

BETHLEHEM EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

RAYMORE MISSOURI

AUGUST 8, 1993

**CONSTITUTION**

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## **PREAMBLE**

It is the will of our Lord Jesus Christ that His disciples should preach the Gospel to the whole world (Mark 16:16, Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8). That Christ's mission for His Church might be carried out according to His will, He has commanded that Christians unite in worship (Hebrews 10:24-25), practice fellowship with one another (Acts 2:42), witness to all men (Acts 1:8), help each other grow in the Word (Ephesians 4:11-14), serve the needs of all men in Christian love (Ephesians 4:7-16, Mark 10:42-44, John 13-35, Galatians 6:10), administer the Office of Keys as His Church (John 20:21-23, Matthew 18:15-20), and maintain decency and order (I Corinthians 14:40) in the Church.

Therefore, we, a number of Lutheran Christians living in or near Raymore, accept and subscribe to the following Constitution and Bylaws, in accordance with which all spiritual and material affairs of our congregation shall be governed.

## **ARTICLE 1. NAME**

The name of the Congregation shall be: Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church of Raymore, Missouri.

## **ARTICLE 2. CONFESSION**

This congregation acknowledges and accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the revealed Word of God, verbally inspired, and submit to them as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life. She acknowledges and accepts all the Confessional writings of the Lutheran Church, contained in the Book of Concord of the year 1580, as the correct presentation and exposition of Christian Doctrine drawn from the Holy Scriptures.

These Confessional writings are:

1. The Three Ecumenical Creeds (Apostles, Nicene and Athanasian),
2. The Unaltered Augsburg Confession,
3. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession,
4. The Smalcald Articles,
5. Luther's Large Catechism,
6. Luther's Small Catechism, and
7. The Formula of Concord.

On the basis of the foregoing standards, all Christian Doctrine shall be taught and examined, all congregational activities shall be regulated, and all controversies which may arise within the congregation, doctrinal or otherwise, shall be resolved.

### **ARTICLE 3. SYNODICAL AFFILIATION**

This congregation shall be affiliated with the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, as long as the Confessions of said Synod are in accord with the Confession and Constitution of this congregation, as laid down in Article 2. This congregation shall, to the best of its ability, collaborate with said Synod and assist it in effecting all sound measures intended for the building up of the Kingdom of God.

### **ARTICLE 4. CONGREGATIONAL MEMBERSHIP**

A member is an individual connected to the whole body (congregation) engaged to work on the Great Commission, to the extent<sup>1</sup> that each individual is working to make the body grow and build in love, according to God's Word. Membership shall be as follows:

- A. Baptized member – one who has been baptized with the water in the name of the Triune God.
- B. Communicant member – one who has been:
  - 1. Baptized in the Triune God,
  - 2. Has declared his acceptance of the Confessions of this congregation, contained in Article 2 of this Constitution,
  - 3. Has been accepted into communicant membership in agreement with the Bylaws and shall remain faithful to the responsibilities of membership,
  - 4. Does not live in manifest works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21), but leads a Christian life, and
  - 5. Is not a member of a secret society or of any other organization conflicting with the Word of God and the conduct of a Christian (II Corinthians 6:14-18).
- C. The membership, and privileges, of each communicant member shall remain in force so long as each member shall maintain his eligibility according to the five points in Section B, this Article and shall meet the requirements stated or implied in the disciplinary or other provisions of the Bylaws.

A member who voluntarily severs his connection with this congregation, or who has been released or transferred, or who has been excommunicated or excludes himself according to the provisions of the Bylaws, shall be deemed to have terminated his membership in this congregation, along with all rights and privileges of such membership.

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<sup>1</sup> Misspelled as "extend" in the final version adopted by the Congregation

## **ARTICLE 5. ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS AND POWERS**

The ultimate power and authority in the Congregation will rest with the Voting Members. The Church Planning Council and Administrative Boards shall be responsible for the performance of such duties as the Congregation may delegate and the right and power to carry out normal, day-to-day Congregational operations and programs. The Congregation shall have the right to review and revise all delegated rights and powers. Any decision contrary to the Word of God and the Confessional writings of the Lutheran Church shall be null and void.

### **Section 1. Voting Members**

Only communicant members, who have qualified according to the Congregational Bylaws, shall be Voting Members of this Congregation.

### **Section 2. Administrative Boards**

Responsibility and authority for the daily administration of Congregational affairs shall be delegated to the Administrative Boards as defined by the Congregational Bylaws.

### **Section 3. Congregational Officers**

The Congregational Officers, collectively known as the Board of Directors, shall consist of a President, a Treasurer, a Financial Secretary, and a Congregational Secretary, elected from the Voting Membership in accordance with the Congregational Bylaws.

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

The Church Planning Council shall consist of the Pastor(s), the President, the Treasurer, the Financial Secretary, the Congregational Secretary, Chairs of the Administrative Boards, and up to three (3) at-large members appointed by the President.

## **ARTICLE 6. PASTORS AND CALLED WORKERS**

Only such candidates shall be called and elected to serve as Pastors or Called Workers who profess acceptance of, and pledge faithful adherence to, the Confessions of this congregation, as set forth in Article 2 of this Constitution, and who have been certified by the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.

In the absence of adequate cause for dismissal, as defined in the Bylaws of the congregation, the tenure of office of a Called Pastor or Called Worker shall be the remainder of his active service, or until the Lord calls him into another field of service.

The right of calling Pastors and other Called Workers shall always be vested in the Voters' Assembly and shall never be delegated to a small body of members, nor to an individual. Before a call is issued, the officers, or a committee authorized by the congregation, shall conduct a survey of the needs of the congregation and shall seek the advice of the President of the District.

## **ARTICLE 7. CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP GROUPS**

Christian fellowship groups may be organized within the Congregation with approval of the Congregation, and shall be under the supervision of the Church Planning Council and/or Administrative Boards. Only members of this Congregation shall be officers of such groups. No decision, enactment or performance by such groups shall conflict with this Constitution and the Congregational Bylaws. The Pastor(s) shall be the advisor for such groups.

## **ARTICLE 8. PROPERTY RIGHTS**

This congregation, represented by the Voters' Assembly, shall have the right to acquire and own such property as is necessary for the successful realization of its purpose. All assets owned by the congregation, whether movable or fixed, are the estate of the congregation.

### **Section 1. Separation**

Members who sever their connection with this congregation, whether by excommunication, transfer, release to another congregation, or by moving away without leaving an address, forfeit all claim to the property of this congregation.

### **Section 2. Doctrinal Dispute**

If at any time a separation—because of doctrine—shall take place in this congregation (may God prevent it), the property of this congregation, and all benefits connected therewith, shall remain with those members who continue to adhere in confession and practice with Article 2 of this Constitution.

### **Section 3. Dissolution**

In the event of dissolution of this congregation (may God prevent it), all the property of the congregation shall be disposed of by the final Voters' Assembly for the payment of debts. Any surplus, after due settlement of just claims against this congregation, shall be conveyed to and become the property of the Missouri District of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.

## **ARTICLE 9. PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY**

The rules contained in the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern the Congregation in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with this Constitution and the Congregational Bylaws or with local, state, or federal laws or regulations.

## **ARTICLE 10. AMENDMENTS**

### **Section 1. Amendment Method**

Amendments shall be made as follows:

A. Notice of a proposed amendment must be made in writing and filed with the Congregational Secretary and distributed to the Congregation assembled for worship two Sundays prior to the meeting in which the amendment is introduced;

B. Amendments filed and distributed in the manner described in paragraph A of this section, shall be introduced at the next Congregational Meeting;

C. Amendments introduced in the manner described in paragraph B of this section, shall require a three-fourths (3/4) majority vote of the Voting Members present to pass.

## **Section 2. Unalterable Articles**

No Constitutional amendments shall be made which conflict with the original intent of Articles 2, 3, 4, 6 and 8.