

# CONSTITUTION

## LORD OF LIFE LUTHERAN CHURCH

### 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 shall be Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin.
- C1.02.** For the purpose of this constitution and the accompanying bylaws, the congregation of Lord of Life Lutheran is hereinafter designated as "this congregation."
- C1.03.** This congregation shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of Wisconsin.

### 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 and Luther's Small Catechism as faithful & valid interpretations of the Gospel.
- C2.06.** This congregation confesses the Gospel, recorded in the Holy Scriptures 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.

### **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 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. Disciple 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 this congregation's ministry and Christian ministry in other parts of this country and the world.
- h. Foster and participate in interdependent relationships with other congregations.
- i. Foster and participate in ecumenical relationships consistent with God's Word and Chapter 2 of this constitution.

**C4.04.** This congregation shall develop an organizational structure to be described in the bylaws.

## **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. Approve the annual budget;
  - d. Acquire real and personal property by gift, devise, purchase, or other lawful means;
  - e. Hold title to and use its property for any and all activities consistent with its purpose;
  - f. Sell, mortgage, lease, transfer, or otherwise dispose of its property by any lawful means;
  - g. Elect its Church Council, Chairperson of the Endowment Committee and the Nominating Committee;
  - h. Remove council members and trustees for cause

## **Chapter 6: CHURCH AFFILIATION**

- C6.01.** This congregation may enter into full partnership or membership with Lutheran denominations, associations, or ministries. Full membership in Lutheran denominations, associations, or ministries shall require a two-thirds majority vote of all members present and voting at a legally called meeting of the congregation. Severance of such membership shall require at least ninety days notice by the Church Council to the membership of the congregation and to the denomination, association, or ministry of the intent to sever membership, followed by a two-thirds majority vote of all voting members present and voting at a legally called meeting of the congregation.

## Chapter 7: PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

**C7.01.** Should a majority at this congregation choose to join a non-Christian denomination or become a non-Christian organization, title to all land and other assets, both real and personal, shall remain with the largest minority faction wishing to remain explicitly Christian.

## 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.
- b. **Voting and Confirmed** members are any active member sixteen (16) years of age or older.
- c. **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. They have all the privileges and duties of membership except voting rights and eligibility for elected offices or membership on the Church Council of this congregation.

### Membership Standing

- a. Baptized Member:
- b. Voting Member:
- c. Associate Member:

**C8.03.** All applications for membership shall be submitted to and shall require the affirmation of the Church Council.

**C8.03. All applications for membership shall be submitted to and shall require the affirmation of the Church Council (monthly basis) and ratified by the Congregation (annually).**

**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 chapter 2 of this constitution.

- c. Support the work of this congregation, 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. Request;
- c. Transfer or release;
- d. Disciplinary action by the Congregation Council; 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.

**C8.06.** Disciplinary Action and discipline of a member

See Addendum 1 attached to this Constitution

## **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 this congregation to recommend the call, may seek the advice and help of the leadership of the LCMC and or other Christian Ministry this congregation has joined per chapter 6 of this constitution.

**C9.02.** Only a person with theological training, who adheres to the confession of faith of Chapter 2 of this constitution and who is recommended by at least three Lutheran Pastors may be called as a pastor or associate pastor of this congregation.

**C9.03** a. Consistent with the faith and practice of the Lutheran Confessions and confession of faith of chapter 2, every ordained minister shall:

- 1) Preach the Word;
- 2) Administer the sacraments;
- 3) Conduct public worship;
- 4) Provide pastoral care;
- 5) Equip members for ministry; and

- 6) 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) With the council, administer discipline.
- c. Every pastor shall:
- 1) Seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel and strive to extend the Kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad.
  - 2) Endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to missions and benevolent needs and organizations.

**C9.04.** The specific duties of the pastors, compensation, and other matters pertaining to the service of the pastor shall be included in a letter of call.

**C9.05.** a. The call of a congregation, when accepted by a pastor, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment, which, except in the case of the death of the pastor, shall be terminated only for the following reasons:

- 1) Mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term;
  - 2) Resignation of a pastor;
  - 3) Inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in the congregation in view of local conditions, without reflection on the competence or the moral and spiritual character of the pastor;
  - 4) The physical or mental incapacity of the pastor;
  - 5) Disqualification of the pastor through discipline on grounds of doctrine, morality, or continued neglect of duty; or
  - 6) The dissolution of the congregation..
- b. In the case of alleged local difficulties that imperil the effective functioning of the congregation, all concerned persons shall be heard, after which the congregation may dismiss the pastor by a two-thirds majority vote of the voting members present and voting at a legally called meeting after consultation with three other active Lutheran Pastors.

- C9.06.** 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.
- C9.07.** The congregation may depart from C9.05.a. and call a pastor for a specific term of years. Details of such calls shall be in writing setting forth the purpose and conditions involved. Such a call may also be terminated before its expiration in accordance with the provisions of C9.05.a.

## **Chapter 10: CONGREGATION MEETING**

- C10.01.** The annual meeting of this congregation shall be held at a time specified in the bylaws.
- 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 40 of the voting members. 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 to all voting members at least 10 days in advance of the date of the meeting. The posting of such notice in the regular mail, with the regular postage affixed or paid, sent to the last known address of such members shall be sufficient.
- C10.04.** 40 voting members shall constitute a quorum.
- C10.05.** Voting by proxy or by absentee ballot shall not be permitted.
- C10.06.** All actions by the congregation shall be by majority vote except as otherwise provided in this constitution.
- C10.07.** Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition, shall govern parliamentary procedure of all meetings of this congregation.

## **Chapter 11: BYLAWS**

- C11.01.** This congregation may adopt bylaws. No bylaw may conflict with this constitution.
- C11.02.** 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.

**C11.03.** Changes to the bylaws may be proposed by any voting member provided, however, that such additions or amendments be submitted in writing to the Church Council at least 60 days before a regular or special Congregation Meeting called for that purpose and that the Congregation Council notify the members of the proposal with its recommendations at least 30 days in advance of the Congregation Meeting.

**Chapter 12: AMENDMENTS**

**C12.01.** Amendments to this constitution may be proposed by at least 40 voting members or by the Church Council. Proposals must be filed in writing with the Church Council 60 days before formal consideration by this congregation at its regular or special meeting called for that purpose. The Congregation Council shall notify the members of the proposal with the council’s recommendations at least 30 days in advance of the meeting.

**C12.02.** A proposed amendment to this constitution shall:

- a. Be approved at a legally called 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.

**Date Approved by Congregational Vote:** \_\_ th day of February, 2012

Signed:

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**Council President**

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**Council Secretary**

## **Addendum 1**

### A Statement of Church Discipline

“And have you forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: ‘My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.’” – Hebrews 12:5-6

### **Definitions:**

#### A. The Invisible Church – The Holy Christian Church, The Communion of Saints

Since only God can look into hearts (I Samuel 16:7), these souls are known only to him. Since there is only one God and one Savior, there is only one true Church (Eph 4:4-6). It is not found in any one building, denomination or place. Access into this Church is NOT gained or lost on the basis of earthly church membership. Access is solely on faith in Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, who lived and died as their perfect substitute. God loves his Church and his ultimate purpose is to give the gift of his Son and therefore calls it the Bride of Christ. For this reason, our Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – is constantly at work calling, guarding, strengthening and keeping his Church (Eph 4:7-16, 5:25-27).

#### B. Visible churches such as Lord of Life Lutheran Church

Since mankind can only determine a person’s faith in Jesus Christ by outward confession, not by looking into the heart, a visible church is gathered by accepting souls into membership by verbal and written agreements between each other. See Membership requirement, standing and responsibilities for further information and the following words.

#### C. Life in the Church

The Bible provides standards from God for the faith and life of all who are part of this visible congregation. Council members are commissioned before God to instruct, govern and preserve local churches within these bounds of doctrine and practice. In addition, he also calls individual members to apply the Word to themselves and to encourage and admonish one another with it (Matthew 18:15-20, II Timothy 3:15-17, Hebrews 3:13, 10:25).

#### D. Church Discipline

Church discipline is the patient and loving corrective process which God gives to the church when a member persists in sin. The goal of this process is to win the erring soul back to Christ. Such persist sin falls into two categories:

- persistent, impenitent sin (Matthew 18:15, I Corinthians 5, 6:9-10, Galatians 5:19-20)
- persistent, impenitent doctrinal error (Galatians 1:9-10, 2:11, 5:9, Romans 16:17-8).

Church discipline is neither intended to humiliate someone nor to seek revenge. It is an expression of God's fatherly love (Proverbs 3:11-12). Also, those involved in bringing this correction are to be motivated by sincere love and their words and actions combined with grace and truth.

E. Purpose of Church Discipline

1. Subjects: brothers and sisters in Christ on the basis of their confession as part of this church or fellowship
2. Objects: proven sin according to Holy Scripture, either in persistent sin or in persistent doctrinal error: not in matters of adiophora or matters of opinion
3. Goal: to win over the soul of the brother or sister; not to clean up the books or to seek or to settle personal differences
4. Urgency: the soul of the individual and the souls of body, not personal agendas
5. Spirit: infinite patience (70x7)

F. Process for addressing sin

1. Private inquiry
2. Establishing the matter with witnesses
3. Telling the church
4. Excluding from membership if necessary
5. Appeals
6. Restoration
7. Application to elected members to Council and pastor: same as above.