

THE CONSTITUTION
OF
ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA

PREAMBLE

The Word of God requires that a Christian congregation shall conform to the Word of God in doctrine and practice (Ps. 119: 105; Matt. 28:18-20; Gal. 1:6-8; 2 Tim. 4: 1-5) and that all things be done decently and in order (I Cor. 14:40). Therefore, we, the members of St. John's Lutheran Church, having duly and regularly incorporated under the laws of the State of California, accept and subscribe to the following constitution and bylaws, in accordance with which all spiritual and material affairs of our congregation shall be governed.

ARTICLE I

NAME

The name of this congregation shall be the St. John's Lutheran Church, located at Bakersfield, Kern County, California. Wherever the word congregation is used in this constitution and bylaws, it shall also refer to and be synonymous with the word corporation.

ARTICLE II

OBJECT AND PURPOSE

The object and purpose for which this corporation is formed, besides those stated in the Articles of Incorporation, are:

- A. To establish and maintain in our own midst, for the spiritual benefit of our own membership, the office of the Christian Ministry.
- B. To assist, to the best of our ability, in the regular and systematic promulgation and dissemination of the Christian religion in our own community and in the world at large as set forth in the Confessional Standard of the Lutheran Church, the Book of Concord of the year 1580.
- C. To establish and maintain the best possible agencies for the Christian education and training of our youth and adults.
- D. To foster Christian fellowship and charity.

- E. To allow for a legal entity and method to corporately acquire, hold title to, and sell, transfer, convey and otherwise dispose of property, real, personal, and mixed.

ARTICLE III

CONFESSION OF FAITH

This congregation acknowledges and accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the revealed, inerrant and verbally inspired Word of God, and acknowledges and accepts all the confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, contained in the Book of Concord of the year 1580, to be the true and genuine exposition of the doctrines of the Bible. These confessional writings are the three ecumenical creeds (Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasian), the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, Luther's Large and Small Catechisms, and the Formula of Concord.

In this congregation, no doctrine or practice shall be taught or tolerated which is at variance with the above-mentioned confessional writings.

ARTICLE IV

MEMBERSHIP

The congregation distinguishes between baptized, communicant, and voting membership. The word member in this constitution always refers to the communicant unless otherwise designated.

A. BAPTIZED MEMBERSHIP

Baptized members are all members who have been baptized, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit including the children on the membership rolls who have not been confirmed. All baptized members are classified as souls.

B. COMMUNICANT MEMBERSHIP

Communicant members are those:

1. Who are baptized in the name of the God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and have been confirmed in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod;
2. Who accept all canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the verbally inspired and inerrant revelation of God and the only divine rule and standard of faith and life;

3. Who are familiar with the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, at least to the extent as it is set forth in Luther's Small Catechism and declare their acceptance of it;
4. Who attend divine services faithfully;
5. Who lead Christian lives (Matt. 5:5-7; Gal. 5:22,23) and do not live in manifest works of the flesh (Gal. 5: 19-21);
6. Who partake of the Lord's Supper frequently after their instruction in the same;
7. Who contribute regularly and faithfully, as God has prospered them (1Cor. 16:2), toward the building of Christ's kingdom in the congregation and throughout the world;
8. Who devote their time and talents to the extension of the kingdom of God;
9. Who permit themselves to be fraternally admonished and corrected when they have erred or when they have become delinquent in the requirements of membership, or otherwise have given offense (Matt. 18:15-17);
10. Who are not members, affiliates, or supporters of secret societies or other organizations conflicting with the Word of God.

C. VOTING MEMBERSHIP

All communicant members who have reached their eighteenth year and are members in good standing of the congregation shall be entitled to vote and to hold office except that women shall not be directly involved in the specific functions of the pastoral office (preaching, the public administration of the sacraments, church discipline). Those who serve as pastor and Elders of the congregation shall be male members.

ARTICLE V

THE OFFICE OF PASTOR AND TEACHER

The pastoral office of this congregation as well as that of a called teacher in the parochial school shall be conferred upon such ministers, teachers, and candidates only as profess and adhere to the confessional standard set forth in Article III of this constitution and are well qualified for their work. Pastors and teachers shall, in the call extended to and accepted by them, be pledged to this confessional standard.

ARTICLE VI

POWER OF THE CONGREGATION

A. GENERAL

The congregation as a body shall have supreme power to administer and manage all its external and internal affairs. The establishment and conduct of all institutions and societies within the congregation, such as Sunday school, youth groups, women's organizations, choir, etc., shall be at all times subject to the approval and supervision of the congregation.

The congregation, however, shall not be empowered to order, enact, or decide anything contrary to the word of God and the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Article III), and any such decision shall be null and void.

B. RIGHT OF CALLING

The right of calling a pastor shall be vested in the congregation and shall never be delegated to a small body or to an individual.

When a ministerial or teacher candidate is to be called directly from one of the synodical seminaries or colleges, the right of selection is delegated to synod's Board for the Distribution of Calls, through which board the congregation's call shall also be transmitted to the person so elected.

C. DECISIONS

Matters of doctrine and conscience shall be decided by the Word of God; other matters shall be decided by the congregation at a meeting properly convened unless otherwise specified by the constitution or bylaws.

D. POWERS OF OFFICERS

Congregational officers, boards, or committees, whether elected or appointed, shall have no authority beyond that which has been conferred upon them, and whatever power may have been delegated to them may at any time be altered or revoked by the congregation.

E. REMOVAL FROM OFFICE

Any pastor may be removed by a three-fourths majority vote of the voting members present at a properly scheduled congregational meeting. Removal from office must be in Christian and lawful order, for one of the following causes: persistent adherence to false doctrine, incompetence, scandalous life, inability to perform his official duties or willful neglect of them.

Any church officer (i.e. elder or member of the Board of Directors) of the congregation who willfully neglects or is grossly ineffective performing the duties of their office may be deposed by the Board of Directors or Elders, according to the individual's role. When an office is made vacant by deposition, resignation, death or excommunication of the incumbent, a successor to such position shall be appointed by the Board of Directors or Elders, according to the vacancy, for the remainder of the unexpired term.

ARTICLE VII

OFFICERS

The officers of this congregation shall be such officers, board chairs, or committee chairs as the bylaws of the congregation may prescribe.

ARTICLE VIII

DISSOLUTION OR SEPARATION

- A. The congregation cannot be dissolved so long as three members still remain and are opposed to its dissolution.
- B. If at any time a separation should take place on account of doctrine, the property of the congregation and all benefits therewith connected shall remain with those voting members who continue to adhere in confession and practice to Article III of this constitution.
- C. In the event the congregation shall totally disband, property shall be distributed to the California-Nevada-Hawaii District of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod or its successor in interest and in no event shall said property inure to the benefit of any private person.

ARTICLE IX

DOCTRINAL LITERATURE

Only such hymns, prayers, and liturgies shall be used in the public services of the congregation and in all ministerial acts as conform to the confessional standard of Article III. Likewise, in all classes for instruction in Christian doctrine only such books shall be used as conform to this standard.

ARTICLE X

SYNODICAL MEMBERSHIP

- A. This congregation shall hold membership in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and shall adhere to the constitution and bylaws of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod as set forth in the handbook. It shall send its pastor and a lay delegate to the district convention.
- B. It shall be the duty of the congregation and its individual members to support the work of synod since they thereby support their own Christ-appointed work.

ARTICLE XI

BYLAWS

This congregation may adopt such bylaws as may be required for the accomplishment of its purpose.

ARTICLE XII

CHANGING THE CONSTITUTION

A. ARTICLES REQUIRING A SUPERMAJORITY OF VOTING MEMBERSHIP

The following articles of this constitution or sections thereof shall be require a supermajority of 99% approval by the voting membership for amendments to these articles: III, V, IX, and Section A of this article.

B. AMENDMENTS

Amendments to this constitution and the bylaws may be offered by any voting member and may be adopted at a properly scheduled congregational meeting provided:

1. That they do not conflict with Section A above, the provision laid down in Article III, or with any section of any other article that pertains to scriptural doctrine and practice

and

2. That the proposed amendment has been submitted in writing at a previous congregational meeting within the last twelve (12) months and has not been rejected by vote during that twelve (12) month period.

The affirmative vote of a two-thirds majority of the voting membership present at the congregational meeting shall be required for the adoption of an amendment.

ARTICLE XIII

ORGANIZATIONS

Any organizations within the congregation shall exist only by the consent and approval of the congregation and shall have right to existence only as their general activities conform to the purpose, and serve the best interests, of the congregation and the church at large. The constitution and bylaws of all organizations shall be subject to the approval of the congregation. The pastor shall, by virtue of his office, exercise spiritual supervision over such organizations. The congregation may, from time to time, request a report of their general status and functions. All such organizations shall be financially accountable to the congregation.

ARTICLE XIV

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The congregation is ever anxious to use every good means and method of Christian training to provide for the education of its children. This may be accomplished by providing Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, a Children's Center, Christian Day School, confirmation classes, and divine services. It shall be the solemn duty of all members of the congregation who have the parental care of unconfirmed children to make use of these means of giving their children a thorough Christian training.

Adult members of the congregation are encouraged to use those agencies which the congregation provides for growth in knowledge and sanctification through participation in worship services, Bible classes, Bible institutes, special training classes, as well as projects and other agencies as may, from time to time, be developed.