

HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

Whereas the Word of God demands that a Christian congregation not only conform to the Word of God in doctrine and practice (**Psalm 119:105; Galatians 1:6-8**), but also that all things be done decently and in order (**I Corinthians 14:10**) therefore, as Christians who are members of Hope Lutheran Church of Rochester, New York, we set forth this constitution and bylaws. Said document shall govern all our congregational affairs.

ARTICLE I: NAME

The Name of this congregation shall be Hope Lutheran Church of Rochester, New York.

ARTICLE II: STATEMENT OF MISSION

TO BRING LOST PEOPLE INTO A LIVING RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST

(The purpose of the congregation of Hope is to reach out and present the Gospel in such a way that lost and irreligious people come into a living relationship with Jesus Christ, become His disciples, grow into mature, fruitful leaders, who will in turn go into the non-believing world and bring others into a living relationship with Jesus Christ.)

ARTICLE III: CONFSSIONAL STANDARD

This congregation acknowledges and accepts all the Canonical Books of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God, and acknowledges and accepts all the Confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of the year 1580 A.D. as true and correct exposition of the doctrines of the Word of God. These Confessional Books are: The Three Ecumenical Creeds (Apostolic, the Nicene, and the Athanasion), the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, Luther's Large and Small Catechisms, and the Formula of Concord.

ARTICLE IV: SYNODICAL AFFILIATION

This congregation with its pastor(s) and called staff shall be a member of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod so long as said synod shall remain true to the confessional standard as set forth in Article III of this constitution.

ARTICLE V: MEMBERSHIP

The membership of this congregation includes baptized, confirmed and voting members. The receiving of new members and the termination of membership shall be set forth in policies established by the Board of Directors in accordance with the spirit of this constitution. The types and responsibilities of membership are as follows:

- A. Baptized Members** – Baptized members are all persons within the congregation who have been baptized in the name of the Triune God, whether children or adults, and come under the pastoral care of this congregation. It is the promise of all baptized members and the expectation of the congregation that they:
1. Worship faithfully and regularly.
 2. Lead a Christian life as taught in **Galatians 5:19-26**;
 3. Out of Christian love, submit to brotherly admonition, according to **Matthew 18**, when having erred or offended;
 4. Give, as God has blessed them, of their time, talents and treasure toward the ministries of the congregation and the fulfilling of the mission and to use their spiritual gifts in the service of Jesus Christ.
 5. In due time, take a course of instruction in preparation for confirmed membership in this congregation.
 6. Are not members of any organization conflicting with the Word of God.
- B. Confirmed Members** – Confirmed members are all baptized persons who profess Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, and who have received a course of instruction in Christian doctrine which meets with the approval of the Board of Elders. In addition to the responsibilities of baptized members, it is expected of all confirmed members that they:
1. Accept all Canonical Books of the Old and New Testament as the only divine rule and standard of faith and life;
 2. Are familiar with and accept the teachings of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, at least as set forth in Luther's Small Catechism and declare acceptance of them.
 3. Partake of the Lord's Supper at least one time per calendar year.
 4. Provide for the Christian training of their children by making use of the educational agencies of the congregation.
 5. Submit willingly and joyfully to the mission, direction and policies already existing or still to be made, provided such do not conflict with the Word of God.
 6. Identify and use their Spiritual Gifts in accomplishing God's purposes.

C. **Voting Members** – Voting membership shall be confirmed members in accordance with this constitution who have attained the age of 21 years. It is expected of all voting members that they shall:

1. Attend all meetings of the Voters' Assembly faithfully.

TERMINATION

- a. Confirmed members may, upon their request, be transferred to congregations with whom we are in fellowship.
- b. Confirmed members who enter into fellowship with congregations outside our fellowship thereby terminate their membership.
- c. Confirmed members whose whereabouts are unknown shall have their names removed from membership. (All of the above shall be acted upon by the Board of Elders and reported to the Board of Directors).
- d. Confirmed members who conduct themselves in an un-Christian manner shall be admonished according to **Matthew 18:15-18**. Each case shall be considered individually by the Board of Elders. A unanimous vote shall be required for excommunication. This action shall be reported to the Board of Directors.

ARTICLE VI: THE OFFICE OF PASTOR AND OTHER CALLED PERSONNEL

The pastoral office of this congregation as well as the office of other called persons, shall be conferred upon only such ministers and candidates who profess and adhere to the confessional standards as set forth in Article III of this constitution and who are well qualified for their work. Pastors and called staff, in the call extended to them, shall be pledged to this confessional standard.

ARTICLE VII: AUTHORITY OF THE CONGREGATION

- A. General** – The congregation as a body, through its Voters’ Assembly, shall be empowered to administer and manage all of the congregation’s external and internal affairs. The congregation, however, shall not be empowered to decide anything contrary to the Word of God and the confessions of the Lutheran Church (see Article III), and any such contrary decision shall be null and void. Matters of doctrine and conscience shall be decided in accordance with the Word of God. Other matters shall be decided by a simple majority vote of the voting members in attendance at a Voters’ Assembly meeting unless otherwise specified by this constitution or bylaws.
- B. Right of Calling** – The right of calling pastors and other called workers shall be vested in the Voters’ Assembly and shall not be delegated to a smaller body or an individual. The Board of Directors may authorize the hiring of non-called staff as approved in the annual budget or by the Voters’ Assembly.
- C. Election of Officers and the Board of Directors** – The Voters’ Assembly shall elect a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer. These individuals shall be the officers of the congregation. The Voters’ Assembly shall also elect three (3) other voting members. These three (3) members plus the four (4) officers, the Head Elder, and the Lead Pastor shall comprise the Board of Directors. The Head Elder and the Lead Pastor shall be non-voting, ex officio members of the Board. The nomination and election of officers and Board members shall be as specified in the Bylaws.
- D. Board of Directors Actions Requiring Prior Approval of the Voters’ Assembly.** – The Board of Directors shall obtain prior approval of the Voters’ Assembly on the following actions/items.
1. Annual Financial Ministry Plan. (Budget)
 2. Acquisition or disposal of any single asset or liability that exceeds 2% of the annual operating budget.
 3. Improvement of buildings, facilities or any single asset that exceeds 2% of the annual operating budget
 4. Call to or removal of called staff.
 5. Dissolution of the congregation.
 6. Amendment(s) to Constitution or Bylaws.
- E. Removal from Office** – Any Pastor, Officer or Board member, who fails to perform the responsibilities of confirmed members as stated in Article V, or is unable or is willfully neglectful in the performance of official duties, may be removed from office in Christian and lawful order by the Voters’ Assembly. Such action shall be initiated through a member of the Board of Elders through the Board of Directors. Reasons for such action could include: persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, or willful neglect of responsibilities.

ARTICLE VIII: AUTHORITY OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- A. Officers and Executive Committee** – The Officers of the congregation shall also serve as the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will obtain its authority for action at the express designation of the full Board. The Chairperson and Secretary shall sign all legal documents.
- B. Board of Directors** – The Board of Directors shall have the authority to develop and implement those policies, procedures and ministries as required to execute the vision and plans approved by the Voters’ Assembly. Written policies and procedures shall be available to voting members upon request. The Board shall have no authority beyond that which has been conferred upon them by the Constitution, its Bylaws or by the Voters’ Assembly, and authority delegated to them may at any time be altered or revoked by the Voters’ Assembly.
- C. Duties of the Board** – The duties of the Board are as outlined in the Bylaws.
- D. Influence of Outside Entities** – The Board of Directors shall not enter into any agreements of any kind with an Outside Entity, public or private, that in any way limits any actions of Hope Lutheran Church or its members in carrying out their mission as identified in Article II or contravenes or denies the confessional standards in Article III. Any such agreement shall be null and void.

ARTICLE IX: PROPERTY RIGHTS

All property of this congregation shall be held in the corporate name as stated in Article I. If at any time a separation should take place in this congregation, the property of the congregation and all benefits pertaining thereto shall remain with those members who shall continue to adhere to Article III and Article IV of this constitution. In the event of the dissolution of this congregation, all property of the congregation shall be disposed of by the final Voters’ Assembly for the payment of debts, and any and all surplus, after due settlement of just claims against this congregation, shall be conveyed to and become the property of the Eastern District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

ARTICLE X: DOCTRINAL CONFORMITY

The public ministry of the congregation such as worship services, teaching of the Word and ministerial acts shall conform to the confessional standard of Article III.

ARTICLE XI: BYLAWS

This congregation, through its Voters' Assembly, may adopt such Bylaws as the accomplishment of the vision and mission of this congregation may demand or require.

ARTICLE XII: AMENDMENTS

- A. Unalterable Articles** – The following articles of this Constitution or sections thereof shall be unalterable and irreplaceable: III (Confessional Standard); VI (The Office of Pastor and Other Called Personnel); and this Article XIII
- B. Amendments** – Amendments to this Constitution may be proposed in writing in any Voters' Assembly meeting by any voting member. If the majority of the voting members present shall vote in favor of the proposal, a copy of such proposed amendment shall be mailed to all voting members at least two (2) weeks preceding the next meeting. Thereupon the final vote shall be taken in that meeting, or at a duly publicized continuation of that meeting, and two-thirds (2/3) majority of the voting members there present shall be required for adoption. Upon adoption, such amendment shall be submitted to the District Committee on Constitutions for approval in accordance with the Synod's Bylaws.
- C. Additional Unalterable Articles** – The following articles of this Constitution or sections thereof shall be unalterable, irreplaceable, and cannot be negated by any future amendments: VIII.E (Influence of Outside Entities) and this article XII.C.