

CONSTITUTION

of

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Marinette, WI

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**CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS
TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
MARINETTE, WISCONSIN**

Preamble

WHEREAS, the Apostle Paul sets forth, 1 Corinthians 14:40, that all things in the church should be done "in a fitting and orderly way," and

WHEREAS, the history of the Christian church of all times shows that certain agreements and regulations are helpful to fulfill the purpose and attain the objectives of congregations; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that we, a congregation of Lutheran Christians at Marinette, Wisconsin do herewith, in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and by subscribing our names hereto, adopt the following CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS.

Constitution

Article I

Name

The name of this congregation shall be Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Article II

Articles of Faith

Section 1.

This congregation accepts and confesses all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God and submits to this Word as the only infallible authority of 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.

Section 4.

No doctrine shall be taught or tolerated in this congregation which is in any way at variance with the Holy Scriptures and these symbolical books.

Section 5.

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 Objective

Section 1.

The continuing purpose of this congregation, as a gathering of Christians, is to shine the light of the Gospel in our community (John 8:12; Matthew 5:16).

Section 2.

The primary objective of this congregation shall be to proclaim the law and the gospel in our congregation, community, and the world (2 Timothy 4:2), so that through the means of grace the Holy Spirit might:

- A. lead sinners to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ for life and salvation (Luke 24:46-48).
- B. strengthen believers in faith and sanctification (Romans 10:17).
- C. equip believers as disciples, stewards, witnesses, and servants to share the gospel and live their faith (Ephesians 4:11,12; Matthew 5:16).

Article IV

Church Affiliation

This congregation shall affiliate itself only with a church body that holds to all the truths of God's Word in doctrine and practice and is bound to the confession of faith as set forth in Article II, if, and as long as, such a church body 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; Mark 16:16).

- B. Communicant members are those baptized souls who confess Jesus Christ to be their Lord and Savior and have stated their adherence to all the canonical books of the Old and New Testament, without qualification, as the only rule and norm of faith and life, and have declared their agreement with the chief parts of Christian doctrine as written in Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism.
- C. Voting members are those male communicant members (1 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:12) who have declared their agreement with this Constitution by their signatures and who have been received by the voters' assembly of the congregation.

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 physical and spiritual gifts (1 John 3:1; James 1:17). In return for all of these undeserved blessings, we love him (1 John 4:19) and show that love with the works that we do. The exercise of such love 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 tell us how to live a God-pleasing life (2 Timothy 3:15-17). Consequently, members of his church will consider it a distinct privilege and a responsibility to
 - a. Hear and receive the Word of God diligently (Luke 11:28).
 - b. Provide and promote opportunities for Christian education (2 Peter 3:18).
 - c. Bring up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).
 - d. Share the gospel with all people (Acts 1:8).
- B. Our God has given us two sacraments: Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, which are means that our Lord uses to bring his grace to us. Consequently, members of his church will
 - a. Have their children baptized early in life, for "baptism now saves you also" (1 Peter 3:21).
 - b. Frequently partake of Holy Communion (1 Corinthians 11:23-26), if they are recognized as such who can properly examine themselves (1 Corinthians 11:28). Only those in our confessional fellowship of faith are permitted to commune at our altar. (Close Communion—1 Corinthians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 6:14-15; Romans 16:17).
- C. Our God has given us the privilege and responsibility of being managers over a certain portion of his estate and assures us he will graciously bless our faithful management (2 Corinthians 9:6). Therefore members of his church will under grace
 - a. Continually remember that all their possessions, time and abilities are really a trust from God.
 - b. Cheerfully decide in their hearts (2 Corinthians 9:7) the portion of their possessions and time and abilities which they will regularly devote to the Lord for use in carrying out that which the congregation has made its concern, not omitting the work of the church-at-large (Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 9:14; 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-11; 1 Peter 4:10).

- c. If eligible, become voting members and regularly attend the voters' meeting and lend the congregation their counsel and aid.
- D. Our God has implanted within us Christians the new man, who desires to live righteously (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:24). Consequently, members of his church will
 - a. Not live in obvious acts of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:19-21), but lead a Christian life (Galatians 5:22-25).
 - b. When they have erred, permit themselves to be admonished and corrected by their fellow Christians in the spirit of Matthew 18:15-18.
 - c. Refuse to hold membership in any organization whose teachings and practices conflict with the Word of God (e.g. lodges) (John 5:23; 8:31,32; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Section 3. Church Discipline and Excommunication

Christian discipline shall be exercised in this congregation according to Matthew 18:15-18 toward those who err from the faith or who in other ways have given offense. Those members who become evident as impenitent sinners must be excommunicated. At all times this shall be done in the spirit of the gospel, namely, to regain the erring. In order that the congregation may be "perfectly united in mind and thought" (1 Corinthians 1:10), a unanimous vote of the voters' assembly is necessary for excommunication.

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. Loss of Rights and Privileges

Those who have been excommunicated or excluded from the fellowship of this congregation lose all rights and privileges in the congregation and its property.

Section 6. Reinstatement

When, by the grace of God, a person who has been excommunicated or whose fellowship has been terminated 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.

In all matters of Christian faith and life the Word of God is supreme (Psalm 119:105).

Section 2.

In all matters not decided by the Word of God the congregation, 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 or authority beyond that conferred upon them by the congregation. However, the church council in an emergency may act in the name and for the welfare of the congregation. Such action must be submitted for approval at the next voters' meeting.

Section 4.

No group or society may be organized within the congregation without the approval of the congregation. The congregation shall be assured that the aims of such a group are in complete harmony with the congregation's aims before it grants its approval (1 Corinthians 1:10; 12:25).

Article VII

The Public Ministry

Section 1.

The congregation has the exclusive right to call pastors, teachers, and staff ministers.

Section 2.

The office of pastor in 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 extended by the congregation (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9).

Section 3.

The offices of teacher and staff minister in this congregation shall be conferred only upon such individuals who are qualified for these ministries and are in accord with the confessional standard of the congregation as set forth in Article II of this Constitution (Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 12:6-8).

Section 4.

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

Article VIII

Officers of the Congregation

Section 1.

The first New Testament congregation at Jerusalem chose men "full of the Spirit and wisdom" (Acts 6:1-6) to aid the apostles in the administration of its affairs. This

congregation shall choose officers and committee members with like qualifications. (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

Section 2.

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

Section 3.

The respect and esteem of the congregation are due these officers in the performance of their duties, and they shall be given its cooperation. They 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 congregation 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, a teacher, or a staff minister are persistent adherence to false doctrine, 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). In such a case the advice and good counsel of the appropriate district officer shall be sought.

Article X

Meetings of the Congregation

Meetings of this congregation 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, 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.

Articles II, III, IV,V, VI, Sections 1 and 2, VII, Sections 1-3, VIII, Sections 1 and 3, IX and XII, Section 1 of this Constitution shall be and remain unalterable and irrevocable, 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 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 voters' assembly 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 regular meeting of the voters' assembly.

Section 4.

A two-thirds vote of the voting members present shall be required to alter or repeal any alterable or repealable article of this Constitution or to add an article hereto.

Section 5.

Any and all Bylaws may be repealed or amended by a majority vote of the voting members present at any regular meeting, provided that public notice of this proposed action shall have been given 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.