

Constitution And Bylaws



Good Shepherd
Evangelical
Lutheran Church
West Bend, Wisconsin

Adopted on November 17, 1996
Revised October 28, 2014

Abbreviated with Sections Especially Relevant to the
Board of Elders

CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE V – CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Section A. Classification

1. **BAPTIZED MEMBERS** of the congregation are those who have been baptized into the Christian faith in the name of the Triune God.
2. **COMMUNICANT MEMBERS** are those baptized souls who confess the chief parts of Christian doctrine as written in Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism and who have declared their adherence to all the canonical books of the Old and the New Testaments, without qualification, as the only rule and norm of faith and life.
3. **VOTING MEMBERS** are those male communicant members (1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:12) who have declared their agreement with this constitution by their signatures and who have been accepted by the Voters' Assembly of the congregation.

Section B. Privileges and Responsibilities

"God is love" (1 John 4:8), and his love ever moves him to bless the members of his church with physical and spiritual gifts (1 John 3:1; James 1:17). In return for all of these undeserved blessings, we ought to love him with all our heart (1 John 4:19) and to show that love with the works that we do. The exercise of such love we acknowledge as both a privilege and a responsibility. Some of the privileges and responsibilities to be noted are:

1. HIS WORD

Our God has given us his Word, the one thing needful (Luke 10:42), which alone can save our souls and tell us how to live a God-pleasing life (2 Timothy 3:15-17). Consequently, members of his church will consider it a distinct privilege and a responsibility to:

- a. Hear and receive the Word of God diligently.
- b. Share the saving truth of God's Word with others (Matthew 28:19 and 1 Peter 3:15).
- c. Provide and promote opportunities for Christian education.
- d. Bring up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

2. THE SACRAMENTS

Our God has given us two sacraments: Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, which are means that our Lord uses to bring his grace to us. Consequently, members of his church will

- a. Have their children baptized early in life, for "baptism now saves you also" (1 Peter 3:21).
- b. Frequently partake of Holy Communion (1 Corinthians 11:23-26), if they are recognized as such who can properly examine themselves (1 Corinthians 11:28). Only those in the confessional fellowship of faith are permitted to commune at our altar. (Close Communion - 2 Corinthians 6:14-15; Romans 16:17).

3. CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

Our God has given us the privilege and responsibility of being managers over a certain portion of his estate and assures us he will graciously bless such faithful management (2 Corinthians 9:6). Therefore members of his church will under grace

- a. Continually remember that all their possessions, time and abilities are really a trust from God.
- b. Cheerfully decide in their heart (2 Corinthians 9:7) the portion of their possessions, time and abilities that they will regularly devote to the Lord for use in carrying out that which the congregation has made its concern, not omitting the work of the synod (Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 9:14; 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-11; 1 Peter 4:10).
- c. If eligible, as voting members, regularly attend the Voters' Assembly meetings and lend the congregation their counsel and aid.

4. CHRISTIAN LIVING

Our God has implanted within us who are Christians the new man, who desires to live righteously (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:24). Consequently, members of his church will

- a. Not live in obvious acts of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:19-21), but lead a Christian life

- (Galatians 5:22-25).
- b. When they have erred, permit themselves to be admonished fraternally and corrected according to Matthew 18:15-18.
 - c. Refuse to hold membership in any organization whose teachings and practices conflict with the Word of God (e.g. lodges) (John 5:23; 8:31,32; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Section C. Church Discipline and Excommunication

Christian discipline shall be exercised in this congregation according to Matthew 18:15-20 toward those who err from the faith or who in other ways have given offense. At all times this shall be done in the spirit of the gospel, namely, to regain the erring as brothers. Those members who become evident as impenitent sinners and finally must be excommunicated, and those who have excluded themselves from the congregation by evading Matthew 18:15-18, lose all their rights in the congregation and in its property. For excommunication a unanimous vote of the Voters' Assembly is required.

Section D. Reinstatement

When an excommunicated member by the grace of God repents of his sin, he is to be reinstated with all former rights and privileges of this congregation (2 Corinthians 2:6-8).

Section E. Termination of Fellowship

Members who persist in an error that in itself does not make the presence of saving faith impossible shall be excluded from the fellowship of the congregation (Romans 16:17-18) and lose all rights in the congregation and in its property.

BYLAWS

BYLAW II – CONGREGATIONAL OFFICERS AND BOARDS

Section A. Election of Officers and Board Members

2. **Nomination**
The Nominating Committee will seek to nominate two or more candidates for each elective position to be filled. The Nominating Committee will acquire the consent of all men it intends to nominate. The list of candidates will be publicized by posting or by means of the church bulletin at least two weeks prior to the October Voters' Assembly meeting. Up to 10 days following the publicizing of the slate of candidates, the communicant members may submit to the Nominating Committee additional names to be added to the proposed ballot if they are found eligible and willing to serve by the Nominating Committee.
5. **Organization of Boards**
The boards of the congregation will organize themselves for the new year by the election of chairmen, secretaries and other officers deemed necessary by them or the Voters' Assembly. Only board members who have served one year of their term or consecutive terms are eligible to be chairmen. This organizing will take place in the first board meeting following the October Voters' Assembly meeting. Newly-elected members will have the right to vote for the purpose of organizing the boards (CF. Bylaw II, Section A, Point 4).
8. **Vacancies**
All vacancies occurring in elective positions between elections will be filled for the unexpired term by election at the next regular or special meeting of the Voters' Assembly if possible. The Nominating Committee will offer a slate of two or more candidates, if possible, as nominees for each vacant position. The Voters' Assembly may add to the slate of candidates prior to the election taking place.

Vacancies in appointed positions will be filled by the president, ratified by the Church Council, and reported to the Voters' Assembly.

BYLAW III – COMMUNICANT MEMBERSHIP

Section A. Membership Changes

The Board of Elders, upon recommendation from the pastor(s), will have the authority to act on all requests for membership changes. All membership changes will be ratified by the Church Council at its next meeting and reported to the Voters' Assembly.

Section B. Application for Membership – Procedure

Applicants for communicant membership in this congregation will consult with the pastor(s), who will determine whether such applicants are eligible for membership in accordance with Article V of this constitution.

1. Applicants from other Lutheran churches with whom this congregation is in fellowship will submit a letter of transfer from their former congregation to establish their eligibility for membership.
2. Applicants from Lutheran churches not in fellowship with this congregation will submit a release of membership from their former congregation. The pastor(s) will then review with them all areas of doctrine where there may be differences and determine their eligibility.
3. Applicants from any Lutheran church whose membership in their former congregation has lapsed, may be required to undergo a period of instruction before the affirmation of faith. This action is to be ratified at the next regular meeting of the Board of Elders.
4. Applicants not familiar with the doctrines and confessions of the Lutheran church will be required to attend a course of instruction and to make profession of their faith either before the congregation or before witnesses who are members of the Board of Elders before being received as members.

Section C. Communicant Membership – Transfer, Release or Removal

1. Transfers
A member desiring transfer to another Lutheran congregation in fellowship with this congregation will apply to the pastor(s). Upon approval by the pastor(s) and the Board of Elders, a letter of transfer will be issued.
2. Releases
 - a. In cases in which communicant members of this congregation desire to join another congregation not in fellowship with us, they will request a release and upon the decision of the pastor(s) and the Board of Elders a release will be granted.
 - b. In cases in which communicant members of this congregation have joined another congregation not in fellowship with us, they will, upon the decision of the pastor(s) and Board of Elders, be regarded as having terminated their membership in this congregation, forfeiting all rights and privileges of membership. They will be notified of this decision in writing.
3. Change in Residence
When communicant members of this congregation move away and no longer attend worship services or partake of Holy Communion at Good Shepherd and have not requested transfer of membership, upon the decision of the pastor(s) and the Board of Elders, they will be referred to a congregation in fellowship with us nearest to their new residence. If after six months no response has been received indicating a change in membership to a new congregation, a letter will be sent again to encourage their transfer. This letter will also inform them they have a period of 30 days to respond. If the congregation does not hear from them within 30 days, their names will be removed from membership at Good Shepherd. When this action is necessary, they will be notified of this decision in writing.
4. Whereabouts Unknown
The names of members whose whereabouts are unknown and cannot be established within a period of six months will be removed from the membership list of the congregation and placed in a file designated "Whereabouts Unknown."
5. Relinquishing Membership Rights
Members released, transferred or removed relinquish all rights in this congregation.

BYLAW IV – CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Christian discipline will be practiced under the direction of the pastor(s) and the Board of Elders according to the following procedure:

Section A. Excommunication

Excommunication will be enacted in the following manner after all procedures have been followed under Article V, Section C of this constitution. Excommunication is to be applied to any member who shows himself or herself to be an impenitent sinner. In such a case the Board of Elders will recommend excommunication at the next regular meeting of the Voters' Assembly. A unanimous ballot vote of those voting members present will be required to excommunicate a member of this congregation. The member in question will not be allowed to vote on his/her own excommunication.

Section B. Appeals

1. Any person who has been subject to disciplinary action under Bylaw IV, Section A, will have the right to appeal this action to the Voters' Assembly of the congregation. Request for appeal will be made by the appellant to the president of the congregation. The president of the congregation will arrange for the appeal to be heard in an orderly fashion.
2. Any person who has been subject to a disciplinary action by the congregation has the right to appeal the judgment to the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Such appeals are subject to the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Constitution and Bylaws, Section 7.45.

Section C. Restoration

Those who have been removed from membership for whatever reason will be restored with all rights and privileges of this congregation when they repent and make that known through the pastor(s) and the Board of Elders.

Section D. Notification

Disciplinary action and all acts of restoration will be made known to all communicant members by whatever methods the pastor(s) and the Board of Elders consider most suitable.

BYLAW V – SERVICE ARRANGEMENTS

Section A. Marriages

Marriage services may be conducted in our church only for those bridal parties in which one or both are members of our congregation or of sister congregations with their approval.

Section B. Funerals

1. Funeral services will be conducted for members of our congregation or of sister congregations when circumstances warrant it.
2. Our pastor(s) will not officiate at funerals of non-members of our church to whom the pastor has not given spiritual ministrations, unless they are members of sister congregations.
3. No display of distinguishing banners or emblems of any organization to which a deceased member may have belonged will be permitted at the funeral services conducted in our church, except that a flag of the United States of America may be draped over the casket of a person having an honorable discharge from the United States Military service.

Section C. Service Leaders

Those leading the service, such as pastors, organists, soloists, instrumentalists, communion assistants, and choir members, are to be members of our congregation or from a congregation with whom we are in fellowship.

Section D. Exceptions

Exceptions to the above general rules may be made in special circumstances by recommendation of the pastor(s) to, and approval by, the Church Council or the Board of Elders.

BYLAW VI – BOARDS AND THEIR DUTIES

Section A. General Procedures

1. Meetings of the boards
 - a. All boards will usually meet monthly. Boards may meet more often if needed.
 - b. The pastor(s) and/or the chairman of the individual boards may call special meetings of their respective boards and must call a special meeting upon the receipt of a written request by any two or more members of their boards. The principal of Good Shepherd Lutheran School may call a special meeting of the Joint Board of Lutheran Schools.
2. Each board, prior to the March Church Council meeting, will prepare its own budgetary items for presentation to the Budget Committee.
3. General considerations
 - a. The boards have the privilege of organizing themselves in whatever manner they determine is best to carry out their duties as listed in this constitution and bylaws.
 - b. The boards have the privilege of appointing ad hoc committees to assist them in fulfilling their duties.
 - c. The boards have the privilege of enlisting the help of the members of the congregation in carrying out their duties.
 - d. The boards have the responsibility of planning the work of the congregation. While the boards may well be involved in carrying out this work, their primary responsibility is planning the work that must be done.
 - e. A quorum of a board must be present for a board to conduct business. A majority of the board will constitute a quorum.
 - f. If the chairman of a board cannot be present for a council meeting, he may designate a member of his board to serve as his representative at the council meeting. This alternate representative will enjoy all rights and responsibilities normally given the board chairman at the council meeting.

4. Qualifications for office
The members of the boards and the Church Council will adorn their high office with an honest way of life and be good examples to the congregation (1 Timothy 3:-12). They will aid the pastor(s) in the spiritual affairs of the church. They will be accountable for good order in the services. They will particularly care in love for their fellow member who have special needs (Galatians 6:9-10).

Section B. Board of Elders

1. Composition of the board
This board will consist of at least 12 men elected by the Voters' Assembly. The chairman, in addition to serving on the Church Council, will preside at all meetings of the board.
2. Duties and responsibilities
This board will assist the pastor(s) in all matters pertaining to the welfare of the congregation. Primary attention will be given to the spiritual welfare of the congregation, which includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. This board will ensure that the pure Word of God is proclaimed and the Sacraments administered in the church and all agencies of the congregation.
 - b. This board will visit, counsel and encourage members who have shown a lack of concern for hearing God's Word and participating in the Lord's Supper.
 - c. This board will act upon church membership transactions such as transfers, releases and reception of new members.
 - d. This board will ensure that all worship services, including funerals and weddings, are conducted in a decent and orderly manner to the glory of God.
 - e. This board will evaluate and analyze the congregation's commitment to God's saving work among its members and encourage the members in their service to the Savior and His saving work.
 - f. This board will coordinate the keeping of church records such as membership, worship attendance, communion attendance, offerings and other records as required by the Voters' Assembly or the Church Council. The Board of Elders will have access to all records of the individual members of the congregation as needed to carry out their assigned duties.
 - g. This board will coordinate the programs and activities of the congregation.
 - h. This board will also be concerned about the spiritual, emotional and physical health and welfare of the individual members of the congregation. As a part of this function, the board will direct all of the congregation's efforts to help the needy.
 - i. This board will be concerned about the spiritual, emotional and physical health and welfare of the called workers and their families. The Board of Elders may serve as a liaison between the called workers and the congregation.
 - j. This board will be responsible for the pastors' position description, to be reviewed and updated annually.
 - k. This board is responsible for the church organizations/activities as shown in the organizational chart, Exhibit A. [Pastoral Staff, Worship, Ushers, Organists, Choirs, Altar Committee, Membership, Active/Inactive, Soul Conservation, Church Secretary, Church Records]

BYLAW VIII – CALLED WORKERS IN THE PUBLIC MINISTRY

Section C. Responsibilities of the Office of Pastor

It will be the responsibility of the pastor(s) called by the congregation to:

1. Preach the Word of God in its truth and purity and administer the Sacraments according to their divine institution (Matthew 28:19-20).
2. Teach God's saving truth to all those under his care, especially those children and adults preparing for communicant membership, and to give witness to others when the opportunities arise (Matthew 10:32-33).
3. Perform all the duties of a pastor toward the members of the congregation in an evangelical way and with loving care for their souls, in particular to visit the sick and "shut-ins," to admonish indifferent and erring members, to perform marriages, and to officiate at funerals (2 Timothy 4:2-5).

4. Guide the congregation in carrying out church discipline in light of Matthew 18.
5. Motivate, train and “prepare God’s people for works of service that the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4:12).
6. Advise and assist the congregation in adopting policies that will help the congregation carry out its God-given mission in the world and to help implement its policies.
7. Supervise the maintenance and preservation of accurate church records, lead and guide the congregation in all of its affairs, and see to it that everything is done in a fitting and orderly way (1 Corinthians 14:40).
8. Keep in mind that a pastor is a watchman and shepherd of the congregation, accountable to God for his ministry (Ezekiel 3:17-21; Hebrews 13:17), and therefore sees that all the affairs of the congregation are conducted to the glory of God.
9. Adorn the pastoral office with a Godly and exemplary life, and endeavor to live in unity with the members of the congregation and with fellow workers (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1).
10. Work in harmony with the boards to whom the congregation has made him responsible.
11. Fulfill the detailed responsibilities as outlined in the pastor’s “position description.”
 - a. The Board of Elders will be responsible for the pastors’ position description.
 - b. The position description for the pastor(s) will be reviewed and updated annually by the Board of Elders.

Section E. Responsibilities of the Congregation

It will be the responsibility of the congregation to:

1. Acknowledge their called pastor(s) and teachers as servants of the Word (Luke 10:16; Hebrews 13:7).
2. Receive the Word of God, which they preach and teach with proper respect and consideration (Hebrews 13:17).
3. Support their work with diligent, faithful assistance.
4. Pray for them, love and honor them, and live in peace and harmony with them (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:18).
5. Encourage them by word and action.
6. Provide for their temporal needs in a timely and sufficient manner (1 Corinthians 9:14; Galatians 6:6; 1 Timothy 5:18)

BYLAW XII – STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE CONGREGATION

Section A. The Nominating Committee

1. Composition of the committee
The Nominating Committee will consist of:
 - a. The president of the congregation as the chairman.
 - b. One member of the Board of Elders.
 - c. One member of the Board of Parish Services.
 - d. One member at large, not currently holding an elected office in the church to be appointed by the president of the Church Council.
 - f. The pastor(s) of the congregation.

Section C. The Budget Review Committee

1. Composition of the committee
The Financial Officer of the congregation will be chairman of this committee. The other members will consist of a member of the Boards of Elders, the Vice President and Financial Secretary. The pastor(s) and the principal of Good Shepherd Lutheran School are non-voting,

ex-officio members.

2. Duties and responsibilities:
 - a. The Budget Review Committee will provide general guidelines for budgeting to each board for the boards to use in preparing their portion of the annual operating budget.
 - b. This committee will receive, no later than the end of February of each year, recommended budget figures from each board covering the scope of each board's fiscal responsibilities.
 - c. This committee will have the authority to request revision of each board's proposed budget. The boards are responsible for submitting requested revisions. Each board will have the opportunity to present its revised budget to the Budget Review Committee. This presentation may take the form deemed most appropriate by the board.
 - d. This committee will be responsible for preparing the congregation's proposed budget for the following year and presenting it to the congregation at least one week prior to the May Voters' Assembly.

Section E. The Worship Committee

The Worship Committee is authorized by the Coordinating Council and is accountable to it. The Nominating Committee will recommend names to be appointed to this committee for a two-year term. Committee members may be reappointed. These appointees will be ratified by the Voters' Assembly at the October meeting.