

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

For

Our Savior Evangelical Lutheran Church

Milford, Illinois

PREAMBLE

God requires that a congregation shall conform to His Divine Word in doctrine and practice (Psalm 119:105; Galatians 1:6-8; II Timothy 4:1-5) and that all things be done decently and in order (I Corinthians 14:40). God requires of His people that they share the life-saving message of His Son Jesus Christ with all people (Matthew 28:18-20). Therefore we, the members of Our Savior Lutheran Church, located at Milford, Illinois, accept and subscribe to the following Constitution and By-Laws, 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 Our Savior Evangelical Lutheran Church.

ARTICLE II

SYNODICAL MEMBERSHIP

This congregation shall hold membership in The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod as long as this Synod remains true to the word of God and the Lutheran Confessions. It shall send its pastor and a lay delegate to the District conventions of the Synod.

ARTICLE III

PURPOSE

The purpose of this congregation shall be to seek the honor and glory of God, to carry out His will, to manifest the unity of our faith in Jesus Christ as God and Savior, to spread the Kingdom of God and to foster Christian fellowship and love, 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 IV).

ARTICLE IV

DOCTINAL STANDARD

- A. This congregation acknowledges and accepts all the canonical books of the Old Testament and the New Testament as the revealed and inerrant Word of God, verbally inspired, and submits to them as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life.
- B. This congregation acknowledges and accepts all the confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the *Book of Concord* of the year 1580, as true and genuine expositions of the doctrines of the Bible. These confessional writings are the three Ecumenical Creeds (Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian), the *Unaltered Augsburg Confession*, the *Smalcald Articles*, *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, *Martin Luther's Large and Small Catechisms*, and the *Formula of Concord*.

ARTICLE V

DOCTINAL CONFORMITY

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 IV of this Constitution.

ARTICLE VI

MEMBERSHIP

The membership of this congregation includes the following:

A. BAPTIZED MEMBERSHIP

1. Definition: Baptized members are all those who have been baptized in the name of the Triune God and who are under the spiritual care of the Pastor and this congregation.
2. Reception: Baptized members are received through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, or through transfer, or with the consent of one or both parents or guardians in the case of children who have been baptized in another Christian congregation.
3. Duties: Baptized members shall conform their lives to their baptismal vow.

B. COMMUNICANT MEMBERSHIP

1. Definition: Communicant members are those baptized members who have been confirmed in the Lutheran faith, who accept the doctrinal standards of Article IV of this Constitution, who are familiar at least with contents of Luther's Small Catechism, and who are not members of un-Christian organizations or other organizations whose principles and conduct conflict with the Word of God.
2. Reception: Communicant members are received through the Rite of Confirmation, by transfer from a sister congregation, upon profession of faith, or

by reaffirmation of faith, provided that they conform to the definition for membership in this congregation. Their reception shall be recommended by the Board of Elders to the Church Council and subsequently ratified by the Voters' Assembly.

3. Duties:

- a. Communicant members 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 gifts, and impart and accept fraternal admonition as the need for such admonition becomes apparent.
- b. It shall be the duty of all members of this congregation to contribute according to their ability toward the maintenance of the church property, and in general to assist in bearing the burdens of the congregation.
- c. It shall also be the duty of the members of the congregation to provide for Christian education.

4. Termination:

- a. Communicant member in good standing may be transferred by the pastor to a sister congregation upon approval of the Board of Elders as recommended to the Church Council to be ratified by the Voters' Assembly. Members who move out of unity and thereby become inactive shall be encouraged to transfer their membership to the sister congregation nearest and most suitable to them.
- b. Communicant members who join congregations outside of our fellowship thereby terminate their membership. Their names shall be removed from the membership list by resolution of the Voters' Assembly.
- c. Communicant members whose whereabouts are unknown and whose addresses can't be established shall have their names removed by resolution of the Voters' Assembly.
- d. Communicant members who conduct themselves in an un-Christian manner shall be admonished according to Matthew 18:15-20; if they remain impenitent after proper admonition, the case shall be presented to the Voters' Assembly for action. A three-fourths (3/4) vote by the voters present shall be required for ex-communication. If such member deliberately absents himself from the meetings at which his case is to be discussed, or in some other manner makes it impossible to deal with him, he thereby excludes himself.

C. VOTING MEMBERSHIP

1. Definition: Voting members are all communicant members who have reached the age of 18 years.
2. Duties: Voting members shall
 - a. be familiar with the Constitution and Bylaws of Our Savior Evangelical Lutheran Church;
 - b. attend the meetings of the Voters' Assembly;
 - c. participate in the work of the congregation; and
 - d. willingly accept responsibility according to ability.
3. Termination: Termination of communicant membership automatically terminates voting membership.

ARTICLE VII

THE OFFICE OF PASTOR AND TEACHER

The pastoral office of this congregation, as well as the office of a called teacher, shall be conferred only on such ministers, teachers, and candidates who profess and adhere to the confessional standard set forth in Article IV of this Constitution and who are qualified for their work. Pastors and teachers shall be pledged to this confessional standard.

ARTICLE VIII

AUTHORITY OF THE CONGREGATION

- A. General: 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 shall be subject to the approval and supervision of the Voters' Assembly.
- B. Right of Calling: The right of extending a call to pastors or teachers shall be vested in the Voters' Assembly and shall never be delegated to a smaller group or to an individual.
- C. Decisions: All matters of doctrine and of conscience shall be decided only by the Word of God, as set forth in the Lutheran Confessions (Article IV). All other matters shall be decided by a majority vote of the Voters' Assembly unless otherwise specified by this Constitution or Bylaws.
- D. Removal from Office: Any pastor, teacher or officer may be removed from office by the Voter's Assembly by a 2/3 (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 of duties, or prolonged incapacity as defined by current Synodical guidelines.

- E. Removal from membership: The Voters' Assembly shall have the authority to exclude any communicant member according to Matthew 18:15-18. The person so excluded (excommunicated) shall forfeit all rights of a member (see Article VI-B-4-d).

ARTICLE IX

OFFICERS

- A. The officers of this congregation shall be such officers, boards, or committees as the By-laws of this Constitution may prescribe.
- B. The offices of the President of this congregation and the members of the Board of Elders shall be held by male voters.
- C. Congregational officers or 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 X

DIVISION

If at any time a division should take place on account of doctrine, 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 Article IV of this Constitution. If the division takes place for any other reason, the property reverts to the Central Illinois District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.

ARTICLE XI

BY-LAWS

This congregation may adopt such By-laws as may be required for the accomplishment of its purpose.

ARTICLE XII

CHANGING THE CONSTITUTION

- A. Unalterable Articles: Article III, IV, V and VII of this Constitution shall not be subject to change or repeal.
- B. Amendments: Amendments to this Constitution may be adopted at a regular Voters' Assembly provided that all of the following conditions are met:
 - 1. They do not conflict with the provisions laid down in Article IV or with any other article that pertains to a Scriptural doctrine and practice.
 - 2. The proposed amendment has been submitted at the previous meeting of the Voters' Assembly and voted upon prior to the meeting at which the proposed amendment will be acted upon for the second time.
 - 3. An affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) majority of the voters present is secured in two consecutive Voters' Assembly meetings.