

*THE  
CONSTITUTION  
&  
BYLAWS  
OF  
HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH  
PLANT CITY, FLORIDA*

ADOPTED BY THE VOTER'S:  
NOVEMBER 16, 2003

# CONSTITUTION

## 1.0 NAME:

The name of this congregation shall be Hope Lutheran Church, Plant City, Florida

## 2.0 PURPOSE & MISSION

The purpose of this congregation shall be to provide pastoral care for its members:

- To teach the Word of God and administer the sacraments,
- To preserve the purity of doctrine,
- To exercise Christian love and fellowship,
- To provide for the Christian training of the young,
- And to extend the Kingdom of God.

The mission of this congregation is:

We, the members of Hope Lutheran Church, anchored in Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, as servants of Jesus Christ, encourage and equip one another to joyfully live and share God's love and forgiveness with others.

## 3.0 CONFSSIONAL STANDARD

This congregation accepts without reservation:

3.1 The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice;

3.2 All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and correct statement and exposition 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, the Large Catechism of Luther, the Small Catechism of Luther, and the Formula of Concord.

## 4.0 MEMBERSHIP:

### 4.1 Membership

The membership of this congregation includes the following:

4.1.1 *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, including the children who have not yet been confirmed.

4.1.2 *Communicant* members are those baptized members who have been in the Lutheran faith, accept the confessional standard of Section 3 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.

4.1.3. *Voting* members are communicant members who have reached the age of 18 years, have been received by the voters assembly, and have signed the constitution of the congregation.

4.1.4 *Associate members* are all those who meet the eligibility of communicant membership, who reside in Plant City or its surrounding communities on a part-time basis and who desire to maintain their membership in their present Lutheran congregation. They shall have the privilege of voting provided that they reside in the area at least three months of the year. Associate members may serve on any of the congregation's ministry

teams but may neither chair any team nor serve as an officer of the congregation. They may vote in all matters of the congregation EXCEPT the calling of congregational staff.

## **4.2 Reception**

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 who have been baptized in another Christian congregation, through the rite of confirmation, through transfer from a sister congregation, or through profession of faith or reaffirmation of faith.

The reception shall be approved by the Voter's Assembly. Eligible communicant members may be received as voting members upon application for such privilege, upon approval by the Voter's Assembly, and upon signing the constitution.

## **4.3 Duties**

Members of the congregation shall conform their entire lives to the rule of God's Word and to that end make diligent use of the means of grace, exercise faithful stewardship of God's many gifts and talents, impart and accept fraternal admonition as the need of such admonition becomes apparent, and be readily available for service in the Kingdom of Christ within and beyond the congregation.

## **4.4 Termination**

4.4.1 Membership shall be terminated by transfer to a sister congregation, by death, by joining a congregation outside the fellowship of this congregation, by excommunication, or by self-exclusion. In cases of excommunication or self-exclusion, each case shall be presented individually to the Voter's Assembly for a decision.

4.4.2 Transfers. A member desiring transfer to another Lutheran congregation shall apply to the Pastor. Upon approval by the Pastor and the Board of Elders, a letter of transfer shall be issued by the Pastor. The Elders Ministry Team shall report all transfers to the congregation via church publications and the Voter's Assembly at the next regular meeting of that body.

4.4.3. Joining Other Churches . In cases where communicant members of this congregation have joined a non-Lutheran congregation, they shall upon the decision of the Pastor(s) and the Elders Ministry Team, be deemed to have terminated their membership in this congregation, forfeiting all rights and privileges of membership in the congregation.

4.4.4 Whereabouts unknown . The names of members whose whereabouts are unknown and cannot be established within a period of six months shall be removed from the membership list of the congregation and placed in a file designated "whereabouts unknown." Such membership is terminated and shall be reported as such to the next regular meeting of the Voter's Assembly.

4.4.5 Self-Exclusion. When a member of Hope Lutheran Church has not communed for three months, he or she will be contacted by an Elder, and shall be admonished and encouraged. If such a member has not communed after 6 months, he or she shall again be contacted by an Elder and the Pastor. Additional admonition and encouragement shall be given. If, after nine months, such a member still has not communed and is not attending the worship services of Church, he or she shall be evangelically admonished more firmly and told that if such neglect continues for another 3 months, it shall be

interpreted as impenitence, lack of faith in Jesus Christ, and indifference to the church membership, privileges, and responsibilities. If then after 12 months, the member has not responded to Christian admonition as outlined above, they shall be notified of such action to remove their name from membership in this congregation by registered mail and shall be declared to have excluded themselves from this Christian congregation. Such self-exclusion releases the individual from all responsibilities to this congregation, but it also excludes the member from privileges of church membership, such as Christian burial, Holy Communion, transfer to a sister congregation. SUCH A PERSON, HOWEVER, WILL AT ALL TIMES BE CORDIALLY WELCOME TO ATTEND ALL WORSHIP SERVICES IN OUR CHURCH.

4.4.6 Excommunication. Excommunication is to be applied by the congregation to any member who conducts themselves in an un-Christian manner; i.e., to one who openly adheres to false doctrine, gives evidence of an immoral and offensive life, or willfully despises the preaching of the Gospel and the Lord's Supper. The Elders Ministry Team shall administer church discipline on behalf of the congregation. Communicant members who conduct themselves in an un-Christian manner shall be admonished according to Matthew 18:15-20. If they remain impenitent after proper admonition, they shall be excommunicated. In all disciplinary cases, the congregation will follow its stated and adopted guidelines.

4.4.7 Reinstatement . Persons who have been removed from membership for whatever reasons shall be restored with all rights and privileges when they repent and ask forgiveness. Anyone desiring to re-join the congregation, having been absent for a period of one year or more shall be required to participate in any new member classes that are available before being reinstated to membership.

## **5.0 CALLED CHURCH WORKERS**

5.1 This congregation has the exclusive right to call ordained and commissioned ministers. The pastoral office shall be conferred only on such a pastor or candidate who professes and adheres to the confessional standard set forth in this constitution, who is qualified for his work, who has been endorsed by the Synod, and who is a member of the Synod. The same shall apply to all commissioned ministers.

5.2 No called worker may be removed without the congregational president and chairman of Elders contacting the circuit counselor and District President.

5.3 Any ordained or commissioned minister may be removed from office by the Voter's Assembly by a two-thirds majority secret ballot vote, in Christian 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.

5.4 In case of a vacancy in the office of an ordained or commissioned minister, the congregation shall notify the President of the District so that he may assist in temporarily filling the vacancy and also give assistance in regard to the calling of a new pastor or commissioned minister.

## **6.0 AUTHORITY OF THE CONGREGATION**

6.1 The Voter's 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 Voter's Assembly.

6.2 All matters shall be decided by a majority vote of the Voter's Assembly unless otherwise specified by this constitution or bylaws, including matters of doctrine and conscience, which shall be decided only on the basis of the Word of God.

6.3 The right of calling ordained or commissioned ministers shall be vested in the Voter's Assembly and shall not be delegated otherwise.

## **7.0 OFFICERS AND MINISTRY TEAMS**

This congregation shall have the following officers and ministry teams in addition to any which the congregation shall authorize from time to time:

### **7.1 Officers**

#### *7.1.1 The President shall:*

7.1.1 Preside over all meetings of the congregation and the Board of Directors.

7.1.2 Call a meeting of the Board of Directors whenever he shall deem it necessary, and generally discharge such duties as may be required of him by the Bylaws.

7.1.3 Be advisory member of all boards and committees. He shall be welcome at any and all meetings of such groups either in person or represented by such person or persons as he may appoint.

7.1.4 To the best of his ability enforce the Constitution and Bylaws of the congregation and carry out the expressed will of the congregation as embodied in the resolution of the voting membership.

7.1.5 Endeavor to coordinate the functions, plans, and activities of the congregation in all its parts for the advancement of the work of Christ's Kingdom in our midst.

7.1.6 The president shall assume the role of Past President at the conclusion of his term.

#### *7.1.2 The Vice President shall:*

7.1.2.1 Attend all meetings of the Board of Directors and Voter's Assembly and shall preside in the absence of the President.

7.1.2.2 Fill the un-expired term of the President in case of his death, disability, resignation, or removal.

7.1.2.3 Assume the office of President the following year subject to congregational approval.

7.1.2.4 The Vice President shall serve as chairman of the Stewardship Ministry Team.

#### *7.1.3 The Secretary shall:*

7.1.3.1 Attend and keep a correct, permanent record of the proceedings of congregational meetings and Board of Directors meetings and make such records available to the congregation.

7.1.3.2 Submit the records for revision and final approval at the next regular meeting.

7.1.3.3 Carry on all correspondence required for this office.

#### *7.1.4 The Financial Secretary shall:*

7.1.4.1 Attend meetings of the Board of Directors and Voter's Assembly.

7.1.4.2 Be responsible with at least one other member for immediate counting, recording, and depositing of the Church offerings for each service.

7.1.4.3 Assign envelopes and record envelope numbers for each member.

7.1.4.4 Issue quarterly statements to each communicant member.

7.1.4.5 Present reports of contributions at all regular meetings of the Board of Directors and at all regular congregational meetings.

*7.1.5 The Treasurer shall:*

- 7.1.5.1 Attend all meetings of the Board of Directors and Voter's Assembly.
- 7.1.5.2 Be responsible for the paying bills. Unbudgeted expenses should be approved by the Board of Directors.
- 7.1.5.3 Keeping an accurate account in a cash journal of all receipts and expenditures, and rendering a statement to the Board of Directors and Voter's Assembly at each meeting.
- 7.1.5.4 Render an annual statement of the financial condition of the congregation at the close of the fiscal year.
- 7.1.5.5 Submit all records for audit either at the close of the fiscal year or when requested by the Board of Directors.
- 7.1.5.6 Maintaining a general ledger showing all assets and liabilities of the congregation, making an annual report to the congregation on this matter.
- 7.1.5.7 Prepare and present the annual Ministry Plan (budget) to the congregation.

*7.1.6 The Assistant Treasurer shall:*

- 7.1.6.1 Attend all meetings of the Board of Directors and Voter's Assembly.
- 7.1.6.2 Work with the treasurer in paying bills and maintaining financial records.
- 7.1.6.3 Assist the treasurer in rendering of both monthly and annual financial statements of the congregation.
- 7.1.6.4 Work with the treasurer in preparation and presentation of congregation's annual Ministry Plan (budget).
- 7.1.6.5 Working with the treasurer, work shall be divided between the treasurer and assistant treasurer.

*7.1.7 The Past President shall:*

- 7.1.7.1 Attend all meetings of the Board of Directors and Voter's Assembly.
- 7.1.7.2 Assist the President and Vice President in any areas as able.
- 7.1.7.3 Serve as Parliamentarian

**7.2 Ministry Teams**

- 7.2.1 An *Elders* ministry team, consisting of a minimum of 5 men which shall assist the pastor in the spiritual life of the congregation.
- 7.2.2 A *Trustees* ministry team, consisting of a minimum of 5 persons which shall be responsible for the physical properties of the congregation.
- 7.2.3 A *Christian Growth & Discipleship* ministry team, consisting of a minimum of 5 persons which shall be responsible for the nurture and Christian growth of the members of the congregation. Should the congregation be privileged to have a Director of Christian Education (DCE), he/she shall be an ex-officio member of this team.
- 7.2.4 An *Evangelism* ministry team, consisting of a minimum of 4 persons which shall lead the members of the congregation in outreach to others in the community.
- 7.2.5 A *Stewardship & Human Care* ministry team consisting of a minimum of 4 persons which shall be charged with the stimulation of the people to a proper stewardship of time, talents and treasures and Christian service to others through the use of their gifts.

7.2.6 A *Health* ministry team consisting of a minimum of 4 persons who are health care professionals (active or retired) to lead the congregation in the care and stewardship of their physical and mental health.

7.2.7 A *Youth* ministry team consisting of a minimum of 5 individuals which shall have oversight of the congregations youth ministries. Should the congregation be privileged to have a DCE, he/she shall be an ex-officio member of this team.

7.2.8 A *Fellowship* ministry team consisting of a minimum of 5 individuals which shall be charged with promoting opportunities for Christian fellowship among members and non-members of the congregation.

7.2.9 The Pastor, by virtue of his call, shall be an ex-officio member of all ministry teams and boards in the congregation.

### **7.3 Removal from Office**

Any officer or board member may be removed from office by the Voter's Assembly by a two-thirds majority ballot vote, in Christian 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.

## **8.0 SYNODICAL MEMBERSHIP**

8.1 This congregation shall be affiliated with The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the District in which it is located as long as the confessions and constitution of said Synod and District are in accord with the confession and Constitution of this congregation.

8.2 This congregation shall, to the best of its ability, collaborate with said Synod and assist in effecting all sound measures intended for the building up of the Kingdom of God.

## **9.0 DIVISION**

9.1 If at any time a division should take place for any reason, 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 the confessional standards set forth in this constitution, as determined by the dispute resolution process described in the Bylaws of the Synod.

9.2 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.

## **10.0 MEETINGS**

Regular meetings of the Voter's Assembly shall be held as determined in the Bylaws. Announcement of the meeting shall be made in the services of the two previous Sundays. Special meetings require announcement in services in the two previous Sundays or notification by mail and announcement in the services of one previous Sunday. Such special meetings may be called at the request of the Pastor, president of the congregation, majority of the Elders, a majority of the Board of Directors or one-third or more voting members.

## **11.0 QUORUM**

A quorum for all properly called meetings shall consist of 10% of voters.

## **12.0 LIMITATIONS ON HOLDING OFFICE**

Members who have reached the voting age of 18 and are in good standing, may serve as an officer of the congregation and on any of the congregation's ministry teams. However, we recognize the limitations that Scripture does place on those serving in the church namely; Women who have reached the age of 18 may hold voting membership in the congregation and serve as officers and as members of ministry teams and committees as long as these positions are not directly involved in the specific functions of the pastoral office (preaching, the public administration of the sacraments, church discipline) and as long as this service does not violate the order of creation. Accordingly, women shall not serve as pastor, or as a member of the Elders ministry team. (revised 2005)

## **13.0 AMENDMENTS**

13.1 Amendments to provisions of this constitution except Sections 2.0, 3.0, 5.0, 8.0, and 13.0 may be adopted at a regular voter's meeting, except as hereinafter provided:

13.1.1 That the proposed amendment has been submitted in writing at a previous meeting of the Voter's Assembly and published by posting in a conspicuous place in the church or by mail to all communicant members of the congregation prior to the meeting at which the proposed amendment will be acted upon;

13.1.2 That an affirmative vote of a two-thirds majority of the voters present is secured.

13.2 In addition to the above requirements, proposals to amend Sections 2.0, 3.0, 5.0, 8.0, and 13.0 shall require that previous notice of such amendment and discussion of the same shall be presented at two regular meetings of the Voter's Assembly before the meeting at which the proposed amendment is to receive action. Due notice of the fact that a vote will be taken shall be given to all voting members of the congregation. Any changes in these articles shall not destroy the essential meaning of the same. Whether or not this has occurred shall be decided, if challenged, by a decision by the dispute resolution process described in the Bylaws of the Synod.



# BYLAWS

## **14.0 PROCEDURES FOR CALLING ORDAINED AND COMMISSIONED MINISTERS**

14.1 When a pastor or commissioned minister (i.e. teacher, DCE, etc) is to be called, every member of the congregation shall have the privilege of making one or more nominations. The congregation shall also ask the President of the synodical District for recommendations.

In the case of a pastoral call the Elders ministry team may serve as the screening committee, and in the case of the calling of a teacher the Board of Education may perform that function. For the calling of other staff (DCE etc.) the pastor and president shall recommend to the Board of Directors a “call committee” which shall be a cross-section of the congregation to perform the necessary functions.

14.2 In the screening process the respective board or committee shall submit all names to the respective District President for information and evaluation. After receiving information and recommendations from the District President, the respective board or committee shall present to the congregation by means of a public announcement, at least 3 preferred candidates, together with a biographical sketch of each.

14.3 At the voter’s meeting, called for the purpose of electing/calling a new pastor, or other staff member, the preferred list may be amended by means of a two-thirds vote of those present. At that point the Voter’s Assembly shall be asked to agree to be satisfied with whatever selection is finally made by the Voter’s Assembly.

14.4 Balloting shall proceed by means of a secret ballot vote. A majority is needed in order to determine the disposition of the call.

## **15.0 BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

### **15.1 Membership**

The Board of Directors shall consist of the president, the vice-president, the secretary, the treasurer of the congregation, the assistant treasurer, the financial secretary, past president of the congregation, the chairman (or designate) of Elders, Christian Growth & Discipleship, Trustees, Fellowship, Stewardship & Human Care, Youth, Evangelism and Health Ministry. The pastor (and DCE and/or principal) shall be an advisory member of the Board of Directors. The President and secretary of the congregation shall serve as president and secretary of the Board of Directors.

### **15.2 Meetings**

The Board of Directors shall preferably meet monthly in regular sessions and at least quarterly. Special meetings may be called by the president or pastor or any three members of the Board of Directors by contacting each member of the Board of Directors at least 24 hours in advance. A majority of the voting members of the board shall constitute a quorum. Notices of monthly meetings will be placed in church newsletter and Sunday bulletins. Members are invited and encouraged to attend these meetings. To make a presentation at any Board of Directors meeting, the member must request, at least 24 hours in advance, to be placed on the agenda and the topic they would like to speak towards by contacting the church office and congregation president.

### **15.3 Duties**

It shall be the principal duty of the Board of Directors to coordinate the programs and activities of the various ministry teams and auxiliaries (LWML, Thrivent etc.) of the congregation. It shall have power to act on behalf of the congregation between meetings of the Voter's Assembly.

### **15.4 Ownership & Management**

This congregation shall receive, acquire, hold title to, and manage such real estate and other property as it may need to accomplish its purposes. Everything owned by the congregation, whether movable or fixed, is the estate of the whole congregation. This congregation, through its voting membership, may sell or dispose of such real estate and other property or any part thereof. The President and/or the Vice President of the congregation along with the secretary, shall execute as needed any documents related to ownership and property on behalf of the congregation with prior approval given through a Voter's Assembly. This congregation shall have all the rights and powers that are granted by the laws of the State of Florida to religious corporations.

## **16.0 NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS**

16.1 A nominating committee, chosen by the Board of Directors, shall present a slate of candidates for all elected offices. The slate shall whenever possible consist of at least two names for each office. Additional nominations may be made from the floor. No person shall be nominated without his or her consent.

16.2 All officers except the Past President shall be elected by a majority vote and voting shall continue until a clear majority has been established after candidates receiving the lowest number of votes have been eliminated in each succeeding ballot.

16.3 The officers are elected for a term of one (1) year. The President and Past President may not succeed themselves in office.

16.4 Officers and ministry team members shall be inducted into office in a public service of the congregation prior to January 1<sup>st</sup>.

16.5 In case of a vacancy in an elective office, the Board of Directors may appoint a member to fill the vacancy until the nomination can be brought before the voters at the next scheduled meeting.

## **17.0 OFFICIAL DUTIES**

Officers and members of ministry teams shall perform the duties prescribed in the constitution. The congregation shall also have the privilege from time to time of detailing and enlarging these responsibilities by majority vote of the Voter's Assembly. It may also call such other boards and committees into being as it may need from time to time.

## **18.0 MEETINGS**

18.1 The regular meetings of the Voter's Assembly shall be held in the months of November and May.

18.2 Notice of time and place of all said meetings shall be given at the regular Sunday morning services preceding the date of such meeting and said notice shall be given at least two (2) weeks before such date.

18.3 Special meetings of the congregation may be called by the Pastor, the President, by a majority the Elders Ministry Team, a majority of the Board of Directors, or upon a written request of at least one-third (1/3), of the membership of the congregational

assembly. Notice of the time and place of special meetings and their purposes shall be given at the regular Sunday morning services preceding the date of such special meeting or a notice of such special meeting, in the Sunday Bulletin, given orally, or by depositing a written copy thereof in the mail, addressed to each voting member at least three (3) days prior to the date of such meeting.

18.4 All reports for the voter's meeting will be submitted in writing to the church office (by announced date) and submitted to voters at least one (1) week prior to the voters meeting.

18.5 The November meeting shall be the annual meeting of the voters and at that meeting, the voters of the congregation will elect new officers and ministry teams and adopt the ministry plan (a.k.a. budget) for the year beginning January 1<sup>st</sup>.

18.6 The use of proxy votes shall not be accepted at any meeting of the voter's assembly.

18.7 The order of business at regular voter's meetings normally include:

- Opening Devotions
- Acceptance of Minutes
- Membership Matters
- Report of the Pastor
- Report of Principal, DCE etc.
- Report of Ministry Teams
- Financial Reports
- Old Business
- New Business
- Adjournment & prayer

## **19.0 RULES OF ORDER**

In addition to principles laid down in Scripture, the latest edition of *Robert's Rules of Order* shall be followed and a current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order* readily available should the need arise.

## **20.0 AMENDMENTS**

These bylaws may be amended in a properly convened meeting of the Voter's Assembly by a majority of all voting members present, provided the proposed change has been announced in a previous meeting or has been submitted in writing at least two weeks prior to the meeting to all communicant members.

REVISION: MAY 15, 2005 (adopted by voters)... 12.0 (Limitations on holding office)

Change last full sentence to read... *Accordingly, women may not as pastor or as members of the Elders Ministry Team.*