

CONSTITUTION, BYLAWS, AND CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS FOR HOSANNA LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA HOUSTON, TEXAS

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Originally Approved by Synod: October 21, 1995

Constitution Last Amended: February 3, 2019

Bylaws Last Amended: November 18, 2012

Continuing Resolutions Last Amended: August 26, 2012

[Note: The asterisks below () indicate required provisions as specified in provisions 9.52. and 9.25b. in the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America].*

*** PREAMBLE.** We, baptized members of the Church of Christ, responding in faith to the call of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, desiring to unite together to preach the Word, administer the sacraments, and carry out God's mission, do hereby adopt this constitution and solemnly pledge ourselves to be governed by its provisions. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 1. NAME AND INCORPORATION

C1.01. The name of this congregation shall be Hosanna Lutheran Church.

C1.02. For the purpose of this constitution and the accompanying bylaws and continuing resolutions, the congregation of Hosanna Lutheran Church of Houston, Texas, ELCA, is hereinafter designated as "this congregation."

C1.03. This congregation shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of Texas.

*** Chapter 2. CONFESSION OF FAITH**

* C2.01. This congregation confesses the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

* C2.02. This congregation confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.

- a. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God fashions a new creation.
- b. The proclamation of God's message to us as both Law and Gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy through word and deed, beginning with the Word in creation, continuing in the history of Israel, and centering in all its fullness in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- c. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. Inspired by God's Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God's revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them God's Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.

* C2.03. This congregation accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life.

* C2.04. This congregation accepts the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of this congregation.

* C2.05. This congregation accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to the Gospel, acknowledging as one with it in faith and doctrine all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.

* C2.06. This congregation accepts the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise, the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, and Formula of Concord, as further valid interpretations of the faith of the Church.

* C2.07. This congregation confesses the Gospel, recorded in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain the Church for God's mission in the world.

*** Chapter 3. NATURE OF THE CHURCH**

* C3.01. All power in the Church belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ, its head. All actions of this congregation are to be carried out under his rule and authority.

* C3.02 This church confesses the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church and is resolved to serve Christian Unity throughout the world.

* C3.03. The Church exists both as an inclusive fellowship and as local congregations gathered for worship and Christian service. Congregations find their fulfillment in the universal community of the Church, and the universal Church exists in and through congregations. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, therefore, derives its character and powers both from the sanction and representation of its congregations and from its inherent nature as an expression of the broader fellowship of the faithful. In length, it acknowledges itself to be in the historic continuity of the communion of saints; in breadth, it expresses the fellowship of believers and congregations in our day.

* C3.04 This church, inspired and led by the Holy Spirit, participates in The Lutheran World Federation as a global communion of churches, engaging in faithful witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ and in service for the sake of God's mission in the world.

* C3.05. The name Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA or "this church") as used herein refers in general references to this whole church, including its three expressions—congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization. The name Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is also the name of the corporation of the churchwide organization to which specific references may be made herein.

*** Chapter 4. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

* C4.01. The Church is a people created by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, called and sent to bear witness to God's creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world.

* C4.02. To participate in God's mission, this congregation as a part of the Church shall:

- a. Worship God in proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments and through lives of prayer, praise, thanksgiving, witness, and service.
- b. Proclaim God's saving Gospel of justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith alone, according to the apostolic witness in the Holy Scripture, preserving and transmitting the Gospel faithfully to future generations.
- c. Carry out Christ's Great Commission by reaching out to all people to bring them to faith in Christ and by doing all ministry with a global awareness consistent with the understanding of God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of all.
- d. Serve in response to God's love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity and justice for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, and standing with the poor and powerless, and committing itself to their needs.

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- e. Nurture its members in the Word of God so as to grow in faith and hope and love, to see daily life as the primary setting for the exercise of their Christian calling, and to use the gifts of the Spirit for their life together and for their calling in the world.
- f. Manifest the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives.

* C4.03. To fulfill these purposes, this congregation shall:

- a. Provide services of worship at which the Word of God is preached and the sacraments are administered.
- b. Provide pastoral care and assist all members to participate in this ministry.
- c. Challenge, equip, and support all members in carrying out their calling in their daily lives and in their congregation.
- d. Teach the Word of God.
- e. Witness to the reconciling Word of God in Christ, reaching out to all people.
- f. Respond to human need, work for justice and peace, care for the sick and the suffering, and participate responsibly in society.
- g. Motivate its members to provide financial support for the congregation's ministry and the ministry of other parts of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- h. Foster and participate in interdependent relationships with other congregations, the synod, and the church wide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- i. Foster and participate in ecumenical relationships consistent with church wide policy.

* C4.04. This congregation shall develop an organizational structure to be described in the bylaws. The Congregation Council shall prepare descriptions of the responsibilities of each committee, task force, or other organizational groups and shall review their actions. Such description shall be contained in continuing resolutions in the section on the Congregation Committees.

.04.04.01 The Pastor is appointed an advisory member of each of the congregation's Ministry Teams, Support Teams, task forces, or any other organizational group.

C4.04.02 Four Ministry Teams shall be organized to carry out the ministry of this congregation: Spiritual Life; Discipleship; Care; and Stewardship.

C4.04.A02 The purpose of the Spiritual Life Team is to answer the core question: How do we keep the presence and grace of God at the center of our life together?

- a. Answering this question should give rise to ministries of worship, prayer, music and devotional life.

C4.04.B02 The purpose of the Discipleship Team is to answer the core question: How do we grow in our faith and share it with others, both within and outside of our congregation?

- a. Answering this question should give rise to ministries of learning, youth and family, witnessing, and outreach.

C4.04.C02 The purpose of the Care Team is to answer the core question: How do we care for each other and for our community?

- a. Answering this question should give rise to ministries of service, fellowship, compassion and pastoral care.

C4.04.D02 The purpose of the Stewardship Team is to answer the core question: How can we help people grow in their relationship with Jesus through the use of the time, talents, and

finances

that God has entrusted to them?

- a. Answering this question should give rise to ministries of property maintenance, giving and benevolence, personal financial management, and holistic health care.

C4.04.03 Four Support Teams shall be organized to facilitate the work of the Ministry Teams: Mission Focus Team; Staff Support Team; Lay Leadership Team; and the Finance Team.

C4.04.E02 The purpose of the Mission Focus Team is to answer the question: How do we keep everyone focused on our mission and serving together to accomplish it?

- a. Answering this question will give rise to ministries of communicating to the congregation, setting goals and priorities, doing long-range planning, and evaluating activities in light of mission and goals.

C4.04.F02 The purpose of the Staff Support Team is to answer the question: How do we direct and support our staff?

- a. Answering this question will give rise to ministries of encouragement, listening, review, and conflict resolution.
- b. This Team will maintain supportive relationships with the pastor(s) and staff and help them annually to evaluate the fulfillment of their calling, appointment, or employment.
- c. The Staff Support Team shall be responsible for approving the appointment of the paid lay workers of this congregation.
- d. This team will help to arrange for pastoral service during the sickness or absence of the pastor.
- e. The members of this team, other than the Team Leader, shall be appointed jointly by the president and the pastor. Term of office shall be two years, two members to be appointed in each successive year.

C4.04.G02 The purpose of the Lay Leadership Team is to answer the question: How do we develop, train, and support our lay leaders?

- a. Answering this question will give rise to ministries of nominating, leadership training, conflict resolution, and encouragement.
- b. This team will seek to involve all members of this congregation in ministry and support.
- c. This team will seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel.
- d. This team will help to promote a congregational climate of peace and goodwill and, as differences and conflicts arise, to endeavor to foster mutual understanding.

C4.04.H12 The purpose of the Finance Team is to answer the question: How do we manage our financial resources in order to support our ministries?

- a. Answering this question will give rise to ministries of coordinating, monitoring, financial reporting, risk management, and investing.
- b. This team shall coordinate all financial matters of this congregation.
- c. This team shall not have the authority to buy, sell, or encumber real property unless specifically authorized to do so by the congregation.
- d. This team shall coordinate with each of the ministry and support teams the preparation of an annual spending plan (“Spending Priorities”). The plan shall be approved by the Congregation Council and presented to the congregation for adoption.
- e. This team shall provide to the congregation an update of Hosanna’s financial condition each quarter. Included in the information provided shall be such basic financial information as income, spending priorities, and cash position. It is understood that the congregation may, at its discretion at any given time restrict expenditures beyond what the Congregation Council has planned.
- f. The Finance Team shall develop policies for approval by the Congregation Council, and shall establish procedures and monitor their application to assure that the financial affairs of this congregation are being conducted efficiently.
- g. This team shall be responsible for this congregation’s investments and its total insurance program.

C4.04.04 Each Ministry Team and each Support Team shall have the following general duties and powers:

- a. Each team shall submit a report of its activities at each regular meeting of the congregation. Such reports shall include specific recommendations for congregation action or approval.
- b. Each team shall initiate and carry out such activities and programs within the congregation as will enable it to effectively perform the mission and ministry assigned to it.
- c. Each team shall develop policies for its area of ministry and mission. After approval by the Congregation Council, such policies shall be written and filed in the congregational policy manual.
- d. Each team shall be encouraged to use the program resources produced or approved by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- e. Quarterly, each team shall prepare an estimate of spending for the upcoming quarter which the Finance Team shall use to develop a spending recommendation for the quarter based upon a review of historic and current giving patterns as well as projected cash balances. Based upon this analysis, the Congregational Council shall approve a final spending level before it is communicated to the congregation each quarter.
- f. Each team shall report to the Congregation Council any actions, issues or accomplishments of their teams.

C4.04.05 Each Ministry Team and each Support Team shall be organized as follows:

- a. Each team, with the exception of the Staff Support Team, shall be appointed by the team leader. It is recommended that each team or sub-team consist of a team leader and four team members.
- b. Each team is encouraged to organize and appoint other sub-teams in its area of ministry and mission if the work requires more than four team members.
- c. The time and frequency of team meetings shall be at the discretion of the team leader and team members, except that for good and sufficient reason, either the president or the pastor(s) may call a meeting of the team at any time. Meetings thus called shall be classified as special meetings, and each person involved shall be notified of the date, time and purpose of such a meeting.

* C4.05. This congregation shall, from time to time, adopt a mission statement which will provide specific direction for its programs.

C4.05.01 As a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Hosanna's mission is "Serving God, Changing Lives." We are God's servants, working together guided by these principles:

- a. Praise Jesus as Lord and Savior.
- b. Prayer changes everything.
- c. Listen to and act on God's Word.
- d. Everyone is a minister, serving with joy.
- e. Invite and welcome all people.
- f. Generously share God's blessings.

* C4.06. References herein to the nature of the relationship between the three expressions of this church—congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization—as being interdependent or as being in a partnership relationship describe the mutual responsibility of these expressions in God's mission and the fulfillment of the purposes of this church as described in this chapter, and do not imply or describe the creation of partnerships, co-ventures, agencies, or other legal relationships recognized in civil law.

*** Chapter 5. POWERS OF THE CONGREGATION**

* C5.01. The powers of this congregation are those necessary to fulfill its purpose.

* C5.02. The powers of this congregation are vested in the Congregation Meeting called and conducted as provided in this constitution and bylaws.

* C5.03. Only such authority as is delegated to the Congregation Council or other organizational units in this congregation's governing documents is recognized. All remaining authority is retained by the congregation. The congregation is authorized to:

- a. call a pastor as provided in Chapter 9;
- b. terminate the call of a pastor as provided in Chapter 9;
- c. call a minister of Word and Service;
- d. terminate the call of a minister of Word and Service in conformity with the constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;
- e. adopt amendments to the constitution, as provided in Chapter 16, and amendments to the bylaws, as specified in Chapter 17, and continuing resolutions, as provided in Chapter 18;

- f. approve the annual budget;
- g. acquire real and personal property by gift, devise, purchase, or other lawful means;
- h. hold title to and use its property for any and all activities consistent with its purpose;
- i. sell, mortgage, lease, transfer, or otherwise dispose of its property by any lawful means;
- j. elect its Congregation Council and officers, and require them to carry out their duties in accordance with the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions; and
- k. terminate its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as provided in Chapter 6.

* C5.04. This congregation shall choose from among its voting members laypersons to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly as well as persons to represent it at meetings of any conference, cluster, coalition, or other area subdivision of which it is a member. The number of persons to be elected by the congregation and other qualifications shall be as prescribed in guidelines established by the Texas Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

*** Chapter 6. CHURCH AFFILIATION**

* C6.01. This congregation shall be an interdependent part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or its successor, and of the Texas Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or its successor, sometimes referred to in this document as “the synod”. This congregation is subject to the discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

* C6.02. This congregation accepts the Confession of Faith and agrees to the Purposes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and shall act in accordance with them.

* C6.03. This congregation acknowledges its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in which:

- a. This congregation agrees to be responsible for its life as a Christian community.
- b. This congregation pledges its financial support and participation in the life and mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- c. This congregation agrees to call pastoral leadership from the roster of the of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in accordance with its call procedures except in special circumstances and with the approval of the bishop of the synod. These special circumstances are limited either to calling a candidate approved for the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or to contracting for pastoral services with a minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America officially has established a relationship of full communion.
- d. This congregation agrees to consider ministers of Word and Service for call to other staff positions in the congregation according to the procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- e. This congregation agrees to file this constitution and any subsequent changes to this constitution with the synod for review to ascertain that all of its provisions are in agreement with the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and with the constitution of the synod.

* C6.04. Affiliation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may be terminated as follows:

- a. This congregation takes action to dissolve.
- b. This congregation ceases to exist.
- c. This congregation is removed from membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America according to the procedures for discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- d. This congregation follows the procedures outlined in * C6.05.

* C6.05. This congregation may terminate its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by the following procedure:

- a. A resolution indicating the intent to terminate its relationship must be adopted at a legally called and conducted special meeting of the congregation by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present. Such meeting may be held no sooner than 30 days after written notice of the meeting is received by the bishop

of the synod, during which time the congregation shall consult with the bishop and the bishop's designees, if any. The times and manner of the consultation shall be determined by the bishop in consultation with the congregation council. Unless he or she is a voting member of the congregation, the bishop and the bishop's designees, if any, shall have voice but not vote at the meeting.

- b. The secretary of the congregation shall submit a copy of the resolution to the bishop, attesting that the special meeting was legally called and conducted and certifying the outcome of the vote, and shall mail a copy of the resolution to voting members of the congregation. This notice shall be submitted within 10 days after the resolution has been adopted.
- c. The bishop of the synod and the congregation shall continue in consultation, as specified in paragraph a. above, during a period of at least 90 days after receipt by the synod of the notice as specified in paragraph b. above.
- d. If the congregation, after such consultation, still seeks to terminate its relationship, such action may be taken at a legally called and conducted special meeting by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present. Notice of the meeting shall be mailed to all voting members and to the bishop at least 10 days in advance of the meeting. Unless he or she is voting member of the congregation, the bishop and the bishop's designees, if any, shall have voice but not vote at the meeting.
- e. A copy of the resolution, attesting that the special meeting was legally called and conducted and certifying the outcome of the vote, shall be sent to the bishop within 10 days after the resolution has been adopted, at which time the relationship between the congregation and this church shall be terminated subject to paragraphs g., h., and i. below. Unless this notification to the bishop also certifies that the congregation has voted by a two-thirds vote to affiliate with another Lutheran denomination, the congregation will be conclusively presumed to be an independent or non-Lutheran church.
- f. Notice of termination shall be forwarded by the bishop to the secretary of the ELCA, who shall report the termination to the Churchwide Assembly.
- g. This congregation shall abide by these covenants by and among the three expressions of this church.
 - 1) Congregations seeking to terminate their relationship with this church which fail or refuse to comply with each of the foregoing provisions in * C6.05., shall be required to receive Synod Council approval before terminating their membership in this church.
 - 2) Congregations which had been members of the Lutheran Church in America shall be required, in addition to complying with the foregoing provisions in * C6.05., to receive synodical approval before terminating their membership in this church.
 - 3) Congregations established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall be required, in addition to complying with the foregoing provisions in * C6.05., to satisfy all financial obligations to this church and receive Synod Council approval before terminating their membership in this church.
- h. If this congregation fails to achieve the required two-thirds vote of voting members present at the congregation's first meeting as specified in paragraph a. above, another special meeting to consider termination of relationship with this church may be called no sooner than six months after that first meeting. If this congregation fails to achieve the required two-thirds vote of voting members present at the congregation's second meeting as specified in paragraph d. above, another attempt to consider termination of relationship with this church must follow all requirements of * C6.05. and may begin no sooner than six months after that second meeting.

* C6.06. If this congregation considers relocation, it shall confer with the bishop of the synod in which it is territorially located and the appropriate unit of the churchwide organization before any steps are taken leading to such action. The approval of the Synod Council shall be received before any such action is effected.

* C6.07. If this congregation considers developing an additional site to be used regularly for worship, it shall confer with the bishop of the synod in which it is territorially located and the appropriate unit of the churchwide organization before any steps are taken leading to such action.

*** Chapter 7. PROPERTY OWNERSHIP**

* C7.01. If this congregation ceases to exist, title to property shall pass to the synod.

* C7.02. If this congregation is removed from membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America according to its procedure for discipline, title to property shall continue to reside in this congregation.

* C7.03. If two-thirds of the voting members of this congregation present at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this congregation vote to transfer to another Lutheran church body, title to property shall continue to reside in this congregation, provided the process for termination of relationship in * C6.05. has been followed. Before this congregation takes action to transfer to another Lutheran church body, it shall consult with representatives of the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod.

* C7.04. If two-thirds of the voting members of this congregation present at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this congregation vote to become independent or relate to a non-Lutheran church body and have followed the process for termination of relationship in * C6.05., title to property of this congregation shall continue to reside in this congregation only with the consent of the Synod Council. The Synod Council, after consultation with this congregation by the established synodical process, may give approval to the request to become independent or to relate to a non-Lutheran church body, in which case title shall remain with the majority of this congregation. If the Synod Council fails to give such approval, title shall remain with those members who desire to continue as a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

*** Chapter 8. MEMBERSHIP**

* C8.01. Members of this congregation shall be those baptized persons on the roll of this congregation at the time that this constitution is adopted and those who are admitted thereafter and who have declared and maintain their membership in accordance with the provisions of this constitution and its bylaws.

* C8.02. Members shall be classified as follows:

- a. **Baptized** members are those persons who have been received by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism in this congregation, or, having been previously baptized in the name of the Triune God, have been received by certificate of transfer from other Lutheran congregations or by affirmation of faith.
- b. **Confirmed** members are baptized persons who have been confirmed in this congregation, those who have been received by adult baptism or by transfer as confirmed members from other Lutheran congregations, or baptized persons received by affirmation of faith.
- c. **Voting** members are confirmed members. Such confirmed members, during the current or preceding calendar year, shall have communed in this congregation and shall have made a contribution of record to this congregation. Members of this congregation who have satisfied these basic standards shall have the privilege of voice and vote at every regular and special meeting of the congregation as well as the other rights and privileges ascribed to voting members by the provisions of this constitution and its bylaws.
- d. **Associate** members are persons holding membership in other Christian congregations who wish to retain such membership but desire to participate in the life and mission of this congregation. These individuals have all the privileges and duties of membership except voting rights or other rights and privileges ascribed to voting members by the provisions of this constitution and its bylaws.
- e. **Seasonal** members are voting members of other ELCA congregations who wish to retain such membership but desire to participate in the life and mission of this congregation, including exercising limited voting rights in this congregation. The Congregation Council may grant seasonal membership to such persons provided that this congregation is a member of a synod where the Synod Council has approved seasonal member voting on its territory. Such seasonal members shall have all the privileges and duties of voting members except that:
 - 1) they shall not be eligible for elected office in, or for membership on the Congregation Council or on a call committee of, this congregation;
 - 2) they shall not have the right to vote on any matter concerning or affecting the call or termination of call of any minister of this congregation;
 - 3) they shall not have the right to vote on any matter concerning or affecting the affiliation of this congregation with the ELCA;
 - 4) they shall not be eligible to serve as voting members from this congregation of the Synod Assembly or the Churchwide Assembly;

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- 5) they shall not, even if otherwise permitted by this congregation, vote by proxy or by absentee ballot; and
- 6) they shall not, within any two calendar month period, exercise voting rights in this congregation and in the congregation where they remain voting members.

* C8.03. All applications for confirmed membership shall be submitted to and shall require the approval of the Congregation Council.

* C8.04. It shall be the privilege and duty of members of this congregation to:

- a. make regular use of the means of grace, both Word and sacraments;
- b. live a Christian life in accordance with the Word of God and the teachings of the Lutheran church; and
- c. support the work of this congregation, the synod, and the church wide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America through contributions of their time, abilities, and financial support as biblical stewards.

* C8.05. Membership in this congregation shall be terminated by any of the following:

- a. death;
- b. resignation;
- c. transfer or release;
- d. disciplinary action in accordance with ELCA constitutional provision 20.40 and the accompanying bylaws;
- e. removal from the roll due to inactivity in accordance with the provision of this constitution and its bylaws.. Such persons who have been removed from the roll of members shall remain persons for whom the church has a continuing pastoral concern.

C8.05e.01 Members may be declared inactive if they have not communed with or made a contribution of record to this congregation for a period of greater than two years. Members who have been declared inactive may be removed from the rolls the following year after recommendation by the Discipleship Team and the staff, and approval by the Congregation Council.

*** Chapter 9. ROSTERED MINISTER**

* C9.01. Authority to call a pastor shall be in this congregation by at least a two-thirds vote of voting members present and voting at a meeting legally called for that purpose. Before a call is issued, Congregation Council shall seek the advice and help of the bishop of the synod.

* C9.02. Only a member of the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or a candidate for the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament who has been recommended for the congregation by the synodical bishop may be called as a pastor of this congregation.

* C9.03. Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,

- a. Every minister of Word and Sacrament shall:
 - 1) preach the Word;
 - 2) administer the sacraments;
 - 3) conduct public worship;
 - 4) provide pastoral care;
 - 5) seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel;
 - 6) impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through distribution of its communications and publications;
 - 7) witness to the Kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad; and
 - 8) speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world.

- b. Each pastor with a congregational call shall, within the congregation:
 - 1) offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead;
 - 2) relate to all schools and organizations of this congregation;
 - 3) install regularly elected members of the Congregation Council;
 - 4) with the council, administer discipline.
 - 5) endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to work of the ELCA churchwide organization and of the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod of the ELCA.

* C9.04. The specific duties of the pastor, compensation, and other matters pertaining to the service of the pastor shall be included in a letter of call, which shall be attested by the bishop of the synod.

C9.04.01 The Pastor shall appoint the paid lay workers of this congregation with the approval of the Staff Support Team, and shall supervise the work of the paid lay workers.

* C9.05. The provisions for termination of the mutual relationship between a minister of Word and Sacrament and this congregation shall be as follows:

- a. The call of this congregation, when accepted by a pastor, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment which shall be terminated only by death or, following consultation with the synodical bishop for the following reasons:
 - 1) mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term;
 - 2) resignation of the pastor, which shall become effective, unless otherwise agreed, no later than 30 days after the date on which it was submitted;
 - 3) inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in the congregation in view of local conditions;
 - 4) physical disability or mental incapacity of the pastor;
 - 5) suspension of the pastor through discipline for more than three months;
 - 6) resignation or removal of the pastor from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church;
 - 7) termination of the relationship between this church and the congregation;
 - 8) dissolution of the congregation or the termination of a parish arrangement; or
 - 9) suspension of the congregation through discipline for more than six months.
- b. When allegations of physical disability or mental incapacity of the pastor under paragraph a.4) above, or ineffective conduct of the pastoral office under paragraph a.3) above, have come to the attention of the bishop of the synod,
 - 1) the bishop in his or her sole discretion may investigate such conditions personally together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one lay person, or
 - 2) when such allegations have been brought to the synod's attention by an official recital of allegations by the congregation council or by a petition signed by at least one-third of the voting members of the congregation, the bishop personally shall investigate such conditions together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one layperson.
- c. In case of alleged physical disability or mental incapacity under paragraph a.4) above, the bishop's committee shall obtain and document competent medical opinion concerning the pastor's condition. When a disability is evident to the committee, the bishop of the synod may declare the pastorate vacant. When the pastorate is declared vacant, the Synod Council shall list the pastor on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament as disabled. Upon removal of the disability and the restoration of the pastor to health, the bishop shall take steps to enable the pastor to resume the ministry, either in the congregation last served or in another appropriate call..
- d. In the case of alleged local difficulties that imperil the effective functioning of the congregation under paragraph a.3) above, the bishop's committee shall endeavor to hear from all concerned persons, after which the bishop together with the committee shall present their recommendations first to the pastor and then to the congregation. The recommendations of the bishop's committee must address whether the pastor's call should come to an end and, if so, may suggest appropriate severance arrangements. The

committee may also propose other actions that should be undertaken by the congregation and by the pastor, if appropriate. If the pastor and congregation agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action need be taken by the synod.\

e. If either party fails to assent to the recommendations of the bishop's committee concerning the pastor's call, the congregation may dismiss the pastor only at a legally called meeting after consultation with the bishop, either (a) by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee did not recommend termination of the call, or (b) by a majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee recommended termination of the call.

f. If, in the course of proceedings described in paragraph c. or paragraph d. above., the bishop's committee concludes that there may be grounds for discipline, the committee shall make recommendations concerning disciplinary action in accordance with the provisions of this church's constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions.

* C9.06. At a time of pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor shall be appointed by the bishop of the synod with the consent of this congregation or the Congregation Council.

* C9.07. During the period of service, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties in the congregation of a regularly called pastor and may delegate the same in part to a supply pastor with the consent of the bishop of the synod and this congregation or Congregation Council. The interim pastor and any rostered minister providing assistance shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor. Unless previously agreed upon by the Synod Council, an interim pastor is not available for a regular call to the congregation served.

* C9.08. This congregation shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former pastor before calling a successor. A pastor shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to this congregation before beginning service in a call to another congregation or employment in another ministry setting related to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

* C9.09. When a pastor is called to serve in company with another pastor or pastors, the privileges and responsibilities of each pastor shall be specified in documents to accompany the call and to be drafted in consultation involving the pastors, the Congregation Council, and the bishop of the synod. As occasion requires, the documents may be revised through a similar consultation.

* C9.11. With the approval of the bishop of the synod, the congregation may depart from *C9.05.a. and call a pastor for a specific term. Details of such calls shall be in writing setting forth the purpose and conditions involved. Prior to the completion of a term, the bishop or a designated representative of the bishop shall meet with the pastor and representatives of the congregation for a review of the call. Such a call may also be terminated before its expiration in accordance with the provisions of *C9.05.a.

* C9.12. The pastor of this congregation

- a. shall keep accurate parochial records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, members dismissed, or members excluded from the congregation;
- b. shall submit a summary of such statistics annually to the synod and to the Congregation Council; and
- c. shall become a member of this congregation upon receipt and acceptance of the letter of call;

* C9.13. The pastor(s) shall submit a report of his or her ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.

* C9.14. The parochial records of this congregation shall be maintained by the pastor and shall remain the property of the congregation. The secretary of this congregation shall attest in writing to the bishop of this synod that such records have been placed in his or her hands in good order by a departing pastor before the installation of that pastor in another field of labor or the granting by the synod of retired status to the pastor.

* C9.15. Under special circumstances, subject to the approval of the synodical bishop and the concurrence of this congregation, an minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which the Evangelical Lutheran Church

in America officially has established a relationship of full communion may serve temporarily as pastor of this congregation under contract between the congregation and the pastor in a form proposed by the synodical bishop and approved by the congregation.

***C9.21.** Authority to call a minister of Word and Service shall be in this congregation by at least a two-thirds vote of voting members present and voting at a meeting legally called for that purpose. Before a call is issued, the officers, or a committee elected by [this congregation][the Congregation Council] to recommend the call, shall seek the advice and help of the bishop of the synod.

***C9.22.** Only a member of the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or a candidate for the roster of Ministers of Word and Service who has been recommended for this congregation by the synodical bishop may be called as a deacon of this congregation.

***C9.23.** Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, every minister of Word and Service shall:

- a. Be rooted in the Word of God, for proclamation and service;
- b. Advocate a prophetic diakonia that commits itself to risk-taking and innovative service on the frontiers of the Church's outreach, giving particular attention to the suffering places in God's world;
- c. Speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world, witnessing to the realm of God in the community, the nation, and abroad;
- d. Equip the baptized for ministry in God's world that affirms the gifts of all people;
- e. Encourage mutual relationships that invite participation and accompaniment of others in God's mission;
- f. Practice stewardship that respects God's gift of time, talents, and resources;
- g. Be grounded in a gathered community for ongoing diaconal formation;
- h. Share knowledge of the ELCA and its wider ministry of the gospel and advocate for the work of all expressions of this church; and
- i. Identify and encourage qualified persons to prepare for ministry of the gospel.\

***C9.24.** The specific duties of the deacon, compensation, and other matters pertaining to the service of the deacon shall be included in a letter of call, which shall be attested by the bishop of the synod.\

***C9.25.** The provisions for termination of the mutual relationship between a minister of Word and Service and a congregation shall be as follows:

- a. The call of a congregation, when accepted by a deacon, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment, which shall be terminated only by death or, following consultation with the synodical bishop, for the following reasons:
 - 1) mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term;
 - 2) resignation of the deacon, which shall become effective, unless otherwise agreed, no later than 30 days after the date on which it was submitted;
 - 3) inability to conduct the ministry of Word and Service effectively in this congregation in view of local conditions;
 - 4) physical disability or mental incapacity of the deacon;
 - 5) suspension of the deacon through discipline for more than three months;
 - 6) resignation or removal of the deacon from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church;
 - 7) termination of the relationship between this church and this congregation;
 - 8) dissolution of this congregation or the termination of a parish arrangement; or
 - 9) suspension of this congregation through discipline for more than six months.
- b. When allegations of physical disability or mental incapacity of the deacon under paragraph a.4) above, or ineffective conduct of the office of minister of Word and Service under paragraph a.3) above, have come to the attention of the bishop of this synod,

- 1) the bishop in his or her sole discretion may investigate such conditions personally together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one layperson, or
 - 2) when such allegations have been brought to the synod's attention by an official recital of allegations by the Congregation Council or by a petition signed by at least one-third of the voting members of this congregation, the bishop personally shall investigate such conditions together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one layperson.
- c. In case of alleged physical disability or mental incapacity under paragraph a.4) above, the bishop's committee shall obtain and document competent medical opinion concerning the deacon's condition. When a disability or incapacity is evident to the committee, the bishop of this synod may declare the position vacant. When the position is declared vacant, the Synod Council shall list the deacon on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service as disabled. Upon removal of the disability and the restoration of the deacon to health, the bishop shall take steps to enable the deacon to resume the ministry, either in the congregation last served or in another appropriate call.
- d. In the case of alleged local difficulties that imperil the effective functioning of this congregation under paragraph a.3) above, the bishop's committee shall endeavor to hear from all concerned persons, after which the bishop together with the committee shall present their recommendations first to the deacon and then to this congregation. The recommendations of the bishop's committee must address whether the deacon's call should come to an end and, if so, may suggest appropriate severance arrangements. The committee may also propose other actions that should be undertaken by this congregation and by the deacon, if appropriate. If the deacon and congregation agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action need be taken by the synod.
- e. If either party fails to assent to the recommendations of the bishop's committee concerning the deacon's call, this congregation may dismiss the deacon only at a legally called meeting after consultation with the bishop, either (a) by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee did not recommend termination of the call, or (b) by a majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee recommended termination of the call.
- f. If, in the course of proceedings described in paragraph c. or paragraph d. above, the bishop's committee concludes that there may be grounds for discipline, the committee shall make recommendations concerning disciplinary action in accordance with the provisions of this church's constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions.

***C9.26.** The deacon shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former congregation before:

- a. installation in another field of labor, or
- b. the issuance of a certificate of dismissal or transfer.

***C9.27.** When a deacon is called to serve in company with another rostered minister or other rostered ministers, the privileges and responsibilities of each rostered minister shall be specified in documents to accompany the call and to be drafted in consultation involving the rostered ministers, the Congregation Council, and the bishop of the synod. As occasion requires, the documents may be revised through a similar consultation.

***C9.28.** With the approval of the bishop of the synod, this congregation may depart from *C9.25.a. and call a deacon for a specific term. Details of such calls shall be in writing setting forth the purpose and conditions involved. Prior to the completion of a term, the bishop or a designated representative of the bishop shall meet with the deacon and representatives of this congregation for a review of the call. Such a call may also be terminated before its expiration in accordance with the provisions of *C9.25.a.

***C9.29.** The deacon shall become a member of this congregation upon receipt and acceptance of the letter of call. In a parish of multiple congregations, the deacon shall hold membership in one of the congregations.

***C9.31.** The deacon(s) shall submit a report of his or her ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.

Chapter 10. CONGREGATION MEETING

C10.01. The annual meeting of this congregation shall be held at a time specified in the bylaws.

C10.01.01 The annual meeting of this congregation shall be held on the third Sunday in January, or as otherwise set by the Congregation Council, to receive annual reports, and conduct other appropriate business.

C10.02. Four additional regular congregational meetings shall be held throughout the calendar year, at times specified in the bylaws, for teams to present items of interest and decision to the congregation. These meetings are to insure that the ministry and mission of the congregation are being done responsibly and in accordance with the Word of God and the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

C10.02.01 A meeting will be held in March, or as otherwise set by the Congregation Council, to focus on spring programming, and to conduct other such business as appropriate.

C10.02.02 A meeting shall be held in May, or as otherwise set by the Congregation Council, to elect team leaders and officers, and to conduct other such business as appropriate.

C10.02.03 A meeting will be held in September, or as otherwise set by the Congregation Council, to focus on fall programming, and to conduct other such business as appropriate.

C10.02.04 A meeting will be held in November, or as otherwise set by the Congregation Council, to approve the next year's budget, and to conduct other such business as appropriate.

C10.03. A special Congregation Meeting may be called by the pastor, the Congregation Council, or the president of this congregation, and shall be called by the president of the congregation upon the written request of ten percent (10%) of the voting members. The president of the Congregation Council shall call a special meeting upon request of the synodical bishop. The call for each special meeting shall specify the purpose for which it is to be held and no other business shall be transacted.

C10.04. Notice of all meetings of this congregation shall be given at the services of worship on the preceding two consecutive Sundays and by mail or electronic means, as permitted by state law, to all voting members at least 10 days in advance of the date of the meeting.

C10.05. Ten percent (10%) of voting members shall constitute a quorum.

C10.06. Voting by proxy or by absentee ballot shall not be permitted.

C10.07. All actions approved by the congregation shall be by majority vote of those voting members present and voting, except as otherwise provided in this constitution or by state law.

C10.08. The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure, latest edition, shall govern parliamentary procedure of all meetings of this congregation. The Congregation President will appoint a qualified person to act as parliamentarian during all congregation meetings.

Chapter 11. OFFICERS

C11.01. The officers of this congregation shall be a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and financial secretary.

a. Duties of the officers shall be specified in the bylaws.

C11.01a.01 The president will provide overall leadership for the congregation's business and activities, and will preside at all meetings of this congregation and of the Congregation Council. Together with the Secretary, the President shall prepare the agendas for the meetings of the Congregation Council.

C11.01a.02 The vice president will preside at the meetings of the congregation and of the Congregation Council in the absence of the president. The vice president will be the Leader of the Mission Focus Team.

C11.01a.03 The secretary will keep accurate minutes of the meetings of the congregation and the Congregation Council, and will maintain these as part of the permanent records of the congregation; will issue notice of all meetings of the congregation and Congregation Council; will work with the President to prepare the agendas for the meetings of the Congregation Council; will receive and file all team reports; will maintain the congregation policy manual; and will handle the general correspondence of the congregation.

C11.01a.04 The treasurer will oversee the books of the accounts of this congregation; the disbursement of all funds upon proper authorization and the regular remittance of benevolence payments to the treasurer of this synod.

C11.01a.05 The financial secretary will maintain confidential records of members giving, will serve as the coordinator of all collections of the church, and will be responsible for preparation of individual statements of giving for each member and related general reporting to the Stewardship Team, the Finance Team, and the congregation.

- b. The officers shall be voting members of the congregation.
- c. The president and the vice president of this congregation shall serve similar offices on the Congregation Council and shall be voting members of the Congregation Council.
- d. The secretary, treasurer, and financial secretary shall have voice but not vote at the meetings of the Congregation Council.

C11.02. The Congregation shall elect its officers at a congregational meeting to be held in May, or at another time designated by the Congregation Council. The officers shall be elected by written ballot and shall serve for two years or until their successors are elected. The president and vice president shall be elected in even-numbered years, and the secretary, treasurer, and financial secretary in odd-numbered years. Their terms shall begin September 1 following their election. Newly elected officers shall be installed at the first convenient worship service after they take office.

C11.03. The president and the vice president are eligible to serve no more than one full term.

C11.04. The treasurer and the financial secretary are not limited in the number of terms that can be served.

C11.05. The secretary is not limited in the number of terms that can be served.

C11.06 In case of a vacancy in an office, the Congregation Council, in consultation with the Lay Leadership Team, will appoint a person to serve until the congregation can elect a successor at a congregational meeting to complete the unexpired term.

C11.07. No officer shall hold more than one office at a time.

C11.08. No person shall hold office, or be elected to the congregation council while holding a paid staff position in the congregation, except as otherwise provided for in this constitution.

Chapter 12. CONGREGATION COUNCIL

C12.01. The voting membership of the Congregation Council shall consist of the pastor(s), the president of the congregation, the vice-president of the congregation (who is the leader of the Mission Focus Team), the leaders of the Ministry Teams, and the leaders of the other Support Teams.

C12.02. The Team leaders who are members of the Congregation Council shall be elected at a congregational meeting to be held in May, or at another time designated by the Congregation Council. They shall be elected by written ballot, and shall serve for two years or until their successors are elected. The leaders of the Support Teams shall be elected in even-numbered years, and the leaders of the Ministry Teams shall be elected in odd-numbered years. Their terms shall begin September 1 following their election. Newly elected Team leaders shall be installed at the first convenient worship service after they take office.

C12.03. Team leaders shall be eligible to serve no more than two full terms consecutively.

C12.04. Any member's place on the Congregation Council shall be declared vacant if the member a) resigns; b) ceases to be a voting member of this congregation or c) is absent from two successive regular meetings of the Congregation Council without cause. Consistent with the laws of the state of Texas in which this congregation is incorporated, this congregation may adopt procedures for the removal of a member of the Congregation Council in other circumstances.

C12.05. Should a Team leader's place on the Congregation Council be declared vacant, the Congregation Council, in consultation with the Lay Leadership Team, will appoint a person to serve until the congregation can elect a successor at a congregational meeting to complete the unexpired term.

C12.06. The Congregation Council shall be the board of directors of this congregation. The Congregation Council shall be responsible for maintaining and protecting the property of the congregation, and for the management of the congregation's business and fiscal affairs. It shall have the powers and be subject to the obligations that pertain to such boards under the laws of the State of Texas, except as otherwise provided herein.

C12.06a.01 The fiscal year of this congregation shall coincide with the calendar year.

C12.07. The Congregation Council shall have general oversight of the life and activities of this congregation, and in particular its worship life, to the end that everything be done in accordance with the Word of God and the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The duties of the Congregation Council shall include the following:

- a. To maintain supportive relationships with the rostered minister(s) and staff and help them annually to evaluate the fulfillment of their calling or employment.
- b. To coordinate the activities of all the teams, and to integrate all such activities into an overall congregational program.
- c. To settle any jurisdictional disputes between teams.
- d. To prepare and present to the congregation a yearly plan of activity.
- e. To set the agenda and the times and dates of congregational meetings, including the annual meeting.
- f. To see that the provisions of this constitution, its bylaws, and the continuing resolutions are carried out.
- g. To submit a comprehensive report to this congregation at its annual meeting.
- h. To present the budget, whose preparation was coordinated by the Finance Team, for the approval of the congregation.
- i. To approve policies prepared by the teams.
- j. To emphasize partnership with the synod and churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as well as cooperation with other congregations, both Lutheran and non-Lutheran, subject to established policies of the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

C12.08. The Congregation Council, acting through the Staff Support Team, shall be responsible for the employment of the paid lay workers of this congregation. Nothing in this provision shall be deemed to affect the congregation's responsibility for the call, terms of call, or termination of call of any employees who are on a roster of this church.

C12.09. The Congregation Council shall normally meet at least five times per year. Special meetings may be called by the pastor or the president, and shall be called by the president at the request of at least one-half of its members. Notice of each special meeting shall be given to all who are entitled to be present.

C12.10. A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of a majority of the voting members of the Congregation Council, including the pastor or interim pastor, except when the pastor or interim pastor requests or consents to be absent and has given prior approval to the agenda for a particular regular or special meeting, which shall be the only business considered at that meeting. Chronic or repeated absence of the pastor or interim pastor who has refused approval of the agenda of a subsequent regular or special meeting shall not preclude action by the Congregation Council, following consultation with the synodical bishop.

C12.11. Voting by proxy or by absentee ballot shall not be permitted in the actions of the Congregation Council.

C12.12. The Congregation Council and its committees may hold meetings by remote communication, including electronically and by telephone conference, and, to the extent permitted by state law, notice of all meetings may be provided electronically.

Chapter 13. CONGREGATION COMMITTEES

C13.01. The president, the pastor, and the secretary shall form the Executive Committee.

C13.02. The Lay Leadership Team shall fulfill the role of the Nominating Committee.

C13.03. An Audit Committee of three voting members shall be elected by the Congregation Council. Audit Committee members shall not be members of the Congregation Council or officers of the congregation. Term of office shall be three years, with one member elected each year. Members shall be eligible for reelection.

C13.04. When a pastoral vacancy occurs, a Call Committee of six voting members shall be elected by the congregation at a special meeting held for this purpose. Nominations for the Call Committee will be made jointly by the Lay Leadership Team and the Staff Support Team. Term of office will terminate upon installation of the newly called pastor.

C13.05. Other committees of this congregation may be formed as the need arises, by decision of the Congregation Council.

C13.06. Duties of committees of this congregation shall be specified in the bylaws.

C13.06.01 The Executive Committee shall be empowered to make decisions in an emergency situation. As soon as practical, the matter shall be referred to the appropriate team or to the Congregation Council for further resolution.

C13.06.02 The Lay Leadership Team, in its role as the Nominating Committee, shall present one nominee for each position open for election at a congregational meeting. Additional nominations may be made from the floor of the meeting, provided that any such nominee shall have given prior consent to the nomination. A nomination is equivalent to a call to service.

C13.06.03 The purpose of the Audit Committee is to conduct an annual audit of the financial records of this congregation; to report the results of this audit to the Congregation Council and to the congregation; and to review and recommend policies and procedures regarding the financial management of this congregation.

C13.06.04 The purpose of the Call Committee is to assess the needs of the congregation at a time of pastoral vacancy; to work with the synod to identify and interview potential candidates who meet those

needs; to introduce a selected candidate to the congregation; and to prepare a letter of call for the consideration of the candidate and the congregation.

C13.06.05 The Congregation Council may approve the purpose and membership of other special congregation committees from time to time to carry out the mission of this congregation.

Chapter 14. ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION

C14.01. All organizations within this congregation shall exist to aid it in ministering to the members of this congregation and to all persons who can be reached with the Gospel of Christ. As outgrowths and expressions of this congregation's life, the organizations are subject to its oversight and direction. This congregation at its meeting shall approve their policies, and receive reports concerning their membership, activities, and finances.

C14.02. Special interest groups, other than those of the official organizations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, may be organized only after authorization has been given by the Congregation Council.

*** Chapter 15. DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS AND ADJUDICATION**

* C15.01. Persistent and public denial of the Christian faith, willful or criminal conduct grossly unbecoming a member of the Church of Christ, continual and intentional interference with the ministry of the congregation, or willful and repeated harassment or defamation of member(s) of the congregation is sufficient cause for discipline of a member. Prior to disciplinary action, reconciliation and repentance will be attempted following Matthew 18:15-17, proceeding through these successive steps, as necessary: a) private counsel and admonition by the pastor, b) censure and admonition by the pastor in the presence of two or three witnesses, c) written referral of the matter by the Congregation Council to the vice president of the synod, who will refer it to a consultation panel drawn from the Consultation Committee of the synod, and d) written referral of the matter by the consultation panel to the Committee on Discipline of the synod. If, for any reason, the pastor is unable to administer the admonitions required by paragraphs a. and b. hereof, those steps may be performed by another pastor chosen by the Executive Committee of the Congregation Council.

* C15.02. The process for discipline of a member of the congregation shall be governed as prescribed by the chapter on discipline in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. If the counseling, censure, and admonitions pursuant to C15.01 do not result in repentance and amendment of life, charges against the accused member(s) that are specific and in writing may be prepared by the Congregation Council, signed, and submitted to the vice president of the synod. The vice president shall select from the synod's Consultation Committee a panel of five members (three lay persons and two ministers of Word and Sacrament). A copy of the written charges shall be provided to the consultation panel and the accused member(s). The consultation panel, after requesting a written reply to the charges from the accused member(s), shall consider the matter and seek a resolution by means of investigation, consultation, mediation, or whatever other means may seem appropriate. The panel's efforts to reach a mutually agreeable resolution shall continue for no more than 45 days after the matter is submitted to it.

* C15.03. If the consultation panel fails to resolve the matter, that panel shall refer the case in writing, including the written charges and the accused member's reply, to the Committee on Discipline of the synod for a hearing. A copy of the panel's written referral shall be delivered to the vice president of the synod, the Congregation Council, and the accused member(s) at the same time it is sent to the Committee on Discipline of the synod. The Executive Committee of the Synod Council shall then select six members from the Committee on Discipline to decide the case, and shall appoint a member of the Synod Council to preside as nonvoting chair. Those six members plus the nonvoting chair comprise the discipline hearing panel for deciding the case. The Congregation Council and the accused member(s) are the parties to the case.

* C15.04. The discipline hearing panel shall commence and conduct the disciplinary hearing in accordance with the provisions governing discipline of congregation members prescribed in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.

* C15.05. By the vote of at least two-thirds of the members of the discipline hearing panel who are present and voting, one of the following disciplinary sanctions can be imposed:

- a..suspension from the privileges of congregation membership for a designated period of time;
- b. suspension from the privileges of congregation membership until the pastor and Congregation Council receive evidence, satisfactory to them, of repentance and amendment of life;
- c. termination of membership in the congregation; or
- d. termination of membership in the congregation and exclusion from the church property and from all congregation activities.

* C15.06. The written decision of the discipline hearing panel shall be sent to the vice president of the synod, the accused member(s), and the Congregation Council as required by the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. The decision of the discipline hearing panel shall be implemented by the Congregation Council and recorded in the minutes of the next council meeting.

* C15.07. No member of the congregation shall be subject to discipline a second time for offenses that a discipline hearing panel has heard previously and decided pursuant to this chapter.

* C15.10. Adjudication

* C15.11. When there is disagreement among factions within this congregation on a substantive issue that cannot be resolved by the parties, members of this congregation shall have access to the synodical bishop for consultation after informing the chair of the Congregation Council of their intent. If the consultation fails to resolve the issue(s), the Consultation Committee of the synod shall consider the matter. If the Consultation Committee of the synod shall fail to resolve the issue(s), the matter shall be referred to the Synod Council, whose decision shall be final.

*** Chapter 16. AMENDMENTS**

* C16.01. Unless provision *C16.04. is applicable, those sections of this constitution that are not required, in accord with the Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, may be amended in the following manner. Amendments may be proposed by at least ten percent (10%) of the voting members or by the Congregation Council. Proposals must be filed in writing with the Congregation Council 60 days before formal consideration by this congregation at a regular or special Congregation meeting for that purpose. The Congregation Council shall notify the congregation's members by mail of the proposal together with the council's recommendations at least 30 days in advance of the meeting. Notification may take place by mail or electronic means, as permitted by state law.

* C16.02. An amendment to this constitution, proposed under *C16.01. shall:

- a. be approved at a legally called Congregation meeting according to this constitution by a majority vote of those voting members present and voting;
- b. be ratified without change at the next annual meeting by a two-thirds vote of those voting members present and voting; and
- c. have the effective date included in the resolution and noted in the constitution.

* C16.03. Any amendments to this constitution that result from the processes provided in *C16.01. and *C16.02., shall be sent by the secretary of this congregation to the synod. The synod shall notify the congregation of its decision to approve or disprove the proposed changes; the change shall go into effect upon notification that the synod has approved them.

* C16.04. This constitution may be amended to bring any section into conformity with a section or sections, either required or not required, of the *Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* as most recently amended by the Churchwide Assembly. Such amendments may be approved by a majority vote of those voting members present and voting at any legally called meeting of the congregation without presentation at a prior meeting of the congregation, provided that the Congregation Council has submitted

by mail or electronic means, as permitted by state law, notice to the congregation of such an amendment or amendments. together with the Council's recommendations, at least 30 days prior to the meeting. Upon the request of two (2) voting members of the congregation, the Congregation Council shall submit such notice and call such a meeting. Following the adoption of an amendment, the secretary of the congregation shall submit a copy thereof to the synod. Such provisions shall be effective immediately following a vote of approval.

Chapter 17. BYLAWS

***C17.01.** This congregation may adopt bylaws. No bylaw may conflict with this constitution.

***C17.02.** Bylaws may be adopted or amended at any legally called meeting of this congregation with a quorum present by a two-thirds vote of those voting members present and voting.

***C17.03.** Changes to the bylaws may be proposed by any voting member, provided that such additions or amendments be submitted in writing to the Congregation Council at least 60 days before a regular or special Congregation Meeting called for that purpose. The Congregation Council shall notify this congregation's members of the proposal with the council's recommendations at least 30 days in advance of the Congregation Meeting. Notification may take place by mail or electronic means, as permitted by state law.\

***C17.04.** Approved changes to the bylaws shall be sent by the secretary of this congregation to the synod.

*** Chapter 18. CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS**

*** C18.01.** The congregation in a legally called meeting or the Congregation Council may enact continuing resolutions. Such resolutions may not conflict with the constitution or bylaws of this congregation.

*** C18.02.** Continuing resolutions shall be enacted or amended by a majority vote of a meeting of the congregation or a two-thirds vote of all voting members of the Congregation Council.

*** Chapter 19. INDEMNIFICATION**

*** C19.01.** Consistent with the provisions of the laws under which this congregation is incorporated, this congregation may adopt provisions providing indemnification for each person who, by reason of the fact that such person is or was a Congregation Council member, officer, employee, agent, or other member of any committee of this congregation, was or is threatened to be made a party to any threatened, pending, or completed civil, criminal, administrative, arbitration, or investigative proceeding.

