

St. Matthew Ev. Lutheran Church, Pound, WI
Constitution



Our Mission

Since 1877 St. Matthew Ev. Lutheran Church has been committed to sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ as savior from the curse of sin and death. Through his sacrifice on the cross he atoned for the sins of the world. His resurrection from the dead assures all who believe in him that they have the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life.

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Table of Contents

Titles		Page
Preamble		1
Constitution		
Article I	St. Matthew Ev. Lutheran Church	1
Article II	Articles of Faith	1
Article III	Purpose and Objectives	2
Article IV	Church Affiliation	2
Article V	Church Membership	2
Article VI	Powers and Rights of the Congregation	4
Article VII	The Public Ministry	5
Article VIII	Officers of the Congregation	5
Article IX	Removal from Office	6
Article X	Meetings of the Congregation	6
Article XI	Separation of Dissolution	6
Article XII	Repeals and Alterations	6
By-Laws		
Article I	Meetings of the Congregation	7
Article II	Quorum	8
Article III	The Church Council	8
Article IV	Committees of the Church Council	10
Article V	Duties of Officers	10
Article VI	Election of Church Officers	11
Article VII	Reception into Membership	11
Article VIII	Transfer, Release or Removal from Membership	12
Article IX	Repeals and Amendments By-Laws	12

Preamble

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

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

RESOLVED, that we, a congregation of Lutheran Christians at St. Matthew Ev. Lutheran Church Pound, Wisconsin do herewith, in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and by subscribing our names hereto, adopt the following CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS.

Constitution**Article I**

The name of this congregation shall be St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church

Article II Articles of Faith**Section 1.**

This congregation accepts and confesses all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God and submits to this Word as the only infallible authority of all matters of faith and life (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

Section 2.

This congregation accepts and confesses all the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of 1580 as true statements of scriptural doctrine. They are:

- A. The three ecumenical Creeds
 - 1) The Apostles'
 - 2) The Nicene
 - 3) The Athanasian
- B. The six Lutheran Confessions
 - 1) Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism
 - 2) The Apology of the Augsburg Confession
 - 3) The Smalcald Articles
 - 4) The Formula of Concord
 - 5) Dr. Martin Luther's Large Catechism
 - 6) The Unaltered Augsburg Confession

Section 3.

This congregation accepts and confesses these symbolical books without reservation, not insofar as, but because they are the presentation and explanation of the pure doctrine of the Word of God and a summary of the faith held by the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Section 4.

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

Section 5.

All controversies which may arise in this congregation shall be decided and adjusted according to this norm of doctrine and practice.

Article III Purpose and Objectives**Section 1.**

The continuing purpose of this congregation, as a gathering of Christians, is to serve all people in God's world with the gospel of Jesus Christ on the basis of the Holy Scriptures (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15).

Section 2.

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

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

Article IV Church Affiliation

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

Article V Church Membership**Section 1. Classification**

- A. Baptized members of the congregation are those who have been baptized into the Christian faith in the name of the Triune God (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:16).
- B. Communicant members are those baptized souls who confess Jesus Christ to be their Lord and Savior and have stated their adherence to all the canonical books of the Old and New Testament, without qualification, as the only rule and norm of faith and life, and have declared their agreement with the chief parts of Christian doctrine as written in Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism.
- C. Voting members are those male communicant members minimum age 15 (1 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:12) who have declared their agreement with this Constitution by their signatures and who have been received by the voters' assembly of the congregation.

Section 2. Privileges and Responsibilities

"God is love" (1 John 4:8), and his love ever moves him to bless the members of his church with physical and spiritual gifts (1 John 3:1; James 1:17). In return for all of these undeserved blessings, we love him (1 John 4:19) and show that love with the works that we do. The exercise of such love we acknowledge as both a privilege and a responsibility. Some of the privileges and responsibilities to be noted are the following:

- A. Our God has given us his Word, the one thing needful (Luke 10:42), which alone save our souls and tell us how to live a God-pleasing life (2 Timothy 3:15-17). Consequently, members of his church will consider it a distinct privilege and a responsibility to
 - 1) Hear and receive the Word of God diligently (Luke 11:28).
 - 2) Provide and promote opportunities for Christian education (2 Peter 3:18).
 - 3) Bring up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).
 - 4) Share the gospel with all people (Acts 1:8).
- B. Our God has given us two sacraments: Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, which are means that our Lord uses to bring his grace to us. Consequently, members of his church will
 - 1) Have their children baptized early in life, for "baptism now saves you also" (1 Peter 3:21).
 - 2) Frequently partake of Holy Communion (1 Corinthians 11:23-26), if they are recognized as such who can properly examine themselves (1 Corinthians 11:28). Only those in our confessional fellowship of faith are permitted to commune at our altar. (Close Communion—1 Corinthians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 6:14-15; Romans 16:17).
- C. Our God has given us the privilege and responsibility of being managers over a certain portion of his estate and assures us he will graciously bless our faithful management (2 Corinthians 9:6). Therefore members of his church will under grace
 - 1) Continually remember that all their possessions, time and abilities are really a trust from God.
 - 2) Cheerfully decide in their hearts (2 Corinthians 9:7) the portion of their possessions and time and abilities which they will regularly devote to the Lord for use in carrying out that which the congregation has made its concern, not omitting the work of the church-at-large (Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 9:14; 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-11; 1 Peter 4:10).
 - 3) If eligible, become voting members and regularly attend the voters' meeting and lend the congregation their counsel and aid.
- D. Our God has implanted within us Christians the new man, who desires to live Christian life (Galatians 5:22-25).
 - 1) Not live in obvious acts of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:19-21), but lead a Christian life (Galatians 5: 22-25).
 - 2) When they have erred, permit themselves to be admonished and corrected by their fellow Christians in the spirit of Matthew 18:15-18.

- 3) Refuse to hold membership in any organization whose teachings and practices conflict with the Word of God (e.g. lodges) (John 5:23; 8:31,32; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Section 3. Church Discipline and Excommunication

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

Section 4. Termination of Fellowship

Members who persist in an error that in itself does not make the presence of saving faith impossible and who otherwise are not under church discipline (cf. Article V, Section 2, D, and Section 3) may be excluded from the fellowship of this congregation

- a) after they have been evangelically admonished by their fellow Christians in the spirit of Matthew 18:15-16; and
- b) when their adherence to error becomes public and a matter of divisiveness (Titus 3:10) and thus an offense and obstacle to the truth of God's Word (Romans 16:17).

This action shall not be used for removing inactive members or as a substitute for the loving act of excommunication when impenitence is clearly evident.

Section 5. Loss of Rights and Privileges

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

Section 6. Reinstatement

When, by the grace of God, a person who has been excommunicated or whose fellowship has been terminated repents of his sin, he is to be reinstated with all former rights and privileges of this congregation (2 Corinthians 2:6-8).

Article VI Powers and Rights of the Congregation

Section 1.

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

Section 2.

In all matters not decided by the Word of God the congregation, represented by the voters' assembly, shall have the right of decision (Romans 12:10; 14:19; Ephesians 5:21).

Section 3.

The church council, any other elected committee or organization within the congregation, and any of its elected or appointed officers shall have no power or authority beyond that conferred upon them by the congregation. However, the church council in an emergency may act in the

name and for the welfare of the congregation. Such action must be submitted for approval at the next voters' meeting.

Section 4.

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

Article VII The Public Ministry

Section 1.

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

Section 2.

The office of pastor in this congregation shall be conferred only upon such men who are qualified for this ministry and publicly and without reservation profess their acceptance of and adherence to Article II of this Constitution, and such acceptance and adherence shall be required of them in the call extended by the congregation (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9).

Section 3.

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

Section 4.

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

Article VIII Officers of the Congregation

Section 1.

The first New Testament congregation at Jerusalem chose men "full of the Spirit and wisdom" (Acts 6:1-6) to aid the apostles in the administration of its affairs. This congregation shall choose officers and those officers will seek assistance from the membership to fill the needs of committees. (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

Section 2.

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

Section 3.

The respect and esteem of the congregation are due these officers in the performance of their duties, and they shall be given its cooperation. They shall conduct themselves in a manner befitting their responsible office (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

Article IX Removal from Office

Section 1.

If anyone who holds an office in the congregation willfully neglects his duty and upon due admonition does not amend, the congregation has the right and eventually the duty to remove him from office and to elect another in his place (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

Section 2.

Sufficient and urgent causes for removing a pastor, a teacher, or a staff minister are persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, willful neglect of duty or established inability to perform the duties of his office (1 Timothy 3: 1-7; Titus 1:6-9). In such a case the advice and good counsel of the appropriate district officer shall be sought.

Article X Meetings of the Congregation

Meetings of this congregation shall be held at such times and in such manner as stated in the By-laws. The meetings shall give the voters of this congregation the opportunity to hear, discuss and take necessary action in matters pertaining to the welfare of this congregation and of the church-at-large.

Article XI Separation or Dissolution

Section 1.

If at any time a separation should occur in this congregation, the property and all equipment of this congregation shall remain with that portion of the membership which adheres to this Constitution, regardless of number.

Section 2.

In the event of termination or dissolution of the congregation, the church council shall, after paying or making provision for the payment of all the liabilities of the congregation, dispose of its remaining assets, if any, exclusively for the purposes of the congregation, by distributing, at the direction of the voters' assembly, the remaining assets to (and only to) one or more organizations with which the congregation is in fellowship, which shall at the time qualify as exempt organization(s) (under section 501 (c) 3 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Code).

Article XII Repeals and Alterations

Section 1.

Articles II, III, IV, V, VI, Sections 1 and 2, VII, Sections 1-3, VIII, Sections 1 and 3, IX and XII, Section 1 of this Constitution shall be and remain unalterable and irrevocable, inasmuch as they express clear, scriptural teachings.

Section 2.

Proposals to alter or repeal any alterable or repealable article of this Constitution or to add an article shall be submitted in writing to the church council, and shall be publicly announced on two Sundays immediately preceding a regular business meeting of the voters' assembly and posted in the church during that period.

Section 3.

Such a proposal shall be discussed in the meeting in which it is presented and voted on in the next regular meeting of the voters' assembly.

Section 4.

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

Section 5.

Any and all By-laws may be repealed or amended by a majority vote of the voting members present at any regular meeting, provided that public notice of this proposed action shall have been given the congregation on at least two Sundays prior to the time of the meeting, and provided that the proposed amendment has been submitted in writing to the church council for its study and recommendation.

By-laws**Article I Meetings of the Congregation****Section 1.**

At, or shortly following, the beginning of each quarter of the calendar year a regular meeting of the congregation's voters shall be held.

Section 2.

The church council shall set the exact date, time and place of the meetings, unless otherwise specified by the congregation. Announcements of the meetings shall be given in print and/or orally or on the Church Website(stmatthewchurchpound.com) on at least two weeks prior to the time of the meeting.

Section 3.

Special meetings of the congregation may be called by the church council, or the pastor, or upon written request of three voting members. Such meetings must be announced according to the general rule set forth in Section 2 with the purpose(s) clearly stated.

Section 4.

The regular January meeting shall be designated as the annual meeting.

Section 5.

The order of business for the regular meetings may be as follows:

- A. Opening with a devotion
- B. Reading and approval of minutes of the previous regular and any intervening special meetings
- C. Reception of new members; transfer, release or removal from membership
- D. Ministry reports and recommendations (outreach, adult spiritual growth, etc.)
- E. Unfinished business

- F. Recommendations of the church council, committees and new business
- G. Elections
- H. Financial reports
- I. Adjournment with prayer

Section 6.

The meetings shall be conducted according to good, Christian order. Robert's Rules of Order may be followed for parliamentary procedure.

Section 7.

No one shall bring to any meeting a charge or complaint against any member or against a pastor, a teacher, or a staff minister unless he has first admonished him in a Christian manner in the spirit of Matthew 18:15-20.

Section 8.

Only voting members present at the meeting shall have the right to vote.

Section 9.

Voting membership shall be restricted to male communicant members who have reached the age of fifteen (15).

Section 10.

Voting members shall sign, thereby indicating their acceptance, the official copy of the Constitution and By-laws at the meeting of the congregation in which they were received or as soon thereafter as possible.

Article II Quorum

The voting members present at a properly announced meeting of the congregation shall constitute a quorum.

Article III The Church Council**Section 1. Structure and Powers**

- 1.1 The voters' assembly shall elect by a called vote of acceptance or opposed at its annual meeting, specified in the By-laws, Article I, a church council composed of as many members (but not fewer than the number of corporate officers required by state law) as the voters' assembly by resolution shall from time to time determine.
- 1.2 The church council shall control the corporate property of the congregation according to the direction given to it by the voters' assembly. The church council is hereby empowered to borrow money, pledge the assets of the congregation, sell, lease or otherwise dispose of the real and personal property of the congregation all at the direction of the voters' assembly. It shall also have the right to acquire property by any legal means as directed by the voters' assembly. The president and the secretary (or the treasurer, in the secretary's absence) are hereby designated as the persons who shall sign all documents of the congregation.

- 1.3 The term of one member shall expire each year if possible, such expired terms to be filled by election at the annual meeting of the voters' assembly. Each member shall serve until his successor is installed.
- 1.4 The pastor shall be an ex-officio member of the church council. The principal of the school and any staff minister may be advisory members of the church council.

Section 2. Term of Office

The term of office for each council member shall be five years. He shall again be eligible for election to the council one year after the expiration of his term.

Section 3. Organization

Not later than ten days following the annual meeting of the voters' assembly the church council shall meet to elect from its own members a president, a secretary, trustee, sexton and a treasurer. Chairmen of the committees will be appointed by the Pastor and Council President.

Section 4. Installation

As soon as possible after the election and organization, the new members of the church council shall be installed in office at a regular service and shall thus be presented to the congregation.

Section 5. Meetings

The church council shall meet regularly, normally two (2) weeks prior to quarterly meeting. Special meetings may be called by the Pastor or the President. The council shall not convene to transact business without the knowledge of the Pastor. A majority of the members of the council shall constitute a quorum.

Section 6. Responsibilities

The members of the church council shall adorn their high office with a godly way of life and be good examples to the congregation (1 Timothy 3:8-12). They shall be responsible for the spiritual and material affairs of the congregation under the guidance of the pastor. They shall be accountable for good order in the services. They shall particularly care in love for their fellow members who have special needs (Galatians 6:9-10). The members of the church council shall consult together concerning the total spiritual and physical well-being of the congregation giving due attention also to the work of the Lord in the church-at-large. The church council shall implement resolutions of the voters' assembly and carry out such assignments as are directed to it by the voters' assembly. It shall recommend to the voters' assembly the annual budget of the congregation.

Section 7. Council Vacancies

In the event of a vacancy on the church council, the vacancy shall be filled at the next meeting of the voters' assembly by a called vote for acceptance or opposed from a list of candidates proposed by the Nominating Committee. Such newly-elected officers shall normally be installed the Sunday following their election. The church council may appoint a person to fill the vacancy until the election occurs.

Article IV Committees of the Church Council

The Pastor and the Council President, as the need arises, will call upon members of the congregation to Chair and assist in the work of said committee.

Section 8. Ex Officio Membership

The Pastor and president by virtue of their offices are members of all boards and committees and are to be informed of all meetings of all committees so that they may attend if they desire to do so.

Article V Duties of Officers

Section 1. President

The President shall preside as chairman of all business sessions of the congregation and church council and shall perform such other duties as may be assigned to him. He shall have general supervision of the affairs of the congregation and conduct all its business affairs according to established good order. He shall sign all deeds, mortgages, notes, leases, and all other legal documents directed to be executed by the congregation. He shall assure that the congregation's financial records are audited annually and that a report of the audit is presented to the voters at the meeting following the close of the fiscal year. In the absence of the president, the council shall appoint a temporary chairman. The President is an ex officio member of all boards and committees.

Section 2. Secretary

The Secretary shall record accurately the proceedings of all meetings of the congregation and the church council. He shall be responsible for the legal records of the congregation. He shall have the authority to countersign all deeds, mortgages, notes, leases, and all other legal documents executed by the congregation and assist in the orderly conduct of its business affairs according to established good order. He shall also perform such other duties as may be assigned to him by the congregation.

3. Treasurer

The Treasurer shall receive from the Financial Secretary a quarterly report of all monies received and credit the same to the proper accounts. The Treasurer or Financial Secretary is responsible for the deposit of contributions in the proper banking accounts and reconciliation of those accounts. He shall make disbursements according to instructions from the church council as directed by the congregation. He shall make quarterly financial reports to the church council, and to the voters' assembly, and special reports whenever the council shall so request. He shall submit his records annually for audit or at any time the voters' assembly so desires. In the absence of the Secretary, he shall have the authority to countersign legal documents on behalf of the congregation. In the event the Treasurer is unable to carry out his duties, the President or Secretary shall have the authority to do so.

Section 4. Financial Secretary

The Financial Secretary shall keep an accurate account of the same and deliver a report of them to the Treasurer, indicating the proper accounts to be credited. He shall make a report for the

regular meetings of the congregation and submit his books for audit annually or at any time the voters' assembly so desires. The Financial Secretary or Treasurer shall provide an annual report of member contributions to each member.

Article VI Election of the Church Officers

Section 1.

The church council shall present to the {October} meeting of the voters' assembly for ratification a committee of three voting members to serve as a nominating committee. The pastor is an ex officio member of this committee. The committee shall consist of the council member whose term is expiring, the Pastor, and council President, in the case of the council Presidents term expiring another council member will be appointed to aid in the process.

Section 2.

After receiving from the secretary a list of expired terms of office, the nominating committee shall select from the voting membership a slate of candidates for the vacancies in keeping with the scriptural requirements stated in Article VIII, Section 1 of the constitution. Each candidate shall be informed of the responsibilities of the office to which he is nominated. Consent of each nominee is necessary for candidacy.

Section 3.

The nominating committee shall report to the {November} meeting of the church council the status of selecting the slate of candidates for the election meeting. The candidates' names shall be published and also posted (with the nominating committee members' names) three Sundays before the election. Additional recommendations for nominations may be made in writing to the nominating committee through any voting member. The committee shall consider such written nominations and take appropriate action {cf. section 2} posting any revisions.

Section 4.

At the annual meeting the voters' assembly shall hear the recommendations of the nominating committee and proceed to elect by a called vote for acceptance or opposed. Nominations shall not be open to the floor at the election meeting. A majority of votes cast shall be necessary for election.

Article VII Reception into Membership

Section 1.

Persons who wish to be received into membership in this congregation {other than through the sacrament of holy baptism or rite of confirmation} shall bring their request to the attention of the pastor or the church council. The council shall honor the request when accompanied by a letter of transfer, a recommendation from a sister congregation, or a profession of faith, provided that qualifications for membership, as specified in Article V of this Constitution, have been met. Such action of the council shall be ratified at the next regular or special meeting of the voters' assembly. Notice of such receptions shall be reported to the entire congregation.

Section 2.

Since reception into membership signifies acceptance of and submission to this Constitution and By-laws, each individual or family shall be given a copy of the same prior to their reception so that they may become familiar with its provisions and then sign a log to acknowledge their acceptance.

Article VIII Transfer, Release, or Removal from Membership

Section 1.

Those desiring a transfer or release from membership shall bring their request to the attention of the pastor or the church council for action to be ratified at the next meeting of the voters' assembly.

Section 2.

Transfer of membership shall apply only to those who desire membership in a congregation which is in agreement with this congregation in doctrine and practice. Release from membership shall apply when affiliation is sought with those denominations not in agreement with this congregation in doctrine and practice.

Section 3.

Members with whom the congregation has been unable to communicate, despite diligent efforts to do so, may be removed from the membership list.

Section 4.

Members released, transferred, or removed have no further rights in this congregation and its property.

Section 5.

Any person who has been subject to disciplinary action by this congregation shall be notified in writing of the right to appeal. This notification shall occur within 30 days of the completion of the disciplinary action. Such appeal must be filed with the District President in writing, with a copy to the congregation within 60 days of the disciplinary action.

Article IX Repeals and Amendments of the By-laws

Any and all By-laws may be repealed or amended by a majority vote of the voting members present at any quarterly meeting, provided that public notice of this proposed action shall have been given the congregation on at least two Sundays prior to the time of the meeting and provided that the proposed amendment has been submitted in writing to the church council for its study and recommendation.