

God is with us

Immanuel Lutheran Church & School

**Constitution
of
Immanuel Lutheran Church
Brandon, Florida**



February 20, 2012

Constitution of Immanuel Lutheran Church

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Preamble

WHEREAS, the Word of God demands that a Christian congregation shall conform to the Word of God in doctrine and practice (Ps. 119; 105; Gal. 1:6-8; 1 Tim. 4:1-5; Matt. 28:20), and that all things be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40), therefore, we the members of Immanuel Lutheran Church of Brandon, Florida, adopt the following Constitution and Bylaws by and under which our congregational affairs, spiritual and material, shall be conducted.

Article 1 – Name

The name of this congregation shall be Immanuel Lutheran Church, Brandon, Florida.

Article 2 – Mission

2.0 The purpose of this congregation shall be to serve its members and spread the kingdom of God by the preaching of the Word of God, by the administration of the Sacraments, and by the religious instruction of youth and adults, according to the confessional standards of the Lutheran Church (Article 3) and to foster Christian fellowship and charity.

The congregation has adopted the following Mission Statement: “Through Word and Sacrament ministry we share the love, joy and peace of Jesus Christ among ourselves and with those around us.”

This congregation and its pastors shall be members of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as long as said Synod

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shall remain true to the Confession of faith set forth in Article 3 of this Constitution. Any change in Synod or District membership or affiliation shall be decided by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the Voters' Assembly.

Article 3 – Confession Of Faith

This congregation accepts and acknowledges without reservation:

- 3.0 All the books of the Old and New Testament as the inspired and inerrant Word of God.
- 3.1 All the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord (1580 A.D.) as being a true and correct exposition of the Word of God. These Symbolical Books are:
 - 3.1.1 The three Ecumenical Creeds (Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasian)
 - 3.1.2 The Unaltered Augsburg Confession
 - 3.1.3 The Apology of the Augsburg Confession
 - 3.1.4 The Smalcald Articles
 - 3.1.5 Luther's Large and Small Catechisms
 - 3.1.6 The Formula of Concord
- 3.2 This Article is unalterable.

Article 4 – Membership

4.0 Members of the Congregation shall be classified as Baptized Members, Communicant Members, and Voting Members.

4.1 Baptized Members

4.1.1 Baptized members are all persons who have been baptized in the name of the Triune God and are under the spiritual care of the pastor(s) of this congregation.

4.1.2 Baptized members are received through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, through transfer from sister congregations, or with the consent of one or both parents or guardians in the case of children who have been baptized in another Christian congregation.

4.1.3 Baptized members shall conform their lives to their baptismal vow.

4.2 Communicant Members

A communicant member is one who:

4.2.1 Is baptized.

4.2.2 Has received instruction and publicly assents to the Confession of Faith as set forth in Article 3 of this Constitution. This may be by the Rite of Confirmation, or by profession or reaffirmation of faith.

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- 4.2.3 Is familiar with Martin Luther's Small Catechism and accepts it.
- 4.2.4 Attends divine service faithfully and partakes of the Lord's Supper frequently.
- 4.2.5 Leads a Christian life.
- 4.2.6 Adheres to the rules of the congregation provided they do not conflict with the Word of God.
- 4.2.7 Was previously a communicant member of a sister congregation and submits a letter of transfer.
- 4.2.8 Is willing to assist, according to his/her ability, in the work of the church.

4.3 Voting Members

- 4.3.1 The privilege of voting shall be extended to every member of the Voters' Assembly. Voting membership shall be extended to all communicant members who have read this constitution and bylaws and signed a book retained for this purpose. Voting members shall attend the meetings of the Voters' Assembly as regularly as possible and participate in the work of the congregation, willingly accepting responsibility. Every member is reminded that what the majority has passed on, to this the minority shall, in all Christian spirit, concede. Termination of communicant membership automatically terminates voting membership.

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4.4 Termination of Membership

Membership may be terminated for the following reasons:

- 4.4.1 Members desiring a release for the purpose of joining a sister congregation shall obtain a written letter of transfer from the Pastor.
- 4.4.2 Members who have joined another congregation outside our own fellowship, shall, upon recommendation of the Elders and action by Council be considered to have terminated their membership and their names shall be removed from the membership list.
- 4.4.3 The names of members whose whereabouts are unknown and cannot be established for a period of one year shall be removed by the Council and forthwith such membership is terminated.
- 4.4.4 Any member who conducts himself in an unchristian manner shall be admonished according to Matthew 18:15-20. If he/she refuses to amend his/her sinful life after proper admonition, such person shall be excommunicated on a unanimous recommendation of the Board of Elders and by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the Voters' Assembly.
- 4.4.5 Every termination of membership shall also be a forfeiture of all rights of the member and of all claims on the property of the congregation.

Article 5 – Called Church Workers

- 5.0 The offices of Called Church Workers, as defined herein, shall be conferred only upon such persons who profess and pledge their acceptance of, and adhere to, the Confessions of Faith as set forth in Article 3 of this Constitution. Called Church Workers are defined as ordained or commissioned workers who are members of Synod. Persons called in this capacity must acknowledge acceptance of the Call, pledge to maintain doctrinal standards of the Confession of Faith, become voting members of the Immanuel Lutheran Church congregation and maintain such status for the tenure of their call.

Article 6 – Powers Of The Congregation

- 6.0 The Voters' Assembly shall be the governing body of this congregation and shall have the supreme power to administer and manage all its affairs. The establishment and conduct of all organizations and societies within the congregation or related directly to it shall at all times be subject to the approval and supervision of the Voters' Assembly. The Voters' Assembly shall not be empowered to decide anything contrary to Article 3 of this Constitution. This paragraph is unalterable.
- 6.1 All matters shall be decided by a plurality vote of the members present at a properly convened meeting of the Voters' Assembly unless otherwise specified by this Constitution or its Bylaws. Matters of doctrine or conscience shall be decided only on the basis of the Word of God.

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- 6.2 The right of calling church workers shall be vested in the Voters' Assembly and shall not be delegated otherwise to a smaller body or to an individual. Called church workers are those defined in Article 5 of this Constitution.
- 6.2.1 A call committee shall be selected in the following manner: The Board of Elders, the School Board, the Board for Youth, and the members of the congregation shall suggest members to the Church Council to serve on a call committee. At its next meeting, the Church Council shall select from the suggested nominees a committee of no fewer than five members to form the call committee.
- 6.2.2 During the screening process the call committee shall submit all names to the District President for information or evaluation and ask the District President for other possible candidates. Within a reasonable time the call committee shall present to the congregation, by means of a public announcement published on the two consecutive Sundays prior to the date set for the Voters' Assembly at which the election shall take place, a slate of candidates, together with a biographical sketch of each candidate.
- 6.2.3 At the Voters' Assembly called for the purpose of electing a new called church worker, the slate of candidates may be amended by means of a three-fourths (3/4) vote of those present. At that point the Voters' Assembly shall be asked to accept the slate.

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- 6.2.5 Balloting shall proceed by means of a written ballot vote. A majority is needed in order to determine the disposition of the call.
- 6.3 Officers and members of the Church council shall be elected as defined by paragraph 6.1 unless otherwise specified by the Bylaws.
- 6.4 Resignations by any called church worker shall be directed to the Church Council for disposition under the Bylaws. Any such resignation shall be in writing, signed by the resigner and shall be binding.
- 6.5 Termination.
- 6.5.1 Any called or elected person may be removed from office by the Voters' Assembly as defined by paragraph 6.1. All such matters shall be dealt with in accordance with Matthew 18:15-18.
- 6.5.2 Persons may be removed from office for one of the following reasons:
- Persistent adherence to false doctrine.
 - Leading a scandalous life.
 - Willful neglect of duties.
 - Prolonged incapacity.
 - General incompetence.
- 6.5.3 The initial steps and recommendations to the Voters' Assembly for the removal of any called person shall be taken through the Board of Elders.

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- 6.5.4 The initial steps and recommendations to the Voters' Assembly for the removal of any elected person shall be taken through the Church Council.
- 6.5.5 Any such removal shall require a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the Voters' Assembly.
- 6.6 The congregation may receive, acquire, hold title to, and manage real property or other property as necessary to conduct its mission.
- 6.7 If at any time a separation of this congregation shall take place for any reason, all property and all benefits connected therewith shall pass into the possession of those communicant members who continue to adhere in confession and practice to the confessional standards set forth in Article 3 of this Constitution as determined by the dispute resolution process described in the Bylaws of the Synod. The decision so made shall be binding on all factions and all members.
- 6.8 In the event the congregation should dissolve, any property and rights thereto which remain in its possession shall be transferred to the Florida-Georgia District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

Article 7 – Officers And Boards

- 7.0 The congregation shall have the following officers and boards. Additional officers and boards may be prescribed by the Bylaws of this Constitution or authorized by the congregation from time to time.

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7.0.1 The officers of the congregation shall be the four corporate officers: The President, the Vice-president, the Secretary, and the Treasurer and such other officers as the Bylaws of the Constitution may prescribe.

7.0.2 The Boards of the congregation shall be as prescribed in the Bylaws.

7.1 The duties of the officers shall be such as required by the State of Florida and such other duties as prescribed in the Bylaws of this Constitution. The duties of the various Boards are prescribed in the Bylaws of this Constitution.

Article 8 – Church Council

8.0 The voting membership of the Church Council shall be prescribed by the Bylaws of this Constitution, but shall include as a minimum, the Corporate Officers enumerated in Article 7.0.1 and the chairpersons of the Boards enumerated in Article 7.0.2.

8.1 The Council, under authority received from the Voters' Assembly, shall administer the affairs of the congregation, review all procedures, progress and problems in connection therewith, and give direction to its individual members. Each individual member of the Council shall have the authority to make all decisions necessary to discharge the responsibilities of his or her position as outlined in the Bylaws of the Constitution. The Council as a group shall retain the right to exercise, as it may deem necessary, final authority over all matters with which it is empowered. The Council shall be responsible for the preparation of the annual church and school budgets to be presented to the

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Voters' Assembly with recommendation for approval, and for the administration of the church and school budgets after approval by the Voters' Assembly.

Article 9 – Meetings

- 9.0 The annual meeting of the Voters' Assembly shall be held in May of each year, and quarterly meetings shall be held in August, November, and February. The exact dates shall be determined by the Church Council and shall require announcements published in the church bulletin on each of the two Sundays prior to the date set for the meeting.
- 9.1 Special meetings of the Voters' Assembly may be called at the request of the pastor, the Church Council, or ten (10) voting members who must address their signed request in writing to the Church Council. The Church Council shall have no right of refusal in such cases, and shall be required to facilitate the special meeting within 30 days of the request. Such special meetings shall require announcements published in the church bulletin on each of the two Sundays prior to the date set for the meeting, together with the reason for which such meeting is called.
- 9.3 The members in attendance at a properly called meeting of the Voters' Assembly shall constitute a quorum.
- 9.4 Agendas and procedures for conduct of meetings shall be outlined in the Bylaws.

Article 10 – Bylaws

This congregation may adopt or amend such bylaws as may be required for the accomplishment of its purpose.

Article 11 – Amendments

- 11.0 Amendments to this Constitution may be adopted at a regular or special Voters' Assembly meeting, provided:
- 11.0.1 The proposed amendment is submitted to the Council in writing for the Voters' Assembly vote.
 - 11.0.2 The proposal is published in the Church bulletin on each of two Sundays prior to the Voters' Assembly meeting.
 - 11.0.3 The Council shall present a recommendation for or against the adoption of the proposed amendment, but may not withhold a proposed amendment from presentation to the Voters' Assembly.
 - 11.0.4 The Council shall have the discretion of calling a special Voters' Assembly meeting to act on the proposed amendment. If no special meeting is called, the proposed amendment shall be presented at the next regular Voters' Assembly meeting.
 - 11.0.5 The vote of a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the voting members present at the Voters' Assembly shall be required for the adoption of an amendment.

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11.0.6 Articles 3 and 11 of the Constitution and sections thereof shall be unalterable and not subject to repeal.