

CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

In response to the love of God the Father in Christ Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit, each member of this Congregation does the work of the church. The vocation of every Christian is service. A believer serves the Lord by serving brothers and sisters in Christ and by serving a world of neighbors. Each member, as a new creation in Christ, is endowed with the fruit of the Spirit. The Lord also gives to each member natural talents and gifts of the Spirit as He sees fit for our specific time and place. Further, our Lord promises that, as a group, this congregation possesses all the natural talents and gifts of the Spirit necessary to fulfill His mission for this congregation.

The Word of God requires that a Christian congregation shall conform to this Divine word in doctrine and practice (Ps. 119:105, Matt. 28:18-20, Gal. 1:6-8, 2 Tim. 4:1-5) and that all things be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40, Col. 2:5). Therefore, we, the members of St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church, accept and subscribe to the following Constitution and Bylaws, in accordance with which all spiritual and material affairs of our congregation shall be governed.

ARTICLE 1: NAME

The name of this congregation shall be St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church of Westland.

ARTICLE 2: PURPOSE

The purpose of this ecclesiastical corporate body shall be that it be a religious organization; more specifically, a Christian congregation, established and maintained for the express purpose of dissemination of the Gospel Truth according to the confessional standard of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod.

ARTICLE 3: CONFESSIONAL BASIS

This Congregation as a body and all its individual members accept without reservation:

- The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired, inerrant, written Word of God and as the only rule and norm of faith and practice.
- All the Symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God, including:
 - The three Ecumenical Creeds (the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed);
 - The Unaltered Augsburg Confession;
 - The Apology of the Augsburg Confession;
 - The Smalcald Articles;
 - The Large Catechism of Luther;
 - The Small Catechism of Luther; and
 - The Formula of Concord.

ARTICLE 4: SYNODICAL MEMBERSHIP

This congregation shall be a member of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and shall exercise all rights associated with membership as long as the Synod conforms to the Congregation's confessional basis set forth in Article 3 of this Constitution. Conformity to the confessional basis shall be determined, if challenged, by a two-thirds majority vote of the Voters' Assembly at a meeting called for that purpose.

ARTICLE 5: MEMBERSHIP

5.1 The membership of this congregation includes the following:

5.1.1 **Baptized Members:** those members who have been baptized into the Name of the Triune God, including the children on the membership rolls who have not yet confirmed their baptismal vows.

5.1.2 **Communicant Members:** those who:

- are baptized into the Name of the Triune God;
- accept all canonical books of the Old and New Testament as the only divine rule and standard of faith and life;
- are familiar with Luther's Small Catechism and declare their acceptance of it;
- are not members, affiliated, or supporters of organizations conflicting with the Word of God.

5.1.3 **Voting Members:** all communicant members who have reached their eighteenth year shall be entitled to vote.

5.2 Responsibilities of communicant members include:

- attend Divine services faithfully;
- lead Christian lives and do not live in manifest works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21);
- partake of the Lord's Supper frequently;
- contribute regularly and faithfully, as God has prospered them, toward the building of Christ's Kingdom in the congregation and throughout the world;
- if they have the parental care of unconfirmed children, commit such children to the parochial school of the congregation, or otherwise to provide for their proper training in pure Christian Doctrine;
- devote their time, talents, and Spiritual gifts to the extension of the Kingdom of God;
- permit themselves to be fraternally admonished and corrected when they have erred according to Matthew 18:15-20.

ARTICLE 6: MINISTERS OF RELIGION (ORDAINED OR COMMISSIONED)

Only such candidates shall be called who profess acceptance of and pledge faithful adherence to, the confessions of this congregation as set forth in Article 3 of this Constitution; and have been certified and endorsed by The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod as eligible for a call as a minister of religion (ordained or commissioned).

ARTICLE 7: DIVISION

- 7.1 **Division on account of doctrine:** If, at any time, a division should take place on account of doctrine, the property of this Congregation shall remain with those Confirmed members who continue to adhere in confession and practice to Article 3 of this Constitution, as determined by the adjudication procedures of the Synod.
- 7.2 **Division for any other reason:** If division takes place for any other reason, the property shall remain with the majority of the Confirmed members who continue to adhere in confession and practice to Article 3 of this Constitution, as determined by the adjudication procedures of the Synod.
- 7.3 **Dissolution:** In the event this Congregation should dissolve, the property shall be transferred to that District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in which the Congregation held membership at the time of dissolution.

ARTICLE 8: AMENDMENTS

8.1 Amendments to Articles 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8

Notice of a proposal to amend these Articles shall be presented at two regular meetings of the Voters' Assembly before the meeting at which the proposed amendment is to receive action, with opportunity for discussion.

8.1.1 All Voting members shall be provided notice of the intent to amend these Articles.

8.1.2 Any changes in these Articles shall not destroy their essential meaning.

8.1.2.1 Whether or not the essential meaning of an Article has been destroyed shall be decided, if challenged, by the Commission on Adjudication of the District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in which the Congregation holds membership at the time of the proposal.

8.1.3 An affirmative vote of two-thirds majority of the Voters present is required to amend any of these Articles.

8.2 Amendments to other articles of the Constitution

Amendments to provisions of this Constitution, except for Articles 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8, may be adopted at a meeting of the Voters' Assembly under the following conditions:

8.2.1 The proposed amendment has been submitted in writing at a previous meeting of the Voters' Assembly and has been published by mail prior to the meeting at which action will be taken on the proposed amendment; and

8.2.2 An affirmative vote of two-thirds majority of the Voters present is secured.