

CONSTITUTION

This Constitution was adopted by a lawful meeting of the Voters Assembly of Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church on June 5, 2016. It replaces all previous constitutions of Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church.

PREAMBLE

It is the will of our Lord Jesus Christ that His disciples should preach the Gospel to the whole world (Mark 16:16; Matt. 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 (Heb. 10:24-25), practice fellowship with one another (Acts 2:42), witness to all people (Acts 1:8), help each other grow in the Word (Eph. 4:7-16; Mark 10:42-44; John 13:35; Gal. 6:10; Matt. 25:31-46), administer the Office of the Keys as His Church (John 20:21-23; Matt. 18:15-20), encourage the gifts of the Spirit (I Cor. 12 to 14), and maintain decency and order (I Cor. 14:40) in the Church.

Therefore we, a number of Lutheran Christians living in and near the community of Santa Cruz, CA, 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 this congregation shall be Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church located in Santa Cruz, California ("Congregation").

ARTICLE 2: MISSION & PURPOSE

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

Purpose: The purposes of the Congregation shall be to maintain the office of the Christian ministry in our midst; to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our own community, in our nation, and throughout the world in obedience to the command of Jesus; to foster Christian education among our children, youth, and adults; to foster Christian fellowship and charity; and to encourage growth in Christian stewardship.

We believe that God, through Jesus Christ, has called us together into a congregation; that He has given us to each other; and that He has made us responsible for and to each other. In this Congregation every person is important and vital, and every person has a role and task to perform.

We believe that our Congregation has been chosen by God to be a model to our community, showing the power and reality of His love. In the life and activity of our Congregation, the world should be able to see reflected the life and activity of God.

We believe that our Congregation has been chosen by God to be the dwelling place of His Spirit and has been destined by Him to be shaped into the image of His Son, Jesus.

We believe that in the activity of worship Jesus Christ is present among us as the power of God, to strengthen our faith in Him and to empower us to be His servants in the world.

We expect each other to be committed to God. By this we mean that we call each other to live our total lives in trust and obedience to God. We take seriously the Word of Jesus, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be yours as well."

We expect each other to be deeply involved in the corporate worship life of the Congregation. We also encourage each other in daily devotional life. We emphasize Bible reading and study because we believe that in the Scriptures God speaks to us and gives us direction and power for life.

We expect each other to take seriously the fact that each of us is an integral part of a living body called Bethlehem Congregation, and that this body can function well only as each of us does his or her proper part.

We expect each other to give sacrificially of our time, ability, and money.

We expect each other to be concerned about the world in which we live and to view it as the place in which we are to practice a life of servanthood.

ARTICLE 3: CONFESSION OF FAITH

This Congregation accepts and acknowledges

- A. All the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments (66 in number) as the inspired and revealed Word of God and as the only rule and standard with which all doctrine in the Congregation must agree and according to which all doctrinal and religious controversies must be decided and regulated; and
- B. the Symbolical Books as contained in the Book of Concord of 1580 (because they are taken from the Word of God and agree with it), as true and genuine exposition of the teachings of the Bible. These books are:
 - 1. the three Ecumenical Creeds (Apostolic, Nicene, and Athanasian);
 - 2. the Unaltered Augsburg Confession;
 - 3. the Apology of the Augsburg Confession;

4. the Smalcald Articles;
5. the Large and Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther; and
6. the Formula of Concord.

ARTICLE 4: SYNODICAL AFFILIATION

This congregation shall be a member of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod as long as the Synod conforms to the congregation's confessional standards as set forth in this constitution.

ARTICLE 5: MEMBERSHIP

- A. Baptized membership in this Congregation is held by all who have received Christian Baptism and are under our pastoral care.
- B. Communing membership in this Congregation is held by all those people who have received instruction preparing them for Holy Communion, including those who are not yet confirmed.
- C. Confirmed membership in this Congregation may be held only by those who
 1. are baptized in the Name of the Triune God;
 2. have received instruction preparing them for Holy Communion;
 3. have declared their acceptance of the confessions of this Congregation as contained in Article 3 of this Constitution;
 4. have been accepted into confirmed membership in accordance with the Bylaws of this Congregation; and
 5. who responsibly maintain this membership.
- D. Voting membership.
 1. All confirmed members shall be eligible to become voting members as provided in the Bylaws.
 2. The voting privilege shall be restricted to California legal age on matters requiring legal decision.

ARTICLE 6: AUTHORITY OF THE VOTER ASSEMBLY

The voters assembly shall administer and manage all substantive powers in this congregation as set forth in the bylaws.

- A. The voters assembly shall be represented by, and administer all of its affairs through, the Board of Directors. All matters before the voters assembly shall be decided by a majority vote unless otherwise specified by this constitution or the bylaws.

- B. The voters retain the right to deal with real and personal property, as set forth in Article 8 below.
- C. The Board of Directors shall exercise only that authority not limited by the bylaws of the congregation. The establishment and conduct of all organizations within the congregation or related directly to the congregation shall be subject to the overall authority and general oversight of the Board of Directors or its delegated authority.

ARTICLE 7: OFFICERS

This Congregation shall have such officers and boards as provided in its bylaws, in addition to any that the Congregation shall establish from time to time.

ARTICLE 8: CALLED CHURCH WORKERS

The voters assembly of this congregation shall have the exclusive right to call a senior pastor. The right to call other ordained or commissioned ministers belongs to the Board of Directors.

- A. The pastoral office shall be conferred only upon pastors or candidates who profess and adhere to the confessional standard set forth in this constitution, who are qualified for the work of the ministry, and who have been endorsed by and are members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.
- B. Only those commissioned ministers shall receive a call who adhere to the confessional standard set forth in this constitution, who are qualified for the work of the ministry to which they are called, and who have been endorsed by and are members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.
- C. The senior pastor may be removed from office in Christian and lawful order by a two-thirds majority ballot vote of the voters assembly for one of the following reasons: persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, willful neglect of the duties of office, or the inability to perform those duties.
- D. Other ordained or commissioned ministers may be removed from office in Christian and lawful order by a two-thirds majority ballot vote of the Board of Directors for one of the following reasons: persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, willful neglect of the duties of office, the inability to perform those duties, and an unwillingness to cooperatively work with the senior pastor.
- E. When a vacancy occurs in an office of the pastor, the Board of Directors shall notify the president of the district to receive assistance in temporarily filling the vacancy and to receive his counsel in calling a new senior pastor.

ARTICLE 9: PROPERTY RIGHTS

All property of this congregation shall be held in the corporate name as stated in Article 1. This congregation may receive, acquire, hold title to, and manage real and personal property, and may erect structure(s) thereon, mortgage, sell, or convey such real or personal property or any part thereof. A two-thirds affirmative vote of the voters present

at a regular or specially called voters assembly shall be required for adoption for the purchase of sale of real property or erection of buildings.

ARTICLE 10: DIVISION & DISSOLUTION

- A. If at any time, a division of the congregation should take place for any reason, the following principles will govern. 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.
- B. If the congregation dissolves, all property shall be disposed of by the final voters assembly for the payment of debts and all just claims against the congregation, and any and all surplus and all rights connected therewith shall be conveyed to and become the property of the California-Nevada-Hawaii District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod or its successor.

ARTICLE 11: AMENDMENTS

This constitution may be amended in the following manner:

Amendments to the provisions of this constitution not identified in the following paragraph shall be submitted in writing at a duly-called voters assembly and announced to the congregation by public posting and/or mail to all communicant members thirty (30) days before the assembly at which the proposed amendment will be acted upon. A two-thirds affirmative vote of the voters present shall be required for adoption. Amendments to this constitution shall not destroy their essential meaning. The date of approval shall be referenced in any adopted amendment. The revised constitution shall, as a condition of continued membership in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, be submitted to the president of the CNH District for review by the district's constitution committee and favorable action by the district's Board of Directors before being implemented by the congregation.

Date Adopted _____

President signature _____

Secretary signature _____

Pastor signature _____