

The Constitution of Living Hope of the Bay Lutheran Church Chesterfield Township, Michigan

1.0 NAME

The name of this congregation shall be Living Hope of the Bay Lutheran Church.

2.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this gathering of believers is to glorify and praise God, strengthen and support fellow members and to reach a lost world with the Good News of Jesus so that more might be saved. We shall be compelled by the love of God toward these endeavors as he works in us through the Word and Sacraments.

3.0 CONFSSIONAL STANDARD

- 3.1 This congregation acknowledges and accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God and submits to them as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life.
- 3.2 This congregation acknowledges and accepts all the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church, contained in the Book of Concord of the year 1580 A.D., as the true and genuine expositions of the doctrines of the Bible. These confessional writings are the three ecumenical creeds (Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian), the unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, Luther's Large and Small Catechisms and the Formula of Concord.

4.0 MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the congregation includes the following:

- 4.1 *Baptized Members:* Baptized members include all those who have been baptized in the name of the Triune God and are under the spiritual care of this congregation, including the children and adults who have not yet become confirmed members. Baptized members may be received into this congregation by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, through transfer of membership, or with the consent of one or both parents in the case of children who have been baptized in another Christian congregation.
- 4.2 *Confirmed Members:* Confirmed members include those members who have been baptized in the name of the Triune God, instructed and confirmed in the six chief parts of Christian doctrine, accept the confessional standards of Article III, conduct themselves in a manner which reflects an embrace of congregational values, mission and

vision and who are not members of organizations whose principles and conduct conflict with the Word of God. Confirmed members may be received by the Rite of Confirmation, by transfer from a sister congregation, upon profession of faith or by re-affirmation of faith.

- 4.3 *Reception into Membership:* Both baptized and confirmed members shall be received into this congregation upon approval by the Board of Elders
- 4.4 *Voting Members:* Confirmed members in good standing who have reached the age of eighteen years and who embrace congregational values, mission and vision statements and accept the right and responsibility of regular participation in both regular and special meetings of the Voters' Assembly.
- 4.5 *Duties of Baptized, Confirmed and Voting Members:* All members are expected to support the mission and ministry of this congregation through regular participation in worship, evangelism, Bible study, prayer, fellowship, service and financial offerings.
- 4.6 *Termination of Membership:* Membership shall be terminated by transfer to a sister congregation, by death, by joining another congregation outside of our fellowship, by excommunication or by self-exclusion. Twenty-four months of complete inactivity will be defined as reasonable cause for self-exclusion.

Confirmed members who conduct themselves in an unchristian manner shall be admonished according to Matthew 18:15-20. If they remain impenitent after proper admonishment, they shall be excommunicated. The Elders shall present each case to the Voters' Assembly for a decision. If such members deliberately absent themselves from the meeting(s) at which their case is to be discussed, they shall be regarded as having excluded themselves from membership.

- 4.7 *Male and Female Member Participation:* Both males and females may serve in all mission and ministry capacities in the congregation except Board of Elders, Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Congregation, in keeping with the practice of our sister congregations in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. In all other circumstances, the congregation shall work to involve both males and females in mission and ministry capacities which promote the extension of God's kingdom and achieve mission and ministry goals.

5.0 PASTORS, TEACHERS AND MINISTRY STAFF

The pastoral office of the congregation shall be conferred only on such pastors who are certified by the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, and who are qualified for their work. All church ministry staff must be qualified for their work and profess and adhere to the Confession of Faith described in Article III of this constitution. Where possible, contracted workers shall pursue Synodical certification in a reasonable and expedient manner.

6.0 AUTHORITY OF THE CONGREGATION

6.1 General Authority

1. *Voters' Assembly:* The Voters' Assembly shall be the ultimate governing body of the congregation and shall be concerned with such issues as:
 - Affirming the annual budget and ministry plan
 - Election of church officers
 - Recall of elected church officers
 - Calling pastors, teachers and ministry staff
 - Approval of newly created Called staff positions, and approval of call committees for filling newly created Called staff positions
 - Dismissal of Called pastors, teachers and ministry staff
 - Approval of Excommunication
 - Constitution and By-law changes
 - Erection or renovation of facilities requiring the borrowing of funds with a value greater than 5% of the congregation's net worth
 - Approval of loans of duration greater than 12 months
 - Approval of loans of duration less than 12 months with an amount greater than 5% of approved annual budget
 - Sale of real estate and church buildings, other than staff housing
 - Sale of church property (other than real estate and buildings) with a value greater than 5% of the congregation's net worth
 - Celebration of vision achievement (God's work among us)
2. *The Board of Elders:* The Voters' Assembly shall delegate other responsibilities to the Board of Elders, which is charged with the month-to-month oversight of the congregation, and shall be concerned with such matters as described in the By-Laws of this congregation. The Board of Elders shall have the authority to accept people into membership between Voters' Assembly meetings.
3. *The Board of Directors:* The Board of Elders shall delegate by policy matters relating to finances, church property, limiting the congregation's risk and liability, congregational worker benefit programs, and other administrative duties to the Board of Directors.

6.2 Decisions

1. All matters of doctrine and of conscience shall be decided only by the Word of God. All other matters shall be decided by a vote of the Voters' Assembly unless otherwise specified by this Constitution.
2. The Voters' Assembly may vote on a motion by a vote during a meeting of the Voters' Assembly or by a ballot vote without a meeting of the Voters' Assembly.

3. The voters of the congregation must be given proper notification of a meeting of the Voters' Assembly or a ballot vote without a meeting of the Voters' Assembly, according to the By-laws and policy documents of this congregation.
4. Voting by proxy shall not be allowed.
5. Absentee ballots shall be accepted, and each ballot must be certified, according to the By-laws and policy documents of this congregation.
6. A quorum at a meeting of the Voters' Assembly shall be constituted of 51% of the current voting membership for a meeting to begin. Once a meeting has begun it may continue until conclusion, or until the number of remaining voting members present does not exceed 20% of the current voting members. If a quorum is not present, the elders are given discretion to determine if the congregation is fairly represented, in which event, the quorum will be established by an affirmative vote of two thirds of the Board of Elders.
7. A ballot vote without a meeting of the Voters' Assembly must have at least two-thirds of the current voting membership submit valid ballots in order for a motion to be voted on.
8. Decisions of the Voters' Assembly are based upon a two-thirds majority of the valid votes cast.
9. The Voters' Assembly may make, review, modify, or eliminate any policy of an individual or group within this congregation.

6.3 Removal From Office

1. Any pastor or other called person may be removed from office by the Voters' Assembly by a three-fourths majority ballot vote, in Christian and lawful order, for one of the following reasons: Persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life or willful neglect of duties.
2. The congregation may request the resignation of any pastor or other called person from his position in the congregation in the case of prolonged incapacity or general incompetence.

6.4 Legal Authority

As the legal representatives of the congregation, the Board of Directors shall sign legal documents, make contracts, and represent the congregation in legal matters. The Board of Elders and those individuals and committees to whom the Elders have delegated the authority, shall be responsible to hire and dismiss non-called workers.

7.0 OFFICERS

- 7.1 The officers of this congregation shall be such officers as the By-Laws of this Constitution may prescribe.
- 7.2 Congregational officers or committees, whether elected or appointed, shall have no authority beyond that which has been conferred upon them and whatever authority may have been delegated to them may be altered or revoked.

8.0 PROPERTY RIGHTS

- 8.1 All property of this congregation shall be held in the corporate name as stated in Article I of this constitution.
- 8.2 If at any time a separation should take place in this fellowship, the property and all the benefits therewith connected shall remain with those members, even though a minority, who shall continue to adhere to these doctrines, tenets and practices which prevailed when this constitution was adopted.
- 8.3 If a separation occurs for any other reason other than doctrine, the property and all benefits therewith connected shall reside with the majority of members.
- 8.4 In the event of the dissolution of this congregation all property of the congregation shall be liquidated and disbursed for the payment of debt. Any and all surplus after the settlement of just claims against this congregation shall be conveyed to the Michigan District of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod..

9.0 DOCTRINAL CONFORMITY

Only such hymns, prayers and orders of worship shall be used in the public services of the congregation and in all mission and ministry functions which conform to the Confession of Faith set forth in Article 3.0 of this congregation and which conform to the stated purposes of the congregation.

10.0 SYNODICAL MEMBERSHIP

In order to do the Lord's work more efficiently at home and abroad, this congregation maintains membership in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as long as the Synod adheres to the Confessions designated in Article III of this constitution.

11.0 BYLAWS

This congregation may adopt such Bylaws as may be required for the accomplishment of its purposes.

12.0 INDEMNIFICATION

To the fullest extent permitted by law, Living Hope of the Bay Lutheran Church shall indemnify any individual who was or is a party or is threatened to be made a party to any proceeding other than a proceeding by or in the right of the congregation, because he or she was or is a staff member, officer or member of the congregation, or because of any action or inaction in such capacity, against liability and expenses incurred in the proceeding, if (a) he or she conducted himself or herself in good faith, (b) he or she reasonably believed (i) in the case of conduct in his or her official capacity, that his or her conduct was in the best interest of the congregation, and (ii) in all other cases, that his or her conduct was at least not opposed to the best interests of the congregation, and (c) in the case of any criminal proceeding, that he or she had no reasonable cause to believe that his or her conduct was unlawful.

13.0 ADOPTION AND REVISION

The constitution and/or proposed amendments to it shall be declared adopted and valid at any scheduled meeting of the Voters' Assembly, provided that:

- A. the clear content and intent of Articles 2.0, 3.0, 5.0, and 9.0 of this constitution shall not be changed or repealed;
- B. the proposed change does not conflict with the provisions defined in Articles 2.0, 3.0, 5.0 and 9.0 or to a Scriptural doctrine or practice;
- C. the proposed amendment has been submitted in writing to the Board of Elders and published for the Voters' Assembly a minimum of two weeks prior to the meeting at which the proposed amendment will be acted upon; and
- D. an affirmative vote of a three-fourths majority of voters present and voting is secured.

14.0 MANDATED REVIEW

This constitution must be thoroughly reviewed and updated by the third anniversary of its approval by the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.