

THE CONSTITUTION OF ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Article I – Name

The name of this congregation shall be St. Paul's Lutheran Church.

Article II – Purpose

This congregation shall be organized as a religious, non-profit, incorporated body, for the purpose of:

- 1) strengthening its members in the life of Christ as they gather around Word and Sacraments; and
- 2) equipping its members for the best possible service as they go forth into Christ's world to love, to serve, and to welcome others to the kingdom of God.

Article III – Confessional Standard

- A. As a Lutheran congregation of God's people, this congregation acknowledges and accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the only trustworthy and reliable authority in all matters of faith and life. All matters of doctrine and practice shall be decided by the Word of God.
- B. This congregation further acknowledges and accepts all the confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, contained in the Book of Concord, as faithful exposition of the doctrine of the Bible. These confessional writings are the three Ecumenical Creeds (Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasian), the Augsburg Confession, the Apology of Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, Luther's Large and Small Catechisms and the Formula of Concord.

Article IV – Synodical Affiliation

- A. This congregation shall hold membership in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) as long as the Synod remains true to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions.
- B. This Congregation shall, to the best of its ability, cooperate with the said Synod and assist it in the up-building of the kingdom of God.

Article V – Membership

- A. Baptized Membership shall include all those on the membership list who are baptized in Christian baptism as defined by the LCMS and who are under the spiritual care of this congregation.
- B. Communicant Membership shall include:
 1. Those who are baptized, give evidence of their ability to "examine themselves" (1 Corinthians 11:33ff) and partake of the Lord's Supper.
 2. Those who have received Christ as Savior and Lord and witness to the same in word and life.
 3. Those who, under the Lordship of Christ, constantly remain on guard against associations which deny this Lordship.

4. Those who willingly live within the discipline of love as exercised by the church in its ministry of reconciliation.
 5. Those who signify their agreement with the Confessional Standard set forth in Article III of this Constitution.
 6. Those who have been accepted into communicant membership in accordance with the By-Laws of this congregation.
- C. Voting Membership shall include Communicant members who have attained the age of eighteen (18) years and who have read, accepted, and signed the Constitution and By-Laws of this congregation.
- D. Associate Membership shall include persons who share in the fellowship of the congregation, but who for various circumstances have not yet become a member of the congregation. This congregation sees a distinct responsibility toward these members and exercises it by including them in congregational activities, particularly those programs of education, service and fellowship.

Article VI – Governing Authority for the Congregation

The Church Council shall be the governing body and shall administer all congregational business. The establishments and conduct of all institutions and groups within the congregation, such as the Sunday School, youth groups, ladies' and men's organizations, choir, etc., shall at all times be subject to the administrative guidance of the Church Council. The Church Council shall not be empowered to decide anything contrary to the Word of God and Confessions of the Lutheran Church (Article III).

Article VII – Officers of the Church Council

A. Composition

The Church Council shall consist of the following officers: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Financial Secretary, and the Chairpersons of the various boards of the congregation to include Stewardship, Youth Ministry, Christian Education, Missions and Ministries, Buildings and Ground and Elders. The Pastor shall be an ex-officio member.

B. Eligibility

Only voting members of good standing who have been members of the congregation for at least six months shall be eligible to be elected as officers.

Article VIII – Pastors

Only such pastors shall be called by this congregation whose beliefs are in accord with the congressional standards of this congregation (Article III) and have been approved by Synod as being qualified pastors of the Church. The right to call pastors shall ever be vested in the congregation and shall never be delegated to a smaller body or to an individual.

Article IX – Property Rights of the Congregation

This corporate body may receive, acquire, hold title to, and manage such real estate and other property as it may deem necessary to accomplish its purpose as a congregation, and may sell or dispose of such real estate and other property or any part thereof; and this corporate body shall have all rights and powers that are granted by the laws of the State of Maryland to religious corporations.

The President, Secretary and Treasurer shall be designated as the “Legal Trustees” of the congregation. They shall, as such, be empowered, upon approval of the Church Council, acting within the limits of authority entrusted to it by the voting membership to close and sign contracts, pay out money, collect or borrow money and give receipt thereof, to sign documents, appear in court, and in fact, do all and everything the congregation as owner of the property, is required to do. Should a separation in the congregation occur, the entire property of the congregation and all rights connected therewith shall remain with those members who hold fast to this Constitution. In the event the congregation should disband, the property and all rights connected therewith shall be transferred to the Southeastern District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, of which this congregation is a member.

Article X – Amendments

Amendments to this Constitution and By-Laws must be submitted in writing to the congregation at least thirty (30) days prior to the congregational meeting in which it is to be acted upon. A two-thirds vote of the voting members present shall be required for adoption.

THE BY-LAWS OF ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

The following By-Laws are intended as aid in interpreting the Constitution. Adherence to the Constitution means automatic adherence to all By-Laws as well.

Article I – Name

As Stated in the Constitution.

Article II – Purpose

As Stated in the Constitution.

Article III – Confessional Standard

As Stated in the Constitution.

Article IV – Synodical Affiliation

As Stated in the Constitution.

Article V – Congregational Membership

A. Admission

1. By Baptism

All those who have received Christian Baptism and who are under the spiritual care of this congregation shall be included as “Baptized Members.”

2. By Confirmation

All those who are baptized in the Christian faith, and instructed in the Lutheran Doctrine shall give evidence (confirmation) of their faith to the congregation. Such persons shall be included as “Communicant Members.”

3. By Transfer

All those who indicate their desire to transfer their membership from other Lutheran Churches to this congregation shall present a letter of transfer to the pastor or elders of this congregation. They shall be received in the public worship service. Such persons shall be included as “Communicant Members.”

4. By Reinstatement or Reaffirmation of Faith

All those who were once members of this or any other Lutheran congregation but whose membership was terminated may become members of this congregation by indicating their desire to the pastor or elders and by giving evidence of their faith to this congregation. Such persons shall be included as “Communicant members.”

B. Responsibilities

In addition to regular and frequent participation in the worship life of the congregation and use of the sacraments, members are expected to share in the task of equipping one another for service by regularly contributing their:

1. Time – for such things as personal growth in Christian education, caring for church property and humane service to the congregation and community.
2. Talent – so one’s unique abilities might be used to promote the life and work of the congregation in such things as teaching, music and administration.
3. Treasure—to the extent that giving becomes a weekly commitment and an attempt to increase that commitment as the Lord gives.

C. Termination

1. Transfer to Other Congregations

Communicant members, upon their request, shall be granted transfer to another church which is in fellowship with the congregation.

2. Joining other Churches

In cases where communicant members have joined a denomination other than Lutheran, they shall be considered to have terminated their membership in this congregation.

3. Whereabouts Unknown

The names of members whose whereabouts are unknown and cannot be established shall be removed from the membership list.

4. Self-Exclusion

When a member refuses to be a member, that is, to live under the discipline of love and persistently rejects the forgiveness of sins as offered by the church, he shall be declared as having excluded himself from the membership of the congregation.

5. Excommunication

When a member persists in living as a manifest and impenitent sinner, all the while claiming membership in this congregation, s/ he shall be excommunicated.

Matthew 18:15-17 has often been misused as jurisdictional formula for excommunication. It was never meant to be that. It is a violation of the whole context of that passage to make it a mechanistic, prescribed procedure for ecclesiastical discipline. Matthew 18 states that forgiveness is the purpose and the end of any confrontation of a brother with his sin.

What is the difference between excommunication and self-exclusion? In brief, excommunication is necessary when a “brother,” a member of the church who still considers himself a member, persists in the living as a “manifest and impenitent sinner.” The offense in question must be a transgression of God’s Word – willful, wanton, persistent wrongdoing against God’s clearly revealed will.

There is no indication in the Confessions for the practice of submitting the matter of excommunication to the congregation for unanimous vote. The Confessions do not state procedure, just the fact that such people are to be excommunicated. Self-exclusion, on the other hand, deals with a member of the congregation who, in fact no longer is a member. He doesn't attend worship; he doesn't partake of the Sacrament of our Lord's Body and Blood; he doesn't want to share his faith within or outside the fellowship of his congregation. He has declared by his action that he is no longer a "brother". Matthew 18:15-17 couldn't apply to him because of that fact, and there is no such thing as "self-excommunication." We can say quite properly that he has excluded himself, hence the term, self-exclusion.

Article VI – Church Council

(Note: in all cases the term chairperson, president, or vice-president shall be interpreted to mean male or female; except in the case of pastor or elder where the term shall only mean male.)

The Church Council shall be the governing body and shall administer all congregational business. The establishments and conduct of all institutions and groups within the congregation, such as the Sunday School, youth groups, ladies' and men's organizations, choir, etc., shall at all times be subject to the administrative guidance of the Church Council. The Church Council shall not be empowered to decide anything contrary to the Word of God and Confessions of the Lutheran Church (Article III).

- A. The Church Council shall be the governing body and shall administer all congregational business. The establishments and conduct of all institutions and groups within the congregation, such as the Sunday School, youth groups, ladies' and men's organizations, choir, etc. , shall at all times be subject to the administrative guidance of the Church Council. The Church Council shall not be empowered to decide anything contrary to the Word of God and Confessions of the Lutheran Church. (Article III).
- B. The Church Council shall determine the best course of action to be used in carrying out the mission and ministry of the congregation. This action must be conducted within the standards set forth in the Articles of the Constitution, within the limits of the yearly budget, and by actively seeking guidance from the congregation
- C. Council officers and chairperson shall provide monthly reports.
- D. Regular meetings of the Church Council shall be held monthly. These meetings shall be announced to the members prior to its convening, and when such announcement has been made, the meeting shall be valid and legal. Special meetings may be called by the President or at the written request of at least three members. A majority of the Church Council shall constitute a quorum. In all meetings, the majority of the votes cast shall decide the action.
- E. All meetings of the Church Council are open to voting members of the congregation. However, only members of the Church Council may vote on items called up for a vote at any council meeting.

Article VII – Voters Meetings

- A. Voters in a properly called Voters’ Meeting shall have the sole responsibility to:
1. Call a pastor or other synodically certified church worker.
 2. Remove a pastor or other synodically approved church worker (see Article XI C.)
 3. Approve or establish the annual church budget.
 4. Elect and approve or remove Church Council members and Board of Elders. An exception to this rule shall be that the Board of Elders shall elect their head elder and he shall assume a position on the Church Council.
- B. The voting membership shall meet semiannually in May and November to elect church officers and elders, approve the budget for the following year in November, hear status reports from the Church Council on Congregational programs, and act on such business matters as may be required. Each meeting shall be announced in writing at least two weeks prior to the date on which it will be held.
1. The May meeting business shall, but not be limited to, status reports.
 2. The November meeting business shall, but not be limited to budget, elections and status reports.
- C. Special meetings of the voting membership may be called by the President, or at the request of the Pastor, or at the written request of three members of the Church Council or ten voting members. Each special meeting shall be announced in writing at least two weeks prior to the date on which it will be held.
- D. Emergency meetings of the voting membership may be called by the President, or at the request of the Pastor, or at the written request of three members of the Church Council or ten voting members. Notice of such a meeting and the nature of the business to be transacted shall be given at the Sunday worship service immediately preceding the meeting.
- E. Fifteen voting members attending a properly called voters’ meeting shall constitute a quorum. In all meetings, the majority of the votes cast shall decide the action. In the event of a tie vote, the President, or presiding officer, shall cast the deciding ballot.
- F. The order of business for semiannual voters’ meetings and meetings of the Church Council shall be as follows:
1. Opening Prayer
 2. Reading of the minutes
 3. Treasurer’s report
 4. Financial Secretary’s report
 5. Pastor’s report
 6. Reports of boards and committees

7. Unfinished business
 8. New business
 9. Adjournment with prayer
- G. In general, for purposes of order, Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, shall prevail.

Article VIII – Fiscal Year

The Fiscal Year shall be from January 1 to December 31.

Article IX – Election of Officers

A. Term of Office

1. The following officers and elders shall be elected at the Voter's Meeting in November to begin the terms January 1st of the odd numbered years.

President

Treasurer

Chairperson of the Board of Building and Grounds

Chairperson of the Board of Youth Ministry

Four Elders

2. The following officers and elders shall be elected at the Voter's Meeting in November to begin the terms January 1st of the even numbered years.

Vice-President

Financial Secretary

Secretary

Chairperson of the Board of Mission and Ministry

Chairperson of the Board of Christian Education

Chairperson of the Board of Stewardship

Four Elders

3. An officer may serve two consecutive terms in the same office.

A. The completion of an unfilled term does not count towards a member's two consecutive terms.

B. An officer may serve longer than the two terms of office if the church voting members confirm the continuance of their service.

C. Mode of election of officers

1. The nominating committee, appointed by the Church Council, shall present a slate of candidates for the Council officers and elders to Church Council for approval prior to the Voters' Meeting.
2. All candidates should be contacted for their approval before being put on the slate.
3. The nominating committee shall use the By-Laws as a job description.
4. Additional nominations may be made from the floor during the voters' meeting.
5. The election of officers and elders shall be by ballot, and the candidate receiving the majority of votes cast shall be elected.
6. Election Schedule
 - a. The Church Council shall appoint the nominating committee in September.
 - b. The nominating committee shall present the slate of candidates to the congregation at least two weeks prior to the Voter's Meeting.
7. The congregation shall fill a vacated office by electing an officer to complete the balance of the unfulfilled term.
 - a. The completion of an unfilled term does not count towards a member's two consecutive terms.

D. Assumption of Duties. The newly elected officers shall assume their duties immediately following their installation in January.

Article X – Duties of Officers

A. The President

1. Shall be the executive officer in charge of the business aspect of the church
2. Shall preside at all meetings of the Church Council and the congregation.
3. Shall perform such duties as pertain to his/her office and he/she is to be an ex-officio member of all boards and committees.
4. Congregational funds shall be subject to withdrawal, for congregational and authorized purposes, by check signed by the Treasurer or by the President of the congregation.

B. The Vice-President

1. Shall assist the President in the performance of his/her duties.
2. Shall act for and in the stead of the President in his/her absence or in the event of his/her inability to function.
3. Shall see an annual audit of all financial books is conducted in January.
4. Shall carry out any other church business as delegated by the President.
5. Shall determine whether or not a quorum is present in the transaction of legal business.

C. The Secretary

1. Shall faithfully keep and sign the minutes of all meetings of the congregation and the Church Council and enter them in a permanent record.
2. Shall keep a record of the members present at all meetings.
3. Provide minutes of the council meetings to all council members, pastor and church office secretary following each Church Council meeting.
4. Provide minutes of the Council Meetings to the congregation members upon their request.

D. The Financial Secretary

1. Shall receive all monies of the congregation, keep account and deposit all monies received, in the name of the congregation, in properly designated bank accounts.
2. Shall submit to the treasurer a full account of such deposits.
3. Shall present in the regular meetings of the Church Council and at the quarterly Voters' Meetings, a report of all monies received.
4. Shall provide each contributor with an annual statement of the contributions to be dispersed no later than January 31st.
5. Shall meet as needed with the treasurer to keep well informed about the financial condition of the congregation and do what is necessary to keep the financial affairs in good order and report to the Church Council monthly.

E. The Treasurer

1. Shall receive notice of all bank deposits of the congregation from the Financial Secretary and keep a correct account of all financial transactions
2. Shall pay all bills of the congregation as properly authorized.
3. Congregational funds shall be subject to withdrawal, for congregational and authorized purposes, by check signed by the Treasurer or by the President of the Congregation.
4. Shall render a detailed financial report in all regular meetings of the Church Council, and a written detailed financial report at the quarterly meetings of the congregation.
5. Shall meet as needed with the financial secretary to keep well informed about the financial condition of the congregation, and report to the Church Council monthly.
6. Shall prepare an annual budget and submit it to the Church Council for approval prior to the November Voters' Meeting, at which time it shall be presented for final adoption.

F. Committee Chairpersons shall do the following:

1. Report at each regular Council and Voters' Meetings. These reports shall consist of a summary of the board's activities and accomplishments.
2. Enlist congregational members to assist in said committee, then report members' names to the Church Council.
3. Prepare an annual budget of Church Council approval.
 - a. Submit any request over allotted budget to the Church Council for approval.
4. Ensure committee meets regularly and functions in accordance with the following Guidelines.

Shepherd the Flock of God

1st Peter 5:1-4 ¹So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ²shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you, not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

- 1) Once the elected elders are officially installed, the Elders shall select a Head Elder. The Head Elder shall serve as a representative on the Church Council and will serve in accordance with term limits as set forth in Church Council officers under Article 9 #3.
- 2) Elders shall meet at least monthly and any other time as necessary to consider, verify, implement and conclude business that may come before the group.
- 3) Elders shall assist the Pastor in conducting worship services and missions concerning congregational needs including visitations and telephone dialogues. Elders are to plan and conduct worship services in the event the pastor and/or guest clergy are not available.
- 4) Elders shall coordinate and work with the Altar Guild in the preparation of divine services and shall tabulate and maintain adequate supplies for services. A listing of materials (i.e. Communion wine, wafers, candles and any other needs to conduct services.) Care and laundering of altar vestments shall be coordinated with the Altar Guild. Cotton gloves are available for handling communion wares.
- 5) Elders shall attend services regularly, be an encourager in the word to our brothers and sisters in Christ and participate in bible studies and church events when possible.
- 6) Elders shall forever maintain silence in spiritual matters brought before the Pastor and Elders.
- 7) Elders are to maintain communication with the parishioners regarding services, special needs and welfare of individuals. Communications shall be via personal visitations, telephone or social networks.
- 8) Elders failing to perform and aforementioned tasks willfully or by incapacitation, shall be removed in accordance with the St. Paul's Constitution.

1Thessalonians 5:11 **Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.**

Mission and Ministry Committee shall:

- 1) Plan, promote, and implement outreach programs in the congregation and in the community.
- 2) Enlist aid in visiting prospective members of the church (i.e. manage greeter, promote new members classes, etc.)
- 3) Integrate new members into the life and work of the church.
- 4) Regarding social welfare, they shall discover the needs of individuals in the congregation and community, of the aged, of the sick, and of the poor and bring these needs to the attention of the Pastor.
- 5) Call to the attention of the congregation the welfare agencies being conducted by the church and solicit support for them.

Stewardship Committee shall:

- 1) Discover the talents of the membership and enlist them in the congregational program.
- 2) Work in close cooperation with the Circuit, District and Synod Stewardship Committee, and encourage larger attendance at Circuit meetings.
- 3) Continually reinforce a clear vision of the World's need of Christ to the congregation and how that need can be supplied.
- 4) Instruct the people in the grace of proportionate giving to God's work in their own congregation and in the world.
- 5) Aid in planning successful Mission Sundays and programs for the young and old.
- 6) Coordinate fund-raising efforts for special funding needs within the congregation.

Building and Grounds Committee shall:

- 1) Shall care for and manage all congregational property.
- 2) Shall be charged with the duty of security and reviewing insurance policies on all congregational property
- 3) Shall establish, with approval of the Church Council and the congregation, rules for the use of Church property and equipment.
- 4) Shall be authorized to spend \$100 at any time in carrying out the duties assigned to it in the document. If an expenditure is needed in excess of this amount, it shall be referred to the Church Council or Voter's Assembly, whichever is appropriate for the amount of money involved.

Christian Education Committee shall:

- 1) Establish Christian educational agencies for all age levels; cradle roll, Sunday School age, youth and adult and set up adequate objectives for each age level.
- 2) Appoint, with the Council's approval, leaders of the agencies, Sunday School Superintendent, and Vacation Bible School Superintendent.
- 3) Select and train teachers and department leaders
- 4) Provide adequate facilities, modern equipment, and suitable instructional materials.
- 5) Evaluate the program of each agency and formulate policy.
- 6) Foster home-church cooperation in Christian education.
- 7) Work with other departments to coordinate the program of Christian education with the total work of the church.

Youth Ministry Committee shall:

- 1) Identify congregational and community age groups to which youth programs can be applied
- 2) Establish Christian Fellowship programs to provide a continuous and coordinated ministry between these groups.
- 3) Provide and equip adult advisors and/or leaders to carry out these programs.
- 4) Continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the programs and revise or modify them as necessary.

NOTE:

Positions on the Boards should be filled only by available persons genuinely interested in the duties outlines. Thus, if there is no such person available for a particular position, it is not intended that the position be filled merely to satisfy this Constitution and Bylaws. However, this does not lessen the congregation's responsibility to continually search for such a person to occupy any position that may be temporarily vacant.

Article XI – Pastors

1) Method of Calling

At the time of vacancy in the office of Pastor, the congregation shall notify the Circuit Counselor or District President and request suggested procedure for calling a new Pastor. At a meeting of the congregation, constitutionally qualified for the transaction of business, candidates may be proposed by an authorized committee and/or by members from the floor. If no protest is entered and sustained, the persons nominated shall stand as recognized candidates by the entire congregation, and nominations shall be closed. The election shall be held at a subsequent meeting by ballot and the candidate receiving a majority of the votes cast shall be regarded as elected by the congregation. The Circuit Counselor of the Synodical Body with which this congregation is affiliated, or his representative, shall be present at all "call meetings" during a pastoral vacancy.

2) Pastoral Role

The Pastor's role is not to be interpreted as the chief administrator of the congregation, nor as the doer of the congregation's work. The functions of the Pastor shall be as follows:

1. To proclaim the Word of God in all its fullness
2. To lead in the Sacramental life of the congregation.
3. To work toward equipping all members of the congregation for the work of the ministry, through both the exercising of his own gifts as well as the gifts of others.
4. To share in the ministries, witness, and discipline of the congregation.

3) Dismissal

Reasons for dismissing Pastors shall be: persistent adherence to false teaching contrary to the Confessional Standard of this congregation, a scandalous life, or willful neglect of duties.

This action shall be taken only after the Pastor has been pre-advised of the charges preferred against him and given the opportunity to answer such charges, and after following the established procedure of the District, relative to such action.

4) The Pastor-Lay Relationship

The congregation has called the Pastor to be an enabler and equipper. He is to help us all even as we are to help him to deepen and broaden our understanding of what it means to be Christian people, and to move from understanding to stewardship. The Pastor should attend the Church Council and Congregational meetings. (He may attend the service auxiliary organizations as advisor, and to share in fellowship.)

Article XII – Property Rights of the Congregation

As Stated in the Constitution, Article IX.

Article XIII – Amendments

Amendments to this constitution and Bylaws must be submitted in writing to the congregation at least thirty (30) days prior to the voters' meeting in which it is to be acted upon. A two-thirds vote of the voting members present shall be required for adoption.

Bylaws revised August 12, 2014

Constitution revised November 18, 2007

