

CONSTITUTION FOR THE AMERICAN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF PRESCOTT, ARIZONA

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PREAMBLE

Recognizing our unity in Christ and our common practice in the Christian Faith; desiring to express our fellowship in worship and work; knowing our spiritual needs; mindful of our Christian privileges and duties; and wishing to observe orderly cooperation, we the voting members of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church, adopt the following constitution:

CHAPTER 1 – NAME AND INCORPORATION

C1.01 The name of the Congregation shall be American Evangelical Lutheran Church.

C1.02 The Congregation shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of Arizona.

CHAPTER 2 – CONFESSION OF FAITH

C2.01 The members of this Congregation confess the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

C2.02 The members of this Congregation confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.

C2.03 The members of this Congregation accept the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the Inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and sole norm of its proclamation, faith and life.

C2.04 The members of this Congregation accept the Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith.

C2.05 The members of this Congregation accept the unaltered Augsburg Confession and the writings in the Book of Concord, namely the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise, Luther's Small Catechism, Luther's Large Catechism and the Formula of Concord, as valid interpretations of the faith of the Church.

C2.06 In applying the above (C2.01 to C2.05) to contemporary issues, the Congregation subscribes to the following Confessional Statements

AMERICAN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH (AELC) ~~OUR~~ CONFESSION OF FAITH

1. WE CONFESS THE HISTORICAL CHRISTIAN CREEDS AND THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS. This congregation accepts the Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian Creeds as a true declaration of faith and the Lutheran Confessions as a true witness to the Word of God, normative for our teaching and practice.

2. WE BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS LORD AND KING. John 14:6; Colossians 1:15-18; Philippians 2:9-11; John 18:36; Luke 17:20-21. Jesus is the head of the Church. Unity among the various expressions of the Body of Christ is achieved through focusing on Jesus, who alone is able to draw all people to Himself. Jesus is the King of the Kingdom of God and is establishing His Kingdom on earth by His effective will through His supreme power and authority. Jesus is the complete and ultimate expression of the living God and is a person of the divine Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

3. WE STAND UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE WORD OF GOD. John 1:1, 1:14; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Romans 15:4; Psalm 1. The Bible is our authority and sole guide for life and faith. We accept that all of the Scripture is inspired by God and is without error; however not all interpretation is without error. Therefore we support and encourage the study of the original manuscripts, recognizing the original audiences and purposes of a text, and allowing the Bible to interpret itself. For the Scriptures are a living Word that are always relevant and revealing God's purpose for all of creation.

4. WE DESIRE GENUINE WORSHIP. John 4:23-24; Romans 12:1-2; Psalm 105:1-4. Worship establishes and encourages a right relationship between God and His people; God is the audience. Worship is essential for the believer and central to the life of the Church. In worship we cast our eyes to the cross, come under the instruction of God's Word, receive the gift of Baptism, are strengthened with the Lord's Supper, and grow together as Christ's body. Worship involves the whole person – body, mind, heart and soul.

5. WE ARE CALLED BY GOD. John 15:16; 1 Peter 2:9; Ephesians 1:3-6 & 4:11-16. We believe in "the priesthood of all believers." All of God's people are called to ministry and each member of the Body of Christ must recognize and affirm that call. Jesus has given each believer the greatest "once-in-a-lifetime" opportunity to be His apprentice and, with His help, discover our spiritual gifts in order to learn how to effectively use them to build up the Body of Christ and grow His Kingdom.

6. WE ARE FREE IN CHRIST. John 8:31-36; Romans 8:1-2; Galatians 5:1; Ephesians 2:13-22. Because of what Jesus has accomplished for us through the cross we are free from the bondage of sin and enjoy peace with God. We are free to serve God as the Lord leads us and not out of guilt, obligation or duty. We serve God joyfully in response to all that the Lord has done for us: past, present and future.

7. WE WILL "GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES." Matthew 28:18-20; Matthew 4:18-20; Luke 19:10; 2 Corinthians 2:14. Jesus gave his disciples this command: "Go and make disciples of all nations." Disciples of Jesus make disciples of Jesus. A disciple of Jesus is one who believes in Him as Savior *and* Lord. Disciples of Jesus intentionally apprentice themselves to Him as the one Master of their life. They, in turn, act as the hands and feet of Jesus in order to spread His saving knowledge and grow His Kingdom—inviting every person to consider a personal, active and everlasting relationship with Him. We are called not only to spread His knowledge and way of life, but also to help cultivate this in all those who have come to believe.

8. WE CELEBRATE THAT GOD IS CHANGING LIVES. John 8:1-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 3:15; Romans 8:29-30; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. It is God alone who spiritually regenerates and transforms people who can freely love and serve Him. It is God's will for every believer to be conformed to the image of His beloved Son. We accept that there is nothing in this world that ever stays the same except the solid rock of Christ. We trust that God will give us all that we could ever need to adapt to our changing surroundings and become "all things to all people" without compromising our obedience to Him. We worship Jesus, not our tradition, not our history and not ourselves.

9. WE BELIEVE THAT IN BAPTISM THE LORD CLEANSSES US FROM OUR SIN AND GIVES US THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. Mark 1:4-5; Acts 2:37-41; Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3-4. God has commanded those who seek eternal life to be baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Baptism is an outward sign of the inner rebirth of the believer. Baptism has not been given to us to act as a proclamation of our faith. Baptism is not our work; it is God's work of grace. In baptism we are buried with Christ in His death and raised to new life in His resurrection. Without repentance and belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of our lives, Baptism alone has no promise of salvation.

10. WE BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS PRESENT IN THE LORD’S SUPPER. 1 Corinthians 11:23-29; John 6:32-58. When we receive the Lord’s Supper (Communion) with a repentant heart we are assured that our sins are forgiven and are spiritually nourished and renewed with Christ’s life-giving body and blood. It is at the Lord’s Table that we together proclaim Christ’s death on the cross for the sins of the world.

11. WE AFFIRM THAT GOD ESTABLISHED THE SACRED COVENANT OF MARRIAGE. Genesis 2:24-25; Matthew 19:4-6. God created us male and female, and it is His will and intention that all human sexual expression and fulfillment take place only within the boundaries of marriage between one man and one woman. Marriage is God’s one-flesh complementary union and covenant that He established from the beginning to beautifully bind together husband and wife. All weddings performed in the facilities of American Evangelical Lutheran Church, or by any of its Pastors in any venue, are Christian worship services.

12. WE MAKE IT OUR AIM TO LOVE AS SCRIPTURE TEACHES US TO LOVE. Matthew 22:37-40; John 14:15; John 17:26; 1 Corinthians 13; 1 John 4:7-21. Love of God and our neighbor is to be the sole focus of our lives. Without the love of God actively working in our lives, guiding, inspiring and directing our daily decisions, our actions come to nothing worthy of God’s name. God is love and expects His followers to be controlled by His love. Love in us produces works of love toward others and empowers us to love all people regardless of their actions and beliefs.

13. WE HOLD THAT ALL HUMAN LIFE IS UNIQUELY SACRED. Genesis 1:25-28; Psalm 139:13-16; John 1:12-13. In the beginning, God uniquely created humankind in His perfect image and likeness. Every person was first conceived in the mind of God, comes into being at physical conception and remains sacred in the eyes of God throughout their life. Because God alone is the giver and sustainer of life, all human acts with the intention to harm or destroy human life without just cause, are an affront to the Creator “who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4).

CHAPTER 3 – CHURCH AFFILIATION

C3.01 This Congregation shall be a member of the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) and Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC). This Congregation subscribes to the constitution of the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) and will act in accordance with it.

C3.02 The Congregation shall have the power to change the Church Affiliation by a two thirds majority ballot vote of the voting members present at a legally called meeting of the Congregation.

CHAPTER 4 – PURPOSE AND POWERS OF THE CONGREGATION

C4.01 The purpose of this Congregation is to know Christ and to make Him known. Individuals and groups within the Congregation shall submit to the authority of the Word and all facets of life and activity shall conform to that norm to fulfill the purpose of the Church.

C4.02 The powers of the Congregation shall be vested in the Congregational meeting, called and conducted in such manner as is provided in this Constitution and its Bylaws as implemented in the Policies and Procedures and in the Council Coordinators elected by the Congregation. A quorum of 5% of the eligible voting members will be required to conduct a legal meeting. The Congregation is empowered to:

- a. acquire real and personal property by gift, devise, bequest, or other lawful means;
- b. hold title to and use its property for any and all activities consistent with its purpose
- c. enter into contract;
- d. sell, mortgage, lease, transfer, or otherwise dispose of its property by any lawful means;
- e. sue and be sued; and
- f. elect officers and Council Coordinators-in accordance with this Constitution and its Bylaws, and the resolutions of the Congregation

C4.03 Real property shall not be purchased, sold, leased, transferred or otherwise disposed of, or encumbered in any manner except by Resolution adopted by not less than two-thirds majority ballot vote of the members present and voting at a legally called meeting of the Congregation.

C4.04 The Congregation shall have the power to initiate or terminate the Call of a pastor by a two-thirds majority of the voting members present at a duly convened meeting of the Congregation.

CHAPTER 5 – MEMBERSHIP

C5.01 Membership of the Congregation shall be those who are designated as such at the time that this constitution is adopted and those who are admitted thereafter; and who maintain their membership in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution and its Bylaws.

C5.02 Members shall be classified as (a) baptized; (b) confirmed; (c) voting; (d) associate. A description of each classification is more fully outlined in the Bylaws section of this document.

C5.03 It shall be the privilege and duty of members of the Congregation to: make diligent use of the means of Grace, both Word and Sacraments; live a Christian life in accordance with the Word of God; and support the work of the Congregation.

CHAPTER 6 – WORSHIP

C6.01 As an expression of the unity of the body of Christ, the Congregation recognizes the desirability of conforming to the practices of other Lutheran Congregations in using such forms of worship, including but not limited to liturgies and hymn books.

CHAPTER 7 – COMMUNION PARTICIPATION

C7.01 This Congregation invites all of its members, who have been prepared to receive the Sacrament, to participate regularly in Holy Communion.

C7.02 Preparation for Holy Communion will normally be provided for persons in the latter part of the fifth grade.

C7.03 Participation in Holy Communion shall be open to members of other congregations who accept the Lutheran teaching in regard to this Sacrament.

C7.04 It shall be made known to prospective participants that the belief of this Congregation is:

Participation in the Lord's Supper is the reception of "the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ given with bread and wine, instituted by Christ himself for us to eat and drink." We hold that a person is well prepared and worthy who believes these words, "given and shed for you for the remission of sins". But anyone who does not believe these words, or doubts them, is neither prepared nor worthy, for the words "for you" require simply a believing heart."

CHAPTER 8 – EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

- C8.01** As evangelical Lutheran Christians, we recognize it is our duty to rear our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and to have them carefully and conscientiously instructed in the Confession of Faith, as detailed in Chapter 2.
- C8.02** The Pastor(s) shall, with all diligence and faithfulness, supervise the preparation and instruction of children for the Rite of Confirmation.

CHAPTER 9 – THE PASTOR

- C9.01** A Pastor of the Congregation shall be a person whose soundness in the faith, aptness to teach, and educational qualifications have been examined and approved by the American Evangelical Lutheran Church and whose ordination is recognized by the North American Lutheran Church (NALC), who accepts and adheres to the confession of faith of the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) and who strives in life and conduct to be above reproach.
- C9.02** Authority to call a pastor shall rest with the Congregation. Such authority to call shall be exercised by not less than a two-thirds majority vote of members present and voting at a meeting legally called for that purpose.
- C9.03** A call for a Pastor may shall be from Clergy in good standing of the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) or one who is recommended for Call by the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) .
- C9.04** If the need arises, the Church Council may hire a pastor on an interim basis. The Congregation will ratify a longer appointment if necessary.
- C9.05** If in the judgment of the Congregation, the pastor is no longer able to serve it satisfactorily, he/she may be requested to resign. Before the resignation is requested, all parties, including the pastor, shall have the opportunity to be heard at a specially called meeting of the Church Council. After the hearing before the Church Council a special meeting of the Congregation may be called to consider a request for the pastor's resignation. A resolution requesting a pastor's resignation must be adopted by a two-thirds majority ballot vote of those present and voting. Notice of such meeting must be given at least ten days prior to the meeting. If the pastor's resignation has been requested in the manner here provided, he/she shall vacate the office at the time the Congregation specifies. Should he/she fail to do so, the Church Council shall declare the pastoral office vacant. The conditions and procedures are outlined in the Bylaws Chapter 10.

CHAPTER 10 – MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION

C10.01 The power and authority of the Congregation shall be exercised through the Congregational meeting, which shall be called and conducted in conformity with civil laws and the provisions of this Constitution and its Bylaws.

CHAPTER 11 – OFFICERS AND BOARDS

C11.01 On an annual basis, the Church Council shall appoint from the current members on the council the following officers, each for a term of one year:

- a) President – *shall serve as Church Council President;*
- b) Vice President – *shall serve as Church Council Vice President;*
- c) Secretary – *shall serve as Church Council Secretary*
- d) Treasurer-*shall serve as Church Council Treasurer*

C11.02 Boards and Committees – Boards, committees, subcommittees, task forces and working groups may be established by the Church Council as deemed necessary.

CHAPTER 12 – BYLAWS

C12.01 With the recommendation of the Church Council, the Congregation shall adopt such Bylaws as may from time to time be necessary. No bylaw may conflict with this constitution.

C12.02 Bylaws may be adopted or amended at any legally called and conducted meeting of the Congregation by a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting.

CHAPTER 13 – AMENDMENTS

C13.01 The doctrinal basis and the confessional subscription of this Constitution shall be unalterable; and no amendment shall conflict therewith.

C13.02 A proposed amendment to this Constitution shall be:

- a) Read at a public service of the Congregation or mailed to the voting members, not less than thirty days before the legally called meeting at which it is to be considered;
- b) Approved without change at the legally called meeting following its announcement, by a majority vote of those present and voting;
- c) Ratified without further change at the next annual meeting or at a specially called meeting, by two-thirds vote of those present and voting.

C13.03 If a proposed amendment fails to be adopted, it may be amended by majority vote of those present and voting; and adopted without change by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting at the next following annual meeting or at a specially called meeting.