

CONSTITUTION for  
BETHLEHEM EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
(MISSOURI SYNOD)  
FAIRBORN, OHIO

PREAMBLE

It is the will of our Lord Jesus Christ that His disciples should preach the Gospel to the whole world (*Mark 16: 15; Matthew 28: 18-20; Acts 1:8*). That Christ's mission for His Church might be carried out according to His will, He has commanded that Christians unite in worship (*Hebrews 10:24-25*), practice fellowship with one another (*Acts 2:42*), witness to all men (*Acts 1 :8*), help each other grow in the Word (*Ephesians 4: 11-14*), serve the needs of all men in Christian love (*Ephesians 4:7-16; Mark 10:42-44; John 13:45; Galatians 6: 10*), administer the Office of the Keys as His Church (*John 20:21-23; Matthew 18: 15-20*), and maintain decency and order (*1 Corinthians 14:40*) in the Church. Therefore, we the members of Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, Fairborn, Ohio, adopt the following constitution according to which all internal and external affairs of the congregation are to be governed.

ARTICLE 1

NAME

The name of this congregation shall be the Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, of Fairborn, Ohio.

ARTICLE 2

PURPOSES AND RIGHTS

The purpose of this congregation shall be to conduct divine services proclaiming the Word of God and administering the Sacraments, to provide Christian education, and to do all other things incident to the conduct of a Christian congregation. In the furtherance of such purposes, the congregation may, through the officers as authorized by the Voters' Assembly, acquire, hold title to, sell, and otherwise dispose of property - real, personal, and mixed. This congregation shall have authority to exercise the general rights, privileges, and powers it may need to accomplish the purposes for which it is formed, as granted by the Laws of the State of Ohio.

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## ARTICLE 3

### DECLARATION OF FAITH

This congregation accepts without reservation:

- The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice.
- All Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God. These Symbolical Books are: the three Ecumenical Creeds- the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed; the Unaltered Augsburg Confession; the Apology of the Augsburg Confession; the Smalcald Articles; the Large Catechism of Luther; the Small Catechism of Luther; the Formula of Concord; and the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope.
- No doctrine or practice in conflict or inconsistent with the above norms of our faith and life shall be taught or tolerated in this congregation.

## ARTICLE 4

### SYNODICAL AFFILIATION

This congregation shall be affiliated with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod as long as the confessions and the constitution of said Synod are in accord with the confessions and constitution of this congregation as laid down in Article 3. This congregation shall, to the best of its ability, collaborate with said Synod and assist it in effecting all sound measures intended for the building up of the Kingdom of God.

## ARTICLE 5

### MEMBERSHIP

- A. Baptized membership of this congregation is held by all those who are baptized in the Name of the Triune God with water and are under our pastoral care.
- B. Communicant membership in this congregation may be held only by those who:
  - 1. Are baptized in the Name of the Triune God.
  - 2. Have declared their acceptance of the confessions of this congregation as contained in the bylaws.
  - 3. Have been accepted into communicant membership in accordance with the bylaws of this congregation and shall remain faithful to the responsibilities of membership as contained in these bylaws.
  - 4. Do not live in manifest works of the flesh (*Galatians* 5:19-21) but lead a Christian life.
  - 5. Are not members of any secret society or organization conflicting with the Word of God and the conduct of a Christian (2 *Corinthians* 6: 14-18).
- C. The membership and membership privileges of each communicant member shall remain in force so long as each member shall maintain his/her eligibility according to the five points in Section B of this article and shall meet the requirements stated or implied in the disciplinary, or other provisions, of the bylaws. A member who voluntarily severs his/her connection with this congregation, or who has been released or transferred, or who has been excommunicated or excludes himself according to the provisions of the bylaws, shall be deemed to have terminated his/her membership in this congregation along with all rights and privileges of such membership.

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## ARTICLE 6 ORGANIZATION

### A. Voting Membership

1. This congregation shall be represented by and administer all its affairs through its Voting Membership.
2. Only communicant members, who have qualified according to the membership provisions of the bylaws, shall be received according as Voting Members of this congregation.

### B. Officers of the Congregation

1. The officers of the congregation shall consist of a President, Vice Presidents, Secretary, Financial Secretary, and a Treasurer elected from among the Voting Membership in accordance with the bylaws of the congregation.
2. The President of the congregation (or the Vice President when acting in the President's capacity) shall have a voice on all Administrative Boards, but his right to vote shall be limited to such board, or boards, on which he may hold membership. The Vice Presidents will have a voice on the Administrative Boards and committees for which they are responsible, but their right to vote shall be limited to such board, or boards, on which they may hold membership. The Pastor(s) of the congregation shall be, ex- officio, a member of all boards and their associated committees, and may, at their discretion, attend any and all meetings related to congregational activity of any kind.
3. The President, the Secretary, and the Treasurer shall be the Board of Trustees of this congregation.

### C. Administrative Boards

Responsibility and authority for the daily administration of the congregational affairs shall be delegated to the following boards:

1. A Board of Elders
2. A Board of Evangelism
3. A Board of Parish Fellowship
4. A Board of Christian Education
5. A Board of Young People's Activities
6. A Board of Church Properties
7. A Board of Public Relations
8. A School Board
9. A School Endowment Fund Board

One member of each Administrative Board shall serve as the director of that board. The boards will be organized under the Vice Presidents to receive guidance, and so that the Vice Presidents may coordinate and integrate their activities (see Figure 1).

**Committees:** Committees may be formed by the President, Vice Presidents, or the chairmen of the boards for special tasks or functions. Committees will report to the officer or chairman who called them into existence, and will function only as long as necessary to complete their designated task or function.

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**Parish Planning Council:** The Parish Planning Council shall consist of the Pastor(s), the President, the Vice Presidents, the Secretary, the Financial Secretary, and the Treasurer of the congregation, and the directors of the Administrative Boards listed in Section C of this article. They shall hold positions on the Parish Planning Council by virtue of their call or election by the Voting Members of the congregation so long as their term of office continues.

**Rights and Powers:** This congregation, subject to the limiting provisions and regulations of this constitution and its associated bylaws, shall have supreme power in the administration of its affairs. No duly elected officers of this congregation shall have any power or authority beyond that conferred upon them by the congregation acting through its Voting Membership. Each Administrative Board, along with the Parish Planning Council, shall be responsible for the performance of such duties as the Voting Membership may delegate to them by special resolution. Such specially delegated rights and powers, both of officers and Administrative Boards, shall be subject to revision or complete withdrawal by the Voting Membership at its discretion.

## ARTICLE 7

### PASTORS, TEACHERS, and OTHER WORKERS

- Only such pastors shall be called by this congregation who are in accord with the Declaration of Faith (Article 3) of this constitution, have been trained and are qualified for the position, are certified for the position by our synodical institutions, and are members of, or have applied for membership in, the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod. The right of calling pastors and teachers shall ever be vested in the Voters' Assembly and shall never be delegated to a small body or an individual.
- For the selection of pastors and teachers, a two-thirds vote of the Voting Membership is required. The President shall then call for a unanimous vote.
- Only such teachers shall be called or contracted by this congregation as are in accord with the Declaration of Faith (Article 3) of this constitution and have been trained and are qualified for their profession.
- A call issued to a Director of Christian Education, teacher, or other professional worker shall ever be vested in the Voters' Assembly and shall never be delegated to a small body or an individual.
- If a pastor or teacher receives a call to another congregation, Bethlehem shall be advised of this fact so that it may conscientiously weigh the reasons for or against acceptance, with the recipient of the call, in the fear of God and with prayer.
- Sufficient grounds for dismissing 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.
- Additional workers may be engaged for work in the church, as the need arises, by officers, boards, or committees, after the approval of the Voters' Assembly. Additional workers may be engaged for work in the school, as the need arises, by action of the School Board. Any worker whose responsibilities include teaching must be in accord with the Declaration of Faith (Article 3) of this constitution.

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**ARTICLE 8**  
**SEPARATION OR DIVISION**

Should separation or division of the congregation occur, which God in His mercy may prevent, all property and all advantages connected therewith shall be retained by those members of the congregation who steadfastly adhere to the provisions of Articles 2 and 3 of this Constitution.

**ARTICLE 9**  
**BYLAWS**

The Voters' Assembly may adopt such bylaws as are needed to carry out the purposes of the congregation.

**ARTICLE 10**  
**AMENDMENTS**

The Voters' Assembly may amend or repeal any article of this constitution, except Article 3 – Declaration of Faith, which shall forever remain unalterable. Any proposed amendment(s) shall be presented in writing at a regular meeting of the Voters' Assembly. Copies of the proposed amendment(s) shall be mailed to all eligible voters at least two weeks before the next regular Voters' Assembly. At this meeting, the amendments shall be read and voted upon. Adoption of such proposed amendment(s) shall require a two-thirds vote of those present at this meeting.

Amendments Approved by the Voters' Assembly - November 21, 1999

Amendments Approved by the Voters' Assembly - May 19, 2002

Amendments Approved by the Voters' Assembly – May 23, 2010

May 23, 2010

Figure 1  
Congregational Board Structure

Voters' Assembly

President

Secretary

Treasurer

Financial Secretary

• Ass't Financial Secretary

Vice President

- Board of Elders
- Board of Evangelism
- Board of Christian Education
- Board of Parish Fellowship
- School Board
- School Endowment Fund Board

Elected Vice President

- Board of Young People's Activities
- Board of Public Relations
- Board of Church Property
- All Men of Bethlehem (AMOB)
- Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML)

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