as needed.

Section 12. Pastor

The pastor is by virtue of his office an ex-officio member of all boards and committees.

ARTICLE V - Method of Election

The election of officers and board members shall be by ballot from the slate of voting member candidates presented by the nominating committee along with any additional voting member candidates nominated at the meeting.

ARTICLE VI - Reception Into Membership

Section 1. Church Membership

Persons who wish to be received into membership in this congregation other than through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism or the Rite of Confirmation shall bring their request to the attention of the pastor or the church council. The council shall honor the request when accompanied by a letter of transfer from a congregation which is in confessional fellowship with this congregation, or when qualifications for membership, as specified in Article V of this constitution, have been met. When accepted into membership by the church council, members will have all rights and privileges of the congregation. Such action of the council shall be ratified at the next regular meeting of the voters' assembly and notice of such receptions reported to the congregation. Since reception into membership signifies acceptance of and submission to this constitution and bylaws, each family shall be given a copy of the same prior to reception so that they may become familiar with its provisions.

Section 2. Voting Membership

- A. Voting membership shall be restricted to male communicant members who have reached the age of eighteen (18) years and have been accepted by the voters' assembly.
- B. Only voting members present at the voters' assembly shall have the right to vote.

ARTICLE VII - Transfer, Release or Removal from Membership

Section 1.

Those desiring a transfer or release from membership shall bring their request to the attention of the pastor or the church council for action, to be ratified at the next meeting of the voters' assembly.

Section 2.

Transfer of membership shall apply only to those who desire membership in a congregation which is in confessional fellowship with this congregation. Release from membership shall apply when affiliation is sought with those denominations not in confessional fellowship with our congregation. The names of members whose whereabouts are unknown and cannot be established or who fail to respond to contact shall be removed by the voters' assembly. When possible, acknowledgement of transfer, release, or removal shall be sent to those individuals who are affected.

Section 3.

Members released, transferred or removed relinquish all rights in this congregation.

ARTICLE VIII - Repeals and Amendments of the Bylaws

Any and all bylaws may be repealed or amended by a majority vote of the voting members present at any quarterly meeting, provided notice of this proposed action shall have been given to the congregation on at least two Sundays prior to the time of the meeting, and provided that the proposed amendment has been submitted in writing to the church council for its study and recommendation.