

CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The members of Zion Lutheran Church, desiring to manifest the unity which we have with one another in our common confession our Lord Jesus Christ, unite in the adoption of the following Constitution and to solemnly pledge ourselves before God and before one another, to be governed by its provisions.

ARTICLE I

Name

The name of the Congregation is Zion Lutheran Church of Cooperstown, North Dakota, a member Congregation of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of America.

ARTICLE II

Confession of Faith

We believe and confess that God's Word, as it is contained in the canonical books of the Bible, is the only source and guide for faith, doctrine and life. We also accept the canonical writings of the Lutheran Church as being in conformity with the Word of God.

1. The Bible, including both the Old and New Testament as originally given, is verbally and plenary inspired and free from error in the whole and in the part, and is therefore the final authoritative guide for faith and conduct.
2. There is one God eternally existent in three distinct persons in the divine essence: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
3. God the Father has revealed Himself to us as the Creator of the world and its Preserver, to whom the entire creation and all creatures are subject.
4. Mankind was originally created in the image and after the likeness of God to live in His fellowship. He fell into sin through the temptation of Satan and thereby lost fellowship with God, became totally depraved and is under the wrath of God.
5. Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son, is the image of the invisible God. To accomplish our redemption, He took upon Himself the form of man, being conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. By his perfect obedience and substitutionary death on the cross, He has purchased our redemption. He arose from the dead for our justification in the body in which He was crucified. He ascended into heaven, where He is now seated at the right hand of God, the Father, as our interceding High Priest. He will come a second time personally, bodily and visibly to gather the believers unto Himself, and to establish His millennial kingdom. Finally, He will judge the living and the dead and make an eternal separation between believers and unbelievers.

6. The Holy Spirit is a divine person eternally one with the Father and with the Son. His ministry is to call and regenerate repentant sinners, to sanctify believers and to preserve them in the one true faith. He guides and comforts the children of God, directs and empowers the Church in fulfillment of the great commission, and “convicts the world of sin and righteousness and of judgment.”
7. The knowledge and benefit of Christ’s redemption from sin brought to mankind through the means of grace, namely the Word and the Sacraments. Through the Word, both the law and gospel, God convicts of sin and bestows his grace in Christ for the forgiveness of sin to all who repent and believe. We believe that all who having reached the age of accountability must have a conscious experience of sin and saving grace.

In the Sacrament of Baptism, God offers the benefits of Christ’s redemption to all persons and graciously bestows the washing of regeneration and the newness of life to every believer. Because of the total depravity of human nature, and because the promise of God also includes little children, infants are to be baptized. In the Sacrament of Holy Communion, Christ gives to the communicants His body and His blood, declares the forgiveness of sins to all believers and strengthens their faith.
8. The Church Universal consists of all those who truly believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. The local congregation is the communion of saints or true believers in which the law and gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered. Therefore it follows that the membership of the local congregation shall comprise only those who by life and testimony show that they are living in fellowship with Jesus Christ. We practice the congregational form of church government and the autonomy of the local congregation.
9. The Lutheran Confessions are a summary of the Bible doctrines. We adhere to the following confessional writings: The Apostolic Creed, Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, Augsburg Confession and Luther’s Small Catechism.

ARTICLE III

Aim

The aim of this Congregation shall be to encourage persons to accept by faith the Lord Jesus Christ and to strengthen the believers by the preaching of the Word, the administration of the Sacraments, and the exercising of the gracious gifts of the spirit. It is also our purpose to cooperate with other congregations of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren in the ventures of the faith that God gives us in North American mission, international mission, Christian education, publications and charities and youth ministries. We shall also support other worthy endeavors which are in harmony with our principles and practices.

ARTICLE IV

Definition

A Lutheran Brethren Congregation is an assembly of believing Christians in a certain locality, among whom the Word of God is preached in harmony with the fundamental doctrines of the Lutheran faith as expressed in the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church and the Sacraments are administered in accordance with the Lord's institution.

ARTICLE V

Church Formation

The Bible teaches (Acts 2:47; Ephesians 2:19-22; I Peter 2:9) and the Lutheran Confessions confirm (Article 7 of the Augsburg Confession) that only regenerate persons are members of the Body of Jesus Christ. The Bible further teaches that the local congregations shall consist only of those who by word and deed manifest a living faith in Jesus Christ.

The Bible teaches that the Church of Christ is to be an organized body in a given locality. It is therefore necessary for individual believers to unite themselves into organized congregations to affect their spiritual preservation and growth in grace through the Word and Sacrament, and fellowship, to fulfill their calling and commission in evangelistic and missionary activities.

ARTICLE VI

Church Membership

Members of this Congregation are classified as follows:

1. Communicant Members

As communicant members, only those are received who confess that they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have a good reputation among the brethren, and who accept the Constitution. No person belonging to any secret society which either in its rules or in its statutes rejects the Christian doctrines, or has any rites for use at public occasions which deny the name of Christ or reject his atonement and exclusive saving power, shall be received into membership in this Congregation.

2. Non-communicant Members

Children of parents who belong to the church become non-communicant members of the church through Baptism and remain so unless they request to be removed from the roll or are accepted as communicant members. The Congregation shall reserve the right to remove their names from the church roll whenever it shall be deemed necessary. The Congregation shall

through Christian interaction endeavor to show them both love and interest, and shall arrange for such definite work among them as will be in accordance with the Word of God and this Constitution, and thereby be ultimately accepted as communicant members. Non-communicants shall have the privilege of being served by the pastor in his ministerial capacity in the instances of weddings, baptisms, Christian instruction and funerals in accordance with the directions given in our Constitution.

3. Associate Members

Those who worship in our Congregation but who, because of doctrinal differences, elect not to become communicant members, although they are believers, may be accepted as associate members. Associate members may participate fully in the Congregation except that they shall not be eligible to hold office as a member of the Joint Board and shall not be eligible to vote at congregational business meetings.

ARTICLE VII

Church Management

1. Christ is the Head of the Church

Through His Spirit He guides the Church by His Word, and according to this Word He bestows upon the Church the gracious gifts of the Spirit for the effectual performance of its various ministries.

Among these ministries we especially emphasize the Office of the Pastor, teaching and governing Elders, Evangelists, Teachers, and Trustees (Acts 14:23, 20:17,28; Titus 1:5; I Peter 5:1-4; Ephesians 4:11; I Thessalonians 5:12; II Timothy 4:5; Acts 6:2-6; and Philippians 1:1)

2. Pastor

The Congregation shall call a man who is recognized as a true Christian, who accepts this Constitution, and who otherwise has the necessary qualifications. The Pastor shall particularly attend to the preaching of the Word and administration of the Sacraments. He shall also perform such other services within the church as are required of him by the Word of God. His call or dismissal shall take place at a lawful meeting of the Congregation, by secret ballot, and shall require a two-thirds majority for passage. The Pastor remains in office as long as both parties find it desirable. His resignation shall become effective after a three (3) month notice. The three month notice may be waived by mutual agreement between the Congregation and the Pastor.

3. Elders

The Congregation shall elect as Elders those who are recognized as true Christians, who accept this Constitution, and who otherwise have the necessary qualifications as listed in I Timothy

3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The duties of the Elders are to assist the Pastor, watch over the spiritual condition of the congregation, and exercise such supervision that all activities are in accordance with the Word of God. In the absence of the pastor, the Elders shall be responsible for the work of the Church. The term of office for the Elder shall be three years. An Elder may be re-elected to serve as long as the Congregation and the Elder find it practicable. The Church Council shall nominate candidates for the election of Elders; in addition, the Congregation may, by written petition of thirty percent (30%) of voting membership, submit the name of a candidate to the Congregation at the Annual Meeting to be voted upon together with the candidates nominated by the Church Council. An Elder may retire for any reason or may be removed for cause by a two-thirds majority vote of the Congregation at any business meeting provided that notice has been given to the Congregation at least two weeks in advance.

4. Church Council

The Pastor and the Elders of the Congregation constitute the Church Council, and to this body the Congregation as a whole commits its spiritual direction. The Council examines and recommends applicants for membership, whereas actual church discipline is exercised in accordance with Matthew 18:15-18, I Corinthians 2:5; I Timothy 5:20 and other related passages. The Council has authority on behalf of the Congregation to exclude an individual from the Lord's Supper. However, expulsion from the Congregation can be brought about only by action of the Congregation itself in a lawful meeting. The council also calls a meeting of the Congregation as often as the Congregation demands it or as the Council finds in necessary.

Elections and matters of primary importance should be considered by the Council before they are brought up in the business meetings of the Congregation for discussion and final decision. The Church Council serves as the Nominating Committee of the office of Elder and on the Call Committee for the Pastor.

5. Boards

A. Board of Trustees

The Congregation shall elect at least three (3) persons to serve as Trustees. They shall serve on the Board of Trustees together with the Treasurer, who is a non-voting member on the board.

B. Board of Deacons and Deaconesses

The Board of Deacons and Deaconesses consist of as many men elected as Deacons and women elected as Deaconesses as the Congregation deems necessary.

C. Board of Parish Education

Each year the Congregation elects a Board of Parish Education at the summer quarterly business meeting. The Board of Parish Education consists of one member of the Church Council and as many other members as the Congregation deems necessary.

D. Joint Board

The Joint Board consists of the Church Council, the Board of Trustees, the Treasurer or the Assistant Treasurer, the Financial Secretary, the Chairman of the Congregation and the Vice-Chairman of the Congregation. The Joint Board may meet for purposes of convenience at the call of the Pastor or any of the Elders; at the call of the Chairman of the Board of Trustees; or at the call of the Chairman of the Congregation, to conduct business together.

6. Committees

A. Auditing Committee

Two Auditors shall be appointed by the Chairman of the Congregation and shall form the Auditing Committee.

B. Nominating Committee

At the fall quarterly meeting a Nominating Committee shall be chosen to select candidates for all church offices except the office of Elder. One each shall be chosen from among the Elders and from the Trustees and three shall be elected by the Congregation. The Pastor shall serve as an ex-officio member of this committee.

C. Other Committees

Other Committees may be appointed by the Joint Board for specific function as seems desirable.

7. Other Officers

A. Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Congregation

The Congregation shall elect a Chairman and a Vice Chairman at the Annual Business Meeting each year. The Chairman is to lead all business meetings. If the Chairman is absent, then the Vice Chairman is to lead the meeting. The Chairman and the Vice Chairman are to be nominated by the Nominating Committee, and additional nominations may be made from the floor. They are then elected by the Congregation.

The Chairman and Vice Chairman shall have been members of the local Congregation for a minimum of three years before they are eligible for nomination as Chairman and Vice Chairman. They are to have a clear Christian testimony in the Church and the community in which they live. They shall be in agreement with the doctrine and Constitution of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of America. They shall, also, be in agreement with the doctrine, Constitution, and By-Laws of the local Church. If at any time the said person or persons elected to the office of Chairman or Vice Chairman cannot be in full agreement with this provision, he shall automatically be relieved of his responsibility of the said office by a majority vote of the Congregation present at any business meeting provided that notice has been given to the Congregation at least one week in advance, and further provided that a quorum is present.

B. Secretary

Each year the Congregation elects a Secretary at the Annual Meeting of the Congregation.

C. Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer, Financial Secretary and Assistant Financial Secretary

The Congregation shall elect a treasurer and an assistant treasurer, and may elect a financial secretary and an assistant financial secretary at the Annual Meeting. Note: The Board of Trustees shall assume responsibility for these offices if candidates cannot be found.

D. Sunday School Superintendent, Assistant Sunday School Superintendent and Secretary-Treasurer

Each year the Congregation may elects a Sunday School Superintendent, Assistant Sunday School Superintendent and Secretary-Treasurer at the summer business meeting of the Congregation.

E. Head Usher

Each year the Congregation elects a Head Usher at the Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE VIII

Church Property

If a division should ever occur in this Congregation, which God forbid, the properties and assets of the Church shall belong to that part of the Congregation which abides by this Constitution, whether that part be in the majority or the minority. In the event that this Congregation is dissolved, the property shall be deeded over to the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of America, provided it is in existence and exempt under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Otherwise it may be given to any organization exempt under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code to carry out the objectives and purposes for which this Church was formed, but for no other purpose. This paragraph is unalterable.

ARTICLE IX

Amendments to this Constitution

This Constitution can be amended (with the exception of Article VIII) by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present at the Annual Meeting of the Congregation providing motion for amendment has been presented or read at the previous Annual Meeting.

BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I

Membership

1. New Members
 - A. Application for membership shall be made to the Church Council
 - B. Those who wish to become members are required to attend a membership class.
 - C. After prospective members have been recommended by the Church Council and accepted into membership at a business meeting of the Congregation, they shall be welcomed into the fellowship of the Church at the Communion Service. Each member shall be given opportunity to give a personal testimony of faith in Christ.
2. Transfer and Withdrawal of Membership

Request for transfer or withdrawal of membership shall be made in writing to the Church Council. The Church Council can contact inactive members, after 5 years of inactivity, for permission to remove them from the membership rolls. If they cannot be contacted, the Church Council is allowed to remove their names from the membership rolls.
3. Responsibility of Members
 - A. Each member is expected to attend the regular services of the Church as often as possible and be willing to assume responsibilities within the Church.
 - B. Each member is expected to support the Church financially as the Lord has prospered him or her.
 - C. Each member is requested to pray for the Pastor and the spiritual welfare of the Church.

ARTICLE II

Meetings

1. Business meetings are held as often as is required by the Congregation or by the Church Council as deemed necessary. A meeting is to be announced on the preceding Sunday. The Annual Meeting shall be announced two Sundays prior to the Annual Meeting. An agenda will be made available to the members in advance of any business meeting. The business sessions must be conducted in a brotherly spirit. At a general business session no one shall bring forth another's mistakes or shortcomings or anything of a personal nature that would disturb the spirit of brotherliness.

2. Baptism and Holy Communion are administered according to the ritual of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of America.
3. At marriages, funerals, catechization, as well as ordination and/or installation of Pastors, Elders and Trustees, together with all other ministerial acts, the ritual of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of America is followed.
4. New members are welcomed into the fellowship of the Church in connection with the Holy Communion Service and opportunity is given for testimony. Members who are reinstated are welcomed with the reading of the following passages of Scripture: II Corinthians 2:6-11; James 5:16; Psalm 32:5; and John 20:23. Prayer is offered and opportunity is given for confession.
5. The meeting for the election of officers takes place at the Annual Meeting which is held during the month of January.
6. A quorum of twenty-five percent (25%) of the resident adult communicant members is required at every business meeting of the church in order to transact any legal business. "Resident adult communicant members" is defined to mean those members who maintain their permanent residence in the local church community and are not absent for an extended period of time. "Extended period of time" is defined to mean more than eight consecutive weeks.
7. Communicant members who are eighteen years of age and older are eligible to vote.
8. The policies on requirement of a pastor, his privileges, his ethics and due process, which have been proposed by a Synodical Committee of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of America, are adopted in general as helpful guidelines for the Pastor and the Congregation.
9. Robert's Rules of Order shall be the basis for parliamentary procedure.

ARTICLE III

Terms of Office

Elected officers of the Congregation shall serve for a term of one year with the following exceptions.

1. An Elder shall be elected for a term of three years with the recommendation of a sabbatical being granted following two consecutive three-year terms.
2. Members of the Board of Trustees shall be elected for a term of three years, with a limit of two consecutive three-year terms.
3. The Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer shall be elected for a term of two years, with a limit of two consecutive two-year terms.

4. The Financial Secretary and Assistant Financial Secretary shall be elected for a term of one year.
5. Deacons and Deaconesses shall be elected for a term of two years.

ARTICLE IV

Duties of Boards, Committees and Officers

All Boards shall meet not less than once each quarter and shall report to the Congregation on their activities at each quarterly business meeting.

1. Board of Trustees

The duties of the Board of Trustees are to care for all financial matters pertaining to the Congregation and to supervise all property belonging to the Congregation and to submit a report of the same at the Annual Meeting. The Board has no authority to buy, sell, mortgage, rent or transfer any real property belonging to the church except by decision of the Congregation. The Trustees shall not transact any business on behalf of the Congregation in excess of one thousand dollars (\$1000) per project without the consent of the Congregation.

2. Board of Parish Education

The Congregation, through the Board of Parish Education, shall diligently endeavor to provide for the instruction of the Word of God by Christian teachers. The duties of the Board of Parish Education are to provide, promote, maintain and direct the educational programs of the Congregation including such programs as Sunday School, Vacation Bible School and other educational activities. The Board shall also be responsible for the selection of materials and teachers to conduct these activities. This Board shall encouraged to promote Christian literature.

The Church provides confirmation instruction for young people. Confirmation takes place when a child is approximately fourteen years old and the instruction shall cover a minimum period of two years. These young people are made the objects of prayer and blessing of the church.

The Board of Parish Education may recommend nominees to the Nominating Committee for the offices of Sunday School Superintendent and Assistant Sunday School Superintendent.

3. Joint Board

The Joint Board shall conduct business which concerns both the Church Council and the Board of Trustees. The members of the Church Council and the voting members of the Board of Trustees shall be voting members of the Joint Board.

4. Board of Deacons and Deaconesses

The Board of Deacons and Deaconesses shall assist the pastor in ministry to the elderly and ill, and shall administer the hospitality program as defined by church policy. It shall also be prepared to provide information to members and visitors concerning church activities.

5. Auditing Committee

The Auditors shall examine the financial records of the Church and submit a report at the Annual Meeting.

6. Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee shall select candidates for all church offices except for the office of Elder.

7. Chairman and Vice Chairman

The Chairman, or the Vice Chairman in his absence, shall lead all business meetings.

8. Secretary

The Secretary is to keep accurate minutes of the transactions and decisions made at the business meetings of the Congregation, care for its correspondence and submit a complete report at each business meeting. The Church Secretary becomes an ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees.

9. Financial Secretary and Assistant Financial Secretary, Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer

The Financial Secretary, along with the Assistant Financial Secretary, is responsible to secure, count and deposit all funds received by the Congregation, and to make reports of the same to the Treasurer each week. Neither the Financial Secretary nor the Assistant Financial Secretary shall have any authority to write checks or otherwise disburse funds received by the Congregation. If applicable, the Financial Secretary is an ex-officio member of the Joint Board.

The Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer are responsible to make all payments as are authorized by the Board of Trustees and the Congregation and to report on the financial status of the church on a quarterly basis. While the Treasurer shall be primarily responsible to accomplish these tasks, the Treasurer and the Assistant Treasurer shall work together so that, in the absence of the Treasurer, the Assistant Treasurer would be able to succeed the Treasurer. Either the Treasurer or the Assistant Treasurer will be an ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees and of the Joint Board.

10. Sunday School Superintendent and Assistant Sunday School Superintendent and Secretary Treasurer

The Sunday School Superintendent and Assistant Sunday School Superintendent, under the direction of the Board of Parish Education, shall have charge of the Sunday School. Leadership of the Sunday School must always be exercised in complete harmony with the principles of the

Church. The Secretary-Treasurer shall take care of all secretarial and financial matters pertaining to the Sunday School.

11. Head Usher

The duties of the Head Usher are as follows:

- A. To appoint ~~all~~ other ushers and to direct their activities.
- B. To provide ushering service at all Church functions as required and in accordance with church policy.

ARTICLE V

Amendments to the By-laws

By-laws may be amended when motion is made at a regular meeting; adoption requires a two-thirds majority vote at the Annual Meeting.