

**Constitution**

**And**

**BY-LAWS**

**OF**

**St. Paul's Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
Strasburg, Illinois**

**March 24, 2021**

## CONSTITUTION PREAMBLE

The Word of God demands that in a Christian congregation all things shall be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40). We, a congregation of Missouri Synod Lutherans of Strasburg, Illinois, and vicinity, have formulated the following constitution according to which the affairs of the congregation shall be administered.

### ARTICLE I NAME

The name of this congregation shall be St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Strasburg, Illinois.

### ARTICLE II 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 foster Christian fellowship and love, preaching the Word of God, administration of the Sacraments, and religious instruction of all its members, according to the confessional standard of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

### ARTICLE III DOCTRINAL STANDARD

This congregation accepts and acknowledges all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God, and all the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord as the true and sound exhibition of Christian doctrine taken from, and in full agreement with, the Holy Scriptures; and in this congregation no doctrine shall be taught or tolerated which is at variance with these Symbols of the Evangelical Lutheran Church:

1. the three Ecumenical Creeds, the Apostolic, the Nicene, and the Athanasian;
2. the Unaltered Augsburg Confession;
3. the Apology of the same;
4. the Smalcald Articles;
5. Luther's Large Catechism;
6. Luther's Small Catechism; and
7. the Formula of Concord. According to this norm of doctrine all doctrinal controversies which may arise in this congregation shall be decided and adjudicated.

### ARTICLE IV MEMBERSHIP

The membership of this congregation includes the following:

#### A. Communicant Membership

1. Definition: Communicant members are those baptized members who have been confirmed in the Lutheran faith, accept the doctrinal standards of Article III of this constitution, are familiar at least with the contents of Luther's Small Catechism, and who are not members of 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 they conform to the requirements for membership in this congregation. Their reception shall be approved by the Church Council and subsequently by the Voters' Assembly.
3. Duties: 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.
4. Termination:
  - a. Communicant members in good standing may be transferred by the pastor to a sister congregation immediately upon their request. Such transfer shall be reported to the Voters' Assembly for approval at its next meeting. Members who move out of the community and thereby become inactive shall be encouraged to transfer their membership to the sister congregation nearest 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 cannot be established shall have their names removed by resolution of the Voters' Assembly.
- d. Communicant members who conduct themselves in an unchristian manner shall be admonished according to Matthew 18:15-20; if they remain impenitent after proper admonition, they shall be excommunicated. Each case shall be presented individually to the Voters' Assembly for action. A unanimous vote by the voters present shall be required for excommunication. **If such member deliberately absents themselves from the meeting at which the case is to be discussed, or in some other manner makes it impossible to deal with them, thereby excommunicates themselves, and their name shall be removed by resolution of the Voters' Assembly.**
- e. **There should be a full audit of the membership list conducted every 3 years by a committee appointed by the President of the congregation.**

**B. Baptized Membership**

- 1. Definition: Baptized members are all members who have been baptized in the Name of the Triune God and who are under the spiritual care of the pastor of this congregation.
- 2. Reception: Baptized members are received through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, 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' duties shall be the same as those of Communicant members in so far as they have the ability to do so.
- 4. Termination: Baptized members who have not been received as communicant members shall have their membership terminated for the same reasons that communicant membership is terminated insofar as these reasons are applicable.

**C. Voting Membership**

- 1. Definition: Voting members are all communicants who have reached the age of **18** years.
- 2. Duties: Voting members shall attend the meetings of the Voters' Assembly regularly, participate in the work of the congregation, and willingly accept responsibility according to ability.

**ARTICLE V**

**THE OFFICES OF PASTOR AND CALLED WORKER**

The pastoral office of this congregation, as well as the office of a called worker, shall be conferred only on such ministers, teachers, and candidates who profess and adhere to the confessional standard set forth in Article III of this Constitution, who are qualified for their work, and who have been endorsed by and are members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Pastors and teachers shall be pledged to this confessional standard.

**ARTICLE VI**

**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 calling pastors or teachers shall never be delegated to a small group or to an individual.
- C. Decisions: All matters of doctrine and of conscience shall be decided only by the Word of God. 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: The Voters' Assembly, by a two-thirds majority ballot vote, may remove any pastor, teacher, or officer in Christian and lawful order for one of the following reasons: persistent adherence of false doctrine, scandalous life, or willful neglect of duties, request the resignation of any pastor, teacher, or officer from his position in the congregation in the case of prolonged incapacity or general incompetence.

E. Removal from Membership: The Voters' Assembly shall have authority to exclude any communicant member according to Matthew 18:15-20. The person so excluded (excommunicated) shall forfeit all rights of a member. (See Article IV, A, 4.)

#### **ARTICLE VII OFFICERS**

- A. The officers of this congregation shall be such officers, boards, or committees as the Bylaws of this Constitution may prescribe.
- B. Congregational officers or committees, whether elected or appointed, shall have no authority beyond that which has been conferred upon them, and whatever authority may have been delegated to them may at any time be altered or revoked.

#### **ARTICLE VIII DIVISION**

- A. 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 III of this Constitution.
- B. If division takes place for any other reason, the property shall remain with the majority of the communicant members.
- C. In the event the congregation should totally disband, the property and all rights connected therewith shall be transferred to that District of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod of which the congregation has been a member at the time of disbanding.

#### **ARTICLE IX DOCTRINAL 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 doctrinal standard of Article III, and all instruction in the congregation shall conform to this doctrinal standard.

#### **ARTICLE X 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(s), called worker(s), and, (a) lay delegate(s) to the District conventions of the Synod as its handbook provides.

#### **ARTICLE XI BYLAWS**

This congregation may adopt such Bylaws as may be required for the accomplishment of its purpose.

#### **ARTICLE XII CHANGING THE CONSTITUTION**

Amendments to this Constitution may be adopted at a regular Voters' Assembly provided –

- A. That they do not conflict with the provisions laid down in Article III, or with any other article that pertains to a Scriptural doctrine and practice; and
- B. That the proposed amendment has been submitted in writing at a previous meeting of the Voters' Assembly and published prior to the meeting at which the proposed amendment will be acted upon; the date of this meeting shall also be published; and
- C. That an affirmative vote of a two-thirds majority of the voters present is secured.
- D. There should be a full review of the Constitution and its bylaws every 5 years by a committee appointed by the President of the congregation.

#### **BY-LAWS**

##### **ARTICLE I VOTERS' ASSEMBLY**

###### **A. Meetings**

1. Regular meetings of the Voters' Assembly shall be held quarterly on dates set by the Church Council.
2. The annual meeting, which shall be the first quarterly meeting, shall be held in January if possible and an election and budget meeting shall be in held in December if possible.

3. Special meetings of the Voters' Assembly may be called by the pastor, the president of the congregation, or the Church Council by publicly announcing the date, time, and place of such meeting. The congregation shall have the right to take up any items of business which are presented at these special meetings.

4. The date and time of the meetings will be announced at least a week in advance. An agenda will be posted with the announcement.

#### **B. Quorum**

1. Ordinarily the voters present at a properly called meeting shall constitute a quorum to do business.

2. To amend the Constitution, for the purchase of property, for the erection of buildings, or for the removal from office of a called pastor or worker, 25% of all voting members shall be required for a quorum. In the absence of such a quorum, those present may fix the date for an adjourned meeting for which at least seven days written notice shall be given. The members who are present at such adjourned meeting shall constitute a quorum.

#### **C. Order of Business**

The regular quarterly meetings of the Voters' Assembly shall be conducted in accordance with the Constitution and By-Laws and shall include an opening prayer, approval of the minutes of the previous meeting(s), report of the pastor, report of the Financial Secretary, report of the Treasurer, reports of other officers and standing committees and action thereon, unfinished business, recommendations of the Church Council, other business, and adjournment with the Lord's Prayer.

In questions of parliamentary procedure not covered by this Constitution and By-Laws, the generally accepted rules of order shall prevail.

### **ARTICLE II PROCEDURE IN THE CALLING OF PASTORS AND OTHER WORKERS**

#### **Nominations and Elections**

A. At any properly called meeting of the Voters' Assembly, eligible and qualified candidates for the office of pastor or called worker (e.g. teacher, DCE, etc. ) shall be submitted by the nominating committee. The Board of Elders, the President of the congregation, the Education superintendent and the Assistant Education superintendent shall jointly serve as the nominating committee for the office of pastor or called worker. Any voter is entitled to make additional nominations from the floor.

B. The list of candidates shall be publicly announced to the congregation. Barring any sustained protest, the candidates shall become eligible for calling at any subsequent properly called meeting of the Voters' Assembly.

C. In circumstances of partnership with other churches, the agreement between the churches supersedes this procedure of calling pastors and other workers.

### **ARTICLE III NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

A. The officers of this congregation shall be all eligible voting members of the Voters' Assembly and shall consist of a president, a vice-president, a secretary, an Education superintendent, an assistant Education superintendent and a head usher, all serving a term of one year; and a financial secretary, a treasurer, a chairperson of stewardship, a director of technology, and a chairperson of evangelism each serving a term of two years, and a Board of Elders and a Board of Trustees, each member of which shall serve a term of three years.

The following officers of the congregation: President, Vice President and Elders shall only be held by eligible male members.

(NOTE: The positions of Board of Education have been eliminated.)

#### **B. Procedure in Nomination and Election**

A nominating Committee, consisting of the church officers whose terms do not expire, shall present a slate of candidates at the election meeting of the Voters' Assembly. The slate proposed by the nominating committee shall consist of at least two names for each office, if possible. Additional nominations may be made from the floor.

All officers shall be elected by a majority ballot vote. The officers-elect shall assume their respective duties on January 1st. Officers shall be installed into office in a public service of the congregation.

In case of a vacancy in an elective office, the Church Council may appoint someone to fill the vacancy until the next regular meeting of the Voters' Assembly when the voters shall elect a successor to fill the unexpired term, and the officers elected shall assume office immediately.

**C. Term of Office**

The Board of Elders and the Board of Church Trustees shall be arranged so that an equal number of each is elected every year. Officers having a two-year term shall be elected as follows: For the even numbered years, the financial secretary and the chairperson of evangelism shall be elected; for the odd numbered years, the treasurer and the chairperson of stewardship shall be elected.

In the event that no successor has been elected or has qualified when the respective term expires, such officer shall continue until a successor is elected and qualified.

**ARTICLE IV THE CHURCH COUNCIL**

**A. Membership**

The Church Council shall consist of all elected officers. The pastor and any called worker shall be ex-officio members. The president of the congregation shall be the chairman of the Church Council and the secretary of the congregation shall be the recording secretary.

**B. Meetings**

1. The Church Council shall meet in regular session before each regular meeting of the Voters' Assembly.

2. The pastor or any three members of the Church Council may call special meetings. A majority of the voting members of the council shall constitute a quorum.

3. The date and time of the meetings will be announced at least a week in advance. An agenda will be posted with the announcement.

**C. Duties**

It shall be the duty of the Church Council to consider and discuss all matters pertaining to the general welfare of the congregation, to review all reports, and to present recommendations to the Voters' Assembly. The Church Council shall act in matters committed to it by the Voters' Assembly.

**ARTICLE V DUTIES OF OFFICERS**

**A. President**

The duties of the president shall include presiding at all meetings of the Voters' Assembly and the Church Council, appointing committees according to the instructions of the By-Laws or the resolutions of the Voters' Assembly, and responsibility for seeing that the resolutions of the Voters' Assembly are carried out.

**B. Vice President**

The vice-president shall perform the duties of the president in his absence, his disability, or at his request. He shall perform such other duties as may be delegated to him.

**C. Secretary**

The secretary shall record the proceedings of the Voters' Assembly and the Church Council, register all members attending the regular meetings of the Voters' Assembly, and submit the minutes for adoption at the following regular meeting. The secretary shall be the custodian of all church records pertaining to the office and at the expiration of the term of office shall deliver them to the successor. The secretary shall perform such other duties as may be delegated.

**D. Financial Secretary**

The financial secretary shall:

1. Receive all moneys collected for whatever purpose and keep an accurate record.

2. Deposit all moneys received in a bank (designated by the Voters Assembly) and furnish the bookkeeper with a duplicate receipt of deposit and a record of the purpose for which the moneys were received.

3. Be a member of the Stewardship Committee.

## **E. Treasurer**

The treasurer shall disburse the funds of the congregation in accordance with its resolutions and under the direction of the Board of Trustees. Items which remain the same from month to month, such as salaries, may be approved by the trustees by a standing motion, and the treasurer shall not require further authorization. All other items shall be disbursed only with the written order of one of the trustees. **The treasurer shall prepare quarterly and annual reports for the congregation, sign checks and oversee investment of the church funds. The treasurer will also serve on the stewardship committee.**

## **F. Board of Elders**

The Board of Elders shall consist of three elected members. **The senior Elder is the Chairman of the Board of Elders.** The Board, as assistants to the pastor, shall concern itself with the spiritual life of the congregation and, under his direction, shall be charged with the supervision of public worship, church discipline, and guarding erroneous doctrine. To that end it shall:

1. admonishes members who are neglecting the means of grace, who fail to share in the support of the congregational endeavors, or who have otherwise erred.
2. direct and supervise the reception of new members, and make every effort to bring them into the life and work of the congregation.
3. work with the head usher to maintain proper church decorum at all services.
4. gives the pastor assistance as needed.
5. in the field of social welfare, discover the needs of individuals in the congregation and community, of the aged, of the sick, and of the poor. They shall bring these needs to the attention of the Voters' Assembly with suggestions for action by the congregation.
6. **Work with the Pastor to encourage a youth ministry and Lutheran Youth Fellowship.**
7. **The Board** shall be authorized to appoint annually such officers and committees (e.g. social welfare committee) as are necessary to carry out its duties, subject to the ratification by the Church Council.

## **G. Board of Trustees**

The Board of Trustees shall consist of three elected members. **The senior Trustee is the Chairman of the Board of Trustees.** The board shall be charged with the supervision of church property, financial and legal affairs, and to that end it shall:

1. have the custody and control of the **church** property and legal documents and make such rules and regulations as it may deem expedient for the maintenance and improvement of the church property. Upon proper authorization **of the Voters Assembly**, the Board of Trustees may sell, mortgage, lease, or otherwise convey and dispose of **church** property.
2. sign legal documents, make contracts, and represent the congregation in court when necessary.
3. regularly review the insurance coverage of the congregation and recommend necessary changes to the Voters' Assembly.
4. supervise and direct the work of the church janitor and all other hired personnel (not the pastoral and teaching staff), and authorize the purchase of all equipment and supplies.
5. have authority to write pay orders for all budgeted items. Items not provided for in the budget shall be approved by special resolution of the Voters' Assembly.
6. be responsible for the repair and upkeep of the church building and church grounds and the parsonage.

## **H. Education Superintendent**

**The Education Superintendent's duties are as follows:**

1. **The Education Superintendent shall be responsible for: the supervision of the Sunday School; Weekday School; Vacation Bible School; the Cradle Roll; providing the best materials available for instruction of the students; maintaining an adequate teaching staff; establishing policy for the Sunday School and Weekday School; and doing all that is possible to increase the effectiveness of these programs.**
2. Encourage a program of teacher training for the purpose of maintaining a high level of instructional competence among the faculty members of the Weekday School and of the Sunday School.
3. **The Education Superintendent shall work with the Assistant Education Superintendent.**

4. Approve expenditures and serve as Treasurer of the Sunday School/WDS funds.
5. The members of the teaching staff of the Sunday school and weekday school shall be recruited by the Education Superintendent and the Assistant Education Superintendent. The names of the members of the teaching staff shall be presented to the voters.

#### **I. Assistant Education Superintendent**

1. The Assistant Education superintendent shall work closely with the Education Superintendent to accomplish duties identified in Article 5, Section H..
2. They shall perform the duties of the Education Superintendent in their absence, disability or at their request.
3. They shall perform such other duties as may be delegated to them.

#### **J. The Evangelism Chairperson**

The Evangelism Chairperson's duties are as follows:

1. Co-operate with the pastor in providing and directing a program of outreach to the un-churched people of the community.
2. Create and maintain an up-to-date prospect list.
3. Provide evangelism literature to the congregation and keep members aware of evangelism projects.
4. Supervise the work of public relations of the congregation.
5. The chairperson may appoint committees as needed.

#### **K. The Stewardship Chairperson**

The chairperson of stewardship working with the treasurer and the financial secretary shall be responsible for the following:

1. Work with the pastor in planning and promoting a Stewardship program in the congregation.
2. Inform the congregation of the stewardship challenges.
3. Encourage the members of the congregation to use their time, talents, and treasure in the work of the church.
4. The chairperson may appoint committees as needed.

#### **L. Director of Technology**

The Director of Technology 's duties are as follows:

1. Maintain an up-to-date church website and social media platform.
2. Coordinate the recording and posting of church services and events.
3. Assess ongoing technology needs and make recommendations to the church council
4. Work with the church trustees as needed.
5. Facilitate the preservation of church records.

### **ARTICLE VI Standing Committees**

#### **A. Budget Committee**

1. The chairperson of stewardship, financial secretary, treasurer, and chairperson of the Board of Trustees shall constitute the budget committee. The chairperson of stewardship shall be the chairperson of the committee.
2. The committee shall prepare the preliminary budget for the following year and present it to the Voters' Assembly for review and for adoption at the December election meeting.
3. The committee shall administer the distribution of the Thanksgiving charity collection.

#### **B. Financial Review Committee**

1. The financial review committee, consisting of three persons (none of whom shall be a financial officer of the congregation), shall be appointed by the president of the congregation. The members shall serve for a term of three years, one appointed each year.

2. The financial review committee shall audit the books and records of the treasurer, the financial secretary, and any other financial records. It shall make its report to the Voters' Assembly at the earliest possible date after the close of the fiscal year.

#### **ARTICLE VII Other Committees**

Other committees may be authorized or created by the President or Congregation.

#### **ARTICLE VIII 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 at least one week prior to the meeting in which the amendment is voted upon.