



# Fellowship of Evangelical Lutheran Churches

## Fellowship of Evangelical Lutheran Churches

### Organizational and Constitutional Documents

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## **Organizational Principles of the Fellowship of Evangelical Lutheran Churches**

Under the cross of Christ and by these principles, we form this fellowship (*koinonia*) of Fellowship of Evangelical Lutheran Churches:

1. Without reservation we accept the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and the confessional documents of Lutheranism as the sole foundation of this fellowship.
2. Within the depths of our sin as unbelief, we trust God's Word alone for the renewal of faith and life.
3. We hold our common ministry to be that of proclaiming - in word, sacrament, and deed - the forgiving, healing, and reconciling Gospel of Jesus Christ for the invocation of justifying faith as the essence of salvation for all people.
4. We are confident that in God's Word all believers are called and represented to share in the unity, life, ministry, and mission of Christ as the Word of God definitively revealed to us.
5. We are thus ready to accept into our fellowship without exception all who profess faith in Triune God, who confess faith in the saving Lordship of Jesus Christ, and who express this faith according to the Lutheran Confessions.
6. We acknowledge not only the equality of all people in sin under the accusing Law of God, but also the equality of status before God of all who believe in Jesus Christ through the Gospel. This fellowship includes people of all races, of either sex, of any age, and of all social strata.
7. We will treat differences between people as true gifts of God whose diversity compliments the tasks which God has called us to do. We will utilize such differences to enrich the priesthood of all believers for the common ministry we have under our Lord, Jesus Christ.
8. We recognize that the Holy Spirit is active through Word and Sacrament among Christians in other denominations. We rejoice in our baptismal unity with all Christians. We will celebrate the gift of unity in both work and worship with any fellow Christians, so long as this does not involve compromise or denial of the confession of either party.
9. We know through the nature of God's Word as Law and Gospel that we are to resist the encroachment of human traditions in realms belonging only to that Word. We therefore reject any human authorities or documents as binding upon us without our prior consent.
10. We pledge to act toward all within and without our fellowship in openness, honesty, trust, fairness, and above all in Christian charity.

**The Mission Statement  
of the  
Fellowship of Evangelical Lutheran Churches**

The Fellowship of Evangelical Lutheran Churches witnesses to the good news that sinners are justified by God through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone and supports its member churches in their striving to proclaim this good news. May God help us to the glory of his holy name.

To this end, the member churches of the Fellowship of Evangelical Lutheran Churches pledge:

- to witness to the love, power, and justice of God's Word in law and gospel as revealed and personified in Jesus Christ,
- to reject corruption of this Word by human tradition and devices,
- to network for mission those churches whose confession accords with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions,
- to preserve the Lutheran confessional heritage as a means to advance theological clarity and integrity in the whole of Christianity on earth.

**The Constitution  
of the  
Fellowship of Evangelical Lutheran Churches**

**Preamble**

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

As members of the priesthood of all believers, called by God through the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit to faith alone in Jesus Christ, we form this fellowship of Lutheran churches in the United States of America in order to proclaim the gospel and to make disciples of all nations.

**Article 1 - Name and Incorporation**

1.01. The name of this ecclesial body will be the Fellowship of Evangelical Lutheran Churches. The official abbreviation will be FELC. Henceforth, this constitution will refer to this ecclesial fellowship as FELC.

1.02. FELC is incorporated and its Articles of Incorporation were filed under the laws of the State of \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ .

**Article 2 - Statement of Faith**

2.01. We believe, teach, and confess the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

2.02. We believe, teach, and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and the gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe in him.

a. Jesus Christ is the Word of God, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God has vanquished powers of sin, death, and the devil.

b. The proclamation of God's message to us as both law and gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgement and mercy in the person and work of Jesus Christ through whom God was pleased to reconcile the world and all things to himself.

c. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God. Inspired by God's Spirit speaking through their authors, they proclaim the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. They are the sole authoritative source and norm of our proclamation, faith, and life. Through them God's Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.

2.03. We accept the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the scriptural faith we believe, teach, and confess.

2.04. We believe, teach, and confess the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and the Small Catechism as true witnesses to the Word of God, as normative for our teaching and practice.

2.05. We believe, teach, and confess the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, that is, Epitome and Solid Declaration with condemnations, as further dependable expositions of the Holy Scriptures.

2.06. We believe, teach, and confess the gospel, proclaimed in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create, sustain, and nurture justifying faith for God's mission in the world.

### **Article 3 - Ministry**

3.01. FELC affirms the priesthood of all believers. All baptized believers are called by God as priests who minister to others in their daily lives. Some are called by God's people to the public duties of Word and Sacrament in a church to equip the saints for the work of ministry.

3.02. Pastors within FELC, ordained as public confirmation of a church's call to the ministry of Word and Sacrament, will subscribe to the confession of faith and statement of purpose of FELC and will otherwise comply with the standards as established by FELC.

3.03. Chaplains, missionaries, and pastors employed in specialized ministries will be commissioned by a member church.

### **Article 4 - Oversight of Ministry**

4.01. Standards and mechanisms for the oversight (*episkope*) of public ministry through visitations will be established by FELC, and may be altered or amended in accordance with the bylaws of FELC.

4.02. Churches in an FELC jurisdiction will elect from their collective membership by a means determined by the collective membership an oversight council of five (5) or seven (7) executive members. For constitutional purposes, the oversight council will be called the jurisdictional council of visitors. The chair of the council will rotate annually with each executive member serving as chair during his or her last year on the council. At no time shall the council of visitors have more than one member from any given parish/pastorate consisting of one or more FELC member churches.

4.02.01. A jurisdictional council of visitors may also appoint non-executive, non-voting members to assist in its tasks.

4.02.02. The council of visitors will oversee but not administer or manage the personnel and administrative operations of an FELC jurisdiction. The council will engage an administrator and/or a personnel officer to handle the jurisdiction's administrative affairs, to help parishes match their needs for mission with appropriate pastoral leadership and resources, and to report regularly to the council on a jurisdiction's business.

4.02.03. The council of visitors' chief duties, in addition to overseeing the paid personnel and administrative staff, will be the oversight of ministry in the churches within its jurisdiction through visitations. That is, in a collegial way the council will support pastors, parish workers, and churches to be equipped, educated, and energized for effective mission in their locality.

4.02.04. The council of visitors will seek to support and develop a parish site with the theological and pastoral tools necessary to enhance a parish's ability to witness to the gospel. This will include addressing conflicts and assisting churches in transition from one stage of history and ministry to the next.

4.03. A jurisdictional council of visitors may pool resources and share administrative and personnel staff with another jurisdictional council of visitors, or with several council's, but in so doing it may not omit or transfer any of its responsibility for oversight of churches within its jurisdiction to another council of visitors.

4.04. The number of member churches per oversight jurisdiction will be established and regulated through the bylaws of FELC.

## **Article 5 - Membership**

5.01. FELC is a fellowship of Lutheran churches. Each church that subscribes in writing to this constitution in a manner determined by the fellowship and carried out by the Board of Trustees will be a member of this fellowship.

5.02. Individuals not able to belong to an FELC member church may become associate members of FELC. Such individuals will be subject to the same standards as regular members, having voice but not vote at conventions of the FELC. A list of such associate members at large will be maintained by FELC and reviewed annually.

5.03. FELC, by action taken by the board of trustees, may suspend the membership of a church for cause by three-quarters vote of a quorum of the board of trustees of FELC. The board of trustees will give at least sixty (60) days written notice of intent to seek suspension of membership in the fellowship. The board will adopt rules and regulations,

approved by the national convention, governing the suspension of membership in FELC and will report all such membership suspensions to all member churches of FELC within 30 days. The suspension will remain in force until the next regular or special meeting of the fellowship at which time a decision regarding the lifting of the suspension or the termination of the membership of a member church be made by a two-thirds majority vote.

## **Article 6 - Fellowship Governance**

6.01. This fellowship will be organized through member churches, the national convention of FELC, and a board of trustees elected at the national convention of FELC.

6.02. Member churches will form or become part of a jurisdiction organized for the purposes of relating easily to one another and to a jurisdictional council of visitors.

6.03. Member churches may additionally form or become part of alliances or associations to suit their particular needs in service of the gospel. Such affiliations will not include in their constituting or governing documents any positions, declarations, statements, or confessions of faith that conflict with, contradict, or supplement the Statement of Faith of FELC in Article 2 above. Such alliances or associations will not accept or assume the responsibilities of the member churches' jurisdictional council of visitors.

6.04. FELC affirms the distinction between statements of faith for the sake of membership and principles of governance for the sake of order. Statements of faith circumscribe the nature of membership and service in FELC. Principles of governance assist in organizing FELC in service of gospel of Jesus Christ, but such principles will not be accorded any sanctity appropriate only to statements of faith. The FELC statement of faith supersedes all matters considered by this fellowship and may not in any way be abridged or changed in meaning or in content as being determinative for membership and thus service in FELC.

6.05. The national convention of FELC will meet annually as convened by the board of trustees or as otherwise provided in the bylaws of this fellowship. The national convention will have only such authority as is specifically granted by this constitution, the bylaws of this fellowship or otherwise granted by the members of the fellowship.

6.06. Each member church will be entitled to two delegates at all conventions where FELC business is conducted. Delegates will be selected pursuant to procedures and rules adopted by church councils of member churches or pursuant to such other internal procedures as member churches may, from time to time, adopt. The manner in which delegates vote on behalf of their respective member churches at conventions will be determined by the member church on whose behalf the delegates are acting.

6.07. Subject to the limitations imposed by this constitution, the bylaws of this fellowship and such other restrictions as may be imposed by the national convention of FELC, the business and affairs of FELC will be managed by a board of trustees.

6.08. FELC does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, national origin, age, gender, or physical impairment.

6.09. Other matters of fellowship governance, organization, and order will be addressed in the bylaws of this fellowship.

### **Article 7 - Member Church Governance**

7.01. FELC will recognize, receive, and maintain a list of those churches which otherwise comply with the discipline of FELC and subscribe to the fellowship's statement of purpose and confession of faith.

7.02. Unless otherwise agreed by the member church and the board of trustees, each member church will own its own assets and property. FELC makes no claim to the assets and property of any church that chooses to become a member of FELC.

7.03. Each member church will govern itself in order to involve its members in fulfilling the definition, purpose, and functions of the church. FELC does not direct, control, or supervise the affairs of individual churches except as specifically provided in this constitution.

7.04. Other matters of member church governance, organization, and order will be addressed in the bylaws of this fellowship.

### **Article 8 - Amendment of Constitution and Bylaws**

8.01. Following adoption of this constitution by the first FELC convention this constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegates present at a succeeding convention. Thereafter this constitution may be amended only through the procedures set forth in the following sections.

8.02. Amendment may be proposed in writing by ten percent (10%) of the member churches. At least four months prior to the next national convention, the proposed amendment will be referred to the board of trustees for review, comment and recommendation, and will thereafter be submitted in writing to the delegates to the national convention. Regardless of the position taken by the board of trustees on the proposed amendment, such proposed amendment will be presented to the delegates to the national convention as required by this constitution. The adoption of such amendment will require a two-thirds majority vote of the delegates present and voting at



the next annual convention, provided that such amendment will not become effective unless it is ratified in accordance with the following sections.

8.03. The board of trustees may propose an amendment six months prior to the next regularly scheduled national convention. The adoption of such an amendment will require a two-thirds majority vote of the delegates present and voting at such national convention provided that such amendment will not become effective unless ratified as described in the following sections.

8.04. Any constitutional amendment, regardless of origin, must be affirmatively ratified by seventy-five percent (75%) of the member churches acting in and through properly called member church meetings, with each member church entitled to one vote. Any proposed amendment not ratified within two years of the date of approval by the national convention will be deemed rejected. The board of trustees is authorized to adopt rules and regulations governing the ratification process provided, however, that such rules and regulations are not inconsistent with this constitution. For the purposes of ratifying constitutional amendments, each church will have one vote. Voting procedures will be defined in the bylaws of FELC.

8.05. Bylaws and Standard Operating Procedures not in conflict with this constitution may be adopted or amended at any regular meeting of the national convention when presented in writing by the board of trustees or by at least ten percent (10%) of the member churches. A two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting at the national convention and a further two-thirds majority of the member churches of this fellowship will be necessary for ratification of the adopted or amended bylaw.

**The Bylaws  
of the  
Fellowship of Evangelical Lutheran Churches**

These bylaws are duly adopted by and govern the affairs of the Fellowship of Evangelical Lutheran Churches.

**Bylaw Section 1 - Membership**

B01.01. FELC is a fellowship of churches and, subject to the provisions of the constitution of FELC and these bylaws, the voting delegates of this fellowship will be each member church for purposes of these bylaws. FELC is also designated as "this fellowship."

B01.02. A church is a community of baptized believers gathered around Word and Sacrament. It serves as God's people in the world, nurturing its members and reaching out in witness and service to the world. Each member church of this fellowship will adopt governing documents and govern itself in such a way as to involve its members in fulfilling the definition, purpose, and functions of the member church. This fellowship does not direct, control, or supervise the affairs of individual member churches except as specifically provided in the constitution.

B01.03. FELC will recognize, receive, and maintain a list of its member churches. Member churches will be by their practice and by their governing documents:

9. Preach the word and administer the sacraments in accord with Holy Scripture (Old and New Testaments) and with the Confessions of the Lutheran church (Book of Concord),
10. Uphold and subscribe to the constitution of this fellowship,
11. Agree to call pastors who actively uphold and subscribe to the constitution of this fellowship and,
12. Support the life and work of this fellowship by their practice, their governing documents, and by written commitment to this fellowship.

B01.04. A member church may terminate its membership in FELC in any of the following ways:

13. A member church terminates its relationship with FELC by following such internal procedures as are required by that member church and gives written notice to FELC that it no longer desires to be a member of the fellowship,
14. A member church ceases to exist,
15. A member church takes action to dissolve.

B01.05. Individuals not belonging to member churches who desire associate membership status in FELC, upon completion of an application in the form determined by the board of trustees, may become associate members of FELC. Subject to such rules as the board of trustees may adopt to promote efficiency and to allow FELC to complete the business of the fellowship, associate members will be entitled to voice, but not vote, at conventions and assemblies of the fellowship. Associate members may be appointed by the board of trustees to a task force or a committee of the fellowship, and following appointment, will be entitled to voice, but not vote, at the meetings of the task force or committee. Following at least thirty (30) days written notice, the board of trustees may revoke associate membership status for cause upon a three-fourths majority vote of a quorum of the board of trustees.

## **Bylaw Section 2 — Ministry**

B02.01. Member churches of this fellowship are authorized to call and ordain pastors pursuant to such standards as the national convention may adopt from time to time.

B02.02. Pastors of this fellowship will approve of and subscribe to the statement of faith of this fellowship and ministry standards as established by this fellowship. Any discipline plan will contain appropriate rights of appeal.

B02.03. Ministry standards, once adopted by this fellowship, may be amended only by a two-thirds vote of the national convention of this fellowship and any such amendments must be ratified by a two-thirds majority affirmative vote of member churches of the fellowship. Any amendment to the ministry standards of this fellowship will first be made in writing to the board of trustees for review and comment and will thereafter be submitted through the national convention of FELC for approval or disapproval.

B02.04. Following approval by the national convention, any amendment to the ministry standards of this fellowship will, within one year of the date of approval by the national convention, be ratified by a two-thirds majority of the member churches of this fellowship. Any unratified amendment will not be effective. The board of trustees may submit proposed changes to the ministry standards of this fellowship but notice of any such changes will be made in writing at least 6 months prior to a national convention of this fellowship and will also be ratified as provided by this paragraph. The board of trustees will have the authority to establish interim ministry standards until the first national convention of this fellowship.

B02.05. Pastors of this fellowship may belong to clergy rosters or lists of another fellowship, association, or church. Such pastors will notify and update annually the FELC board of trustees of any dual or multiple clergy memberships.

### **Bylaw Section 3 - Statement of Purpose**

B03.01. The mission of the Fellowship of Evangelical Lutheran Churches is:

16. to witness to the love, power, and justice of God's Word in law and gospel as revealed and personified in Jesus Christ,
17. to repudiate corruption of this Word by human tradition and devices,
18. to network for mission those churches whose confession is thus according to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions,
19. to preserve and promote the Lutheran theological heritage and witness for the sake of the whole of Christianity on earth.

B03.02. The objectives of FELC will support member churches in this mission. In order to serve and support the member churches of this fellowship in their mission to proclaim the gospel, this fellowship may foster activities as provided in continuing resolutions.

### **Bylaw Section 4 - Organization**

B04.01. As a fellowship of churches, FELC recognizes a need for checks and balances in its governance and operational procedures. Although only churches can be full members of the fellowship, other forms of participation may be needed from time to time.

B04.02. FELC will offer oversight (*episkope*) to its member churches through its member churches in the form of an oversight council whose members will be elected from the member churches in a given FELC jurisdiction. An oversight council will be called a council of visitors after its function developed at the time of the Reformation.

B04.02.01. A council of visitors will regularly visit and consult with member churches for the purposes of supporting member churches in their mission. A full, on-sight visit of a member church by a representative or a team from the council of visitors will take place at least every three years or more frequently as local circumstances necessitate.

B04.02.02. A council of visitors will provide oversight in an FELC jurisdiction whose size may range from fifty (50) to one hundred and fifty (75) member churches, or as otherwise determined in consultation with the FELC board of trustees.

B04.02.03. A council of visitors will engage or employ staff to undertake its administrative tasks and staff to provide for the personnel needs of member churches in an FELC jurisdiction. Such staff serve primarily the needs and interests of jurisdictional member churches. As member churches call and install or ordain their own pastors, the council of visitors is prohibited from interfering in or hindering the work of the Council's personnel staff in helping member churches seek and call or employ suitable pastors and other staff, respectively.

B04.02.04. Each FELC jurisdiction will draft a charter, approved by a three-fourths majority vote of its member churches, stipulating in accordance with the FELC constitution and bylaws, the remit, functions, and powers of oversight for its council of visitors.

B04.02.05. Member churches of an FELC jurisdiction will annually nominate and elect a new member to the council of visitors by a means determined by the jurisdiction's member churches, i.e. convention, member church postal or electronic vote, etc. At any given time, the council of visitors shall not have more than one member from any single pastorate of an FELC jurisdiction.

B04.03. Member churches, in their sole discretion, may also join together in alliances and associations (affiliations) and may adopt governing documents, budgets and other procedures that will allow such affiliations to support the mission of the members of this fellowship. Affiliations need not be organized along traditional geographic boundaries and may be united by, and organized for the support of, member churches of this fellowship using such criteria as an affiliation(s) of member churches may choose from time to time to adopt. All such affiliations will be self-supporting and will be subject to supervision and direction of the affiliated member churches.

B04.04. Affiliations will have such powers to promote and accomplish the objectives of this fellowship that are specifically granted to those affiliations by member churches and not otherwise prohibited by these bylaws or the constitution of this fellowship.

B04.05. Unless otherwise prohibited by these bylaws or the constitution of this fellowship, churches will be free to organize in a manner deemed most effective by those churches in support of the purpose and objectives of this fellowship.

### **Bylaw Section 5 - National Convention**

B05.01. The national convention of member church delegates will be the legislative authority of FELC, and the powers of the national convention are limited only by the provisions of the articles of incorporation, the constitution and bylaws of this fellowship, and the national convention's own resolutions.

B05.02. The national convention will meet annually in regular session but may meet as called by the board of trustees. The time and place of the national convention will be determined by the board of trustees which will give at least sixty (60) days written notice to member churches of the date and place of any national convention of this fellowship.

B05.03. Each church will be entitled to delegates and alternates to the national convention of FELC as set out in paragraph 5.04 of the constitution. The names of the delegates and any alternates selected by member churches to represent the interests of the member churches will be provided to the board of trustees pursuant to such

procedures as the board of trustees may adopt. Members of the board of trustees will also serve as members of the national convention and will have voice but no vote.

B05.04. The national convention, in addition to such other duties as are assigned to it by the constitution, the bylaws of this fellowship, or the member churches as they may direct from time to time, will also have the authority to establish boards and commissions to assist in the management of the affairs of the fellowship.

B05.05. The national convention is authorized to adopt continuing resolutions to assist in governing the affairs of the fellowship that do not otherwise conflict with or are prohibited by the constitution or bylaws of this fellowship.

B05.06. The national convention will be convened by the board of trustees of FELC but will, in any event, occur no later than June 30 of each year. The national convention will serve as an annual meeting of the fellowship and the agenda may include but is not limited to, election of the board of trustees or the filling of any vacancies on the board of trustees, approval of the annual budget, approval of ministry standards or changes to ministry standards and such other business as may occur from time to time.

B05.07. The board of trustees of FELC will convene a national convention of this fellowship within sixty (60) days of submission of a written petition signed by twenty-five (25%) per cent of the then existing member churches requesting a national convention.

B05.08. Except as otherwise provided by the constitution, the bylaws and continuing resolutions, if any, of this fellowship, rules of parliamentary authority as set forth in the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order will govern the affairs of this fellowship.

### **Bylaw Section 6 - Board of Trustees**

B06.01. Subject to the limitations of the constitution or the bylaws of this fellowship, the business and affairs of FELC will be managed by the board of trustees.

B06.02. The board of trustees will consist of seven (7) or nine (9) or eleven (11) members and each trustee will hold office until the election of a successor trustee. Any person who is a member of an FELC member church will be eligible for election to the board of trustees. The number of trustees to be elected will be determined by the national convention of this fellowship to facilitate the greatest representation of member churches. Until a successor trustee has been elected and qualified, the trustee to be replaced or succeeded will continue in office. No trustee will serve more than two consecutive three-year terms of office. At no time shall the board of trustees have more than one member from any given parish/pastorate consisting of one or more FELC member churches.

B06.03. There will be no voting by proxy or absentee ballot by members of the board of trustees.

B06.04. Meetings of the board of trustees may be held from time to time at any place the board of trustees may designate within or without the state of \_\_\_\_\_. Either the chair or any three members of the board of trustees may call a board meeting by giving ten (10) days notice to all of the other trustees of the purpose, date and time of the meeting. The notice may be given by mail, telephone, electronic mail, facsimile transmission, or in person. If a meeting schedule is adopted by the board, or if the date and time of a board meeting has been announced at a previous meeting, no formal notice is required. A trustee may waive notice of a meeting of the board and such waiver is effective whether given before, at, or after the meeting and whether such waiver is given in writing, orally, or by attendance. Official minutes of every meeting of the board of trustees will be posted to member churches within ten days following each meeting. A financial statement will be posted to member churches at least quarterly.

B06.05. A majority of the trustees currently holding office is a quorum for the transaction of any business.

B06.06. Any action required or permitted to be taken at a meeting of the board of trustees may be taken by written action signed by the number of trustees that would be required to take the same action at a meeting of the board of trustees at which all trustees were present, provided that all members of the board of trustees receive reasonable notice of the text of the written action at the same time it is furnished to any trustee for signature. All members of the board of trustees will be notified immediately of the effective date of any such written action that is duly taken.

B06.07. Vacancies on the board of trustees resulting from the death, resignation, or removal of a trustee may be filled by the affirmative vote of a majority of a quorum of the remaining trustees. Each trustee elected under this section to fill a vacancy holds office until a qualified successor is elected by the delegates at the next regular or special meeting of the fellowship.

B06.08. The board of trustees may, by resolution, establish committees to conduct the affairs and business of the fellowship.

B.06.09. Nothing in these bylaws is intended to discourage electronic participation in the affairs of the fellowship including, where consistent with good order and ballot integrity, voting and election procedures.

### **Bylaw Section 7 - Officers of the Fellowship**

B07.01. FELC will have as its officers a chair of the board of trustees, a vice-chair of the board of trustees, a secretary, and a treasurer and such other officers as the board of

trustees will, from time to time, elect. The board of trustees may remove any officer by a two-thirds majority vote with cause.

B07.02. All officers will be elected by the board from among the board's members to serve a one-year term. No officer will serve more than three consecutive one-year terms in the same office.

B07.03. The chair of the board will perform the responsibilities described in \_\_\_\_\_ (name of state) Statutes as being applicable to the president of the corporation.

B07.04. The vice chair will preside over all meetings of the board of trustees where the chair is unable to preside and will serve under the direction of the chair.

B07.05. The secretary will serve as the recording officer of FELC, will keep the minutes, have responsibility for records, rosters, archives, and other documents of the fellowship, and such other duties as may be assigned to the secretary by the board of trustees.

B07.06. The treasurer will propose policy for review in action by the board of trustees of the financial, accounting, insurance, property management, investment, and money management systems of FELC. The treasurer and others charged with money-handling responsibilities will be bonded.

B07.07. Should the chair of this fellowship die, resign, or be unable to serve, the vice chair will be charged with the responsibilities of the president until the election of a new chair or until the chair is able to serve again. Should the vice chair, secretary, or treasurer die, resign, or be unable to serve, the chair, with the approval of the board of trustees, will arrange for the election of a new officer by the board of trustees to fulfil the responsibilities of the position.

B07.08. Candidates for election to the board of trustees who have submitted their names or have had their names submitted to the nominating committee will provide the board of trustees with a curriculum vitae and short statement of the candidate's vision and desire to seek election to the board of trustees. The board of trustees will compile such candidate data into an information packet and will distribute this information packet to the pastor(s) and council president of each member church in a timely fashion. Candidates for election to the board of trustees will not promote or advance their own election, or have so done on their behalf, directly with the member churches.

## **Bylaw Section 8 - Amendment of Bylaws**

B08.01. The bylaws of this fellowship may be amended at any regular or special meeting of the national convention where the amendment to the bylaws has been presented in writing by the board of trustees or by at least 10 per cent of the member churches. The board of trustees will review and comment on proposed bylaw changes transmitted by



member churches pursuant to this paragraph but will submit any proposed bylaw changes to the national convention of FELC for action. Any proposed bylaw or amendment to an existing bylaw will first be approved by a two-thirds majority of those delegates present and voting at the national convention of this fellowship. Thereafter, member churches of this fellowship will have one year from the date of enactment by the national convention to approve the proposed bylaw or amendment to existing bylaw. A two-thirds majority of member churches is required to approve a proposed bylaw or proposed amendment to the bylaws of this fellowship. No amendments to the bylaws of this fellowship will become effective until adopted by a two-thirds majority of the delegates to the national convention then present and voting at the national convention and until the time period for approval by member churches has passed.

### **Bylaw Section 9 - Transition Arrangements**

B09.01 The affairs of FELC will be governed in its first years by an interim board of trustees. There will be not fewer than five (5) nor more than twelve (12) members of the interim board of trustees. The interim board of trustees shall be composed of the four original incorporators plus one representative from each FELC member church pastorate until the interim board reaches full membership of twelve (12). In accordance with Bylaw Section 6 Board of Trustees, each member church pastorate may elect one person to the board for a period of two consecutive three year terms. Thereafter, each pastorate must elect a different representative to the interim board. The original incorporators shall remain on the interim board until FELC has attained at least two member church pastorates with representation on the interim board. Thereafter, an original incorporator may voluntarily leave the interim board provided that member church pastorate representation allows a minimum of five (5) interim board members. The original incorporators are entitled to hold a place on the board until FELC has nine member church pastorates desiring board membership. At such time by a means to be determined by the interim board, the interim board of trustees will give at least thirty (30) days notice of an election whereby successor trustee(s) will be elected to the interim board. Upon the election of the ninth through the twelfth interim board members from member church pastorates, the original incorporators must relinquish corresponding numbers of places on the interim board. The remaining places on the interim board to which the incorporators are entitled shall be filled by a means determined annually amongst the original incorporators. At this stage, original incorporators from member church pastorates with interim board membership are no longer entitled to serve on the interim board.

**Sample Constitution for Member Churches  
of the  
Fellowship of Evangelical Lutheran Churches**

Title: Constitution for (name of member church) of (name of city and state)

**Preamble**

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

As members of the priesthood of all believers, called by God through the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit to faith alone in Jesus Christ, we form this Lutheran church in order to proclaim the gospel and to make disciples of all nations. We pledge to abide by the provisions of this constitution.

**Article 1 - Name and Incorporation**

1.01. The name of this church will be (give name, city and state)

1.02. For the purpose of this constitution and the accompanying bylaws, the (name of church) is hereinafter designated as "this church".

1.03. This church is incorporated under the laws of the (name of state)

1.04. If applicable, the seal of this church presents (description). The border reads: (quote any Inscription).

**Article 2 - Confession of Faith**

2.01. We believe, teach, and confess the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

2.02. We believe, teach, and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe in him.

a. Jesus Christ is the Word of God, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God brings the new creation.

b. The proclamation of God's message to us as both law and gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy in the person and work of Jesus Christ through whom God was pleased to reconcile the world and all things to himself.

c. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God. Inspired by God's Spirit speaking through their authors, they proclaim God's revelation

centering in Jesus Christ. They are the sole authoritative source and norm of our proclamation, faith, and life. Through them God's Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.

2.03. We accept the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the scriptural faith we believe, teach, and confess.

2.04. We believe, teach, and confess the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and the Small Catechism as true witnesses to the Word of God, normative for our teaching and practice.

2.05. We believe, teach, and confess the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise, the Large Catechism, the Epitome and Formula of Concord as further valid expositions of the Holy Scriptures.

2.06. We believe, teach, and confess the gospel, proclaimed in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain justifying faith for God's mission in the world.

### **Article 3 - Statement of Purpose of this Church**

3.01. All power in member churches of FELC belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ, our head. All actions of this church are to be carried out under His rule and authority.

3.02. This church is a fellowship of believers created and empowered by the gospel of Jesus Christ, called by the Holy Spirit and sent into the world to bear witness in word, sacrament, and action to God's creative, justifying, and sanctifying grace for the world.

3.03. To participate in Christ's mission, this church as a part of the priesthood of all believers will:

- a. Worship the triune God where the gospel is proclaimed in its purity and where the sacraments are administered in accordance with the gospel,
- b. Proclaim the gospel of the justification of sinners by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone,
- c. Carry out Christ's Great Commission by reaching out to all people to bring them to faith in Christ,
- d. Nurture its members in the Holy Scriptures (Old and New Testaments) so as to live in faith toward God, in hope from the promise of salvation, and in love for one another,
- e. Study the Lutheran Confessional writings, as accurate expositions of the Holy Scriptures, so as to be theologically accountable for the Christian faith before God and before the world,
- f. Engage in actions and programs which witness to the gospel.

## **Article 4 - Powers of this Church**

4.01. The powers of this church are those necessary to fulfill its mission (3.03.).

4.02. The powers of this church are vested in the Church Meeting called and conducted as provided in this constitution and bylaws.

4.03. Only such authority as is delegated to the Church Council or other organizational units in this church's governing documents is recognized. All remaining authority is retained by the church as part of the fellowship of believers. This church is authorized to:

- a. call (and ordain as confirmation of call) a pastor pursuant to such standards as the national convention of FELC may adopt from time to time,
- b. terminate the call of a pastor for just cause,
- c. appoint or terminate the appointment of other ministerial personnel as this church's circumstances for mission necessitate,
- d. approve the annual budget,
- e. acquire real and personal property by gift, devise, purchase, or other lawful means,
- f. hold title to and use its property for any and all activities consistent with its mission,
- g. sell, mortgage, lease, transfer, or otherwise dispose of its property by any lawful means,
- h. elect its church council and require them to carry out their duties in accordance with the constitution, bylaws and continuing resolutions; and
- i. terminate its relationship with FELC as provided in Article 5.

## **Article 5 - Member Church Affiliation**

5.01. This church will be a member church of FELC. This church is subject to the discipline of FELC according to these constitutional provisions.

5.02. This church accepts the Confession of Faith and agrees to the Purposes of FELC and will act in accordance with them.

5.03. This church acknowledges its relationship with FELC in which:

- a. This church agrees to be responsible for its life as a Christian community,
- b. This church pledges its financial support and participation in the life and mission of FELC,
- c. This church agrees to call pastoral leadership, in the first instance, from the roster of pastors of FELC. In special circumstances, and with the approval of the jurisdictional council of visitors, this church may call a pastor from another Lutheran body. In cases of extreme necessity, and with the approval of the jurisdictional council of visitors and of the FELC Board of Trustees, this church may choose to call non-Lutheran pastors from FELC recognized church bodies.

- d. This church may employ other ministerial personnel for appointment to staff positions in this church,
- e. This church agrees to file this constitution and any subsequent changes to this constitution with FELC for review to ascertain that all of its provisions are in accordance with FELC's Statement of Faith and are not in contradiction with FELC's Statement of Purpose.

5.04. Affiliation with FELC may be terminated as follows:

- a. This church takes action to dissolve.
- b. This church ceases to exist.
- c. This church is removed from membership in FELC according to the procedures for discipline of FELC
- d. This church follows the procedures outlined in 5.05. of this constitution.

5.05. This church may terminate its relationship with FELC by the following procedures:

- a. If this church desires to terminate its relationship with FELC, such action may be taken at a legally called and conducted special meeting by a two-thirds majority of the voting members present, at which meeting a representative from the jurisdictional council of visitors will be present. Notice of the meeting will be mailed to all voting members at least 10 days in advance of the meeting.
- b. A certified copy of the resolution to terminate this church's relationship with FELC will be sent to the FELC Board of Trustees, with an additional copy sent to the jurisdictional council of visitors. With this final action the relationship between this church and FELC will be terminated.

5.06. If this congregation is considering relocation, it will confer with the jurisdictional council of visitors before steps are taken leading to such action. The advice of the council of visitors will be received before any such action is effected.

## **Article 6 - Property Ownership**

6.01. If this church ceases to exist, title to un-disposed property will pass to FELC.

6.02. If this church is removed from membership in FELC according to its procedure for discipline, title to property will continue to reside in this church.

6.03. If a two-thirds majority of the voting members of this church present at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this church vote to transfer to another Lutheran church body, title to property will continue to reside in this church.

6.04. If a two-thirds majority of the voting members of this church present at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this church vote to become independent or

relate to a non-Lutheran church body, title to property of this church will continue to reside in this church.

## **Article 7 - Membership**

7.01. Members of this church will be those baptized persons on the roll of the church at the time that this constitution is adopted and those who are admitted thereafter and who have declared and maintain their membership in accordance with the provisions of this constitution and its by-laws.

7.02. Members will be classified as follows:

a. Baptized members are those persons who have been received by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism in this church. In the case of unconfirmed children, it is preferred but not necessary that one or both parents of the baptized are to be confirmed members of this church. Baptized members are also those who have been previously baptized in the Name of the Triune God and have been received by certificate of transfer from another Lutheran body or by affirmation of faith.

b. Confirmed members are baptized persons who have been confirmed in this church, those who have been received by adult baptism or by transfer as confirmed members from other Lutheran churches, or baptized persons received by affirmation of faith.

c. Voting members are confirmed members. Such confirmed members will have communed and made a contribution of record during the current or preceding year.

d. Associate members are persons holding membership in other Lutheran churches who wish to retain such membership but also desire to participate in the life and mission of this church. They have all the privileges and duties of membership except voting rights and eligibility for elected offices or membership on the Church Council of this church.

7.03. All applications for confirmed membership will be submitted to and will require the approval of the Church Council.

7.04. It will be the privilege and responsibility of members of this church to:

a. make regular use of the means of grace, both Word and sacrament(s)

b. live a Christian life in accordance with the Word of God as found in the Holy Scriptures and in the teachings of the Lutheran church, and

c. support the work of this church and of FELC through contributions of their time, abilities, and financial support.

7.05. Membership in this church will be terminated by any of the following:

a. death,

b. resignation,

c. transfer or release,

- d. disciplinary action by the Church Council, or
- e. removal from the roll due to inactivity as defined in the bylaws.

Such persons who have been removed from the roll of members will remain persons for whom the church has a continuing pastoral concern.

### **Article 8 - The Office of Proclamation (Pastor)**

8.01. Authority to call (and ordain as confirmation of call) a pastor will be exercised in this church by at least a two-thirds majority ballot vote of members present and voting at a meeting regularly called for that purpose. Before a call is issued, a Call Committee, appointed by the Church Council, will recommend the pastoral candidate to the Church Council. The Church Council will in turn recommend the pastoral candidate to the church. The Church Council and the Call Committee will seek the advice and help of the jurisdictional council of visitors's personnel officer for assistance in the search for a pastor(s).

8.02. In the first instance, a member of the roster of pastors of FELC or candidate approved for pastoral ministry in FELC may be called as pastor of this church. In special circumstances, this church will seek the approval of the jurisdictional council of visitors to call a pastor from another Lutheran body. In cases of extreme necessity, this church will seek the approval of the jurisdictional council of visitors and of the FELC Board of Trustees to call a non-Lutheran pastor from a FELC recognized church body.

8.03. As soon as practicable, the newly called pastor of the church will be installed, or ordained as confirmation of call, by this church at a service conducted, where applicable, by a pastor already serving this church or, where desired, by a pastor from a neighboring FELC member church. This church may also elect to have the newly called pastor installed, or ordained as confirmation of call, by the president of the Church Council.

8.04. Consistent with the faith and practice of FELC, every pastor will preach the Word of God as law and gospel, administer the sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper, conduct public worship, provide pastoral care, and will speak publicly to the world proclaiming God's love for the world. Each pastor with a church call will offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead. Each pastor will impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through distribution of its periodicals and other publications. Each pastor will encourage the member church where called to support the missions and ministries of FELC. Unless otherwise delegated, pastors may also supervise employees, schools and organizations of the church, may install regularly elected members of the Church Council and its officers, and may with the Church Council administer discipline. Pastors may seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

8.05. The specific duties of the pastor, compensation, and other matters pertaining to the service of the pastor will be included in a letter of call. These matters will be reviewed by the Church Council each year based on FELC guidelines.

8.06.01. The call of a church, when accepted by a pastor, will constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment which, except in the case of the death of the pastor, will be terminated only following consultation with the jurisdictional council of visitors and for the following reasons:

- a. mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term of years;
- b. resignation of the pastor: A letter of resignation will be submitted to the Church Council for report to the church. Unless otherwise agreed, the resignation will normally become effective two months after the date on which it is submitted;
- c. inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in the church in view of local conditions, without reflection on the competence or the moral and spiritual character of the pastor;
- d. the physical or mental incapacity of the pastor;
- e. disqualification of the pastor through discipline on grounds of doctrine, morality, or continued neglect of duty; or
- f. the dissolution of the member church.

8.06.02. In the case of alleged physical or mental incapacity of the pastor or dysfunctional conduct of the pastoral office, it will be the responsibility of the Church Council when such difficulties are personally known, or have been brought to the Council's attention in writing by member(s) of this church, to initiate an investigation of such conditions personally in consultation with the jurisdictional council of visitors.

8.06.03. In case of alleged physical or mental incapacity, competent medical testimony will be obtained. When such disability is evident, the Church Council in consultation with the jurisdictional council of visitors will declare the pastorate vacant. Upon the restoration of a disabled pastor to health, the Church Council with the input of the jurisdictional council of visitors will take steps to enable the pastor to resume the ministry, either in the church last served or in another church or in another field of labor.

8.06.04. In the case of alleged local difficulties which imperil the effective functioning of the church, all concerned persons will be heard, after which the Church Council in consultation with the jurisdictional council of visitors will decide on the course of action to be recommended to the pastor and the church. If they agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action will be taken. If either party fails to assent, the church may dismiss the pastor by a two-thirds majority vote of the voting members present at a regularly called meeting.



8.06.05. The foregoing procedure may be invoked when questions of doctrine, morality, or continued neglect of duty are involved, all such cases being treated as disciplinary matters. Charges against a pastor which, if sustained, would subject him or her to discipline will be presented to the jurisdictional council of visitors and be adjudicated as set forth in the bylaws of FELC.

8.06.06. If in the course of any of the proceedings in 8.06.01.- 8.06.05. above, it should become apparent that the pastoral office cannot be conducted effectively in the church being served by the pastor due to local conditions, the Church Council in consultation with jurisdictional council of visitors may temporarily suspend the pastor from service in the church without prejudice and with pay provided through a joint FELC fund and with housing provided by the church.

8.07. At the time of pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor may be recommended by the jurisdictional council of visitors and appointed with the consent of this church or the Church Council.

8.08. During the period of service, an interim pastor will have the rights and duties of a regularly called pastor and may delegate the same in part to a supply pastor with the consent of the jurisdictional council of visitors and this church or Church Council. The interim pastor and any pastor providing assistance will refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor.

8.09. This church will make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former pastor before calling a successor. A pastor will make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to this church before resigning or leaving.

8.10. When a pastor is called to serve in company with another pastor or pastors, the privileges and responsibilities of each pastor will be specified in documents to accompany the call and to be drafted in consultation involving the pastors, church council and the personnel officer of the jurisdictional council of visitors. As occasion requires, the documents may be revised through a similar consultation.

8.11.01. With the counsel of the jurisdictional council of visitors, the church may call a pastor for a specific term of years. Details of such calls will be in writing setting forth the purpose and conditions involved. Prior to the completion of a term a member of the jurisdictional council of visitors will meet with the pastor and representatives of the church for a review of the call and to offer any suggestions. Such a call may also be terminated before its expiration in accordance with the provisions of 8.06.01.

8.12. The pastor(s) will submit a report of his or her ministry to the Church Council, with a copy sent to jurisdictional council of visitors, at the first quarterly church meeting.

## **Article 9 - Church Meetings**

9.01. Quarterly meetings of this church will be held at a time specified in the bylaws.

9.02. A special church meeting may be called by the pastor, the church council, or the president of this church, and will be called at the written request of 10% of the voting members. The call for each special meeting will specify the purpose for which it is to be held and no other business will be transacted at that meeting.

9.03. Notice of all meetings of this church will be given at the service of worship on the preceding two consecutive Sundays and by mail to all voting members at least 10 days in advance of the date of the meeting. The posting of such notice in the regular mail, with the regular postage affixed or paid, sent to the last known address of such members will be sufficient.

9.04. Any number of voting members will constitute a quorum.

9.05. Voting by proxy or by absentee ballot will not be permitted.

9.6. At all church meetings, a written roll call of all voting members will be taken and filed in the church office for three (3) years.

9.7. All actions by this church will be by majority vote except as otherwise provided in this constitution.

9.8. Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition, will govern parliamentary procedure of all meetings of this church.

## **Article 10 - Officers of this Church**

10.01. The officers of this church will be a president, a vice president, secretary, treasurer, and financial secretary.

a. Duties of the officers will be specified in the bylaws.

b. The officers will be voting members of this church.

c. Officers of this church will serve similar offices of the Church Council and will be voting members of the Church Council.

10.02. The church will elect its officers, and they will be the officers of the church. The officers will be elected as specified in the bylaws. Their term will be in accordance with the bylaws.

10.03. No officer will hold more than one office at a time. With the exception of the treasurer, no elected officer will be eligible to serve more than two full consecutive terms.

In exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the voting members at the church meeting for such elections, the treasurer may continue to be elected to serve a maximum of three full consecutive terms.

10.04. The pastor(s) will not be an officer of the church.

## **Article 11 - Church Council**

11.01. The voting membership of the Church Council will consist of the officers and other elected leaders of the church as stipulated in the bylaws. Any voting member of the church may be elected, subject only to the limitation on the length of continuous service permitted in that office. A member's place on the Church Council will be declared vacant if the member:

- a. ceases to be a voting member of this church, or
- b. is absent from four successive regular meetings of the Church Council without cause.

11.02. The members of the Church Council except the pastor(s) will be elected at a legally called annual meeting of the church. Their term of office will be for three years with the term of office beginning on January 1 and ending on December 31. Such members will be eligible to serve consecutively no more than two full three-year terms, plus any portion of one unexpired, appointed or elected term. Their tenure will be so arranged that one third of the terms expire annually. The Church Council members will be installed at worship on a Sunday early in the new calendar year.

11.03. Should a member's place on the Church Council be declared vacant, the Church Council will elect, by majority vote, a successor to fill the term of office.

11.04. The Church Council will have general oversight of the life and activities of this church, to the end that everything is done in accordance with the Word of God and the faith and purpose of FELC. The duties of the Church Council will include but not be limited to the following:

- a. To lead this church in stating its mission, to do long range planning, to set goals and priorities, and to evaluate its activities in light of its mission and goals.
- b. To seek to involve all members of this church in worship, learning, witness, service, and support.
- c. To oversee and provide for the administration of this church to enable the church to fulfill its functions and perform its mission.
- d. To maintain supportive relationships with the pastor and staff, and help them to evaluate the fulfillment of their calling, appointment, or employment.
- e. To be examples individually and corporately of the style of faith, ministry, and life expected of all members of the priesthood of all believers.

- f. To promote a congregational climate of peace and good will, and as differences and conflicts arise, to endeavor to foster mutual understanding and resolution in accordance with Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.
- g. To arrange for pastoral services during the sickness or absence of the pastor.
- h. To emphasize partnership with FELC as well as cooperation with other churches, both Lutheran and non-Lutheran guided by established policies of FELC.
- i. To recommend and encourage the use of program resources produced or approved by FELC.

11.05. The Church Council will be responsible for the financial and property matters of this church.

- a. The Church Council will be the board of directors of this church, and as such will be responsible for maintaining and protecting its property and the management of its business and fiscal affairs. It will have the powers and be subject to the obligations that pertain to such boards under the laws of the State of \_\_\_\_\_, except as otherwise provided herein.
- b. The Church Council will not have the authority to buy, sell, or encumber real property unless specifically authorized to do so by a meeting of this church.
- c. The Church Council will prepare an annual budget for adoption by this congregation, will supervise the expenditure of funds in accordance therewith following its adoption, and may incur obligations more than 10% in excess of the adopted current budget only after approval by a church meeting.
- d. The budget will include this church's full-indicated share in support of the mission and ministry being carried on in partnership with other churches through FELC.
- e. The Church Council will ascertain that the financial affairs of this church are being conducted efficiently, giving particular attention to the prompt payment of all obligations and to the regular forwarding of benevolence monies to FELC (suggested amount of 25% of total benevolence), to the jurisdictional council of visitors (suggested amount of 25% of total benevolence), and to other Christian and charitable beneficiaries (suggested amount of 50% of total benevolence).
- f. The Church Council will be responsible for this congregation's investments and its total insurance program.
- g. No paid employee of the church will be eligible to be elected to the Church Council, since this constitutes an ethical conflict of interest.

11.06. The Church Council will see that the provisions of this constitution and its bylaws and continuing resolutions are carried out.

11.07. The Church Council will provide for an annual review of the membership roll.

11.08. The Church Council will be responsible for the appointment and supervision of the paid or salaried workers of this church in conjunction with the pastor(s) in accord with a Personnel Manual adopted by the church council.

11.09. The Church Council will submit a comprehensive report to this church prior to the first quarterly meeting. It will include a summary report of Church Council activities and be open to review at the said meeting.

11.10. The Church Council will normally meet once a month. Special meetings may be called by the pastor or the president or at the request of at least one-half of its members. Notice of each special meeting will be given to all who are entitled to be present.

11.11. A quorum for the transaction of business will consist of at least half of the elected members of the Church Council, including the pastor or interim pastor, except when the pastor or interim pastor requests or consents to be absent and has given prior approval to an agenda of routine matters which will be the only business of the meeting.

## **Article 12 - Church Committees**

12.01. The officers of this church and the pastor will constitute the Executive Committee.

12.02. A Nominating Committee of three voting members of this church will be elected at the July quarterly meeting in sufficient time to make recommendations to the Church Council and the subsequent church meeting.

12.03. An Audit Committee of three voting members of this church will be elected at the October quarterly meeting. Audit Committee members will not be members of the Church Council.

12.04. When a pastoral vacancy occurs, a Call Committee of seven voting members of this church will be appointed by the Church Council. Term of office will terminate at the installation of the newly-called pastor. Decisions may be made by a two-thirds majority vote.

12.05. Except as otherwise stipulated in the bylaws, there will be standing committees representing at least the following areas of church life to be organized as the Church Council determines: education, property, social ministry, evangelism, stewardship, finance, worship, and youth.

12.06. Except as stipulated in the bylaws, the Church Council will assign the duties of all committees, along with such instructions as in its judgment are in the best interests of this church. All actions of committees will be subject to review by the Church Council.

12.07. At a regular or specially called meeting, the Church Council will appoint as many additional standing committees or ad hoc task forces as the local and wider concerns of this church will require. Each such committee will be composed of one or more members of the Church Council, and in addition, other confirmed members of this church.

Although appointed by and responsible to the Church Council, these committees will be recognized as representatives of the interests of, and performing essential services for, this church as a whole. The pastor will have voice and vote in all committees.

12.08. Duties of standing committees will be specified in the bylaws.

### **Article 13 - Organizations within this Church**

13.01. All organizations within this church will exist to aid it in ministering to the members of this church and to all persons who can be reached with the Gospel of Christ. As outgrowths and expressions of this church's life, the organizations are subject to its oversight and direction. This church at its meetings and the Church Council will determine their policies, guide their activities, and receive reports concerning their membership, work and finances.

13.02. Special interest groups other than those of the official organizations of FELC may be organized only after the Church Council has given authorization.

### **Article 14 - Discipline of Church Members and Adjudication**

14.01. Denial of the Christian faith as described in this constitution, conduct grossly unbecoming a member of the priesthood of all believers, or persistent trouble making in this congregation are sufficient cause for discipline of a member. Prior to disciplinary action, reconciliation will be attempted following Matthew 18: 15-17, proceeding through these successive steps: a. private admonition by the pastor, b. admonition and discussion by the pastor in the presence of two or three witnesses, and c. a written citation to appear before the Church Council which will hear the response of the admonished member.

14.02. A member charged with an offense will appear before the Church Council having received a written notice, specifying the exact charges that have been made against the member at least 10 days prior to the meeting. If the accused fails to appear at the appointed hour without valid excuse, the Church Council may proceed with the hearing and may pass judgment in the absence of the accused.

14.03. Should the allegations be sustained by a two-thirds majority vote of the Church Council, the council will impose one of the following disciplinary actions:

- a. censure before the council or church;
- b. suspension from membership for a defined period of time; or
- c. exclusion from membership in this church.

Disciplinary actions b. and c. will be delivered to the member in writing.

14.04. The member against whom disciplinary action has been taken by the Church Council will have the right of appeal of the decision to the jurisdictional council of visitors. Such right may not be abridged and the decision of council of visitors will be final.

14.05. Disciplinary actions may be reconsidered and revoked by the Church Council upon receipt of a. evidence that injustice has been done; or b. evidence of repentance and amendment of life.

14.06. When there is disagreement among factions within this church on a substantive issue that cannot be resolved by the parties, members of this church will have access to the appointed representative of the jurisdictional council of visitors for consultation after informing the president of the Church Council of their intent. If the consultation fails to resolve the issue, the council of visitors will consider the matter. If the council of visitors will fail to resolve the issue, the matter will be referred to FELC Board of Trustees whose decision will be final.

### **Articles 15 - Amendments to the Constitution of this Church**

15.01. Amendments to this constitution may be proposed by at least five (5) voting members or by the Church Council. Proposals must be filed in writing with the Church Council sixty (60) days before formal consideration by this church at a regular or special meeting called for that purpose. The Church Council will notify the members of the proposal with their recommendations at least thirty (30) days in advance of the meeting.

15.02. A proposed amendment to this constitution will:

- a. be approved at a properly called meeting according to this constitution by a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting;
- b. be ratified without change at the next regularly scheduled meeting by a three-fourths majority vote of those present and voting; and
- c. have the effective date included in the resolution and noted in the constitution.

15.03. Any amendments to this constitution will be sent by the secretary of this congregation to the administrator for the jurisdictional council of visitors. The amendment will become effective when passed, but the council of visitors should inform the church within one hundred twenty (120) days if the amendment is in conflict with the constitution and bylaws of FELC.

15.04. Whenever FELC recommends any changes for church constitutions, those recommendations should be forwarded to each church in a timely manner, usually within six months of the adoption of the recommendation.

## **Article 16 - Provision and Amendment of the Bylaws of this Church**

16.01. This church may adopt bylaws. No bylaw may conflict with this constitution or the constitution of FELC.

16.02. Bylaws will be described in a separate section of this constitution as a further elaboration of constitutional provisions.

16.03. Amendments to this constitution may be proposed by at least five (5) voting members or by the Church Council. Proposals must be filed in writing with the Church Council sixty (60) days before formal consideration by this church at a regular or special meeting called for that purpose. The Church Council will notify the members of the proposal with their recommendations at least thirty (30) days in advance of the meeting. A bylaw will be considered changed or adopted if approved by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting.

16.04. Approved changes to the bylaws will be sent to the jurisdictional council of visitors.

### **Bylaws**

#### **Bylaw 1 - Active Membership**

B01.01. Membership in this church will be terminated by removal from the roll due to inactivity.

B01.02. Inactivity is defined as those members who have not communed and contributed for a period of three (3) years according to current church records.

B01.03. Alternatively, at the request of an active member and with the approval of the Church Council, an inactive member may be placed on a roll of inactive members pending reactivation of membership pursuant to a change in life's circumstances of the inactive member. The status of such inactive members should be reviewed annually by the church secretary.

#### **Bylaw 2 - Regular Quarterly Meetings of this Church**

B02.01. Regular quarterly meetings of this church will be held in January, April, July, and October of each year.

B02.01.01. Business at the January meeting will include, but not be limited to, a financial report of the previous fiscal year, an Auditor's report, and the report from the pastor, committee chairs, and parish organizations.



B02.01.02. Business at the April meeting will include, but not be limited to, evangelization, outreach, and education programs and projects for the coming summer and school year.

B02.01.03. Business at the July meeting will include, but not be limited to, the election or appointment of a nominating committee.

B02.01.04. Business at the October meeting will include, but not be limited to, the election of officers for the next ministry year, action on the proposed budget for the next fiscal year, and appointment or election of auditors.

### **Bylaw 3 - Duties of the Officers**

B03.01. The president is the chairman of the church and Church Council, and will work closely and in concert with the pastor on all matters. The president will preside over the council and all church meetings. The president will be informed about the work of all organizations, committees, and special task forces and be welcome at any meeting. The president is an ex officio member of all committees.

B03.01.01. With information supplied by the pastor, the Church Council president will keep accurate parochial records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, members dismissed or members excluded from the congregation, and will submit a summary of such statistics annually to the jurisdictional council of visitors. If applicable, the church council president or the pastor will be the custodian of the seal.

B03.02. The vice president will provide assistance to the president and will assume the responsibilities of that office in the absence of the president.

B03.03. The secretary will keep accurate minutes of all meetings of the church and the Church Council in a volume provided by the church, which will be preserved permanently in the archives.

B03.04. The financial secretary will be responsible for receiving and recording all income from contributing members and from other sources that are directed to the church. The financial secretary will submit a monthly written report to the Finance Committee and to the Church Council. The financial secretary will prepare an annual written report for the church.

B03.05. The treasurer will keep the books of account of the congregation. The treasurer will receive from the financial secretary all funds and disburse them properly. The treasurer will submit a monthly written report to the Finance Committee and the Church Council. The treasurer will prepare an annual written report for the church.

#### **Bylaw 4 - Other Church Council Members**

B04.01. The bylaws may contain provisions for the specification, election, and duty descriptions for other Church Council members perhaps to be charged with the areas of ministry as described in bylaw section 4. Such items should be placed in this section of these bylaws.

#### **Bylaw 5 - Procedure for Elections of Officers and Other Church Council Members**

B05.01. The election of officers and other Church Council members will be by written ballot at the October church meeting.

B05.02. The nominating committee will serve as tellers of the election.

B05.03. To be elected a candidate must receive a simple majority of the votes cast.

B05.04. Should no candidate for a particular office receive a simple majority of the votes cast then a run off will be held between the two candidates receiving the most votes in the first ballot.

B05.05. Elections for staggering of terms as described in (11.02. of the constitution) will be stipulated in the bylaws.

#### **Bylaw 6 - Standing Committees of this Church**

(Each church may create its own committee structures to be overseen by the Church Council. These are helpful suggestions.)

B06.01. There will be a committee on Christian Education. This committee will oversee the schools and educational opportunities within the church. It will encourage the use of teaching materials published or approved by FELC, seek to introduce the Church's periodicals and books of family devotions into the homes of the church.

B06.02. There will be a committee on Church Property. This committee will be responsible for the proper maintenance and protection of all property of the church. This committee will be responsible for arranging the activities of maintenance personnel employed by the church and will keep the pastor informed of such activities.

B06.03. There will be a committee on Evangelism. This committee will also seek to assist in endeavors to reawaken the spiritually indifferent and promote the growth in faith of its own members. This committee will also make recommendations to the Church Council relative to membership rolls and membership categories. It will continuously study the church in the context of its hospitality to the stranger and its outreach to surrounding communities.

B06.04. There will be a Finance Committee of which the treasurer and financial secretary will be ex officio members. It will prepare a draft of a budget for each succeeding year, including the church's benevolence and other giving, and submit said budget to the Church Council for its action and for presenting a budget to a church meeting for adoption. This committee will exercise oversight over all financial affairs of the church to make certain that they are being conducted efficiently including the prompt payment of all financial obligations and commitments. It will see that proper insurance is provided, subject to the approval of the Church Council and be responsible for the church's investments, except in the case where a special committee is duly appointed for special investments such as an Endowment Fund.

B06.05. There will be a committee on Stewardship. It will be a function of this committee to evoke and promote the expression of Christian faith in daily living, to teach the Christian use of time, talents and treasure, and to lead all members to Biblical tithing and higher levels of proportionate giving to the Lord's work. This committee will be responsible for regular continuing stewardship efforts in the church.

B06.06. There will be a committee on Worship & Music. This committee will assist the Church Council in seeing that the services of worship are conducted regularly and in accordance with good liturgical practices, that ushers and greeters are recruited and trained, that hymnals and other devotional materials are provided and properly maintained. This committee will receive regular reports on the welfare and effective service of choirs of the church and music being used. This committee will consult the pastor regarding the theological suitability and accuracy of liturgies and music used in the church. This committee will arrange for the care of all worship appointments such as communion ware, altar furnishings, paraments, vestments and musical instruments. In consultation with the organist and choir director(s), the committee will recommend to the pastor(s) music supplies appropriate for use in worship.

B06.07. There will be a committee on Youth. It will be the responsibility of this committee to identify all the youth of the church and to see that the youth are integrated into the life and structure of the church. The committee will organize and supervise specific activities for youth which will nurture the faith life of youth. The committee will also make special efforts to involve youth in youth programs and activities of FELC.

B06.08. There will be a committee on Fellowship and Social Ministry. This committee will be concerned with promoting the fellowship which Christ establishes among his followers and in the world. To this end, the committee will organize activities and events where the members of this church and others may gather for fellowship.

This committee will assist the church in extending Christian compassion and care to those in need. This committee will be responsible to study societal conditions in order to bring the cleansing and healing light of Christian truth to bear upon critical problems through thoughtful Christian discussions of facts and issues. The committee will

encourage the pastor(s) and members to be involved in the community in social issues congruent with the gospel.

### **Bylaw 7 - Other Organizations within this Church**

B07.01. There will be an organization entitled, "Women of \_\_\_\_\_". All women of \_\_\_\_\_ Church are encouraged to participate in the activities of the Women of \_\_\_\_\_, whose purpose is to gather for study, support, and action as a community of women called to discipleship in Christ Jesus.

B07.02. In order to support one another, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society and the world:

- a. The Women of \_\_\_\_\_ will elect from the church an administrative board consisting of a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, circle leaders and chairpersons of committees.
- b. The Women of \_\_\_\_\_ will have their own treasury, and it will be audited by the church Audit Committee once a year.
- c. The Women of \_\_\_\_\_ will report to the Church Council and prepare an annual written report.

B07.03 There will be an organization entitled \_\_\_\_\_ (there can be a separate Youth Group, a Men's Group, or any variety of organizations which can follow a similar format to the above or their own structure and purposes).

### **Bylaw 8 - Continuing Resolutions**

B08.01. The Church Council may initiate and enact continuing resolutions which describe the function of the various committees or organizations of this church; or which may address any issues or concerns of its members.

B08.02. Continuing resolutions will be enacted or amended by a two-thirds vote of all voting members of the Church Council. Such resolutions may also be voted on by the entire congregation. Such resolutions will be for guidance, counsel, and direction; but will not be binding in the same manner as Articles and other Bylaws of this constitution.

### **Bylaw 9 - Endowment Fund**

(The bylaws may for provide for the establishment of additional programs, funds, or projects in the church. An endowment fund can then also have its own additional bylaws to govern it's own elected Trustees, etc.)

### **Affirmation of Baptism as Confirming and Ordering of Ministries**

[The service may be conducted by a pastor of the church or by the church council president of the church or by a pastor from an neighboring FELC member church, whichever the member church council has determined in advance.]

## **Preface**

In baptism God, our Father, has promised to forgive our sin, to deliver us from death and the devil, and to grant us eternal salvation. In the waters of baptism we have died to ourselves and have been raised to a new life of faith alone in our Lord, Jesus Christ. At the time of our baptism, God the Holy Spirit called and ordained us to be ministers of the gospel in the priesthood of all believers.

St. Paul writes, "For there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:23-26)

Jesus says, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." (John 8: 31-32)

Again St. Paul writes, "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." (II Corinthians 5:14-20)

Again, Jesus says, "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 lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." (Matthew 18-20)

## **Mutual Pledges of Service**

If it is your intention to fulfil your calling to ministry in this church, we ask you to profess your faith in Christ Jesus, to reject sin, and to confess the faith in which we baptize.

P: Do you renounce all the forces of evil, the devil, and all his empty promises?

R: I do.

P: Do you believe in God the Father?

R: I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

P: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

R: I believe in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
He descended into hell.  
On the third day, he rose again,  
he ascended into heaven, and  
is seated at the right hand of God, the almighty Father,  
from where he will come to judge the living and the dead.

P: Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

R: I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
one holy Christian church,  
the community of saints,  
the resurrection of the dead,  
and life everlasting. Amen.

P: Will exercise your ministry in accordance with the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, with the Apostles', the Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds, and with the Lutheran Confessions as true and faithful expositions of Scripture?

R: I will, and I ask God to help me.

P: Will conform your ministry to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ and will you therewith assert truths which are congruent with this gospel?

R: I will, and I ask God to help me.

P: Will serve this community of believers with the gospel as you are so led by this same gospel, will you seek to reconcile sinners to God as God has reconciled you to himself in Christ, and will you care and pray for the members of this community whom has called you to serve?

R: I will, and I ask God to help me.

P: You, the members of (.....) Lutheran Church, do you receive this minister/these ministers as servants called and sent by Christ to labour among you as members of his body?

R: We do, and with the help of God we will support and encourage (him/her/them) with prayer and patience, showing (him/her/them) the gifts of faith, hope, and love as God has revealed and incarnated these gifts to us through word and deed in his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

P: If anyone speaks, one must do so as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, one must do so with the strength that God provides, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen." (I Peter 4:11)

### **Confirmation of Call and Ordination to Service**

Fellow Servant(s) of God, having been called by the Holy Spirit through the gospel, having been ordained into the priesthood of all believers in your baptism, having professed the faith in which we baptize, having pledged to uphold the biblical and confessional integrity of this church, and having been received as a minister by this fellowship of believers, you are herewith confirmed in your call as (confirmed member, Sunday school teacher, church council member, church musician, deacon/deaconess, pastor, acolyte, usher, other) of [name of church] and are commanded (or ordained) to exercise the duties of this office in faithful service to Christ and to the members of his body gathered in this community of believers.

Jesus said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." As you assume the responsibilities of your calling, so too do we pray for you as you enter the Lord's harvest,

Our Father ...

P: May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

[The service continues with Communion.]