

BYLAWS

ARTICLE 1

Communicant Membership

Section 1. Application for Membership – Procedure

After applicants have given satisfactory evidence of their eligibility in accordance with the two preceding paragraphs, their admission as communicant members shall be recommended by the Pastor to the Board of Elders, which shall have the authority to act on such application on behalf of the Voting Membership. The roster of new members shall be publicized in the various news media of the congregation.

Section 2. Privileges and Duties of Communicant Members

It shall be the privilege and duty of members of this congregation to:

- Grow in the Christian faith and life through faithful use of the means of grace by searching the Scriptures at home and in fellowship with either members of the congregation and its agencies, and partaking of the Lord's Supper frequently.
- Live a morally decent life before God and men, abstain from open works of the flesh (Galatians 5: 18-21), and so conduct themselves at all times to bring credit upon the Church of Jesus Christ. Provide for proper Christian training of their children by instruction at home and through the agencies of the Church.
- Contribute toward the maintenance of the congregation and the extension of the Kingdom of God at home and abroad to the limit of their financial ability.
- Place their God-given talents and abilities at the disposal of the Pastor(s), the officers, and other agencies of the congregation as set forth in its constitution and bylaws, so that the purposes and functions of the congregation may be effectively implemented.

ARTICLE 2

Voting Membership

Section 1. Eligibility

Any communicant member of this congregation who is eighteen years of age or over shall be eligible to apply for Voting Membership. Such application shall be made at a regular Voters' Meeting of the congregation. Upon affirmation by the applicant of his/her intention to fulfill such duties as are required of a Voting Member to the best of his/her ability, he/she shall be accepted as a Voting Member by a vote of acclamation, and has signified his/her agreement with this constitution and bylaws by his/her signature at a regular meeting of the Voters' Assembly. He/she will automatically become a Voting Member at the next regular meeting.

Section 2. Privileges and Duties of Voting Members

- It shall be the privilege and duty of a Voting Member of this congregation to:
- Conscientiously and prayerfully exercise his/her right of suffrage in all measures that will advance the work of Christ's Kingdom both locally and in the church-at-large.
- Willingly serve in any office or capacity for which his/her talents and abilities equip him/her.

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- Faithfully attend all meetings of the Voting Membership. (Any member failing to attend two consecutive regular meetings, without notifying the Secretary either before the meeting or within seven days after the meeting, shall be automatically dropped from the Voting Membership by the Secretary at the next regular Voters' Assembly. However, he/she may be reinstated by reapplying for Voting Membership as prescribed in Section 1 - Eligibility. After missing three consecutive regular meetings without notification, he/she shall be referred to the Board of Elders for their concern and investigation.)
- Assist with wholehearted diligence in administering the temporal and spiritual affairs of the congregation.
- Encourage, by personal example, friendly interest, and judicious counsel such eligible communicant members who are not yet Voting Members to seriously consider accepting the responsibilities and privileges of Voting Membership.

ARTICLE 3

Discipline in the Congregation

All discipline in this congregation shall be administered in accordance with the order of discipline laid down in Matthew 18: 15-20; 1 Corinthians 5: 1-5; and other related New Testament passages. The following procedures shall be followed under the direction of the Pastor(s) and the Board of Elders.

Section 1. Communicant Membership - Termination – Reinstatement

Transfers: A member desiring transfer to another Lutheran Congregation shall apply to the Pastor(s). Upon approval by the Pastor(s) and the Board of Elders, a letter of transfer shall be issued by the Pastor. The Board of Elders shall report all transfers to the congregation via church publications and to the Voters' Assembly at the next regular meeting of that body.

Joining Other Churches: In cases where communicant members of this Congregation have joined a non-Lutheran congregation, they shall, upon the decision of the Pastor(s) and the Board of Elders, be deemed to have terminated their membership in this congregation, forfeiting all rights and privileges of such membership. Their name(s) shall be removed from the membership list of the congregation.

Whereabouts Unknown: The names of members whose whereabouts are unknown and cannot be established within a period of six months shall be removed from the membership list of the congregation and placed in a file designated "Whereabouts Unknown." Such membership is terminated and shall be reported as such to the next regular meeting of the Voters' Assembly.

Self-Exclusion and Excommunication: When a member of Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church has not communed for three months, he or she will receive a visit from his elder, and shall be admonished and encouraged. If such a member has not communed after six months, he or she shall receive another visit by at least two members of the congregation, one the elder of the area and the other the Pastor or some other concerned member of the congregation. Additional admonition and encouragement shall be given. If, after nine months, such a member still has not communed and is not attending worship services of the church, he or she shall be evangelically admonished more firmly and told that if such neglect continues for another three months, it shall be interpreted as impenitence, lack of faith in Jesus Christ, and indifference to church membership, privileges, and responsibilities. If, then, after twelve months, the member has not responded to Christian admonition as outlined above, the member's name shall be removed from the membership list of the congregation. The individual shall be notified of such action by certified mail and shall be declared to have excluded himself/herself from this Christian congregation.

Excommunication is to be applied to any member who conducts himself/herself in an unchristian manner; i.e., to one whom openly adheres to false doctrine, gives evidence of an immoral and offensive life, or willfully despises the preaching of the Gospel and the Lord's Supper. The Board of Elders shall administer church discipline on behalf of the congregation.

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Such self-exclusion or excommunication releases the individual from all responsibilities to this congregation, but it also excludes the member from privileges of church membership, such as Christian burial, Holy Communion, transfer to a sister congregation, and of any claim against the properties of this congregation. SUCH PERSON, HOWEVER, WILL AT ALL TIMES BE CORDIALLY WELCOME TO ATTEND ALL DIVINE SERVICES IN OUR CHURCH.

Reinstatement. Persons who have been removed from membership by self-exclusion or excommunication shall be restored with all rights and privileges when they repent and ask forgiveness through the Pastor(s) and the Board of Elder. Both acts of discipline and restoration shall be made known to all communicant members by whatever method the Pastor(s) and the Board of Elders deems most suitable.

Section 2. Provisions Pertaining to Church Officers and Directors

Any officer or director of the congregation who willfully neglects the duties of his office may be deposed by a two-thirds majority vote of the Voting Members present in a regular meeting of the Voters' Assembly. The Board of Elders shall initiate such disciplinary action. When an office is made vacant by deposition, resignation, death or excommunication of the incumbent, a successor to such officer or director shall be elected by the Voting Membership at the next meeting.

Section 3. Provisions Pertaining to Pastors and Teachers

Sufficient grounds for deposing a pastor or duly called or contracted teacher shall be persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, and willful neglect of official duties, despite all admonition by the congregation in accordance with our Lord's instructions in Matthew 18: 15-17, or evident and protracted incapacity to perform the function of the office. Charges on any of these counts shall be carefully investigated by the Board of Elders, or in the case of a teacher, by the School Board. Should such charges be substantiated by clear evidence, the individual involved shall first be given an opportunity to resign his position in the congregation. Such opportunity having been given and declined, the above mentioned board or boards shall, after consultation with the appropriate officers of the Ohio District, notify the Voting Members of the situation, and shall submit the matter for action at a special meeting of that body. A three-fourths majority vote of the Voting Members present shall be required to depose a pastor or teacher.

Should the occasion to depose a pastor or teacher ever arise, the intended deposition shall be announced by the Chairman of the Board of Elders at regular divine services on the two Sundays preceding a special meeting of the Voting Members called for that purpose. All Voting Members shall be notified by mail at least two weeks in advance.

ARTICLE 4

Meetings of the Voters' Assembly

Section 1. Regular Meetings

Regular meetings of the Voting Membership shall be held a minimum of three times a year, normally in February, May, and November. Dates and times of all Voters' Meetings shall be set by the Parish Planning Council.

All communicant members of the congregation may attend the meetings of the Voters' Assembly and may, with the consent of the Voting Membership, submit recommendations, or participate in a discussion of any given item of business before the Voting Membership.

Every meeting of the Voting Membership shall be announced in the Worship Bulletin on the Sunday preceding the date of the meeting.

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Section 2. Special Meetings

Special meetings of the Voters' Assembly may be called by the President, the Board of Elders, the Pastor(s), at the request of anyone of the administrative boards, or at the request of ten Voting Members of the congregation. Notice of the date and time of such meeting, and the nature of the business to be transacted, shall be given at each Sunday worship service immediately preceding the time of the meeting.

Section 3. Order of Business at Regular Meetings

A. The Order of Business shall be:

1. Opening Devotion and/or singing of a hymn
2. Taking attendance of the Voting Members
3. Reception of new baptized and communicant members and new voting members
4. Reading of the Minutes of Previous Meeting, including Special Meetings
5. State of the Parish Report by Pastor(s)
6. President's Report
7. Treasurer's Report
8. Financial Secretary's Report
9. Reports from Administrative Boards
10. Reports from Committees
11. Reports from Special Organizations
12. Recommendations from the Parish Planning Council
13. Unfinished Business
14. New Business
15. Adjournment

B. The President may, with the consent of the Voting Membership, vary this agenda in the interests of efficiency.

Section 4. Restrictions Pertaining to Voters' Assemblies

- A quorum shall be required for all meetings. One-fourth or more of the Voting Members shall constitute a quorum.
- The meetings of the Voters' Assembly shall be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order, insofar as they are applicable and are not inconsistent with Christian love and practice.
- In the event of a tie vote, the President shall cast the deciding vote.
- There shall be no voting by proxy.

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ARTICLE 5

The Office of the Pastor

Section 1. Procedure for Securing a Pastor

After consultation by the Board of Elders with the President of the Ohio District or his representative, candidates for the Pastoral Office shall be proposed at the next regular meeting of the Voting Membership or at a special meeting called for that purpose. Additional candidates may be proposed by any Voting Member at the meeting called to discuss candidates. At that meeting, or at a subsequent regular or special meeting of the Voting Membership, the Voting Members shall elect one of the proposed candidates by ballot in accordance with Article 7, Section B, of the constitution. It shall be the duty of the President to see that notice of his election is delivered promptly to the candidate in an expeditious and appropriate manner.

Section 2. The Pastoral Office

- A. The Pastoral Office is the authority conferred upon pastors by God, through a call of the congregation (the holder of the priesthood and all congregational authority) to exercise in public office the common rights of spiritual priesthood on behalf of all. The Pastoral Office is the primary office in the congregation from which all other offices of the congregation issue. However, the congregation may establish as many auxiliary offices as its needs require and determine what work shall be assigned to such offices.
- B. Upon being installed, the Pastor is authorized and obligated to proclaim to the congregation, jointly and severally, the Word of God in its full truth and purity as contained in the canonical writings of the Old and New Testaments and professed in the Book of Concord of the year 1580.

He is further to:

1. Administer the Sacraments in accordance with their divine institution.
 2. Discharge toward all members of the congregation the functions of a minister and curate of their souls in an evangelical manner, in particular to visit the sick and the dying and admonish indifferent and erring members.
 3. Spiritually guard the welfare of the younger members of the congregation and adults during their preparation for acceptance of Holy Communion.
 4. Guide the congregation in applying the divinely ordained discipline of the church.
 5. Provide spiritual leadership and oversight in the educational agencies and the various adult and youth organizations within the congregation.
 6. Serve as an example by Christian conduct and do all that is possible for the up building of the congregation and for the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ. By reason of his position, the pastor is not only a servant and a steward of God, but also of the congregation. The pastor(s) shall have authority and responsibility for supervising the musical portion of all worship services in conjunction with the Board of Elders so that it is at all times in harmony with the doctrine and practice of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Members of the congregation are obligated to accord the pastor(s) honor, love, and obedience in his ministry of God's Word, and to support his ministrations with diligence and faithful prayers; to help him in the discharge of his duties by cordial one-mindedness, by willing readiness, by peaceable conduct, and in every other way possible; and to provide for his maintenance according to the ability of the congregation.
- C. In calling a pastor to preach the Word of God and to administer the Sacraments on their behalf, the members of the congregation exercise their royal priesthood and by no means relinquish it. This is the privilege and responsibility of all members of the Church.

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ARTICLE 6

Election of Officers and Administrative Boards

Section 1. Nomination Procedure

- A. A. At the February meeting of the Voting Membership in an election year, the Parish Planning Council shall announce its selection of at least three qualified Voting Members who, together with the Pastor, shall serve as the Nominating Committee. At this meeting, the Voting Members may also submit to the committee the names of possible candidates for office.
- B. The Nominating Committee, as soon after the February meeting as possible, shall prepare and publish a list of candidates drawn from among the communicant members of the congregation who are eighteen years of age or over, either male or female, and from the list submitted by the Voting Members at the February meeting. Candidates shall be in good standing within the congregation, regularly attend worship and Holy Communion, and regularly participate in corporate Bible study. Only male candidates shall be eligible for membership on the Board of Elders, as the President and as the Vice President.
- C. Following the publication of the Nominating Committee's list, any communicant member of the congregation may submit to the committee additional names for inclusion on the list, and such names shall be placed in nomination by the Committee along with the candidates already chosen provided that:
1. Such names shall be submitted at least thirty days before the May meeting of the Voters' Assembly and
 2. The Nominating Committee, through consultation with the Pastor(s) and the Board of Elders, shall have investigated the status of the proposed candidates and found them spiritually eligible for office and willing to serve.
- D. The Nominating Committee, at least one week before the date of the May Voters' Assembly Meeting, shall place conspicuously on the church bulletin board the list of candidates.

Section 2. Election Procedure

From the list of candidates for each elective office submitted by the Nominating Committee, the Voting Membership shall, at its May meeting, elect by ballot and simple majority, the follow officers and board members in the order herein indicated:

- A President
- A Vice President
- A Treasurer A Secretary
- A Financial Secretary
- An Assistant Financial Secretary
- A Director for all the Boards
- Board members, to the number required to complete the membership of each of the Administrative Boards. The determination of the number of members required on each board shall be an annual function of the Parish Planning Council and shall be decided no later than the March meeting of that body. Only candidates from the posted list may be placed in nomination by the Voting Membership.

Section 3. Installation of Officers - Term of Office, Filling Vacancies

- The newly elected officers and board members of the congregation shall be installed on the third Sunday in June, and shall assume their duties as of July 1st.
- The term of office for all officers, directors, and board members shall be two years, terminating on June 30th of the second year of their terms.
- Vacancies shall be filled by appointment until the appointee is approved at the next meeting of the Voters' Assembly.

ARTICLE 7

Duties of Officers - Functions, Powers, Organizations of Administrative Boards, Committees and the Parish Planning Council

Section 1

A. The President of the congregation shall:

1. Preside at all meetings of the Voting Membership. He shall, to the best of his ability, enforce the constitution and bylaws of the congregation and carry out the expressed will of the congregation as embodied in the resolutions of the Voting Membership. All boards, committees, auxiliaries, groups, etc., in the congregation shall be responsible to the President, and he shall be welcomed at any and all meetings of such groups, either in person or as represented by such person or persons as he may appoint. He shall meet quarterly with the Vice Presidents to assess the implementation of the Congregational Plan and provide guidance to the Vice Presidents as required. He shall also call and preside over the meeting of the Parish Planning Council and shall endeavor to coordinate the functions, plans, and activities of the congregation in all its parts for the total furtherance of the work of Christ's Kingdom in our midst.
2. Appoint an Auditing Committee consisting of any two qualified communicant members of the congregation other than the Treasurer, Financial Secretary or Assistant Financial Secretary to audit the financial records of the congregation. The President shall submit the Audit Committee's report at the May meeting of the Voting Membership in each year.
3. Fill unexpired terms or shortages of personnel by appointment. Vacancies shall be filled by appointment until the appointee is approved at the next meeting of the Voters' Assembly.

B. The Vice Presidents of the congregation, in the absence of the President, shall act for and in the stead of the President. The Vice Presidents will be responsible for the oversight and coordination of the meetings and activities of those boards and committees under their purview. They will meet with the President quarterly to report on the activities of the organizations under them, and ensure that top level plans for the congregation are being implemented. The Director of the Board of Elders will serve as the Vice President responsible for the Board of Elders, Board of Evangelism, Board of Parish Fellowship and the Board of Christian Education. The elected Vice President will be responsible for the Boards of Young Peoples Activities, Public Relations, Church Properties, and the following auxiliaries: All Men of Bethlehem, and Lutheran Women's Missionary League. This structure is shown in Figure 1 (Congregational Board Structure). They shall be available for whatever duties the President shall assign to them as his representatives.

C. The Secretary shall: Be present at all Voters' meetings of the congregation and at all meetings of the Parish Planning Council and shall enter the minutes of all meetings of said groups in a permanent book over his signature. He shall conduct all official correspondence of the congregational boards and committees under the supervision of the President. In general, he shall perform all duties normally pertaining to his office and such additional duties as the Voting Membership may delegate to him. One copy of the Voters' Meeting minutes is to be submitted to the church library for public record.

D. The Treasurer shall:

1. Be responsible for accurate recording of congregational receipts and disbursements and budgeted and actual expenditures according to proper accounting procedures and, as deemed advisable, shall suggest for congregational consideration improved methods and systems for keeping financial records.
2. Present a written, duplicated financial report at the Voters' Meetings and at Parish Planning Council Meetings.
3. Submit permanent financial records for annual audit.
4. Be responsible for remission of offerings for missions and church agencies and for prompt payment of salaries and bills authorized by the congregation or the boards and directors as duly constituted sources.
5. Furnish the congregation a surety bond in the sum designated by the Voters' Assembly. Such bond shall be procured and premiums paid by the congregation.
6. Coordinate the flow of monies from the treasury to the various boards in such a way that an adequate balance is retained for payment of salaries and other recurring expenses.
7. Remit payment to the professional workers of the church for documented expenses while attending professional workshops, conferences, conventions, etc., as approved by the board under whose jurisdiction they function.
8. Receive from the Financial Secretary a report of all monies received through worship services, special offerings, or any other source and duly record same.
9. Sign all checks for payment of bills, salaries, and all other financial commitments of the congregation of any sort.
10. Have available for all boards a current record of their accrued disbursements and budget allotment.
11. Have authority to work out with salaried workers of the congregation a breakdown of the worker's total compensation into salary and fringe benefits as the worker requests.

The Board of Trustees:

When so directed by the Voters' Assembly, shall erect buildings and capital improvements, and alter the same, as well as mortgage, encumber, sell and convey any real estate and personal estate of this congregation and enter into all lawful contracts in the name and on behalf of this congregation.

Section 2. The Parish Planning Council:

- A. The Parish Planning Council serves as a forum where the activities of the Administrative Boards may be discuss, evaluated, and coordinated, and where all such activities may be integrated into an

overall congregational program. The Parish Planning Council shall be available at all times, however, for any additional function(s) which the Voting Membership may wish to confer.

- B. The Parish Planning Council shall consist of the President, the Vice Presidents, the Treasurer, the Congregational Secretary, the Financial Secretary, the Directors of the Administrative Boards, (all of whom will hold membership on the Parish Planning Council until their term of office expires) and the Pastor(s) of the congregation. **It shall be the specific function of the Parish Planning Council to:**

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1. Serve as the point of liaison between the Pastor(s), the officers of the congregation, and the various Administrative Boards in planning the total work of the congregation.
 2. Settle jurisdictional issues between the Administrative Boards.
 3. Present to the Voters' Assembly at its February meeting a yearly plan of activity for the entire congregation as well as long-range plans for the development and expansion of Christ's work in our midst.
 4. Prepare the agenda and set the date and time for each regular Voters' Assembly Meeting.
 5. Appoint a nominating committee as required.
- C. The Parish Planning Council shall normally meet prior to each of the yearly Voters' Meetings. Additional meetings may be called by the President and/ or Pastor(s) as required. One copy of these minutes is to be submitted to the church library for public record.
- D. The Parish Planning Council functions to enable the congregation and the Administrative Boards to carry out the Great Commission. The Parish Planning Council shall keep a permanent set of minutes for each meeting and such minutes shall be the property of the congregation.

Section 3. The Administrative Boards

A. General Duties and Powers of Administrative Boards

1. Each Administrative Board shall submit a report of its activities at each regular meeting of the Voting Membership and on such other occasions as Voting Membership shall require. Such reports shall include specific recommendations (if any) for congregational action and/ or approval.
2. Each Administrative Board shall initiate and carry out such activities and programs within the congregation as will enable it to effectively perform the functions and duties assigned to it by the constitution and bylaws, or by specific resolution of the Voting Membership.
3. Each Administrative Board shall be empowered to administer all funds set aside for its work by budget appropriation, by receipt of tuition, grants, or donations or by special resolutions of the Voter' Assembly, provided that the Parish Planning Council may, at its discretion, restrict such expenditures to conform with the financial condition of the congregation or school at any given time.
4. Each Administrative Board shall be jointly and severally liable for all expenditures not authorized either by the budget, by special resolution of the congregation, or in excess of receipts from tuition, grants, or donations.
5. Each Administrative Board shall keep a permanent set of minutes for each meeting and such minutes shall be the property of the congregation. In addition, one copy of the minutes shall be submitted to the Church Library for public record, one copy to the Pastor(s), and one copy to the President. All minutes from each meeting are to be distributed within two weeks after the meeting.

The Board of Elders may choose to submit a modified version, which excludes personal/sensitive information, because of the nature of their business.

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B. Organization and Meetings of Administrative Boards

1. Each Administrative Board shall be under the purview of one of its respective Vice Presidents, and under the direct control and supervision of the director of that board. Following the election of the director of each board and the number of board members required, the director of the respective board shall be responsible for designating and appointing from among the board members those individuals who will be responsible for the various phases of the work of that board. Such appointments are to be made within two weeks of the date of their election, and notification of such appointments is to be given to the President for publication to the members in the manner he deems most advisable.
2. The time and frequency of board meetings shall be at the discretion of the director of the board and the board members, except that, for good and sufficient reason, either the President, the appropriate Vice President, or the Pastor(s) may call a meeting of the board at any time. Meetings thus called shall be classified as special meetings, and each person involved shall be notified of the date, time, and purpose of such meeting. The director of each board will meet with the appropriate Vice President periodically to coordinate activities and assess participation and progress in the congregation's overall plan.

C. Organization/Ad Hoc Committee Reports

1. The Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) and the All Men Of Bethlehem (AMOB) shall submit one copy of their meeting minutes to the Church Library for public record, and one copy for the Pastor(s) and President.
2. Any organizations that become an active part in the life of the congregation or committees (Ad Hoc) appointed by the President will be required to supply meeting minutes, with one copy to be submitted to the Church Library for public record, and one copy to the Pastor(s), and President.

ARTICLE 8

Amendments to the Bylaws

These bylaws may be amended at a meeting of the Voters' Assembly provided that the proposed amendment(s) has been submitted to the Voters' Assembly at any preceding meeting.

Approved by the Voters' Assembly 11/21/99

Approved by the Voters' Assembly May 19, 2002

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