

THE CONSTITUTION

OF

ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CONGREGATION

September 9, 2016

PREAMBLE

John 11:25-26

²⁵ Jesus said ... "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Ephesians 5:23

"... Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior."

Ephesians 2:19-22

¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Matthew 18:19-20

¹⁹ "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

Hebrews 10:24-25

²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

According to these words of God, we—an assembly of Lutherans in Oak Lawn and greater Chicago, being founded on December 4th, 1910 by ethnic Lithuanian immigrants, and incorporating Lutheran Christians coming from various ethnic heritages, responding to the challenges of Christian mission and evangelism of the day—establish this constitution by which all congregation business will be conducted. We assume this responsibility, with God's help, to be faithful workers in His kingdom and loyal members of the congregation by the grace and guidance of our Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

ARTICLE I

THE NAME, THE PURPOSE, AND THE DECLARATION OF FAITH OF THE CONGREGATION

1. The name of the congregation—**originally called Zion Lithuanian Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession (EST 1910, Illinois Secretary File Number 67321596)**—shall henceforth be Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church.
2. The purpose of this congregation shall be to give honor and glory to the Triune God, to carry out His will, to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all the world, to manifest the unity of our faith in Jesus Christ as God and Savior, to foster Christian fellowship and love, to extend a helping hand to human need, and to achieve its objectives by the preaching of the Word of God, by the administration of the sacraments, and by the religious instruction of all its members according to the confessional standard of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.
3. This congregation accepts without reservation:
 - a. The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and practice.
 - b. All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God, to wit: the three Ecumenical Creeds (the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed), the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Large Catechism of Luther, the Small Catechism of Luther, and the Formula of Concord.

ARTICLE II

SYNODICAL MEMBERSHIP

In order to further the purpose of conserving and promoting the Kingdom of God through the truths of God's Word as stated in Article I of this constitution, this congregation shall be and remain a member of the Lutheran Church---Missouri Synod as long as the Synod accepts and operates in accordance with the confession of faith as set for in Article I of this Constitution. While this congregation is a member of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, it shall abide by the Synod's constitution and bylaws.

ARTICLE III

MEMBERSHIP

The membership of this Congregation includes the following:

A. Baptized Membership

Baptized members are all the members who have been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

B. Communicant Membership

Communicant membership in our congregation shall be extended to all those persons who:

1. Are baptized according to the Trinitarian formula;
2. Declare adherence to all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as divine rule and norm of faith and life;
3. Are acquainted with the confessions of this congregation through instruction and acceptance of Luther's Small Catechism and declare this by confession;
4. Strive to lead a Christian life and abstain from manifest works of the flesh;
5. Attend divine services and partake of the Lord's Supper faithfully, not less than four times a year;
6. Support the confession of faith of the congregation, submit for the sake of love and peace to the regulations already made, or still to be made, by the Voters' Assembly of this congregation;
7. Submit on the basis of the Word of God to brotherly Christian admonition when having erred and offended;
8. Abstain from membership in any secret or other organization conflicting with the Word of God;
9. Contribute time, talents, and finances toward the maintenance of church and school and the extension of the Kingdom of God at large.

C. Voting Membership

All Communicant Members who have reached the age of eighteen years of age and have been confirmed into the Lutheran faith, and have read, accepted and signed the Constitution and By-Laws of this Congregation shall be entitled to vote.

D. Termination of Membership

Membership may be terminated in any of the following ways:

1. Transfer to other congregations.

Members or family of members desiring to join a congregation in church fellowship shall present their request to the Pastor (or elders if the Congregation is without a Pastor) who with the approval of the Church Council, shall issue such a transfer.

2. Joining other churches.

In cases where members or family of members have joined another congregation outside our own fellowship, they shall, upon the recommendation of the Pastor and Elders (**or elders** if the Congregation is without a Pastor) be considered to have terminated their membership, and their names shall be removed from the membership list by the congregation on a motion of the Church Council to the Voters' Assembly.

3. Excommunication and Self-exclusion.

Communicant Members who conduct themselves in an un-Christian manner shall be admonished according to Matthew 18:15-20; if they remain impenitent after proper admonition, they shall be excommunicated. A two-thirds majority vote of the voting Members present at the regular assembly of Voting Members is required for excommunication or self-exclusion by the congregation on a motion to the Voters' Assembly by the Church Council after recommendation by the Pastor and Elders (**or Council members** if the Congregation is without a Pastor). If such members deliberately absent themselves from the meeting(s) at which their case is to be discussed, they shall be regarded as having excluded themselves from the membership of the Congregation.

4. Whereabouts unknown.

The names of members whose whereabouts are unknown and cannot be established within a reasonable period of time, shall be removed by a motion to the Voters' Assembly by the Church Council after recommendation by the Pastor and Elders (or Elders if the Congregation is without a Pastor). A two-thirds majority vote of the Voting Members present at the regular assembly of Voting Members is required for removal.

5. Status.

A person whose communicant membership has been terminated has forfeited all rights as a member of this Congregation and all claims upon the property of the Congregation as such, or upon any part thereof, so long as the person is not reinstated into membership.

ARTICLE IV

THE OFFICE OF CALLED SERVANTS

The Pastoral Office of this Congregation, as well as other called Ministers of Religion shall be conferred only on such candidates as profess and adhere to the confessional standard set forth in Article 3 of this Constitution, are well qualified for their work, have been endorsed by the Synod, and are members of the Synod. Candidates will be solicited from the Synod, District and

Congregation. All candidates shall, in the call extended to and accepted by them, be pledged to this confessional standard.

ARTICLE V

SOVREIGNTY OF THE CONGREGATION

A. General

The Congregation as a body, through the voting members, who are guided by the Holy Spirit, shall have supreme power to administer and manage all its external and internal affairs. The establishment and conduct of all institutions within the Congregation, such as all schools, societies, and organizations shall at all times be subject to the approval and supervision of the Congregation. The Congregation, however, shall in all things be bound to the authority of the Word of God; any decision contrary to the Confessional Standards set forth in Article 5 of this Constitution shall be null and void.

B. Right of Calling

The right of calling pastors, other ministers, or teachers shall be vested in the Congregation as represented by the Voting Members in assembly and shall never be delegated to a smaller body or to an individual.

C. Decisions

All matters of doctrine and conscience shall be decided only by the Word of God; other matters shall be decided by the Voting Members by a majority vote unless otherwise specified by the Constitution and By-Laws.

D. Powers of Office

Congregational officers, whether elected by the voters or appointed, shall have no authority beyond that which has been conferred upon them, and whatever power may have been delegated to them may at any time be altered or revoked by the Voting Members.

E. Removal from Office

Any elected member, pastor, other minister or teacher may be removed or dismissed from office, by ballot, by the Congregation in a Christian and lawful manner (as prescribed in Matthew 18:15-20).

Valid and urgent causes for removal or dismissal shall be: persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous or immoral life, persistent neglect or inability to perform his/her official duties. A two-thirds majority vote of the Voting Members present at the regular assembly of Voting Members is required for removal or dismissal.

ARTICLE VI

OFFICERS AND BOARDS

The officers and boards of the Congregation shall be elected by the Voter's Assembly and shall consist of:

- A. President
- B. Vice-President
- C. Recording Secretary
- D. Financial Secretary
- E. Treasurer
- F. Elders (minimum of four)
- F. Board of Education (consisting of a minimum of 4 individuals—two of whom will be Council members).

The Congregation will have a Church Council consisting of the aforesaid officers and the Pastor. The officers and congregational government shall be further defined by the By-Laws.

ARTICLE VII

PROPERTY RIGHTS

If at any time a separation should take place on account of doctrine, or for other reason, the property of the congregation and all benefits therewith connected shall remain with those Voting Members who continue to adhere in confession and practice to Articles I, II and III of this Constitution. **The congregation will not cease existing while it has enough voting members to keep the church financially stable. In the event the remaining members realize it is no longer financially feasible to continue and** the Congregation should totally disband, the property and all other rights connected therewith shall be transferred to the Northern Illinois District of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.

ARTICLE VIII

BY-LAWS

This congregation may adopt such By-Laws as may be required for the accomplishment of its purpose, but which do not conflict with the Constitution.

ARTICLE IX

AMENDMENTS

- A. **Amendments to Article I of this Constitution shall not destroy their essential meaning and require approval of two rather than one voters' meetings.**
- B. Amendments to this Constitution may be adopted at a regular or special assembly of Voting Members provided that:
 - 1. They do not conflict with the provisions laid down in Article 5 or with any section of any article that pertains to Scriptural doctrine and practice.
 - 2. The proposed amendment has been submitted in writing at a previous assembly of Voting Members.
 - 3. The proposed amendment is published in at least two successive congregational newsletters or bulletins.
 - 4. The meeting in which a proposed amendment will be decided upon be announced in the two previous weekly services, and reference to the proposed amendment is made in such announcements.
 - 5. The affirmative vote of a two-thirds majority of the Voting Members present will be required for the adoption of an amendment
 - 6. **The revised constitution shall, as a condition of continued membership in The Lutheran Church---Missouri Synod, be submitted to the president of the district for review by the district's constitution committee and favorable action by the district's board of directors before being implemented by the congregation.**
- C. In addition to the above requirements, proposals to amend Articles IX shall require that previous notice of such amendment and discussion of the same be presented at two regular or special meetings of the Voters' Assembly before the meeting at which the proposed amendment is to receive action. Due notice of the fact that a vote will be taken shall be given to all Voting Members of the Congregation.