

CONSTITUTION

OF

BEREA EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Inver Grove Heights, MN



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PREAMBLE

WHEREAS, the Apostle Paul sets forth, 1 Corinthians 14:40, that all things in the Church will be done "decently and in order," and

WHEREAS, the history of the Christian Church of all times shows that certain agreements and regulations are helpful to properly attain the purposes and fulfill the obligations of congregations; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that we, a congregation of Lutherans do herewith, in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and by subscribing our names hereto, adopt the following CONSTITUTION.

ARTICLE I (1)

NAME

The name of this congregation is Berea Evangelical Lutheran Church. The place of worship is in Inver Grove Heights, Dakota County, Minnesota. (The name "Berea" is taken from Acts 17:10-12 where it is said that the Bereans "received the word with all readiness and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.")

ARTICLE II (2)

PURPOSE

Berea Evangelical Lutheran Church has been established for the express purpose of serving its members and guests in the following ways:

- A) Spreading the Gospel Truth by regularly preaching the Word of God in all its truth and purity, by the administration of the sacraments and by the religious instruction of children, youth and adults, all, according to its Confessional Standard as proclaimed in Article III (3).

"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20)

[All passages are taken from the New King James Version]

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations ... " (Matthew 28:19a)

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, in the "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations ... " (Matthew 28:19a)

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42)

- B) Fostering Christian fellowship and love among its members and guests.

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." (Hebrews 10:25)

- C) Supporting the work of any Lutheran 'church-body' with which it is in full agreement in religious doctrine and practice.

"BEHOLD, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1)

ARTICLE III (3)

ARTICLES OF FAITH

Berea Evangelical Lutheran Church accepts and confesses without reservation all sixty-six canonical books of the Old and New Testaments. It accepts these Holy Scriptures as the verbally inspired Word of God and therefore as the sole infallible rule of doctrine and life.

This congregation confesses all the symbolic writings of the historic Lutheran Church contained in the "Book of Concord" of the year 1580 as a correct presentation and true exposition of Christian doctrine, drawn from and in full agreement with the Holy Scriptures. These historic symbols are the following:

- (1) The Three Ecumenical Creeds - - the Apostolic, the Nicene, and the Athanasian;
- (2) The unaltered Augsburg Confession;
- (3) The Apology of the Augsburg Confession;
- (4) The Smalcald Articles;
- (5) Luther's Catechisms, the Large and the Small;
- (6) The Formula of Concord.

Berea Evangelical Lutheran Church also subscribes to more recent theological statements. These confessions of Scriptural doctrine are in full agreement with the historic Lutheran symbols. These more recent statements are the following:

- (1) *"Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod"* of the year 1932;
- (2) *"Concerning Church Fellowship, A Statement Of Principle"* by the Church of the Lutheran Confession of the year 1961;
- (3) *"Concerning Church And Ministry"* by the Church of the Lutheran Confession of the year 1962;
- (4) *"Statement Of Faith And Purpose"* of the Church of the Lutheran Confession of the year 1969.

No doctrine will be taught or tolerated in Berea Evangelical Lutheran Church which is in any way at variance with the doctrinal position of the above referenced Holy Scriptures, historic symbols and more recent theological statements of the confessional Lutheran Church.

ARTICLE IV (4)

AUTHORITY AND POWER

The congregation has the supreme authority in all church and congregational matters. No regulation or decision is binding for the congregation or any member unless issued by authority of the congregation as stated in Article VI (6). Decisions by any group of members will be binding only as far as the congregation has given authority. However, the congregation has no authority to regulate or decide anything which is contrary to Article III (3). All regulations or decisions which are contrary to the Word of God are null and void.

Groups of church members which unite for the purpose of serving the common welfare of the congregation will always be brought about with the approval of the congregation. They will remain under the supervision of the Pastor and the Church Council. All authority is vested in the local congregation.

"Let all things be done decently and in order." (1 Corinthians 14:40)

ARTICLE V (5)

PROPERTY RIGHTS

If at any time a separation should occur in this congregation on account of doctrine or for any other cause (which God may graciously prevent), the property rights of this congregation and all of its benefits will remain with those members who adhere to this constitution.

All persons who are no longer members of this congregation, because of action described in Article VI (6), relinquish all their rights in the congregation and its property until they have been accepted again as members by the voting body.

Upon total dissolution of Berea Evangelical Lutheran Church, any assets will be distributed to the church body with which it is affiliated at the time, for an exempt purpose within the meaning of section 501(C)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code or corresponding section of any future code.

ARTICLE VI (6)

MEMBERSHIP

A. Qualifications for Membership

- 1) Membership of this congregation consists of all the communicant members and baptized members who are not yet confirmed.
- 2) Communicant membership and the rights and privileges of communicant membership in this congregation require of communicants that they.
 - a) Be baptized;
 - b) Declare their acceptance of all the canonical books of the Bible as the verbally inspired Word of God and the only rule and standard of doctrine and life;
 - c) Be at least familiar with Luther's Small Catechism and declare their acceptance of the same;
 - d) Strive earnestly to lead Christian lives and abstain from manifest works of the flesh;

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry,

sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outburst of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like: of the which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." (Galatians 5:19-21)

- e) Attend divine services faithfully and partake of the Lord's Supper frequently;

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some; but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as you see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:25)

"For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:26)

- f) Not become members of any society or fraternal organization, either for adults or youth, which has religious principles or practices at variance with the teachings of Holy Scripture;

"That all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him." (John 5:23)

"...nor share in other people's sins:..." (1 Timothy 5:22b)

"Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them." (Romans 16:17)

- g) Be willing, in Christian love, to abide by the resolutions of the congregation, provided these are not contrary to the Word of God;

"Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love; in honor giving preference to one another;" (Romans 12:10)

"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said: We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29)

- h) Permit themselves to be admonished in a brotherly way when they have erred in doctrine or life.

"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear you, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be

established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 18:15-18)

"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; considering yourself lest you also be tempted." (Galatians 6:1)

B. Reception of Members

Persons requesting transfer from a sister congregation will present a letter or other evidence of transfer from the sister congregation. They may be received into baptized or communicant membership by the congregation or Church Council. The Church Council will report any membership action at the next voters meeting.

Persons other than transfers requesting membership will give evidence of their confessional agreement to the Pastor. The Pastor will present their request to the Elders and Council who will make a formal recommendation to the voters for action at the next regular meeting of the congregation. The Pastor may commune these persons prior to their formal reception as members.

C. Termination of Membership, Excommunication and Transfer

The congregation shall terminate the membership of a person when it is determined the member is causing divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which we have learned (Romans 16:17) or when he severs his association with the congregation.

A member who is guilty of open sins will become the deep concern of the congregation. Patient, loving admonition will be offered as directed in Matthew 18:15-20. Should such a person remain manifestly impenitent in spite of these efforts, the congregation will excommunicate him with the earnest prayer that he be brought to repentance;

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." (1 Corinthians 5:4-5)

The congregation or Church Council will grant a transfer of membership to a sister congregation when such a transfer is requested for valid reasons. This action is to be reported at the next regular meeting of the congregation.

ARTICLE VII (7)

SUFFRAGE

Any male member of this congregation 18 years and older may request voting membership at any regular meeting of the congregation. He will be requested to be absent while his membership is being discussed. Upon acceptance he will express his agreement by signing the constitution and will be eligible to vote at the next meeting.

The right of suffrage is both a privilege and a duty. It is expected that every voter attend every meeting, as far as it is possible for him to do so. After three calendar years of no attendance, a voter will lose his suffrage privilege. A voter who has lost his privilege may petition for reinstatement upon promise of regular attendance and use of his voting privilege. Non-voting members are encouraged to share their thoughts with any voter on any issue before the congregation.

Our Christian families and churches have been richly blessed by the devoted service of faithful Christian men and women. And while there is no spiritual distinction *between men and women who are "one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28), our God in his loving wisdom established the differing roles for men and women at creation (Genesis 2:18) and reaffirmed them throughout Scripture. These are expressed by husbands and wives within the Christian family (Ephesians 5:22-33) and men and women within Christian churches.*

"Let the women learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression." (1 Timothy 2:11-14)

"Let your women keep silence in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they will learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in the church." (1 Corinthians 14:34-35)

ARTICLE VIII (8)

CONTRIBUTIONS

It is the privilege and responsibility of every member to contribute toward all that the congregation has made its concern and assist in carrying out all its responsibilities in proportion to the measure in which the Lord has prospered them.

"On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collection when I come." (1 Corinthians 16:2)

"So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7)

ARTICLE IX (9)

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

It is the responsibility of all members to bring up their children *"in the training and admonition of the Lord"* (Ephesians 6:4). To this end, members are to bring them to Holy Baptism at an early age, give them a Christian training in the home and make the best possible use of the opportunities for Christian Education which are offered by the congregation.

"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart; you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up." (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)

ARTICLE X (10)

CHURCH BODY AFFILIATION AND MEMBERSHIP

This congregation, by two-thirds majority vote of the entire voting membership, may affiliate itself with and hold membership in an orthodox evangelical Lutheran church body that without reservation accepts and in practice adheres to the confessional position stated in Article III (3) of this constitution. A simple majority vote will be required to sever membership or affiliation with any church body.

ARTICLE XI (11)

MINISTRY

A. Calling a Pastor or Teacher

The congregation has the exclusive right to call Pastors and teachers. The calling of Pastors and teachers will be done by ballot and such calling will be by majority vote. In Christian love, encouragement will be given to make the vote unanimous. The pastoral and teaching offices of this congregation will be conferred only upon such candidates who publicly profess their acceptance of and adherence to Article III (3) of this Constitution. Their acceptance and adherence will be required in the call of vocation extended by the congregation.

"This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money; but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one that rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence; (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." (1 Timothy 3:1-7)

B. Termination of the Call

Both Pastor and members will appreciate and lovingly nurture their God-given roles and mutual relationship as they labor together in their Savior's service. Should difficulties arise, all will seek to preserve the precious Spirit-created bond of unity, love and peace that join them together as members of the body of Christ.

Situations, however, may arise which call for congregational admonition and action. The congregation alone has the authority both to extend and, if necessary, to terminate the call of its Pastor(s) or teacher(s). Sufficient and urgent causes for terminating a called worker include persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, willful neglect of duty, or established inability to perform the duties of his office.

ARTICLE XII (12)

OFFICERS

A. Duties of the Annual Officers

- 1) The **President** will be elected by the voting members for two years. The elections will be on even numbered years and he will not succeed himself more than once. He will preside at all meetings of the congregation and will ensure that all decisions are executed. In the absence of the President the Recording Secretary will be temporary chairman. The president is a Trustee Board member.
- 2) The **Recording Secretary** will be elected by the voting members for two years. The elections will be held on odd numbered years and he will not succeed himself more than once. He will keep an accurate and permanent record of all the proceedings of the congregation and Church Council. He will keep a copy of the CONSTITUTION, bound in a permanent record book and will have the same at hand at all meetings for reference and signature of newly accepted voting members. He will keep a current roster of all voting members of the congregation, from which he will call the roll at every duly called meeting. The Recording Secretary is a Trustee Board member.
- 3) The **Financial Secretary** will be elected by the voting members for two years. The election will be held on even numbered years and he will not succeed himself more than once. He will keep an accurate record of individual contributions as the Church Council or congregation directs. He

will make a report quarterly and annually and submit his books to the congregation for an annual audit.

- 4) The **Treasurer** will be elected by the voting members for two years. The election will be held on odd numbered years and he will not succeed himself more than once. He will receive a record of receipts from the Board of Property and disburse the funds according to the instructions of the congregation. He will make reports monthly, quarterly, and annually and submit his books to the congregation for an annual audit. The Treasurer is a Trustee Board member.

B. Election of Officers

The Church Council, at a meeting preceding the regular October meeting of the congregation, annually elects a nomination committee of a minimum of three members. The Pastor is a member of this committee and its chairman.

This committee will set up a slate of candidates to be at the annual meeting and will submit this slate of candidates for approval by the Council. The approved slate will thereupon be announced to the congregation before the annual meeting. The voting body reserves the right to amend the slate by adding names at the annual meeting.

The election will be by ballot and the candidate receiving the majority vote will be declared elected. The installation of the elected Officers and Board members will take place at a regular worship service.

C. Removal from Office

If anyone holding an office in the congregation willfully neglects his duty and upon due admonition does not amend, the congregation in such case has the right and eventually the duty, to remove him from office and elect another to take his place.

ARTICLE XIII (13)

BOARDS AND CHURCH COUNCIL

In accordance with the laws of the state of Minnesota the President, Secretary and Treasurer will form the Board of Trustees and serve as the legal representatives of the congregation.

The congregation will elect a Board of Property consisting of three members. The three-year term of one of the members expires each year at the annual meeting. No Board of Property member may succeed himself. It will be the duty of the Board of Property to oversee the maintenance of all church property, to be responsible for receiving and depositing all contributions for the congregation, to make an accurate record of them and deliver a copy to the Treasurer and Financial Secretary-

A Board of Elders consisting of two voters and the President will be elected at the annual meeting. The two year term of one of the Elders will expire each year. Each Elder may succeed himself once. The Board of Elders will work with the Pastor in overseeing the spiritual well being of the congregation.

The Board of Education will consist of three voting members with the Day School Principal and Sunday School Superintendent as advisors. The three year term of one of the members expires each year at the annual congregational meeting. No Board of Education member may succeed himself. It will be the duty of the Board of Education to administer the affairs of the Christian Day School and Sunday School. A Sunday School Superintendent will be elected at the April voters meeting from nominations submitted by the Board of Education. The term is one year starting in June and he may succeed himself. He will work with the Pastor in supervising the Sunday School instruction of our children.

The Pastor and President are the ex officio members of all Church Boards. No Officer or member of any Board may hold another elected office. All Boards are encouraged to hold regular meetings. Each Board will select a member to represent it at both Church Council and voter meetings. In addition to the general guidelines of the constitution, each Board has a list of specific duties which it prepares and periodically reviews. The lists and changes to the lists are approved by the Church Council. Each board is required to submit an annual budget for voter approval at the annual meeting. Voter approval of the budget authorizes the expenditures. The boards will manage their budgets. Expenditures will be reported at each quarterly meeting. Extra budgetary, non emergency, expenses require advance voter approval.

A representative of the Board of Property, Elders and Education together with the President, Recording Secretary, Financial Secretary, Treasurer and the Pastor constitute the Church Council.

Only such men who have been voting members of the congregation for at least one year will be eligible to hold any of these offices. Vacancies will be filled by election at the next regular or special meeting of the congregation. Those filling vacancies will serve the remaining portion of the vacant term.

The duties of the Church Council are the following:

- (1) They will adorn their high office with an honest Christian manner and be good examples to the congregation in knowledge, faithfulness and zeal.

"Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." (Acts 6:3)

- (2) They will aid the Pastor in the spiritual affairs of the congregation and support him in maintaining proper Christian discipline.

- (3) They will pay regard to good order and decorum in the worship service.

- (4) They will care in love for special needs which may arise in the congregation.
"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.—Galatians 6:9-10)

- (5) They will help implement the will and decisions of the congregation, coordinate the work of the various Boards and bring recommendations to the voters on matters before the congregation.

- (6) They will administer the temporal affairs of the congregation and adequately provide for the needs of the servant or servants of the Word and for all other necessary expenses;

"Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches." (Galatians 6:6)

No single, unapproved or unbudgeted, expenditure exceeding \$1500 will be made except upon resolution by the congregation. Only in matters of real urgency and immediate necessity will this sum be exceeded. Ratification of such action will be made at a meeting of the congregation.

ARTICLE XIV (14)

MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION AND CHURCH COUNCIL

A. Congregational Meetings

The annual meeting of the congregation will be held in January, with quarterly meetings in April, July and October. At the annual meeting the annual reports will be made and the Officers and Board Members will be elected. (cf., Article XII (12) and Article XIII (13)). Each meeting will be announced at the two prior Sunday services. All voting members will earnestly consider it their Christian duty to attend the same. (cf. Article VII (7)).

Special meetings of the congregation may be held by decision of the congregation or by request of the Church Council and must be called by the President upon request of the Pastor or upon request of three or more voting members of the congregation. Announcement of such special meetings will be made at two regular services preceding the meeting, except that in cases of necessity one announcement may be made by phone or mailing. The purpose of such special meetings must be stated in connection with the announcement.

The voters present when a vote is called at any meeting properly announced constitute a quorum. In all matters not already decided by the Word of God the majority rules, except in the case of constitutional changes as specified in Article X (10) and Article XV (15).

No one will bring before the congregation a complaint against any member of the congregation or against any called worker unless he has admonished him in a Christian manner according to Matthew 18:15-20.

B. Church Council Meetings

Regular meetings of the Church Council will be held.

A majority of the Council must be present to constitute a quorum. The Pastor or President may call special meetings of the Council and must call a special meeting upon the submission of a request of two voting members of the congregation. The President will conduct the meeting of the Council. The President will consult with the Pastor prior to all meetings regarding the matters that are to be presented. The Church Council will never convene to transact business without the Pastor's knowledge.

C. Order of Business

All meetings of the congregation will be conducted according to parliamentary procedure in so far as it is in harmony with Christian love and serves the purpose of these congregational meetings.

The agenda will include the following:

- (1) Opening with a short devotion
- (2) Roll Call
- (3) Reading and approval of minutes of previous session
- (4) Membership matters
- (5) Reports of Officers and Boards
- (6) Old business
- (7) New business
- (8) Pastor's Report
- (9) Adjournment with prayer

ARTICLE XV (15)

REPEALS AND ALTERATIONS

Articles III (3), IV (4), X (10) and XV (15) of this constitution will be and remain unalterable and irrevocable.

Proposals to alter or repeal any alterable or repealable article of this constitution will be offered in writing and announced at one regular meeting preceding any action thereon. Two-thirds of all members present will be necessary to pass the alteration or repeal.