



CONSTITUTION
OF
MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH OF CAMROSE

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ARTICLE 1 - NAME AND INCORPORATION

Section 1 The name of this congregation shall be Messiah Lutheran Church of Camrose.

Section 2 This congregation shall be incorporated under the laws of the province of Alberta.

ARTICLE 2 - CONFESSION OF FAITH

Section 1 This congregation confesses the Triune God -- Father, Son and Holy Spirit -- as the one true God. It proclaims the Father as Creator and Preserver, His Son Jesus Christ as Redeemer and Lord, and the Holy Spirit as Regenerator and Sanctifier.

Section 2 This congregation confesses that the Gospel is the revelation of God's saving will and grace in Jesus Christ, which He imparts through Word and Sacrament. Through these means of grace the Holy spirit creates believers and unites them with their Lord and with one another in the fellowship of the Holy Christian Church.

Section 3 This congregation confesses the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God, through which God still speaks, and as the only source of the Church's doctrine and the authoritative standard for the faith and life of the Church.

Section 4 This congregation subscribes to the documents of the Book of Concord of 1580 as witnesses to the way in which the Holy Scriptures have been correctly understood and explained and confessed for the sake of the Gospel, namely:

- a) The Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creeds as the chief confessions of the Christian faith;
- b) The Unaltered Augsburg Confession as its basic formulation of Christian doctrine;
- c) Luther's Small Catechism as a clear summary of Christian doctrine;
- d) The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Luther's Large Catechism, the Smalcald Articles with the Treatise, and the Formula of Concord as further witnesses to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.

ARTICLE 3 - NATURE AND MISSION

Section 1 This congregation is a worshipping, learning, witnessing and serving community of baptized persons among whom the Word is proclaimed and the Sacraments are administered according to the Gospel, and whose corporate existence is recognized by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. It shall provide support to enable the fulfilment of the mission and ministry of this church.

- Section 2** **Worship:** This congregation, remembering God's mighty acts in the past, celebrating His abiding presence, and moving toward His promised fulfilment, will listen to the Word of God in Scripture and preaching, receive the Sacraments, and respond with confession, prayer, praise, thanksgiving, and with tithes and offerings. In order to assist worshipers to acknowledge God's rule over their lives, their own unity as Christ's body on earth, and to express their relationship with God in public and in private, the congregation shall gather for worship regularly and, in accordance with the traditions of the Lutheran Church, recruit, equip and support members for leadership in worship, use appropriate worship materials, and make certain that worship has a place in other functions of the congregation.
- Section 3** **Learning:** The congregation shall develop an educational program designed to assist persons to grow in grace and faith and in the knowledge of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions for service and witness in the world. To this end it shall provide learning opportunities with appropriate curricula, shall recruit, equip, approve and support teachers, and shall ensure that adequate study undergirds all functions of the congregation.
- Section 4** **Witnessing:** This congregation, relying on the Holy Spirit, shall proclaim the Gospel by word and deed and thereby invite all people to repent and believe. The congregation shall recruit, motivate, equip and support its members to witness to their faith at every opportunity in daily life so that the Lord is glorified, the fellowship is strengthened, the lapsed are restored, and new members are added to the congregation. The congregation shall provide for the sharing of Jesus Christ with all people - locally, nationally and internationally. It shall ensure that all congregational functions witness to the faith of the church.
- Section 5** **Service:** This congregation shall live by faith active in love. It shall motivate, equip and support its members to minister in daily life; to participate as members of a caring community; to serve as Christians in all the institutions and structures of the society of which they are a part; and individually and corporately to promote justice and reconciliation, meet human needs, and alleviate suffering. In these efforts the congregation shall cooperate with The Synod of Alberta and the Territories and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, other Christian churches, and other groups in society. It shall make certain that all its functions strengthen the motivation and ability for service.
- Section 6** **Support:** This congregation, in faithfulness to God, shall provide leadership, organizational structures, facilities, and funds to enable fulfilment of its mission. The congregation shall maintain effective stewardship practices, evaluate regularly the total life and ministry of the congregation, and recruit, equip and support members of the congregation to provide for these activities.

ARTICLE 4 – MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 Definition of membership

- 4.1.A The membership of this congregation consists of people who
- a) have been baptized in this congregation, or
 - b) having been previously baptized in the name of the Triune God, have been received by any of:
 - 1) Transfer from another congregation according to the practices of the ELCIC;
 - 2) Confirmation;
 - 3) Affirmation of faith.
- 4.1.B Members who have been confirmed or have affirmed their faith may vote.

Section 2 Expectations of Membership

- 4.2.A **Worship:** Members, united in one Lord, one faith and one baptism, regularly nourish their life in Christ and that of their children through the celebration of baptism, the sacrament of the altar and through regular worship. The nurturing of faith in children is the joint responsibility of parents, godparents and the congregation.
- 4.2.B **Learning:** The call of the Christian member is to provide for continuing appreciation, knowledge and understanding of the Holy Scriptures and doctrines of the Lutheran church by way of formal and informal opportunities
- 4.2.C **Witnessing:** Members are called by the Holy Spirit to lead godly lives, to promote the unity and welfare of the congregation, to proclaim the Gospel, and to renounce the evil one. The commitment of each baptized member to this call is expressed through the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, its synods, and this congregation by a life of repentance, faith, prayer, stewardship and witness. In the spirit of love our witness is to others who, for whatever reasons, are not partaking in Holy Communion, participating in church life, worshiping, and supporting the church.
- 4.2.D **Service:** Members are to live by faith, active in love in the circumstances in which they find themselves. Each is called to: participate as a member of the caring community, serve as a Christian in the institutions and structures of society of which they are a part, promote justice and reconciliation, and meet human needs and alleviate suffering.

- 4.2.E **Support:** Within the limits of one's giftedness in time, talents and material resources, members are to share in the furtherance of opportunities for personal and corporate worship, learning, witness, and service towards our one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.

Section 3 Forgiveness, Reconciliation and Discipline

- 4.3.1 Members of this congregation are expected to conduct themselves toward one another and toward the world following the example of Jesus Christ, acting with grace, forgiveness, and mercy, speaking the truth in love. Members strive to seek the best for one another individually and in community.
- 4.3.2 When relationships are harmed, members are expected to strive toward reconciliation and peace, following the direction of Matthew 18:15-18, seeking both to forgive and to be forgiven.
- 4.3.3 A member who advocates doctrines which are contrary to the holy scriptures and the confessions of the church or who is unrepentant of conduct that is unbecoming of the body of Christ shall be subject to discipline in accordance with Matthew 18:15-18.
- 4.3.4 Discipline shall be administered by the Church Council. A person requested to appear before the Church Council shall be advised in writing no less than ten days prior to the hearing. The written notice shall include the time and place of the hearing and shall specify the exact reason for the hearing. If a person fails to appear at the time and place without valid excuse, the Council may proceed with the hearing and may reach its conclusion in the member's absence. Should the person be found guilty by a two-thirds vote of the members of the Council, the Council shall impose one of the following:
- a) Censure before the Church Council or the congregation.
 - b) Suspension from membership until evidence is given of sufficient repentance and amendment.
 - c) Exclusion from membership.
- 4.3.5 In the event of the imposition of 4.3.4.b or 4.3.4.c above, the action of the Council shall be in writing.
- 4.3.6 There shall be the right of appeal to the congregation. Right of further appeal from a decision of the congregation shall be provided in the constitution and bylaws of the Synod of Alberta and the Territories.

Section 4 Termination of Membership

4.4.A Termination of membership in this congregation occurs by any one of the following:

- a) Death
- b) Resignation
- c) Transfer or release
- d) Discipline
- e) Inactivity

Section 5 If, for a period of one year, a member neither partakes of Holy Communion, supports the church with offerings, nor participates in the life and worship of the congregation, that person shall be contacted in a way defined in the By-Laws and be encouraged to resume active membership. If, by the end of the second year, the member has not actively participated, the member's name may be removed from the membership roster of the congregation, but it shall be retained on a responsibility list as one who is in need of the congregation's prayer and concern.

ARTICLE 5 – AUTHORITY

Section 1 This congregation shall operate in accordance with its own constitution, owning its own property, making decisions in regard to its programming, calling its own pastors after consulting with the bishop, and retaining authority in all other matters that have not been committed to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada or its synods in their constitutions or by subsequent enactments.

Section 2 The authority of the congregation shall be vested in the congregational meeting, the Council and the committees of the congregation as provided by this constitution and the bylaws.

Section 3 Real property shall be purchased, disposed of or encumbered by resolution adopted by no less than a two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting at a legally called meeting of the congregation.

Section 4 Should this congregation disband, all property not disposed of, real, personal and mixed, shall vest in The Synod of Alberta and the Territories, its successor or assigns.

Section 5 Should this congregation cease to exist or should its membership so diminish in numbers as to render it impossible or impractical for the congregation to function according to its constitution and bylaws, the synod shall after consultation with any remaining members deem the congregation to be defunct. The synod through the Synod Council shall appoint trustees, including where feasible former members of the congregation, who shall take charge and control of the property of said congregation to hold, manage and convey the same in behalf of this synod.

Section 6 In the case of strife and division in the congregation, the Council shall seek the advice of the Bishop of the Synod.

ARTICLE 6 – RELATIONSHIP TO THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

- Section 1** This congregation is and shall remain a part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada or its successor and of The Synod of Alberta and the Territories or to another synod to which it has otherwise been assigned.
- Section 2** This congregation claims for itself all the rights and privileges and accepts all the duties and obligations connected with being part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. In so doing this congregation recognizes the constitution, bylaws and enactments of the church and of the synod as having governing force in its life.
- Section 3** This congregation covenants to support faithfully with prayer, personal service and offerings the common work of the church and of the synod for the Kingdom of God.
- Section 4** This constitution, and all amendments thereto, shall be transmitted to the synod for review to ascertain that none of its provisions is in conflict with the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada or with the synodical constitution.
- Section 5** Should the congregation desire to relocate or merge with another congregation, it shall secure the advice of the synod before any commitments to that end are entered into.
- Section 6** Should the congregation desire to sever its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada this decision shall require a two-thirds majority vote of all voting members present and voting at a legally called and conducted meeting. Such a decision shall not be effective until at least ninety days after the bishop has been notified and until the initial action has been ratified by a two-thirds vote at a subsequent legally called and conducted meeting.
- Section 7** This congregation prohibits any corporate worship with any organization which practices the forms of religion without confessing faith in the Triune God and in Jesus Christ, the eternal and incarnate Son of God, as our only Saviour.

ARTICLE 7 – THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY

- Section 1** A pastor of the congregation shall be a person whose soundness in the faith, aptness to teach and educational qualifications have been examined and approved by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and who has been properly ordained, who accepts and adheres to the Confession of Faith of this Church, and who strives in life and conduct to be above reproach.
- Section 2** Authority to call a pastor shall rest in the congregation. Such authority to call shall be exercised by not less than a two-thirds majority vote of members present and voting at a meeting legally called for that purpose. Throughout the call process the Church Council, or a committee authorized by the congregation, shall seek the advice and counsel of the bishop of the synod.

Section 3 Only an ordained minister on the roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada or one who is recognized for call by a synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada may be called as a pastor of the congregation.

Section 4 Every pastor shall fulfil:

- a) general duties as prescribed by the synod and national church in the letter of call.
- b) particular duties as described in the position description for the particular ministry to which called.

Section 5 In order that a pastor of this congregation may be devoted fully to the duties of the office, adequate compensation and premiums under the church's pension plan shall be provided, paid in semi-monthly or monthly instalments. Expenses incidental to attendance at conventions of the synod and of the church and at meetings otherwise required by the pastor's office shall be paid for by the congregation, except where other provisions are made.

Section 6 The regular call of this congregation, when accepted by a pastor, shall constitute a relationship which shall be terminated only for the following reasons:

- a) The resignation of the pastor;
- b) Disqualification of the pastor through discipline;
- c) Division of the pastoral charge;
- d) The physical or mental incapacity of the pastor;
- e) Continued neglect of the ministry;
- f) Inability to conduct the pastoral office satisfactorily in the parish in view of local conditions, without reflection on the moral and spiritual character of the pastor.

In the last three contingencies, the procedures provided for in the constitution of the synod shall be followed.

Section 7 In the event of alleged defection in doctrine or alleged conduct unbecoming of a pastor, the matter shall be referred by the Church Council to the bishop for action as provided in the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

Section 8 At the time of a pastoral vacancy (i.e. there is no pastor), an interim pastor shall be selected by the Church Council after consultation with the bishop. The interim pastor shall have the responsibility of a regularly called pastor. All interim and supply pastors shall refrain from exerting influence in the call process of the congregation.

Section 9 When an additional pastor is called, the privileges and responsibilities of that pastor shall be specified in the call drafted in consultation with the incumbent pastor(s), the Church Council and the bishop.

Section 10 Upon receiving a call to another ministry, the pastor shall consult with the bishop and the president of the Church Council before a decision is reached. The pastor shall inform the congregation and the bishop of the decision on the call within thirty days of official notice. When a call has been accepted, the pastor shall normally terminate the ministry within two months.

ARTICLE 8 – LAY PROFESSIONAL

Section 1 A lay professional is a person serving the congregation through a call from, or contract with, the congregation.

Section 2 The lay professional will work in the areas that are specified in an official position description.

Section 3 Section 5 of Article 7, the Office of the Ministry, shall pertain to the lay professional in reference to compensation. Sections 6, 7, and 10 of Article 7, the Office of the Ministry, shall pertain to the lay professional with a regular call of the congregation.

Section 4 Members of the congregation are obligated to receive the lay professional as a servant of the Word, to honour and love him or her as such, and to support his or her work among them with diligent, faithful assistance and prayer.

ARTICLE 9 – GOVERNANCE

Section 1 Congregational Meetings

- a) Notice of all congregational meetings shall be given at the worship services on the preceding two consecutive Sundays or by mail to all voting members at least ten days in advance of the date of the meeting.
The pastor(s) shall be notified of all regular and special meetings of the congregation.
- b) Fifty voting members shall constitute a quorum.
- c) In the following cases the vote shall be by secret ballot:
 - 1) elections
 - 2) to adopt, repeal, change or amend the Articles of Incorporation, Constitution, or Bylaws of this congregation;
 - 3) to sever official connections with a pastor.

- d) Bourinot's Rules of Order, latest edition, shall be the governing parliamentary law of this congregation, except as otherwise provided in the constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada or in this constitution or its bylaws.

Section 2 The Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the congregation shall:

- a) be held on a date to be stipulated in the Bylaws.
- b) elect Church Council and Standing Committee members as prescribed in the Bylaws.
- c) be a special time of praise and thanksgiving to God for the many ways, as reflected in the annual reports, in which the congregation was privileged to share Jesus Christ during the past year.
- d) act on those ministry issues arising out of the annual reports and any motions submitted by a member at least thirty (30) days in advance.

Section 3 Special Congregational Meetings

Special congregational meetings may be called by the Church Council or at the written request of 50 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.

Section 4 Church Council

Church Council shall:

- a) consist of the President, other officers and at least five members at large as prescribed in the Bylaws.
- b) meet as prescribed in the Bylaws. A special meeting of the Church Council may be called by the Senior Pastor, the President or any three members of the Church Council. Notice of such meeting shall be given not less than five days prior to the meeting and shall be announced at a public service if one is held during that period.
- c) require a majority of its members present for constituting a quorum.
- d) regularly review the ministries of all Standing Committees and all staff of the congregation and shall have general overview of the life and activities of the congregation ensuring that everything is done in accordance with the Word of God and the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. The Church Council shall exercise such authority as is delegated to it by this constitution, the bylaws and the resolutions of the congregation.

Section 5 Standing Committees.

9.5.A There shall be a minimum of four and a maximum of fifteen Standing Committees as prescribed in the Bylaws.

9.5.B The Standing Committees shall:

- a) meet as prescribed in the Bylaws.
- b) minister in those areas specifically prescribed in the Bylaws. Church Council approval must be obtained for action in ministries not specifically prescribed in the Bylaws.
- c) provide minutes of all meetings to the Church Council.
- d) address vacancies and absenteeism as prescribed in the Bylaws.

Section 6 Other Ministry Groups.

Ministry groups of long standing, or established from time to time, shall exist to minister to its members and to minister in specific areas of the congregation's mission of sharing Jesus Christ with all people. Regular reports of their ministries shall be made to the congregation through a Standing Committee as determined by Church Council.

ARTICLE 10 – BYLAWS AND AMENDMENTS

Section 1 Amendments to this constitution may be proposed by the Church Council and shall be proposed by the council at the request of five voting members. Such proposed amendments shall be:

- a) Read at two successive public services of the congregation or be mailed to the voting members not less than thirty days before the meeting at which it is to be considered;
- b) Approved with or without change by a majority vote of those present and voting;
- c) Approved without further change at a second congregational meeting to be held no less than thirty days later by a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting;
- d) Become effective upon official notice and approval by the Synod Council.

Section 2 This congregation may adopt such Bylaws, not in conflict with this constitution, as may be necessary. Such Bylaws may be adopted or amended at any legally called and conducted meeting of the congregation by a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting.

Section 3 The confession of Faith as stated in Article 2 shall be that of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

Section 4 If in the judgement of the Synod Council an amendment to the constitution or bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, to the Approved Constitution for Synods or to the Approved Constitution for Congregations ought to entail related amendments of this constitution, receipt of an official communication to that effect from the secretary of the Synod enclosing a draft of the amendment recommended by the Synod Council shall constitute proper proposal and notice thereof. Adoption of such amendment shall then be in order at the next following meeting of the congregation.