

**CONSTITUTION
and
BY-LAWS
of
The Bethlehem Evangelical
Lutheran Congregation
Bremen, Kansas
Revised October 2014**



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Constitution Revised in 1972
Approved at Wichita, Kansas by
District Synod on April 18, 1972
By-laws revised and adopted
August 24, 2003
Constitution Revised October, 2014

CONSTITUTION PREAMBLE

Whereas the Word of God demands that a Christian congregation not only conform to the Word of God in doctrine and practice (Ps.119,105: Gal. 1:6-8; 2 Tim. 4:1-5), but that also all things be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40), therefore we, the members of Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bremen, Kansas set forth by this present document signed by ourselves, the Constitution and Bylaws in accordance with which our congregational affairs, spiritual and material, shall be conducted.

ARTICLE I—NAME

The name of this congregation shall be: Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church (U.A.C.) of Herkimer Township, Marshall County, Kansas.

ARTICLE II—PURPOSE

The purpose of this church shall be that of a Christian congregation, established and maintained for the express purpose of proclaiming the Gospel truth according to the confessional standard of the Lutheran Church, the Book of Concord of the year 1580.

ARTICLE III CONFESSIONAL STANDARDS

This congregation acknowledges and accepts without reservation, all the canonical books of the Old and New Testament as the revealed Word of God, verbally inspired, and acknowledges and accepts all the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, contained in the book of Concord of 1580, to be the true and genuine exposition of the doctrines of the Bible. These Symbolical Books are: the three Ecumenical Creeds (the Apostolic, the Nicene, and the Athanasian), the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the same, the Smalcald Articles, Luther's Large and Small Catechisms, and the formula of Concord.

According to this norm of doctrine, all doctrinal controversies, which may arise in this congregation, shall be decided and adjudicated.

ARTICLE IV MEMBERSHIP

No one can become or be a member of this congregation nor enjoy the rights and privileges of such membership unless he is: (a) baptized; (b) accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testament as the only divine rule and standard of faith and conduct; (c) is acquainted with, and accepts, Luther's Small Catechism (and also the Unaltered Augsburg Confession); (d) leads a Christian life and abstains from manifest works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21; (e) attends divine services faithfully and partakes of the Lord's Supper on a frequent and regular basis; (f) submits, for the sake of love and peace, to the regulations already made, or still to be made, by this body, provided they do not conflict with the Word of God, and accepts brotherly admonition when having erred or offended; (g) is not a member of any secret or other organization conflicting with the Word of God, (lodges, etc.)

When a member of this congregation, after fruitless admonition in the various grades prescribed by the Word of God (Matthew 18:15-20), where the observance of such grades has been possible, shall have been removed by unanimous vote from the congregation such person shall have forfeited all rights of a member of this congregation and all claims upon the property of the congregation as such, or upon any part thereof, as long as he is not again received into membership by the congregation. The same shall apply to such members as refuse to submit to church discipline and thus excommunicate themselves, as also to those who sever their connection

with the congregation.

ARTICLE V

BAPTIZED MEMEBERS

Any individual who is baptized and attends divine service at Bethlehem congregation regularly, is considered a baptized member. Baptized members may also include those who are unable to attend regular services due to residency in nursing homes, special care units, or other institutions due to medical or mental needs. Other baptized members may include individuals serving in the military, missionary projects or occupations which require individuals to be absent from the local congregation.

Baptized members are those individuals who have been Baptized with water in the name of The Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and are under the spiritual care of the congregation and the Pastor.

ARTICLE VI

COMMUNICANT MEMBERS

Upon confirmation, an individual becomes a communicant member of the congregation. A confirmed individual may transfer from another congregation who is in pulpit fellowship with the Missouri Synod to Bethlehem. A communicant member may transfer from Bethlehem to another Missouri Synod Congregation by requesting a transfer from the pastor or the elders. Individuals who do not wish to remain with the Missouri Synod may request and be granted a release. The pastor and elders will review the communicant membership list on a regular basis to identify individuals who have stopped attending divine service or communion and have voluntarily excluded themselves from membership.

Communicant Members are those who have been Baptized and have successfully completed instruction in Luther's Small Catechism, who accept as their confession Article III and Article IV of this Constitution.

ARTICLE VII

LOSS OF MEMBERSHIP

A Voting and/or Communicant Member of Bethlehem Lutheran, Bremen, shall forfeit all membership rights and privileges under the following conditions:

1. Transfer of Membership: A transfer of membership to a sister congregation in pulpit and altar fellowship within the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod shall be granted to a member of Bethlehem who makes written request for such transfer to the Pastor or to the Elders.
2. Excommunication: See Article IV on Membership.
3. Release of Membership: A release of membership shall be granted to a member who joins a non-Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod congregation.
4. Self-exclusion: Any members who absences himself/herself from worship and/or reception of Holy Communion for a period of one (1) year without just and reasonable cause shall be contacted by the Elders and in brotherly love encouraged to return to worship and regular reception of the Sacrament. If the individual does not return to worship and regular reception of the Sacrament after proper admonition by the Church Elders, a motion for release of membership by self-exclusion shall be presented by the Elders to the Voters' Assembly. A two-thirds (2/3rds) majority vote shall be required to recognize self-exclusion. An individual who has been released may request to have their membership reinstated. Such request must be in writing to the Church Elders who shall present such request to the Voters' Assembly. A two-thirds (2/3rds) majority vote shall be required to reinstate a person's membership.

5. Moving: Any member who moves away and does not within a period of six (6) months makes provision to keep his/her membership or transfer membership shall forfeit their membership at Bethlehem. A motion for release of membership shall be presented by the Church Elders to the Voters' Assembly. A two-thirds (2/3rds) majority vote shall be required for this release. Such individual may become a member of Bethlehem again through the successful completion of an Adult Confirmation Class or reaffirmation of faith.

ARTICLE VIII DUTIES OF MEMBERS

It shall be the duty of every member of this congregation to contribute according to his/her abilities toward the maintenance of church and school and in general to assist in ~~bearing the burdens~~ **meeting the financial requirements** of the congregation.

ARTICLE ~~VIII~~ IX VOTING MEMBERS

Male members of this congregation that have attained their twenty-first year and have signed the constitution shall be entitled to vote. **They shall be eligible to hold an office after one year of being a Voting Member.** ~~and having been a voting member of the congregation for one year shall be eligible for an office in the congregation.~~

ARTICLE ~~IX~~ X OFFICERS

The officers of this congregation shall be: a President, a Vice-President, a Secretary, a Treasurer, the Board of **Elders**, and the Board of Christian Education. These officers, together with the Pastor, shall constitute the Church **Council**. The Council shall meet before each regular meeting and whenever necessary.

ARTICLE XI ORDAINED MINISTERS

Only such men shall be called as Pastor who accept all the books of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God, who are in full agreement with the Confessional Standard (Constitution Article III), and who have the qualifications for such calls according to the standards and teachings of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. The Pastor in the call extended to him and accepted by him pledges himself to this confessional standard.

The right of calling **Pastors** shall ever be vested in the Bethlehem and Immanuel Dual Parish **Agreement** and shall never be delegated to a smaller body or to an individual. Reasons for dismissing a **Pastor** shall be: persistent adherence to false teaching, an ungodly life, and unfaithfulness or inability in reference to the performance of duties. For the election of Pastors, a unanimous vote is required.

ARTICLE XII
POWERS VESTED
IN THE CONGREGATION

The congregation shall decide all matters relating to the congregation or congregation affairs. Every member may appeal to it in regard to any matter relating to the affairs and government of said congregation. All decisions shall always be in accord with the Word of God and the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Those decisions not in accord with the Word of God and the Confessions shall be null and void.

ARTICLE XIII
PROPERTY RIGHTS
OF THE CONGREGATION

This congregation may receive, acquire, hold title to, and manage such real estate as it may need to accomplish its purpose of organization (See Art. II); ~~and it~~ may sell or dispose of real estate and other property or any part thereof; and ~~it~~ shall have the rights and powers granted by the laws of the state of Kansas to religious corporations.

If at any time a separation should take place in the congregation, ~~(may our gracious God prevent this from happening)~~ the property of the congregation and all the benefits therewith connected shall remain with those members who shall continue to adhere to Article III of this constitution.

If the congregation should close, the congregation will determine the future status of the property and buildings in accordance with the original Warranty Deeds. Any funds remaining will be placed into a perpetual care fund for the cemetery.

ARTICLE ~~XIII~~ XIV
LUTHERAN FORMS IN SERVICE AND EDUCATION

~~In the public services of this congregation purely Christian hymns, and in all public ministerial acts purely Lutheran forms only shall be used. Thus also, in the parochial school, beside the Holy Scriptures and Luther's Small Catechism, such books only, as are pure Christian, shall be introduced and used for the instruction of Christian doctrine.~~

In all of our public services, including weddings and funerals only such hymnals, hymns, and orders of service shall be used as are in agreement with the Word of God and our Lutheran Confessions. For all official acts, only such forms shall be used as are in agreement with the Word of God and our Lutheran Confessions. In our Sunday School, in the Parochial School, and in all other religious instruction programs, only such material shall be used that is in harmony with the Word of God and our Lutheran Confessions.

ARTICLE ~~XIV~~ XV
RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION OF CHILDREN

It shall be the duty of the parents of this congregation to raise their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. To this end parents are required to send their children to the religious instruction classes of Bethlehem, Bremen. They are also requested to send their children to our Good Shepherd Lutheran Day School or to provide for their proper training in pure Christian doctrine.

ARTICLE XVI
AUTHORITY OF THE OFFICERS

The officers shall have no authority beyond that which has been conferred upon them by the congregation and whatever power may have been delegated to them shall be at all times liable to change or revision by resolution of the congregation. All the officers of the congregation may, in a Christian and lawful order, be removed from office for the following reasons: persistent adherence to false teaching, an ungodly life, unfaithfulness or inability in reference to the performance of duties.

ARTICLE XVII
CONGREGATIONAL MEMBERSHIP

This congregation shall always be a member of an Orthodox Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

ARTICLE XVIII
DUAL PARISH AGREEMENT

Bethlehem Lutheran Church is a member of a dual parish with Immanuel Lutheran Church based on the Articles of Agreement.

ARTICLE ~~XVIII~~ XIX
GOOD SHEPHERD SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

Bethlehem Lutheran Church is a member of the Good Shepherd School Association providing Christian Day Education at the school located in Marysville, Kansas.

ARTICLE ~~XVIII~~ XX
BYLAWS

This congregation may adopt such bylaws as the accomplishment of the purpose of its organization may demand.

ARTICLE XXI
~~ALTERATION OF~~ AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION OR BYLAWS

To ~~alter or repeal a paragraph~~ amend an article of this constitution or bylaw, it shall be ~~requisite~~ required that in two meetings of the congregation two thirds of all the voting members present cast their votes in favor of such ~~alternation or repeal~~ amendment.

Of this constitution articles ~~2-3-4-5-8-9-10-11-12-13-16~~ 9-10-11-12-13-14-17 may only be amended by submitting the proposed changes to the congregation in writing at a regular voter's assembly and announced to the congregation in the regular Sunday bulletin. Notice of the discussion of such amendments shall be given prior to two regular voter's assemblies. The date of approval shall be referenced in any amendment adopted. A three-fourths affirmative vote of the voters present shall be required for adoption.

The revised Constitution shall, as a condition of continued membership in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, be submitted to the President of the Kansas District for review by the District's Constitution and Bylaw Committee, and favorable action by the District's Board of Directors before being implemented by the congregation."

BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I – ADMISSION OF NEW MEMBERS

Persons intending to join this congregation shall give notice of such intention to the Pastor and one of the Elders and in an interview with the Pastor give satisfactory evidence of their qualifications for membership. The application with the testimony of the ~~minister-Pastor~~ and the Elder will be presented at a subsequent meeting of the congregation and acted upon. **A unanimous vote from the congregation shall be required to accept the person as a member. The person shall then sign the Constitution.** ~~If in this meeting the admission of the applicant has been resolved by a unanimous vote, the applicant shall be permitted to sign the constitution, and thus his membership under the constitution shall be established.~~

Question for the congregation: Is this a congregation meeting or a Voters' Assembly Meeting. The two could be different.

ARTICLE II – MEETINGS

The regular voter's meetings of this congregation shall be four in number during the calendar year, to be held in the months of January, April, July and October. Every regular meeting shall be announced at two Sunday services previous to its date, or all members shall be notified in advance, if possible. Special meetings may be called by the Pastor, the Chairman, or the Board of Elders. Such meeting shall be valid and legal, capable of transacting business, provided that at least one-third (1/3) of the voting members of the congregation (quorum) are in attendance. It shall be the duty of every voting member to attend the voter's meetings. **By failing to attend the member waives his right to vote in that meeting.** In all meetings of the congregation the majority of votes cast shall decide all questions unless specified by the Constitution and Bylaws.

ARTICLE III

OFFICERS TERMS OF OFFICE

In addition to the officers specified in the constitution, the congregation shall elect a Collector and a Cemetery and Grounds Committee. ~~The duties of synod representative~~ **responsibilities of to represent the congregation at all Circuit and District meetings** shall be vested upon the senior elected Church Elder. Since according to the State charter, dated April 18, 1902, and revised to an indefinite charter in April 2002, our congregation must have five trustees. The Board of Elders (three members) and the School Elders (two senior elected members) shall constitute this Board of Trustees. **Question: what do you mean by "senior" elected members?**

Terms of Office. The election of **officers** is to be held in the January annual meeting. The officers of the congregation shall be elected for a three-year term and may not hold office the year following with the exception of the treasurer who may succeed himself.

~~Each year elected~~ **Elected each year** shall be: one Elder, one School Elder, the Chairman or Vice Chairman or the Secretary; in two consecutive years one **member** of the Cemetery and Grounds Committee; every third year a **Collector shall be elected**; and every third year a **Treasurer shall be elected**.

A Nominating Committee of outgoing officers shall propose a slate of candidates and present them two weeks prior to the annual meeting. Additional nominations may be made from the floor for the ballot.

If a vacancy occurs **in an office** it shall be filled by a special meeting or in the next quarterly meeting.

The congregation shall elect or appoint such special and standing committees as its needs demand.

ARTICLE IV – DUTIES OF OFFICERS

The duties of the President, the Vice-President and the Secretary are those which are usually required of such officers. The Vice-President shall be chairman of the Church Council.

TREASURER. The Treasurer shall

1. Keep a regular account of monies received and shall make disbursements as authorized by the congregation.
2. Shall render quarterly reports to the congregation.
3. Will keep insurance policies.
4. Will provide receipts as requested to donors who have made contributions to the congregation.

THE COLLECTOR shall

1. ~~Receive~~ Receive donations from congregational members, and provide a receipt of donation to the members.
2. Present all monies received to the Treasurer.

THE BOARD OF ELDERS shall consist of three members. They shall

1. Hold meetings when necessary.
2. Aid the Pastor in pastoral work, exercise the Christian admonition, when necessary, and in general assist the Pastor in maintaining regular, orderly services, and work for harmony in the church.
3. Sign diplomas of vocation in the name of the church-congregation.
4. Visit the sick and indigent What does "indigent" mean? members.
5. Prepare the church sanctuary for services
6. The third elected Elder-also will also serve as the chief Usher.

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES shall

1. Represent the congregation in all legal matters.
2. Securely keep deeds, abstracts and all other valuable documents belonging to the congregation.

THE BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION shall consist of three members. They shall

1. Hold regular meetings.
2. Supervise all educational agencies in the congregation, especially our association with Good Shepherd Lutheran School.
3. Be responsible for the educational facilities and equipment and their maintenance and repair.

THE SENIOR ELECTED ELDER shall

1. ~~Be the synod congregation representative.~~
+ Be to Represent the congregation at circuit and district meetings which he is required to attend.
2. Keep the congregation regularly informed on synod and district matters and promote interest and zeal in our midst for the work of the church at large.

It would not hurt to state here or somewhere else who attends in case the Senior Elected Elder cannot attend.

CEMETERY AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE shall consist of two members. They shall

1. Supervise the landscaping, graveling, removal of snow from the cemetery and the parish hall sidewalks, and the rest of the church grounds.
2. Chart and designate burial plots.
3. Accept gifts or donations to carry out projects authorized by the congregation. All such contributions shall be paid to the Treasurer and disbursed by him.
4. Prepare a map of the cemetery and keep it up to date on all burials persons interested. What does it mean, "burials persons interested"?

5. Maintain a display identifying the location of each burial site
6. Call for assistance to carry out its work.
7. Give an annual report of its activities.

THE CHIEF USHER will be the 3rd Elder. He shall

1. Call for assistants as necessary. Confirmed ~~boys and girls~~ **young adults** may be assistants.
The ushers shall
 1. Welcome visitors.
 2. Direct communicants to the altar during the **Lord's** Supper.
 3. Distribute all publicity material authorized by the Pastor or congregation.
 4. Assist in the regular collections during services.

PARISH HALL COMMITTEE shall consist of three members and their spouses if married. They will serve a term of three years. A new member will be appointed by the **Church Council** following the January elections. The member serving the third term will be the chairman. ~~They~~ **The Committee** will

1. Be in charge of maintenance, repair, cleaning, and providing supplies as necessary.
2. Call for assistance when necessary, especially for an annual general cleaning.

ARTICLE V CONFIRMATION AGE

A child who is thirteen (13) years old by the first day of January preceding his/her confirmation and is in the eighth grade at Good Shepherd Lutheran School shall be considered old enough to be confirmed. A child who is not attending Good Shepherd, but has completed instructions with the Pastor **and meets the age and grade level requirements stated above** may be confirmed upon the recommendation of the Pastor.

ARTICLE VI CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The constitution and by-laws supersede all previous rules where a conflict occurs.

ARTICLE VII ROBERTS RULES OF ORDER

All meetings shall be conducted with Roberts Rules of Order unless such conflict with **this Constitution and the Bylaws** or the Word of God.

ARTICLE VIII
ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. Opening devotion.
2. Roll call.
3. Educational Feature
4. Reading of minutes.
5. Admission of new members.
6. Release of members.
7. Treasurer's report
8. Board reports.
 - a. Pastor
 - b. Elders and Trustees
 - c. Education
 - d. Ushers
 - e. Cemetery committee
9. Special Committees
10. Synodical representative
11. Unfinished business
12. New Business
13. Adjournment and prayer