

## PREAMBLE

WHEREAS, The Apostle Paul sets forth, 1 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 properly to fulfill the purpose and attain the objectives of congregations; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That we, a congregation of Lutherans of Findlay, Ohio and its surrounding communities, do herewith, in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and by subscribing our names hereto, adopt the following CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS.

## CONSTITUTION

### Article I Name

The name of this congregation shall be Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church of Findlay, Hancock County, Ohio.

## ARTICLE II

### Articles of Faith

1. This congregation accepts and confesses all the canonical books of the Old and the New Testaments as the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God and submits to this Word as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

2. This congregation accepts and confesses all the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of 1580 as true statements of Scriptural doctrine. They are:

#### 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

3. This congregation accepts and confesses these symbolical books without reservation, not insofar as, but because they are the presentation and explanation of the pure doctrine of the Word of God and a summary of the faith held by the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

4. Hence, no doctrine shall be taught or tolerated in this congregation which is in any way at variance with these symbolical books and the Holy Scriptures.

5. Likewise, all controversies which may arise in this congregation shall be decided and adjusted according to this norm of doctrine and practice.

### ARTICLE III

#### Purpose and Objectives

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

2. The primary objectives of this congregation shall be:

- A. To proclaim the Law and the Gospel, to lead sinners to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ for life and salvation (2 Timothy 4:2; Luke 24:46-48).
- B. To strengthen believers in faith and sanctification through the means of grace.
- C. To equip believers as disciples, stewards, and witnesses for sharing the Gospel of Jesus with our fellowmen.

### ARTICLE IV

#### Synodical Affiliation

This congregation shall affiliate itself only with a synod 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 synod exists.

### ARTICLE V

#### Church Membership

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 the New Testaments, without qualification, as the only rule and norm of faith and life.

C. Voting members are those male communicant members (1 Corinthians 14:34, 1 Timothy 2:12) who have declared their agreement with this Constitution and who have been accepted by the voters' assembly of the congregation.

2. Privileges and Responsibilities - "God is love" (1 John 4:8), and His love ever moves Him to bless the members of His Church with innumerable physical and spiritual gifts (1 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 (1 John 4:19) and to show that love with the works that we do. The giving of such expressions we acknowledge as both a privilege and a responsibility. Some of the privileges and responsibilities to be noted are the following:

- A. Our God has given us His Word, the one thing needful (Luke 10:42), which alone can save our souls and tell us how to live a God-pleasing life (2 Timothy 3:15-17). Consequently, a member of His Church will consider it a distinct privilege and a responsibility to:
  1. Hear and receive the Word of God diligently;
  2. Provide and promote opportunities for Christian education;
  3. Bring up his 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, a member of His Church will:
  1. Have his children baptized early in life, for "Baptism doth also now save us" (1 Peter 3:21);
  2. Frequently partake of Holy Communion (1 Corinthians 11:23-26), if he is recognized as one who can properly examine himself (1 Corinthians 11:28). Only those in the confessional fellowship of faith are permitted to commune at our altar. (Close Communion --2 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, a member of His Church will:
  1. Continually remember that all his property, time, and talents really belong to God;
  2. Conscientiously determine which part of his money, time, and talents shall be devoted to that which the congregation has made its concern, not omitting the work of the Synod (Mark 16:15; 1 Corinthians 9:14; 16:2; 1 Peter 4:10);
  3. If he is a voting member, regularly attend the voters' meeting and lend the congregation his counsel and aid.

D. Our God has implanted within us who are Christians the New Man, who desires to live righteously (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:24). Consequently, a member of His Church will:

1. Not live in manifest works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21), but lead a Christian life (Galatians 5:22-25);
2. When he has erred, permit himself to be fraternally admonished and corrected in the spirit of Matthew 18:15;
3. Refuse to hold membership in any organization whose teachings and practices conflict with the Word of God (e.g. lodges) (John 5:23, John 8:31-32, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

3. Church Discipline and Excommunication - Christian discipline shall be exercised in this congregation in the spirit of 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 brethren. Those members who finally must be excommunicated and those who have excluded themselves from the congregation by evading Matthew 18:15-20 lose all their rights in the congregation and in its property. For excommunication a unanimous vote is required.

4. Reinstatement - When an excommunicated member by the grace of God repents of his sin, he is to be reinstated with all former rights and privileges of this congregation (2 Corinthians 2:6-8).

## ARTICLE VI

### Powers and Rights of the Congregation

1. In all matters of Christian faith and life, the Word of God is supreme (Psalm 119:105).
2. In all matters not decided by the Word of God, the congregation alone shall have the right of decision (Romans 12:10; 14:19; Ephesians 5:21).
3. The church 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, in rare occasions of emergency, the church council may act in the name and for the welfare of the congregation. Such action must be fully explained at the next voters' meeting and submitted for approval.
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 (2 Corinthians 6:14-15; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 12:25).

## ARTICLE VII

### The Ministry

1. The congregation has the exclusive right to call pastors and teachers and to elect other officers.
2. The pastorate of this congregation shall be conferred only upon such ministers or ministerial candidates as unqualifiedly and publicly 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 (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; Colossians 4:5-6).
3. The teachers called by the congregation 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; 1 Corinthians 14:40).
4. In case of a vacancy in the office of pastor or teacher the congregation shall notify the president of the local district of the Synod 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 VIII

### Officers of the Congregation

1. The first New Testament congregation at Jerusalem chose men of "honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom" (Acts 6:1-6) to aid the Apostles in the administration of its temporal affairs. Likewise shall this congregation choose officers and committee members with like qualifications to aid the pastor in administering its affairs (1 Timothy 3:8-13).
2. The listing of the officers and their duties is given in the Bylaws.
3. These officers shall be given the respect and esteem of the congregation in the performance of their duties and they shall conduct themselves in a manner befitting their responsible office (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

## ARTICLE IX

### Removal from Office

1. If anyone who holds an office in the congregation willfully neglects his duty and upon due admonition does not amend, the congregation has the right and eventually the duty to remove him from office and to elect another in his place. (1 Timothy 3:8-13).
2. Sufficient and urgent causes for removing a pastor or a teacher are persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, willful neglect of duty, or established inability to perform the duties of his office. In such case, the counsel of an official of the District will be sought (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9).

## ARTICLE X

### Meetings of the Congregation

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

## ARTICLE XI

### Separation

If at any time a separation should occur in this congregation -- may God graciously prevent it -- the property and all equipment of this congregation shall remain with that portion of the membership which adheres to this Constitution, regardless of number.

In the event of termination or dissolution of the congregation, the church council shall, after paying or making provision for payment of all the liabilities of the congregation, dispose of its remaining assets, if any, exclusively for the purposes of the congregation, by 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 1994 or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Code).

## ARTICLE XII

### Repeals and Alterations

1. Articles II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, IX, XI, and XII, Section 1 of this Constitution shall be and remain unalterable and irrevocable, inasmuch as they express clear, Scriptural teachings.
2. Proposals to alter or repeal any alterable or repealable article of this Constitution, or to add an article, shall be submitted in writing to the church council and shall be publicly announced on two Sundays immediately preceding the regular business meeting of the congregation, and posted in the church during that period.
3. Such a proposal shall be discussed in the meeting in which it is presented and voted on in the next regular meeting of the congregation.
4. A majority vote, consisting of not less than two-thirds of the voting members present at such a constitutional meeting, shall be required to alter or repeal any alterable or repealable article of this Constitution, or to add an article thereto.
5. Any and all Bylaws may be repealed or amended by a majority vote of the voting members present at any regular meeting, 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 proposed amendment has been submitted in writing to the church council for its study and recommendation.