

**THE CONSTITUTION OF GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THE  
FORT WALTON BEACH AREA, FLORIDA, INC.  
Shalimar, Florida Amended and approved November 2013  
Preamble**

The Word of God requires that a Christian congregation shall conform to this Divine Word in doctrine and practice (Matthew 28:18-20; Galatians 1:6-8; 2 Timothy 4:1-5), and that all things be done decently and in order (1Corinthians 14:40). Therefore we, the members of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, accept and subscribe to the following Constitution and Bylaws, in accordance with which all spiritual and material affairs of our congregation shall be governed.

**1.0  
Name**

The name of this congregation, a corporate body, shall be Good Shepherd Lutheran Church of the Fort Walton Beach Area, Florida, Inc.

**2.0  
Mission and Purpose**

The purpose of this congregation shall be to give honor and glory to the Triune God, to carry out His will, to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all the world, to manifest the unity of our faith in Jesus Christ as God and Savior, to foster Christian fellowship and love, to extend a helping hand in human need, and to achieve our objectives by the preaching of the Word of God, by the administration of the sacraments, and by the religious instruction of all its members according to the confessional standard of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

**3.0  
Confessional Standard**

This congregation accepts without reservation:

- 3.1** The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice;
- 3.2** All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God, to wit:
  - 3.2.1 The Three Ecumenical Creeds (the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, The Athanasian Creed),
  - 3.2.2 The Unaltered Augsburg Confession,
  - 3.2.3 The Apology of the Augsburg Confession,
  - 3.2.4 The Smalcald Articles,

- 3.2.5 The Large Catechism of Luther,
- 3.2.6 The Small Catechism of Luther, and
- 3.2.7 The Formula of Concord.

## **4.0 Membership**

- 4.0.1 Membership:  
The membership of this congregation includes the following:
  - 4.1.1 **Baptized** members are all who have been baptized in the name of the Triune God and who are under the spiritual care of the pastor of this congregation, including the children who have not yet been confirmed.
  - 4.1.2 **Communicant** members are those baptized members who have been in the Lutheran faith, accept the confessional standard of **3.0** of this constitution, are familiar with the contents of *Luther's Small Catechism*, and are not members of organizations whose principles and conduct conflict with the Word of God.

Communicant membership in this congregation may be held only by those who:

- 4.1.2.1 Profess Jesus Christ as their personal Savior;
- 4.1.2.2 Accept the Canonical books of the Old and New Testament as the true Word of God;
- 4.1.2.3 Are baptized members in the name of the Triune God, and have been instructed in the Sacrament of the Altar as taught in Luther's Small Catechism;
- 4.1.2.4 Have declared their acceptance of the teachings of Luther's Small Catechism;
- 4.1.2.5 Have been accepted into communicant membership in accordance with the Bylaws of this congregation and remain faithful to the responsibilities of membership as contained in these Bylaws;
- 4.1.2.6 Lead a Christian life and do not live in manifest works of the flesh (Galatians 5:16-25);
- 4.1.2.7 Permit themselves to be fraternally admonished and corrected when they have erred (Matthew 18:15-20, I Corinthians 5:1-5)

- 4.1.2.8** Are not members of a secret society or of any other organization conflicting with the Word of God and Christian conduct (II Corinthians 6:14-18).
- 4.1.3** Communicant members who have qualified according to the membership provisions of the Bylaws may hold voting membership.
- 4.2** Reception  
Baptized and communicant members are received through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, through transfer from a sister congregation, or through reaffirmation of their Baptismal faith. Children are received through reaffirmation of Baptismal faith with the consent of one or both parents. The Board of Elders and Called Ministers will approve all member receptions.
- 4.3** **Duties**  
Members of the congregation shall conform their entire lives to the rule of God's Word, and to that end make diligent use of the means of grace, exercise faithful stewardship of God's many gifts and talents, impart and accept fraternal admonition as the need of such admonition becomes apparent, and be readily available for service in the kingdom of Christ within and beyond the congregation.
- 4.4** Termination of Membership
- 4.4.1** Membership in this congregation is terminated by: Transfer - 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, the Pastor(s) shall issue a letter of transfer. The Board of Elders shall publish all transfers for the congregation.
- 4.4.2** Joining Other Churches - In cases where communicant members of this congregation have joined another congregation without transfer, they shall, as determined by 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 names shall be removed from the membership list of the congregation published for the congregation.
- 4.4.3** Whereabouts Unknown - The names of members whose whereabouts are unknown and cannot be established within a period of one year 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 published for the congregation. If their whereabouts thereafter becomes known, they shall be advised

of the action that has been taken and encouraged to take steps toward reinstatement.

- 4.4.4** Self-Exclusion - Individuals who voluntarily leave the church, those who sever their connection without requesting a transfer, or those without the sincere intention to retain their membership in this congregation, by their absence from worship and their lack of reception of The Holy Communion, shall be removed.
- 4.4.5** Leaving the Area - When members leave the area and plan to return, upon request, they may be retained as active members. Otherwise, they may be declared inactive by the Board of Elders and placed on the Inactive Roll. After four years in the inactive member status, the Board of Elders shall notify them that the inactive status has been terminated and no transfer of membership in good standing will be given.

## **5.0 Called Ministers**

- 5.1** This congregation has the exclusive right to call ordained and commissioned ministers. The pastoral office shall be conferred only on such a pastor or candidate who professes and adheres to the confessional standard set forth in this Constitution, who is qualified for his work, who has been endorsed by the Synod, and who is a member of the Synod. [The same shall apply to all commissioned ministers.]
- 5.2** The Voters' Assembly may remove any ordained or commissioned minister from office by a two-thirds majority ballot vote, in Christian and lawful order, for one of the following reasons: persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, willful neglect, or inability to perform the duties of the office.
- 5.3** In case of a vacancy in the office of an ordained or commissioned minister, the congregation shall notify the President of the District and the Circuit Counselor so that they may assist in temporarily filling the vacancy and also give assistance in regard to the calling of a new pastor or teacher.
- 5.4** As members of the congregation, the Called Ministers retain the rights and privileges of membership including the right to vote at Voter's Assemblies.
- 5.5** The Called Ministers are ex-officio members of all councils, boards, and committees of the congregation. As ex-officio members they

are afforded the same rights as other members, including debate, making formal motions, and voting.

## **6.0 Officers, Boards, and Church Council**

- 6.1 The elected officers of this congregation shall be: president, vice-president, recording secretary, and treasurer. Duties not listed in these bylaws are assigned in the GUIDELINE MANUAL FOR CHURCH OFFICERS AND BOARDS
  - 6.1.1 The President of the congregation shall:
    - 6.1.1.2 Prepare an agenda and preside at all meetings of the Voters' Assembly;
    - 6.1.1.3 Enforce the Constitution and Bylaws of the congregation and carry out the expressed will of the congregation as embodied in the resolutions of the Voters' Assembly, to the best of his/her ability;
    - 6.1.1.4 Prepare an agenda and preside at the meetings of the Church Council;
    - 6.1.1.5 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;
    - 6.1.1.6 Establish a Finance committee with the duties assigned in the FINANCE COMMITTEE POLICIES and PROCEDURES.
    - 6.1.1.7 Appoint a Financial Review Committee consisting of at least two (2) qualified communicant members of the congregation, other than the Treasurer and Financial Secretary, to review the financial records of the congregation. The President shall submit the Financial Review Committee's report at the June meeting of the Voters' Assembly in each year.
  - 6.1.2 The Vice President of the congregation shall:
    - 6.1.2.1 Assist the President in performance of his duties.
    - 6.1.2.2 Substitute for the President in his absence.
    - 6.1.2.3 Serve as the Finance Committee Chairman.
  - 6.1.3 The Recording Secretary shall:
    - 6.1.3.1 Record the minutes of all meetings of the Voters' Assembly and the Church Council, and enter them in a permanent record book over his/her signature. The taking and drafting of minutes may be assigned to a member of the paid staff at the discretion of the Church Council;
    - 6.1.3.2 Conduct all official correspondence of the Congregation as charged by the President.
  - 6.1.4. The Treasurer shall:
    - 6.1.4.1 Be responsible for the financial records of the congregation.

- 6.1.4.2 Present a written financial report to the Voters' Assembly and Church Council meetings.
  - 6.1.4.3 Submit permanent financial records for annual financial review.
  - 6.1.4.4 Be responsible for the monthly remission of offerings for missions and church agencies and for prompt payment of salaries, bills, and other regularly recurring expenses.
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- 6.2 The following are the elected boards of this congregation. Duties not listed in these bylaws are assigned in the GUIDELINE MANUAL FOR CHURCH OFFICERS AND BOARDS
    - 6.2.1 A Board of Elders, which shall assist the pastor in the spiritual life of the congregation.
    - 6.2.2 A Board of Church Properties, which shall be responsible for the physical properties of the congregation.
    - 6.2.3 A Board of Christian Education, which shall be responsible for the nurture and Christian growth of the members of the congregation.
    - 6.2.4 A Board of Outreach (Evangelism), which shall lead the members of the congregation in outreach to others in the community.
    - 6.2.5 A Board of Stewardship, which shall be charged with the encouragement of the members to a proper stewardship of time, talents and treasures.
    - 6.2.6 A Board of Human Care, which shall extend the "helping hand" in Christ's name to fellow Christians and to those in need.
    - 6.2.7 A Board of Fellowship, which shall offer activities of mutual sharing and friendship within the congregation.
    - 6.2.8 A Board of Youth, which shall offer activities for Christian growth and fellowship to the youth of the congregation.
  - 6.3 The Church Council shall consist of the elected officers, ~~and~~ board chairs of elected boards the Called ministers, and the Business Manager. The Church Council shall preferably meet monthly in regular sessions and at least quarterly.
    - 6.3.1 The Church Council shall have power to act in behalf of the congregation between meetings of the Voters' Assembly. The duties of the church council shall be as assigned by the Voters' Assembly and as assigned in the GUIDELINE MANUAL FOR CHURCH OFFICERS AND BOARDS
    - 6.3.2 The President, any member of the Called ministers, or any three members of the Church Council may call a special Church Council meeting by sending a notice, which shall be delivered to the residence of each Church Council member at least 24 hours in advance. A majority of Church Council Members shall constitute a quorum.

- 6.3.3 When the position of an officer, board chair, or board member becomes vacant, the Church Council shall appoint to fill the position to serve for the remainder of the term. These appointments require confirmation at the next regular Voters' Assembly meeting;

## **7.0 Removal from Office**

Any officer or board member may be removed from office by the Voters' Assembly by a two-thirds majority ballot vote, in Christian and lawful order, for one of the following reasons: persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, willful neglect, or inability to perform the duties of the office.

## **8.0 Synodical Membership**

This congregation shall be a member of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod as long as the Synod conforms to the congregation's confessional standards set forth in this Constitution as determined by a majority vote of the congregation at a meeting called for that purpose.

## **9.0 Division**

- 9.1** If at any time a division should take place for any reason, the property of the congregation and all benefits connected therewith shall remain with those communicant members who continue to adhere in confession and practice to the confessional standards set forth in this Constitution, as determined by the dispute resolution process described in the Bylaws of the Synod.
- 9.2** If, at any time, a separation on account of doctrine should take place within this congregation, the advice and counsel of the officers of District and Synod shall be sought. If, despite all efforts to reach a peaceful reconciliation, the congregation should divide into factions, the property of the congregation and all benefits therewith connected shall remain with those members who continue to adhere in confession and practice to 3.0 and 4.0 of this Constitution. In the event the congregation should totally disband, the property and all rights connected therewith shall be transferred to The Southern District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, as long as they adhere to Article II of this Constitution.
- 9.3** In the event the congregation votes to sever its relationship with The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and/or The Southern District, the property and all rights connected therewith shall remain with Good

Shepherd Lutheran Church of the Fort Walton Beach Area, Florida, Inc.

## **10.0 Meetings**

Regular meetings of the Voters' Assembly shall be held as determined in the Bylaws. Announcement of the meeting shall be made in the services of the two previous Sundays. Special meetings require announcement in services in the two previous Sundays or notification by mail and announcement in the services of one previous Sunday. Such special meetings may be called at the request of the Pastor(s), President, Church Council, or twelve (12) voting members.

## **11.0 Quorum**

All members present at a properly called meeting shall constitute a quorum.

## **12.0 Limitations on Holding Office**

Women who have reached the age of 18 years old may hold voting membership in the congregation and serve as officers and as members of boards and committees as long as these positions are not directly involved in the specific functions of the pastoral office (preaching, the public administration of the sacraments, church discipline). Accordingly, they shall not serve as Pastor or a member of the Board of Elders.

## **13.0 Amendments**

**13.1** Amendments to provisions of this Constitution except 3.0 and 4.0, may be adopted at a regular voters' meeting, except as hereinafter provided that:

**13.1.1** The proposed amendment has been submitted in writing at a previous meeting of the Voters' Assembly and published by posting in a conspicuous place in the church, or by mail to all communicant members of the congregation prior to the meeting at which the proposed amendment will be acted upon.

**13.1.2** That an affirmative vote of a two-thirds majority of the voters present is secured.

**13.1.3** In addition to the above requirements, proposals to amend 3.0, and 4.0 shall require that previous notice of such amendment and discussion of the same

shall be presented at two regular meetings of the Voters' Assembly before the meeting at which the proposed amendment is to receive action. Due notice of the fact that a vote will be taken shall be given to all voting members of the congregation. Any changes in these articles shall not destroy the essential meaning of the article. Whether or not this has occurred shall be decided, if challenged, by a decision by the dispute resolution process described in the Bylaws of the Synod. The affirmative vote of a three-fourths majority of the votes cast in a regular meeting of the Voters' Assembly shall be required for the adoption of an amendment.

**THE BYLAWS  
GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH  
OF THE FORT WALTON BEACH AREA, FLORIDA, INC.  
Shalimar, Florida**

**14.0  
Authority of The Congregation**

- 14.1** The Voters' Assembly shall be the governing body of this congregation and shall be empowered to administer and manage all its affairs. The establishment and conduct of all organizations and societies within the congregation or related directly to it, shall be subject to the approval and supervision of the Voters' Assembly. The Voters Assembly reserves authority for the following decisions:
- 14.1.1 Ministry Direction:** The Voters' Assembly reserves authority for determining the overall Ministry focus of the congregation, which it does through the adoption of the annual budget, and establishing the level of accomplishment desired and to which they are committed to support.
- 14.1.2 Annual Budget:** The Congregation Assembly reserves authority for approving an annual budget that supports their defined Ministry Direction.
- 14.1.3 Divine Call:** The Congregation Assembly reserves authority for issuing or rescinding a Divine Call.
- 14.1.4 Real Estate:** The Congregation Assembly reserves authority for decisions about acquiring or selling real estate or buildings, or entering into a mortgage. Good Shepherd Lutheran Church of the Fort Walton Beach Area, Florida, Inc., may receive, acquire, hold title to, and manage real estate and other property as needed to accomplish its purpose and may sell or dispose of such real estate and other property in whole or in part. This Corporation shall have all rights and powers granted by the laws of the State of Florida to religious corporations. Members who transfer their membership, or for any reason are separated from this congregation, automatically forfeit all rights to, and claims on, property held by the congregation
- 14.1.5 Elections:** The Voter's Assembly reserves the authority for selecting congregational officers, board chairs, and individual board members.
- 14.1.6** All matters before the Voters Assembly shall be decided by a majority vote unless otherwise specified by this constitution or bylaws. Matters

of doctrine and conscience shall be decided only on the basis of the Word of God.

- 141.7 The rules contained in the current edition of Roberts' Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern the Voters' Assembly in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with this Constitution and any special rules of order the Congregation Assembly may adopt.

## **15.0**

### **PROCEDURES FOR CALLING ORDAINED AND COMMISSIONED MINISTERS**

- 15.1** When a pastor is to be called, every member of the congregation shall have the privilege of making one or more nominations. The congregation shall also ask the President of the Synodical District and the Circuit Counselor for recommendations.
- 15.2 In the case of a pastoral call, the Board of Elders may serve as the Call Committee.
- 15.3** In the screening process, the Call Committee shall submit all names to the respective District President for information and evaluation. After receiving information and recommendations from the District President, Call Committee shall present to the congregation, by means of a public announcement, at least five (5) preferred candidates, together with a biographical sketch of each.
- 15.4** At the Voters' Assembly, called for the purpose of electing a new pastor, the preferred list may be amended by means of a two-thirds vote of those present. At that point, the Voters' Assembly shall be asked to agree to be satisfied with whatever selection is finally made by the congregation.
- 15.5** Balloting shall proceed by means of a secret ballot vote. A majority is needed in order to determine the disposition of the call.

**16.0**  
**COMMUNICANT MEMBERSHIP**

16.1. Admission into Membership

**16.1.1** By Confirmation - Members received by confirmation become communicant members of this congregation.

**16.1.2** By Transfer - A person from other Missouri Synod Lutheran Churches shall submit a letter of transfer from his/her former congregation. The Pastor(s) shall determine that they meet the requirements for communicant membership of this congregation as established in **4.0** of the Constitution.

**16.1.3** By Profession of Faith - Anyone giving satisfactory evidence of faith in accordance with **4.0** of the Constitution may be received as communicant members by profession of faith.

**17.0**  
**ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP**

*A member of another Lutheran Church who does not intend to remain in the local area permanently, and who intends to return to his/her home congregation, may become an Associate Member while here and participate in all privileges of membership to include being able to teach, but is not eligible to hold office or vote at the Voters' Assembly meetings.*

**18.0**  
**VOTING MEMBERSHIP**

**18.1** Eligibility - Any communicant member of this congregation, who is eighteen (18) years of age or over, male or female, shall be eligible for Voting Membership.

**18.2** Privileges and Responsibilities - It shall be the privilege and responsibility of each Voting Member of this congregation to:

18.2.1 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;

18.2.2 Willingly serve in his/her office or capacity as the Lord equips each with talents and abilities;

**18.2.3** Assist with wholehearted diligence in administering the temporal and spiritual affairs of the congregation;

**18.2.4** Encourage communicant members to accept the responsibilities and privileges of Voting Membership.

## **19.0 NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS**

19.1 A nominating committee, chosen by the Church Council, shall present a slate of qualified candidates for congregational officers, board chairs, and individual board members. The slate may consist of two names for each position. Additional nominations of qualified candidates may be made from the floor for any position except that of elder. No person shall be nominated without his or her consent. All candidates shall be a communicant member of the congregation.

19.2 The elections shall be made by a majority ballot vote, and voting shall continue until a clear majority has been established, after candidates receiving the lowest number of votes have been eliminated in each succeeding ballot.

19.3 Term of office for congregational officers, board chairs, and individual board members shall be two (2) years or until the next election cycle. Vacancy appointments, made by the Church Council and ratified by the Voter's Assembly, shall serve until the next election cycle.

19.4 The congregational officers, board chairs, and individual board members shall be inducted into office in a public service of the congregation.

## **20.0 OFFICIAL DUTIES**

Officers and members of boards shall perform the duties prescribed in the Constitution. The congregation shall also have the privilege, from time to time, of detailing and enlarging these responsibilities by majority vote of the Voters' Assembly. It may also call such other boards and committees into being as it may need from time to time. Refer to the Guidelines for Church Officers and Boards for detailed duty descriptions.

## **21.0 MEETINGS**

The Voters' Assembly shall meet three (3) times per year during election years and two (2) times a year on non-election years. The November meeting of the Voters' Assembly will discuss and approve the budget for the next year. The

February meeting will be held every other year for the purpose of electing officers and board chairpersons (to replace the current officers and board chairpersons on \*March 1<sup>st</sup>) for the coming \*term. The June meeting will be used to update the congregation on current events and provide the results of the audit of the financial records.

## **22.0** **AMENDMENTS**

These Bylaws may be amended in a properly convened meeting of the Voters' Assembly by a majority of all voting members present, provided the proposed change has been announced in a previous meeting or has been made available, in writing, and published by posting in a conspicuous place in the church, or by mail to all communicant members of the congregation prior to the meeting at which the proposed amendment will be acted upon.

### Summary of Changes:

- Amended by the Voters Assembly on February 22, 2009 to change the date that the newly elected officers and board members take office.

### Summary of Amendments by the Voters Assembly 4 November 2012

- Numbering two unnumbered paragraphs after paragraph 14.1.5
- Removed doctrinal changes by popular vote in paragraph 14.1.6
- Article 6 Church Council and Boards:
  - Restructured to define terms before they are used.
  - Clarified which positions are officers of the congregation.
  - Gave Guidelines, and Finance Procedures documents authority.
  - Some duties given to the president were reassigned to the Church Council.
- Article 19 Changes made to clarify that Voters Assembly is responsible for electing individuals who serve on standing boards.

### Summary of Amendments by the Voters Assembly 17 November 2013

- Proposal to add paragraphs 5.4 and 5.5 to Article 5, Called Church Workers.
- Change wording in Para 6.3 to remove the confusing ex officio terminology.
- Delete para 4.1.4. Removing the requirement to track members who have signed the Constitution.
- Change wording of Para 4.2 to clarify that Baptism is required for reception into the membership.