

# THE CONSTITUTION

## Lutheran Church - International

Amended by the LC-I 2016 Annual Synod.

### Article I NAME

#### **Article I, Section 1: Name**

The name of this church body shall be the Lutheran Church - International.

### Article II DOCTRINE

#### **Article II, Section 1: Doctrines**

As an evangelical Christian Fellowship in general and a Lutheran fellowship in particular, the Lutheran Church - International accepts and acknowledges the Holy Scriptures as the divinely inspired and revealed Word of God, inerrant and wholly reliable, and the only infallible rule and standard for faith and practice. The Lutheran Church - International is unreservedly and without compromise dedicated to the "holding fast the faithful Word" of the Holy Scriptures (Titus 1:9), and to the "contending earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints," (Jude 3). It accepts and confesses not only the three oldest creeds of Christendom (The Apostolic, the Nicene, and the Athanasian) as faithful summaries of the central truths of Scriptures, but also the unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true exposition of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity together with the further development of these doctrines as contained in the Lutheran Confessions found in the Book of Concord in the sense that these confessions themselves declare in the Preface of the Formula of Concord.

#### **Article II, Section 2: Name Change**

This article shall not be changed except for the name of this church body (Article I).

### Article III PURPOSE

#### **Article III, Section 1: Biblical Purpose**

To fulfill its biblical and confessional mandate, the Lutheran Church - International, in accordance with Acts 2:42, shall promote

- a. The worship of God centered in Word and Sacrament (*leitourgia*);
- b. The proclamation of the Good News of Jesus (*kerygma*);
- c. The teaching of Christian Truth within the Church (*didache*);
- d. The communion of saints in loving fellowship between Christians (*koinonia*);
- e. The spiritual Life of Prayer, Bible-reading, and Devotion (*eusebia*);
- f. The care of those in need (*diakonia*);
- g. The evangelization of those who do not know Christ (*apostolé*); and
- h. The good order and tranquility of the Church in accordance with the pattern of governance universally known in Christendom (*episcopé*).

**Article III, Section 2: A Church Body**

The Lutheran Church – International shall serve as a church body for ministers and communities of faith (Article IV) who subscribe to the doctrines and confessions of the Lutheran Church – International as outlined in its supporting Constitution and By-Laws, and who make proper application for membership and are duly received as described in this Constitution.

**Article III, Section 3: Roster of Members**

The Lutheran Church – International shall maintain an active roster of the ministers and communities of faith who are members of the Lutheran Church – International (Article IV).

**Article III, Section 4: Activity**

The Lutheran Church - International shall promote programs and activities which are in agreement with the purposes of the Lutheran Church - International.

**Article III, Section 5: Ordination**

The Lutheran Church - International shall examine and ordain candidates for the Holy Ministry.

**Article III, Section 6: Funds**

The Lutheran Church - International shall receive and distribute funds for the promotion of the Kingdom of God.

**Article III, Section 7: Fellowship**

The Lutheran Church - International shall promote unity in the Body of Christ in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4) as a non-profit Christian corporation organized solely for the mutual benefit and help of its membership in the establishment of the Kingdom of God. It seeks to connect, guide, foster and encourage love and fellowship in accord with the faith and practices of The Lutheran Church - International.

**Article IV**  
**MEMBERSHIP**

**Article IV, Section 1: Definition of Membership**

Members in the Lutheran Church - International are the ministers and communities of faith who subscribe to the doctrinal statement in this Constitution and who have been received into membership as described in this Constitution.

**Article IV, Section 2: Ministers**

Ordained ministers in the Lutheran Church – International are those clergy in the Orders of Deacons, Pastors (Presbyters, Elders, or Priests), and Bishops (Article IV, Sections 3, 4 and 6 and Article V, Sections 2 and 3). Other men or women who are commissioned or consecrated are considered lay ministers. Lay ministers, without regard to titles or descriptions, include teachers, evangelists, deaconesses, parish nurses, church musicians (“Ministers of Music”) and others accepted by the Executive Board. All ministers, ordained or lay, are full members of the ministeriums of the Lutheran Church - International and participate in its functions in their respective offices.

**Article IV, Section 3: Deacons**

The Order of Deacons as established by the Apostles in Acts 6 is a class of ordained clergy entrusted with a ministry of assisting in worship, preaching and baptizing with the permission of the bishop or pastor in authority, evangelizing, visiting, comforting the sick, and serving the world with Christ's

love. In worship, the deacon traditionally distributes the Blood of Christ to communicants, and may take the Sacrament to the sick with the permission of the local authority. The deacon teaches and catechizes, and engages in other Christian work as determined by the local community. Deacons, male or female, are to exhibit the apostolic description in I Timothy 3. The office of Deacon is permanent in duration and universal in its utilization in the Churches. It is conferred by a rite of Ordination administered by a bishop in apostolic orders.

**Article IV, Section 4: Pastors (Presbyters, Elders, or Priests)**

The Order of Pastors witnessed to in the New Testament consists of men called from among the people of God ordered to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. In addition to those duties for the Order of Deacons (Article IV, Section 3), the following are the normal callings of the pastoral office:

- a. To preside at the celebration of Holy Communion (the Eucharist, Lord's Supper, or Mass);
- b. To preach the Word of God in the liturgies;
- c. To care for individuals and groups with evangelistic counsel;
- d. To hear confession and to pronounce absolution when appropriate;
- e. To be the minister of Holy Baptism;
- f. To be the minister of weddings and funerals;
- g. To be the minister of the Anointing of the Sick or Dying;
- h. To be the minister of Confirmation with the permission of his community of faith;
- i. To participate with other ministers in available collegial and ecumenical activities, and in the ministeriums of the Lutheran Church - International;
- j. To provide governance and judgment in the administration of the congregation or ministry to which he is called; and
- k. In general, to oversee the ministry in a local place in all its general aspects.

**Article IV, Section 5: Pastors, Qualifications**

Pastors are to strive to exhibit the qualifications for elders stated in the Pauline and Johannine epistles of the New Testament. They are normally to be formed through a seminary recognized by the Lutheran Church - International, and to have served as a deacon for no less than six months prior to ordination, unless the Executive Board accepts alternative work. The office of Pastor is permanent in duration and universal in its utilization in the Churches. It is conferred by a rite of Ordination administered by a bishop in apostolic orders. Following the teaching and practice of the New Testament, the office of Pastor (Presbyter/Elder/Priest) is limited to males.

**Article IV, Section 6: Bishops**

The Order of Bishops witnessed to in the New Testament consists of men called from among the people of God ordered to the service of oversight in the ministry of Word and Sacrament. In addition to those duties of the Order of Pastors (Article IV, Section 4), the following are the normal callings of the office of Bishop:

- a. To have oversight over the work of the other ministers of the Lutheran Church - International, according to the office to which the particular bishop is called;
- b. To ordain pastors and deacons who have been approved for ordination by the Lutheran Church - International;
- c. To participate in the ordination of bishops called to share in the Order of Bishops;
- d. To confirm in congregations when invited by the local pastor;
- e. To visit the ministers and members of the Lutheran Church - International and to strive to build up the ministry of the Kingdom of God;
- f. To be a visible sign of the unity of the whole church, and to engage in ecumenical activities for the Lutheran Church - International as assigned or able; and

- g. To be a pastor to the ordained pastors and deacons, and to the lay ministers of the Lutheran Church - International (Article IV, Section 2).

**Article IV, Section 7: Bishops, Qualification**

Bishops are to strive to exhibit the qualifications for their office stated in the Pauline and Johannine epistles of the New Testament. They are viewed as successors to the apostolic office, as recorded in the New Testament. They should have served in the office of Pastor for at least ten years. The office of Bishop is permanent in duration and universal in its utilization in the Churches. It is conferred by a rite of Ordination administered by three bishops in apostolic orders. When the ordination of a bishop has been constitutionally scheduled and abnormal circumstances prevent three bishops from being present at the scheduled ordination, the ordaining bishop shall proceed as scheduled with the consent of the Archbishop and with at least one additional bishop present. Because of the office's inherent apostolic identification and following the teaching and practice of the New Testament, the office of Bishop is limited to males.

**Article IV, Section 8: Bishops, Selection of**

Pastors selected to be Bishops from among the membership of and in service for the Lutheran Church - International shall be nominated at an Annual Synod of the Lutheran Church - International. The nomination may be put forward by a member of any House, but either the nomination or a second to the nomination must be made by a member of the House of Bishops to designate the nominee as a candidate for the Order of Bishops. Candidates shall have a period of discernment lasting no more than one year to accept or decline nomination. Candidates who accept nomination shall then be presented to the next Annual Synod for election. All ballots for bishop shall be by paper (secret) vote, which shall follow an invocation of the Holy Spirit in a form to be determined by the presiding officer, who shall be a bishop in the Lutheran Church – International. A unanimous vote of the House of Bishops, present and voting; a three-quarters majority of the House of Clergy present and voting; and a simple majority of the House of Delegates present and voting shall constitute election of the candidate. Having accepted nomination, the candidate shall indicate his acceptance of the election, which shall complete the process of election. A date and place for the ordination of the bishop shall be set by the House of Bishops, including the Bishop-elect, to be conducted prior to the next Annual Synod.

**Article IV, Section 9: Bishops, Selection of when urgent**

When the Annual Synod, for reasons of apparent urgency recognized by a simple majority of each House, determines that an election must occur without the year of discernment, an election may be conducted at the same Annual Synod at which the nomination is made. The election procedure (Article IV, Section 8) shall occur at a session other than the session in which the Houses adopt a motion to exercise this procedure and in which the nomination is presented and accepted. This shall not be the normal procedure of election, but is to be used only in a time of unexpected urgency.

**Article IV, Section 10: Bishops, Reception from other church bodies**

A bishop of another church body who applies for membership as a bishop in the Lutheran Church - International and who has been ordained in apostolic orders as stated in Article IV, Section 7 shall have the application for membership presented at an Annual Synod following approval by the Executive Board (Article IV, Section 8) as a nomination to the office of Bishop. The approval of membership of a bishop shall use the same procedure and form of ballot as in the nomination and election of a bishop, with the exception that the invocation of the Holy Spirit and the processes of nomination and ordination are omitted. The new member is seated as a bishop following the vote by the Annual Synod with all the rights and privileges of the office of Bishop.

**Article IV, Section 11: Communities of Faith**

Communities of Faith are established assemblies gathering around the Word of God and the Holy Sacraments (Augsburg Confession VII). Some communities of faith are congregations formally established to fulfill the local function of being the Church of Jesus Christ in the Lutheran tradition. Some communities of faith are missions which may or may not become congregations. Communities of faith are:

- a. Organized in some way acceptable to itself, with an ordained minister involved in its leadership;
- b. Organized to involve more than two people;
- c. Constitutionally mandated to accept the Lutheran Confessions and faith consistent with Article II;
- d. Free to incorporate according to the mandate of local laws and customs;
- e. Independent owners of their own property; as a normal practice, the Lutheran Church - International does not own or administer local property of or on behalf of a community of faith; and
- f. Free to issue calls to their ministers without an appointment system from the Lutheran Church - International. Ministers who receive and accept a call to serve a community of faith shall agree to be ordained by or received by the Lutheran Church – International.

A community of faith is distinguished from an affiliated ministry of the Lutheran Church - International established for a specific function but which is not a community gathered around Word and Sacrament. Affiliated ministries may be schools, youth groups, hospitals, clinics, or social, educational, or service ministries. A community of faith has voting membership in the Lutheran Church – International. An affiliated ministry does not have voting membership.

**Article IV, Section 12: The World Lutheran Parish**

The Lutheran Church - International shall maintain a roster of interested individual Lutherans who may or may not be connected to another Lutheran congregation, and who are dispersed throughout the world, especially including those who have difficulty in relating to any established local congregation or community of faith. This roster shall be known as the World Lutheran Parish and shall be regarded and function as a community of faith (Article IV, Section 11) although not primarily gathered around a local congregation or mission. Under the supervision of the Archbishop, diocesan bishops shall provide pastoral care in their geographical areas of ministry for those members of the World Lutheran Parish, including the attempt to provide at least an annual Word and Sacrament ministry to members of this parish. The lay members of the World Lutheran Parish shall be entitled to voting delegates as would any other community of faith. Under the supervision of the Archbishop, a Missionary Bishop or another pastor may be assigned pastoral care of those not reasonably able to be served in a diocesan area (Article V, Section 9; By-Laws, Section 1).

**Article IV, Section 13: Acceptance of Members**

Ministers or Communities of Faith shall be admitted to the roster of the Lutheran Church - International by the following procedure:

- a. The applicant minister, ministerial candidate or community of faith shall communicate with the diocesan bishop, who will discuss the identity of the Lutheran Church - International, its doctrine, practice, history, and structure, in whatever format seems best to the applicant and the bishop.
- b. If the applicant desires to apply for membership in the Lutheran Church – International, the diocesan bishop shall provide the standard application form to the candidate. Upon completion of the application for membership, the diocesan bishop or the Secretary of the

Lutheran Church – International shall notify the members of the Executive Board, each member of which will have opportunity to express a preliminary opinion on acceptance to the Archbishop and Secretary. If there are substantial questions about a candidate, further dialogue shall take place between the candidate and the diocesan bishop and the Archbishop, including face-to-face visits if possible.

- c. The format for the application forms shall be reviewed periodically by the Executive Board, taking into account all possible factors and information desired. The form shall always require doctrinal acceptance of Article II of this Constitution and By-Laws. Various manuals or other literature may be issued to describe the Lutheran Church - International and its requirements.
- d. The candidate shall be invited by the Archbishop to appear personally before the Executive Board, serving as a candidacy committee, at the Annual Synod, or at another convenient location, or by video or telephone conference. If the Executive Board finds the candidate acceptable, a simple majority vote of the Board shall admit the candidate (individual or community of faith) immediately to the roster or standing in the Lutheran Church – International. If the Executive Board determines not to accept a candidate, the candidate may re-apply in future years, or when the conditions set by the Executive Board are met.
- e. When an ordained or commissioned minister is received (Article IV, Section 2), he or she shall be received at the main liturgy or closing liturgy of the Annual Synod by the Archbishop or presiding minister or at another time and location deemed appropriate. If the new ministerial member is approved for reception into the Order of Pastors or Deacons, and has not previously been ordained by a bishop in apostolic succession, as defined by the Lutheran Church - International, he (or she, if a deacon) is received by affirmation of ordination. Voting rights, however, shall be given immediately upon the vote of the Executive Board to accept the member. An applicant who previously has been ordained as a bishop will be rostered as a Pastor and shall be accepted as a member upon appropriate action by the Executive Board. To be recognized as a bishop of the Lutheran Church - International, he shall follow the procedure in Article IV, Section 10.
- f. When a community of faith is received, its representatives shall be granted voting rights upon the vote of the Executive Board to accept the community as a member of the Lutheran Church - International. Representatives shall be received at the main liturgy or closing liturgy of the Annual Synod by the Archbishop or presiding minister at the liturgy, but the formal reception of the community into the Lutheran Church - International shall occur at its location in a liturgy to be scheduled to coincide with a visitation from the Archbishop or its diocesan bishop, or a bishop of the Lutheran Church - International appointed to represent the Archbishop.
- g. When a ministerial candidate is approved for ordination, a date and site, normally the site of the ministry to which the candidate is called, shall be set for the liturgy of Ordination to the office to which the candidate is called. The Archbishop or the diocesan bishop or a bishop of the Lutheran Church - International appointed to represent the Archbishop shall preside at the Ordination, and all members of the Lutheran Church - International and the members of its communities of faith will be invited to the Ordination.

#### **Article IV, Section 14: Departure of Members**

Membership in the Lutheran Church - International will end in the following ways:

- a. Upon the death of a ministerial member or the dissolution of a community of faith.
- b. By the voluntary resignation of a ministerial member or community of faith. Membership is voluntary and no compulsion is exercised to compel members to retain their membership. Withdrawal shall be recognized like the separation of St. Paul and St.

- Barnabas (cf. Acts 15:36-41). The departing minister or community shall be wished Godspeed, with no burdens placed upon the departing member other than that of prayer.
- c. By the disciplinary removal of a member. A ministerial member or a community of faith may be removed when the member fails to meet the standards of membership as stated in Article IV or in the By-Laws of the Lutheran Church – International. The allegation of failure shall be brought to the attention of the Executive Board in writing by other members of the Lutheran Church – International, or by the member's bishop, or by the Archbishop. The Executive Board shall consider the allegations at a regular or a specially called meeting as determined by the Archbishop dependent on the particular circumstances and offense. The Executive Board may suspend a member until the next Annual Synod if it determines that a failure exists and is serious enough to warrant disciplinary action. A formal hearing may be held by the Executive Board at the Annual Synod with the accused member present. An accused member has the right to a full hearing by the Executive Board or by a special committee appointed by the Archbishop. At any time during this process the member has the right to withdraw from membership, to prove the accusation false, or to show repentance and amendment of life acceptable to the Executive Board to merit dropping the accusation. The decision of the meeting of the Executive Board shall be reported to the Annual Synod during the business session. If the Executive Board recommends disciplinary action or termination of the membership of a ministerial member or of a community of faith, this decision must be presented to the Annual Synod for final action. The member accused has the right to make a presentation to the Annual Synod before the vote on continuing or terminating membership. Disciplinary action or removal from membership is effected by a majority vote. For removal of a ministerial member, a majority vote of the House of Bishops and the House of Clergy is deemed sufficient. For removal of a community of faith, a majority of all three Houses is required. Removal from membership may be reconsidered by a subsequent Annual Synod upon request by the Executive Board or by the former member. God's grace and mercy through Jesus Christ shall always be paramount in the forgiveness and restoration of the sinner upon repentance, confession, absolution, and amendment of life. Yet, where unrepentant sin remains or where the faith professed by the Lutheran Church - International is denied, the Law of God must be administered justly.

## Article V STRUCTURE

### **Article V, Section 1: The Annual Synod**

The members of the Lutheran Church – International shall meet in an Annual Synod at a place designated by the previous Annual Synod with the dates of the Annual Synod determined by the Executive Board. Notice of the time and place of the Annual Synod shall be given by mail or electronic means not less than 60 days prior to the Annual Synod to the members eligible to vote at the Annual Synod. The Annual Synod is a legislative and fellowship meeting of all ministers on the membership roster (ordained and lay) and delegates from all communities of faith on the membership roster, and all have voting rights. The decisions of the Annual Synod other than directives in this Constitution and By-Laws shall constitute the policy and authority of the Lutheran Church - International. The quorum for an Annual Synod is those in attendance. The members belong to one of three Houses: the House of Bishops, the House of Clergy, and the House of Delegates (Article V, Sections 2, 3 and 4). The simple majority of those present and voting, with all Houses concurring on issues, shall be sufficient to adopt a motion unless otherwise required by the

Constitution. Votes may be taken simultaneously unless the chair requests separate votes by Houses. The chair of the Annual Synod is the Archbishop or, in his absence, the Vice-President or the Secretary.

**Article V, Section 2: The House of Bishops**

All ministers ordained to the Order of Bishops of the Lutheran Church – International (Article IV, Section 6), shall be members of the House of Bishops, each having one vote in this House. The Archbishop, or a bishop appointed by the Archbishop, shall preside over this House when meeting separately.

**Article V, Section 3: The House of Clergy**

All ministers ordained to the Orders of Deacons or Pastors of the Lutheran Church – International (Article IV, Sections 3 and 4), shall be members of the House of Clergy, each having one vote in this House. If this House meets separately during the Annual Synod, it selects a chair pro tem from the Order of Pastors. When this House meets together with the other two Houses, the Archbishop will preside.

**Article V, Section 4: The House of Delegates**

Each community of faith, as defined in Article IV, Sections 11 and 12, shall select two lay members of its community to be delegates to the Annual Synod and the House of Delegates. If a community of faith has more than 500 voting members in its own constitutional definition, it shall select an additional delegate for each additional 500 voting members. In addition, all commissioned or consecrated lay ministers, as defined in Article IV, Section 2, are members of the House of Delegates. Although a community of faith may bind their delegates to vote in a certain way on known issues before the Annual Synod, all delegates have the freedom to vote individually as they determine. One member of the House of Delegates shall be elected by the House of Delegates, meeting separately at the beginning of the Annual Synod, who shall serve as Chair of that House if it meets separately for votes or other business during the Annual Synod, and who shall serve as Vice President of the Lutheran Church – International (Article VII). If requested by the Chair, the Archbishop or a representative appointed by the Archbishop may serve as a resource to the House of Delegates when in session.

**Article V, Section 5: The Executive Board**

The authority to execute the decisions of the Annual Synod shall reside in the Executive Board, which shall submit a report of its activities to the Annual Synod. Between Annual Synods, it shall govern the Lutheran Church - International in conformity with this Constitution and By-Laws and the decisions of the Annual Synods. The Executive Board shall have the authority to schedule special meetings, and shall always meet at the site of the Annual Synod in advance of the Annual Synod to carry out preparatory and constitutional duties. It may meet by telephone or other electronic means at times it determines. Decisions of the Executive Board are by majority vote of those present and voting at all meetings called to which appropriate notice has been given to all entitled to be present. The Members of the Executive Board shall be:

- a. The Archbishop,
- b. The Vice President of the Lutheran Church – International (Chair of the House of Delegates),
- c. The Secretary of the Lutheran Church – International,
- d. The Treasurer of the Lutheran Church - International,
- e. All members of the House of Bishops, active or retired, of the Lutheran Church – International,

- f. One member of the House of Clergy elected by that House at an Annual Synod to a three-year term of office on the Executive Board; the member is eligible for re-election at the conclusion of his or her term.
- g. One member of the House of Delegates elected by that House at an Annual Synod to a three-year term of office on the Executive Board; the member is eligible for re-election at the conclusion of his or her term, if he or she is a member of the House of Delegates at the time of that election.

**Article V, Section 6: Board Member, Resignation of**

If a member of the Executive Board wishes to resign, the resignation shall be placed in writing to be presented to the Executive Board and sent to the Secretary of the Lutheran Church - International with a copy to the Archbishop. Vacancies in the Executive Board shall be filled at the following Annual Synod. If a vacancy occurs in the office of Archbishop, the administrative duties of the Archbishop on the Executive Board shall be filled by the Vice President, and the spiritual duties by one of the other bishops appointed by the Executive Board to serve until the next Annual Synod. If there is a Coadjutor, he shall temporarily assume both the administrative and spiritual duties of the Archbishop (Article VI, Section 5) until the next Annual Synod.

**Article V, Section 7: Dioceses**

The ministries of the Lutheran Church - International shall be organized in geographical areas, each area called a Diocese. The geographical boundaries of each diocese shall be described in the By-Laws. The member ministers in each diocese, both ordained and lay (Article IV, Section 2) shall attempt to meet periodically, depending on geographical and financial circumstances, for fellowship, worship, prayer, Bible Study, and mutual support. The delegates and others of the communities of faith may be invited to meet with the ministers for mutual support in fellowship opportunities, missions, and possible joint ministries. The diocesan bishop may call for a Diocesan Synod when circumstances suggest, or when a majority of ministers and communities of faith in that diocese request a Diocesan Synod. The delegates who represented their communities of faith at the previous Annual Synod shall serve in the same capacity at a Diocesan Synod. If a local community of faith determines to select other delegates, the diocesan bishop shall be notified in writing.

**Article V, Section 8: Diocesan Bishops**

A bishop of the Lutheran Church - International shall serve as the Diocesan Bishop to chair diocesan meetings and provide the diocesan ministers and communities of faith with oversight and pastoral care on behalf of the Lutheran Church - International. Whenever possible, he shall be resident in the territory of the diocese. The Archbishop shall make the initial appointment. Upon a vacancy in the office of Diocesan Bishop in an established diocese, the Archbishop shall appoint a bishop or pastor to serve during the interim and who shall call a Diocesan Synod to nominate a new Diocesan Bishop by ecclesiastical ballot (Article IV, Section 5). The nomination shall be reported immediately to the Archbishop and Executive Board, and shall constitute the nomination of a candidate for bishop for election at the next Annual Synod. The interim appointee shall serve until the installation of the Bishop-elect. The Bishop shall be installed by the Archbishop either at his Ordination or at another convenient time.

**Article V, Section 9: Missionary Bishops, Missionary Districts**

Unless a bishop serves in a specific Diocese (Article V, Sections 7 and 8), he is designated a Missionary Bishop. He is to seek to spread the Gospel anywhere in the world to which he may have ability to reach, and, where possible, to assist in organizing new ministries and supporting pastors who show interest in the Lutheran Church - International. There may be more than one missionary

bishop, depending upon the determination of Annual Synods. In this way the disparate regions of the world are given ministry. A missionary bishop is considered a pastor of the World Lutheran Parish with pastoral care responsibility, for those not under the care of other bishops, who reside in the territory assigned to the missionary bishop. Missionary Districts may be established at any Executive Board meeting for areas of mission development and may issue a Call to a bishop or a pastor for leadership. If a missionary bishop has not been ordained previously to the Order of Bishops, the Archbishop may appoint him to serve with all the rights, duties, and responsibilities of a Missionary Bishop except for the right to ordain until his Ordination to the Order of Bishops.

**Article V, Section 10: Duties of Bishops**

Since the office of Bishop in itself is permanent, all bishops of the Lutheran Church - International shall work in harmony with each other to carry out the purposes of the Lutheran Church – International (Article III) and shall exercise oversight in accord with the Book of Concord. Retired bishops shall be responsible to the Executive Board, on which they remain, for whatever assignments they are able to accept. Bishops shall not interfere in the work of other bishops. Bishops within dioceses may aid the diocesan bishops under whose leadership they serve. One bishop, elected as Archbishop, shall be the chief officer of the Lutheran Church – International (Article VI) and to whom all other bishops report. All bishops remain members of the House of Bishops no matter what their particular assignment, and are called to the mutual ministry of advice and consultation.

**Article V, Section 11: Property, Ownership and Disposition of**

The Lutheran Church - International is organized exclusively for charitable, religious, educational, and scientific purposes (Article III), including the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code. In the event of dissolution of the Lutheran Church - International, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government or to a state or local government, for a public purpose. Any assets not disposed of shall be disposed of by the Court of Common Pleas of the county in which the principal office of the organization is then located, exclusively for purposes or to an organization or organizations which are organized and operated exclusively for purposes as the Court shall determine.

**Article VI**  
**THE ARCHBISHOP**

**Article VI, Section 1: Archbishop, Office and Authority**

One ministerial member of the Lutheran Church - International shall be elected to serve as Archbishop. He shall be the chief executive officer of the Lutheran Church - International without term until his death, resignation, or removal. He shall chair the Executive Board (Article V, Section 5). If he is the subject of charges which could remove him, the matter would be handled by the Executive Board (Article IV, Section 14 c), with authority to temporarily suspend him until the next Annual Synod, the duties being filled as described in Article V, Section 6.

**Article VI, Section 2: Archbishop, Requirements of Office**

The Archbishop shall be a God-fearing man, pious and firmly established in evangelical and missionary zeal. He shall be a man of good judgment, just, and with a strong desire for fellowship among God's people. As much as possible, he shall be a man of practical and representative

endowments. He shall give evidence by life and testimony that he is a saved sinner by grace, with an earnest desire and passion to be true to the heavenly vision of his calling and service to the Lord Jesus Christ. Prior to his selection as Archbishop, he shall be an ordained bishop or pastor of the Lutheran Church - International.

**Article VI, Section 3: Archbishop, Duties of the Office**

The Archbishop shall preside over the entire life and work of the Lutheran Church - International in ways that glorify Jesus Christ. Specifically, he will

- a. Preside at the Annual Synod (Article V, Section 1);
- b. Preside at meetings of the Executive Board (Article V, Section 5);
- c. Give pastoral oversight to all ministers and communities of faith in the Lutheran Church - International, and particularly to his fellow bishops in their oversight responsibilities and care of souls;
- d. Preside at the Ordination of, or appoint a fellow bishop to ordain, those approved by the Lutheran Church - International for the Orders of Deacons and Pastors;
- e. Preside at the Ordination of Bishops, with other bishops as required, when the Lutheran Church - International elects new bishops;
- f. Report his activities and recommendations, if any, to the Annual Synod;
- g. Exercise general supervision of all activities and responsibilities of the Lutheran Church – International;
- h. Fulfill the duties of his office as described elsewhere in the Constitution and By-Laws; and
- i. Nominate or appoint, depending on the position, those needed in various positions of leadership in the Lutheran Church – International.

**Article VI, Section 4: Expansion of the Church**

The Archbishop shall oversee the administration of the Lutheran Church - International as currently structured, and toward expansion. The Archbishop may specify areas of mission outreach and development and assign leadership under his direction to a bishop to serve as a Missionary Bishop. The Archbishop may assign leadership under his direction to a coordinating pastor.

**Article VI, Section 5: Archbishop, Election of**

When it is known that in the next year a new Archbishop is to be elected, nominations shall be made by secret ballot for this office at the Annual Synod by all entitled to vote. Only those who are currently pastors or bishops of the Lutheran Church - International are eligible to be candidates. If a pastor is nominated who is not a bishop, that person shall fulfill all the requirements for the election and ordination of a bishop (Article IV, Section 8). No more than three nominees shall be selected, balloting taking place until only three candidates remain. During the following year a time of discernment is held. Candidates who remain in nomination at the Annual Synod of election shall be the only nominees allowed. The election shall be conducted as described in Article IV, Section 8. If a pastor is elected Archbishop, he shall be installed as Archbishop at the same service at which he is ordained a bishop. If a ministerial member already a bishop is chosen to be Archbishop, he shall be installed at the main liturgy of the Annual Synod at which he was elected. The installation shall be conducted by the outgoing Archbishop, or if the outgoing Archbishop is unable, by the longest-serving other Lutheran Church - International bishop present at that Annual Synod. The authority to preside over administrative matters comes with the installation. If a pastor is elected and the installation delayed until ordination as a bishop, the Annual Synod may vote to name the Archbishop-elect “Apostolic Administrator” and to serve in that administrative capacity until his installation as Archbishop upon his ordination as a bishop. If no candidate is elected and the Holy

Spirit leads the Annual Synod to a candidate not previously nominated, a unanimous vote of all three Houses is required for election. If no election has been completed, the procedure begins anew.

**Article VI, Section 6: Coadjutor**

The office of Coadjutor may be created at the request of the Archbishop or by the House of Bishops. The candidate for this office must meet all requirements for the office of Archbishop. Upon nomination by the Archbishop, or by the House of Bishops if the Archbishop is incapacitated, the Coadjutor shall be elected in the same way as described for the Archbishop (Article VI, Section 5). The Coadjutor's duties shall be defined by the Archbishop and be performed under his leadership. This office is permitted but not required, and does not signify or imply any impairment or inability in the office of Archbishop.

**Article VI, Section 7: Archbishop, Incapacity or Inability to Fulfill Duties**

If a Coadjutor has been elected and the Archbishop is unable to fulfill his duties, at the request of the Archbishop or by action of the Executive Board, the Coadjutor (Article VI, Section 6) shall temporarily assume both the administrative and spiritual duties of the Archbishop until the next Annual Synod (Article V, Section 6). Upon the death, resignation, or removal of the Archbishop, the Coadjutor shall serve as Archbishop until a new Archbishop is elected. If a new Archbishop other than the Coadjutor is elected (Article VI, Section 5), the Coadjutor's term of office ends at the installation of the new Archbishop. If the new Archbishop recommends to the Annual Synod that the Coadjutor continue in that office, a majority affirmative vote of all Houses voting separately is required.

**Article VII**  
**VICE PRESIDENT**

**Article VII, Section 1: Vice President, Duties of**

The Vice President of the Lutheran Church-International shall be a lay member elected by the House of Delegates as its Chair at each Annual Synod for a one-year term (Article V, Section 4) beginning immediately upon election. The Vice-President shall be eligible for re-election without limit of terms, provided that he or she remains a member of the House of Delegates at the electing Annual Synod. The Vice-President shall serve (Article V, Sections 3 and 4) unless removed from office (Article IV, Section 14c).

**Article VII, Section 2: Vice President, Vacancy of**

If a vacancy occurs in the office of Vice President, the Executive Board shall appoint a lay person to serve as Vice President pro tem with all rights and privileges of the office until the election of a Vice-President at the next Annual Synod.

**Article VIII**  
**SECRETARY**

**Article VIII, Section 1: Secretary, Requirements for the Office**

The Secretary of the Lutheran Church - International shall be either a minister of the Lutheran Church - International or a lay member of one of its communities of faith. He or she shall be a person of faith and dedication to the work of the Lord.

**Article VIII, Section 2: Secretary, Election and Term of Office**

The Secretary of the Lutheran Church - International shall be elected upon nomination by the Annual Synod of the Lutheran Church - International by majority vote of all Houses voting jointly. The term of office shall be four years, and the incumbent may be re-elected without limit of terms. In the case of vacancy in the office of Secretary, the Archbishop shall appoint a qualified person to serve as Interim Secretary until the next Annual Synod, at which time a person shall be elected to fulfill the remaining term of the Secretary. If the term of Secretary would have expired at that Annual Synod, the election is for the full term.

**Article VIII, Section 3: Secretary, Duties**

The Duties of the Secretary of the Lutheran Church - International shall be:

- a. To record, maintain, report, and distribute minutes of all official meetings and decisions of the Lutheran Church - International to its membership promptly;
- b. To maintain, update, publish and distribute an official current membership roster at least annually;
- c. To maintain, propose amendments to, and distribute as required, in cooperation with the Executive Board, the most current version of the Lutheran Church - International Constitution and By-Laws;
- d. To maintain and present at Annual Synods a current listing of clergy ordination anniversaries;
- e. To assist all called Lutheran Church - International members, the Executive Board, and prospective calling congregations in the publication, completion, and distribution of all necessary call documents, at the direction of the Archbishop;
- f. To oversee and facilitate the annual renewal of the required legal documentation that shall insure ongoing non-profit organizational status with the U. S. Federal Government;
- g. To oversee and facilitate the renewal of clergy certification cards;
- h. To maintain and oversee storage of any historical documents, records, or files for the Lutheran Church - International organizational structure, and to assist the Executive Board with any administrative or clerical activities as required.

**Article IX**  
**TREASURER**

**Article IX, Section 1: Treasurer, Requirements for the Office**

The Treasurer of the Lutheran Church - International shall be either a minister of the Lutheran Church - International or a lay member of one of its communities of faith. He or she shall be a person of faith and dedication to the work of the Lord.

**Article IX, Section 2: Treasurer, Election and Term of Office**

The Treasurer of the Lutheran Church - International shall be elected upon nomination by the Annual Synod of the Lutheran Church - International by majority vote of all Houses voting jointly. The term of office shall be four years, and the incumbent may be re-elected without limit of terms. . The term of office of the Secretary shall begin in one year, the term of office of the Treasurer in another year. In the case of vacancy in the office of Treasurer, the Archbishop shall appoint a qualified person to serve as Interim Treasurer until the next Annual Synod, at which time a person shall be elected to fulfill the remaining term of the former Treasurer. If the term of the Treasurer would have expired at that Annual Synod, the election is for the full term.

**Article IX, Section 3: Treasurer, Duties**

The Duties of the Treasurer of the Lutheran Church - International shall be:

- a. To maintain up to date financial records on a quarterly basis and initiate an annual audit of the financial records by an independent accredited financial advisor or institution;
- b. To disburse funds as requested for any expenditures approved by the Executive Board or Annual Synod;
- c. To consult with the Archbishop and other officers when questions arise concerning any particular disbursements;
- d. To share the current financial situation of the Lutheran Church - International with members of the Executive Board;
- e. To prepare an annual report for the Annual Synod of all financial activity.

**Article X**

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION**

**Article X, Section 1: Constitution, Amendments**

Proposed amendments to the Constitution shall be presented in writing to the Executive Board for review, consideration and recommendation at least ninety (90) days prior to the Annual Synod at which the amendments will be presented for adoption. The Executive Board shall prepare and present recommendations regarding the proposed amendments to the Annual Synod, and notify in writing all those with authority to vote at the Annual Synod of the proposed amendments in detail at least thirty (30) days prior to the Annual Synod.

**Article X, Section 2: Constitution, Grammatical or Non-Substantive Minor Amendments**

Amendments to the Constitution of a grammatical or minor nature, if in the opinion of the Archbishop they are determined not to be changes to the substance of a section or item, may be adopted by the Executive Board by a unanimous vote. A report shall be submitted to the following Annual Synod as amendments (Article X, Section 1). If the changes are contested by the simple majority vote of all Houses voting together, they are null and void until discussed and voted upon at any business session of the Annual Synod in accord with Article X, Section 3.

**Article X, Section 3: Constitution, Ratification and Adoption of Amendments**

Proposed Amendments to the Constitution, with the recommendations from the Executive Board, shall be discussed during business at the Annual Synod. Amendments shall be approved if they receive a two-thirds affirmative vote by all Houses voting separately. Upon the declaration by the Archbishop, the amendments shall be approved and immediately in force.

**Article XI**

**BY-LAWS AND AMENDMENTS TO THE BY-LAWS**

**Article XI, Section 1: By-Laws**

By-Laws may be adopted which are not in conflict with this Constitution or the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Confessions.

**Article XI, Section 2: By-Laws, Amendments**

Proposed amendments to the By-Laws shall be presented in writing to the Executive Board for review, consideration and recommendation. Proposed amendments may be submitted prior to or during a business session of an Annual Synod.

**Article XI, Section 3: By-Laws, Grammatical or Non-Substantive Minor Amendments**

Amendments to the By-Laws of a grammatical or minor nature, if in the opinion of the Archbishop they are determined not to be changes to the substance of a section or item, may be adopted by the Executive Board by a unanimous vote. A report shall be submitted to the following Annual Synod. If the changes are contested by the simple majority vote of all Houses voting together, they are null and void until discussed and voted upon at any business session of the Annual Synod (Article XI, Section 4).

**Article XI, Section 4: By-Laws, Ratification and Adoption of Amendments**

Proposed amendments to the By-Laws, with the recommendations from the Executive Board, shall be discussed during business at the Annual Synod. Amendments shall be approved if they receive an affirmative majority vote of each House voting separately and a two-thirds affirmative vote by all Houses voting together. Upon the declaration by the Archbishop, the amendments shall be approved and immediately in force.

**Article XII**

**PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY**

**Article XII, Section 1: Parliamentary Authority**

The rules contained in the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* shall govern the Lutheran Church – International in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with the Constitution, By-Laws or other special rules of order the Lutheran Church – International may adopt.

**[END OF CONSTITUTION]**

**PERSONAL NOTATIONS:**

## **BY-LAWS - Lutheran Church - International**

Amended by the LC-I 2016 Annual Synod.

### **By-Law 1: The Dioceses**

The Dioceses of the Lutheran Church - International are described as consisting of the following territory:

- a. The Northeastern Diocese consists of those ministers and communities of faith in the United States of America states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont; the Canadian provinces of New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and that portion of Ontario south and east of the city of Sudbury.
- b. The Mid-America Diocese consists of those ministers and communities of faith in the United States of America states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and the Canadian provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and that portion of Ontario north and west of the city of Sudbury
- c. The Southern Diocese consists of those ministers and communities of faith in the United States of America states of Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and the territories of the District of Columbia and the U. S. Virgin Islands.
- d. The Western Diocese consists of those ministers and communities of faith in the United States of America states of Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, and the Canadian provinces of Alberta and British Columbia, and the Canadian territories of Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Yukon.

The formation and boundaries of a new diocese and a change in the geographical boundaries of an existing diocese may be altered to provide appropriate pastoral care. The Executive Board may change the boundaries temporarily by a two-thirds affirmative vote. The Executive Board shall report the changes to the next Annual Synod for approval by amendment of the By-Laws (Article X, Sections 2 and 4). Those territories not embraced by a diocese herein described are under the pastoral care of the Archbishop or of a Missionary Bishop (or Missionary Dean, if not currently a bishop) as assigned by the Archbishop. Missionary Districts may be established at any Executive Board meeting (Article V, Section 9) for areas of mission development and may be assigned by the Archbishop to the leadership of a Missionary Bishop or a coordinating pastor.

### **By-Law 2: Interchurch Relationships**

- a. The Lutheran Church-International may enter into cooperative and non-binding relationships with other church bodies to promote an outreach of ministry and to strengthen the existing ministry of the Lutheran Church – International.
- b. All inter-church Lutheran and ecumenical relationships involving the Lutheran Church – International shall be approved by a majority vote of the Executive Board and will be coordinated through the Office of the Archbishop of the Lutheran Church – International.
- c. The Lutheran Church-International may enter into a binding relationship with another church body (traditionally referred to as “Altar and Pulpit Fellowship”) when the confession of faith and practices are harmonious with our own. A binding relationship shall be presented by the Executive Board for approval at an Annual Synod by a two-thirds majority of all Houses voting separately.

**By-Law 3: Emeritus Servants**

Upon the recommendation of the Archbishop and the Executive Board for approval at an Annual Synod, a person who has provided exemplary service and time to the Lutheran Church – International as a member of the Executive Board can be publicly recognized and granted the honorary title of “Emeritus” without conferring any further rights or privileges.

**By-Law 4: Member Dues**

An Annual Synod may establish and impose the payment of annual dues for the financial support of the Lutheran Church – International upon the members as defined in Article IV, Section 1. The dues for ministerial members and the dues for communities of faith do not have to be the same. Diocesan and Missionary Bishops can recommend to the Executive Board that payment of the dues be waived on a case-by-case basis as necessary and appropriate.

**By-Law 5: Active Members**

All communities of faith and ministers in the Lutheran Church – International, whether active in ministry or retired, are expected to fulfill their respective ministries (Article IV), attend and participate in ministerial and diocesan activities and the Annual Synods of the Lutheran Church - International, and to contribute financially in support though the payment of annual dues as established by an Annual Synod. Diocesan and Missionary Bishops will provide pastoral oversight to those under their care and can waive obligations as necessary and appropriate. Upon recommendation of the Executive Board, those ministers and communities of faith who fulfill their obligations, or for whom certain obligations are waived, will be considered active members of the Lutheran Church - International and will receive clergy certification cards or community of faith certificates (Article VIII, Section 3g). Those not considered active members remain in the care of the Lutheran Church – International but will be urged to increase their faithful involvement in the life of the Lutheran Church – International.

**By-Law 6: Inactive Members**

If a member community of faith or minister in the Lutheran Church – International fails to pay the annual dues set by an Annual Synod within the first six months of the Church Year and has not had the obligation waived, that member is considered inactive and will be suspended from voting in Annual or Diocesan Synods or from holding any office in the Lutheran Church – International. Within thirty days after receipt of the dues, the Treasurer shall notify the Executive Board and the member permitted to vote. A member who does not fulfill the obligations of membership as stated in By-Law 5 and is persistent in being inactive for more than three consecutive years may be removed from membership (Article IV, Section 14c).

**[END OF BY-LAWS]**

**PERSONAL NOTATIONS:**

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