

Constitution of University Lutheran Church of Hope

Preamble

We, baptized members of the Church of Christ, responding in faith to the call of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, desiring to unite together to preach the Word, administer the sacraments, and carry out God's mission, do hereby adopt this constitution and solemnly pledge ourselves to be governed by its provisions. In the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 1. Name and Incorporation

1.1 The name of this congregation shall be "University Lutheran Church of Hope."

1.2 This congregation shall be incorporated under the provisions of [Chapter 317A of Minnesota Statutes](#).

Chapter 2. Confession of Faith

2.1 This congregation confesses the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

2.2 This congregation confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.

a. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God fashions a new creation.

b. The proclamation of God's message to us as both Law and Gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy through word and deed, beginning with the Word in creation, continuing in the history of Israel, and centering in all its fullness in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

c. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. Inspired by God's Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God's revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them God's Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.

2.3 This congregation accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life.

2.4 This congregation accepts the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of this congregation.

2.5 This congregation accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to the Gospel, acknowledging as one with it in faith and doctrine all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.

2.6 This congregation accepts the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise, the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, as further valid interpretations of the faith of the Church.

2.7 This congregation confesses the Gospel, recorded in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain the Church for God's mission in the world.

Chapter 3. Nature of the Church

3.1 All power in the Church belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ, its head. All actions of the congregation are to be carried out under His rule and authority.

3.2 The Church exists both as an inclusive fellowship and as local congregations gathered for worship and Christian service. Congregations find their fulfillment in the universal community of the Church, and the universal Church exists in and through congregations. This church, therefore, derives its character and powers both from the sanction and representation of its congregations and from its inherent nature as an expression of the broader fellowship of the faithful. In length, it acknowledges itself to be in the historic continuity of the communion of saints; in breadth, it expresses the fellowship of believers and congregations in our day.

Chapter 4. Statement of Purpose

4.1 The Church is a people created by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, called and sent to bear witness to God's creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world.

4.2 To participate in God's mission, this congregation as a part of the Church shall:

- a. Worship God in proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments and through lives of prayer, praise, thanksgiving, witness, and service.
- b. Proclaim God's saving Gospel of justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith alone, according to the apostolic witness in the Holy Scripture, preserving and transmitting the Gospel faithfully to future generations.
- c. Carry out Christ's Great Commission by reaching out to all people to bring them to faith in Christ and by doing all ministry with a global awareness consistent with the understanding of God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of all.
- d. Serve in response to God's love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity and justice for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, and standing with the poor and powerless, and committing itself to their needs.
- e. Nurture its members in the Word of God so as to grow in faith and hope and love, to see daily life as the primary setting for the exercise of their Christian calling, and to use the gifts of the Spirit for their life together and for their calling in the world.
- f. Manifest the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives.

4.3 To fulfill these purposes, this congregation shall:

- a. Provide services of worship at which the Word of God is preached and the sacraments are administered.
- b. Provide pastoral care and assist all members to participate in this ministry.
- c. Challenge, equip, and support all members in carrying out their calling in their daily lives and in their congregation.
- d. Teach the Word of God.
- e. Witness to the reconciling Word of God in Christ, reaching out to all people.
- f. Respond to human need, work for justice and peace, care for the sick and suffering, and participate responsibly in society.
- g. Motivate its members to provide financial support for the congregation's ministry and the ministry of other parts of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- h. Foster and participate in interdependent relationships with other congregation, the Synod, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- i. Foster and participate in ecumenical relationships consistent with churchwide policy.

4.4 This congregation shall develop an organizational structure to be described in the bylaws. The Board of Commissioners shall prepare descriptions of the responsibilities of each committee, task force, or other organizational groups not included in the bylaws and shall review the actions of all organizational groups.

4.5 This congregation shall, from time to time, adopt a mission statement which will provide specific direction for its programs.

Chapter 5. Powers of the Congregation

Only such authority as is delegated to the Board of Commissioners or other organizational units in the congregation's governing documents is recognized. All remaining authority is retained by the congregation. The congregation is authorized to:

- a. Call a pastor;
- b. Terminate the call of a pastor;
- c. Appoint or terminate the appointment of associates in ministry in conformity with the applicable policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;
- d. Approve the annual budget;
- e. Acquire real and personal property by gift, devise, purchase, or other lawful means;
- f. Hold title to and use its property for any and all activities consistent with its purpose;
- g. Sell, mortgage, lease, transfer, or otherwise dispose of its property by any lawful means;

- h. Elect its officers, the Board of Commissioners and committees and require them to carry out their duties in accordance with the constitution and bylaws; and
- i. Terminate its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as provided in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6. Church Affiliation

6.1 This congregation shall be an interdependent part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or its successor, and of the applicable synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This congregation is subject to the discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

6.2 This congregation accepts the Confession of Faith and agrees to the Purposes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and shall act in accordance with them.

6.3 This congregation acknowledges its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in which:

- a. This congregation agrees to be responsible for its life as a Christian community.
- b. This congregation pledges its financial support and participation in the life and mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- c. This congregation agrees to call pastoral leadership from the clergy roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in accordance with its call procedures except in special circumstances and with the approval of the bishop of the synod.
- d. This congregation agrees to consider associates in ministry for appointment to other staff positions in the congregation according to the procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- e. This congregation agrees to file this constitution and any subsequent changes to this constitution with the synod for review to ascertain that all of its provisions are in agreement with the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or with the constitution of the Synod.

6.4 Affiliation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may be terminated as follows:

- a. The congregation takes action to dissolve.
- b. The congregation ceases to exist.
- c. The congregation is removed from membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America according to the procedures for discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- d. The congregation follows the procedures outlined in Section 6.5.

6.5 This congregation may terminate its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by the following procedure:

- a. A resolution indicating the desire of this congregation to terminate its relationship must be adopted at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this congregation by a two-thirds majority of the voting members present.
 - b. The secretary of this congregation shall submit a copy of the resolution to the synodical bishop and shall mail a copy of the resolution to voting members of the congregation. This notice shall be submitted within 10 days after the resolution has been adopted.
 - c. The bishop of the synod shall consult with this congregation during a period of at least 90 days.
 - d. If this congregation, after consultation, still desires to terminate its relationship, such action may be taken at a legally called and conducted special meeting by a two-thirds majority of the voting members present, at which meeting the bishop of the synod or an authorized representative shall be present. Notice of the meeting shall be mailed to all voting members at least 10 days in advance of the meeting.
 - e. A certified copy of the resolution to terminate its relationship shall be sent to the synodical bishop, at which time the relationship between this congregation and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall be terminated.
 - f. Notice of termination shall be forwarded by the synodical bishop to the secretary of this church and published in the periodical of this church.
- 6.6 If this congregation is considering relocation, it shall confer with the bishop of the synod before any steps are taken leading to such action. The approval of the Synod Council shall be received before any such action is effected.

Chapter 7. Property Ownership

- 7.1 Title to congregational business records and all real and personal property acquired by the congregation, its organizations, or individuals for use by the congregation and its organizations, shall be held by the congregation as a corporation.
- 7.2 Real property shall not be purchased, disposed of, or encumbered in any manner except by resolution adopted by a majority vote of the members present and voting at a duly called meeting of the congregation.
- 7.3 If the congregation ceases to exist, title to undisposed property shall pass to the Minneapolis Area Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- 7.4 If the congregation is removed from membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America according to its procedure for discipline, title to property shall continue to reside in the congregation.
- 7.5 If a two-thirds majority of the voting members of the congregation present at a regularly called and conducted special meeting of the congregation vote to transfer to another Lutheran church body, title to property shall continue to reside in the congregation. Before the congregation takes action to transfer to another Lutheran church body, it shall consult with representatives of the Minneapolis Area Synod.

7.6 If a two-thirds majority of the voting members of the congregation present at a regularly called and conducted special meeting of the congregation vote to become independent or relate to a non-Lutheran church body, title to property of the congregation shall continue to reside in the congregation only with the consent of the Synod Council, after consultation with the congregation by the established synodical process, may give approval to the request to become independent or to relate to a non-Lutheran church body, in which case title shall remain with the majority of the congregation. If the Synod Council fails to give such approval, title shall remain with those members who desire to continue as a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Chapter 8. Membership

8.1 Members of the congregation shall be those baptized persons on the roll of the congregation at the time that this constitution is adopted and those who are admitted thereafter and who have declared and maintain their membership in accordance with the provisions of this constitution and the bylaws.

8.2 Members shall be classified as follows:

- a. Baptized members are those who have been baptized in the name of the Triune God and who have been received by the congregation.
- b. Confirmed members are baptized persons who have been confirmed in the Lutheran faith and received into membership by the congregation, or baptized members received into membership by the congregation by affirmation of faith.
- c. Voting members are confirmed members who have communed or made a contribution of record during the immediately preceding two-year period.
- d. Associate members are those who wish to participate in the congregational life of the University Lutheran Church of Hope, but wish to retain their voting membership in their home congregation. Associate members may not serve as commissioners but they may serve as commission members and vote at commission meetings. Associate members may not vote at congregational meetings, but they have the right to speak at such meetings.

8.3 All applications for confirmed membership shall be submitted to and shall require the approval of the Board of Commissioners.

8.4 It shall be the privilege and duty of members of the congregation to:

- a. Make regular use of the means of grace, both Word and sacraments;
- b. Live a Christian life in accordance with the Word of God and the teachings of the Lutheran church; and
- c. Support the work of the congregation and of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America through contributions of their time, abilities, and financial support as Biblical stewards.

8.5 Members who have not communed or made a contribution of record for a period of two years shall be placed on an inactive list. Reasonable and concerned attempts shall be made to reach

them. Those who wish to maintain membership with the congregation shall be reinstated to active membership. Those who do not wish to maintain membership or who cannot be located shall be declared inactive.

8.6 Membership in this congregation shall be terminated by any of the following:

- a. Death;
- b. Resignation;
- c. Transfer or release; or
- d. Disciplinary action by the Board of Commissioners or the congregation.

Such persons who have been removed from the roll of members shall remain persons for whom the church has a continuing pastoral concern.

8.7 This section shall be interpreted so that membership shall not be dependent upon factors such as age, gender, race, socioeconomic or marital status, physical or mental capacities or sexual orientation.

Chapter 9. The Pastors

9.1 Authority to call a pastor shall be in this congregation by at least a two-thirds majority ballot vote of members present and voting at meeting regularly called for that purpose. Before a call is issued, the officers, or a committee elected by this congregation to recommend the call, shall seek the advice and help of the bishop of the synod.

9.2 Only a member of the clergy roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or who has been recommended for it by the synodical bishop may be called as a pastor of this congregation.

9.3 Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, every ordained minister shall preach the Word, administer the sacraments, conduct public worship, provide pastoral care, and shall speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world. Each ordained minister with a congregational call shall, within the congregation, offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead; supervise all schools and organizations of the congregation; shall install regularly elected members of the Board of Commissioners, and with the Board administer discipline. Every pastor shall seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel and strive to extend the Kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad; shall impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through distribution of its periodicals and other publications; and shall endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to the work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and of the synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

9.4 The specific duties of the pastor, compensation, and other matters pertaining to the service of the pastor shall be included in a letter of call.

9.5

a. The call of a congregation, when accepted by a pastor, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment which, except in the case of the death of the pastor, shall be terminated only following consultation with the synodical bishop and for the following reasons:

1. Mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term of years;
2. Resignation of the pastor;
3. Inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in the congregation in view of local conditions, without reflection on the competence or the moral or spiritual character of the pastor;
4. The physical or mental incapacity of the pastor;
5. Disqualification of the pastor through discipline on grounds of doctrine, morality, or continued neglect of duty; or
6. The dissolution of the congregation.

b. In the case of alleged physical or mental incapacity of the pastor or ineffective conduct of the pastoral office, it shall be the responsibility of the bishop of the synod, when such difficulties are personally known or have been brought to the synod's attention by an official recital of allegations by the Board of Commissioners, or by a petition signed by at least one-third of the voting members of the congregation, to investigate such conditions personally in company with a committee of two ordained ministers and one lay person.

c. In case of alleged physical or mental incapacity, competent medical testimony shall be obtained. When such disability is evident, the bishop of the synod with the advice of the committee shall declare the pastorate vacant. Upon the restoration of a disabled pastor to health, the bishop of the synod shall take steps to enable the pastor to resume the ministry, either in the congregation last served or in another field of labor.

d. In the case of alleged local difficulties which imperil the effective functioning of the congregation, all concerned persons shall be heard, after which the bishop of the synod together with the committee described in Section [9.5\(b\)](#) shall decide on the course of action to be recommended to the pastor and the congregation. If they agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action shall be taken by the synod. If either party fails to assent, the congregation may dismiss the pastor by a two-thirds majority vote of the voting members present at a regularly called meeting after consultation with the bishop.

e. The foregoing procedure shall never be invoked when questions of doctrine, morality, or continued neglect of duty are involved, all such cases being treated as disciplinary matters.

f. If in the course of the proceedings, it should become apparent that the pastoral office cannot be conducted effectively in the congregation being served by the ordained minister due to local conditions, the bishop of the synod may temporarily suspend the pastor from service in the congregation without prejudice and with pay provided through a joint churchwide/synod fund and with housing provided by the congregation.

9.6 At a time of pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor may be called by the congregation at the recommendation of the Board of Commissioners in consultation with the Bishop of the Minneapolis Area Synod.

9.7 During the period of service, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties of a regularly called pastor.

9.8 This congregation shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former pastor before calling a successor. A pastor shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to this congregation.

9.9 When a pastor is called to serve in company with another pastor or pastors, the privileges and responsibilities of each pastor shall be specified in documents to accompany the call and to be drafted in consultation involving the pastors, the Board of Commissioners, and the bishop of the synod. As occasion requires, the documents may be revised through a similar consultation.

9.10 With the approval of the bishop of the synod the congregation may depart from Section 9.5(a) and call a pastor for a specific term of years. Details of such calls shall be in writing setting forth the purpose and conditions involved. Prior to the completion of a term, the bishop or a designated representative of the bishop shall meet with the pastor and representatives of the congregation for a review of the call. Such a call may also be terminated before its expiration in accordance with the provisions of Section 9.5(a).

9.11 The pastor shall keep accurate parochial records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, members dismissed, or members excluded from the congregation, and shall submit a summary of such statistics annually to the synod.

9.12 The pastor(s) shall submit a report of his or her ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.

Chapter 10. Board of Commissioners

The business of the congregation shall be managed by a Board of Commissioners consisting of the officers and commissioners. Terms of office and duties of the officers and commissioners shall be as specified in the articles and bylaws.

Chapter 11. Discipline of Members

11.1 Denial of the Christian faith as described in this constitution, conduct grossly unbecoming a member of the Church of Christ, or persistent trouble-making in the congregation are sufficient cause for discipline of a member. Prior to disciplinary action, reconciliation will be attempted following Matthew 18:15-17, proceeding through these successive steps: a) private admonition by a pastor, b) admonition by a pastor in the presence of two or three witnesses, and c) citation to appear before the Board of Commissioners.

11.2 A member charged with the offense shall appear before the Board of Commissioners having received a written notice, specifying the exact charges that have been made against the member, at least 10 days prior to the meeting.

11.3 Should the allegations be sustained by a two-thirds majority vote of the Board of Commissioners, the Board shall impose one of the following disciplinary actions:

- a. Censure before the Board or congregation;
- b. Suspension from membership for a definite period of time; or
- c. Exclusion from membership in the congregation. Disciplinary actions b. and c. shall be delivered to the member in writing.

11.4 The member against whom disciplinary action has been taken by the Board of Commissioners shall have the right to appeal the decision to the congregation. Such right may not be abridged. The member is encouraged to consult with the Minneapolis Area Synod staff during disciplinary action.

11.5 Disciplinary actions may be reconsidered and revoked by the Board of Commissioners upon receipt of a) evidence that injustice has been done or b) evidence of repentance and amendment.

Chapter 12. Bylaws

The congregation may adopt bylaws. No bylaw may conflict with this constitution.

Chapter 13. Amendments

13.1 Any amendment to this constitution must be presented in writing to the congregation at least thirty days before the annual meeting or a special meeting called for that purpose.

13.2 A proposed amendment shall:

- a. be approved at a meeting of the congregation by a three-fourths majority of the votes cast; and
- b. be ratified without change at the next annual meeting (which shall occur not less than nine months after the first vote) by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast.

13.3 Any amendments to this constitution shall be sent by the secretary of the congregation to the synod for review. The amendment shall become effective within 120 days from the date of the receipt of the notice by the synod unless the synod informs the congregation that the amendment is in conflict with the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, or the constitution of the synod.

This constitution was adopted by the congregation