

**CONSTITUTION**  
**of**  
**TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**of SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS**

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**PREAMBLE**

Since the Word of God invests the Christian congregations with the power and duty to administer the **Office of the Keys** (*Matt. 18:17-20; 28:19*), and since in such Christian congregations all things should be done decently and in order (*1 Cor. 14:40*), the members of the Congregation, hereinafter designated as Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church of Springfield, Illinois, herewith establish and publish the order in which this Congregation shall be constituted, and according to which the affairs of this Congregation shall be conducted.

**PARAGRAPH I: NAME**

The name of this Congregation shall be: Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church of Springfield, Illinois.

## **PARAGRAPH II: CREED**

The Congregation acknowledges all canonical books of the *Old* and *New Testaments* as the revealed, verbally inspired **Word of God**, and all the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the *Book of Concord* as the form and norm extracted from the **Word of God**, according to which, because taken from **God's Word**, all doctrine is to be taught and proved in our Congregation, and all disputes which may occur in matters of doctrine and religion are to be judged and decided. These Confessions are: the three ecumenical *Creeds* (*Apostolic*, *Nicene*, and *Athanasian*), the *Unaltered Augsburg Confession*, the *Apology of the Same*, the *Smalcald Articles*, *Luther's Small* and *Large Catechisms*, and the *Formula of Concord*.

## **PARAGRAPH III: SYNODICAL AFFILIATION**

In order to exercise fellowship with those who profess the same faith with us, this Congregation shall maintain membership in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, inasmuch as and as long as it is in agreement with the creed of this Congregation set forth in Paragraph II above.

## **PARAGRAPH IV: MEMBERSHIP**

### **A. BAPTIZED MEMBERSHIP.**

Baptized membership shall be held by all persons who are baptized by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, and who are under the spiritual care of the Congregation. Baptized membership may be terminated in the same manner as Communicant Membership, as provided in Paragraph IV B 3.

### **B. COMMUNICANT MEMBERSHIP.**

#### **1. Admission to Communicant Membership.**

Persons shall be accepted by the Board of Elders into Communicant Membership in any of the following ways:

- a. by the Rite of Confirmation;
- b. by letter of Transfer from an Evangelical Lutheran congregation in Church Fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, provided that an applicant shall conform in all respects to the requirements of membership of this Congregation. The Head Pastor shall make this determination.

- c. by Profession of Faith after having demonstrated to the Head Pastor, in the presence of at least two (2) members of the Board of Elders, satisfactory evidence of qualification for Communicant Membership, especially knowledge of and agreement with the **Chief Parts of Christian Doctrine** contained in **Luther's Small Catechism**.
2. **Privileges and Duties of Communicant Membership.**

Each Communicant Member shall have responsibility as a member of the Body of Christ to endeavor to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (*II Peter 3:18*) and to become a man of God thoroughly equipped to good works (*II Timothy 3:17*). To this end, each Communicant Member shall have the following privileges and duties:

  - a. To grow in the Christian faith and life through faithful use of the means of grace, study of scripture individually and in fellowship with others, and frequent partaking of the Lord's Supper;
  - b. To live a life of Christian example before God and men, abstaining from open works of the flesh (*Galatians 5:18-24*), and to conduct themselves at all times so as to bring credit rather than dishonor upon the Church of Jesus Christ;
  - c. To not hold membership in any secret or other organizations which conflict with the Will of the Triune God as contained in **Holy Scripture**;
  - d. To provide for proper Christian training of their children at home and through the agencies of the Church (*II Peter 3:18, Ephesians 4:11-14*);
  - e. To contribute regularly and faithfully, as God has prospered them, toward the building of Christ's Kingdom in the Congregation, the local community, the nation, and the world (*II Corinthians 8-9*);
  - f. To prayerfully place their spiritual gifts and talents at the disposal of the Pastors, the officers and other agencies of the Congregation for the extension of the Kingdom and the building up of the Body of Christ (*I Corinthians 12-14*);
  - g. To allow themselves to be admonished in a brotherly way, and to be corrected when they have erred (*John 20:21-23; Matthew 18:15-20*);
  - h. To faithfully attend divine services.
3. **Termination of Communicant Membership.**
  - a. **Transfers.**

Communicant members who desire to join other congregations in Church Fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod shall present their request for transfer to the Head Pastor, who shall approve the request

and advise the Board of Elders and issue the Letter of Transfer.

b. **Joining Other Churches.**

Communicant members who desire to join a congregation outside of Church Fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod shall make a written request to the Head Pastor for Release from Membership. The Head Pastor shall make an appropriate recommendation to the Board of Elders. Upon resolution of the Board of Elders, such members shall be released from membership, forfeiting all rights and privileges of membership in the Congregation. If a Communicant member joins a church outside of Church Fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod without requesting a release, the Board of elders may, upon the recommendation of the Head Pastor and by appropriate resolution, release the person from membership.

c. **Whereabouts Unknown.**

Communicant members whose whereabouts are unknown to the Board of Elders and cannot be established despite reasonable efforts, shall be removed from Communicant membership by appropriate resolution of the Board of Elders.

d. **Removal.**

A Communicant member who fails to attend worship services, partake of the Lord's Supper, or share in the support of the Congregation, shall be visited and admonished by the Board of Elders, according to *Matthew 18:15-20*. When such efforts have not resulted in repentance after a reasonable time, the Board of Elders shall recommend to the Voters' Assembly the removal of the member from Communicant membership. Removal must be by unanimous vote of the Voters' Assembly. The Board of Elders shall inform the person of their removal by certified mail and shall prayerfully commit them to the Lord's care.

e. **Excommunication.**

Any Communicant members who conduct themselves in an unchristian manner shall be visited and admonished by the Board of Elders according to *Matthew 18:15-20*. If they refuse to amend their sinful life after proper admonition, the Board of Elders shall bring an appropriate resolution to the Voters' Assembly and shall provide written notice to the erring member at least one month prior to the meeting of the Voters' Assembly, advising of the member's right to attend such meeting and address the Voters' Assembly. Those refusing to be dealt with in matters of discipline shall be adjudged and declared to have terminated their

membership. A resolution to excommunicate must pass by a unanimous vote. If the resolution does not receive a unanimous vote the Board of Elders shall continue to visit and admonish the erring member. The Board of Elders shall inform the person of their excommunication by certified mail and shall prayerfully commit them to the Lord's care.

f. **Effect of Termination of Communicant .**

A person whose membership has been terminated forfeits all rights as a member of this Congregation and all claims upon the property of this congregation or upon any part thereof.

4. **Restoration of Membership.**

Persons whose Communicant membership has been terminated, for any reason, may be restored to membership, with all rights and privileges, if they repent and ask forgiveness through the Head Pastor and Board of Elders.

C. **VOTING MEMBERSHIP.**

1. **Admission to Voting Membership.**

a. All Communicant members of the Congregation who are over twenty-one (21) years of age shall be considered Voting Members.

b. In order to Activate their Voting Membership, members not previously accepted as Voting Members by resolution of the Voters' Assembly, must personally appear at a Voters' Assembly meeting and declare their intention to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of an Active Voting Member to the best of their ability. Upon acceptance by the Voters' Assembly, the Voting Member shall be added to the List of Active Voting Members and shall sign the Constitution and By-Laws of the Congregation. The newly activated Voting Member shall obtain the privilege of voting at the next Voters' Assembly meeting the member attend.

c. The right to hold elective office shall be granted to male Active Voting Members who fulfill the requirements set forth in the By-Laws of this Constitution.

d. **Associate Membership.**

(1) Any Communicant member may apply for Associate Membership in any meeting of the Voters' Assembly, and shall be received by resolution of the Voters' assembly. The Associate Member shall sign the Constitution and By-Laws of this Congregation in token of acceptance of the same.

(2) The Associate Member shall not have the right to vote at any Voters' Assembly meeting or to hold elective office, but shall have the right to hold appointive office.

(3) An Associate Member shall become an Active Voting Member immediately upon attaining the age of twenty-

one (21) years of age, provided the Associate Member attended at least one (1) Voters' Assembly meeting during the preceding calendar year.

2. **Duties and Responsibilities of Active Voting Members.**

Each Active Voting Member shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

- a. To conscientiously and prayerfully obtain and exercise their right of suffrage in all measures that will advance the work of Christ's Kingdom, both locally and in the Church-at-Large;
- b. To willingly serve in any office or capacity for which their spiritual gifts or talents equip them;
- c. To faithfully attend all meetings of the Voters' Assembly;
- d. To diligently assist in administering the spiritual and temporal affairs of the Congregation;
- e. To encourage eligible Voting Members, who are not yet Active Voting Members, to seriously consider accepting the responsibilities and privileges of Active Voting Membership.

3. **Termination of Active Voting Membership.**

Any Active Voting Member who fails to attend at least one meeting of the Voters' Assembly in any calendar year shall be removed from active Voting Membership and placed on the List of Inactive Voting Members at the first meeting of the Voters' Assembly in the subsequent calendar year. The names of Active Voting Members shall be announced by the President of the congregation prior to the conducting of any business of the first Voters' Assembly meeting of that calendar year, and the names of all Active Voting Members shall be published in the first Church Newsletter of the calendar year.

4. **Restoration of Active Voting Membership.**

Inactive Voting Members may be restored to Active Voting Membership by again attending a meeting of the Voters' Assembly and re-affirming their intention to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of an Active Voting Member to the best of their ability. Upon re-acceptance by the Voters' Assembly, the newly re-activated Voting Member shall again obtain the privilege of voting at the next Voters' Assembly Meeting the member attends.

## **PARAGRAPH V: VOTERS' ASSEMBLY MEETINGS**

All Voting Members and all Associate Members of this Congregation are duty bound to attend Voters' Assembly meetings whenever possible. Any Active Voting Member failing to attend a meeting forfeits his vote for that meeting.

Thirty (30) Active Voting Members shall constitute a quorum. A majority vote of the Active Voting Members present is sufficient to adopt a resolution, except in matters of doctrine and conscience, where the **Word of God** alone must decide. In matters of church discipline unanimity is required.

The order of business shall be established by the Chairman of the meeting and questions of parliamentary procedure not covered by the Constitution, shall be resolved in accordance with ***Robert's Rules of Order***.

## **PARAGRAPH VI:** **RIGHTS AND POWERS OF THE CONGREGATION**

The Congregation as a body has the supreme power in all external and internal administration of its own church and congregation affairs. No order or decision is valid for the Congregation as such, or for any members or group of members in particular, if not done in the name of and by a general or specific authorization of the Voters' Assembly. Every resolution in conflict with God's Word and the above named Lutheran Confessions is automatically invalid.

The right to exercise the call to Ministers of Religion – Ordained and Ministers of Religion – commissioned and to elect officers of the Congregation shall at all times be the prerogative of the whole Congregation, operating through its Active Voting Members, and such calling and electing shall take place in the Voters' Assembly meetings.

Any called workers or officers of the Congregation may be removed from office, but only in an orderly, Christian manner. Valid reasons for removal shall be: persistent adherence to false doctrine, offensive moral conduct, willful unfaithfulness, and protracted incapacity to perform the duties of their office.

## **PARAGRAPH VII: MINISTERIAL OFFICE**

The office of Minister of Religion – Ordained, and that of Minister of Religion – commissioned shall be conferred upon such persons only as profess their acceptance of all the canonical books of the ***Old*** and ***New Testaments*** as the revealed, verbally inspired **word of God**, and of the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran church enumerated in Paragraph II to which acceptance they are to be pledged in the call issued to them by this Congregation.

Candidates for nomination for the office of Minister of Religion – Ordained or Minister of Religion – Commissioned shall be submitted by members of the Congregation along with candidates from the District President to a Call Committee appointed for that purpose.

Candidates for nomination for the office of Minister of Religion – Ordained or Minister of Religion – Commissioned shall have their names published in the Church Bulletins in the public services for two (2) consecutive weekends. Protests to a candidate may be submitted in writing to the Chairman of the Call committee. The Call Committee shall review protests to a candidate and obtain additional information from congregational, District or Synodical offices, and report their findings at the next Voters' Assembly meeting. Protest to a candidate shall be sustained by a majority vote of the Voters' Assembly and the candidate shall be removed from the list of candidates.

Those persons remaining shall stand recognized as candidates. The election shall be performed by secret ballot and the candidate receiving a majority of all votes cast shall be considered called by the Congregation. But when a candidate is to be called directly from one of our seminaries or terminal teachers colleges, persons properly designated by Synod for this purpose may be requested to appoint the person to whom the call shall them be extended.

### **PARAGRAPH VIII:** **PROPERTY OF CONGREGATION ADMINISTERED**

All property of the Congregation shall be held in the name and for the use of the Congregation and shall be administered by such Officers and Boards as may be designated under the By-Laws of the Congregation.

### **PARAGRAPH IX: RIGHT OF PROPERTY IN CASE OF SCHISM**

Should a separation take place in the Congregation on account of doctrine – which God graciously may prevent – the property of the Congregation and all benefits and all appurtenances connected herewith shall remain vested in those members who shall adhere to the Creed set forth in Paragraph II of this Constitution, and who pledge the pastors and all teachers of the Congregation to said Creed.

## **PARAGRAPH X: SOCIETIES**

Organized societies with the Congregation shall exist only by consent of the Congregation, the pastor exercising supervision over them as spiritual leader of the Congregation. The societies shall be accountable to the Congregation in all enactments and decisions of the societies.

## **PARAGRAPH XI: CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

The Congregation shall at all times foster and support the Christian education of all its members, particularly the young. To this end it shall seek to maintain a Christian Day School, and all other agencies necessary for the promotion of such Christian education.

The Congregation holds parents responsible for the Christian training of their children and urges them and all its members to make full use of its program of Christian education.

For instruction in Christian doctrine, besides ***Holy Scripture*** and ***Luther's Small Catechism***, only such books may be used which contain nothing contrary to the Creed of this Congregation set forth in Paragraph II of the Constitution.

## **PARAGRAPH XII: SERVICES AND FORMS**

No one shall be permitted to officiate in this Congregation without the consent of the Pastor, who in turn is accountable to the Congregation.

All liturgies, hymns and prayers used in the public services of this congregation, all ministerial acts, and all books used in all the classes for instruction in Christian doctrine shall conform to the confessional standard of Paragraph II of this Constitution.

### **PARAGRAPH XIII: AMENDMENTS**

Paragraph II of this Constitution is irrevocable. Any addition to this Paragraph must be in harmony with its doctrinal standard and accepted by unanimous consent of the Active Voting Members.

Other alteration, repeal, or amendment of this Constitution may be effected by a resolution which has the support of a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote in a regular or special Voters' Assembly meeting, provided that the proposed change has been received in a previous regular Voters' Assembly meeting and written copies thereof sent by mail to all Active Voting Members.