

Constitution
Christ Lutheran Church
Elbow Lake Minnesota 56531
(Proposed as of 3/28/2011)

Preamble

The word of God requires that Christian congregations shall conform to the Divine Word in doctrine and practice, as directed in these passages. (passages are from ESV.)

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Psalm 119:105)

And Jesus came and said to them, “ All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel - not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:6-8)

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Timothy 4:1-5)

And that all things be done decently and in order, (“ But all things should be done decently and in order.” 1 Corinthians 14:40) therefore, we the members of Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church, Elbow Lake, Minnesota accept and subscribe to the following Constitution and Bylaws, in accordance with which all spiritual and material affairs of our congregation shall be governed.

(When the masculine pronoun is used in The Constitution and Bylaws, this shall be applied for both man and/or woman, except where it conflicts with the Constitution and Bylaws.)

1.0 NAME

The name of this congregation shall be: Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church at Elbow Lake, Minnesota 56531, County of Grant.

2.0 MISSION

The purpose of this congregation shall be to give glory to the Triune God, to carry out his will, to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all the world, 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 in 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 as the revealed, inspired, inerrant, and infallible word of God:

- 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, those being: 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.
- 3.3 No doctrine or practice in conflict or inconsistent with this confessional standard shall be taught or tolerated in this congregation.
- 3.4 Only such hymns, prayers, liturgies, and other worship forms shall be used in the public service and activities of this congregation and in all ministerial acts as conform to these confessional standards.

4.0 SYNODICAL MEMBERSHIP

This congregation shall be a member of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as long as the Synod conforms to the congregation's confessional standards as set forth in this constitution.

- 4.1 A two-thirds vote of the voters present at a properly called voters assembly shall be required to withdraw from membership in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

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 and 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 this constitution.
 - 5.1.3 VOTING members are communicant members who have reached the age of 18 (eighteen) years and subscribe to this constitution and bylaws with their signature.
- 5.2 The members of this congregation are received in the following manner:
 - 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 an other Christian congregation.

- 5.2.2 Adult members are received through the rite of confirmation and the 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 having read and signed a copy of the constitution. They then will have the right to vote.
- 5.3 Members of this congregation shall conform their 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, by self-exclusion, or by death.
 - 5.4.2 Communicant members who conduct themselves in an un-Christian manor shall be admonished according to (Matthew 18: 15-20), the goal of which shall be to call them to repentance. 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 those present at a properly called voters assembly shall be required.
- 5.5 Requests for change in membership shall be processed by the Pastor in conjunction with the board of elders and reported to the voters assembly. All changes in membership shall be reported in the annual report.

6.0 CALLED CHURCH WORKERS

The voters assembly of this congregation shall have the exclusive right to call ordained or commissioned ministers. This responsibility shall not be delegated to a smaller body and never to an individual.

- 6.1 The pastoral office shall be conferred only upon pastors or candidates who profess and adhere to the confessional standard set forth in this constitution, who are qualified for the work of the ministry, and who have been endorsed by and are members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.
- 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 work of the ministry to which they are called, and who have been endorsed by and are members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.
- 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, or the inability to perform those duties. This shall be done in consultation with the President of the Minnesota North District.
- 6.5 When a vacancy occurs in an office of an ordained or commissioned minister, the congregation shall notify the President of the Minnesota North District to receive assistance in temporarily filling the vacancy and to receive his counsel in calling a new pastor, teacher, or church worker.

7.0 AUTHORITY OF AND WITHIN THE CONGREGATION

The voters assembly shall be the governing body of this congregation and shall be empowered to administer and manage all its affairs.

- 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 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 its bylaws. Matters of doctrine and conscience shall be decided only on the basis of the Word of God.
- 7.3 Officers, board members, and committee members shall have no authority beyond that which has been conferred upon them. Whatever power may have been delegated to them shall at all times be subject to change or revision by the voter assembly.
- 7.4 This congregation may receive, acquire, hold title to, and manage such real estate and other property in order to accomplish its purpose. It may also sell or dispose of such real estate and other property or any part thereof, remodel existing facilities, or build new facilities in order to accomplish its purpose. A two-thirds majority vote of the voters assembly at a properly called meeting is required for such action.
- 7.5 The board of trustees shall serve as the legal representative for the congregation.

8.0 VOTERS ASSEMBLY MEETINGS

Meetings of the voters assembly shall be held as determined in the bylaws.

- 8.1 Announcements of regular meetings shall be made in the services of the two previous Sundays or printed in the Sunday bulletin for the two previous Sundays.
- 8.2 Special meetings may be called at the request of the pastor, president, church council, or 10 (ten) voting members. The business at a special meeting shall be limited to the reason for which the meeting was called.
- 8.3 Ten (10) voting members at a properly called meeting shall constitute a quorum to do business. In the absence of a quorum, those present may fix the date for a follow-up meeting for which at least five days written notice shall be given. The quorum for the follow-up meeting shall be the voting members who are present.
- 8.4 It shall be the obligation of every voting member to attend all meetings of the voters assembly. By being absent a voter waives the right to vote in that meeting.
- 8.5 The attendance of each voter present shall be recorded by the secretary.

9.0 OFFICERS, BOARDS, AND COMMITTEES

This congregation shall have the following officers, boards, and committees in addition to any which the congregation shall establish from time to time.

- 9.1 The officers of this congregation shall be:
 - 9.1.1 A president, who shall conduct the meetings of the voters assembly, church council and congregation.
 - 9.1.2 A vice-president, who shall serve in the president's absence or inability to act.
 - 9.1.3 A secretary, who shall keep the minutes of the voter's assembly and the church council.
 - 9.1.4 A treasurer, who shall be responsible for the financial records of the congregation.
 - 9.1.5 A financial secretary, who shall be responsible for the receipt of all contributions and who shall deposit 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 three members which shall assist the pastor in the spiritual life of the congregation.
 - 9.2.2 A board of trustees, consisting of three members which shall be responsible for the physical properties of the congregation.
- 9.3 The committees of this congregation shall be:
 - 9.3.1 An audit committee, consisting of two members, which shall annually audit the books of the treasurer shall be appointed by the president.
 - 9.3.2 A nominating committee, consisting of three members, consisting of the Vice-president and two additional members, appointed by the president.
 - 9.3.3 Standing committees shall be appointed by the president as needed.

- 9.4 Any officer, board member, or committee member who fails to carry out his or her duties of office or who fails to perform the responsibilities of confirmed membership may be removed from office by the voters assembly by a two-thirds majority ballot vote. Reasons for such removal shall normally include persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, willful neglect of the duties of the office, or inability to perform the duties of the office. Matthew 18 should be followed under such circumstances.
- 9.5 The pastor, by virtue of his office, shall be an advisory member of all boards and committees.

10.0 LIMITATIONS ON HOLDING OFFICE:

Women who hold voting membership may serve as officers and as members of boards and committees of this congregation which do not call upon them to carry out specific functions of the pastoral office (preaching in or serving as the leader of the public worship service, the public administration of the sacraments, the public exercise of church discipline). Accordingly, a woman shall not serve as pastor of this congregation or on the board of elders. They also shall not serve as president or vice-president.

11.0 DIVISION:

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

- 11.1 The president of the Minnesota North District shall be contacted for his counsel before any final decision is made regarding a division.
- 11.2 If at any time a separation were to 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 the confessional standards set forth in this constitution.
- 11.3 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. Any and all surplus and all rights connected therewith shall be conveyed to and become the property of the Minnesota North District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to be used for mission work or the start of a new mission congregation.

12.0 AMENDMENTS:

This constitution may be amended in a properly convened meeting of the voters assembly.

- 12.1 Amendments to articles other than article 3.0 may be adopted at a regular or special voters assembly meeting provided that:
- 12.1.1 They do not conflict with the provisions of article 3.0 or with any other article that pertains to scriptural doctrine and practice.
- 12.1.2 The proposed amendment has been submitted in writing at a previous meeting of the voters assemble at which the proposed amendment will be acted upon.
- 12.1.3 A two-thirds affirmative vote of the voters present at a properly called voters assembly shall be required for adoption.
- 12.2 Article 3.0 shall be unalterable and irrevocable. Any other changes to these articles shall not destroy the essential meaning of the same.
- 12.3 The revised constitution shall, as a condition of continued membership in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, be submitted to the President of the Minnesota North District for review by the district's constitution committee and favorable action by the district's board of directors before being implemented by the congregation.

Bylaws

13.0 PROCEDURES FOR CALLING MINISTERS OF RELIGION

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

- 13.1 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.
- 13.2 A call committee shall be appointed by the church council to serve as a screening committee and shall submit all suggested names to the District President for information and evaluation. The District President may add additional names as necessary. The committee shall then present to the congregation by public announcement its proposed list of candidates and their biographical sketches.
- 13.3 After the final list of candidates is received from the District President, the information shall be made available to the congregation for two Sundays prior to a voters assembly called for the purpose of calling a pastor or commissioned minister. All congregation members shall be allowed to attend this meeting regardless of whether they are a member of the voters assembly or not. However, only eligible voters may cast a vote.
- 13.4 Ballot voting shall continue until a majority vote determines the disposition of the call.
- 13.5 If at all possible, a unanimous voice vote by registered voters shall be the last vote for the candidate who was elected.

14.0 CHURCH COUNCIL

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

- 14.1 The church council shall consist of the congregation's president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, financial secretary, board of trustees and board of elders. The pastor shall be an advisory member of the church council. The president and secretary of the congregation shall also serve as the president and secretary of the church council.
- 14.2 The church council shall meet a minimum of four times a year. Special meetings of the church council may be called by the president, the pastor, or any three members of the church council by providing notice prior to the meeting.
- 14.3 The church council members present at a properly called meeting shall constitute a quorum.
- 14.4 The principal duty of the church council shall be to coordinate the program and activities of the various boards and committees 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 and the constitution and bylaws. Actions of the church council shall be reported to the next meeting of the voters assembly.

15.0 NOMINATIONS, ELECTIONS, APPOINTMENTS, AND TERMS OF OFFICE

The procedure for the nomination and election of officers and board members, appointment of committees, and appointment to vacant offices shall be as follows.

- 15.1 A nominating committee appointed by the congregation president shall present a slate of candidates for each elected office. The slate shall normally provide two names for each office. Additional nominations may be made from the floor. No person shall be nominated without his or her consent.
- 15.2 A majority of the votes cast at a properly called voters assembly shall be required for all elections. Candidates receiving the lowest number of votes shall be eliminated in each succeeding ballot.
- 15.3 All officers shall be elected as follows:
 - 15.3.1 The president shall annually be succeeded by the vice-president.
 - 15.3.2 The vice-president shall be elected yearly for a two (2) year term, the second year serving as president.
 - 15.3.3 The secretary shall be elected for a term of one (1) year.
 - 15.3.4 The financial secretary and treasurer shall be elected for staggered terms of two (2) years.

- 15.4 Members of the board of trustees and board of elders shall be elected for a term of three (3) years. Each board member may serve for two consecutive terms in the office to which he is elected.
- 15.5 An individual may only hold one elective office at a time. Elected individuals may serve on appointed committees at the same time as serving in an elected office.
- 15.6 The president of the congregation shall appoint all committee members. Appointed committee members shall serve for a term of one year. Appointed committee members may serve for an unlimited number of terms.
- 15.7 Officers, board members, and committee members shall assume office upon completion of elections at the annual meeting. They shall be inducted into office in a public service of the congregation.
- 15.8 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 or qualified.
- 15.9 The following restrictions shall prevail:
 - 15.9.1 All elective offices of the congregation shall be reserved to members of the voters assembly.
 - 15.9.2 Members of the board of elders shall be reserved to male members of the congregation who are at least twenty-one (21) years of age.
 - 15.9.3 Appointed offices may be filled by any communicant member of the congregation who is at least eighteen (18) years of age.

16.0 OFFICIAL DUTIES

Officers and members of boards and committees shall perform the duties as provided in the constitution.

- 16.1 Each board shall elect its chairman annually.
- 16.2 The congregation shall have the right to detail and expand upon those responsibilities by job descriptions developed by the church council and approved by the voters assembly. (See Addendum)

17.0 MEETINGS OF THE VOTERS ASSEMBLY

The voters assembly shall meet in January, April, July and October. The January voters assembly shall be designated as the annual meeting during which elections and approval of the budget shall take place. The voters assembly shall normally meet on the second Monday of the month. However, the president shall have the authority to schedule the meetings for any day of the month.

18.0 RULES OF ORDER

In addition to principles laid down in Scripture and in the constitution and bylaws of this congregation, accepted parliamentary procedures such as Robert's Rules of Order shall be followed.

19.0 AMENDMENTS

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

- 19.1 Amendments shall be adopted by a two-thirds majority of voting members present at the voters assembly, provided the proposed change has been submitted in writing in a previous meeting.
- 19.2 The revised bylaws shall, as a condition of continued membership in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, be submitted to the President of the Minnesota North District for review by district's constitution committee and favorable action by the district's board of directors before being placed into practice by the congregation.

ADDENDUM TO THE CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS DUTIES OF OFFICERS, BOARD MEMBERS, AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The President shall:

- 1) Chair all meetings of the congregation, the voters assembly, and the church council;
- 2) Call meetings of the congregation, the voters assembly, or the church council as regularly scheduled or whenever necessary;
- 3) Assist the pastor in the administration of the temporal affairs of the congregation;
- 4) Appoint board and committee members as necessary;
- 5) Perform such other duties as assigned by the voters assembly.

The Vice-President shall:

- 1) Perform the duties of the president during his absence or inability to serve;
- 2) Perform such other duties as assigned by the voters assembly;

The Secretary shall:

- 1) Keep a written record of actions of the voters assembly and the church council in the form of minutes of these meetings;
- 2) Keep a written record of all standing resolutions;
- 3) Conduct the correspondence of the congregation not otherwise arranged;
- 4) Keep an accurate and current roster of the members of the voters assembly;
- 5) Be present at all elections to test the qualifications of candidates if a question should arise;
- 6) Perform such other duties as assigned by the voters assembly.

The Financial Secretary shall:

- 1) Receive all contributions for the congregation, and see their prompt deposit in a bank designated by the voters assembly;
- 2) Keep an accurate account of all receipts and deposits;
- 3) Issue offering envelopes, provided by the congregation, to each communicant member;
- 4) Record the contributions of members through the offering envelopes on forms provided by the congregation and distribute them on a periodic basis;
- 5) Make written quarterly reports to the church council and written quarterly reports to the voters assembly;
- 6) Ask for assistance in completing these assigned tasks as necessary;
- 7) Perform such other duties as assigned by the voters assembly.

The Treasurer shall:

- 1) Receive the rightful and lawful bills to the congregation and make disbursements by check from congregational funds on authority of the congregation;
- 2) Make written quarterly reports of disbursements to the church council and make written quarterly and annual reports to the voters assembly;
- 3) Submit the financial books of the congregation for audit after the close of the fiscal year;
- 4) Ask for assistance in completing these assigned tasks as necessary;
- 5) Perform such other duties as assigned by the voters assembly.

The Board of Elders shall:

- 1) Pray for the pastor and other spiritual leaders and encourage them in their work by word and action;
- 2) Establish and maintain Elder care groups to assist the pastor in all spiritual matters of the congregation, in particular to cultivate peace, harmony and love among the members, to assist in pastoral care of the sick, the needy, and such as are negligent in worship participation or the use of the Sacraments;

- 3) Insure that the worship services are conducted decently and in order, that the Gospel is preached in its purity, and in accord with sound Lutheran doctrine, and that all instruction, religious or secular, is in accord with the Word of God and in accord with sound Lutheran doctrine;
- 4) Make provision for pastoral care and services in the absence, sickness, or disability of the pastor or in times of pastoral vacancy;
- 5) Assist the pastor in the administration of the Sacraments in whatever ways are considered necessary and mutually agreeable;
- 6) Devise and foster ways by which guests and visitors are sincerely welcomed and made to feel at home in the congregation;
- 7) Direct and supervise the incorporation of new members and make every effort to bring them into the life and work of the congregation;
- 8) Approve all special services, entertainments, performances, or any other functions planned for presentation to the congregation or general public or to any society or organization;
- 9) Supervise the couples of the month in the care, use, and maintenance of all items such as communion ware chancel furnishings, banners, vestments, etc.;
- 10) Consider cases of church discipline and bring them to a satisfactory conclusion or bring them to the attention of the voters assemble in accordance with Matthew 18;
- 11) Exercise leadership in gathering call lists and calling a new pastor when a vacancy occurs;
- 12) Be concerned about the spiritual, emotional, and physical welfare of the pastor and his family (adequate compensation, housing, free time, vacation, assistance in times of illness) and to specifically review these items annually;
- 13) Assist the pastor in processing changes of membership among congregation membership;

The Board of Trustees shall:

- 1) Be concerned with and responsible for the maintenance of real and personal property of the congregation;
- 2) Take such action as may be necessary in an emergency to protect the property and interest of the congregation;
- 3) Arrange proper insurance coverage for the congregational properties and make necessary reports and recommendations to the voters;
- 4) Regulate the use of all congregational facilities by organizations of the congregation, individual members, and non member individuals or groups;
- 5) Make proper and adequate arrangements for the housing of the pastor and his family;
- 6) Perform such other duties as assigned by the voters assembly.

The Audit Committee shall:

- 1) Audit the financial records of the congregation annually;
- 2) Report the findings of their audit to the voters assembly at the annual meeting.

APPOINTED POSITIONS

- A. Sunday School Superintendent:** The Sunday School Superintendent shall be appointed annually by the President before the July quarterly meeting, to be approved by the Voters' Assembly. He/she shall supervise the program of Sunday School, and Vacation Bible School. He/she shall be involved in the recruitment of teachers, selection of materials, and the encouragement of Sunday School teacher meetings and training sessions. He/she shall make an annual report to the congregation.
- B. Head Ushers:** Head Ushers shall be one in number, appointed annually by the president, for a term of one year. He/she is responsible for the ushering at all regular and special church services. He/she shall schedule the Couples of the Month, to be posted by January.

- C. Evangelism Coordinator:** The Evangelism Coordinator shall be appointed annually by the president. This coordinator shall have charge of the evangelism program of the church, canvassing, welcoming new members, calling on prospects, building church attendance, and other duties set forth by the church council.
- D. Memorial Coordinator(s):** An individual/couple shall be appointed annually by the president and shall provide information to individuals and families of the congregation concerning memorials. A Memorial Fund list shall be presented for approval at the annual voters meeting.
- E. ACT Leader (Active Christian Teens Leader):** The ACT Leader shall be appointed annually by the president before the July quarterly meeting to be approved by the Voters' Assembly. He/she shall supervise the ACT program. He/she shall be a member of the board of education and make an annual report to the congregation.
- F. Lutheran Layman's League Membership Representative:** The Lutheran Layman's League Membership Representative shall be appointed annually by the president and shall inform the congregation concerning L.L.L. activities and promote the Lutheran Layman's League. He/she shall be appointed by the president.
- G. Lutheran Island Camp Representative:** The Lutheran Island Camp Representative shall be appointed annually by the president and shall inform the congregation concerning Lutheran Island Camp activities and to promote participation in camp programs. He/she shall be appointed by the president.
- H. The Education Committee:** The education committee shall be composed of one elder (appointed by the elders), the Sunday school superintendent, the ACT leader, and the pastor (as an advisor) to be involved in the recruitment of teachers, selection of materials, and to assist in any capacity needed, for the education program of the congregation, such as Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, and any other formal Bible studies.