

**Star of Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran
Church and School**
New Berlin, Wisconsin

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

January 31, 2017

PREAMBLE

WHEREAS, the Apostle Paul sets forth, I Corinthians 14:40 that all things in the Church shall 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 the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod of New Berlin, Wisconsin, do herewith, in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and by subscribing our names hereto, adopt the following CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS.

CONSTITUTION

Article I

Name

The name of this congregation shall be “Star of Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church” of New Berlin, Wisconsin.

Article II

Articles of Faith

Section 1.

This congregation accepts and confesses all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the verbally inspired Word of God, and all the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of 1580 as a correct presentation and true exposition of Christian doctrine, drawn from and in full agreement with, the Holy Scriptures; hence no doctrine shall be taught or tolerated in this congregation which is in any way at variance with the following symbols of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, namely:

- A. The three ecumenical Creeds
 - 1) The Apostles’
 - 2) The Nicene
 - 3) The Athanasian

- B. The six Lutheran Confessions
 - 1) Dr. Martin Luther’s Small Catechism
 - 2) Dr. Martin Luther’s Large Catechism
 - 3) The Unaltered Augsburg Confession
 - 4) The Apology of the Augsburg Confession
 - 5) The Smalcald Articles
 - 6) The Formula of Concord

Section 2.

And we set forth that according to this norm of doctrine and faith all controversies which may arise in this congregation shall be decided and adjusted.

Article III

Purpose and Objectives

Section 1.

The continuing purpose of this congregation, as a gathering of Christians, is to serve all peoples in God’s world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ on the basis of Holy Scriptures (Matthew 28:18-20).

Section 2.

The primary objectives of this congregation shall be:

To proclaim the Law and the Gospel, to lead sinners to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ for life and salvation (II Timothy 4:2; Luke 24:26-48).

To strengthen believers in faith and sanctification through the means of grace (Romans 10:17).

To equip believers for works of service in Christ's kingdom as disciples, stewards, and witnesses (Ephesians 4:11, 12).

Article IV

Church Affiliation

This congregation shall affiliate itself only with a church body that holds to all the truths of God's Word in doctrine and practice and is bound to the confession of faith as set forth in Article II, if, and as long as, such a church body exists.

Article V

Church Membership

Section 1.

Classification

- A. Baptized members of the congregation are those who have been baptized into the Christian faith in the name of the Triune God.
- B. Communicant members are those baptized souls who confess the chief parts of Christian doctrine as written in Dr. Luther's Small Catechism and who have declared their adherence to all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, without qualification, as the only rule and norm of faith and life.
- C. Voting Members are those male communicant members (I Corinthians 14:34, I Timothy 2:12) who have declared their agreement with this Constitution and who have been accepted by the Voters' Assembly of the congregation.

Section 2.

Privileges and Responsibilities

"God is love" (I John 4:8), and His love ever moves Him to bless the members of His Church with innumerable physical and spiritual gifts (I John 3:1; James 1:17). In return for all of these undeserved blessings, we can do nothing less than to love Him with all our heart (I John 4:19) and to show that love with the works that we do. The giving of such expression we acknowledge as both a privilege and a responsibility. To be noted are the following:

- A. Our God has given us His Word, the one thing needful (Luke 10:42), which also can save souls and tell us how to live a God-pleasing life (II Timothy 3:15-

17). Consequently, members of His Church will consider it a distinct privilege and a responsibility to:

- 1) Hear and receive the Word of God regularly.
- 2) Provide and promote opportunities for Christian education.
- 3) Bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

B. 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:

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

C. Our God has given us the privilege of being stewards over a certain portion of His estate and of receiving the steward's rich reward of grace (Matthew 25:14-30). Consequently, members of His Church will:

- 1) Continually remember that all their property, time, and talents really belong to God.
- 2) Conscientiously determine which part of their money, time, and talents shall be devoted to that which the congregation made its concern, not omitting the work of the Synod (Mark 16:15; I Corinthians 9:14; 16:2; II Corinthians 9:6-11; I Peter 4:10).
- 3) If they are voting members, regularly attend the Voters' Assembly meetings and lend the congregation their counsel and aid.

D. Our God has implanted within us who are Christians the New Man who desires to live righteously (II Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:24). Consequently, members of His Church will:

- 1) Not live in acts of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:19-21), but lead a Christian life (Galatians 5:22-25).
- 2) When they have sinned, permit themselves to be admonished and corrected in the spirit of Matthew 18:15-18 by their fellow Christians.
- 3) Refuse to hold membership in any organization whose teachings and practices conflict with the Word of God (John 5:23; John 8:31, 32; II Corinthians 6:14-18).

Section 3. 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 4. Reinstatement

When excommunicated members, by the grace of God repent of their sins, they are to be reinstated with all former rights and privileges of this congregation (II Corinthians 2:6-8).

Section 5. 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 its property.

Section 6. Right of Appeal

A lay person who has been subject to disciplinary action by this congregation shall have the right to appeal the action. The lay person shall be notified in writing by the congregation of the right to appeal within 30 days of the completion of the disciplinary action. Such an appeal must be filed with the president of the district to which the congregation belongs within 60 days of receipt of the notification from the congregation.

Article VI Separation or Dissolution

Section 1.

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 of this congregation and all equipment shall remain with those who adhere to this Constitution, regardless of number.

Section 2.

In the event of termination or dissolution of the congregation, the Ministry Council shall, after paying or making provision for the payment of all the liabilities of the congregation, dispose of its remaining assets, if any, exclusively for the purposes of the congregation, by the distributing, at the direction of the Voters' Assembly, the

remaining assets to (and only to) one or more organizations with which the congregation is in fellowship, which shall at the time qualify as exempt organization(s) (under section 501(c) 3 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Code).

Article VII

Powers and Rights of the Congregation

Section 1.

In all matters of Christian faith and life the Word of God is supreme (Psalm 119:105).

Section 2.

In all matters not decided by the Word of God, the congregation, represented by the Voters' Assembly, shall have the right of decision (Romans 12:10, 14:19; Ephesians 5:21).

Section 3.

The Ministry Council, any other elected committee or organization within the congregation, and any of its elected or appointed officers shall have no power or authority beyond that conferred upon them by the congregation. However, the Ministry Council in an emergency may act in the name and for the welfare of the congregation. Such action must be submitted for approval at the next Voters' Assembly meeting.

Section 4.

No group or society may be organized within the congregation without the approval of the congregation. The congregation shall be assured that the aims of such a group are in complete harmony with the congregation's aims before it grants its approval.

Article VIII

Meetings of the Congregation

Meetings of this congregation shall be held at such times and in such manner as stated in the By-Laws. The meetings shall give the Voters of this congregation the opportunity to hear, discuss and take necessary action in matters pertaining to the welfare of this congregation and of the church-at-large.

Article IX

The Ministry

Section 1.

The congregation has the exclusive right to call pastors and teachers, and to elect officers.

Section 2.

The pastorate of this congregation shall be conferred only upon such men who are qualified for this ministry and publicly and without reservation profess their acceptance of and adherence to Article II of this Constitution, and such acceptance and adherence shall be required of them in the call of vocation extended by the congregation (Ephesians 4:11-16; I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; Colossians 4:5-6).

Section 3.

The teachers called to assist the pastor in the Christian training of the youth shall be such as are in accord with the confessional standard of the congregation (Article II) and are qualified for this field of work (Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 12:6-8; I Corinthians 14:40).

Section 4.

In case of a vacancy in the position of the pastor or teacher, the congregation shall notify the president of the local district of the Synod for the purpose that he may assist in temporarily filling the vacancy and in giving his good counsel in regard to the calling of a new pastor or teacher.

Article X

Officers of the Congregation

Section 1.

The first New Testament congregation at Jerusalem chose men "full of the Spirit and wisdom" (Acts 6:1-6) to aid the apostles in the administration of its affairs. This congregation shall choose officers and committee members with like qualifications to aid the pastors in administering its affairs (I Timothy 2:11-14, 3:8-13).

Section 2.

The listing of the officers and their duties is given in the By-Laws.

Section 3.

The respect and esteem of the congregation are due these officers in the performance of their duties, and they shall be given its cooperation. They shall conduct themselves in a manner befitting their responsible office (I Timothy 3:8-13).

Article XI

Removal from Office

Section 1.

If anyone holding an office in the congregation willfully neglects his duty, and upon due admonition does not amend, the church in such cases has the right, and eventually the duty, to remove him from office and elect another to take his place (I Timothy 3:8-13).

Section 2.

Sufficient and urgent causes for removing a pastor or teacher are persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, willful neglect of duty, or established inability to perform the duties of his office (I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9). In such a case the advice and good counsel of the appropriate district officer shall be sought.

Article XII

Repeals and Alterations

Section 1.

Articles II, III, IV, V, VII (Sections 1,2,4), IX (Sections 1,2,3), XI and XII (Section 1) of this Constitution shall be and remain unalterable and irrevocable, inasmuch as they express clear scriptural teachings.

Section 2.

Proposals to alter or repeal any article of the Constitution or to add an article shall be submitted in writing to the Ministry Council, and shall be publicly announced on two Sundays immediately preceding a business meeting of the Voters' Assembly and posted in the church during that period.

Section 3.

Such a proposal shall be discussed in the meeting in which it is presented and voted on in the next meeting of the Voters' Assembly.

Section 4.

A two-thirds vote of the voting members present shall be required to alter or repeal any article of this Constitution or to add an article hereto.

Section 5.

Any and all By-Laws may be repealed or amended by a majority vote of the voting members present at any meeting of the Voters' Assembly, provided that public notice of this proposed action shall have been given the congregation on at least two

Sundays prior to the time of the meeting, and provided that the substance of the proposed amendment has been submitted to the Ministry Council for its study and recommendation.

BYLAWS

Article I

Organizational Structure

Section 1.

“Christ is the head of the church, His body, of which he is the Savior” (Ephesians 5:23). *“Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her”* (Ephesians 5:25). Compelled by Christ’s love (2 Corinthians 5:14), we members of Star of Bethlehem Lutheran Church know that it is the Lord Christ we are serving (Colossians 3:24), and it is both our privilege and responsibility to participate in His mission to make disciples (Matthew 28:19). We, therefore, serve wholeheartedly because we know we are serving our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (Ephesians 6:7).

Section 2.

The primary purpose of our organizational structure is to enable, as best possible under God, our congregation’s vision as outlined in our strategic ministry plan. Our organization system is designed (1) to be flexible and adaptive to changing ministry needs, (2) to position elected leaders to focus mainly on the accomplishment of current and longer-range ministry goals, (3) to involve many members in meaningful roles that match their gifts and interests, and (4) to enhance communication and accountability.

The strategic ministry plan shall be updated annually by the Vision Planning Team and approved by the Voters’ Assembly. On the basis of the updated ministry plan, the organizational chart and position descriptions shall be reviewed and revised as needed.

The most recently approved strategic ministry plan, organizational chart, and position descriptions are attached to these Bylaws.

Section 3.

As a congregation – a gathering of believers in Christ – all members of Star of Bethlehem have the responsibility and privilege of carrying out Christ’s mission to make disciples. The Ministry Council and all other organizational units receive their authority to function within the congregation from the Voters.

Section 4.

The Ministry Council consults concerning the overall spiritual and physical well-being of the congregation, giving due attention also to the work of the Lord in the church-at-large. They focus primarily on (a) implementing the current ministry plan by accomplishing measurable ministry goals and (b) envisioning the future direction of the congregation. Additionally, the Ministry Council implements resolutions and carries out assignments as directed by the Voters.

The members of the Ministry Council are the Executive Leadership Team and Team Leaders for each ministry area (ministry areas are defined by the Ministry Organizational Chart and Position Descriptions).

Section 5.

The Executive Leadership Team reports to the Ministry Council. This team's primary focus is to ensure that the current approved ministry plan is wholeheartedly implemented by all areas of ministry, and they work closely with the Vision Planning Team to prepare and propose annually an updated ministry plan for Ministry Council and Voters' Assembly approval. They also make emergency decisions, when necessary, on behalf of the Ministry Council.

The members of the Executive Leadership Team are the President, Vice-President, Recording Secretary, Treasurer (Finance Team Leader), pastors and principal.

Section 6.

The Officers of the Church are the President, Recording Secretary and Treasurer (Finance Team Leader). These three officers are empowered to sign legal documents on behalf of the church.

Section 7.

The Vision Planning Team reports to the Ministry Council. This team's primary focus is to envision future ministry in consultation with the Executive Leadership Team. Annually, they seek input from elected and appointed leaders and all willing members on what may be included in the updated ministry plan.

The members of the Vision Planning Team are the Vice-President (Chairman of the Team) and members appointed by the Vice-President.

Section 8.

The Team Leaders provide passionate leadership in their areas of ministry. They determine priorities, establish measurable goals, and develop strategies and action plans consistent with the congregation's overall ministry plan. They appoint team members in their areas of ministry (with assistance from the Volunteer Ministry Coordinator and approval of the Ministry Council) and proactively provide oversight within their area as ministry coordinators and ministry teams. Team Leaders are elected and are members of the Ministry Council.

Section 9.

Coordinators are appointed by Team Leaders (with the approval of the Ministry Council). They are responsible for action coordinating and implementation of specific ministry goals with associated authorized funding (consistent with the congregation's overall ministry plan within the team leader's area of ministry). Coordinators, in

consultation with their Team Leader, may request the assistance of others and from ministry teams.

Section 10.

The Volunteer Ministry Coordinator is appointed by the President in consultation with the Executive Leadership Team. With the assistance of others, the Volunteer Ministry Coordinator develops and manages a process for helping all new and current members discover their gifts and ministry interests, matches members with appropriate opportunities to serve, and works with the pastors and leaders to ensure adequate ministry training is provided as needed/desired.

The person in this position coordinates an ongoing effort to assist all new members and as many active members as possible to serve their Savior and others on the basis of their spiritual gifts, natural talents, and individual interests.

Section 11.

The Nominating Team, with guidance from the pastors, selects from the voting membership a slate of candidates to fill the vacancies of those whose terms are expiring. Elections are held at the annual meeting of the Voters' Assembly.

The Nominating Team – comprised of one coordinator and a minimum of two additional members – is appointed by the President in consultation with the Executive Leadership Team. The Nominating Team members are approved by the Voters at a Voters' Assembly meeting.

Section 12.

The Called Worker Care Team is appointed by the President, with approval of the Ministry Council, and reports directly to the President. The team communicates with and supports the called workers and their families, encouraging them in their ministries and enhancing their quality of life.

Section 13.

The Audit Team conducts an annual internal audit of the church's financial records, or (if directed to do so), arranges to have an external audit conducted. The findings are reported to the Ministry Council and Voters' Assembly.

An Audit Coordinator and a minimum of two additional qualified members (other than those directly involved with congregational finances) are appointed by the President in consultation with the Executive Leadership Team. This Audit Team, as requested, ensures the completion of the annual audit of the congregation's financial records.

Section 14.

Other organizational entities (ministry areas, teams, team leaders, coordinators, etc.) may be proposed and approved as deemed appropriate for the purpose of accomplishing our congregation's vision as outlined in our strategic ministry plan.

Section 15.

Officers and Team Leaders are elected by the Voters for a 2-year term. They may serve three consecutive terms. Coordinators are appointed for 1-year terms and are renewable without limit as approved by the Ministry Council.

Article II

Meetings of the Congregation

Section 1.

The annual meeting of the Voters' Assembly shall be conducted in January, at which the ministry plan and budget shall be approved by the Voters and elections shall be held by the Voters. Additional Voters' Assembly meetings shall be scheduled as needed.

The order of business at the annual (January) Voters' Assembly meeting shall be as follows:

- A. Open with a devotion
- B. Read and approve minutes of the previous annual Voters' Assembly and special meetings
- C. Financial Team Leader's review of the past calendar year
- D. Ministry plan and budget approval for the new year
- E. Reports from team leaders on their areas of ministry
- F. Election of officers, team leaders, and board members
- G. Unfinished business
- H. New business
- I. Adjourn with prayer

Section 2.

A minimum of two open forums will be scheduled per year for all members based on accepted guidelines.

Section 3.

The Ministry Council shall set the exact date, time and place of the Voters' Assembly meeting(s) and open forum(s). Announcements shall be publicly made two Sundays immediately preceding the date of the Voters' Assembly meeting(s) and open forum(s).

Section 4.

Special Voters' Assembly meetings of the congregation may be called by the Ministry Council, the pastors, or upon written request of three voting members. Such meetings must be announced according to the general rule set forth in Section 3 with the purpose(s) clearly stated.

Section 5.

The Voters' Assembly meetings shall be conducted according to good, Christian order. Robert's Rules of Order may be followed for parliamentary procedure.

Section 6.

No one shall bring to any Voters' Assembly meeting a charge or complaint against any member or a pastor or a teacher unless he has first admonished that person in a Christian manner according to Matthew 18:15-20.

Section 7.

Only voting members present at the Voters' Assembly meeting shall have the right to vote.

Section 8.

Voting membership shall be restricted to male communicant members who have reached the age of 18.

Section 9.

The voting members present at a properly announced meeting of the Voters' Assembly shall constitute a quorum.

Article III

The Ministry Council

Section 1.

The Ministry Council shall consist of the congregation's President, Vice-President, Recording Secretary, the team leader of each ministry area, and as many additional men as may be needed to carry on the congregation's business, as determined by the Voters' Assembly. The pastors and principal are ex officio voting members of the Ministry Council.

Section 2. (Please reference the policy manual for individual Position Descriptions that list in more detail the responsibilities for each position.)

In the event of a conflict, the Ministry Council has the final authority regarding decisions made by the teams, boards, and committees.

The Ministry Council is hereby empowered to borrow money, pledge the assets of the congregation, sell, lease or otherwise dispose of the real and personal property of the congregation all at the direction of the Voters' Assembly. It shall also have the right to acquire property by purchase, trade, gift or devise as directed by the Voters' Assembly. Any two officers of the congregation are hereby designated as the persons who shall sign all documents of the congregation.

Section 3. (Please reference the position descriptions for additional responsibilities.)

The term of one-half of the officers or otherwise elected member, if possible, shall expire each year and be filled by election at the annual meeting of the Voters' Assembly.

Any church officer or otherwise elected member who has served three consecutive full terms will be eligible for an elected congregational position one year after the expiration of his third consecutive full term (partial terms not included) in office.

Section 4.

As soon as possible after the elections, the newly elected members shall be installed in office at a regular service and shall thus be presented to the congregation.

Section 5.

The Ministry Council shall meet once each month. Special meetings may be called by a pastor or the President. The Ministry Council shall not convene to transact business without the knowledge of the pastors. A majority of the members of the Ministry Council shall constitute a quorum.

Section 6.

The Nominating Team recommends a candidate – in consultation with the Executive Leadership Team – to the Voters in the event of a vacancy in an elected position.

Vacancies in non-elected positions shall be filled through appointment by the Ministry Council.

Article IV

Position Descriptions

Section 1.

Position Descriptions for all called workers, officers, teams and team leaders, boards, coordinators, and any other recognized role in the organizational chart shall be provided. Typically, position descriptions will include the following components:

- A. Description of Role
- B. Qualifications
- C. Responsibilities
- D. Time Commitment
- E. Relationships
- F. Position Review
- G. Training

Section 2.

Each position description shall be reviewed annually on the basis of the updated Strategic Ministry Plan and Organizational Chart and then revised and approved as needed by the Ministry Council.

The most recently approved strategic ministry plan, organizational chart, and position descriptions are attached (as addendums) to these Bylaws.

Article V

Ministry Roles

Section 1.

Temporary or permanent positions (including officers, teams and team leaders, boards, coordinators, etc.) may be established or dismissed by the congregation as needs may warrant.

Section 2.

The pastors and the President, by virtue of their offices, are members of all teams, boards, and other organizational entities and are to be informed of all meetings so that they may attend if they desire.

Section 3. (See the position descriptions for additional responsibilities.)

All teams and boards shall develop their own objectives and goals in the light of the congregation's overall objectives (Constitution, Article III) and current strategic ministry plan. They shall also develop whatever policies and procedures are needed or desired and have them approved by the Ministry Council and Voters' Assembly and reviewed annually thereafter by their respective teams and boards. If the annual review results in changes in objectives, policies, or procedures, these changes must be submitted to the Ministry Council and Voters' Assembly for approval. They shall annually establish their own goals and report them to the Ministry Council and Voters' Assembly together with a report on the previous year's goals.

Section 4.

The specific duties of called workers, officers, team leaders, and others with called, elected, or appointed roles in the organizational structure will be outlined in each person's position description.

Article VI

Reception into Membership

Section 1.

Persons who wish to be received into membership in this congregation, other than through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism or Rite of Confirmation, shall bring their request to the attention of the pastors or the Ministry Council. The Ministry Council shall honor the request when accompanied by a letter of transfer or other recommendation from a sister congregation or when qualifications for membership, as specified in Article V of this Constitution, have been met. Such action will be approved by the Ministry Council.

Section 2.

Since reception into membership signifies acceptance of and submission to this Constitution and Bylaws, each family shall be given a copy of the same prior to their reception so that they may become familiar with its provisions.

Article VII

Transfer or Release from Membership

Section 1.

Those desiring a transfer or release from membership shall bring their request to the attention of the pastors and then approval by the Ministry Council.

Section 2.

Transfer of membership shall apply only to those who desire membership in a congregation which is in agreement with this one in doctrine and practice. Release from membership shall apply when affiliation is sought with those denominations not in agreement with our congregation in doctrine and practice.

Section 3.

Members released or transferred relinquish all rights in this congregation.