

**CONSTITUTION  
OF  
FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
KEARNEY, NEBRASKA**



Receiving God's Grace  
Sharing God's Love  
Uniting In Christ

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**2017**

Approved June 25, 2017 at the Annual Congregational Meeting.  
INTRODUCTION to the *Constitution*

The *Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, like the other governing documents of this church, is an ecclesial, legal, and missional document that reflects the underlying theology and doctrines of this church as well as its polity and governance structures. As the guiding document of one of the three expressions of this church, it reflects that congregations, while fully the church, are not the whole church; they are in an interdependent relationship with synods and the churchwide organization and are part of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. As such, the *Model Constitution for Congregations* is deeply rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Lutheran Confessions, and the history of this church.

The *Model Constitution for Congregations* was adopted by the Constituting Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, as required by the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. This current edition of the *Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* contains changes adopted by all Churchwide Assemblies, including the thirteenth Churchwide Assembly in 2013. It is consistent with the requirements of the governing documents of the ELCA's churchwide organization and synods, and it provides organizational flexibility to recognize the context of local congregations.

□ **Required provisions:** Sections of this constitution marked by an asterisk [\*] are required when a congregation amends its governing documents. These sections must be used without alteration or amendment of the text in any manner (i.e., neither additions nor deletions are permissible). This requirement is based on constitutional provision 9.52. in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. This provision requires that when a congregation of this church “wishes to amend any provision of its governing documents, the governing documents of that congregation shall be so amended to conform to 9.25.b.” in the churchwide constitution. Provisions in the *Model Constitution for Congregations* identified by an asterisk [\*] are those required under ELCA constitutional provision 9.25.b.

□ **Review by synod:** Each congregation of this church is to provide a copy of its governing documents, and any amendments thereto, to its synod. In accordance with ELCA bylaw 9.53.03., amendments to a congregation constitution become effective *only* when approved by the synod. This bylaw provides:

All proposed changes in the constitution or incorporation documents of a congregation shall be referred to the synod with which the congregation is affiliated. The synod shall notify the congregation of its decision to approve or disapprove the proposed changes; the changes shall go into effect upon notification that the synod has approved them. The synod shall recognize that congregations may organize themselves in a manner which they deem most appropriate.

No governing document amendment will be approved by a synod if it conflicts with the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. In order to meet constitutional requirements and to avoid potential problems, all proposed amendments to a congregation's constitutional provisions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions should be submitted to the synod for review.

□ **Codification explanation:** The *Model Constitution for Congregations* is organized into chapters by general subject matter and codified as (a) constitutional provisions, (b) bylaws, and (c) continuing resolutions. Each provision is preceded by a capital “C.” If a constitutional provision is mandatory, it will be preceded by an asterisk, “\*C.”

a. Constitutional provisions are codified with two sets of numbers, preceded by a “C”: the chapter number, followed by a period and a two-digit number. A period follows the two-digit number. Thus, one required constitutional provision related to “Membership” in Chapter 8 is codified as “\*C8.02.” A provision in Chapter 12 relating to a report by the Congregation Council to the congregation at an annual meeting is codified as “C12.09.” Constitutional provisions are adopted and amended in accordance with Chapter 17 titled “Amendments.”

b. Bylaw provisions follow constitutional provisions to which they apply. They are not intended to be organized in a separate document at the end of the constitutional provisions. Bylaws are codified with three sets of numbers: the chapter number (preceded by a “C”), the related constitutional provision number, and a two-digit number. There are periods after the chapter number, after the reference to the constitutional provision, and after the bylaw number. Thus, a bylaw provision related to “Membership” would be codified as “C8.02.01.” A bylaw relating to the contents of an annual report by the Congregation Council to the congregation at an annual meeting would be codified as “C12.09.01.” Because bylaws and continuing resolutions normally relate to specific practices and details of each congregation's organization, operation, and life, there is not a model set of bylaws or continuing resolutions. Thus, each congregation has discretion and may develop its own bylaws and continuing resolutions, including bylaws and continuing resolutions under required constitutional provisions, but no such bylaw or continuing resolution may conflict with constitutional provisions in the *Model Constitution for Congregations*, the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, or the constitution of the synod, as indicated in \*C6.03.e. Bylaws are adopted and amended in accordance with Chapter 17.

c. Continuing resolutions are intended to provide descriptions of operational patterns and practices or of the ongoing responsibilities of committees or other units within the organizational structure of the congregation. They follow the relevant constitutional provision or bylaw to which they refer. Continuing resolutions also are codified with three sets of numbers, except that the third set is preceded by a capital letter. Thus, a continuing resolution describing congregational committees in Chapter 13 might be numbered “C13.07A13.” The initial numbers “C13.07” indicate that the continuing resolution relates to the designated constitutional provision, which in this case provides that the duties of congregational committees may be specified in bylaws or continuing

resolutions. The final letter and numbers “A13” designate that this is the first continuing resolution “A” and the year that it was adopted, in this example 2013. Continuing resolutions are adopted and amended in accordance with Chapter 18. Unlike constitutional provisions and bylaws which are adopted by the congregation at a legally called and conducted meeting, continuing resolutions may be adopted either by a congregational meeting or by the Congregation Council.

□ **Missing numbers:** You will notice that certain numbers are missing from the numbering sequence in some chapters. These omissions are intentional. For example, in some chapters the number “.10.” and multiples thereof have been reserved for possible use as section headings in future editions.

□ **Selection of options:** Alternatives are provided in some places within the *Model Constitution for Congregations*. Alternatives are noted by brackets or blank lines. For example, constitutional provision \*C9.01. offers the alternative of election of a call committee by the congregation or by the Congregation Council. Only one alternative should be chosen in each instance where brackets appear in the text. In other provisions, alternative provisions are provided. Thus, in Chapters 11 and 12, regarding “Officers” and “Congregation Council,” options are provided separated by the word “or.” Each congregation should select one of those options, subject to approval through the synod’s constitutional review process. Where a blank line appears, such as in C1.01. or C10.02., the appropriate word, phrase, or number determined by the individual congregation should be inserted.

□ **References to church:** In the governing documents, “Church” with a capital letter refers to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. The words “church” or “this church” in lower case letters refer to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The specific congregation may be identified, as provided in C1.02., as “this congregation.”

□ **Guidelines:** A list of guidelines for a congregation engaging in review and amendment of its constitution is available through each synod office and at ELCA.org.

□ **Consultation and concluding comments:** Each synod has a process to review proposed amendments to congregational constitutions. The work of both congregations in amending their governing documents and the synod in reviewing proposed amendments is facilitated by consultation and cooperation *before* proposed amendments are acted upon by the congregation. In addition, each congregation should establish a process for periodic review of its governing documents. You are encouraged to contact your synod office to assist your congregation in its periodic review of governing document provisions and to assess whether problems may exist with respect to proposed amendments.

The important task of amending a constitution is challenging. It is, however, an essential endeavor that merits thoughtful work. In addressing your constitutional responsibilities, may God grant you and your colleagues wisdom, discernment, and commitment to the unity of this church in faithful witness to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

DAVID D. SWARTLING  
Secretary  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
September 15, 2013

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## **\*PREAMBLE**

We, baptized members of the Church of Christ, responding in faith to the call of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, desiring to unite together to preach the Word, administer the sacraments, and carry out God’s mission, do hereby adopt this constitution and solemnly pledge ourselves to be governed by its provisions. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

## **Chapter 1**

### **NAME AND INCORPORATION**

- C1.01.** The name of this congregation is First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Kearney, Nebraska.
- C1.02.** For the purpose of this constitution and the accompanying bylaws, the congregation of First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Kearney, Nebraska is hereinafter designated as “this congregation.”
- C1.11.** This congregation is incorporated under the laws of the State of Nebraska.

## **Chapter 2**

### **CONFESSION OF FAITH**

- \*C2.01.** This congregation confesses the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- \*C2.02.** This congregation confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.
  - a. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God fashions a 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 through word and deed, beginning with the Word in creation, continuing in the history of Israel, and centering in all its fullness in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
  - c. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. Inspired by God’s Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God’s revelation centering in

Jesus Christ. Through them God's Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.

- \*C2.03. This congregation accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life.
- \*C2.04. This congregation accepts the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of this congregation.
- \*C2.05. This congregation accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to the Gospel, acknowledging as one with it in faith and doctrine all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.
- \*C2.06. This congregation accepts the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise, the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, as further valid interpretations of the faith of the Church.
- \*C2.07. This congregation confesses the Gospel, recorded in the Holy Scripture and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain the Church for God's mission in the world.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **NATURE OF THE CHURCH**

- \*C3.01. All power in the Church belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ, its head. All actions of this congregation are to be carried out under his rule and authority.
- \*C3.02. The Church exists both as an inclusive fellowship and as local congregations gathered for worship and Christian service. Congregations find their fulfillment in the universal community of the Church, and the universal Church exists in and through congregations. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, therefore, derives its character and powers both from the sanction and representation of its congregations and from its inherent nature as an expression of the broader fellowship of the faithful. In length, it acknowledges itself to be in the historic continuity of the communion of saints; in breadth, it expresses the fellowship of believers and congregations in our day.
- \*C3.03. The name Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA or "First Lutheran Church") as used herein refers in general references to this whole church, including its three expressions: congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization. The name Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is also the name of the corporation of the churchwide organization to which specific references may be made herein.

### **Chapter 4**

#### **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

- \*C4.01. The Church is a people created by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, called and sent to bear witness to God's creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world.
- \*C4.02. To participate in God's mission, this congregation as a part of the Church shall:
  - a. Worship God in proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments and through lives of prayer, praise, thanksgiving, witness, and service.
  - b. Proclaim God's saving Gospel of justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith alone, according to the apostolic witness in the Holy Scripture, preserving and transmitting the Gospel faithfully to future generations.
  - c. Carry out Christ's Great Commission by reaching out to all people to bring them to faith in Christ and by doing all ministry with a global awareness consistent with the understanding of God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of all.
  - d. Serve in response to God's love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity and justice for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, and standing with the poor and powerless, and committing itself to their needs.
  - e. Nurture its members in the Word of God so as to grow in faith and hope and love, to see daily life as the primary setting for the exercise of their Christian calling, and to use the gifts of the Spirit for their life together and for their calling in the world.
  - f. Manifest the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives.
- \*C4.03. To fulfill these purposes, this congregation shall:
  - a. Provide services of worship at which the Word of God is preached and the sacraments are administered.
  - b. Provide pastoral care and assist all members to participate in this ministry.

- c. Challenge, equip, and support all members in carrying out their calling in their daily lives and in their congregation.
  - d. Teach the Word of God.
  - e. Witness to the reconciling Word of God in Christ, reaching out to all people.
  - f. Respond to human need, work for justice and peace, care for the sick and the suffering, and participate responsibly in society.
  - g. Motivate its members to provide financial support for the congregation's ministry and the ministry of other parts of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
  - h. Foster and participate in interdependent relationships with other congregations, the synod, and the churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
  - i. Foster and participate in ecumenical relationships consistent with churchwide policy.
- \*C4.04.** This congregation shall develop an organizational structure to be described in the bylaws. The Congregation Council shall prepare descriptions of the responsibilities of each committee, task force, or other organizational group and shall review their actions.
- \*C4.05.** This congregation shall, from time to time, adopt a mission statement which will provide specific direction for its programs.
- \*C4.06.** References herein to the nature of the relationship between the three expressions of this church—congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization—as being interdependent or as being in a partnership relationship describe the mutual responsibility of these expressions in God's mission and the fulfillment of the purposes of this church as described in this chapter, and do not imply or describe the creation of partnerships, co-ventures, agencies, or other legal relationships recognized in civil law.

## **Chapter 5**

### **POWERS OF THE CONGREGATION**

- \*C5.01.** The powers of this congregation are those necessary to fulfill its purpose.
- \*C5.02.** The powers of this congregation are vested in the Congregation Meeting called and conducted as provided in this constitution and bylaws.
- \*C5.03.** Only such authority as is delegated to the Congregation Council or other organizational units in this congregation's governing documents is recognized. All remaining authority is retained by the congregation. The congregation is authorized to:
- a. call a pastor as provided in Chapter 9;
  - b. terminate the call of a pastor as provided in Chapter 9;
  - c. call or terminate the call of associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers in conformity with the applicable policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;
  - d. adopt amendments to the constitution, as provided in Chapter 17, amendments to the bylaws, as specified in Chapter 16, and continuing resolutions, as provided in Chapter 18.
  - e. approve the annual budget;
  - f. acquire real and personal property by gift, devise, purchase, or other lawful means;
  - g. hold title to and use its property for any and all activities consistent with its purpose;
  - h. sell, mortgage, lease, transfer, or otherwise dispose of its property by any lawful means;
  - i. elect its Congregation Council and committees, and require them to carry out their duties in accordance with the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions; and
  - j. terminate its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as provided in Chapter 6.
- C5.03.01** The Fiscal year for this congregation shall be June 1 to May 31.
- \*C5.04.** This congregation shall choose from among its voting members laypersons to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly as well as persons to represent it at meetings of any conference, cluster, coalition, or other area subdivision of which it is a member. The number of persons to be elected by the congregation and other qualifications shall be as prescribed in guidelines established by the Nebraska Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- C5.04.01** This congregation shall provide voting members to the assemblies of the Nebraska Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as established by the Synod, and shall provide for the necessary transportation, lodging, meals, and all other fees related to their services as voting members to Assembly and Conference meetings.
- C5.04.02** This congregation shall delegate to the council the responsibility to select voting members to the assemblies

of the Nebraska Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

**\*C5.05.** This congregation shall have an endowment fund that will operate as specified in this congregation's bylaws. The purpose of the endowment fund is to provide for mission work beyond the operational budget of this congregation.

**\*C5.05.01 ENDOWMENT FUND BYLAWS**

- a. The First Lutheran Church Endowment Fund has been established as a separate fund. The purpose of the FUND is to enhance the mission of First Lutheran Church apart from the general operation of the congregation; no portion of the income generated by the FUND shall be used for the annual operating budget of the congregation.
- b. The First Lutheran Church Endowment Fund Committee (hereinafter called the "COMMITTEE") shall be the custodian of the FUND.
- c. The FUND shall be administered and managed as follows:
  1. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP. The COMMITTEE shall consist of five members, all of whom shall be voting members of First Lutheran Church. At the first election, the congregation shall elect two for a term of three years, two for a term of two years, and one for a term of one year. Thereafter, at each annual meeting, the congregation shall elect the necessary number for a term of three years. No member shall serve more than two consecutive three-year terms. After a lapse of one year, former COMMITTEE members may be re-elected. The senior pastor and the president or vice president of the Congregation Council shall be advisory members of the COMMITTEE. The nominating committee of the Congregation Council shall nominate for the COMMITTEE and report at the annual congregation meeting in the same manner as for other offices and committees. In the event of a vacancy on the Committee, the Congregation Council shall appoint a member to fill the vacancy until the next annual meeting of the congregation, at which time the congregation shall elect a member to fulfill the term of the vacancy.
  2. The COMMITTEE shall meet at least quarterly, or more frequently, as deemed by it in the best interest of the FUND.
  3. A quorum shall consist of three members. When only three members are present, a unanimous vote shall be required to carry any motion or resolution.
  4. The COMMITTEE shall elect from its membership a chairperson, recording secretary and financial secretary. The chairperson, or member designated by the chairperson, shall preside at all COMMITTEE meetings.
  5. The recording secretary of the COMMITTEE shall maintain complete and accurate minutes of all meetings and supply a copy thereof to each member of the committee. Each member shall keep a complete copy of minutes to be delivered to his or her successor. The recording secretary shall also supply a copy of the minutes to the Congregation Council.
  6. The financial secretary of the COMMITTEE shall work with the congregation's treasurer in maintaining and coordinating complete and accurate accounts for the FUND and shall as directed by the COMMITTEE authorize the issuance of checks and all other necessary documents on behalf of the congregation in furtherance of the purposes of the FUND. The books shall be audited annually by a certified public accountant or other appropriate person who is not a member of the COMMITTEE.
  7. The COMMITTEE shall report on a quarterly basis to the congregation council and, at each annual or duly called special meeting of the congregation, shall render a full and complete audited account of the administration of the FUND during the preceding year.
  8. The COMMITTEE may request other members of the congregation to serve as advisory members and, at the expense of the FUND income, may provide for the promotion and enhancement of the FUND and for such professional counseling on investments or legal matters as it deems to be in the best interest of the FUND.
  9. Members of the COMMITTEE shall not be liable for any losses which may be incurred upon the investments of the assets of the FUND except to the extent such losses shall have been caused by bad faith or gross negligence. No member shall be personally liable as long as he/she acts in good faith and with ordinary prudence. Each member shall be liable only for his/her own willful misconduct or omissions, and shall not be liable for the acts or omissions of any other member. No member shall engage in any self dealing or transaction with the FUND in which the member has direct or indirect financial interest and shall at all times refrain from any conduct in which his/her personal interests would conflict with the interest of the FUND.
  10. All assets, except real estate, are to be held in the name of First Lutheran Church Endowment Fund or in the name of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, for the benefit of First Lutheran Church Endowment Fund. All FUND assets shall be separate from and not a part of the general

fund or operation of the First Lutheran Church. All real estate shall be held and conveyed in the name of First Lutheran Church.

11. Recommendation to hold, sell, exchange, rent, lease, transfer, convert, invest, reinvest, and in all other respects to manage and control the assets of the FUND including stocks, bonds, debentures, mortgages, notes or other securities, as in their judgment and discretion they deem wise and prudent, are to be made by the COMMITTEE for approval by the Congregation Council, which subsequent execution by the delegated member of the COMMITTEE. All transfers of real estate shall comply with all the bylaws, articles, and Nebraska statutes concerning the conveyance of real estate.

a. DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME.

1. The COMMITTEE shall determine what is principal and income according to generally accepted accounting procedures.
2. Income from the FUND shall be distributed annually and at such other times as deemed necessary and/or feasible to accomplish the following purposes:
  - 1A. Minimum of 20% for outreach into the community and synod, including but not limited to, grants to ELCA seminaries, colleges or students attending such school, social service agencies, institutions and agencies to which this congregation relates, and to special programs designed for those persons in our parish area who are in spiritual and/or economic need.
  - 1B. Minimum of 10% for missions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in this continent and worldwide, including but not limited to, grants to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for new congregational development in North America, professional leadership, educational ministries, global mission, ecumenism, evangelism, social ministries and capital financing.
  - 1C. Minimum of 10% for new ministry opportunities within First Lutheran Church.
  - 1D. Up to 60% for any one or all of the above designated areas in any proportion as determined by the COMMITTEE, or for causes and programs, which at the discretion of the committee are consistent with the fund purpose of enhancing the mission outreach of First Lutheran Church.
3. Programs for support shall be recommended by the COMMITTEE and approved by the Congregation Council for funding according to the guidelines established by the congregation.
4. Disbursements of income from the FUND need not occur annually in the event causes and programs have not been approved by the COMMITTEE sufficient to utilize total income available, or if in the judgment of the COMMITTEE total annual disbursements of income is not recommended.
5. DISTRIBUTION OF PRINCIPAL. When, in the opinion of the COMMITTEE circumstances are so dire and of such an emergency nature that the future of the congregation is at stake, and that the only recourse seems to be the use of the FUND principal, the committee may, upon a two-thirds majority vote, recommend such authorizing action to the congregation.
6. AMENDING THE ENDOWMENT RESOLUTION. Any amendment to this endowment fund bylaws which will change, alter or amend the purpose for which the FUND is established shall be adopted by a two-thirds vote of the members present at an annual meeting of the congregation or at a special meeting called specifically for the purpose of amending the endowment fund bylaws.
7. DISPOSITION OR TRANSFER OF FUND. In the event First Lutheran Church, Kearney, Nebraska, ceases to exist either through merger or dissolution, disposition or transfer of the FUND shall be at the discretion of the Congregation Council in conformity with the Articles of Incorporation and Constitution of the congregation, and in consultation with the bishop of the synod to which this congregation belongs at such time. Consultation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may be desirable for continuation of Mission Endowment Fund obligations.

## Chapter 6

### CHURCH AFFILIATION

- \*C6.01. This congregation shall be an interdependent part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or its successor, and of the Nebraska Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This congregation is subject to the discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- \*C6.02. This congregation accepts the Confession of Faith and agrees to the Purposes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and shall act in accordance with them.
- \*C6.03. This congregation acknowledges its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in which:



- a. This congregation agrees to be responsible for its life as a Christian community.
  - b. This congregation pledges its financial support and participation in the life and mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
  - c. This congregation agrees to call pastoral leadership from the clergy roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in accordance with its call procedures except in special circumstances and with the approval of the bishop of the synod. These special circumstances are limited either to calling a candidate approved for the roster of ordained ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or to contracting for pastoral services with an ordained minister of a church body with which the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America officially has established a relationship of full communion.
  - d. This congregation agrees to consider associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers for call to other staff positions in the congregation according to the procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
  - e. This congregation agrees to file this constitution and any subsequent changes to this constitution with the synod for review to ascertain that all of its provisions are in agreement with the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and with the constitution of the synod.
- \*C6.04.** Affiliation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may be terminated as follows:
- a. This congregation takes action to dissolve.
  - b. This congregation ceases to exist.
  - c. This congregation is removed from membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America according to the procedures for discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
  - d. This congregation follows the procedures outlined in C6.05.
- \*C6.05.** A congregation may terminate its relationship with this Church by the following procedure:
- a. A resolution indicating the intent to terminate its relationship must be adopted at a legally called and conducted special meeting of the congregation by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present. Such meeting may be held no sooner than 30 days after written notice of the meeting is received by the bishop of the synod, during which time the congregation shall consult with the bishop and the bishop's designees, if any. The times and manner of the consultation shall be determined by the bishop in consultation with the Congregation Council. Unless he or she is a voting member of the congregation, the bishop and the bishop's designees, if any, shall have voice but not vote at the meeting.
  - b. The secretary of the congregation shall submit a copy of the resolution to the bishop, attesting that the special meeting was legally called and conducted and certifying the outcome of the vote, and shall mail a copy of the resolution to voting members of this congregation. This notice shall be submitted within 10 days after the resolution has been adopted.
  - c. The bishop of the synod and the congregation shall continue in consultation, as specified in paragraph a. above, during a period of at least 90 days after receipt by the synod of the notice as specified in paragraph b. above.
  - d. If the congregation, after such consultation, still seeks to terminate its relationship, such action may be taken at a legally called and conducted special meeting by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present. Notice of the meeting shall be mailed to all voting members at least 10 days in advance of the meeting. Unless he or she is a voting member of the congregation, the bishop and the bishop's designees, if any, shall have voice but not vote at the meeting.
  - e. A copy of the resolution, attesting that the special meeting was legally called and conducted and certifying the outcome of the vote, shall be sent to the bishop within 10 days after the resolution has been adopted, at which time the relationship between the congregation and this Church shall be terminated subject to paragraphs g., h., and i. below. Unless this notification to the bishop also certifies that the congregation has voted by a two-thirds vote to affiliate with another Lutheran denomination, the congregation will be conclusively presumed to be an independent or non-Lutheran church.
  - f. Notice of termination shall be forwarded by the bishop to the secretary of this church, who shall report the termination to the Churchwide Assembly.
  - g. Congregations seeking to terminate their relationship with this church which fail or refuse to comply with each of the foregoing provisions in C6.05. shall be required to receive Synod Council approval before terminating its membership in this church.
  - h. Congregations which had been members of the Lutheran Church in America shall be required, in addition to complying with the foregoing provisions in \*C6.05., to receive synodical approval before terminating their membership in this church.
  - i. Congregations established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall be required, in addition to complying with the foregoing provisions in \*C6.05., to satisfy all financial obligations to this church

- and receive Synod Council approval before terminating their membership in this church.
- j. If a congregation fails to achieve the required two-thirds vote of voting members present at the congregation's first meeting as specified in paragraph a. above, another special meeting to consider termination of relationship with this church may be called no sooner than six months after that first meeting. If a congregation fails to achieve the required two-thirds vote of voting members present at the congregation's second meeting as specified in paragraph d. above, another attempt to consider termination of relationship with this church must follow all requirements of \*C6.05. and may begin no sooner than six months after that second meeting.
- \*C6.06. If this congregation considers relocation, it shall confer with the bishop of the synod in which it is territorially located and the appropriate unit of the churchwide organization before any steps are taken leading to such action. The approval of the Synod Council shall be received before any such action is effected.
- \*C6.07. If this congregation considers developing an additional site to be used regularly for worship, it shall confer with the bishop of the synod in which it is territorially located and the appropriate unit of the churchwide organizations before any steps are taken leading to such action.

## Chapter 7

### PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

- \*C7.01. If this congregation ceases to exist, title to undisposed property shall pass to the Nebraska Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- \*C7.02. If this congregation is removed from membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America according to its procedure for discipline, title to property shall continue to reside in this congregation.
- \*C7.03. If a two-thirds majority of the voting members of this congregation present at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this congregation vote to transfer to another Lutheran church body, title to property shall continue to reside in this congregation, provided the process for termination of relationship in \*C6.05. has been followed. Before this congregation takes action to transfer to another Lutheran church body, it shall consult with representatives of the Nebraska Synod.
- \*C7.04. If a two-thirds majority of the voting members of this congregation present at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this congregation vote to become independent or relate to a non-Lutheran church body and have followed the process for termination of relationship in \*C6.05., title to property of this congregation shall continue to reside in this congregation only with the consent of the Synod Council. The Synod Council, after consultation with this congregation by the established synodical process, may give approval to the request to become independent or to relate to a non-Lutheran church body, in which case title shall remain with the majority of this congregation. If the Synod Council fails to give such approval, title shall remain with those members who desire to continue as a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- \*C7.05. Notwithstanding the provisions of \*C7.02. and \*C.7.03. above, where this congregation has received property from the synod pursuant to a deed or other instrument containing restrictions under provision 9.71.a. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, this congregation accepts such restrictions and:
- a. Shall not transfer, encumber, mortgage, or in any way burden or impair any right, title, or interest in the property without prior approval of the Synod Council.
  - b. Shall—upon written demand by the Synod Council, pursuant to †S13.23. of the constitution of the Nebraska Synod—reconvey and transfer all right, title, and interest in the property to the synod.

## Chapter 8

### MEMBERSHIP

- \*C8.01. Members of this congregation shall be those baptized persons on the roll of this congregation 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 bylaws.
- \*C8.02. Members shall be classified as follows:
- a. **Baptized** members are those persons who have been received by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism in this congregation, or, having been previously baptized in the name of the Triune God, have been received by certificate of transfer from other Lutheran congregations or by affirmation of faith.
  - b. **Confirmed** members are baptized persons who have been confirmed in this congregation, those who have been received by adult baptism or by transfer as confirmed members from other Lutheran congregations, or baptized persons received by affirmation of faith.

- c. **Voting** members are confirmed members. Such confirmed members, during the current or preceding calendar year, shall have communed in this congregation and shall have made a contribution of record to this congregation. Members of this congregation who have satisfied these basic standards shall have the privilege of voice and vote at every regular and special meeting of the congregation.
  - d. **Associate** members are persons holding membership in other Christian congregations who wish to retain such membership but desire to participate in the life and mission of this congregation, or persons who wish to retain a relationship with this congregation while being members of other congregations. They have all the privileges and duties of membership except voting rights and eligibility for elected offices or membership on the Congregation Council of this congregation.
- \*C8.03.** All applications for confirmed membership shall be submitted to and shall require the approval of the Congregation Council.
- \*C8.04.** It shall be the privilege and duty of members of this congregation to:
- a. make regular use of the means of grace, both Word and sacraments;
  - b. live a Christian life in accordance with the Word of God and the teachings of the Lutheran church; and
  - c. support the work of this congregation, the synod, and the churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America through contributions of their time, abilities, and financial support as biblical stewards.
- \*C8.05.** Membership in this congregation shall be terminated by any of the following:
- a. death;
  - b. resignation;
  - c. transfer or release;
  - d. disciplinary action in accordance with ELCA constitutional provision 20.40 and the accompanying bylaws; 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 shall remain persons for whom the Church has a continuing pastoral concern.

**C8.05.01 MEMBERSHIP STATUS**

Any confirmed member who, despite pastoral care and counseling, has failed for a period of two years to receive Holy Communion and to make a contribution of record to the congregation shall be removed from the rolls. He/she shall be restored to the roll of active confirmed members when he/she again receives the Lord's Supper and enters once more upon the other rights and obligations of a member of this congregation. Exceptions may be made in cases where members are prevented from involvement due to health, location, or circumstances beyond their control such as, shut-ins, nursing home residents, students away at school, military personnel, or other situations approved by the Congregational Council.

- C8.05.02** The Congregational Council shall provide for a review of the membership rolls bi-annually in even number years.

**Chapter 9  
THE PASTOR**

- \*C9.01.** Authority to call a pastor shall be in this congregation by at least a two-thirds majority ballot vote of members present and voting at a meeting legally called for that purpose. Before a call is issued, the officers, or a committee elected by the Congregation Council to recommend the call, shall seek the advice and help of the bishop of the synod.
- \*C9.02.** Only a member of the clergy roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or a candidate for the roster of ordained ministers who has been recommended for the congregation by the synodical bishop may be called as a pastor of this congregation.
- \*C9.03.** Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,
- a. Every ordained minister shall:
    - 1) preach the Word;
    - 2) administer the sacraments;
    - 3) conduct public worship;
    - 4) provide pastoral care; and
    - 5) speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world.
  - b. Each ordained minister with a congregational call shall, within the congregation:
    - 1) offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead;

- 2) supervise all schools and organizations of this congregation;
  - 3) install regularly elected members of the Congregation Council; and
  - 4) with the Congregation Council, administer discipline.
- c. Every pastor shall:
- 1) strive to extend the Kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad;
  - 2) seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel;
  - 3) impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through distribution of its periodicals and other publications; and
  - 4) endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to the work of the churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and of the Nebraska Synod of the ELCA.
- \*C9.04.** The specific duties of the pastor, compensation, and other matters pertaining to the service of the pastor shall be included in a letter of call, which shall be attested by the bishop of the synod.
- \*C9.05.**
- a. The call of a congregation, when accepted by a pastor, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment, which, shall be terminated only by death or, following consultation with the synodical bishop, for the following reasons:
    - 1) mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term;
    - 2) resignation of the pastor, which shall become effective, unless otherwise agreed, no later than 30 days after the date on which it was submitted;
    - 3) inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in the congregation in view of local conditions;
    - 4) physical disability, or mental incapacity of the pastor;
    - 5) suspension of the pastor through discipline for more than three months;
    - 6) resignation or removal of the pastor from the roster of ordained ministers of this church;
    - 7) termination of the relationship between this church and the congregation;
    - 8) dissolution of the congregation or the termination of a parish arrangement; or
    - 9) suspension of the congregation through discipline for more than six months.
  - b. When allegations of physical disability or mental incapacity of the pastor under paragraph a.4) above, or ineffective conduct of the pastoral office under paragraph a.3) above, have come to the attention of the bishop of this synod,
    - 1) the bishop in his or her sole discretion may, investigate such conditions personally together with a committee of two ordained ministers and one layperson, or
    - 2) when such allegations have been brought to the synod's attention by an official recital of allegations by the congregation council or by a petition signed by at least one-third of the voting members of the congregation, the bishop personally shall investigate such conditions together with a committee of two ordained ministers and one layperson.
  - c. In case of alleged physical disability or mental incapacity under paragraph a.4) above, the bishop's committee shall obtain and document competent medical opinion concerning the pastor's condition. When a disability or incapacity is evident to the committee, the bishop of the synod may declare the pastorate vacant and the pastor shall be listed in the clergy roster as disabled. Upon removal of the disability and restoration of the pastor to health, the bishop shall take steps to enable the pastor to resume the ministry, either in the congregation last served or in another appropriate call
  - d. In the case of alleged local difficulties that imperil the effective functioning of the congregation under paragraph a.3) above, the bishop's committee shall endeavor to hear from all concerned persons after which the bishop together with the committee shall present their recommendations first to the pastor and then to the congregation. The recommendations of the bishop's committee must address whether the pastor's call should come to an end, and if so, may suggest appropriate severance arrangements. The committee may also propose other actions that should be undertaken by the congregation and by the pastor, if appropriate. If the pastor and the congregation agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action need be taken by the synod.
  - e. If either party fails to assent to the recommendation of the bishop's committee concerning the pastor's call, the congregation may dismiss the pastor only at a legally called meeting after consultation with the bishop, either (a) by a two-thirds majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee did not recommend termination of the call, or (b) by a simple majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee recommended termination of the call.

- f. If, in the course of proceedings described in paragraph c. or paragraph d. above, the bishop's committee concludes that there may be grounds for disciplinary action, the committee shall make recommendations concerning disciplinary action in accordance with the provisions of this church's constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions
- \*C9.06.** At a time of pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor shall be appointed by the bishop of the synod with the consent of this congregation or the Congregation Council.
- \*C9.07.** During the period of service, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties in the congregation of a regularly called pastor and may delegate the same in part to a supply pastor with the consent of the bishop of the synod and this congregation or Congregation Council. The interim pastor and any ordained pastor providing assistance shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor. Unless previously agreed upon by the Synod Council, an interim pastor is not available for a regular call to the congregation served.
- \*C9.08.** This congregation shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former pastor before calling a successor. A pastor shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to this congregation before beginning service in a call to another congregation or employment in another ministry setting related to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- \*C9.09.** When a pastor is called to serve in company with another pastor or pastors, the privileges and responsibilities of each pastor shall be specified in documents to accompany the call and to be drafted in consultation involving the pastors, the Congregation Council, and the bishop of the synod. As occasion requires, the documents may be revised through a similar consultation.
- \*C9.11.** With the approval of the bishop of the synod, the congregation may depart from C9.05.a. and call a pastor for a specific term. Details of such calls shall be in writing setting forth the purpose and conditions involved. Prior to the completion of a term, the bishop or a designated representative of the bishop shall meet with the pastor and representatives of the congregation for a review of the call. Such a call may also be terminated before its expiration in accordance with the provisions of C9.05.a.
- \*C9.12.** The pastor of this congregation:
- a. shall keep accurate parochial records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, members dismissed, or members excluded from the congregation;
  - b. shall submit a summary of such statistics annually to the synod; and
  - c. shall become a member of this congregation upon receipt and acceptance of the letter of call. In a parish of multiple congregations, the pastor shall hold membership in one of the congregations.
- \*C9.13.** The pastor(s) shall submit a report of his or her ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.
- \*C9.14.** The parochial records of this congregation shall be maintained by the pastor and shall remain the property of the congregation. The secretary of this congregation shall attest in writing to the bishop of this synod that such records have been placed in his or her hands in good order by a departing pastor before the installation of that pastor in another field of labor or the granting by the synod of retired status to the pastor.
- C9.20. Ecumenical pastoral ministry**
- C9.21.** Under special circumstances, subject to the approval of the synodical bishop and the concurrence of this congregation, an ordained minister of a church body with which the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America officially has established a relationship of full communion may serve temporarily as pastor of this congregation under a contract between the congregation and the ordained minister in a form proposed by the synodical bishop and approved by the congregation.

## **Chapter 10**

### **CONGREGATION MEETING**

**C10.01.** The annual meeting of this congregation shall be held at a time specified in the bylaws.

#### **C10.01.01 ANNUAL MEETING**

The annual meeting of the congregation will be held on a date and time set by the Congregation Council, usually the last Sunday in June.

**C10.02.** A special Congregation Meeting may be called by the pastor, the Congregation Council, or the president of this congregation, and shall be called by the president of the congregation upon the written request of five percent of the voting members. The president of the Congregation Council shall call a special meeting upon the request of the synodical bishop. The call for each special meeting shall specify the purpose for which it

is to be held and no other business shall be transacted.

- C10.03.** Notice of all meetings of this congregation shall be given at the services of worship on the preceding two consecutive Sundays and by mail or electronic means, as permitted by state law, to all voting members at least 10 days in advance of the date of the meeting.
- C10.04.** Seventy-five voting members shall constitute a quorum.
- C10.05.** Voting by proxy or by absentee ballot shall not be permitted.
- C10.06.** All actions approved by the congregation shall be by majority vote of those voting members present and voting, except as otherwise provided in this constitution or by state law.
- C10.07.** *Robert's Rules of Order*, latest edition, shall govern parliamentary procedure of all meetings of this congregation.

## **Chapter 11**

### **OFFICERS**

- C11.01.** The officers of this congregation shall be a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.
  - a. Duties of the officers shall be specified in the bylaws.
  - b. The officers shall be voting members of this congregation.
  - c. The officers of this congregation shall serve similar offices of the Congregation Council as officers of the Congregation Council, and shall be voting members of the Congregation Council.
  - d. The president, vice president, secretary and treasurer shall be selected from the elected membership of the Congregation Council.

#### **C11.01.01 DUTIES OF OFFICERS BYLAWS**

- a. The president of the Congregation Council shall preside at all meetings of the council and of the congregation.
  - b. In the absence of the president, the vice-president shall perform the duties of the president.
  - c. The secretary shall keep accurate minutes of all meetings of the Congregation Council and the congregation, which minutes shall be preserved permanently in the archives of the congregation.
  - d. The treasurer shall keep the books of account of the congregation. He/she shall receive from the financial secretary a report of all funds and disbursements of proper orders, making monthly remittance of benevolence receipts to the treasurer of the synod.
  - e. The treasurer shall make written reports of all financial transactions to the Congregation Council monthly and to the congregation, together with a satisfactory audit, at its annual meeting. The treasurer shall be bonded at the expense of the church.
  - f. **The treasurer will convene a Ministry and Facilities Budget Committee each year to assist in the preparation of the next fiscal year spending plan.**
- C11.02.** The Congregation Council shall elect its officers and they shall be the officers of this congregation. The officers shall be elected by written ballot and shall serve for one year or until their successors are elected. The election shall take place immediately following the annual meeting, and at which time their terms shall begin.
  - C11.03.** No officer shall hold more than one office at a time. No elected officer shall be eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office.

## **Chapter 12**

### **CONGREGATION COUNCIL**

- C12.01.** The voting membership of the Congregation Council shall consist of the pastor(s) and 9 members of this congregation elected by the congregation to the Congregation Council. <sup>6-28-15</sup>Any voting member of the congregation may be elected, subject only to the limitation on the length of continuous service permitted in that office. A member's place on the Congregation Council shall be declared vacant if the member a) ceases to be a voting member of this congregation or b) is absent from four successive regular meetings of the Congregation Council without cause. Consistent with the laws of the state in which this congregation is incorporated, the congregation may adopt procedures for the removal of a member of the Congregation Council in other circumstances.
- C12.02.** The members of the Congregation Council except the pastor(s) shall be elected by written ballot to serve for three years or until their successors are elected. Such members shall be eligible to serve no more than two full terms consecutively. Their terms shall begin at the close of the annual meeting at which they are elected.

- C12.03.** Should a member's place on the Congregation Council be declared vacant, the Congregation Council shall elect, by majority vote, a successor until the next annual meeting.
- C12.04.** The Congregation Council shall have general oversight of the life and activities of this congregation, and in particular its worship life, to the end that everything be done in accordance with the Word of God and the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The duties of the Congregation Council shall include the following:
- a. To lead this congregation 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 congregation in worship, learning, witness, service, and support.
  - c. To oversee and provide for the administration of this congregation to enable it to fulfill its functions and perform its mission.
  - d. To maintain supportive relationships with the pastor(s) and staff and help them annually to evaluate the fulfillment of their calling or employment.
  - e. To be examples individually and corporately of the style of life and ministry expected of all baptized persons.
  - f. To promote a congregational climate of peace and goodwill, and, as differences and conflicts arise, to endeavor to foster mutual understanding.
  - g. To arrange for pastoral service during the sickness or absence of the pastor.
  - h. To emphasize partnership with the synod and churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as well as cooperation with other congregations, both Lutheran and non-Lutheran, subject to established policies of the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
  - i. To recommend and encourage the use of program resources produced or approved by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
  - j. To seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel.
- C12.05.** The Congregation Council shall be responsible for the financial and property matters of this congregation.
- a. The Congregation Council shall be the board of trustees of this congregation, and as such shall be responsible for maintaining and protecting its property and the management of its business and fiscal affairs. It shall have the powers and be subject to the obligations that pertain to such boards under the laws of the State of Nebraska, except as otherwise provided herein.
  - b. The Congregation Council shall not have the authority to buy, sell, or encumber real property unless specifically authorized to do so by a meeting of the congregation.
  - c. The Congregation Council may enter into contracts of up to \$10,000.00 for items not included in the budget.
  - d. The Congregation Council shall prepare an annual budget for adoption by this congregation, shall supervise the expenditure of funds in accordance therewith following its adoption, and may incur obligations of more than \$5,000.00 in excess of the anticipated receipts only after approval by a Congregation Meeting. The budget shall include this congregation's full indicated share in support of the wider ministry being carried on in partnership with the synod and churchwide organization.
  - e. The Congregation Council shall ascertain that the financial affairs of this congregation are being conducted efficiently, giving particular attention to the prompt payment of all obligations and to the regular forwarding of benevolence monies to the synodical treasurer.
  - f. The Congregation Council shall be responsible for this congregation's investments and its total insurance program.
- C12.06.** The Congregation Council shall see that the provisions of this constitution, its bylaws and the continuing resolutions are carried out.
- C12.07.** The Congregation Council shall provide for a bi-annual review of the membership roster.
- C12.08.** The Congregation Council shall be responsible for the employment and supervision of the salaried lay workers of this congregation.
- C12.09.** The Congregation Council shall submit a comprehensive report to this congregation at the annual meeting.
- C12.11.** The Congregation Council shall normally meet once a month. Special meetings may be called by the pastor or the president, and shall be called by the president at the request of at least one-half of its members. Notice of each special meeting shall be given to all who are entitled to be present.
- C12.12.** A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of a majority of the members of the Congregation 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 the agenda for a particular regular or special meeting, which shall be the only business considered at that meeting. Chronic or repeated absence of the pastor or interim pastor who has refused approval of the agenda of a subsequent regular or special meeting shall not preclude action by the Congregation Council, following consultation with the synodical bishop.

- C12.13.** The Congregation Council and its committees may hold meetings by remote communication, including electronically and by telephone conference, and, to the extent permitted by state law, notice of all meetings may be provided electronically.

## Chapter 13

### CONGREGATION COMMITTEES

- C13.01.** The officers of this congregation and the pastor shall constitute the *Executive Committee*.
- C13.02.** The *Nominating Committee* is comprised of six voting members of this congregation two of whom should, if possible, be outgoing council members. Three vacancies should be filled by election at each annual meeting for a term of two years.
- C13.02.01** The outgoing council members become candidates that can be asked by the Nominating Committee to be placed on the ballot.
- C13.03.** An *Audit Committee* of three voting members shall be elected by the Congregation Council. Audit Committee members shall not be members of the Congregation Council. Term of office shall be three years, with one member elected each year. Members shall be eligible for reelection.
- C13.04.** A *Mutual Ministry Committee* (in the absence of a mutual ministry committee, the duties shall be fulfilled by the executive committee) shall be appointed jointly by the president and the pastor. Term of office shall be two years, with three members to be appointed each successive year. Committee members will hold no other office in the congregation during their term.
- C13.05.** When a pastoral vacancy occurs, a *Call Committee* of six voting members shall be elected by the Congregation Council. Term of office will terminate upon installation of the newly called pastor.
- C13.06.** Other committees of this congregation may be formed, as the need arises, by decision of the Congregation Council.
- C13.07.** Duties of committees of this congregation shall be specified in the bylaws or in the continuing resolutions.
- C13.07.01 TEAM, BOARD, COMMITTEE, AND TASK FORCE BYLAWS**
- a. The Congregation Council will determine the number of members for each team, board, committee and task force and appoint its members. The term of each appointment will be three years and a member may be re-appointed for one consecutive three-year term. The duties of each body will be as described in the Council's Continuing Resolutions/Approved Motion Items. Team – These groups are permanent in nature and serve to carry out the operational work of the church. They have budget authority in their areas of responsibility. Committee – These are ongoing groups with a limited focus. They have no budget authority. Task Force/Work Group – These are groups created to address a specific task or need. They have a very narrow focus and limited duration.
  - b. At the beginning of each Congregation Council year, each Team shall prepare a mission statement, describing the Team's purpose and goals for the year. The mission statement shall also include any recommendation or request for a change in the number of Team members. The Mission Statements will be submitted to the Congregation Council for Council approval and for filing with the records of the church.
  - c. The Endowment Committee will consist of five voting members, elected by the congregation for staggered three-year terms. Members may be re-elected for one consecutive three-year term.
- C13.07.02** Worship Life Team – **This team's mission is to facilitate, support, evaluate and implement all aspects of worship, to the glory of God. Celebrating God's abiding presence and faithfulness, and moving towards God's promised fulfillment, this congregation shall seek to proclaim faithfully the love of God in Word and Sacrament. This team shall encourage and develop structures and programs which fulfill the worship needs of this congregation, both in acts of public worship and in private devotion. This team shall be responsible for, but not limited to the following areas of ministry: altar guild; paraments and banners; musicians and music needs; worship personnel including lectors, communion assistants, nursery attendants, assisting ministers, acolytes, greeters and ushers. The team shall also be responsible for books for worship and literature for personal devotion; care and maintenance of vestments, liturgical cloths and metal ware. They shall support worship and liturgy in the life and ministry of the Body of Christ; stewarding the liturgical treasure of the church in Word and Sacrament.**



- C13.07.03** Imaging & Technology Team – this team exists to assess, provide, and implement technology in all its varied forms to enhance worship and Christian education; and to assist the congregation in communicating with each other and with the greater community. This team also consults with staff on the purchase of, and oversees the maintenance of, all computers and technology within the church facility.
- C13.07.04** Mission Outreach Team – This team provides opportunities for outreach by encouraging congregational members to reach out beyond themselves to spread God’s love locally and globally. By planning and coordinating service projects in Kearney and throughout all corners of the world, the team helps the congregation fulfill Jesus’ command to love, serve, and care for our brothers and sisters everywhere.
- C13.07.05** Witness and Members Team – This team is involved in endeavors to reach out to new members, inactive members, and those interested in our church. Our goal is to make all who worship at First Lutheran feel welcome, and to engage with them to connect with the church. This team encourages both new and existing members to become a part of the body of Christ through worship as well as participation in our church ministries.
- C13.07.06** Care and Growth Team – This congregation shall seek to provide opportunities for Christian Education for all members. This team shall be responsible for, but not limited to the following areas of ministry: Sunday School, vacation Bible school, children’s programming, high school youth programming, and all adult education opportunities. It shall assist the pastor(s) in the on-going task of confirmation ministry; promoting camp and providing retreat opportunities of the church; providing for the recruitment and equipping of educational leaders; reviewing and maintaining curriculum, seeking to use the appropriate materials, and making sure that adequate study undergird the other functions of the congregation.
- C13.07.07** Personnel Team – In order to serve Christ and glorify God, this team evaluates staffing needs, recommends and interprets personnel policies, and screens job applicants, considering pastoral, staff and congregational needs.
- C13.07.08** Property and Management Team – Care and maintenance of the physical properties belonging to this congregation are an important part of good stewardship. This team shall have responsibility for, but not limited to the following areas of ministry: maintain, protect, and improve all real and personal property of this congregation; see to proper insurance and safety programs; develop and oversee long range plans for property, both real and personal, including the acquisition and usage thereof; provide for yard care, snow removal, and church cleaning; and maintain a current inventory of the congregational personal property.
- C13.07.09** Stewardship Team – This congregation shall endeavor to be responsible stewards over all with which God has blessed its members. This team shall provide leadership and organizational structure to maintain effective motives and practices of stewardship of all members of the congregation. This team shall be responsible for, but not limited to the following areas of ministry: devising means to encourage generous giving to the work of the church at home, in the Nebraska Synod, through the church-wide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, and through the world; encourage members to give generously of their time and talents in order to provide the personnel for programs and activities of this congregation and acknowledge such and provide for an on-going year-round stewardship program.
- C13.07.10** Memorials Committee – In order to honor loved ones when monetary donations of memorials or honoraria are given; there shall be a Memorial Committee. The committee will assist these donors with suggestion of appropriate uses of their donations. The Memorials Committee will include all standing committees input regarding requests, which will then be reviewed for approval by the Memorials Committee.
- C13.07.11** Preschool Board – The First Lutheran Church Preschool exists to provide a Christian environment so children can experience a loving, caring and nurturing place to grow in God’s love while promoting the academic, spiritual, physical and social development of each child. This board oversees the operation, personnel and budget of the preschool.
- C13.08.** The senior pastor of this congregation shall be *ex officio* a member of all committees and boards of the congregation. The president of this congregation shall be *ex officio* a member of all committees and boards of the congregation, except the Nominating Committee.

## Chapter 14

### ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION

- C14.01.** All organizations within this congregation shall exist to aid it in ministering to the members of this congregation and to all persons who can be reached with the Gospel of Christ. As outgrowths and expressions of this congregation’s life, the organizations are subject to its oversight and direction. This congregation at its meeting shall determine their policies, guide their activities, and receive reports concerning their membership, work, and finances.
- C14.01.01** The Preschool Board is a distinct entity of First Lutheran Church and shall be subject to the Congregational

Council. However, the Board shall delegate to the Pastor or Preschool Director the function of specifying required actions and designating the detailed arrangements under which the Preschool will be operated. Such rules and detailed arrangements shall constitute the administrative regulations governing the school. They must be in every respect consistent with the policies adopted by the Board. In the absence of applicable policy, the Pastor or Preschool Director is authorized to establish needed regulations subject to later confirmation in policy, should the Board so wish.

- C14.01.02** The First Lutheran Church UNIT of the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is a distinct entity of First Lutheran Church. This UNIT of the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran church of America shall participate in the life and work of First Lutheran Church and report to the annual meeting. It may report regularly to the congregational council.
- C14.02.** Special interest groups, other than those of the official organizations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, may be organized only after authorization has been given by the Congregation Council and specified in a continuing resolution.

## **Chapter 15**

### **DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS AND ADJUDICATION**

- \*C15.01.** Persistent and public denial of the Christian faith, willful or criminal conduct grossly unbecoming a member of the Church of Christ, continual and intentional interference with the ministry of the congregation, or willful and repeated harassment or defamation of member(s) of the congregation is sufficient cause for discipline of a member. Prior to disciplinary action, reconciliation and repentance will be attempted following Matthew 18:15-17, proceeding through these successive steps, as necessary: a) private counsel and admonition by the pastor, b) censure and admonition by the pastor in the presence of two or three witnesses, c) written referral of the matter by the Congregation Council to the vice president of the synod, who will refer it to a consultation panel drawn from the Consultation Committee of the synod, and d) written referral of the matter by the consultation panel to the Committee on Discipline of the synod. If, for any reason, the pastor is unable to administer the admonitions required by paragraph a. and b. hereof, those steps may be performed by another pastor chosen by the Executive Committee of the Congregation Council.
- \*C15.02.** The process for discipline of a member of the congregation shall be governed as prescribed by the chapter on discipline in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. If the counseling, censure, and admonitions pursuant to C15.01 do not result in repentance and amendment of life, charges against the accused member(s) that are specific and in writing may be prepared by the Congregation Council, signed, and submitted to the vice president of the synod. The vice president shall select from synod's Consultation Committee a panel of five members (three lay persons and two clergy). A copy of the written charges shall be provided to the consultation panel and the accused member(s). The consultation panel, after requesting a written reply to the charges from the accused member(s), shall consider the matter and seek a resolution by means of investigation, consultation, mediation or whatever other means may seem appropriate. The panel's efforts to reach a mutually agreeable resolution shall continue for no more than 45 days after the matter is submitted to it.
- \*C15.03.** If the consultation panel fails to resolve the matter, that panel shall refer the case in writing, including the written charges and the accused member's reply, to the Committee on Discipline of the synod for a hearing. A copy of the panel's referral shall be delivered to the vice president of the synod, the Congregation Council, and the accused member(s) at the same time it is sent to the committee on Discipline of the synod. The Executive Committee of the Synod Council shall then select six members from the Committee on Discipline to decide the case, and shall appoint a member of the Synod Council to preside as nonvoting chair. Those six members plus the nonvoting chair comprise the discipline hearing panel for deciding the case. The Congregation Council and the accused member(s) are the parties to the case.
- \*C15.04.** The discipline hearing panel shall commence and conduct the disciplinary hearing in accordance with the provisions governing discipline of congregation members prescribed in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran church in America*.
- \*C15.05.** By the vote of at least two-thirds of the members of the discipline hearing panel who are present and voting, one of the following disciplinary sanctions can be imposed:
- a. suspension from the privileges of congregation membership for a designated period of time,
  - b. suspension from the privileges of congregation membership until the pastor and Congregation Council receive evidence, satisfactory to them, of repentance and amendment of life;
  - c. termination of membership in the congregation; or
  - d. termination of membership in the congregation and exclusion from the church property and from

all congregation activities.

- \*C15.06. The written decision of the discipline hearing panel shall be sent to the vice president of the synod, the accused member(s), and the Congregation Council as required by the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran church in America*. The decision of the discipline hearing panel shall be implemented by the Congregation Council and recorded in the minutes of the next council meeting.
- \*C15.07. No member of the congregations shall be subject to discipline a second time for offenses that a discipline hearing panel has heard previously and decided pursuant to this chapter.
- \*C15.10. **Adjudication**
- \*C15.11. When there is disagreement among factions within this congregation on a substantive issue that cannot be resolved by the parties, members of this congregation shall have access to the synodical bishop for consultation after informing the chair of the Congregation Council of their intent. If the consultation fails to resolve the issue(s), the Consultation Committee of the synod shall consider the matter. If the Consultation Committee of the synod shall fail to resolve the issue(s), the matter shall be referred to the Synod Council, whose decision shall be final.

## **Chapter 16**

### **BYLAWS**

- \*C16.01. This congregation may adopt bylaws. No bylaw may conflict with this constitution.
- \*C16.02. Bylaws may be adopted or amended at any legally called meeting of this congregation with a quorum present by a majority vote of those voting members present and voting.
- \*C16.03. Changes to the bylaws may be proposed by any voting member provided, however, that such additions or amendments be submitted in writing to the Congregation Council at least 60 days before a regular or special Congregation Meeting called for that purpose. The Congregation Council shall notify the congregation's members of the proposal with the council's recommendations at least 30 days in advance of the Congregation Meeting. Notification may take place by mail or electronic means as permitted by state law.
- \*C16.04. Approved changes to the bylaws shall be sent by the secretary of this congregation to the synod.

## **Chapter 17**

### **AMENDMENTS**

- \*C17.01. Unless provision C17.04. is applicable, those sections of this constitution that are not required, in accord with the *Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, may be amended in the following manner. Amendments may be proposed by at least fifty voting members or by the Congregation Council. Proposals must be filed in writing with the Congregation Council 60 days before formal consideration by this congregation at a regular or special Congregation Meeting called for that purpose. The Congregation Council shall notify the congregation's members of the proposal together with the council's recommendations at least 30 days in advance of the meeting. Notification may take place by mail or electronic means as permitted by state law.
- \*C17.02. An amendment to this constitution, proposed under \*C17.01., shall:
  - a. be approved at a legally called Congregation Meeting according to this constitution by a majority vote of those present and voting;
  - b. be ratified without change at the next annual meeting by a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting; and
  - c. have the effective date included in the resolution and noted in the constitution.
- \*C17.03. Any amendments to this constitution that result from the processes provided in C17.01. and C17.02. shall be sent by the secretary of this congregation to the synod. The synod shall notify the congregation of its decision to approve or disapprove the proposed changes; the changes shall go into effect upon notification that the synod has approved them.
- \*C17.04. This constitution may be amended to bring any section into conformity with a section or sections, either required or not required, of the *Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*-as most recently amended by the Churchwide Assembly-by a simple majority vote of those voting members present and voting at any legally called meeting of the congregation without presentation at a prior meeting of the congregation, provided that the Congregation Council has submitted by mail or electronic means, as permitted by state law, notice to the congregation of such an amendment or amendments, together with the council's recommendations, at least 30 days prior to the meeting. Upon the request of twenty-five voting members of the congregation, the Congregation Council shall submit such notice. Following the adoption of an amendment, the secretary of the congregation shall submit a copy

thereof to the synod. Such provisions shall become effective immediately following a vote of approval.

## **Chapter 18**

### **CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS**

- \*C18.01. The congregation in a legally called meeting or the Congregation Council may enact continuing resolutions. Such continuing resolutions may not conflict with the constitution or bylaws of this congregation.
- \*C18.02. Continuing resolutions shall be enacted or amended by a majority vote of a meeting of the congregation or a two-thirds vote of all voting members of the Congregation Council.

## **Chapter 19**

### **INDEMNIFICATION**

- \*C19.01. Consistent with the provisions of the laws under which this congregation is incorporated, this congregation may adopt provisions providing indemnification for each person who, by reason of the fact that such person is or was a Congregation Council member, officer, employee, agent, or other member of any committee of this congregation, was or is threatened to be made a party to any threatened, pending, or completed civil, criminal, administrative, arbitration, or investigative proceeding.

## **Chapter 20**

### **PARISH AUTHORIZATION**

- \*C20.01. This congregation may unite in partnership with one or more other congregations recognized by the synod named in C6.01. to form a parish. Except as provided in C20.02. and C20.03., a written agreement, developed in consultation with the synod and approved by the voting members of each congregation participating in the parish, shall specify the powers and responsibilities that have been delegated to a Parish Council.
- \*C20.02. Whenever a letter of call is being recommended for extension to an ordained minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or a candidate for the roster of ordained ministers who has been recommended to the congregation by the synodical bishop to serve the congregations of a parish, such letter of call shall be first approved by a two-thirds vote at congregational meetings of each of the congregations forming the parish. If any congregation of the parish should fail to approve extending this call, the other congregation(s) in the same parish shall have the right to terminate the parish arrangement.
- \*C20.03. Any one of the congregations of a parish may terminate the call of a pastor as provided in †S14.13.d. of the synodical constitution of the synod named in C6.01. In such case, the other congregation(s) in the same parish shall have the right to terminate the parish arrangement.
- \*C20.04. Whenever a parish arrangement is terminated, the call of any rostered person serving that parish is terminated. Should any congregation that formerly was part of the parish arrangement desire to issue a new call that rostered person, it may do so in accordance with the call process of this church.

### **CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL**

The undersigned President and Secretary of the Congregation Council and of the congregation of First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Kearney, Nebraska, do hereby certify and attest that the above is a true copy of the Constitution of First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Kearney, Nebraska, approved by the members of First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Kearney, Nebraska, by a vote of 111 to 0, at the Annual Congregational Meeting held on June 26, 2016.

A copy will be sent to the Nebraska Synod for review, and to the Synod Council for review and approval. The Bishop's office will provide notice when the Constitution is approved, at which time it is formally adopted.

In addition, as per \*C17.02.b, a vote for ratification of the amendments made under \*C17.01 and \*C17.02 will be taken to the 2017 Annual Congregational Meeting for ratification.

Dated on the 25th day of June, 2017

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Kyle Means  
President

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Lanny Gerdes  
Secretary