

ST. PETER'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

CONSTITUTION

1.0 Name and Affiliation.

- 1.1. **Name.** This congregation was organized as St. Peter's German Evangelical Lutheran Church on September 17, 1911, incorporated under the laws of the State of Connecticut on April 12, 1920, and renamed St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Norwalk, Connecticut by resolution adopted on June 29, 1958.
- 1.2. **Affiliation.** This congregation is and shall remain affiliated with The Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod, as long as the Synod conforms to the congregation's standards and practices set forth in section 3.0 of this constitution.

2.0 Mission.

- 2.1. **Mission.** The purpose of this congregation shall be to give honor and glory to God; to assist in the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all the world; to foster Christian fellowship and love; to achieve our objectives by the right administration of the Word and the sacraments, and by the religious instruction of all its members according to the confessional standard of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as defined in Section 3.0 of this constitution.

3.0 Confessional Standard.

This congregation accepts without addition or reservation:

- 3.1. **The Holy Bible.** The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired, inerrant and infallible Word of God, and the only source and norm of faith and practice;
- 3.2. **The Book of Concord.** All the Symbolic Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of 1580 as true expositions 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;
 - Luther's Large Catechism;
 - Luther's Small Catechism;
 - The Formula of Concord.

4.0 Division.

- 4.1. **Doctrinal Division.** If at any time a division should take place on account of doctrine, the property of the congregation and all benefits connected therewith shall remain with those

communicant members who continue to adhere in confession and practice to Section 3.0 of this constitution.

- 4.2. **Division for Other Reasons.** If division takes place for any other reason, the property shall remain with the majority of the communicant members who continue to adhere in confession and practice to Section 3.0 of this constitution.
- 4.3. **Dissolution.** In the event the congregation should dissolve, the property and all rights connected therewith shall be transferred to that District of the Synod in which the congregation held membership at the time of dissolution.

5.0 Membership.

- 5.1. **Classes of Membership.** The membership of this congregation includes the following:
 - 5.1.1. **Baptized Members.** Baptized Members are all who have been baptized in the name of the Triune God and who are under the spiritual care of the pastor of this congregation.
 - 5.1.2. **Communicant Members.** Communicant Members are those baptized members in good standing who have been confirmed in the Lutheran faith; accept the confessions of Section 3.0 of this constitution; are familiar with the contents of Luther's Small Catechism; and are not members of organizations whose principles and conduct conflict with the Word of God.
 - 5.1.3. **Voting members.** Voting members are communicant members who have reached the age of 18 years, have received, read, and accepted the constitution of this congregation as attested by their signatures thereon, and have been accepted by the Voters Assembly.
- 5.2. **Reception of Members.** Baptized and Communicant members are received through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism; through the consent of one or both parents in the case of children (under the age of 18) who have been baptized in another Christian congregation; through the Rite of Confirmation; through transfer from a sister congregation; or through profession or reaffirmation of faith. The reception shall be ratified by the Voters Assembly.
- 5.3. **Duties of Members.** Members of the congregation shall conform their entire lives to the rule of God's Word. To that end members shall make diligent use of the means of grace, exercise faithful stewardship of God's many gifts and talents, encourage one another, and accept fraternal admonition as the need for such admonition becomes apparent.
- 5.4. **Termination of Membership.** Membership shall be terminated by death; by transfer to a sister congregation; by joining a congregation outside the fellowship of this congregation; by excommunication; or by self-exclusion.
- 5.5. **Church Discipline.** Communicant members who conduct themselves in an impenitent manner shall be pastorally admonished according to Matthew 18:15-20. If they remain impenitent after proper admonition, and the revocation of their good standing by the pastor and Board of Elders, then they shall be formally presented for excommunication by the Voters Assembly. Each case shall be presented individually to the Voters Assembly for

decision by a two-thirds (2/3) majority votes. Any member whose case is to be brought before the Voters shall receive prior written notice of the date and time of the meeting(s). 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. The ultimate purpose of removal or excommunication is not punishment, but the salvation of the offending member, and the removal of offense from the Church. When excommunicated or self-excluded persons repent of their sins, they shall be reinstated by the pastor and the Board of Elders.

6.0 Authority of the Congregation.

- 6.1. **The Voters Assembly.** The Voters Assembly shall be the governing body of this congregation and shall be empowered to administer and manage all its affairs. The establishment and conduct of all organizations and societies within the congregation, or related directly to it, shall be subject to the approval and supervision of the Voters Assembly. The officers and members of the church boards represent, and are responsible to, the congregation through the Voters Assembly.
- 6.2. **Majority Vote.** All matters shall be decided by a majority vote of the Voters Assembly unless otherwise specified by this constitution or bylaws. Matters of doctrine and conscience shall be decided only on the basis of the confessional standard in Section 3.0 of this constitution and may not be decided by vote.
- 6.3. **Calls.** The right of calling to the pastoral or auxiliary offices shall be vested in the Voters Assembly and shall not be delegated otherwise.

7.0 The Pastoral and Auxiliary Offices.

- 7.1. **Qualifications.** This congregation has been given the right by God to establish the pastoral office, which shall be conferred only on such a pastor or candidate who professes and adheres to the confessional standard set forth in Section 3.0 of this constitution and who is qualified for his work. (The same standards shall apply to anyone called to an office auxiliary to the pastoral ministry, i.e. Parochial School Teacher, Director of Christian Education, Lay Minister, etc.)
- 7.2. **Removal.** Any pastor, or person called to an auxiliary office may be asked to resign or may be removed from office by the Voters Assembly with a two-thirds (2/3) majority ballot vote, following a procedure of Christian love and lawful order, for one of the following reasons: persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, willful neglect, or inability to perform the duties of the office due to prolonged incapacity or general incompetence.

8.0 Officers and Boards.

This congregation shall have the following officers and boards in addition to any which the congregation shall authorize from time to time. They shall have only that authority which has been designated to them by the Voters Assembly.

- 8.1. **Officers.** The officers shall be the President, Vice President, Recording Secretary, and

Treasurer.

8.2. **Boards.** The boards shall be the Boards of “Christian Education and Evangelism”, “Elders”, “Deacons and Stewardship”, and “Trustees”.

8.3. **The Role of Women.** In keeping with Scriptural principles that women neither hold the pastoral office nor exercise authority over men, the following limitations shall be observed:

8.3.1. Women shall not be elected to the Board of Elders or in any other way exercise the pastoral office in the congregation.

8.4. **Age Restrictions.** Those under 21 years of age may not serve as an elected congregational officer, or as chairman of a board or committee.

9.0 Bylaws.

This congregation may and shall adopt such bylaws as may be required for the efficient administration and management of its affairs.

10.0 Amendments.

10.1. Sections 3.0 and 7.0 of this Constitution shall be unalterable.

10.2. Amendments to other articles of this constitution and its bylaws may be adopted at a properly convened meeting of the Voters Assembly, provided that:

- They do not conflict with the provisions of Section 3.0 or with any part of any section of this constitution that pertains to Scriptural doctrine and practice;
- The proposed amendment has been submitted in writing at a previous properly convened meeting of the Voters Assembly;
- All voting members have been advised in writing that the amendment is being considered;
- Two-thirds (2/3) of the voting members present at a properly convened meeting of the Voters Assembly cast an affirmative vote by secret ballot for the adoption of the amendment;
- All modifications to the constitution and bylaws must be submitted to the District for approval on behalf of the Synod.

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BYLAWS

B 1.0 Call Procedure.

B 1.1. **Nomination.** Should a vacancy occur in the office of the Pastor, the Board of Elders shall request a list of candidates from the District President. Names of candidates may be added or deleted from this list by the Board of Elders or a specially appointed Call Committee. Any voting member may nominate additional candidates from the floor at a properly convened meeting of the Voters Assembly. Only candidates who profess and adhere to the confessional standard set forth in Section 3.0 of this constitution may be considered.

B 1.2. **Election.** The election of a pastor from the list of candidates shall be by secret ballot of the Voters Assembly, and the nominee receiving the majority of all votes cast shall be considered elected. The President, with the aid of the Board of Elders/Call Committee shall then prepare and forward the formal Call to the Pastor-elect.

B 2.0 Voters Assembly.

B 2.1. A meeting duly called in accordance with the following shall be considered a properly convened and legal meeting capable of transacting business.

B 2.1.1. **Regular Meetings.** Regular meetings of the Voters Assembly shall be held after the last worship service on the third Sunday in the months of January, May, and November, unless an alternate date and/or time for a regular meeting is designated by the President.

B 2.1.2. **Special Meetings.** Special Meetings of the Voters Assembly may be called by the President whenever he deems it necessary or at the request of ten (10) voting members.

B 2.1.3. **Notification.** Every Voters Assembly meeting shall be announced at a prior Sunday Service and through notification to the voting members by mail and/or email.

B 2.1.4. **Quorum.** A quorum shall consist of 20 eligible voters as defined in Article 5.1.3 of the Constitution.

B 2.2. Duties of the Voters Assembly.

The Voters Assembly shall:

- Elect all officers (except Vice President) and board members;
- Receive and approve reports of officers, boards and committees;
- Act on recommendations from the Church Council, boards or committees;
- Direct the various officers, boards and committees, and make specific assignments to them in line with their general responsibilities as herein described;
- Approve of special projects for the various boards, committees;
- Approve the hiring or release of all regular church employees and their salaries;

- Carry out any other actions reserved to the Voters Assembly by this Constitution and these Bylaws.

B 2.3. Order of Business for Regular Meetings of the Voters Assembly

All meetings shall be conducted in the spirit of Christian love, and in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order, under the following suggested agenda:

- Opening Prayer
- Approval of the agenda
- Approval of the minutes
- Reception of new members and granting of transfers or releases
- Pastor's report
- Financial reports
- Board reports
- Committee reports
- Old business
- New business
- Adjournment with prayer

B 3.0 Church Council.

B 3.1. **Council Members.** The Church Council shall consist of the President, Recording Secretary, Treasurer, and the Chairperson of each board. The Pastor shall be an advisory member of the Church Council.

B 3.2. **Vice President.** The Church Council shall elect one of its members to serve as Vice President for a period of one year.

B 3.3. **Meetings.** The Church Council shall meet quarterly to consider matters pertaining to the general welfare of the congregation as presented by the various boards. Special meetings of the Church Council may be called by the President or the Pastor.

B 3.4. **Duties.** The Church Council shall coordinate the work and programs of all organizations and groups in the congregation. It shall receive reports and recommendations from the various officers, boards and committees. It shall take remedial action in any and all situations which are deemed by the president to be an emergency, reporting such action to the Voters Assembly at the next regular meeting.

B 4.0 Terms of Office; Limitations

B 4.1. The term of office for the President, Recording Secretary, and Treasurer shall be for two (2) years. The President and Treasurer shall be elected in even-numbered years; the Recording Secretary shall be elected in odd-numbered years.

B 4.2. The term of office for a member of the Board of Elders shall be three (3) years with one-third (1/3) of the members elected each year.

B 4.3. The term of office for members of the remaining boards shall be two (2) years with one half of the members elected each year.

B 4.4. A member may not serve in more than one elected office, or on more than one board at the same time. The Pastor may not serve in an elected office, or on a board.

B 5.0 Nomination and Election of Officers and Board Members.

B 5.1. **Nominations.** No later than three months prior to the November meeting of the Voters Assembly, the president shall appoint a Nominating Committee of at least three voting members to prepare a list of candidates.

B 5.2. **Election.** The election of officers and members of the Church Boards shall be held at the regular November meeting of the Voters Assembly. Any voting member may make additional nominations from the floor. A nominee must indicate his or her acceptance in order to be included in the vote. All elections shall be decided by a simple majority of all votes cast.

B 5.3. **Installation.** The newly elected officers and members of the church boards shall be installed in office at a public service of worship prior to January 1st.

B 5.4. **Chairperson; Secretary.** As soon as possible following elections, each board shall elect its chairman and secretary. The secretary shall maintain a written record of all meetings.

B 6.0 Removal or Vacancy of Officers and Board Members.

B 6.1. **Removal.** A resolution for the removal from office of an elected officer or member of a church board may be introduced by the Board of Elders or by written petition of ten (10) or more voting members. Adoption shall require at least two-thirds (2/3) majority vote by secret ballot of all voting members present at a duly convened meeting of the Voters Assembly.

B 6.2. **Vacancy.** In the event of vacancy in an elective office, the Voters Assembly, at its next meeting, shall elect a successor to assume office immediately and fill the unexpired term. In the event of a vacancy in the office of President, the Vice President shall succeed to the office of President until that vacancy is filled by election at a subsequent meeting of the Voters Assembly.

B 7.0 Duties of Officers.

B 7.1. President.

The President, in accordance with the constitution, shall:

- Call, prepare the agendas for, and preside over all Voters Assembly and Council meetings;
- Be responsible for enforcing the Constitution and Bylaws of the church;
- Ensure that the resolutions of the Voters Assembly are carried out;
- Be a non-voting member of all boards, except the board of Elders;

- Be responsible for ensuring that all boards and committees meet on a regular scheduled basis;
- Appoint committees as required;
- Encourage the effective communication of board and voters meeting information to church members;
- Execute any contracts as may be authorized by the Voter Assembly;
- In the event that the treasurer is unavailable to sign a check, the president shall have the authority to sign.

B 7.2. **Vice President.** The Vice President shall perform the duties and assume the responsibilities and authority of the President in his absence or in the event of his inability to function.

B 7.3. **Recording Secretary.**

The Recording Secretary shall:

- Keep written minutes and a record of attendance of all meetings of the Voters Assembly and Church Council;
- Distribute minutes of each meeting within 45 days after each meeting;
- Dispatch any correspondence that may be authorized by the Voters Assembly.

B 7.4. **Treasurer.**

The Treasurer shall:

- Receive all receipted bank deposit slips from the Financial Secretary;
- Pay all approved expenditures;
- Be responsible for maintaining records of all receipts and disbursements;
- Submit a written financial report at each regular meeting of the Voters Assembly and Church Council;
- File all pertinent reports and payments required by Local, State, and Federal authorities.
- Serve as the Chairman of the Finance Committee;
- Submit the financial records for each year to the Audit Committee as soon as is practical, but no later than government deadlines.

B 8.0 Church Boards.

B 8.1. The Pastor and President shall be advisory members of all boards and committees.

B 8.2. **Board of Christian Education and Evangelism.**

The Board of Christian Education and Evangelism shall consist of at least four (4) members. This board shall:

- Assist the Pastor in supervising all activities of the congregation established for the development of Christian education, including such programs as Sunday School, Confirmation Class, Adult Instruction Class, Youth Groups, Vacation Bible School, and Adult Bible Class;
- Recruit qualified candidates for administrative and teaching positions;

- Maintain a roll of all baptized children;
- Maintain an account of each child' s participation level;
- Seek to encourage the less active;
- Promote an evangelical spirit within the congregation;
- Plan programs that will aid the congregation in carrying the Gospel to the community;
- Seek new areas and methods for mission expansion;
- Interest others in the congregation in taking part in this work.

B 8.3. Board of Deacons and Stewardship.

The Board of Deacons and Stewardship shall consist of at least four (4) members. It shall be their duty to:

- Maintain good order and Christian customs during divine services;
- Recruit and train ushers and acolytes;
- Supervise the manner in which each service is conducted;
- Ensure that all necessary supplies for serving of the sacraments and conducting worship services are on hand;
- Be responsible for the choir(s), organist(s), and choir director(s);
- Educate and encourage the congregation in the Gospel-motivated practice of joyful giving of time, talent and treasure, both within and outside of the congregation;
- Encourage regular, systematic giving.

B 8.4. Board of Elders.

The Board of Elders shall consist of at least four (4) qualified men (1 Peter 5:1-9, Titus 1:6-9). It shall be their duty to:

- Regularly attend church service and Bible study;
- Ensure that the Doctrinal and Confessional Standard established in the constitution is always upheld, Assist and counsel Pastor in his ministry;
- Reach out to all parishioners, and especially those who become inactive or delinquent;
- Be available and accessible to parishioners who wish to express issues or concerns, especially if they are not comfortable bringing them to pastor;
- Provide for the welfare of Pastor and his family;
- Manage the budget for the office of Pastor;
- Supervise the Pastor and conduct an annual performance review;
- If no ordained pastor is available, lead the worship service (but do not administer sacraments);
- With the help of Pastor, become knowledgeable on doctrinal and/or theological issues that might affect the congregation, as they arise.

B 8.5. Board of Trustees.

The Board of Trustees shall consist of at least four (4) members. They shall:

- Maintain custody and control of all real personal property of the congregation;
- Ensure that church property is properly maintained, repaired and insured;
- Exercise the powers conferred upon them by the laws governing religious corporations

- in the State of Connecticut;
- Oversee all legal contracts and supervise the work of all church employees involved in the maintenance and upkeep of the church;
 - Arrange for all normal repairs and alterations for which budget funds have been allocated;
 - Arrange for immediate repairs of an urgent nature. Any expenditure in excess of \$2,000.00, which is neither budgeted nor an emergency, must be approved by the Voters Assembly.

B 9.0 Duties of Standing Committees.

The President, with approval of the Church Council, shall make annual appointments to the Standing Committees of Finance and Audit. All communicant members of the congregation shall be eligible for membership on the Standing Committees, except as indicated below.

B 9.1. Finance Committee.

The Finance Committee shall consist of at least three (3) members, including the Treasurer who shall serve as chairman. It shall be their duty to:

- Supervise the financial programs of the congregation;
- Appoint a qualified Financial Secretary to supervise the counting, posting and depositing of all monies;
- Supervise the preparation of members' contribution statements;
- Prepare and present the annual budget for approval by the Voters Assembly.

B 9.2. Audit Committee. The Audit Committee shall consist of at least three (3) members. The President shall appoint the Audit Committee and name its Chairperson. No church officers, nor members of the Finance Committee, shall serve on the Audit Committee. The Audit Committee shall, annually and whenever called upon by the Voters Assembly, audit all books and records of the Congregation and its associated funds. They shall submit their written report to the Voters Assembly at the meeting after the report is complete.