

Bylaws

1.0 NAME

“The name of this congregation shall be Christian Fellowship of Redeeming Excursion”

2.0 MISSION

“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 nurture the faith of its members, 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.”

3.0 CONFESSIONAL STANDARD

“This congregation accepts without reservation:

“WHEREAS, We have been called Lutheran since the formation of our Synod (and since reformation times) and are thankful for our doctrinal background and heritage; and

WHEREAS, The name Lutheran clearly identifies what the member congregations and ELCA believe, teach and confess; and

WHEREAS, Basic Christian honesty and integrity require that no deception of any sort be used in declaring the truth of the Gospel before all the world, as St. Paul declares: ‘Rather we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the Word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God’ (2 Cor. 4:2); therefore be it

Resolved, That all congregations and mission stations in our Synod boldly profess in their official title and/or name that they are ‘Lutheran’; and be it further

Resolved, That all congregations and mission stations of our Synod state in their materials (bulletins, newsletters, etc.) that they belong to ECLA; and be it finally

Resolved, That all ECLA congregations gladly proclaim our great doctrinal heritage to a world that needs the clear proclamation of the truth.” (1995 Res. 3-13A, “To Use the Name Lutheran”)

Historically, The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope is not listed in Article II of Synod’s constitution, but it is included in the Book of Concord of 1580, and is therefore one of the confessional writings of the Synod. Because it is not listed separately in Synod’s constitution, it does not have to be listed separately by a congregation, but a congregation may choose to do so.

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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 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: 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.”

4.0 SYNODICAL MEMBERSHIP

“This congregation shall be a member of The ELCA as long as the Synod conforms to the congregation’s confessional standards as set forth in this constitution.”

5.0 MEMBERSHIP

“This congregation distinguishes between three types of congregational membership. 5.1 The membership of this congregation includes the following:

5.1.1 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 into communicant membership.**

5.1.2 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 prior Sections of this Constitution.

5.1.3. Voting members are communicant members who have reached the age of 6 years. 5.2 The members of this congregation are received in the following manner:

12 Some congregations include a fourth category: "Guest Members." 1989 Res. 5-19 encouraged such a category for congregations with many seasonal members, "which could include such basic rights and privileges as reception of the sacraments, pastoral care, congregational concern, use of their time, talents, and treasures in the service of the Lord, and attendance and participation in voters' assemblies as advisory or associate members" (1989 Convention Proceedings, p. 140). 13 Variations often occur in the last two categories. Some congregations distinguish between communicant and confirmed members due to the practice of early communion, in which case further definitions will be necessary.

14 1969 Res. 2-17 concluded that "Scripture does not prohibit women from exercising the franchise in congregational and synodical assemblies," at the same time concluding that "the Synod itself and the congregations of the Synod are at liberty to alter their policies and practices in regard to women's involvement in the work of the church" (1969 *Convention Proceedings*, p. 88).

15 "(a) Pastors and congregations alike must avoid membership or participation in any organization that in its objectives, ceremonies, or practices is inimical to the Gospel of Jesus Christ or the faith and life of the Christian church...." (Bylaw 3.9.5.3.1).

16 "(a) It shall be the policy of the Synod to decline membership to congregations whose constitutions deny membership or other congregational privileges to any Christian because of race or ethnic origin" (Bylaw 2.3.1 [a]).

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5.2.1 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.

5.2.2 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.

5.2.3 Eligible communicant members may be received as voting members upon application for such privilege upon approval of the voters assembly.

5.2.3 All communicant members who have reached the **age of 6 are voting members**.

5.3 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.

5.4 Membership in this congregation shall be terminated as follows:

5.4.1 Membership shall be terminated by transfer to a sister congregation, by joining a congregation

outside the fellowship of this congregation, by excommunication or self-exclusion, or by death. 5.4.2 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 guidelines¹⁷. If they remain impenitent after proper admonition, they shall be excommunicated. Each case of excommunication or self-exclusion shall be presented to the voters assembly for a

decision. A two-thirds majority vote of the voters assembly shall be required."

6.0 CALLED CHURCH WORKERS

"The voters assembly of this congregation shall have the exclusive right to call ordained ministers. The right to call commissioned ministers also belongs to the congregation and ordinarily shall not be delegated to a smaller body and never to an individual.

6.1 The pastoral office shall be conferred only upon ordained ministers who are members of ELCA, candidates for the pastoral ministry who have satisfied the qualifications and requirements for assignment of first calls by Synod, or ordained ministers who are members in good standing of church bodies that have been formally recognized to be in altar and pulpit fellowship with the Synod when agreements for such calls are in place.

6.2 Only those commissioned ministers shall receive a call who adhere to the confessional standard set forth in this constitution, who are qualified for the work of the ministry to which they are called, and who have been endorsed by

and are members of ELCA Synod, who are candidates of ELCA colleges and universities who have satisfied the qualifications and requirements for assignment of first calls, and who are commissioned ministers in good standing from church bodies that are in altar and pulpit fellowship with ELCA.

6.3 The right of calling ordained or commissioned ministers shall be vested in the voters assembly and shall not be delegated otherwise.

6.4 Called ordained or commissioned ministers may be removed from office in Christian and lawful order by a two-thirds 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, the inability to perform those duties, or domineering in office.

6.5 When a vacancy occurs in an office of an ordained or commissioned 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, teacher, or other church worker (Bylaw 2.5.1).”

7.0 AUTHORITY OF AND WITHIN THE CONGREGATION

7.1 The establishment and conduct of all organizations and societies within the congregation or related

directly to the congregation shall be subject to the overall authority and general oversight of the voters

assembly.

7.2 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.”

8.0 MEETINGS

8.1 Announcements of regular meetings shall be made in the services of the two previous Sundays.

8.2 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 at the request of the pastor, chairman, church council, or ten (10) voting members.

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

9.0 OFFICERS AND BOARDS

“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.

9.1 The officers of this congregation shall be:

9.1.1 A chairperson, who shall conduct the meetings of the voters assembly, plan the fiscal year and plan religious excursions.

9.1.2 A vice-chairperson, who shall serve in the chairman's absence or inability to act.

9.1.3 A treasurer, who shall be responsible for the financial records of the congregation and shall

deposit contributions the same in an account established in the name of the congregation.

9.2 The boards of this congregation shall be:

9.2.1 A board of elders, consisting of elected members or associates of the church, which shall assist the pastor in the spiritual life of the congregation.

10.0 DIVISION

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

10.1 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.

10.2 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 the District of The Lutheran Church—California Synod.”

11.0 AMENDMENTS

“This constitution may be amended in the following manner.

11.1 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.

11.2 Amendments to Articles 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 by mail to all communicant members. Notice of the discussion of such amendments shall be given prior to two 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.

11.3 The revised constitution shall, as a condition of continued membership in good standing in ECLA, 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 adopted by the congregation.

IV. GUIDELINES FOR BYLAWS

The following are subjects that ordinarily can be addressed in a congregation's bylaws. Instructive comments are provided together with sample paragraphs.

1.0 PROCEDURES FOR CALLING MINISTERS OF RELIGION

“When this congregation calls a minister of religion, ordained or commissioned, the following procedure shall be followed:

1.1 When a pastor or commissioned minister is to be called, every member of the congregation shall be

provided opportunity to suggest one or more names for consideration.

1.2 A call committee shall be appointed [or an existing board or committee designated] to serve as a screening committee and shall submit all suggested names to the district president for information and evaluation. The committee shall then present to the congregation by public announcement its proposed list of candidates and their biographical sketches.

1.3 At a voters meeting called for the purpose of calling a new pastor or commissioned minister, the proposed list may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the assembly. When possible, information regarding additional candidates shall be provided by the district president and/or his representative at the meeting.

1.4 Ballot voting shall continue until a majority [or two-thirds] vote determines the disposition of the call.”

2.0 CHURCH COUNCIL OR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

“The church council shall provide direction to the congregation on behalf of the voters assembly.

2.1 The church council shall consist of the congregation’s president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer,

financial secretary, and the chairmen of its boards. [The pastor may be an advisory or voting member.] The chairman and secretary of the congregation shall also serve as the chairman and secretary of the church council.

2.2 The church council shall meet a minimum of one time a year. Special meetings may be called by the chairman, the pastor, or any three members of the council by providing notice at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. A majority of the voting members of the council shall constitute a quorum.

2.3 The principal duty of the church council shall be to coordinate the program and activities of the various departments of the congregation. It shall also have the power to act on behalf of the congregation between meetings of the voters assembly within limitations established by the voters assembly, which actions shall be reported to the next meeting of the voters assembly.”

3.0 NOMINATIONS, ELECTIONS, AND TERMS OF OFFICE

“The procedure for the nomination and election of elected and appointed officers and board members shall be as follows.

3.1 A nominating committee appointed by the church council (or board of directors) shall present a slate of

candidates for each elected and appointed office. The slate shall normally provide one name for each office. In the case of elected positions, additional nominations may be made from the floor. No person shall be nominated without his or her consent.

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3.2 A majority of the votes cast shall be required for all elections. Candidates receiving the lowest number of votes shall be eliminated in each succeeding ballot.

3.3 All officers shall be elected for a term of 1 year. Other members of the church council and of boards and committees shall be elected or appointed for a term of 1 year.

3.4 Officers and board members shall be inducted into office in a public service of the congregation.

3.5 In case of a vacancy in an elective office, the voters assembly shall elect [or: the church council shall appoint] a successor to fill the unexpired term from a list of candidates provided by the nominating committee. Service for more than one-half of a term shall constitute a full term.”

4.0 OFFICIAL DUTIES

“Officers and members of boards and committees shall perform the duties as provided in the constitution. The congregation shall also have the right to detail and expand upon those responsibilities by the development of job descriptions developed by the church council [board of directors] and approved by the voters assembly.”

5.0 MEETINGS

The voters assembly shall meet once a year on March 16

6.0 RULES OF ORDER

“In addition to principles laid down in Scripture and in the constitution and bylaws of this congregation, accepted parliamentary procedures shall be followed”

7.0 AMENDMENTS

“These bylaws may be amended in a properly convened meeting of the voters assembly.

7.1 Amendments shall be adopted by a majority of all votes cast, provided the proposed change has been

announced in a previous meeting or has been submitted in writing at least two weeks prior to the

meeting to all communicant members.

7.2 The revised bylaws shall, as a condition of continued membership in good standing of ECLA, must be submitted to the president of the district for review by the district’s CCM – Guidelines for Constitutions and Bylaws of Lutheran Congregations – *Page 12*– Revised November, 2012

constitution committee and favorable action by the district’s board of directors before being adopted by the congregation.”