

BETHLEHEM EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

RAYMORE MISSOURI

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**BY LAWS**

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## **ARTICLE 1. MEMBERSHIP**

### **Section 1. Membership Application Eligibility**

- A. Applicants for communicant and/or baptized membership in the Congregation shall consult the Pastor, who shall determine whether such applicants are eligible for membership in accordance with Article 4 of the Constitution.
- B. Applicants not familiar with the doctrines and confessions of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod shall be required to attend a course of instruction.
- C. Applicants from other Lutheran Churches – Missouri Synod shall submit a letter of transfer from their Congregation to establish their eligibility for membership. The Pastor may, with consent of the Board of Lay Ministry, arrange for a period of instruction prior to reaffirmation of faith.

### **Section 2. Membership Admission**

- A. Applicants eligible for membership are recommended by the Pastor to the Board of Lay Ministry which shall have the authority to act on such application on behalf of the Congregation.
- B. Accepted applicants shall make a profession of their faith, either before the Congregation or, before the Board of Lay Ministry. New members shall be publicized in the various news media of the Congregation.

### **Section 3. Membership Duties**

It shall be the duty of the members:

- A. To grow in the Christian faith and life through faithful use of the Means of Grace, including public worship and Holy Communion (Acts 2:42), searching the Scriptures at home and in fellowship with other members of the Congregation (Acts 17:11);
- B. To live a morally decent life, in word and in deed, before God and his people, abstaining from open works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21), so conducting themselves at all times to bring credit rather than blame upon the Church of Jesus Christ;
- C. To provide for proper Christian training of their children by instruction at home and through the agencies ministries of the church (Proverbs 22:6);
- D. To diligently administer the temporal and spiritual affairs of the Congregation;
- E. To contribute generously (First Timothy 6:18), in proportion to the goodness and mercy of God (Mark 12:42-44), regarding the Tithe as a worthy goal (Genesis 28:20-22), toward the financial support of the Congregation and the expansion of God's Kingdom at home and abroad;

F. To discover their God-given talents and abilities (Corinthians 12:1-11) and to contribute them generously, in proportion to the goodness and mercy of God, to the Congregation, so that the mission of the Church to fulfill the Lord's command to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19) may be implemented; and

G. To provide for the Pastor(s) maintenance according to the ability of the Congregation.

#### **Section 4. Membership Termination**

Termination of membership by transfers, peaceful releases and whereabouts unknown shall be recommended by the Pastor(s) to the Board of Lay Ministry which shall have the authority to act on such application on behalf of the Congregation.

A. When a member wants to join a Lutheran congregation which is in fellowship with the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, the member shall apply for a transfer with the Pastor(s).

B. When a member wants to join a congregation which is not in fellowship with the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, the member shall apply for a peaceful release with the Pastor(s).

C. When a member has already joined a congregation which is not in fellowship with the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, the member will be deemed to have terminated their membership and the Pastor(s) may recommend the member be given a peaceful release.

D. When a member's whereabouts are unknown and can not be established within a period of six (6) months, the Pastor(s) shall recommend the membership be terminated.

### **ARTICLE 2. VOTING MEMBERSHIP**

#### **Section 1. Voting Membership Eligibility and Admission**

Any communicant member, either male or female, shall be Voting Members upon the Rite of Confirmation or upon profession of their faith as defined in Article 1 of the Bylaws.

#### **Section 2. Forfeiture of Voting Membership**

A. A Voting Member who fails to attend at least one (1) Congregational Meeting per year shall forfeit their Voting Membership, except those Voting Members who are teaching Sunday School during a Congregational Meeting or those Voting Members who are temporarily relocated while in active military service or enrolled as a full-time student.

B. To reinstate Voting Membership, the member must attend one (1) complete Congregational Meeting before Voting Membership is reinstated.

### **Section 3. Voting Membership Duties**

It shall be the duty of Voting Members:

- A. To conscientiously and prayerfully exercise their right of suffrage on all measures that will advance the work of Christ's Kingdom, both locally and in the church-at-large;
- B. To willingly serve in any office or capacity for which their talents and abilities equip them, and for which they are eligible;
- C. To faithfully attend Congregational Meetings; and
- D. To encourage non-voting members to seriously commit to Voting Membership.

### **ARTICLE 3. CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

All discipline in the Congregation shall be administered in accordance with the order of discipline laid down in Matthew 18:15-20, and other related New Testament passages within the context of evangelical pastoral care.

#### **Section 1. Excommunication and Self-Exclusion**

- A. When a member has neglected to commune for three (3) months, the member will receive a visit from the member's respective Lay Minister, and shall be admonished and encouraged.
- B. If a member has neglected to commune for six (6) months, the member shall receive another visit from the member's respective Lay Minister and the Pastor or a concerned member, and shall be admonished and encouraged.
- C. If a member has neglected to commune for nine (9) months and is not attending the worship services, the member shall receive another visit from the member's respective Lay Minister and the Pastor, and shall be admonished more firmly and told that if the neglect continues for another three (3) months, his neglect shall be interpreted as impenitence, lack of faith in Jesus Christ and indifference to church membership, privileges and responsibilities.
- D. If a member has neglected to commune for twelve (12) months and has not responded to Christian admonition as outlined in this Section, the Board of Lay Ministry shall recommend membership termination by self-exclusion at the next Congregational Meeting.
- E. Self-exclusion releases the individual from all responsibilities to the Congregation, and forfeits all member rights and privileges. A MEMBER TERMINATED BY SELF-EXCLUSION IS WELCOME TO ATTEND WORSHIP SERVICES AT ALL TIMES.

## **Section 2. Excommunication**

A. When a member acts in an unchristian manner, the member will receive a visit from the member's respective Lay Minister, and shall be admonished and encouraged. Examples of unchristian manners include, but are not limited:

1. To openly adhering to false doctrine;
2. Evidence of an immoral and offensive life; or
3. Willfully despising the preaching of the Gospel and Holy Communion.

B. If a member acts in an unchristian manner and has not responded to Christian admonition as outlined in this Section, the Board of Lay Ministry shall recommend membership termination by excommunication at the next Congregational Meeting.

## **Section 3. Termination by Self-Exclusion or Excommunication**

A. The Board of Lay Ministry shall notify the member, by certified mail, when the recommendation of termination by self-exclusion or excommunication will be made to the Voting Members.

B. Termination of a member by self-exclusion or excommunication shall require a two-thirds (2/3) ballot vote of the Voting Members present at a Congregational Meeting. The Congregational Secretary shall notify, by certified mail, the member terminated by self-exclusion or excommunication.

C. A member terminated by self-exclusion or excommunication shall be readmitted with all rights and privileges when they repent and ask forgiveness through the Pastor(s) and/or the Board of Lay Ministry.

## **ARTICLE 4. CALLED AND NON-CALLED CHURCH WORKERS**

### **Section 1. Pastoral Office**

A. The Congregation has the responsibility of filling the Pastoral Office with a qualified Pastoral Candidate in accordance with the Word of God.

B. The Pastor(s) shall serve as an ex-officio member of all Administrative Boards, committees, and may, at his discretion, attend meetings related to a Congregational activity.

### **Section 2. Calling a Called Church Worker**

A. When a Called Church Worker is to be called, Communicant Members shall have the privilege to nominate Candidates at a Congregational Meeting. The District President may also nominate Candidates.

B. When calling a Pastor, the Board of Lay Ministry shall serve as the Calling Committee. When calling other Called Church Workers, the President shall appoint a Calling Committee.

C. When calling a Pastor, the Calling Committee shall submit the Candidates to the District President for biographical information and evaluation. When calling other Called Church Workers, the Calling Committee may submit the Candidates to the District President for biographical information and evaluation.

D. The Calling Committee shall present the Candidates and Candidate biographies at a Congregational Meeting. The Calling Committee, after prayerful evaluation, shall also recommend at the Congregational Meeting, the Candidate(s) to be called.

E. When calling a Pastor, the quorum at the Congregational Meeting consists of fifty percent (50) of the Voting Members.

F. After the Calling Committee recommends the Candidate(s) to be called, the President shall ask the Voting Members to support the Voting Members' final selection. A Candidate shall be called by a seventy-five percent (75) ballot vote of the Voting Members present at a Congregational Meeting.

### **Section 3. Rescinding the Call of a Called Church Worker**

A. The Board of Lay Ministry, after consultation with the Circuit Counselor, may recommend, at a Congregational Meeting, to rescind the call of a Called Church Worker, for:

1. Persistent adherence to false doctrine;
2. Leading a scandalous life;
3. Willful neglect; or
4. The inability to perform the duties of the call.

B. The Board of Lay Ministry shall notify the Called Church Worker, by certified mail, when the recommendation to rescind the call will be made to Voting Members.

C. When the call of a Pastor may be rescinded, the quorum at the Congregational Meeting consists of fifty percent (50) of Voting Members.

D. The call of a Called Church Worker may be rescinded by a seventy-five percent (75) ballot vote of the Voting Members present at a Congregational Meeting. The Congregational Secretary shall notify, by certified mail, the Called Church Worker that the call has been rescinded.

E. The Board of Lay Ministry may request the resignation of a Called Church Worker in the case of prolonged incapacity or general incompetence.

### **Section 4. Non-Called Church Workers**

All Non-Called Church Workers shall be selected and released by the Church Planning Council or appropriate Administrative Board in consultation with the President and Pastor(s).

**ARTICLE 5. ELECTION OF OFFICERS,  
CHAIRS OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE BOARDS,  
AND ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD MEMBERS**

**Section 1. Nominations**

A. After the regular August Congregational Meeting, a Nominating Committee shall convene. The Nominating Committee shall consist of an Administrative Board Member appointed by the President from each of the Administrative Boards and the President-Elect. The President may also appoint up to three (3) at-large Voting Members. As the President can not succeed himself in office, the President is an ex-officio member of the Nominating Committee. The Administrative Board Member from the Board of Lay Ministry shall chair the Nominating Committee.

B. It shall be the duty of the Nominating Committee to nominate eligible candidates for the Officers, Chairs of Administrative Boards and Board Members to be filled at the regular September and February Congregational Meetings. The Nominating Committee shall post a report on the church bulletin board two Sundays prior to the elections. Before the elections, additional nominations from the floor shall be permitted.

**Section 2. Candidate Eligibility**

A. All Voting Members are eligible candidates for:

1. Treasurer, Financial Secretary and Congregational Secretary;
2. Chairs of Administrative Boards, except for the Chair of the Board of Lay Ministry, and
3. Administrative Board Members, except for the Board of Lay Ministry.

B. Male Voting Members are eligible candidates for:

1. President and President-Elect;
2. Chair of the Board of Lay Ministry, and
3. Board of Lay Ministry.

**Section 3. President**

The President-Elect shall become the President serving for two years after being President-Elect, and the term of office shall begin during the March Church Planning Council Meeting. The President shall not succeed himself in office.

**Section 4. President-Elect**

The President-Elect shall be elected in odd-numbered years, by ballot, to serve for six months, and the term of office shall begin upon election at the regular September Congregational Meeting.

## **Section 5. Other Officers**

The Treasurer, the Financial Secretary and the Congregational Secretary shall be elected at the regular February Congregational Meeting, by ballot, to serve for two years or until their successors are elected, and their term of office shall begin during the March Church Planning Council Meeting. The Treasurer, the Financial Secretary and the Congregational Secretary shall not be eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office.

## **Section 6. Chairs of the Administrative Boards**

A. The Chairs of the Administrative Boards shall be elected at the regular February Congregational Meeting, by ballot, to serve for two years or until their successors are elected, and their term of office shall begin during their respective March Administrative Board Meeting. Chairs shall not succeed themselves in the same Chair.

B. The Chairs of the following Administrative Boards shall be elected in odd-numbered years: the Board of Church Properties; the Board of Lay Ministry; the Board of Preschool Ministry; and the Board of Evangelism. The Chairs of the following Administrative Boards shall be elected in even-numbered years: the Board of Discipleship; the Board of Christian Education; the Board of Fellowship and the Board of Youth Ministry.

## **Section 7. Administrative Board Members**

A. Administrative Board Members shall be elected, at the regular February Congregational Meeting, by ballot, to serve for two years or until their successors are elected, and their term of office shall begin during their respective March Administrative Board Meeting. No Administrative Board Member shall be eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms on the same Administrative Board. Administrative Board Member terms of office shall be staggered.

B. The Board of Lay Ministry shall consist of one (1) Administrative Board Member per sixty (60) communicant and/or baptized members.

C. There shall be no fewer than two (2) Administrative Board Members per Administrative Board, including the Board of Lay Ministry.

## **Section 8. Installation**

The newly elected officers, Chairs of the Administrative Boards and Administrative Board Members shall be installed within two weeks of their election.

## **Section 9. Vacancies**

The Chairman of the Board of Lay Ministry shall become the President if the Office of the President is vacated. The President shall appoint persons to fill all vacant offices, Chairs of Administrative Boards and Administrative Board Members, subject to ratification by a majority of the Voting Members present at a Congregational Meeting.

## **Section 10. Duties**

The Officers, Chairs of Administrative Boards and Administrative Board Members shall perform the duties prescribed in these bylaws and by the parliamentary authority adopted by the Congregation.

## **Section 11. Removal**

A. The Board of Lay Ministry may recommend to rescind the election of any officer, Chair of an Administrative Board or Administrative Board Member at a Congregational Meeting. In cases that permit no delay, the Board of Lay Ministry may temporarily relieve any officer, Chair of an Administrative Board, Administrative Board Member or Committee member.

B. Upon permanent or temporary removal, all Congregation property shall be returned to the Congregation.

## **Section 12. Simultaneous Terms of Office**

Except for the office of President-Elect, no member shall hold more than one office at a time.

**ARTICLE 6. DUTIES OF OFFICERS,  
CHAIRS OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE BOARDS,  
AND ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD MEMBERS**

**Section 1. Duties of the President**

The President shall:

- A. Preside at all Congregational Meetings and Church Planning Council Meetings;
- B. Serve as an ex-officio member of all Administrative Boards, committees, and may, at his discretion, attend meetings related to a Congregational activity, and
- C. Perform other duties applicable to the office as prescribed by the parliamentary authority adopted by the Congregation.

**Section 2. Duties of the President-Elect**

The President-Elect shall:

- A. Attend Congregational Meetings and Church Planning Council Meetings;
- B. Attend Administrative Boards and Committee Meetings as designated by the President; and
- C. Perform other duties applicable to the office as prescribed by the parliamentary authority adopted by the Congregation.

**Section 3. Duties of the Treasurer**

The Treasurer shall:

- A. Disburse budgeted funds as authorized by an Officer or the Chair of an Administrative Board;
- B. Receive funds from sources other than members;
- C. Record financial transactions in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles for not-for-profit corporations;
- D. Attend Congregational Meetings and Church Planning Council Meetings and present a financial report;
- F. Ensure that individuals who handle funds of the Congregation, are bonded for a sum sufficient to protect the Congregation from loss;
- E. Submit the financial records to the Audit Committee;

- G. Provide financial reports to the Administrative Boards and the Church Planning Council that reflect current receipts and/or disbursements, and variances to the budget;
- H. Chair the Finance Committee;
- I. Serve as a member of the Endowment Committee; and
- J. Perform other duties applicable to the office as prescribed by the parliamentary authority adopted by the Congregation.

#### **Section 4. Duties of the Financial Secretary**

The Financial Secretary shall:

- A. Receive and record contributions;
- B. Expediently deposit all contributions;
- C. Provide current contribution statements to members on a quarterly basis;
- D. Attend Congregational Meetings and Church Planning Council Meetings and present a Financial Secretary's Report;
- E. Submit the financial records to the Audit Committee;
- F. Provide financial reports to the Board of Discipleship and the Treasurer that reflect current contributions and variances to the budget;
- G. Serve as a Finance Committee member;
- H. Supply contribution envelopes to members;
- I. Authorize the Treasurer to remit designated offerings to the District and other church agencies; and
- J. Perform other duties applicable to the office as prescribed by the parliamentary authority adopted by the Congregation.

#### **Section 5. Duties of the Congregational Secretary**

The Congregational Secretary shall:

- A. Attend Congregational Meetings and Church Planning Council Meetings, take the minutes, and present the minutes of the previous meeting(s);
- B. Maintain a permanent record book in which the Constitution, Bylaws, Special Rules of Order, Standing Rules, minutes and committee reports are entered, with any amendments to these documents properly recorded, and to have the record book on hand at every meeting;

- C. Receive, and respond to official correspondence of the Congregation;
- D. Keep the Congregation's official voting membership roll and call the roll where it is required;
- E. File an annual not-for-profit corporate registration report with the Missouri Secretary of State as prescribed by the revised statutes of the State of Missouri; and
- F. Perform other duties applicable to the office as prescribed by the parliamentary authority adopted by the Congregation.

## **ARTICLE 7. CHURCH PLANNING COUNCIL**

### **Section 1. Church Planning Council Purpose**

The Church Planning Council serves as a forum where significant activities may be discussed, evaluated, and integrated into the overall Congregational ministry. The Church Planning Council shall have general supervision of the Congregational affairs between Congregational Meetings.

### **Section 2. Regular Church Planning Council Meetings**

Regular Church Planning Council Meetings shall be held on the third Tuesday of each month unless otherwise ordered by the President and Pastor(s).

### **Section 3. Special Church Planning Council Meetings**

Special Church Planning Council Meetings may be called by the President or the Pastor(s). Notice and purpose of the special Church Planning Council Meeting shall be given to all Church Planning Council Members and ex-officio Church Planning Council Board Members. The Congregational Secretary shall notify Voting Members of the date and time of all special Church Planning Council Meetings.

### **Section 4. Church Planning Council Quorum**

The quorum at any Church Planning Council Meeting consists of one-third (1/3) of the Church Planning Council Members.

### **Section 5. Church Planning Council Duties**

The Church Planning Council shall:

- A. Make recommendations to Congregational Meetings;
- B. Serve as a liaison between the Pastor(s), the Officers, and the Administrative Boards;

- C. Have authority to examine up to thirty (30) days the records of all auxiliary organizations within the Congregation;
- D. Prepare a respective budget for the next year and submit the budget to the Finance Committee at the Finance Committee's October meeting;
- E. Settle jurisdictional disputes between Administrative Boards;
- F. Prepare and evaluate long-range plans; and
- G. Perform other duties as prescribed by the Congregation.

## **ARTICLE 8. COMMITTEES**

### **Section 1. Finance Committee**

- A. The Finance Committee shall consist of the Treasurer, the Financial Secretary, an Administrative Board Member from the Board of Lay Ministry and the Board of Discipleship, the President-Elect, and up to three (3) at-large Voting Members appointed by the President. The Treasurer shall chair the Finance Committee.
- B. It shall be the duty of the Finance Committee to prepare an annual budget for the next year and to submit the budget at the regular November Congregational Meeting. The Finance Committee shall periodically review receipts and disbursements to budget and shall give a status report at the regular August Congregational Meeting. The Finance Committee may recommend budget adjustments at Congregational Meetings.

### **Section 2. Audit Committee**

An Audit Committee of at least two Voting Members shall be appointed by the President at the regular November Congregational Meeting, whose duty it shall be to have the financial records professionally audited at the close of the fiscal year. The audit report shall be presented to the Congregation by the regular May Congregational Meeting. The Pastor(s), the Officers and Chairs of the Administrative Boards shall not be members of the Audit Committee.

### **Section 3. Endowment Committee**

The Endowment Committee shall consist of five Voting Members: the Treasurer, the Administrative Board Member from the Board of Lay Ministry and the Board of Discipleship, and two (2) at-large Voting Members. One at-large Voting member shall be appointed by the President, the other at-large, shall be elected by the Voting Members of the Church Planning Council.

### **Section 4. Other Committees**

Other Committees, standing or special, shall be appointed by the President as the Congregation or the Church Planning Council shall from time to time deem necessary to carry on the Congregational ministry.

## ARTICLE 9. CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

### Section 1. Regular Congregational Meetings

A. Regular Congregational Meetings shall be held on the fourth Tuesday of February, May, August and November, and on the fourth Sunday of April and September unless otherwise ordered by the President and Pastor(s).

B. The quorum at any regular Congregational Meeting consists of those Voting Members who attend.

C. Notice of regular Congregational Meetings shall be announced at the worship services, and listed in the bulletin, on the Sunday preceding the date of the Congregational Meeting.

D. The February Congregational Meeting shall include the election of specified Officers, specified Administrative Board Chairs, and specified Administrative Board Members. The April Congregational Meeting shall include a progress review of the long-range plan. The September Congregational Meeting shall include approval of the next year's long-range plan and sometimes the election of the President-Elect. The November Congregational Meeting shall include approval of the next year's budget.

### Section 2. Special Congregational Meetings

A. Special Congregational Meetings shall be called by the President at the request of the Pastor(s), the Church Planning Council, an Administrative Board, or at the written request of ten (10) Voting Members.

B. The quorum at any special Congregational Meeting consists of ten percent (10) of the Voting Members.

C. Notice and purpose of special Congregational Meetings shall be announced at the worship services, and listed in the bulletin, on the Sunday preceding the date of the Congregational Meeting.

### Section 3. Conveying Real Property

When conveying real property, the quorum of the Congregational Meeting consists of twenty percent (20) of the Voting Members.

## **ARTICLE 10. ADMINISTRATIVE BOARDS**

### **Section 1. Administrative Boards**

Responsibility and authority for the daily administration of the Congregation shall be delegated:

- A. To the Board of Lay Ministry;
- B. To the Board of Evangelism;
- C. To the Board of Christian Education;
- D. To the Board of Youth Ministry;
- E. To the Board of Discipleship;
- F. To the Board of Church Properties;
- G. To the Board of Fellowship;
- H. To the Board of Preschool Ministry.

### **Section 2. Regular Administrative Board Meetings**

Regular Administrative Board Meetings shall ordinarily be held monthly at the date and time determined by the respective Administrative Board unless otherwise ordered by the Administrative Board Chair and the President or Pastor(s).

### **Section 3. Special Administrative Board Meetings**

A special Administrative Board Meeting may be called by the Administrative Board Chair, the President or the Pastor(s). Notice and purpose of a special Administrative Board Meeting shall be given to all respective Administrative Board Members and ex-officio Administrative Board Members.

### **Section 4. Administrative Board Quorum**

Three (3) respective Administrative Board Members shall constitute a quorum.

### **Section 5. Duties of Each Administrative Board**

Each Administrative Board shall:

- A. Give a report of the Administrative Board activities at each Congregational Meeting and on other occasions as required by the Congregation.
- B. Provide a copy of the Administrative Board minutes to each member of the Church Planning Council;

C. Designate an Administrative Board Secretary;

D. Maintain a permanent record book in which the Special Rules of Order, Standing Rules, minutes and committee reports are entered with any amendments to these documents properly recorded, and to have the record book on hand at every Administrative Board Meeting;

E. Administer budgeted funds as authorized by the Congregation (the Church Planning Council may restrict expenditures to conform with the Congregation's actual financial condition);

F. Prepare the Administrative Board's annual budget for the next year and to submit the budget to the Finance Committee by the Finance Committee's October Meeting;

G. Prepare the Administrative Board's long-range plan consisting of at least a mission statement, vision statement(s) and strategies to achieve the mission/vision for the next year and to submit the long-range plan to the Church Planning Council by the Church Planning Council's August Meeting; and

H. Perform other duties as prescribed by the Congregation.

#### **ARTICLE 11. AMENDMENT OF BYLAWS**

These Bylaws can be amended by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Voting Members present at a Congregational Meeting, provided that the amendment has been submitted in writing, to the worship Congregation, at the two (2) previous Sundays.