

The ByLaws  
of  
**St. John Lutheran Church**  
**Missouri Synod**

700 Heritage Road  
Luxemburg, WI 54217

## **Article I – Name**

Since this congregation is dedicated to the grace of God, especially as revealed in the inspired writings of St. John, we shall offer special prayers of thanks for God's gracious mercy each fourth Sunday in October and on the first Sunday after Christmas.

## **Article II – Confession of Faith**

In accepting the Sacred Scriptures and the Book of Concord, the congregation shall always try to make its members familiar with these documents through Bible Classes, lectures, church libraries, topics, instruction classes, and tracts.

## **Article III – Purpose**

The pastor and elders shall always endeavor to hold before the congregation as a whole the God-given reasons for its existence described in Article II of this constitution, so that its functions and activities do not contradict those purposes.

## **Article IV – Membership**

### **A. Baptized Membership**

1. A person baptized within the congregation should have at least two Christian's sponsors who can make the promises of sponsors from The Lutheran Agenda without any mental reservations. All others may be witnesses. A baptismal certificate shall be given by the pastor.
2. If a child of communicant members is baptized in an emergency, and the child lives, this child shall be considered a baptized member of this congregation upon public ratification of the emergency baptism.
3. Children properly baptized in another Christian congregation may be declared baptized members of this congregation when their parents or guardians have given their consent or have been properly admitted into communicant membership.
4. It is expected that baptized members will wish to learn God's Word throughout their life. If a member, baptized as an infant, is unwilling (though mentally able) to be admitted into communicant membership through instruction and confirmation, such a person shall no longer be considered a baptized member of this congregation after the age of 18.

### **B. Communicant Membership**

#### **1. Admission Into Communicant Membership**

- a. Baptized persons shall receive Christian instruction in the Sacred Scriptures and the Lutheran Creeds (especially *Luther's Small Catechism*) so that they might pledge their willing allegiance to Christ, remember their covenant with God in Holy Baptism, be spiritually prepared to receive

Holy Communion, and understand and accept the beliefs and practices of the Lutheran branch of the Church. When a person is well-prepared in mind and heart, especially when he is sorry for sin, intends to do better, believes the Gospel of forgiveness, and “discerns the Body of Christ” in the Blessed Sacrament, he will be given permission by the pastor and elders to share Holy Communion.

- b. Adults who have not been baptized shall be instructed in the Sacred Scriptures and the Lutheran Creeds. When they are well prepared in mind and heart, they shall be baptized and confirmed (either publicly or before at least two elders).
- c. Baptized and confirmed Lutherans, who have lost communicant membership through inactivity, self-exclusion, or excommunication, shall be readmitted to communicant membership through reaffirmation of faith (before at least two elders) after thorough instruction by the pastor.
- d. Baptized and confirmed Lutherans being transferred to this congregation shall be received by the pastor and elders, provided that there are no doctrinal or moral impediments. The degree of instruction or orientation shall be left to the pastor’s discretion. This action shall be reported to the next voters’ assembly.

## 2. **Termination of Communicant Membership**

- a. A communicant member desiring to join a congregation, which is in church fellowship with us, shall present their request for transfer to the pastor and elders to whom authority is granted to issue such transfers. Such transfer of membership shall be reported to the voters’ assembly.
- b. If a communicant member joins another congregation outside of our fellowship, he shall be considered to have terminated his membership, and, upon recommendation of the pastor and elders, his name shall be removed from the membership list by a resolution of the voters’ assembly.
- c. A member who is inactive in spite of Christian admonition (*Article V*) or whose whereabouts is unknown and cannot be established shall have his membership terminated by the voters’ assembly after one year of inactivity.
- d. A member who renounces his faith or denies it by an ungodly life, and refuses all Christian admonition, shall be declared excommunicated by the voters’ assembly.
- e. When communicant membership has been terminated, such a person loses all communicant rights as well as all claims to property of the congregation. (Regarding burial privileges in the congregation’s cemetery for former members, see the *Cemetery Constitution*.)

## C. **Voting Membership**

Every voting member is expected to attend the meetings of the voters’ assembly, accept nomination for office and committee appointments if qualified, and generally participate in the activities of the voters’ assembly.

## **Article V – Admonition of Members to Their Christian Duties**

Any member who takes his responsibilities lightly shall be admonished according to *Matthew 18:15-17*. If one does not participate in the Holy Communion often during the year, he shall be visited by pastor and elders (*Preface, Small Catechism #22*). If one does not have his children baptized or instructed in God's Church of the time, talents, and possessions which God has given him shall be warned concerning God's judgment (*Luke 19:11-26*). Any member who denies his faith through unchristian action is to be corrected in an evangelical way, especially who show bitterness or hatred, who join or support antichristian organizations, and who make oaths or promises which deny any part of the faith.

## **Article VI – The Congregation**

### **A. The Congregation under God**

1. The pastor shall guide the congregation's thought and keep the members informed concerning The implications of *Article II* of this constitution when a congregational decision is determined by the Scriptures and the Confessions.
2. The congregation follows those Christian traditions (received by the Lutheran Church), which are in agreement with God's Word, teach the doctrine of the Gospel, and are practical for this congregation. (See also *VI, B*)

### **B. Doctrinal Literature in the Congregation**

Whenever a member believes that he recognizes a congregational violation of the Scriptures and the Confessions, he shall bring it to the attention of the pastor and the church council. The president shall then appoint a committee, which, together with the pastor, shall study the claim in the light of the related Scripture passages and sections of the Confessions and shall report to the Council. This committee is encouraged to consul district officials and other authorities as well. If it is discovered that the Scriptures and the Lutheran Creeds have not been followed in past congregational action or literature, the congregation shall declare its penitence, correct its error, and record the same in the minutes.

### **C. The Right of Pastoral Calling**

1. When a vacancy in the pastoral office occurs, the elders shall consult the circuit counselor and/or the district president, and shall obtain a list of candidates to be presented to a lawfully convened voters' assembly. The congregation may exercise the right to investigate or interview the candidates prior to calling.
2. The election shall be by ballot. The candidate receiving the majority of the votes cast will be considered elected. Unless an individual's conscience dictates otherwise for doctrinal or moral reasons, the assembly shall make the election unanimous by a rising vote.
3. The "solemn call" shall then be read aloud to the assembly and sent to the pastor elect, along with a copy of this constitution and bylaws.

4. After the pastor-elect has accepted the call, he shall be installed according to the Lutheran rite by the district president or his appointee.

#### **D. Synodical Affiliation**

The congregation shall send its pastor and a lay delegate to each convention or required conference of the North Wisconsin District of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. The parish shall pray for the District and Synod, defend them, petition them when reform is needed, and participate in their programs whenever possible or practical.

#### **E. Congregational Organizations**

When five or more communicants wish to form an organization within the congregation, they shall present a proposed constitution or statement of purpose to the church council. The Council shall approve of such organization or give reasons for denying such approval.

#### **F. Property Rights**

Our faithfulness to Holy Scripture and the Book of Concord should be able to resolve any strife or dissension among us (see *Augsburg Confession VII, Constitution and Bylaws Article VI A, B; Bylaws VII, B*). If, in spite of the principles and procedures outlined above, some would persist in false doctrine (which should be settled simply by God's Word) or in division over human matters not determined by God's Word (which should be peaceably resolved by majority vote), and schism threatens, the church council shall request that the circuit counselor and/or the district president visit the congregation. They may, in cooperation with the church council, mediate the dispute on the basis of Article II of the constitution, assist with advice in the discipline of the erring party, or give other aid as the situation demands.

### **Article VII – The Pastor**

#### **A. Activities**

In the performance of his duties the pastor normally will meet with all boards and committees. The pastor may engage in activities not directly related to his ministry provided that his full-time responsibilities described in *Article VII (B)* of this constitution are not thereby impaired.

#### **B. Termination of Office**

1. **Reception of a Call**. If the pastor receives a call to serve another congregation (or some other area of church work), he shall notify the congregation within seven days, and a special meeting shall be called within 30 days. The pastor and the members shall discuss the call in light of the needs of the Church and of this parish. The congregation recognizes, however, that the ultimate decision is in the hands of the pastor. If the call is accepted, the pastor will continue to serve at least 30 days.
2. **Inability to Perform the Office**. If the pastor is unable to fulfill his office as described in the constitution, upon request of the elders or 1/3 of the voting membership, the president shall appoint

a committee to study the matter, or confer with the pastor, circuit counselor and district president, and report to the voters' assembly concerning the possibilities of obtaining an assistant, suggesting that the pastor retire, or directing the pastor to resign. If the latter request is made by an affirmative vote of at least 2/3 majority of those present, he shall end his official activities and vacate the church property as soon as practical.

3. **Refusal to Perform the Office**. If the pastor is unwilling to fulfill his office owing to indifference, immoral conduct, or false doctrine, the elders shall urgently admonish him. Failing this, they shall contact the circuit counselor and the district president to obtain guidance, advice, and possible help. If this does not correct the problem, the elders shall direct the president to call a voters' assembly and present the problem to the members (with the circuit counselor and, if possible, the district president present), and request that the pastor be deposed if he does not repent. If he continues impenitence in view of clear evidence of guilt, the assembly shall depose him by at least 2/3 affirmative vote of the members present. The pastor shall immediately end all official duties and vacate the church property within seven days, unless otherwise specified by state law.

## **Article VIII – Officers, Boards, and Committees**

### **A. The Church Council**

1. This body shall consist of the president; secretary; treasurer; and the boards of elders, trustees, stewardship, and education and financial secretary. The pastor will attend the meetings.
2. The council will meet at least quarterly, prior to the voters' assembly to consider and discuss all matters pertaining to the spiritual and material welfare of the congregation as presented by various board and to present recommendations to the voters' assembly. The council shall see that the decisions of the voters' assembly are carried out. The council may also authorize emergency actions by the various boards between regularly scheduled meetings of the voters' assembly.

### **B. The Voters' Assembly**

1. Regular meetings of the voters' assembly shall convene quarterly, in January, April, July, and October, date and time within the month to be set by the church council, and to be announced verbally and by the bulletin for two weeks prior to the meeting.
2. Normally, elections will take place in January, and the church budget will be adopted in October for the following fiscal calendar year. In the event of no business in July, the church council may cancel the meeting.
3. Special or emergency meetings of the voters' assembly, as well as meetings of the church council may be called by the board of elders, the pastor, or the president of the congregation as the need arises. Such special meeting of the voters and the purpose shall be announced in at least one public service, at least three days prior to the meeting.

### C. Elections

1. The church council will serve as a nominating committee to propose, if possible, a slate of two or more candidates for each elective office of the congregation. This slate shall be published in the bulletin prior to the January voters' meeting. The council shall give serious consideration to qualifications for office and secure the consent of the candidates to serve if elected. Only male voters may be elected to the offices of president and elders.
2. Additional nominations may be made from the floor, but they are not required. The election shall be by ballot, and each office shall be balloted separately. The officers-elect shall assume their respective duties following their installation. The first Sunday after the January meeting (or as soon thereafter as possible) is the date for the installation of officers.
3. In the event of a vacancy in any office, the president shall appoint a successor to serve until the next annual election. Officers shall hold office until their successors have been elected and installed. If an elected and installed officer is unwilling or unable to serve in his position, even after evangelical admonition, the president shall request his resignation and appoint a successor.
4. The term of office of the president, treasurer, and secretary shall be three years, eligible for reelection indefinitely. At least one officer shall be elected each year. The Financial Secretary's term is for one year and eligible for reelection. Members of the boards of elders, trustees, stewardship, and education shall be elected for a term of three years, at least one of the members to be elected each year. No board member shall hold office for more than one term on the same board. After one year he shall again be eligible to hold office in that board. Each board shall elect its chairman annually.
5. **(This proposed change would take the place of number 4 above) The term of office of the president, treasurer, financial secretary and secretary shall be three years. The treasurer and financial secretary are eligible for reelection indefinitely. The president and secretary can serve no more than two consecutive terms and are eligible for election to this office after taking one term off. At least one officer shall be elected each year. Members of the boards of elders, trustees, stewardship, evangelism and education shall be elected for a term of three years, at least one of the members to be elected each year. No board member shall hold office for more than one term on the same board. After one year he shall again be eligible to hold office in that board. Each board shall elect its chairman annually.**

### D. The President

The president shall preside over all assemblies and councils in accord with *Robert Rules of Order*. He shall hold ex officio membership on all boards and committees, and he shall appoint appointive committees. By resolution of the voters' assembly, he shall represent the congregation at all delegate meetings of the District or Synod, or shall appoint such representation. **(Proposed Change) In the event the Congregational President is unable to perform his duties (illness, etc.) the chairman of the Board of Elders shall assume the role of President.**

#### **E. The Secretary**

The secretary shall keep accurate minutes of all assemblies and councils, handle official correspondence, and assist the president in preparing each meeting's agenda.

#### **F. The Treasurer**

The treasurer shall have charge of the deposited monies and records pertaining to receipts and disbursements of the congregation, receive the monies, issue receipts, make the necessary disbursements, keep his books in an orderly manner, submit a report to each council and assembly of the monies received and disbursed compared with the budgeted amounts, and submit his books to an appointed audit committee annually.

#### **G. The Financial Secretary**

The Financial Secretary shall:

1. Be responsible for the financial receipts of the congregation, in particular, the offerings taken in church services, and their deposit, (minimum of bi-weekly) in the bank designated by Church Council.
2. Serve a term of (3) year.
3. Be responsible for the counting and recording of receipts in weekly contributions.
4. Submit reports of all receipts as required by Treasurer.
5. Appoint someone from the Finance Committee to handle duties when Financial Secretary is unable to attend and a minimum of (3) members, to be present to open and record weekly contributions.

The Finance Committee shall:

1. Consist of a minimum of (4) and a maximum of (6) members and serve a one-year term and be designated by the Church Council.
2. Assist the Financial Secretary in counting and recording of receipts in weekly contributions.

#### **H. The Board of Elders**

1. The board of elders shall consist of at least six members. It shall meet regularly and make reports to the church council and the voters' assembly.
2. The elders shall be a good example of Christian conduct and conversation. They shall be willing to become familiar with as well as accept the Augsburg Confession, Luther's Small Catechism, and the other creeds listed in *Article II* of this constitution.
3. They shall assist the pastor as he spiritually cares for God's people, e.g.:
  - a. They shall be concerned that good order is preserved in Worship Services.
  - b. They shall see that the congregation is led in general worship whenever an emergency arises in which a Lutheran clergyman of our confession cannot be obtained, using Lutheran worship aids from our Hymnal (appropriate for laymen), and reading the standard Epistle and Gospel.

- c. They shall make every effort to induce members to fulfill their responsibilities listed in Article V of this constitution, and work with the pastor in visiting, admonishing, and correcting those who fail to fulfill these responsibilities.
- d. They shall admonish the pastor when he neglects his responsibilities and lead the congregation in correcting the situation (*Article VII, B, 2&3* of these bylaws).
- e. They shall annually audit the church records of Word and Sacrament.

**I. The Board of Trustees**

1. The board shall consist of at least three members. It shall meet monthly and make reports to the church council and voters' assembly.
2. They shall administer the civil affairs and property of the congregation. They may make contracts, sign documents, appear in court, and transact all business of the congregation designated by the church council and voters' assembly. They shall see that all church property is kept in a state of good repair and supervise all janitorial work. Working within the budget they shall deal immediately with obvious need to repair as it arises, but if such repair cost exceeds \$500, they shall consult the church council. Extreme emergency repairs may be an exception but should not violate this general rule. In such matters they shall act as a unit and not as individuals.
3. They shall supervise the use of the church building and any other properties owned by the congregation and enforce the congregation's rules and regulations governing its property.
4. They shall audit the financial records of the treasurer.

**J. The Board of Stewardship**

1. The board shall consist of at least three members. It shall meet regularly and report to the church council and voters' assembly.
2. This board shall:
  - a. Guide the members of the congregation in being good managers of time, talents, possessions, and opportunities God has entrusted to them.
  - b. Recommend appropriate Christian stewardship programs to the voters' assembly for approval.
  - c. Work with the trustees and other officers in bringing any financial crisis to the congregation's attention.
  - d. Lead the congregation in its use of time and talent at special occasions of celebration.
  - e. Submit names for nominations for office to the church council.

**K. The Board of Education**

1. This board shall consist of at least three elected members in addition to the appointed Sunday School superintendent. It shall meet regularly and make reports to the church council and the voters' assembly.
2. This board shall:

- a. Work to strengthen the Christian home, and help equip parents, youth, and children for Christian family living among themselves and their community.
- b. Support and up build the existing means of Christian education; namely, the cradle roll, Sunday School, confirmation instruction, Bible classes, and Vacation Bible School.
- c. Appoint the Sunday School Superintendent and promote effective means of recruiting teachers for all classes.
- d. See that all phases of parish education are promoted, properly financed and equipped, and bring such needs to the church council and the voters' assembly for action.

*(Proposed change)*

**L. Board of Evangelism**

1. This board shall consist of at least three elected members.
2. They shall be responsible for:
  - a. mobilizing our congregation to witness for Christ in the daily lives of its members
  - b. enlightening our community regarding the work of the congregation at St. John
  - c. guiding, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the unsaved to Christ and reclaiming those living in our area of responsibility and released by our congregation.

*(Proposed change)*

Function lists for each board are listed in the Functions handbook. These lists can be amended and revised by the Church Council.

**Article IX – Protection of Officers**

The congregation is to be directly responsible concerning its property and actions for whatever its officers and committee members do in conformity with its resolutions and instructions and shall not permit its officers or committee members to suffer any personal loss in the proper performance of their duties.