

St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church Constitution

Preamble

WHEREAS, the Apostle Paul sets forth, in 1 Corinthians that all things in the church shall be done “in a fitting and orderly way” (1 Corinthians 14:40), and

WHEREAS, the history of the Christian church of all times shows that certain agreements and regulations are helpful to properly fulfill the purpose and attain the objectives of the congregations; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that we, a congregation of Lutheran Christians of the Villages of Prairie du Sac and Sauk City, and vicinity, State of Wisconsin, do herewith in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, and by subscribing our names hereto, adopt the following **Constitution and Bylaws**.

Constitution

Article 1 Name

The name of this congregation shall be Saint James Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, of the villages of Prairie du Sac and Sauk City, State of Wisconsin.

Article II Articles of Faith

Section 1

This congregation accepts and confesses all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God and submits to this Word as the only infallible authority of all matters of faith and life. (2 Timothy 3:15-17)

Section 2

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This congregation accepts and confesses all the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, contained in the Book of Concord of 1580 as a correct presentation and true exposition of the Christian doctrine. They are:

1. The three ecumenical Creeds
 1. The Apostles'
 2. The Nicene
 3. The Athanasian

2. The six Lutheran Confessions
 1. Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism
 2. Dr. Martin Luther's Large Catechism
 3. The Unaltered Augsburg Confession
 4. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession
 5. The Smalcald Articles
 6. The Formula of Concord

Section 3

This congregation accepts and confesses these symbolical books without reservation, not in so far as, but, because they are drawn from and in full agreement with the Holy Scripture and are a summary of the faith held by the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Section 4

Hence, no doctrine shall be taught or tolerated in this congregation which is in any way at variance with these symbolical books and the Holy Scriptures.

Section 5

Likewise, all controversies which may arise in this congregation shall be decided and adjusted according to this norm of doctrine and practice.

Article III Purpose and Objectives

Section 1

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The continuing purpose of this congregation, as a gathering of Christians, is to serve all people in God's world with the gospel of Jesus Christ on the basis of the Holy Scriptures. (Matthew 28:18-20)

Section 2

The primary objectives of this congregation shall be:

To proclaim the law and gospel, to lead sinners to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ for life and salvation. (2 Timothy 4:2; Luke 24:26-48)

To strengthen believers in faith and sanctification through the means of grace.(Romans 10:17)

To equip believers as disciples, stewards and witnesses for sharing the gospel of Jesus with our fellow men. (Ephesians 4:11,12)

Article IV Church Affiliation

This congregation shall affiliate itself only with a church body that holds to all the truths of God's Word in doctrine and practice and is bound to the confession of faith as set forth in Article II, if, and as long as, such a church body exists.

Article V Church Membership

Section 1 Classification

1. Baptized members of the congregation are those who have been baptized into the Christian faith in the name of the Triune God.
2. Communicant members are those baptized souls who confess the chief parts of Christian doctrine as written in Dr. Luther's Small Catechism and who have declared their adherence to all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, without qualification, as the only rule and norm of faith and life.
3. Voting members are those male communicant members (who have reached age 18), not under church discipline, who have declared their agreement with this Constitution by their

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signatures and who have been accepted by the voters' assembly of the congregation (1 Corinthians 14:24; 1 Timothy 2:12).

Section 2 Privileges and Responsibilities

“God is love” (1 John 4:8) and His love ever moves Him to bless the members of His church with physical and spiritual gifts (1 John 3:1; James 1:17). In return for all of these undeserved blessings, we ought to love Him with all our heart (1 John 4:19) and show that love with the works we do. The exercise of such love we acknowledge as both a privilege and a responsibility. Some of the privileges and responsibilities to be noted are the following:

1. Our God has given us His Word, the one thing needful, (Luke 10:42) which alone can save our souls and tell us how to live a God-pleasing life (2 Timothy 3:15-17). Consequently, members of His church will consider it a distinct privilege and responsibility to:
 1. Hear and receive the Word of God diligently.
 2. Attend divine services faithfully (Hebrews 10:25).
 3. Provide and promote opportunities for Christian Education.
 4. Bring up their children in the instruction and training of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).
 5. Share His Word with the un-churched and to seek to win them for Christ and his church.

2. Our God has given us two sacraments: Holy Baptism and Holy Communion which are means that our Lord uses to bring His grace to us. Consequently, members of His church will:
 1. Have their children baptized in the name of the Triune God as early as possible and in the faith of this congregation (1 Peter 3:21).

 2. Frequently partake of Holy Communion (1 Corinthians 11:23-26), if they are recognized as such who can properly examine themselves (1 Corinthians 11:28). Only those in confessional fellowship of faith are permitted to commune at our altar (close communion - 2 Corinthians 6:14,15; Romans 16:17).

3. Our God has given us the privilege and responsibility of being managers over a certain portion of His estate and assures us He will graciously bless such faithful management (2 Corinthians 9:6). Therefore members of His church will under grace:

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1. Continually remember that all their possessions, time and abilities are really a trust from God.
2. Cheerfully decide in their heart (2 Corinthians 9:7) the portion of their possessions and time and abilities which they will regularly devote to their Lord for use in carrying out that which the congregation has made its concern, not omitting the synod (Matthew 28:19, 1 Corinthians 9:14; 16:2, 2 Corinthians 9:6-11; 1 Peter 4:10).
3. If eligible, become voting members and regularly attend the voters' meeting and lend the congregation their counsel and aid.
4. Our God has implanted within us who are Christians the new man, who desires to live righteously (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:24). Consequently, members of His church will:
 1. Not live in obvious acts of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:19-21), but lead a Christian life (Galatians 5:22-25).
 2. When they have erred, permit themselves to be fraternally admonished and corrected according to Matthew 18:15-18.
 3. Refuse to hold membership in any organization whose teachings and practices conflict with the Word of God (e.g., lodges, scouting) (John 5:23, 8:31,32; 1 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Section 3 Church Discipline and Excommunication

Christian discipline shall be exercised in this congregation according to Matthew 18:15-20 toward those who err from the faith or who have in other ways given offense. At all times this shall be done in the spirit of the gospel, namely, to regain the erring as brothers. Those members who become evident as impenitent sinners finally, must be excommunicated, and those who have excluded themselves from the congregation by evading Matthew 18:15-18, lose all rights in the congregation and in its property. For excommunication a unanimous vote of the voters' assembly is required.

Section 4 Reinstatement

When excommunicated members, by the grace of God, repent of their sin, they are to be reinstated with all former rights and privileges of this congregation (2 Corinthians 2:6-8).

Section 5 Termination of Fellowship

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Members who persist in error, that in itself does not make the presence of saving faith impossible, shall be excluded from fellowship of the congregation and lose all rights in the congregation and in its property (Romans 16:17, 18).

Article VI Powers and Rights of the Congregation

Section 1

In all matters of Christian faith and life the Word of God is supreme (Psalm 119:105).

Section 2

In all matters not decided by the Word of God, the congregation, represented by the Voters' Assembly, shall have the right of decision (Romans 12:10; 14:19; Ephesians 5:21).

Section 3

The Planning Council, any other elected committee or organization within the congregation, and any of its elected or appointed officers shall have no power or authority beyond that conferred upon them by the congregation. However, the Planning Council, in an emergency, may act in the name and for the welfare of the congregation. Such action must be submitted for approval at the next voters' meeting.

Section 4

No group or society may be organized within the congregation without the approval of the congregation. The congregation shall be assured that the aims of such a group are in complete harmony with the congregation's aims before it grants its approval (1 Corinthians 1:10; 12:25).

Article VII The Ministry

Section 1

The congregation has the exclusive right to call pastors and teachers.

Section 2

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The pastorate of this congregation shall be conferred only upon men who are qualified for this ministry, who publicly and without reservation profess their acceptance of and adherence to Article II of this constitution; and such acceptance and adherence shall be required of them in the call of vocation extended by the congregation (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; Colossians 4:5, 6).

Section 3

The teachers called by this congregation shall be such as are in accord with the confessional standard of the congregation (Article II) and are qualified for this field of work (Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 14:40).

Section 4

In case of a vacancy in the office of pastor or teacher, the congregation shall notify the president of the district; that he may assist in temporarily filling the vacancy and in giving his good counsel in regard to calling of a new pastor or teacher.

Article VIII Officers of the Congregation

Section 1

The first New Testament congregation at Jerusalem chose men “full of the spirit and wisdom” (Act 6:1-6) to aid the apostles in the administration of its affairs. This congregation shall choose men to administer its affairs so the Pastor does not neglect the ministry of the Word of God (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

Section 2

The listing of the officers and their duties is given in the Bylaws.

Section 3

The respect and esteem of the congregation are due these officers in the performance of their duties; and they shall be given its cooperation. They shall conduct themselves in a manner

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befitting their responsible office (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

Article IX Removal from Office

Section 1

If anyone who holds an office in the congregation willfully neglects his duty, and upon due admonition does not amend, the congregation has the right and, eventually, the duty to remove him from office and to elect another in his place (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

Section 2

Sufficient and urgent causes for removing a pastor or teacher are persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, willful neglect of duty or established inability to perform the duties of his office (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9). In such a case the advice and good counsel of the appropriate district officer shall be sought.

Article X Meetings of the Congregation

Meetings of the congregation shall be held as prescribed in the Bylaws.

Article XI Separation or Dissolution

Section 1

If at any time a separation should occur in this congregation - may God graciously prevent it - the property and assets and all equipment of this congregation shall remain with that portion of the membership which adheres to this Constitution, regardless of number.

Section 2

In the event of termination or dissolution of the congregation, the Planning Council shall, after paying or making provision for the payment of all the liabilities of the congregation, dispose of its remaining assets, if any, exclusively for the purposes of the congregation. By distributing, at the direction of the Voters' Assembly, the remaining assets to (and only to) one or more organizations with which the congregation is in fellowship, which shall at the time qualify as exempt organization(s) (under section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Code).

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Article XII Repeals and Alteration

Section 1

Articles II, III, IV, V, VI, Sections 1-3, IX, and XII, Section 1 of this Constitution shall not be altered or repealed, inasmuch as they express clear, Scriptural teachings.

Section 2

Article XI, Section 1, shall not be altered or repealed.

Section 3

Proposals to alter or repeal any article of this Constitution or to add an article shall be submitted in writing to the Planning Council, and shall be publicly announced on two Sundays immediately preceding a regular business meeting of the Voters' Assembly.

Section 4

Such a proposal shall be discussed in the meeting in which it is presented and voted on in the next regular meeting of the Voters' Assembly.

Section 5

A two-thirds vote of the voting members present shall be required to alter or repeal any article of this Constitution or to add an article hereto.

Section 6

Any and all Bylaws may be repealed or amended by a majority vote of the voting members present at any quarterly meeting, provided that public notice of this proposed action shall have been given the congregation on at least two Sundays prior to the time of the meeting, and provided that the substance of the proposed amendment has been submitted in writing to the Planning Council for its study and recommendation.