

Constitution
Of
Epiphany Evangelical Lutheran Church



A Member
Of
The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod

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Article I. Name

The name of this congregation shall be Epiphany Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Article II. Mission

The purpose of this church is to grow in faith and understanding of God's Word by teaching grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ.

This congregation shall create a church that faithfully preaches God's Word and gathers together in worship around His means of grace providing strength and assurance to her members that faith in Jesus Christ brings forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.

This congregation shall create a church that reaches out to the surrounding community, embodying the love and forgiveness won for all in Jesus Christ.

This congregation shall 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 to human need and to achieve its 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.

Article III. Confessional Standard

This congregation accepts without reservation:

- (a) The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and practice.
- (b) All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God, to wit: 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 and the Formula of Concord.

Article IV. 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 as set forth in this constitution.

Article V. Membership

This congregation distinguishes between three (3) types of congregational membership:

- (a) The membership of this congregation includes the following:
 - (i) *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 into the communicant membership.
 - (ii) *Communicant* members are those baptized members who have been instructed and are familiar with the contents of *Luther's Small Catechism*, have been confirmed in the Lutheran faith and accept the confessional standard of Article III. of this Constitution.
 - (iii) *Voting* members are communicant members who have reached the age of 18 years.
- (b) The members of this congregation are received in the following manner. New members will be reported annually to the congregation at a meeting of the voters' assembly.
 - (i) Baptized members are received through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism or through the consent of one or both parents in the case of children who have been baptized in another Christian congregation.
 - (ii) Adult members are received through the rite of confirmation and Sacrament of Holy Baptism as appropriate, through transfer from a sister congregation or through profession of faith or reaffirmation of faith.
- (c) Members of this congregation shall conform their entire lives to the authority of God's Word and to that end shall 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. Membership in organizations whose principles and conduct conflict with the Word of God is prohibited.

- (d) Membership in this congregation shall be terminated as follows.
Terminated members will be reported annually to the congregation at a meeting of the voters' assembly.
- (i) Membership shall be terminated by transfer to a sister congregation.
 - (ii) Membership shall be terminated by joining a congregation outside the fellowship of this congregation, by excommunication or self-exclusion or by death.
- (e) This congregation prays all members will turn towards Jesus Christ for repentance of sins. Members who remain impenitent will be terminated as follows:
- (i) Communicant members who conduct themselves in an un-Christian manner shall be admonished according to Matthew 18:15-20 and the congregation's stated and adopted guidelines. If they remain impenitent after proper admonition, they shall be excommunicated. Each case of excommunication shall be presented to the voters' assembly for a decision. An affirmative vote of 90% majority of the voters' assembly shall be required for excommunication.

Congregational Guidelines for Admonition

1. Private admonition by the Senior Pastor.
 2. Admonition by the Senior Pastor in the presence of two or three witnesses.
 3. Admonition by the Senior Pastor in the presence of the Congregation Council.
 4. Affirmative vote of 90% majority of the voters' assembly.
- (ii) Members unwilling to submit to the Congregational Guidelines for Admonition may request a release from membership in this congregation. Such action shall be considered self-exclusion from the Christian Church. Excommunication and/or self-exclusion shall terminate membership. Persons whose names have been removed from the membership roster of the congregation by excommunication or self-exclusion shall be notified of such action, if possible by certified mail within one week after the action has been taken. Self-excluded or excommunicated persons who repent and ask forgiveness of the congregation shall be reinstated into membership as outlined in part (b) of this article.

Article VI. Called Ordained Ministers

The voters' assembly of this congregation shall have the exclusive right to call ordained ministers.

- (a) The pastoral office shall be conferred only upon pastors or candidates who profess and adhere to the confessional standard set forth in this constitution, who are qualified for the work of the ministry and who have been endorsed by and are members of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.
- (b) The right of calling ordained ministers shall be vested in the voters' assembly and shall not be delegated otherwise.
- (c) Called ordained ministers may be removed from office in Christian and lawful order by a 90% majority ballot vote of the voters' assembly for one of the following reasons: persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, willful neglect of the duties of office or the inability to perform those duties.
- (d) When a vacancy occurs in an office of an ordained minister, the congregation shall notify the president of the district to receive assistance in temporarily filling the vacancy and to receive his counsel in calling a new pastor.

Article VII. Authority of and Within the Congregation

The voters' assembly shall be the governing body of this congregation and shall be empowered to administer and manage all its affairs.

- (a) The voters' assembly, as a body, shall be empowered to administer and manage all the congregation's property, business, external and internal affairs. The establishment and conduct of all organizations and societies within the congregation shall at all times be subject to the approval and supervision of the voters' assembly. The voters' assembly, however, shall not be empowered to decide anything contrary to the Word of God.
- (b) Congregational officers, council members, boards and committees, whether elected or appointed, shall have no authority beyond that which has been conferred upon them by the voters' assembly and whatever authority may have been delegated to them may at any time be altered or revoked.

Article VIII. Meetings

Meetings of the voters' assembly shall be held as determined in the bylaws.

- (a) Announcements of regular meetings shall be made in the services of the two previous Sundays.
- (b) Announcements of special meetings shall be made in the services of the two previous Sundays or in the services of the previous Sunday when accompanied by notification by mail. Such special meetings may be called by the pastor, president, church council or ten (10) voting members.
- (c) All voting members present at a properly called meeting shall constitute a quorum.

Article IX. Officers, Boards and Committees

This congregation shall have the following officers and boards in addition to any which the congregation shall establish from time to time. The officers and the chairpersons of the boards, and the pastor as an advisory member, shall constitute the membership of the church council. Those officers identified by state law shall serve as legal representatives of the congregation.

- (a) The officers of this congregation shall be:
 - (i) A president, who shall conduct all official meetings of the congregation.
 - (ii) A vice-president, who shall serve in the president's absence or inability to conduct all official meetings of the congregation.
 - (iii) A secretary, who shall keep the minutes of the all official meetings of the congregation.
 - (iv) A treasurer/financial secretary, who shall be responsible for the financial records of the congregation.
- (b) The boards of this congregation shall be:
 - (i) A board of elders, consisting of a minimum of three (3) male members, which shall assist the pastor in the spiritual life of the congregation.
 - (ii) A board of trustees, consisting of a minimum of two (2) members, which shall be responsible for the physical properties of the congregation.

- (iii) A board of Christian education, consisting of a minimum of two (2) members, which shall be responsible for congregational education programs of the members of the congregation.
 - (iv) A board of evangelism, consisting of a minimum of two (2) members, which shall lead the members of the congregation in outreach into the community.
 - (v) A board of stewardship, consisting of a minimum of two (2) members, which shall be charged with teaching and promoting proper stewardship of time, talents and treasures.
- (c) Any officer or council member who fails to carry out his or her duties of office or who fails to perform the responsibilities of confirmed membership may be removed from office by the voters' assembly by a two-thirds majority ballot vote, in Christian and lawful order. Matthew 18 should be followed under such circumstances

Article X. Limitations on Holding Office

This congregation sets forth the following provisions for holding office.

- (a) Men who have reached the age of 18 years may serve as officers and as members of boards and committees of this congregation.
- (b) Women who have reached the age of 18 years may serve as officers and as members of boards and committees of this congregation which do not call upon them to carry out the specific functions of the pastoral office (preaching in or serving as the leader of the public worship service, the public administration of the sacraments, the public exercise of church discipline). Accordingly, a woman shall not serve as pastor of this congregation or as Congregational president, vice-president or an elder.

Article XI. Division

If at any time a division of the congregation should take place for any reason, the following principles will govern:

- (a) The property of the congregation and all benefits connected therewith shall remain with those communicant members who continue to adhere to the confession and practice to the confessional standards set forth in this constitution.
- (b) In the event that the congregation dissolves, all property shall be disposed of by the final voters' assembly for the payment of debts and all just claims against the congregation and any and all surplus and all rights connected therewith shall be conveyed to and become the property of Advent Evangelical Lutheran Church, Zionsville, IN.

Article XII. Amendments

This constitution may be amended in the following manner:

- (a) Amendments to the provisions of this constitution not identified in the following paragraph shall be submitted in writing at a meeting of the voters' assembly and announced to the congregation by public posting and/or mail to all communicant members prior to the meeting at which the proposed amendment will be acted upon. A two-thirds affirmative vote of the voters' present shall be required for adoption.
- (b) Amendments to Articles III, IV and X shall not destroy their essential meaning. Amendments shall be submitted in writing at a meeting of the voters' assembly and made public to the congregation by public posting and/or mail to all communicant members. Notice of the discussion of such amendments shall be given prior to two (2) regular voters' assemblies when the proposed action will be discussed. Notice that action will be taken on proposed amendments shall be provided to all voting members prior to the meeting when a vote will be taken. The date of approval shall be referenced in any amendment adopted.
- (c) The revised constitution shall, as a condition of continued membership in The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, be submitted to the president of the district for review by the district's constitution committee and favorable action by the district's board of directors before being implemented by the congregation.