

**CONSTITUTION
MESSIAH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
SANTA CRUZ, CA 95066**

Adopted: May 22, 2002

PREAMBLE

Whereas, the Word of God demands that a Christian congregation not only conforms to the Word of God in doctrine and practice (Psalm 119:106, Gal. 1:6-8, 2 Tim. 4:1-5, Titus 1:9), but also that all things be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40); therefore, we, the members of Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church of Santa Cruz, California, set forth by this constitution and bylaws the procedure and manner in which our congregational affairs, spiritual and material, shall be conducted.

ARTICLE I – NAME

The name of this congregation shall be Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church of Santa Cruz, California. Wherever the “congregation” is used in this constitution or bylaws, it shall also refer to and be synonymous with the word “corporation”.

ARTICLE II – MISSION STATEMENT

Messiah Lutheran congregation is to make disciples, reaching out with Jesus Christ as Savior, and sharing His Word and service of love with people in the whole community.

ARTICLE III – CONFESSIONAL STANDARD

This congregation acknowledges and accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testament as the revealed Word of God, verbally inspired, and acknowledges and accepts all the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, contained in the Book of Concord of 1580, the true and genuine exposition of the doctrines of the Bible. These symbolical books are: the three ecumenical creeds (The Apostles' Creed, The Nicene Creed, and 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. No doctrine or practice shall be taught or tolerated which is at variance with the above mentioned symbols. This article shall not be altered or amended except by the unanimous vote or written consent of all those entitled to vote.

ARTICLE IV – OBJECT AND PURPOSE

The object and purposes for which this corporation is formed, besides those stated in the Articles of Incorporation, are:

1. to preach the Word of God and to administer the Sacraments.
2. to establish and maintain in our midst the office of the Christian Ministry in order that we might be equipped for our work of ministry in God's universe.
3. to attempt in every way possible to be God's people in the universe on His mission proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ through both Word and deed.
4. to establish and maintain agencies for Christian worship, education and service, such as regular worship services, Sunday school and Bible classes, Christian Day school, vacation Bible school, midweek school, special seminars, retreats, institutes, programs for family devotions, programs for social ministry, social welfare work and other creative forms of ministry which may be needed or feasible.
5. to contract with persons, firms and corporations to do all other acts necessary or expedient for the administration of the affairs of the congregation to attain the objectives and purposes for which this corporation is formed.
6. to acquire or build any structure suitable for human habitation which the congregation deems necessary.

ARTICLE V – MEMBERSHIP

The membership of this congregation includes the following:

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 and the congregation.
2. *Communicant* members are those members who accept the confessional standard of Article III of this constitution, are familiar at least with the contents of *Luther's Small Catechism* and are not members of organizations whose principles and conduct conflict with the Word of God.
3. *Confirmed* members are those who have received the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and have been confirmed in the Lutheran faith.
4. *Voting* members are all confirmed members.

ARTICLE VI – AUTHORITY OF THE CONGREGATION

The voters 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 or related directly to it shall be subject to the approval and supervision of the voters assembly.

All matters shall be decided by a simple majority vote of the voters assembly unless otherwise specified by this constitution or the bylaws. Matters of doctrine and conscience shall be decided only on the basis of the Word of God.

ARTICLE VII – PASTORS AND OTHER PROFESSIONAL CHURCH WORKERS

The right of calling pastors and other professional church workers shall be vested in the voters assembly and shall not be delegated otherwise.

The pastoral office is the authority conferred upon pastors by God, through a call of the congregation to exercise in public office the common rights of spiritual priesthood. It shall be conferred only on a pastor or candidate who professes and adheres to the confessional standard set forth in Article III of this constitution, who is qualified for his work, who has submitted a self-characterization or who has been characterized by the District President, and who is on the clergy roster of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.

Any pastor or other called professional church worker may be removed from office by the voters assembly by a two-thirds (2/3) majority ballot vote conducted in a 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 to which he/she has been called.

The voters assembly may request the resignation of any pastor, called professional church worker or officer of the congregation from his/her position in the case of prolonged incapacity or general incompetence.

ARTICLE VIII – OFFICERS AND BOARDS

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

1. A president who shall preside over the meetings of the voters assembly and the church council and shall generally supervise the administration and is ex-officio, without vote, in the various committees/boards of the congregation. He, together with the secretary, shall sign all legal documents on behalf of the corporation.
2. A vice-president who will fill the role of the president in the event of the president's absence or inability to act. He will also serve as the Circuit Representative of the congregation.
3. A secretary who shall be responsible for those duties ordinarily expected of him/her in both the voters assembly and the Church Council. The secretary, together with the president, shall sign all legal documents on behalf of the corporation.
4. A treasurer who shall be responsible for disbursing all monies of the congregation.
5. A Board of Elders who shall assist the pastor(s) in all matters pertaining to the spiritual welfare of the congregation. In the event the president and vice-president of the congregation are absent or incapacitated for any reason, the chairman of the Board of Elders shall be the active presiding officer of the church council.
6. A Board of Finance who will be responsible for the receipt and accounting of all donations and for the fiscal management of the congregation with the advice and consent of the church council.

7. A Board of Stewardship who shall be responsible for a program to assist all members of the congregation to better understand the principles and practices of Christian stewardship,
8. A Board of Education who shall be responsible for the nurture and Christian growth of the members of the congregation by providing a solid Christian foundation upon which a person may build and maintain a life-long relationship with Christ.
9. A Board of Christian Pre/Day School, who shall be responsible for the management, operation and curriculum of the pre/day school with the approval of the church council.
10. A Board of Property Management who shall be responsible for the management of the property of the congregation.
11. A Board of Evangelism who shall lead the members of the congregation in outreach to others in the community.
12. A Board of Social Ministry and welfare who shall be responsive to the needs of people who have suffered grief through death, tragedy or illness in the lives of family members.
13. A Board of Fellowship who shall be responsible for congregational fellowship events for the enjoyment and edification of the church membership.
14. A Board of Youth who shall plan and develop programs to involve the young people of the congregation and community in the work of Christ, provide for their spiritual growth and nurture and to promote genuine Christian fellowship for the young people.

ARTICLE IX – SYNODICAL MEMBERSHIP

This congregation shall be a member of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod as long as the synod conforms to the congregation's confessional standards set forth in Article III of this constitution as determined by a simple majority vote of the voters assembly at a meeting called for that purpose.

ARTICLE X – DISSOLUTION OR SEPARATION

The congregation can not be dissolved except by two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the voters assembly.

If at any time a separation should take place within this congregation, which God in mercy prevent, the advice of the officers of the California-Nevada-Hawaii District of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod shall be sought. If despite all efforts to resolve these differences in peace and love, the ownership of the property of the congregation, together with all interest and assets connected therewith, determined by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the voters assembly at a special meeting called for that purpose, shall remain with those members who continue to adhere to the confession and practice stated in Article III of this constitution.

In case of dissolution the administration of the property of the congregation shall be entrusted to the District of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (or its legally constituted successor) of which the congregation was a member.

ARTICLE XI – AMENDMENTS

The proposals to change the constitution may be offered by any member of the voters assembly. Such proposals shall be given in writing to the president, who in turn will refer them to the Church Council for special study. The church council shall draft suitable resolutions concerning the proposals. These shall be distributed to the voting membership not less than two (2) weeks prior to the meeting at which they are to be considered. A two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the members in attendance at the meeting is necessary to make the adoption of an amendment valid, except Article III which shall not be altered or amended except by unanimous vote or written consent of the entire voting membership.