

**Trinity Lutheran Church
Constitution
Gothenburg, Nebraska**

Preamble

All power in Trinity Lutheran Church and all actions of the Congregation are to be carried out under God's rule and His authority, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We, the baptized members of the church of Christ, responding in faith to the call of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel desiring to unite together to preach the Word, administer the sacraments, and carry out God's mission, do hereby adopt this Constitution and solemnly pledge ourselves to be governed by its provisions.

Article I –Name and Incorporation

The name of this congregation is Trinity Lutheran Church (hereafter referred to as the "Congregation"). This Congregation has been organized as a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the State of Nebraska and shall be subject to Nebraska laws governing such corporations.

Article II – Confession of Faith

- 2.1 This Congregation confesses faith alone in the Triune God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- 2.2 This Congregation holds that the Gospel is the revelation of God's sovereign will and saving grace in Jesus Christ. In Him, the Word Incarnate, God imparts Himself to all humankind.
 - A. Jesus Christ is Lord of the Church. The Holy Spirit creates and sustains the Church through the Gospel and thereby unites believers with their Lord and with one another in the fellowship of faith.
 - B. The proclamation of God's message to us as both Law and Gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy through word and deed, beginning with the Word in creation, continuing in the history of Israel, and centering in all its fullness in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
 - C. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. Inspired by God's Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God's revelation centering in Jesus Christ.
 - D. It is only by the Grace of God through the redemptive act of Jesus Christ that God effects the salvation of a sinful and fallen humanity.
- 2.3 This Congregation acknowledges the Holy Scriptures as the only authoritative source and norm for the proclamation, faith and life of the Church. The Holy Scriptures are an infallible and divinely inspired record of God's redemptive act in Christ, for which the Old Testament prepared the way and which the New Testament proclaims. In the

continuation of this proclamation in the Church, God still speaks through the Holy Scriptures and realizes His redemptive purpose generation after generation.

- 2.4 This Congregation accepts the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of the Church.
- 2.5 This Congregation accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism as true and valid witnesses to the Gospel, and acknowledges itself as one in faith and doctrine with all churches that likewise accept the teachings of these symbols.
- 2.6 This Congregation accepts the other symbolic books of the evangelical Lutheran church, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, Luther's Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, as further valid interpretations of the confession of the church, as further defined in Appendix A.
- 2.7 This Congregation affirms that the Gospel transmitted by the Holy Scriptures to which the creeds and confessions bear witness, is the true treasure of the Church, the substance of its proclamation, and the basis of its unity and continuity. The Holy Spirit uses the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship. As this occurs, the Church fulfills its divine mission and purpose.
- 2.8 This Congregation subscribes to the "Common Confession" as a further definition of its statement of purpose and faith, as outlined in Appendix B.

Article III –Nature of the Church

- 3.1 The Church is the universal assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. (Augsburg Confession VII) And in Matthew 28, Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
- 3.2 Those who receive the Gospel are a people, called and sent by God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to be a community of faith, hope and love, who witness to Christ and His coming Kingdom before the whole world. As part of our God-given mission, this Congregation shall constantly strive to be disciples of the living Christ through the following actions:
 - A. Pray daily, as the Apostles were in constant prayer (Acts 6:4, 1 Thess 5:16-18),

praying for all things and all people as we are commanded (Philippians 4:6)

- B. Engage in Weekly worship of praise to God as a community of believers and a family of God, where we pray, study the Holy Scriptures, praise God, and receive the Sacraments (Luke 24:52).
- C. Read the Scriptures on a regular basis, knowing that they are the first exposition of the Christian faith handed down throughout the ages and entrusted to us to know, teach, and pass on to future generations (1 Timothy 4:13, 2 Timothy 3:16).
- D. Share the Gospel with all who have not heard the marvelous news of the redemption through Christ Jesus (Matthew 28:16-20).
- E. Relate to one another as a family of God, not only maintaining accountability and mutual exhortation with one another to repent and seek God's will, but also working together with one another for the sake of the kingdom of God (3 John 1:5-8, Hebrews 3:13).
- F. Give generously of our time, our talents, and our treasures, especially as we see need throughout the world that we are gifted to fulfill (Matthew 10:8, Romans 12:4-8).

3.3 This Congregation shall develop an organizational structure to be described in the Bylaws Articles III and IV.

Article IV –Church Affiliation

- 4.1 This Congregation shall be a member Congregation of the North American Lutheran Church ("NALC") and Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ ("LCMC") or their successors. As long as this Congregation remains a member Congregation of the NALC and LCMC, it agrees to financially support and participate in their life and mission. This Congregation subscribes to the constitution of the NALC and will act in accordance with it.
- 4.2 While this Congregation is a member of both the NALC (or its successor) and LCMC (or its successor), this Congregation may terminate its relationship with either the NALC (or its successor) or LCMC (or its successor) by the affirmative vote of a majority of the voting members present and voting at a meeting of this Congregation as long as the notice of the meeting indicates that this matter will be considered.
- 4.3 If this Congregation ceases to be a member of either the NALC (or its successor) or LCMC (or its successor), whether as a result of terminating its relationship as provided in Article 4.2 or for any other reason, this Congregation may terminate its relationship with

the other organization (or its successor) only as provided in this Article 4.2 The Congregation's relationship with the other organization (or its successor) may be terminated by the affirmative vote of two thirds of the voting members present and voting at two special meetings of this Congregation called for that purpose. The second special meeting must be at least 45 days after the first meeting. Notice of the second meeting, stating the time, place and purpose of the meeting, shall be mailed, either electronically or by U.S. postal service, to all voting members at least 30 days in advance of the meeting.

Article V –Property Ownership

- 5.1 This Congregation shall own its property.
- 5.2 If this Congregation is removed from membership in any denomination, title to its property shall continue to reside in this Congregation.
- 5.3 If this Congregation terminates its relationship with any denomination, title to the property of this Congregation shall, in all events, continue to reside with this Congregation regardless of whether it becomes independent or relates to another Lutheran or other denomination. This provision shall prevail even if it is in conflict with the provisions of the constitution of a denomination to which this Congregation belongs.
- 5.4 No real estate property shall be purchased unless approved by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the voting members present and voting at a legally called meeting of this Congregation.
- 5.5 No real property acquired for the purpose of or used for public worship services or other ministries of this Congregation, shall be sold or otherwise disposed of, or encumbered in any manner unless approved by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the voting members present and voting at a legally called meeting of this Congregation.

Article VI –Membership

Members of this Congregation shall be those baptized individuals on the roll of this Congregation at the time that this Constitution is adopted and those individuals who are admitted thereafter and who have declared and maintained their membership in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Congregation.

- 6.1 Baptized Members. Those individuals who have been received by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism in this Congregation or, having been previously baptized in the name of the Triune God, have been received by certificate of transfer from a Lutheran Congregation which accepts the Confession of Faith set forth in Article II of this Constitution or by affirmation of faith.

- 6.2 Confirmed Members. Those individuals who are baptized members and have been confirmed by catechism in this Congregation, those who have been received by adult baptism or by transfer as confirmed members from a Lutheran Congregation AND accept the Confession of Faith set forth in Article II of this Constitution, or baptized individuals received by affirmation of faith.
- 6.3 Associate members. Those individuals holding membership in other Christian Congregations who wish to retain such membership but desire to participate in the life and mission of this Congregation. Associate members shall also subscribe to the Confession of Faith outlined in Article II, as well as the other provisions of this Constitution. They have all the privileges and duties of membership except voting rights and eligibility for elected offices or membership on the Church Council of this Congregation.
- 6.4 Active Members. Active members are the voting members: Members who are eligible to hold office, serve on Council, vote in all meetings of the Congregation, and who are confirmed members of this Congregation who have communed at least 6 times and made a financial contribution of record to the Congregation within the last year.
 - a. For Members who have joined within the last 6 months, they must have communed at least once for each month of membership, and made a contribution of record, to satisfy the Active membership definition.
 - b. Removal from active membership shall occur when an active member fails to meet the requirements outlined. The Council shall annually review the active membership list and contact those who have not met the requirements within the past year.
 - c. Removal from membership can occur by any one of the following:
Death.
Resignation.
Transfer or release of membership.
Removal from the roles due to disciplinary action as outlined in Article IX.

Article VII –Powers and Limitations of the Congregation

- 7.1 The Congregation as a body shall have supreme power in the internal and external administration and management of its own ecclesiastical and Congregational affairs. The ultimate right to choose and call a Pastor and the right to elect officers shall reside with the Congregation. The right to enact Bylaws which are not in conflict with this Constitution may be carried out at any regularly called meeting of the Congregation. The procedures for these powers shall be specified in the Bylaws.

- 7.2 No decision, enactment, or performance of any individual or committee on behalf of the Congregation shall be valid unless otherwise specified in the Bylaws or unless enacted or performed according to a general or special power conferred by the Congregation. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Congregation shall not be empowered to order, enact, or decide anything contrary to Articles II and III of this Constitution and any such ordinance or enactment shall be null and void.
- 7.3 The officers of this Congregation shall be: President, Vice President, Secretary, Financial Secretary, and Treasurer. No officer shall have any authority beyond that which has been conferred upon him or her by the Congregation, subject to change or revision by the Congregation. Normal duties of the officers of the Congregation shall be specified in the Bylaws (Article III).

Article VIII –Pastoral Staff

The Pastoral Staff of the Congregation shall only be those ordained ministers or candidates for the Ministry who declare their belief in and accept the Confession of Faith enumerated in Article II of this Constitution. Each and every member of the Pastoral Staff accepting a call extended by the Congregation shall pledge to preach and teach in accordance with the Confession of Faith enumerated in Article II herein. Pastoral Assistants authorized by the NALC, the Great Plains Mission District of the NALC, or the LCMC may be authorized to aid in the ministry of the Congregation, with the understanding that they shall also subscribe to the Confession of Faith enumerated in Article II.

Bylaw 5.14 and Bylaw Appendix B specifies the procedure on how this congregation shall call a Pastor. A Pastoral call team will be formed upon the resignation of a Pastor or the need to call a new Pastor. In the event of a Pastoral resignation, notice shall be given to the congregational President and the Council 30 days before the effective end of the call.

Article IX –Discipline of Members

the Congregation may expel any communicant member by unanimous vote of all voting members present at a meeting of the Congregation for sufficient cause and after a fruitless admonition according to the various grades prescribed by the Word of God (Matthew 18:15-20). The call of this meeting shall not take place before the following procedures are followed.

- 9.1 Any reason for discipline of members must be specifically stated in detail to the accused at the first meeting or consultation in accord with Matthew 18, and the person(s) making the accusation must make them in person to the accused.
- 9.2 The offenses for which a confirmed member of this Congregation shall be subject to discipline are: denial of the Christian faith as described in this constitution; immoral or

scandalous conduct and, in general, continued behavior that is grossly unbecoming a member of the church of Christ.

9.3 Discipline shall be administered by the Congregation with the right of appeal to the Dean of the Mission District of the NALC. The procedure which Christ instructed His disciples to follow (Matthew 18:15-17) shall be adhered to in every case, proceeding through these successive steps: 1) private admonition by the Pastor in accord with 9.1, 2) admonition by the Pastor in the presence of two or three witnesses, and 3) citation to appear before the Congregation at a regularly called meeting as outlined in Article X. Should any of these successive steps resolve the matter, no further action shall be deemed necessary.

The member proposed for expulsion shall not be allowed to vote on the question. An expelled individual shall lose all rights as a member of the Congregation and all claims upon the property of the Congregation as such, or any part thereof, so long as he or she is not readmitted to membership. This same rule shall apply to those members who refuse to submit to church discipline and thus excommunicate themselves and to those members who may sever their connection with the Congregation by removal to another place.

Article X – Congregational Meetings

10.1 The annual meeting of this Congregation shall be held at a time specified in the by-laws (Bylaw 2.2).

10.2 A special Congregational meeting may be called by the Pastor, the Congregation Council, or the President of this Congregation, and shall be called by the President of the Congregation upon the written request of ten (10) percent of the voting members. The call for each special meeting shall specify the purpose for which it is to be held and no other business shall be transacted.

10.3 Notice of all meetings of the Congregation shall be given at the services of worship on the preceding two (2) consecutive Sundays and either through the Postal service or electronic mail to all voting members at least ten (10) days in advance of the date of the meeting. The posting of such notice in the regular mail, with the regular postage affixed or paid, sent to the last known address, or by electronic mail to the address on file of such members shall be sufficient.

10.4 A quorum shall be those voting members (Constitution 6.4) present at any legally called Congregation Meeting.

- 10.5 Voting by proxy or by absentee ballot shall not be permitted.
- 10.6 All actions approved by the Congregation shall be by majority vote of those voting members present and voting, except as otherwise provided in this constitution or by state law.
- 10.7 When a member of the church council is elected to an officer position, the partial term (if any) served by that member shall not count toward the two term limit. (See Constitution 11:3)
- 10.8 Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition shall cover all parliamentary procedure of all meetings of this Congregation.

Article XI - Church Council

- 11.1 The voting membership of the Church Council shall consist of the Pastor(s), and 9 other members of the Congregation. If the treasurer is not elected from the membership of the Church, the treasurer shall have voice but not vote. Any voting member of the Congregation may be elected, subject only to the limitation on the length of continuous service permitted in that office. A member's place on the Church Council shall be declared vacant if the member a) ceases to be a voting member of this Congregation or b) is absent from four successive regular meetings of the Church Council without cause. Spouses shall not be permitted to serve concurrent terms. Consistent with the laws of the state in which this Congregation is incorporated, the Congregation may adopt procedures for the removal of a member of the Church Council in other circumstances.
- 11.2 The members of the Church Council except the Pastor(s) shall be elected by majority vote at the annual meeting of the Congregation normally to be held on a date specified in the Bylaws (see Bylaw 2.2). They shall serve terms of 3 years or until their successors are elected. Their terms shall begin on the Sunday immediately after the meeting at which they are elected. Newly elected Church Council members shall be installed at worship on any Sunday as soon as is practical after the date they assume office. Members shall be eligible to serve no more than two full terms consecutively. Terms shall be staggered in order that each year, 3 members of the council shall be elected by the Congregation. An additional member with voice but not vote may be appointed from among the confirmed membership of the youth organization. This appointment shall be for a one year term beginning at the close of the annual meeting of the Congregation. This appointment shall be made by the youth organization. If this position is unappointed, it shall remain vacant for that year.

11.3 Any Church Council member may resign from his or her office at any time by giving written notice to the Chairman of the Church Council or the Secretary, upon which such resignation shall become effective. The acceptance of such resignation shall not be necessary to make it effective. Should a member's place on the Church Council be declared vacant, the Church Council shall elect, by majority vote, a successor until the next annual meeting. The partial term served by Council appointment shall not be considered a part of the two term limit.

11.4 The Church Council shall have general oversight of the life and activities of this Congregation, and in particular its worship life, to the end that everything be done in accordance with the Word of God, the Lutheran Confessions and the faith and practice of the NALC and LCMC. The duties of the Church Council shall include the following:

- A. To lead this Congregation in stating its mission, to do long-range planning, to set goals and priorities, and to evaluate its activities in light of its mission and goals.
- B. To seek to involve all members of this Congregation in worship, learning, witness, service, and support.
- C. To oversee and provide for the administration of this Congregation to enable it to fulfill its functions and perform its mission.
- D. To maintain supportive relationships with the Pastor(s) and staff and help them annually to evaluate the fulfillment of their calling or employment.
- E. To be examples individually and corporately of the style of life and ministry expected of all baptized persons.
- F. To promote a Congregational climate of peace and goodwill, and, as differences and conflicts arise, to foster resolution of such conflicts according to Biblical principles.
- G. To arrange for Pastoral service during the sickness or absence of the Pastor.
- H. To emphasize partnership with the NALC and LCMC as well as cooperation with other Christian Congregations, both Lutheran and non-Lutheran.
- I. To seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel.

11.5 The Church Council shall be responsible for the financial and property matters of this Congregation.

- A. The Church Council shall be the board of directors of this Congregation, and as such shall be responsible for maintaining and protecting its property and the management of its business and fiscal affairs. It shall have the powers and be subject to the obligations that pertain to such boards under the laws of the State of Nebraska, except as otherwise provided herein.

- B. The Church Council shall not have the authority to buy, sell, or encumber real property unless specifically authorized to do so by a meeting of the Congregation.
- C. The Church Council may enter into contracts of up to an amount specified in the Bylaws (see Bylaw 6.1) for items not included in the budget.
- D. The Church Council shall prepare an annual budget for adoption by this Congregation, shall supervise the expenditure of funds in accordance therewith following its adoption.
- E. The Church Council shall ascertain that the financial affairs of this Congregation are being conducted efficiently, giving particular attention to the prompt payment of all obligations and to the regular forwarding of benevolence monies to designated recipients. The Council shall also determine the level of and provide for an annual independent review of all church financial records.
- F. The Church Council shall be responsible for this Congregation's investments and its total insurance program.

11.6 The Church Council shall see that the provisions of this constitution and of the Congregation's Bylaws, policies, and continuing resolutions are carried out.

11.7 The Church Council shall provide for an annual review of the membership roster.

11.8 The Church Council shall be responsible for the employment and supervision of the salaried lay workers of this Congregation.

11.9 The Church Council shall submit a comprehensive report to this Congregation at the annual meeting.

11.10 The Church Council shall normally meet once a month. Meetings are normally open to all members. Special meetings may be called by the Pastor or the President, and shall be called by the President at the request of at least twenty (20) percent of the Council members. Notice of each special meeting shall be given to all who are entitled to be present.

11.11 A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of a majority of the members of the Church Council. In addition, the Pastor or interim Pastor must be present, except when the Pastor or interim Pastor requests or consents to be absent and has given prior approval to the agenda for a particular regular or special meeting, or with the consent of the Dean of the NALC. In such a circumstance, the Church Council may not conduct any business beyond that which was included on the agenda as approved by the Pastor, interim Pastor,

Bishop or Dean, as applicable. Chronic or repeated absence of the Pastor or interim Pastor who has refused approval of the agenda of a subsequent regular or special meeting shall not preclude action by the Church Council.

Article XII - Amendments to the Constitution

This Constitution may be amended or repealed by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of all voting members present at two consecutive meetings of the Congregation.

Article XIII - Adoption of the Constitution

This Constitution shall be considered adopted and in immediate effect upon an affirmative vote by two-thirds of all voting members present at a meeting of the Congregation. The adoption of this Constitution shall abolish, supersede, and take the place of any and all constitutions and Bylaws, and any and all amendments thereto, that preceded it.

Article XIV - Indemnification

Consistent with the provisions of the laws under which this congregation is incorporated, this congregation may adopt provisions providing indemnification for each person who, by reason of the fact that such person is or was a Church Council member, officer, employee, agent, or other member of any committee of this congregation, was or is threatened to be made a party to any threatened, pending, or completed civil, criminal, administrative, arbitration, or investigative proceeding.

The undersigned, the President and Secretary of the Congregation, hereby certify that the above is the true and accurate Constitution of the Congregation as adopted by the voting members of the Congregation on April 3, 2016.

President

Secretary

Appendix A: Definition of Certain Historical References

The “Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments” are the books of the Bible accepted by the early church leaders as meeting the “canon” or measuring rule to be authentic witnesses to the mighty works of God. The Roman Catholic Church adds some books to the Bible called “the Apocrypha.” Most Protestant leaders say that those books are good for devotional reading and historical perspective, but do not meet the canon.

The **Book of Concord** or **Concordia** is a collection of writings from the Lutheran Reformation. All of the writings of the reformers, except the creeds themselves, are written between 1530 and 1580. The Book of Concord was first published in 1580. The Book of Concord, or the “confessional writings,” are not to be considered as equal to the Scriptures. In fact, Luther himself said that Scripture always trumps his writings.

- A. The **Creeds** are confessions of faith written by church leaders at particular times during the early church. The three “chief symbols” or creeds are the Apostles’, the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creed, with the Nicene being the earliest.
- B. The **Unaltered Augsburg Confession** was written in June, 1530, as a “confession of faith” presented in Augsburg, Germany by certain princes and cities to Emperor Charles V. The Lutheran movement was being called into question by the Roman Catholic Church. This paper was written as a unified Lutheran statement. In it there were 21 statements of agreement to what was held in the common belief with the church throughout history and there were 7 statements of disagreement with the Catholic Church.
- C. The **Apology of the Augsburg Confession**: In this context, the word “apology” means “in defense of.” After the Augsburg Confession was written and read before the emperor, the Roman Catholic leaders drafted a “Roman Confutation” which was said to refute the position of the Lutherans as stated in the Augsburg Confession. The Lutheran reformers, without having a text of the Roman Catholic paper, wrote a defense of the Augsburg Confession. It contains the same number of topics as the Augsburg Confession.
- D. The **Smalcald Articles** were written by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther in the year 1537 as a paper describing what was acceptable and what was not acceptable in church practice and theology.
- E. The **Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope** was actually written by Philip Melanchthon, upon the direction of several clergy in 1537 to address the power that was

being demonstrated by the Pope. This paper condemned the abuses that were being carried out by the papacy and sought to limit the power and jurisdiction of the Pope and others with ecclesiastical power, only insofar as we all answer and are subordinate to Christ Jesus.

- F. The **Large Catechism** was written by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther 1529-1530 as a tool for Pastors and preachers to use in teaching to their Congregations.
- G. The **Small Catechism** was also written by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther in 1529 as a tool for parents to teach the Christian faith to their children.
- H. The **Formula of Concord** was agreed to in its final form in 1577. This was after the death of Martin Luther and after the military defeat of 1547, a series of controversies about the “pure doctrine” of the reformation threatened to split the Lutherans into two camps who followed different leaders: Martin Luther and Philip Melanchthon, despite that Luther and Melanchthon were friends and colleagues. This rift was resolved through a process of statements and discussions that culminated in the written statement now called “The Formula of Concord.”

Appendix B: The Common Confession

1. The Lord Jesus Christ

We are people who believe and confess our faith in the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We trust and believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.

2. The Gospel of Salvation

We believe and confess that all human beings are sinners, and that sinners are redeemed by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God alone justifies human beings by faith in Christ—a faith that God creates through the message of the Gospel. As ambassadors for Christ, God uses us to speak His Word and build His kingdom.

3. The Authority of Scripture

We believe and confess that the Bible is God's revealed Word to us, spoken in Law and Gospel. The Bible is the final authority for us in all matters of our faith and life.

4. A Common Confession of Faith

We accept and uphold that the Lutheran Confessions reliably guide us as faithful interpretations of Scripture, and that we share a unity and fellowship in faith with others among whom the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached and the sacraments are administered in accordance with the Gospel.

5. The Priesthood of All Believers

We believe and confess that the Holy Spirit makes all who believe in Jesus Christ to be priests for service to others in Jesus' name, and that God desires to make use of the spiritual gifts he has given through the priesthood of all believers.

6. Marriage and Family

We believe and confess that the marriage of male and female is an institution created and blessed by God. From marriage, God forms families to serve as the building blocks of all human civilization and community. We teach and practice that sexual activity belongs exclusively

within the Biblical boundaries of a faithful marriage between one man and one woman.

7. The Mission and Ministry of the Congregation

We believe and confess that the church is the assembly of believers called and gathered by God around Word and Sacrament, and that the mission and ministry of the church is carried out within the context of individual Congregations, which are able to work together locally and globally.