

OUR FATHER'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

6025 South 27th Street
Greenfield, WI 53221

THE CONSTITUTION

REVIEWED, EDITED AND PROPOSED BY CHURCH COUNCIL ON MARCH 9, 2021
PRESENTED AT VOTERS' ASSEMBLY JUNE 6, 2021

PREAMBLE

It is the will of our Lord Jesus Christ that His disciples should preach the Gospel to the world (Mark 16:16, Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8). That Christ's mission for his Church might be carried out according to His will He has given the Gospel to be preached in its purity and the holy sacraments to be administered according to the Gospel (AC VII). He has commanded that Christians unite in worship (Hebrews 10:24-25), practice fellowship with one another (Acts 2:42), witness to all men (Acts 1:8), help each other grow in the word (Ephesians 4:11-14), serve the needs of all men in Christian love (Ephesians 4:7-16, Mark 10:42-44, John 13:35, Galatians 6:10), administer the Office of the Keys as His Church (John 20:21-23, Matthew 18:15-20), and maintain decency and order in the church (1 Corinthians 14:40).

Therefore the members of OUR FATHER'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH accept and subscribe to the following Constitution and Bylaws, in accordance with which all spiritual and material affairs of our congregation shall be governed. We do so in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

ARTICLE 1. NAME

The name of this congregation shall be: OUR FATHER'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH (herein also "OFELC") of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the City of Greenfield, County of Milwaukee, State of Wisconsin.

ARTICLE 2. CONFSSIONAL STANDARD

In concordance with our Statement of Faith, OFELC accepts and confesses the following without reservation:

- 2.1. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and practice of the true Christian Church.
- 2.2. The one, true catholic (Christian) and apostolic faith is confessed in the three ecumenical creeds: the Apostles Creed; the Nicene Creed; and, the Athanasian Creed.
- 2.3. All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of 1580 are a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God, namely: the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology (Defense) of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, Treatise on the Authority and Primacy of the Pope, the Large Catechism of Luther, the Small Catechism of Luther, and the Formula of Concord— Epitome — Solid Declaration.

ARTICLE 3. SYNODICAL MEMBERSHIP

This congregation shall be a member of The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) as long as the Synod conforms to the congregation's Statement of Faith and Confessional Standard set forth in this Constitution.

ARTICLE 4. MISSION

The purpose of this congregation shall be to give honor and glory to the Triune God, to carry out the will of the Father by proclaiming the Gospel of His Son Jesus Christ in our community and to all the world, to nurture the faith of its members, to manifest the unity of our faith in Jesus Christ by gathering around His altar, to foster Christian love and fellowship, to extend a helping hand to those in physical, emotional and spiritual need, and to achieve this purpose by the faithful preaching of the pure Word of God, the administration of the Sacraments according to the Word of Christ, and by instructing all members according to the confessional standard of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.

ARTICLE 5. MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION

Members of the congregation shall conform their entire lives to the authority of God's Word. Accordingly, they shall: attend divine services faithfully; lead Christian lives and not live in manifest works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21); partake of the Lord's Supper frequently after their confirmation; contribute regularly and faithfully as God has prospered them toward the building of Christ's kingdom in the congregation and throughout the world; devote their time and talents to the extension of the Kingdom of God; impart to others fraternal admonishment as appropriate; and, permit themselves to be fraternally admonished when they have erred.

Members shall not become members, affiliates, or supporters of secret societies or other organizations that conflict with the Word of God.

The members of OFELC are categorized as Baptized, Communicant and Voting.

- 5.1. Baptized Members are all who have been baptized in the name of the Triune God and who are under the spiritual care of the Pastor(s) of this congregation. Baptized members are received through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism or through the permission of the Pastor(s) and the consent of one or both parents in the case of children who have been baptized in another Christian congregation.
- 5.2. Communicant Members are those baptized members who have been instructed and are familiar with the contents of Luther's Small Catechism, have been admitted to the Sacrament of the Altar, and accept the congregation's Statement of Faith and Confessional Standard set forth in this Constitution. Admission into communicant membership shall happen through one or more of the following ways:
 - 5.2.1. They undergo the rite of confirmation at OFELC.
 - 5.2.2. They transfer (normally including letter of transfer) from a congregation of the LCMS or a congregation currently in altar and pulpit fellowship with LCMS.
 - 5.2.3. They publicly profess faith in the Confessional Standard set forth in this Constitution (Article 2), or they reaffirm such faith for persons who have previously been confirmed as a member of an LCMS congregation or a church congregation currently in altar and pulpit fellowship with LCMS.
- 5.3. Voting Members are communicant members who have reached the age of 18 years.
 - 5.3.1. Eligible Communicant Members may be received as Voting Members upon application for such privilege and approval by the Voters' Assembly.
- 5.4. Termination of Membership

Upon recommendation of the Pastor(s) to the Voters' Assembly, membership in this congregation may be terminated by death, by transfer to a sister LCMS congregation or to a congregation currently in altar and pulpit fellowship with LCMS, by joining a congregation outside the fellowship of the LCMS, by self-exclusion or by excommunication.

Removal of a member from the congregation through excommunication or self-exclusion represents the ultimate act of church discipline and has the ultimate purpose of calling the member to repentance. Accordingly, OFELC will endeavor to be consistent in applying discipline, follow disciplinary guidelines, base decisions on biblical grounds, and not allow unsubstantiated rumors or charges to be circulated within or by the church.

- 5.4.1. Communicant or Voting Members may be removed for self-exclusion for inactivity in worship only if they have been properly admonished and have been encouraged to repent, according to Matthew 18:15-20 and remain impenitent after such admonition.
- 5.4.2. Communicant or Voting Members who conduct themselves in an un-Christian manner, including adherence to false doctrine, unscriptural life, and neglect of the means of grace, shall be admonished and encouraged to repent, according to Matthew 18:15-20. If they remain impenitent after proper admonition, they may be excommunicated.
- 5.4.3. Each case of excommunication or self-exclusion shall be presented by the Pastor(s) to the Voters assembly for a decision. A two-thirds majority vote of the Voters' Assembly shall be required to remove any member through self-exclusion or excommunication.

ARTICLE 6. ORGANIZATION

(The organizational structure of OFELC as articulated in this Constitution is represented graphically at the end of this document.)

6.1. VOTERS' ASSEMBLY

OFELC shall be represented and shall administer and manage all its affairs through its body of voting members known as the Voters' Assembly. The congregation, acting through the Voters' Assembly and subject to the provisions and regulations of this Constitution and its associated Bylaws, shall have the supreme power in the administration of its affairs. It is not and shall never be empowered to decide anything contrary to the Word of God or to the Confessional Standard articulated in Article 2. Any such decisions shall be null and void.

The Voters' Assembly shall be the governing body of this congregation and shall be empowered to administer and manage all its affairs as specified in the Bylaws.

Voters' Assembly meetings shall be called as specified in the Bylaws.

- 6.1.1. Matters of doctrine and conscience shall be decided on the basis of the Word of God.
- 6.1.2. The Voters' Assembly shall have the exclusive rights to encumber, purchase, or sell property, including buildings; to adopt the annual budget of the congregation; to incur non-budgeted (emergency) expenses; and to dissolve the congregation or to terminate its membership in the LCMS.
- 6.1.3. The Voters' Assembly shall have the exclusive right of oversight of all matters pertaining to OFELC, including the Church, School and Childcare.
- 6.1.4. The Voters' Assembly shall have the exclusive right to call ordained ministers, principals and school teachers. However, filling vacancies temporarily may be done by a smaller body, as authorized in the Bylaws.
- 6.1.5. The Voters' Assembly shall have the exclusive right to elect the members of boards.
- 6.1.6. The Voters' Assembly shall have the privilege of detailing, reducing and/or enlarging the responsibilities of boards.
- 6.1.7. The Voters' Assembly retains the privilege to call into being committees as needed.

- 6.1.8. The Voters' Assembly, or a congregational board authorized by the Voters' Assembly, shall have the exclusive right to establish and determine the conduct of all organizations within the congregation and organizations related directly to the congregation.
- 6.1.9. The Voters' Assembly shall delegate to the Board of Directors (herein also "the BOD"), the Board of Elders (herein also "the BOE"), and the Board of Christian Education (herein also "the BCE") authority to conduct and perform the acts and affairs of the congregation in accordance with responsibility provisions of the Bylaws in its stead between meetings of the Voters' Assembly.
 - 6.1.9.1. All boards shall have no authority beyond that which has been conferred upon them by the Constitution and Bylaws or by the Voters' Assembly. Whatever power may have been delegated to them may at any time be altered or revoked by the Voters' Assembly.
 - 6.1.9.2. Any member of any board who fails to perform the duties of the office or the responsibilities of communicant membership may be removed from office by the Voters' Assembly by a two-thirds majority vote in Christian and lawful order. Matthew 18 should be followed under such circumstances.
 - 6.1.9.3. Each board shall operate in accordance with its respective Policy Manual.
 - 6.1.9.3.1. Policy manuals shall be approved by the Voter's Assembly.
 - 6.1.9.3.2. Boards should regularly review their Policy Manual, at least every five years.
 - 6.1.9.3.3. Any modification to a Policy Manual must be approved by the Voter's Assembly.

6.2. BOARD OF DIRECTORS (BOD)

The BOD shall propose, monitor and enforce governance policies and guidelines that are consistent with the Constitution, the Bylaws, and the directives of the congregation as articulated by the Voters Assembly. Members of the BOD are "Officers" of the congregation.

- 6.2.1. All Officers of the BOD shall be elected by the Voters' Assembly through the procedure set forth in the Bylaws. Likewise, terms of service shall be those set forth in the Bylaws.
- 6.2.2. The Officers of the BOD shall consist of a President, Vice-President, Secretary (non-voting), the Head of the Board of Elders, the Chair of the Board of Christian Education, and three at-large Board Members.
- 6.2.3. The Pastor(s) and the Principal shall be nonvoting, ex-officio members of the BOD.
- 6.2.4. Any voting member 21 years or older may be elected to the BOD, except that the offices of President and Vice-President may be occupied by males only.
- 6.2.5. Officers of the BOD shall serve as legal representatives of the congregation.

6.3. BOARD OF ELDERS (BOE)

The BOE shall assist the Pastor(s) in fostering the spiritual life of the congregation through the procedure set forth in the Bylaws.

- 6.3.1. All members of the BOE ("Elders") shall be elected by the Voters' Assembly. Likewise, terms of service shall be those set forth in the Bylaws.
- 6.3.2. Members of the BOE must be male voting members who are 21 years or older.
- 6.3.3. There is no defined term limit for members of the BOE.

6.3.4. The BOE shall elect the Head of the BOE.

6.4. BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION (BCE)

The BCE shall assist the Principal in managing the school and the Childcare Director in managing the daycare. It shall also oversee the Sunday School and Vacation Bible School.

- 6.4.1. All members of the BCE shall be elected by the Voters' Assembly through the procedure set forth in the Bylaws. Likewise, terms of service shall be those set forth in the Bylaws.
- 6.4.2. The members of the BCE shall consist of a Chairman, Vice-Chair, Secretary, and two at-large Board Members.
- 6.4.3. The Principal shall be a nonvoting member of the BCE.
- 6.4.4. Any voting member 21 years or older may be elected to the BCE, except that the position of Chairman may be occupied by males only.

ARTICLE 7. CALLING PASTORS, PRINCIPALS, AND TEACHERS

As established in Article 6, the Voters' Assembly shall have the exclusive right to call ordained ministers. The Voters' Assembly shall call Pastors, principals and school teachers in accordance with the following policies and in accordance with the procedures set forth in the Bylaws.

- 7.1. The pastoral office at OFELC shall be conferred by divine call *only* upon men who meet *one or more* of the following qualifications:
 - 7.1.1. They have satisfied the qualifications and requirements for ordination as a minister through assignment of a first call by the LCMS.
 - 7.1.2. They are ordained ministers of an LCMS church.
 - 7.1.3. They are members in good standing of a church body that has been formally recognized as currently being in altar and pulpit fellowship with LCMS, if and only if agreements for such calls are in place at the Synodical level.
- 7.2. Calls to serve as principal or school teacher to OFELC shall be conferred *only* upon persons who meet *all of the following* qualifications:
 - 7.2.1. They are members of the LCMS or are members in good standing of a church body that is in altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS.
 - 7.2.2. They publicly profess and adhere without reservation to the confessional standard set forth in this Constitution.
 - 7.2.3. They are qualified for the office to which they are called, including but not limited to being a graduate of an LCMS college or university who has satisfied, or a candidate of an LCMS college or university who is expected to satisfy before beginning the position, the qualifications and requirements for assignment of first calls. Any candidate who has not graduated from an LCMS college or university will be expected to have accomplished similar qualifications and requirements.
- 7.3. Called ordained ministers, principals or school teachers may be removed from office for one or more of the following reasons: persistent adherence to false doctrine; scandalous life; persistent willful neglect of the duties of office; and/or, a persistent inability to perform the duties of office.
 - 7.3.1. The congregation shall proceed with procedures for removal only after consultation with appropriate officers at the district, such as the Circuit Counselor and/or the District President.

- 7.3.2. Called ordained ministers, principals or school teachers may be removed from office by a two-thirds majority vote of the Voters' Assembly.
- 7.3.3. OFELC Voter's Assembly must vote in Christian and lawful order for removal of a called ordained minister, principal, school teacher or childcare teacher in a public meeting. At the Voter's Assembly meeting, there may be a public presentation and discussion of the reasons for removal only if it is consistent with Christian and lawful order.

ARTICLE 8. DIVISION AND DISSOLUTION

If at any time a division should take place for any reason, the following principles will govern.

- 8.1. The property of the congregation and all benefits connected therewith shall remain with those communicant members who continue to adhere in confession and practice to the confessional standards set forth in this Constitution.
- 8.2. In the event the congregation should dissolve, all property shall be disposed of by the final Voters' Assembly for the payment of debts and all just claims against the congregation.
- 8.3. Upon completion of the stipulation of Article 10.2, any and all surplus assets and property and all rights connected therewith shall be conveyed to and become the property of the South Wisconsin District of The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.

ARTICLE 9. BYLAWS

This congregation shall articulate and adopt Bylaws to this Constitution as are required for the accomplishment of its purpose.

ARTICLE 10. AMENDMENTS

Amendments to Articles 2.0, 3.0, 4.0, 5.0, 7.0, 8.0, and/or 9.0 shall not destroy their essential meaning. This Constitution may only be amended in a properly convened meeting of the Voters' Assembly. It shall be amended in the following manner:

- 10.1. Any proposed amendments to the Constitution shall be submitted in writing, presented verbally, and discussed at a meeting of the Voters' Assembly.
 - 10.1.1. Proposed amendments shall not be voted upon at the meeting at which they are first proposed. Proposed amendments may only be voted upon at a Voters' Assembly meeting that follows the meeting at which the amendment(s) was first proposed and discussed.
- 10.2. In order to act upon proposed amendments, the following shall occur:
 - 10.2.1. Information that a vote will be taken shall be given to all voting members of the congregation prior to the meeting at which the proposed amendments will be acted upon.
 - 10.2.2. Both any proposed amendments and an explanation of its or their purpose shall be published by posting in a conspicuous place in the church, by mail, or by other means prior to the meeting at which the proposed amendments will be acted upon.
- 10.3. An affirmative vote of at least two-thirds majority of the voters present shall be required for adoption of any amendment to the Constitution.
 - 10.3.1. The date of approval shall be referenced in any amendment adopted.

- 10.4. As a condition of continued membership in good standing in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, before being adopted by the congregation, proposed revisions and/or amendments to the OFELC Constitution shall be submitted to Office of the President of the South Wisconsin District (herein “SW District Office”) of the LCMS for review and approval.
- 10.4.1. If the proposed amendment is approved by the SW District Office, it shall be formally adopted.
- 10.4.2. If the proposed amendment is not approved by the SW District Office, the amendment will not be formally adopted.
- 10.4.3. As needed, consultation with the SW District Office shall take place either to revise an amendment in order for it to be approved or to abandon an amendment deemed unsalvageable.
- 10.4.4. If an amendment needs minor revision that do not change the intent and meaning of that amendment in order to be approved by the SW District Office, the revision can be approved by the BOD and shall be presented to the next Voters’ Assembly meeting.

