Guidelines for Congregational Constitutions and Bylaws

A church's constitution and bylaws are a very important part of the congregation's ministry. That's why it is important to be sure your congregation's constitution and bylaws accurately reflect your congregation's mission and move your ministry forward.

The North Wisconsin District has a Constitution and Bylaws Committee in place to help congregations through the process of creating or revising these important ministry documents and to help make sure congregations are within the state laws of Wisconsin.

Following are some tips on writing or revising your congregation's constitution and bylaws.

- **Plan on taking some time.** Understand your current documents, understand what you want to change, appoint a committee, and follow your old constitution for making changes.
- **Download Constitution and Bylaw Guidelines for LCMS Congregations by the Commission on Constitutional Matters** by clicking this link, or visiting Synod's CCM page for this and other helpful documents. The Commission on Constitutional Matters also provides an abbreviated version intended for small and developing Lutheran congregations.
- **Study these pages**: general principles, simplicity, flexibility, timelessness, purpose, confessions, mission, boards & committees.
- **You may send preliminary drafts of new constitutions/bylaws or questions concerning revisions of existing documents to the District Constitution and Bylaws Chairman** for suggestions, comments, and revisions. Documents are reviewed for clarity and consistency and in light of the above-referenced Synod guidelines. The current chairman is Rev. Dan Thews: dan.thews@faithfv.org or *Faith Lutheran Church, 601 E. Glendale Avenue, Appleton, WI 54911.*
- **Wait** for the Constitution and Bylaws Committee to respond to your submitted draft or questions.
- **Make suggested changes and adopt in your congregation.** After the constitution has been amended with the final changes and has been approved by the voters' assembly, please do the following:

a) Submit the entire constitution and bylaws to the District Constitution and Bylaws Committee.
b) Include a copy of the old constitution.
c) Identify what and where the changes are in the amended constitution.
d) Please include the date of acceptance by the congregation on the constitution.

District Constitution and Bylaws Committee will make their final review and submit it to the North Wisconsin District Board of Directors for approval at their next regular meeting.

- **Receive notification of approval** of constitution and bylaws, attach letter of approval to the document, make copies and return one to the District Office.
- **Begin operating under new constitution and bylaws** at next meetings of congregation, boards, council, etc.
- **File new/revised constitution** (with date of approval) in folder labeled “CURRENT CONSTITUTION.” Shred old constitutions and bylaws, or at least destroy all old copies except one which goes into an archive file, so labeled. Distribute new copies and ask members to do same with old copies.