

CONSTITUTION and BY-LAWS
EBENEZER LUTHERAN BRETHREN CHURCH
Minneapolis, Minnesota
Shows changes that were voted on and approved on 1-25-2009

ARTICLE I

The name of this congregation is EBENEZER LUTHERAN BRETHREN. This church is located in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

ARTICLE II - Confession

We believe and confess that God's Word, as it is contained in the canonical books of the Bible, is the source and guide for faith, doctrine, and life. We accept the Apostle's Creed and confessional writings of the Lutheran Brethren as expressed in the Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism in conformity with the Word of God.

ARTICLE III - Aim

Our aim is by the preaching of the Word and the exercise of the gifts of grace, to win souls for Christ and to strengthen the believers. It is also our purpose to join with the other congregations of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of America in the ventures of faith that God gives us in missions, in Christian education and institutions of mercy.

ARTICLE IV - Definition

A Lutheran congregation is an assembly of believing Christians in a certain locality, among whom the Word of God is preached in harmony with the fundamental doctrines of the Lutheran faith as expressed in the confessional writing of the Lutheran Church and the sacraments are administered in accordance with the Lord's institutions.

ARTICLE V - Congregational Membership

According to the Scriptures and our Lutheran confessions the Church of Christ is made up only of regenerated persons. Therefore, the local congregation shall conform to the Scriptures in that its membership be made up only of those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and whose testimony and life bear witness to that confession..

Since it is also the will of God, according to Scripture, that the Church of Christ shall appear in the world as an externally visible organization, it becomes necessary for individual believers in each locality to unite themselves into an assembly or congregation, in order thereby more effectually to discharge their duties. There, inwardly, the unity, preservation and growth of the Body of Christ is effected through the Word, the Sacraments and the chastening, guiding and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Through the same means the congregation is energized and equipped to fulfill its mission outwardly as the light and salt of the world and to help establish God's kingdom and justice.

ARTICLE VI - Church Management

1. Christ is the head of the Church. Through His Spirit He guides the Church by His Word. According to His Word, He bestows upon the Church gifts of grace necessary for the effectual performance of its various ministrations. Among these ministrations we especially emphasize the office of pastor, elders, teachers, and trustees. (Acts 14:23; 20:17,28; I Peter 5:1-4; I Thessalonians 5:12,13; Ephesians 4:11; Acts 6:2-6; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5)

2. **PASTOR.** For the office of pastor, the congregation shall call a man who is recognized as a true Christian, who accepts this constitution, and who otherwise has the necessary qualifications. Upon acceptance of the call, it is understood that he shall make application for membership in the congregation. The pastor shall particularly attend to the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. He shall also perform such other services within the church as are required of him by the Word of God and his letter of call. His call, as well as his resignation, or dismissal, takes place at a lawful meeting of the congregation by two-thirds majority of the confessing members present. The pastor remains in office as long as both parties find it desirable. His resignation becomes effective after three months reciprocal notice.

3. **ELDERS.** For the office of elder, the congregation shall call men who are recognized as true Christians, who accept this constitution, and who otherwise have the necessary qualifications. The duties of the elders are to assist the pastor; watch over the spiritual condition of the congregation; and to exercise such supervision that all activities are in accordance with the Word of God. In the absence of the pastor, the elders shall be responsible for the work of the church. An elder is called to serve as long as the congregation and the elder find it practicable. In order that both the congregation and the elder may be given an opportunity to express themselves about his continued service, an elder will be reviewed every three years and submitted to a vote of confidence by the congregation at its annual meeting. The nominating committee, at its discretion, may give the congregation an opportunity to choose between the elder being reviewed and another qualified candidate. Approximately every six years an elder shall take a one-year sabbatical leave from the Elder Board. An elder may retire because of ill health, advanced age or for any other reason.

4. **Elder Board.** The pastor(s) and the elders together constitute the Elder Board, and to this body the congregation commits its spiritual direction. The Elder Board examines applicants for membership and presents approved applicants to the congregation. Approved applicants are then received into membership at a worship service. It also reviews the membership roll annually and submits a report to the annual meeting. It has further to see that church discipline is exercised in accordance with Matthew 18:15-18; I Corinthians 2:5-11; I Timothy 5:20; and other related passages of Scripture. It has authority, on behalf of the congregation, to exclude individuals from the Lord's Supper, and may recommend expulsion from the congregation at a lawfully assembled meeting. The Elder Board is authorized to form an executive committee from within the Elder Board to perform such duties as it deems necessary. The Elder Board also calls congregational meetings as often as the constitution demands it or the Elder Board finds it necessary. The pastor, or one of the elders, acts as moderator at these congregational meetings.

5. **BOARD OF TRUSTEES.** The congregation elects as many members as it deems necessary to serve as trustees. Their duties are to care for all financial matters pertaining to the congregation and to submit a report of the same once a year. They shall supervise all property belonging to the congregation. They have no authority to sell, mortgage, alter appreciably, or transfer any real property belonging to the church, except as authorized by the congregation. Trustees are elected for a term of three years.

6. **MINISTRY BOARDS - DISCIPLESHIP, EVANGELISM, FELLOWSHIP, SERVICE & WORSHIP.** These five ministry boards will direct the ministries of the congregation. The ministry boards will serve as visionaries and catalysts for their respective ministry areas. Each board will consist of one elder and as many other confessing members of the congregation as deemed necessary. All ministry boards will develop (and revise as necessary) a

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mission statement for their respective ministry area and are accountable for its execution. Mission statements for each board can be found in the By-Laws.

Each board's mission is carried out through the work of ministry teams. Boards may form as many ministry teams as they deem necessary to faithfully execute their ministries.

7. SECRETARY. The congregation elects a secretary at its annual meeting. The secretary keeps an accurate record of the transactions and decisions of each congregational business meeting. In addition, the office of secretary is charged with the responsibility of maintaining an up-to-date roll of members; keeping a copy of the Constitution and By-Laws, with amendments properly entered; providing a list of pending and potential business for the chairman before business meeting; keeping a record of all committee activities; handling correspondence arising out of business meeting actions; notifying membership of meetings and notifying by letter, those elected into office.

8. TREASURER. The congregation elects a treasurer. The duties are to receive and deposit funds belonging to the congregation, and keep accurate detailed and complete accounts of the same and report on the financial status of the congregation whenever required. The treasurer shall pay all obligations of the congregation as well as such other payments as are authorized by the Board of Trustees. By virtue of the office, the treasurer shall be a member of the Board of Trustees, in addition to those elected to that board by the congregation. The treasurer is elected for a term of three years.

9. SUNDAY SCHOOL MINISTRY TEAM. A ministry team consisting of at least two members shall be appointed by the Discipleship Board and have overall responsibility for the adult and children's Sunday School. The Sunday School ministry team will be responsible to the Discipleship Board and will operate in complete harmony with the Christian education ministry objectives and strategies of the Discipleship Board and with the principles of the congregation.

10. CHAIRMAN. The congregation elects a chairman each year who shall lead all business meetings. The chairman must be a member of the Elder Board. The Elder Board elects from its membership a vice-chairman for the congregation who, in the absence of the chairman, leads the business meetings.

ARTICLE VII - Church Membership and Affiliation

1. Classification of Members

Members of the congregation are classified as follows:

- A. Confessing Members
- B. Baptized Children of the Congregation

A. Confessing Members. Confessing members shall have been baptized in "the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," confess personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, maintain a good reputation in their community and accept this constitution. All requests for confessing membership are made to the Elder Board which presents approved applicants to the congregation. Approved applicants are then received into membership at a worship service. Baptized children of the congregation may request confessing membership when they reach confirmation age.

Only confessing members of the congregation may vote at congregational business meetings. They shall not have membership in any secret society or other organization which in its official statements or ties asserts that individuals are reconciled to God outside of Jesus Christ and his atonement.

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B. Baptized Children of the Congregation. Children baptized in the congregation and all baptized children of confessing members shall be designated “baptized children of the congregation”. This status continues until they reach eighteen (18) years of age, or are accepted as confessing members of the congregation, whichever occurs first. Those not requesting confessing membership shall become parishioners.

The congregation shall diligently guide these children and youth by teaching the Word of God and modeling godly attitudes and behavior. The congregation shall arrange for Sunday school, Bible school, youth ministry, pastoral instruction, confirmation and other Christian training programs. These young people shall be made the objects of prayer as the congregation seeks to guide them to conscious faith, spiritual growth and confessing membership in the church.

The formal instruction by the pastor culminates in a public catechization when the child has reached the age of approximately fourteen years. The preparatory period of instruction should cover at least two years.

2. Parishioners. The term "parishioner" will be used to describe persons in the congregation who are not “confessing members” or “baptized children of the congregation” as follows:

A. “Baptized children of the congregation” who have not been received into the congregation as confessing members by the time they have reached eighteen (18) years of age will become known as “parishioners”.

B. Persons, who are not members, but who regularly attend and support Ebenezer, and who consider Ebenezer their church home, will be known as “parishioners”.

3. The Elder Board shall compile and maintain a church directory of all members of the congregation and parishioners. From time to time, but not less than once a year, it will review the directory.

ARTICLE VIII - Church Organizations

Only those organizations that have first been approved by the Elder Board and accepted by the congregation shall function within the church.

ARTICLE IX - Church Property

If a division should ever occur in this congregation (God forbid) the properties and assets of the church shall belong to that part of the congregation which abides by this constitution, whether that part be in the majority or minority. This paragraph is unalterable.

ARTICLE X - Amendments to the Constitution

This constitution can be amended (with the exception of Article IX) by a two-thirds majority vote of the confessing members present at the annual meeting of the congregation, providing a motion for amendment has been presented or read at the previous annual meeting.

BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I - Membership

1. New Confessing Members

A. Applicants for membership shall complete the “Pathways to Membership” class which will be offered on a periodic basis. Applicants who wish to become a member after the class will complete an application for membership. The Elder Board will review all applications and present approved applicants to the congregation. Approved applicants are then received into membership at a worship service.

B. Each new member shall be given opportunity to give a personal testimony of faith in Christ.

2. New Baptized Children of the Congregation

A. Names of children baptized in the congregation and thereby designated baptized children of the congregation shall be recorded in the permanent record book of the church.

B. Baptized children of new confessing members shall be accepted concurrently into membership as new baptized children of the congregation and their names recorded in the permanent record book of the church.

3. Transfer and Withdrawal of Membership

Request for transfer or withdrawal of membership shall be made in writing to the Elder Board.

4. Responsibility for Confessing Membership

A. Members are expected to attend the regular services of the church as often as possible and be willing to assume responsibility within the church according to their gifts and talents.

B. Members are expected to support the church financially as the Lord has prospered them.

C. Members are expected to pray for the pastors, church officers, and one another and also for the spiritual life of the church.

ARTICLE II - Meetings

1. Baptism and Holy Communion are administered according to the ritual of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of America. The Communion Service shall be held at least once a month.

2. At marriages, funerals, confirmation, as well as installation of pastors and elders, together with all other ministerial acts, the ritual of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of America shall be followed.

3. Business meetings shall be held quarterly unless otherwise decided by the congregation or by the Elder Board. The annual meeting shall be held during the month of January, or the first week in February.

A. Business meetings are announced on the preceding Sunday except when state law requires otherwise.

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B. Except as otherwise required in the constitution, the following quorums for business meetings shall apply:

1. For the annual meeting, twenty-five percent (25%) of the confessing membership living in the seven-county metropolitan area shall constitute a quorum.
2. For quarterly and special business meetings, fifteen percent (15%) of the confessing membership living in the seven-county metropolitan area shall constitute a quorum.

C. All confessing members of the church are eligible to vote.

D. Except as otherwise provided in the Constitution and By-Laws, business meetings shall be governed by the latest revision of Robert's Rules of Order.

ARTICLE III - Elections and Term of Office

1. Candidates for office within the congregation shall be selected by the nominating committee. Additional candidates may be nominated from the floor during the annual meeting except for the office of elder.

2. The congregation elects three (3) or more men who are confessing members and at least eighteen (18) years of age to serve as elders under the provisions of Article 6, Paragraph 3 of this constitution. The Elder Board will establish the term of an elder's sabbatical leave so as to avoid the absence of too many members from the Elder Board. An elder shall remain in office as long as the congregation considers it practicable.

3. The congregation elects five (5) or more confessing members who are at least eighteen (18) years of age to serve on the Board of Trustees. Their term of office shall be three (3) years and shall be so arranged that not more than one half of the elected members can be elected each year, except for an unexpired term. After serving two (2) terms of three (3) years, a trustee shall not be a candidate for re-election until one (1) year has elapsed.

4. The congregation elects two or more confessing members for each of the five ministry boards (Discipleship, Evangelism, Fellowship, Service and Worship). Their term of office shall be three (3) years and should be so arranged that not more than one-half of the elected members can be elected each year, except for an unexpired term. A member who has served two (2) consecutive full terms shall not be a candidate for re-election until one (1) year has elapsed.

5. Each ministry team is accountable to its respective ministry board and shall consist of as many members as necessary to faithfully execute a ministry. Any confessing member, baptized child of the congregation or parishioner who is asked or who volunteers may serve on a ministry team with the exception of the Sunday School ministry team which must consist entirely of confessing members.

6. Team leaders will perform the organizational and communication functions for ministry team(s). Team leaders are appointed by the ministry board in the spring of each year. For each ministry team there will be at least one team leader. When there is more than one team leader, terms will be staggered. Team leaders will serve as long as a ministry team is functioning but no more than three (3) years without stepping aside for a period of at least one (1) year.

7. The treasurer is elected for a term of three (3) years and may be elected for as many terms as the congregation finds practicable.

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8. Election of all other officers of the congregation shall be on a yearly basis. Officers elected for a one (1) year term may not serve more than three (3) consecutive years.
9. The election of all officers of the congregation shall take place at the annual meeting, except for an unexpired term.

ARTICLE IV - Committees

1. **LEADERSHIP COUNCIL.** The Leadership Council shall consist of the Chairman of the congregation, pastor(s), the chairperson of each board within the church, and the congregational Secretary. The Leadership Council will meet at least twice annually to evaluate the ministries of the church and develop plans for future ministry within the church. The chairman of the congregation will serve as chairman of the Leadership Council.
2. **AUDITING COMMITTEE.** An auditing committee composed of two (2) confessing members who are at least eighteen (18) years of age shall be appointed by the chairman of the congregation prior to the annual meeting. It shall be the duty of said committee to audit the books of the congregational treasurer, as well as the books of the various organizations under the jurisdiction of the congregation, and bring a report to the annual meeting.
3. **NOMINATING COMMITTEE.** The Elder Board shall constitute the nominating committee for candidates for offices of the congregation.
4. **PASTORAL CALL COMMITTEE.** The Elder Board shall constitute the call committee for selection of persons to be presented to the congregation as candidates for the office of pastor.

ARTICLE V - Limits to Expenditures

The Board of Trustees, in its authorization of expenditures is limited to the sum of \$4,000 for any specific project in exercising its duties of supervision over church properties and its general needs. Any amount over \$4,000 must be authorized by the congregation at one of its business meetings.

ARTICLE VI - Amendments to the By-Laws

These By-Laws may be amended when a motion to that effect is made at a regular business meeting of the church. The adoption of the motion to amend requires a two-thirds majority vote of the confessing members present at the following annual meeting of the church.

ARTICLE VII - Ministry Board Mission Statements

DISCIPLESHIP BOARD - The mission of the Discipleship Board is to mobilize and encourage people of all ages to study the Bible, grow in their personal relationship with God and others, and apply His Word to all aspects of their daily lives. Colossians 3:16-17 "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom--so that whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus."

EVANGELISM BOARD - The mission of the Evangelism Board is to mobilize the congregation toward fulfilling the Great Commission by reaching out to people in our neighborhoods, country and the world with

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the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ. Mark 16:15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to all creation."

FELLOWSHIP BOARD - The mission of the Fellowship Board is to lead the congregation in providing Christ-centered events and activities that build community characterized by love, support and mutual concern. John 13: 34-35 "A new commandment I give you; Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

SERVICE BOARD - The mission of the Service Board is to mobilize the congregation to reach out to people with the love of God by helping to meet their needs and heal their hurts in the name of Jesus. Matthew 25:40 The King (God) will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

WORSHIP BOARD - The mission of the Worship Board is to encourage and lead the congregation in providing dynamic worship for all ages where God is glorified and Christ is proclaimed so that everyone may experience the grace of God and grow in their relationship and commitment to Christ. Psalms 34:1,3 "I will always thank the Lord; I will never stop praising Him. Proclaim with me the Lord's greatness; let us praise His name together!"