

# **THE CONSTITUTION OF FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH, HUNTSVILLE, TEXAS**

## **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; II Timothy 4:1-5; Isaiah 8:20), but also that all things be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40), therefore, we, the members of Faith Lutheran Church, Huntsville, Texas, adopt this document as our Constitution with its Bylaws. Said document shall govern all our congregational affairs.

## **ARTICLE I - NAME**

The name of this congregation shall be: Faith Lutheran Church, (The Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod), Huntsville, Texas.

## **ARTICLE II - PURPOSE**

The purpose of this corporate body shall be that of a religious organization, more specifically that of a Christian congregation, established and maintained for the express purpose of disseminating the Gospel truth according to the Confessional Standard of the Lutheran Church, the Book of Concord of the year 1580 A.D.

## **ARTICLE III - CONFESSIONAL STANDARD**

This congregation acknowledges and accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the revealed Word of God, verbally inspired, and it acknowledges and accepts all the Symbolical books of the Lutheran Church, contained in the book of Concord 1580, to be a true and genuine exposition of the Bible. These Symbolical books are: the Apostolic Creed, The Nicene Creed, The Athanasian Creed, The Unaltered Augsburg Confession, The Apology of the same, The Smalcald Articles, Luther's Large Catechism, Luther's Small Catechism and the Formula of Concord.

## **ARTICLE IV - SYNODICAL AFFILIATION**

This congregation with its pastor(s) and teacher(s) 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.

## **ARTICLE V - MEMBERSHIP**

This congregation classifies membership as follows: baptized, confirmed, and voting members. The admission of new members is set forth in the Bylaws of this Constitution.

- A. 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.
- B. Confirmed members are all baptized persons within the congregation who have received a course of instruction in Christian doctrine which meets with the approval of the pastor and the Board of Elders and have participated in the Rite of Confirmation.
- C. Voting membership shall be limited to confirmed members in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution.

## ARTICLE VI - DUTIES OF MEMBERS

### A. Baptized Members

It is expected of all baptized members that they

1. attend divine services 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. contribute, as God has blessed them, of their time, talents, and treasures toward the maintenance of the congregation, and the extension of the church at large;
5. in due time take a course of instruction in preparation for confirmed membership in this congregation.

### B. Confirmed Members

In addition to the above duties of baptized members, it is expected of all confirmed members that they

1. are familiar with the doctrines of the Lutheran Church, at least as set forth in Luther's Small Catechism, and declare acceptance of them;
2. are not members of any organization conflicting with the Word of God;
3. provide for the Christian training of their children, making full use of the Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Confirmation Classes, Bible Class, and Youth Programs;
4. utilize, where appropriate and they are able, the educational services of Faith Lutheran School;
5. submit willingly and cheerfully to the regulations already made or still to be made by this body, provided such regulations do not conflict with the Word of God.

### C. Voting Members

It is expected of all voting members that they

1. attend all meetings of the Voters Assembly faithfully. By being absent the voting member forfeits the right to vote.
2. serve faithfully, according to their God-given talents, in any capacity where they may be called upon to serve.

## ARTICLE VII - RIGHT OF SUFFRAGE

The right of suffrage shall be vested in such confirmed members of this congregation who have reached the legal voting age in the State of Texas, are members of the Voters Assembly, and have

signed the Constitution and Bylaws of this corporate body.

#### ARTICLE VIII - PASTOR, PRINCIPAL, TEACHER, CANDIDATES

The ministerial office (of Pastor, Principal, Teacher, Candidate) shall be conferred upon such persons only as unreservedly accept the Confessional Standard of the Lutheran Church (Article III), have been prepared for and are duly qualified for their work, (Manner of calling is set forth in the Bylaws.)

The right of calling a pastor and/or teacher shall ever be vested in the congregation, and shall never be delegated to an individual or a group.

#### ARTICLE IX – OFFICERS

The officers of this congregation shall be President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and such other boards, officers and committees as the Bylaws of this Constitution may prescribe, or as this body may elect in accordance with its needs. The pastor shall be an ex officio member of all boards and committees.

#### ARTICLE X - REMOVAL FROM OFFICE

Any officer (s), including pastor and teacher (s), may in Christian and rightful order, be removed from office by 2/3 majority vote of the Voters Assembly for any of the following reasons: persistent adherence to false doctrine; leading an ungodly life; unfaithfulness or inability in the performance of official duties.

#### ARTICLE XI - POWERS VESTED IN THE CONGREGATION

The Voters Assembly shall have ultimate authority in all matters relating to the church affairs, and every member may appeal to it in regard to any matter relating to the government and affairs of said church, and its decision shall be final and binding, but such decision(s) shall always be in accord with the Word of God and the Confessional Standard (CF. Article III), and, unless it is so, shall be null and void.

#### ARTICLE XII - PROPERTY

This congregation, represented by the Voters Assembly, shall have the right to acquire and own such property as is necessary for the successful realization of its aims. Everything owned by the congregation, whether movable or fixed, is the estate of the congregation.

- A. Separation - Members who sever their connection with this congregation, whether by transfer or release to another congregation or by self exclusion or by moving away without leaving an address, forfeit all claims to the property of this congregation.
- B. Excommunication – In each case of excommunication the various steps of Matthew 18:15-20 shall be observed. Excommunicated persons forfeit from the moment of separation, all claims to the property of the congregation.
- C. Doctrinal Dispute - If at any time a separation on account of doctrinal dispute should

take place in this congregation, which God may prevent, the property of the congregation and all benefits connected therewith shall remain with those members who adhere to the Confessional Standard of Article III of this Constitution.

- D. Dissolution - In the event of dissolution of this congregation, which God may prevent, all property of the congregation shall be disposed of by the final Voters Assembly for the payments 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 Texas District of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod.

#### ARTICLE XIII - BYLAWS

This congregation may adopt such Bylaws as the accomplishment of the purpose of its organization may demand.

#### ARTICLE XIV - AMENDMENTS

Amendments to this Constitution must be made at any regularly convened meeting of the voters, provided that the amendment has already been submitted in a previous meeting and that two-thirds of the voting members present cast their vote in favor of such amendment. Upon adoption, such amendments may be submitted to the District Committee on Constitutions for approval in accordance with Synod's Bylaws.

# BYLAWS TO THE CONSTITUTION OF FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH

## ARTICLE I - MEMBERSHIP

### A. Admission of Members

1. Baptized Members. Children and adults become members when baptized, or by transfer from recognized sister congregations.
2. Confirmed Members. Applicants for confirmed membership on the strength of a letter of transfer from a recognized sister congregation will be accepted as confirmed members at any regularly convened meeting of the Church Council. Applicants not affiliated with a recognized sister congregation shall give satisfactory evidence of their qualifications for membership to the pastor, and, if necessary, receive a course of instruction in the chief parts of Christian Doctrine. Upon presentation of their names and recommendation by the pastor for their acceptance, if no valid objections be raised, such applicants will be accepted as confirmed members at any regularly convened meeting of the Church Council.
3. Voting Members. Confirmed members who have attained legal voting age in the State of Texas may become voting members by signing this Constitution and its Bylaws at any regularly convened meeting of the Voters Assembly.

### B. Termination of Membership

1. Transfer. Members desiring to join a congregation in fellowship with this congregation shall present their request for transfer to the pastor, who shall be authorized to issue such transfer, subject to ratification by the Church Council.
2. Release. Members desiring to join a church not in fellowship with this congregation shall present their request for release to the pastor, who shall be authorized to issue such release, subject to ratification by the Church Council.
3. Dual membership. In cases where members have joined another church, they shall, upon the recommendation of the pastor and the Board of Elders, be considered as having terminated their membership, and their names shall be removed from the membership by a resolution of the Church Council.
4. Whereabouts Unknown. The names of members whose whereabouts are unknown and cannot be established, after a reasonable time shall, upon the recommendation of the pastor and Board of Elders, be removed from the membership by a resolution of the Church Council.
5. Self-Exclusion. Members who have severed their connection with this congregation by neglecting the Word of God and the Sacraments through non-participation and the public means of grace may, upon the recommendation of the pastor and the Board of Elders, providing such members have been admonished in Christian love according to the Word of God, be removed from membership by resolution of the Voters Assembly.

6. Excommunication. Any member who conducts himself or herself in an unchristian manner shall be admonished according to Matt. 18:15-20. If such member refuses to amend his or her sinful life after proper admonition, such member shall be subject to excommunication. A three-fourths (3/4) majority vote shall be required for every resolution by the Voters Assembly for excommunication.

## ARTICLE II – THE CALLING PROCESS

1. When a worker is to be called, every member of the congregation should have the privilege of making one or more nominations. The congregation shall also ask the President of the synodical District for recommendation. In the case of a pastoral call the Board of Elders shall serve as the Call Committee, and in the case of the call of a teacher the Faith Lutheran School Board shall perform that function. In the cases of all other called workers, the Board of Elders shall serve, with the addition of as many as three current Board chairpersons whose boards are impacted by the call documents of the worker. These additional members of the Call Committee for other called workers are appointed at the discretion of the president of the congregation and approved by the Church Council
2. In the screening process the Calling Committee shall submit all names to the Texas District President for information and evaluation. After receiving information and recommendations from the District President, the Calling Committee shall present to the congregation, by means of a public announcement, at least three preferred candidates, together with a biographical sketch of each.
3. At the Voters Assembly, called for the purpose of selecting a new worker, the preferred list may be amended by means of a two-thirds (2/3) vote of those present. At that point the Voters Assembly shall abide with whatever selection is finally made.
4. Balloting shall proceed by means of secret ballot vote. A majority of the votes cast is needed in order to determine the disposition of the call.

## ARTICLE III – VOTERS ASSEMBLY

1. This congregation shall hold four (4) regularly scheduled meetings of the Voters Assembly each year. These meetings shall be held in March, May, September, and November.

Dates and times will be set by the Church Council. Notice of such meetings shall be made in two (2) preceding public services.

2. The purpose of such meetings shall be to provide updated reports on the work of the church, to conduct specific items of business, and to receive input from voters on church affairs. The Church Council will conduct the normal business of the church; however, only the Voters Assembly will have the authority to hold annual elections, approve the budget, issue calls, approve capital projects, and excommunicate a member. The March Voters Assembly shall be designated as the meeting in which the election of church officers shall take place. The May Voters Assembly is designated as the meeting to set the annual budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

Voters will receive in advance of the meetings financial reports, budgets, slates of candidates, minutes from previous meeting, and reports from Boards and committees.

3. The Order of Business at regular meetings shall be as follows:
  - a. Opening devotion
  - b. Roll call
  - c. Admission of voting members
  - d. Changes to minutes
  - e. Pastor's message and report
  - f. Financial report
  - g. Reports of boards and committees
  - h. Unfinished business
  - i. New business
  - j. Adjournment
  - k. Closing devotion
4. Special meetings may be convened upon call by the pastor, the president or the Church Council. Legal notice of such special meetings shall be made in the Sunday public service preceding the meeting or by mail stating purpose, time and place.
5. Those present at regular or special meetings of the Voters Assembly shall constitute a quorum. A majority of votes cast shall decide all questions unless otherwise specified.
6. In all questions not covered by the Constitution and Bylaws of this congregation, the rules contained in the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order shall be applied.

#### ARTICLE IV - OFFICERS

1. The following shall hold office by election.

President  
Vice-President  
Secretary  
Treasurer  
Chairman of the Board of Christian Education  
Chairman of the Board of Finance/Financial Secretary

Chairman of the Board of Evangelism  
Chairman of the Board of Youth Ministry  
Chairman of the Board of Social Ministry  
Chairman of the Board of Public Worship  
Chairman of the Board of Faith Lutheran School  
Chairman of the Board of Stewardship  
Chairman of the Board of Fellowship  
Chairman of the Board of Young Adult Ministry

2. In addition to the above, the following shall be chosen by election.

a. One Elder for every twenty households in the congregation

b. Trustee, place 1  
Trustee, place 2  
Trustee, place 3  
Trustee, place 4

3. Term of office. All elected officers serve two year terms and are eligible to serve two consecutive terms in the same office, if re-elected. No member shall hold more than one office.

4. Appointive positions. Members of boards other than Elder, Trustee, and board chairmen shall serve by appointment. Such appointments shall be made annually by the Church Council at its July meeting.

5. Filling positions

a. The Board of Elders shall annually elect a Chairman of the Board of Elders, who, along with fulfilling the duties generally assigned to the chair, shall also serve as the board's representative to the Church Council. The election shall be held in the July meeting of the board and shall be by secret ballot, with the candidate receiving the least votes eliminated until one candidate receives a majority of the votes cast.

The Board of Elders shall appoint a Head Usher and, with the Head Usher, shall recruit and train an usher staff.

b. The Board of Public Worship shall appoint an Altar Guild Chairman and, with the Altar Guild Chairman, shall recruit and train an Altar Guild.

c. The Board of Trustees shall annually elect a Chairman of the Board of Trustees, who along with fulfilling the duties generally assigned to the chair, shall also serve as the board's representative to the Church Council. The election shall be held in the July meeting of the board and shall be by secret ballot, with the candidate receiving the least votes eliminated until one candidate receives a majority of the votes cast.

- d. The Board of Christian Education shall annually appoint a Sunday School Superintendent, an Adult Bible Class Coordinator, a Vacation Bible School Director, a Nursery Director, a Children's Choir Director, and a Librarian. Each of the above will, by right of office, be members of the Board.

#### ARTICLE V - CHURCH COUNCIL

1. The officers listed in Article IV. 1, the Chairman of the Board of Elders, and the Chairman of the Board of Trustees shall serve as the Church Council. The pastor shall be an advisory member of the Church Council.
2. Meetings. The Church Council shall meet on a monthly basis. Special meetings of the Church Council may be called by the President or by three members of the Church Council. Regular or special meetings of the Church Council shall be open to the entire congregation. When possible notice will be given to the congregation in advance. A quorum necessary for the transaction of business shall consist of at least one-half (1/2) of the voting members of the Church Council or in their absence, alternates with full voting privileges may represent their respective board. Should a quorum not be present at either a regular or special meeting, the members of the Church Council present shall fix another date. This second meeting shall be capable of transacting business and passing valid resolutions by the members of the Church Council then present.
3. It shall be the duty of the Church Council to study the reports of the various congregational boards and committees and make a determination in regard to proposed activities within the limits set by the budget and otherwise delegated to the Council by the Voters Assembly. The Council shall represent and act for the congregation between meetings of the Voters Assembly and with accountability to the Voters Assembly in all matters. All boards and committees shall be accountable to the Church Council and, ultimately, to the Voters Assembly. The Council may approve the expenditure of any budgeted item according to the availability of funds. Except in case of emergency, only the Voters Assembly may approve an unbudgeted expenditure. In an emergency, such expenditures by the Council shall be reported and approved in a meeting of the Voters Assembly.

#### ARTICLE VI - ELECTIONS

1. Elections shall be held in the March meeting of the Voters Assembly.
2. Elections shall be by ballot and for one office at a time. The candidate receiving a majority of the votes cast shall be declared elected. Elections shall occur in the following order:
  - A. For the election held in odd-numbered years

One-half of the Elders  
Two Trustees  
President  
Vice-president  
Secretary  
Treasurer  
Chairman of the Board of Christian Education  
Chairman of the Board of Social Ministry  
Chairman of the Board of Faith Lutheran School

B. For election held in even-numbered years

One-half of the Elders  
Two Trustees  
Chairman of the Board of Finance/Financial Secretary  
Chairman of the Board of Evangelism  
Chairman of the Board of Youth Ministry  
Chairman of the Board of Public Worship  
Chairman of the Board of Stewardship  
Chairman of the Board of Fellowship  
Chairman of the Board of Young Adult Ministry

3. Those elected shall take office on July 1 of the year elections are held. An installation ceremony shall be held at a Sunday morning worship service.
4. Preparatory to the elections, the President of the congregation shall appoint a five-member Nominations Committee.
5. The Nominations Committee shall
  - A. Review what the Scriptures say about elders and deacons, especially 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:7-9; and 1 Peter 5:1-4, seeking to discern God's will in regard to and supportive of the public ministry of Word and Sacrament.
  - B. Diligently and systematically seek to place in nomination two or more qualified candidates for each office to be filled, additional nominations may be made from the floor. Nominees shall include only those persons who have stated their willingness to serve if elected. All Confirmed members of the congregation who have attained legal voting age in the State of Texas may be considered for nomination to any office, with the following exceptions:
    1. In accord with synodical policy women may hold such offices of the congregation as do not involve them in the distinctive function of the pastoral office. Accordingly, women may not hold the office of Elder.

2. Those who have been members of the congregation for less than three months shall not be eligible for nomination.
3. Those who are under church discipline shall not be eligible for nomination.
6. If an elected position becomes vacant for any reason, the Church Council shall elect a replacement for the remainder of the term.

#### ARTICLE VII - DUTIES OF OFFICERS AND BOARDS

1. Board of Elders. It shall be the duty of the Board of Elders to watch the doctrine, life, and administration of the office of the pastor and teacher(s); see to it that they are treated with due respect, and that the congregation fulfill its duty toward them with regard to their physical needs in accord with God's command and their respective counsel in difficult pastoral cases, and to further, to the best of their ability, the office of pastor; to admonish negligent and delinquent members;

To assist in maintaining order and discipline in the congregation and in the worship service; see to it that accurate records of births, deaths, and other vital statistics are kept and preserved, along with any material of historical nature; and, in general, concern themselves with the improvement and advancement of the congregation's spiritual affairs.

2. Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees shall serve as the stated Board of Directors under the Charter of Incorporation. It shall be the duty of this Board to care for the property of the congregation as a sacred, legal, and equitable trust; see that it is kept in good repair and appearance; recommend needed repairs and improvements to the Voters Assembly, see to it that the estate of the congregation is protected against loss or damage; concern itself about, and, from time to time, report to the Voters Assembly on all matters relating to the congregation's property, including among other things, insurance; to represent the congregation in all legal and business transactions which the congregation, as property owner may be required to act upon and perform, or, as the Voters Assembly may resolve, and shall sign all necessary documents and papers involved in such transactions.

Whenever the Board of Trustees, in accord with the above specified duties, or upon resolution of the Voters Assembly, acts in the name of the congregation, the latter shall be liable; if, however, it acts independently of the above generally prescribed duties, the members of the Board themselves shall be responsible.

3. President - Vice President. Their duties shall be those generally prescribed for these offices. The President shall be the president of the Church Council and Voters Assembly.
4. Secretary. The Secretary's duties shall be those commonly required of that office,

especially the keeping and preserving of accurate records of all congregational proceedings, and handle such correspondence as the congregation may require. The Secretary shall serve as secretary to the Voters Assembly and the Church Council.

5. Treasurer. The Treasurer shall keep and preserve accurate records of all receipts and disbursements, and make a report at all regular meetings. He/She shall pay all fixed and regular expenses that are included in the annual budget or included by special resolution approved by the Voters Assembly. Each expenditure must also be approved by the respective board chairman. The treasurer shall prepare the financial records for a financial review each year.
6. The Board of Christian Education and its Chairman. The Board of Christian Education will be responsible for the planning and supervision of Christian education programs in the congregation other than that of Faith Lutheran School. Its mission is to promote a deeper understanding of and love for Christ through study of the Scriptures.

The Chairman of the Board of Christian Education shall chair the meetings of the Board of Christian Education. In this capacity, in consultation with and with the assistance of the members of the board, he or she shall oversee all programs of Christian education in the congregation except for those of Faith Lutheran School. This board's responsibilities includes the recruitment of teachers, the ordering of materials, the keeping of all necessary and helpful records, and such other activities as will further the cause of Christian education.

7. The Board of Finance and its Chairman. The Board of Finance shall assist both the Treasurer and the Financial Secretary in the performance of their duties and concern itself chiefly with the management of money received by the congregation. This includes preparing of a budget to be presented to the Voters Assembly in the May meeting each year. The board shall receive and count all monies that pass through the church books. It shall annually appoint a financial review committee.
8. The Board of Stewardship and its Chairman. The Board of Stewardship shall concern itself chiefly with time, talent and treasure resources in the congregation. It shall plan and oversee such activities as will aid in effective deployment of these resources.
9. The Board of Evangelism and its chairman. The Board of Evangelism shall plan and supervise activities designed to encourage and equip for personal Christian witnessing by all members. It shall, also, provide systematic methods by which the congregation as a unit may bear witness to Christ before the community. It shall, as well, provide programs by which members are given greater opportunity to support and participate in these undertakings.
10. The Board of Youth Ministry and its Chairman. The Board of Youth Ministry shall be responsible for the planning and supervision of programs designed to provide fellowship and Christian growth opportunities for teenagers in the congregation.

11. The Board of Social Ministry and its Chairman. The Board of Social Ministry shall concern itself with assisting the needy. It shall provide planning and supervision of such activities as will enhance our congregation's involvement in projects that equip us as a congregation to provide direct assistance to those in need and in projects through which we assist various agencies, both local and affiliated with the church at large, in their efforts to help meet human need.
12. The Board of Public Worship and its Chairman. The Board of Public Worship shall plan and supervise activities designed to help worshipers gain a deeper appreciation of our historic liturgical and musical heritage so that this heritage may more effectively aid the church in faithful proclamation and celebration. It shall, also, plan occasional extraordinary worship experiences within the board structure of the common liturgy, primarily using resources provided by Lutheran publishing houses, district and synodical worship committees, and the like. It shall plan worship activities on occasion such as church anniversaries, dedications of new facilities, and the like.
13. The Board of Faith Lutheran School and its Chairman. The Board of Faith Lutheran School will be responsible for policy making, supervision, and management of Faith Lutheran School. Through this pre-school/day care/elementary school ministry, it shall seek to provide Christian nurture for children and an environment and program that aids parents in the fulfilling of their God-given parental duties. Faith Lutheran School shall be perceived as a ministry of Faith Lutheran Church with accountability to the congregation and as a means by which the congregation reaches out to others in Christian love and service.
14. The Board of Fellowship and its Chairman. The basic objectives of this board are the strengthening of the fellowship between congregation members spiritually and socially, the integration of new members into the life of the congregation, and the general up building of mutual cooperation, trust, and enjoyment among the members of the congregation. To that end, this board will expedite existing fellowship opportunities and will plan additional fellowship opportunities. The primary responsibility of this board will be to arrange for the setting up of facilities and for food to be served at relationship-building events. It will do this in cooperation with other boards and/or by initiating new programs on its own in keeping with its mission.
15. The Board of Young Adult Ministry and its chairman. This board shall be responsible for programs designed to provide fellowship and Christian growth opportunities for young adults of Faith and for students from Sam Houston State University and other institutions of higher learning.
16. The Salary Review Committee and its Chairman. The Salary Review Committee shall have included in its responsibilities the production of, and annual review of a salary and benefits grid for all paid workers of Faith Lutheran Church and an annual review of salary and benefits packages for each referenced individual. Subsequent

recommendations of this committee will be made, annually as well, and presented, through the Finance Board and Church Council, to the Voters Assembly for consideration in its annual budget meeting. The committee shall be composed of one representative from each of the boards of Elders, Faith Lutheran School, Finance, and Public Worship. The Vice President of the congregation shall preside over this Committee.

#### ARTICLE VIII - AMENDMENTS

These Bylaws may be amended in a properly convened meeting of the Voters Assembly by a 2/3 majority of all voting members present, provided the proposed change has been announced in a previous meeting or has been submitted in writing at least two weeks prior to the meeting to all voting members.

Revised 4/3/05