

**The BY-LAWS of the CONSTITUTION  
Messiah Lutheran Church**

**ARTICLE I – MEMBERSHIP**

**Admission into Membership:**

**A. Baptized Membership:**

1. By Baptism. A person received by the Sacrament of Baptism in this congregation becomes a baptized member.
2. By transfer. Baptized members received by letter of transfer from a sister congregation shall become baptized members.
3. By request. Persons properly baptized who have no church affiliation and who come under the spiritual care of this congregation may, upon their request, be received into Baptized membership.

**B. Communicant Membership:**

1. By Confirmation. Baptized persons received by the rite of confirmation shall become communicant members.
2. By transfer. A person confirmed and a communicant member of a sister congregation, released by a letter of transfer, shall be received into communicant membership.
3. By profession of faith. A person who has received instructions in the doctrines and faith confessed by this congregation, and having declared this faith; or, a person having given satisfactory evidence of qualification for communicant membership, by a colloquy before the pastor and the Board of Elders, shall be received into communicant membership.

**C. Voting Membership:**

1. Any person(s) newly accepted into communicant membership will also be granted the privileges of voting membership.
2. Any communicant member, having forfeited his/her voting privileges, may be reinstated as a voting member by giving notice of his/her intention to the pastor, Chairman of Elders, or President. The President shall present such application at a subsequent regular meeting of the congregation, and upon three-quarters majority vote of the voting members present, he/she shall be declared a voting member. The applicant's voting rights shall be effective at the next congregational meeting.
3. Failure to attend a regular or special congregational meeting waives the individual's right of vote at that meeting.
4. An individual's status as a voting member has no bearing, implied or otherwise, upon their standing as a communicant member.

**D. Absentee Membership:**

1. A member who cannot meet the requirements for communicant membership may be eligible for absentee membership in the following cases.
  - a) Those temporarily relocating (i.e. college students, military)
  - b) Those permanently relocating into an area not within a reasonable distance of a LC-MS parish.
2. Any member desiring to be classified as an "Absentee Member" should submit such in writing to the Pastor, President or Chairman of Elders prior to their relocation.
3. A member, whether temporarily or permanently relocating, will be classified as an "Absentee Member" only if, in the judgement of the Pastor(s) and Elders, it is in the best interest of their spiritual well-being.

**Termination of Membership:**

**A. Baptized and Communicant Membership:**

1. By transfer. When a member desires to transfer membership to a sister congregation, the membership of that person, in this congregation shall terminate upon the granting and the acceptance of such letter of transfer.
2. Joining another church. When a member has joined another church, outside of our fellowship, that membership in this congregation shall be considered terminated and the name shall be removed from the membership of this congregation.
3. Whereabouts unknown. If a member moves away or leaves the congregation without applying for release or transfer, and no contact with them can be established within a year, their name shall be removed from the membership and forthwith such membership is terminated.

4. Excommunication. Any member guilty of offense due to unchristian conduct or self-exclusion shall be admonished according to *Matthew 18:15-20*. Self-exclusion shall be defined as willful denial of Word & Sacrament and fellowship with the body of Christ. If after proper admonition they refuse to amend their sinful life, they may be excommunicated. Excommunication terminates membership. When such excommunicated persons repent and seek forgiveness from God and the Christian congregation, they shall be forthwith reinstated into membership.
5. Neglect of Holy Communion. Any member who is unfaithful in the use of the means of Grace, as evidenced by partaking of Holy Communion less than two times in a calendar year, shall be properly admonished and, if such neglect continues, individuals may be removed from the membership roles and membership terminated. This does not apply if special circumstances prevent such.

**B. Voting Membership:**

The failure of a voting member to attend at least one regular or special congregational meeting in any calendar year shall effect the forfeiture of his/her right to vote and of all other prerogatives of Voting Membership. A former voting member may, however, be reinstated upon application and acceptance in the manner described previously in *Article I - C* of these By-Laws.

**C. Absentee Membership:**

Absentee members will be contacted annually in order for them to reaffirm in writing their desires to remain on the membership roles. A form for this purpose will be sent out to each absentee member annually, which must be filled out and returned. Failure to resubmit such intentions may result in termination of membership. If circumstances change such that individuals are permanently located in an area near a LC-MS congregation, they will be expected to transfer their membership as soon as possible.

**D. Status of Rights and Claims:**

A person whose communicant or absentee membership has been terminated, for any of the aforementioned reasons, has 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, so long as they are not reinstated into membership.

**ARTICLE II – MEETINGS:**

- A. **Regular meetings** of the Voters Assembly shall be held in the months of January, April and October of each year. Dates of meetings to be set by the Church Council.
- B. The regular meeting of the Voters Assembly held in the month of October shall elect and appoint the Church Council, Boards and Committees for the following calendar year. The regular meeting held in the month of April shall be designated as the Annual Meeting.
- C. **Special meetings** of the Voters Assembly shall be called as needs arise. Such meetings are to be called by the President, or by the pastor, or by the Church Council, or upon the written request, addressed to the president of the congregation, by three (3) or more voting members of the congregation.
- D. Regular meetings of the congregation shall be announced, by word of mouth and/or in the Sunday bulletin announcements, in all the church services on the preceding two (2) Sundays, and/or by personal mailing to the membership at least fourteen (14) days prior to the date of the meeting.
- E. Special meetings shall be announced in (at least) one (1) public worship service and/or by personal mailing to the membership, such mailing to reach the membership at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting date. Also, the purpose of such special meetings must be stipulated and stated clearly.
- F. In all matters, not already decided by the Word of God, the majority rules except in the case of amendments and changes as specified in *Article X* of the Constitution.

- G. Whenever a regular or special meeting has been announced in accordance with items ‘D’ or ‘E’ of this Article, it shall be considered a properly convened and legal meeting capable of transacting business. In decisions regarding the following items, however, a quorum of one-third of the voting membership is necessary and a three-quarters majority vote shall be required for the passage of a resolution.
1. Amending the Constitution and By-Laws
  2. The erection of buildings
  3. The buying or selling of real property
  4. The removal of a pastor, teacher, or some other member from office

Throughout the first full calendar year that the afore-mentioned revised concept of voting membership is in effect, decisions regarding the four items listed above will be decided by a three-quarters majority vote of those members present at a duly constituted congregational meeting.

### **ARTICLE III – RIGHT TO CALL:**

When a vacancy occurs in the office of the pastor or teacher due to resignation or by release from the congregation, to accept another call, the congregation shall be given a thirty-(30) day severance notice. This period may be adjusted or waived by mutual agreement. (Vacancies in said offices may occur also for reasons stated in *Article VIII*, paragraph C of the Constitution.)

Upon a vacancy in the office of a pastor or teacher, a special meeting of the congregation shall be called by the president. At such meeting the names of candidates for pastor or teacher shall be submitted for the consideration of the Voters Assembly. Any LC-MS member is entitled to make nominations.

The election of a pastor or teacher from the list of candidates submitted for the Voters consideration shall take place by secret ballot. The candidate receiving more than half of the total vote shall be considered elected. The election shall, if possible, be made unanimous by a rising vote, and the call shall be sent to the pastor or teacher elect.

### **ARTICLE IV – ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

A nominating committee of five (5) members (plus the pastor as an advisory member) shall be appointed by the Voters Assembly at the October meeting. This committee shall present a slate of candidates for the following October meeting. Additional nominations may be made from the floor. The annual elections shall be by secret ballot. The elected officers of the Church Council shall be installed into their respective offices on the first Sunday of January each year. Terms of officers are specified in *Article VIII* of the By-Laws, and each officer shall hold office until the successor has been duly installed.

### **ARTICLE V – OFFICERS**

The elected officers of this congregation shall be: a President; a Vice-President; a Secretary; an Assistant-Secretary; a Treasurer; a Missions-Treasurer; a Financial-Secretary; a Chairman of Stewardship; a Chairman of Evangelism; an Assistant Financial Analyst; and a Board of Trustees. Other officers and committees shall be appointed as are deemed necessary to effectively promote and carry out the work of the church (e.g. Christian Education and Youth Committee, Auditing Committee, etc.). Women members may hold any office other than President or Vice-President. All officers must be 18 years of age or older.

### **ARTICLE VI – CHURCH COUNCIL**

The Church Council shall consist of: the President, the Vice-President, the Secretary, the Assistant Secretary, the Treasurer, the Missions-Treasurer, the Financial-Secretary, the Assistant Financial Analyst, the Chairman of the Board of Elders, the Chairman of Stewardship, the Chairman of Evangelism, the Chairman of Trustees, the Sunday School Superintendent, and such other officers as may be chosen in accord with *Article V* of these By-Laws. The Pastor(s) shall be an “ex-officio” member of the Church Council.

### **ARTICLE VII – DUTIES OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL**

It shall be the duty of the Church Council to meet regularly each month to consider and discuss all matters pertaining to the spiritual and material welfare of the congregation; and to make decisions and take actions in matters of exigency and emergency, and it shall inform the congregation of such actions.

#### **ARTICLE VIII – TERMS OF OFFICE**

- A. The term of office of the President and Treasurer shall be one (1) year, each eligible for succession by re-election.
- B. The term of office for all other Council members (excepting those of the Board of Trustees) shall be two (2) years. The election of the Secretary and the Assistant-Secretary shall occur on alternate years, likewise that of the Missions-Treasurer and the Financial-Secretary. The terms of office of the Board of Trustees shall be for three (3) years, with at least one (1) member of the board being elected each year. All officers shall be eligible to succeed themselves by re-election.
- C. There will be no specified term of office for an Elder. Elders will be released from office under the following conditions:
  - When the Elder decides that he is no longer able or willing to serve in this capacity
  - If the Elder is removed by the pastor or congregation due to improper conduct as outlined in Article VIII paragraph C of the Constitution.
- D. If any office becomes vacant during the course of the year the Church Council shall appoint a successor to serve “pro-tem” until the next October meeting.

#### **ARTICLE IX – DUTIES OF OFFICERS**

##### **A. President and Vice President:**

- 1. The President shall preside at all meetings of the Voters Assembly and of the Church Council and see to it that all meetings are conducted in an orderly and a Christian manner.
- 2. The Vice-President shall, in the absence of the President, perform the duties of that office. In the event of a vacancy in the office of the President, the Vice-President shall succeed to the office of President for the remainder of the term.

##### **B. Secretary:**

The Secretary shall keep accurate minutes of the meetings of the Voters Assembly and the Church Council, in a permanent record of the congregation, and shall submit such records for approval, and shall handle the correspondence for the Church Council and the congregation, as well as perform all other duties incumbent upon this office. In the absence of the Secretary the Assistant-Secretary shall function in all these capacities.

##### **C. Treasurer:**

The Treasurer shall receive all monies contributed for the operating budget of the congregation, and shall promptly pay all bills and salaries authorized by the congregation. He shall keep accurate records of receipts and disbursements for permanent record, which shall be and remain the property and possession of the congregation.

The Treasurer shall submit a written report at each Church Council and Voters meeting. Such reports will show actual receipts and disbursements for all budgeted and authorized expenses.

The Treasurer shall be required to post a “Security Bond” to be paid for by the congregation.

##### **D. Missions – Treasurer:**

It shall be the duty of the Missions-Treasurer to receive and record for permanent record all contributions for Missions, both home and foreign, and shall remit regularly all monies received and designated for the support of the Church’s work, outside of this congregation, both Missions and charities.

**E. Financial-Secretary:**

It shall be the duty of the Financial-Secretary to record, for permanent record, all congregational monies, including individual offerings and contributions, special offerings, gifts, bequests, etc.

The Financial-Secretary shall be responsible for organizing and directing the annual gathering of pledges.

The Financial-Secretary shall also prepare a quarterly report to each member, stating the amount of their pledge, the contributions received, and the balance unpaid or the amount over-subscribed.

**F. Assistant Financial Analyst:**

The Assistant Financial Analyst shall be knowledgeable in all aspects of monetary transactions within the church. This individual will take on the duties and responsibilities of the church Treasurer, Missions Treasurer, or Financial Secretary in the event that any of those officers are temporarily unable to carry on the duties previously ascribed to them in these By-Laws.

The Assistant Financial Analyst shall take on these temporary duties for only one officer at any given time. Such obligation will remain in effect until either the officer resumes his/her position or it is deemed necessary to elect another individual at the next October Voter's meeting.

**ARTICLE X – DUTIES OF BOARDS AND COMMITTEES****A. Board of Elders:**

The Board of Elders shall consist of three (3) or more members. Elders will be selected by the pastor based on 1 Timothy 3. The congregation will then either validate the pastor's recommendation by their full approval or reject the recommendation. Women members may not serve as Elders. The board shall elect a chairman from their group. Their duties shall be:

1. To assist the pastor in all matters pertaining to the spiritual welfare of the congregation;
2. To consider complaints and grievances of the members of the congregation, if *Matthew 18:15-16* has been duly observed, and shall report to the congregation those cases which cannot be thus resolved and must be dealt with according to *Matthew 18:17-18*;
3. Make every effort to induce members who are negligent in church attendance, in the use of the Sacrament, and in the support of the congregation's work, to mend their sinful and remiss ways and to fully enjoy the privileges and rights of their membership;
4. To see that all services are conducted in decent and good order so as to foster an air conducive to worship among those who attend;
5. To be an example of Christian conduct and life to others.

**B. Board of Trustees:**

The Board of Trustees shall consist of three (3) or more members. They shall elect a chairman from their group. Their duties shall be:

1. They are the legal custodians of all the congregation's property. The congregation is to be directly responsible with its property for whatever the Trustees do in conformity with the congregation's resolutions and instructions, and is in no case to permit the Trustees to suffer any personal loss whatsoever;
2. The Board of Trustees may appoint a "Custodial Committee" to oversee the operation and property of Camp Pineshore. The Custodial Committee shall be subject to the directives and limitations set by the Board of Trustees.

**C. Committee of Evangelism:**

This committee shall consist of three (3) or more members. The chairman of this committee shall represent the committee on the Church Council. It shall be the duty of this committee to:

1. Plan, promote and carry out an on-going evangelism program and effort in the congregation and in the community;
2. Plan and supervise religious surveys of the community;
3. Enlist the aid of lay-visitors to call on prospective members;
4. Assist the pastor in training the laity to bring the unchurched to the Pastor's Information classes;
5. Help integrate new members into the life and work of the church.

**D. Christian Education and Youth Committee:**

This committee shall consist of three (3) or more members. The pastor(s), Sunday school Superintendent (parochial school principal) shall be advisory members of this committee. The Sunday school Superintendent shall represent this committee on the Church Council. The members of this committee shall elect a chairman from the group. If a woman member is elected, she will not act in any teaching capacity contrary to Missouri Synod policy. The duties of this committee shall be to:

1. Concern itself with the program of Christian education at all age levels;
2. Foster and encourage the strengthening of the Christian home;
3. Give attention to enrollment, attendance, and to soul accounting;
4. Regularly review and appraise all phases of the Christian education and youth programs and to plan for improvements on the basis of such evaluations;
5. Bring to the attention of the Church Council and the Voters' Assembly the needs for facilities, equipment, etc. necessary for all educational agencies.

**E. Stewardship Committee:**

This committee shall consist of three (3) or more members. The chairman of this committee shall represent the committee on the Church Council. The duties of this committee shall be to:

1. Foster and encourage the "Total Stewardship" of Time, Talents, and Treasures on the part of all the members of the congregation;
2. Enlist and direct all talents in the congregation to serve the church's programs;
3. Plan and submit a proposed budget for the congregation's annual Voters' Assembly in January of each year.

**F. Pineshore Facilities Committee:**

This committee shall consist of three (3) or more members. The chairman of this committee shall be either a church Trustee or an alternate member so elected from the group. It shall be the duty of this committee to:

1. Plan the best use of the Camp Pineshore property to promote the work of the great commission and fulfill the purpose of the "Mission Statement". which was previously adopted by this congregation and is attached as an addendum to this Constitution
2. Act in behalf of the congregation in governing the use of said property by members, campers, property owners, outside groups and all potential users of this property – to include setting of weekly and seasonal rental rates and resolve all financial / use issues with outside organizations.
3. Promote a healthy relationship between the church and the Pineshore Ministries Association / Bible Camp program
4. Appoint a primary "Overseer" who will monitor the condition of the property and arrange for repair and maintenance work to be done when he/she sees fit.

The committee will work through the Board of Trustees to bring up issues of importance that require Church Council or congregational approval (i.e. private camp ownership, land sale or purchase, major additions or construction...).

**G. Pre-School / Learning Center Board of Directors:**

This board shall consist of three (3) or more members. A majority of the board members will be members of the church. The church Pastor and the Preschool Director will be non-voting advisory members of this committee. The chairman of this committee will not be the Learning Center's Director of operations but will be elected by a majority of the remaining committee members. Although the chairman does not need to be a member of Messiah Lutheran, he/she must be an active and professing Christian as determined by the pastor working with the committee. The chairman will represent this committee to the church council. It shall be the duty of this committee to:

1. Plan the best use of the Learning Center to promote the work of the Great Commission and fulfill the purpose of the congressional " Mission Statement" which is attached as an addendum to this Constitution;
2. Act in behalf of the congregation in governing the use of said facilities by members, staff, outside groups and all potential users of the center;
3. Work closely with the church council to set salaries, budget expenses, and manage all financial details relative to the Learning Center staff and facilities;
4. Work with the church trustees to coordinate proper upkeep and maintenance;
5. Regularly update the congregation on the work of the center, solicit their support and participation;

6. Prepare an annual report detailing the center's activities and itemizing the income and expenses for the previous fiscal/calendar year.

#### **ARTICLE XI – LEGAL TRANSACTIONS:**

The Board of Trustees shall be the legal representatives of the congregation. At least three Trustees shall sign all legal documents and papers, such as: deeds, insurance policies, certificates of incorporation, etc., and shall deliver the same to the president of the congregation, who shall deposit them in a safety deposit box of a bona fide local bank. They shall make loans for the congregation, when so authorized by a duly constituted meeting of the Voters' Assembly, and shall sign such notes, mortgages, et al., for the congregation. The congregation is to be directly responsible for such incurred indebtedness, in conformity with the congregation's resolutions and instructions, and is in no case to permit the afore-mentioned officers to suffer any personal loss whatsoever.

#### **ARTICLE XII – AUDITS:**

The financial records of the Treasurer, Missions-Treasurer, and Financial Secretary are to be audited quarterly and the statement of such quarterly audit to be submitted to the Church Council. An "annual" statement of audit (including the treasuries of the congregation's auxiliary organizations) shall be submitted to the annual Voters' Assembly in April of each year.

The auditing committee shall consist of three (3) members. The committee is to be elected, for each calendar year, by the previous October Voters' Assembly.

#### **ARTICLE XIII – AMENDMENTS, ETC.**

The congregation, in a duly constituted Voters' Assembly, may from time to time amend, alter, or add to the rules, regulations, or directives for the guidance of officers, boards and committees in their work, subject to conditions and restrictions stipulated in Articles X and XI of the Constitution.

## Pastoral Calling Procedure for Messiah Lutheran Church

- Upon notification to the congregation that the pastor has accepted a call and after having received an official release from the congregation, the church council president or chairman of elders will notify the circuit counselor. The circuit counselor, church president or chairman of elders will also notify the district office of the impending vacancy.
- The circuit counselor in conjunction with the district office will determine if the need exists to meet with the church council / board of elders to discuss vacancy arrangements.
- Names / nominations for a new pastor will be requested from the congregation and submitted to the president or chairman of elders. A deadline for the nomination process will be established at one month from the start of the vacancy.
- The names received will be forwarded to the district office and the circuit counselor as they are received for evaluation.
- The chairman of elders will make arrangements to have the district president preach at the first Sunday service of the vacancy and conduct a Bible study relating to the doctrine of the Call.
- After the nomination process is completed, a call committee will be established consisting of the following:

*President*

*Chairman of Elders*

*Circuit Counselor (advisory member)*

one representative who is a voting member of each of the following organizations

*church council*

*board of elders*

*trustees*

*Christian ed. board*

*evangelism committee*

*stewardship committee*

*guild*

*men's prayer group*

*Finnish women's league*

*music committee*

*youth group*

three (3) additional voting members of the congregation-at-large

- The call committee will be limited to one appointee per family
- During the period from the start of the vacancy through the end of the nomination process, voting members will be given the opportunity to submit their names as possible candidates for the three at-large call committee positions. The positions will be determined by a random drawing of those names submitted at the next church council meeting.
- The list of names returned to the congregation from the district office through the circuit counselor will be reproduced for publication. A one week grace period from the time of publication will be established for communicant members in good standing to file objections to any candidate on the list of nominees.
- After the nomination process is completed, the circuit counselor will meet with the call committee and establish the screening procedure for the final list of nominees.
- After all nominees have been screened according to the procedure outlined at the call committee meeting, the call committee will meet again and make recommendations to take to the congregational call meeting.
- A date for the call meeting will be set by the call committee; the details of the call meeting will be determined by a joint meeting of the president, chairman of elders and circuit counselor.
- Any procedural details of the call process not itemized above will be decided and dictated by the circuit counselor in conjunction with the district president.

Revised and Accepted: November 2, 1997

# Our Mission Statement

We, The people of Messiah Lutheran Church, accept as our mission, the Mission of the Lord of the Church that:

"all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth."

- Furthermore we accept and confess that those who believe are also to become disciples of Jesus, learning from Him and carrying on His work, as Jesus himself said in Matthew 28: 18-20:  
*"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."*
- Furthermore we believe and confess then that every aspect of the church's ministry is for the purposes expressed above, of bringing people to saving faith in Jesus and of making disciples of them, and therefore must conform to and serve these purposes.
- Furthermore we also believe that this work cannot be done in the strength and wisdom of man, but that the power to do this work comes from the Holy Spirit who administers his power and gifts to all believers, as He sees fit, through the Word and sacraments, and that this power and His gifts are received by faith.
- Furthermore we believe this mission is urgent and demands our constant individual and corporate attention and service.
- Furthermore since the Holy Spirit has called us into one body, and one faith with one goal, we believe that we commit to doing all to promote the unity of the body in serving together in love and oneness of Spirit locally and around the world with the people of our congregation, with our brothers and sisters in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, and with the church at large as the Holy Spirit guides that we might most effectively serve the cause of salvation in Jesus Christ.

And finally all our work for the Lord, we accompany with regular and fervent prayer, for without this prayer offered up in confident faith in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ nothing can be accomplished.