

The Constitution
and
Doctrinal Statement
of
United Lutheran Church
305 West Third Street
Laurel, NE

revised June 2005

**CONSTITUTION
OF
UNITED LUTHERAN CHURCH
Laurel, Nebraska**

Preamble

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

We, the members of the United Lutheran Church of Laurel, Nebraska, do solemnly adopt the following Doctrinal Statement, Constitution and by-laws:

**ARTICLE I
Name of Congregation**

The name of this congregation shall be United Lutheran Church of Laurel (City), Cedar (county), State of Nebraska. This congregation shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of Nebraska.

**ARTICLE II
Confession and Denominational Affiliation**

1. This congregation accepts the sixty-six (66) canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as a whole and in all their parts as the divinely inspired, revealed and inerrant Word of God and submits to this as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life.
2. This congregation accepts and adheres to the Apostolic, the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creeds, and in addition thereto, the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, Luther's Small Catechism and Tapperts "Book of Concord." All preaching and teaching in the congregation shall conform therewith.
3. The public worship of this congregation, as well as the ministerial acts performed, shall be conducted in conformity with the altar-book and rituals recommended by the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations when the same have been endorsed by this congregation.
4. This congregation affiliates with the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, endorses its Guiding Principles and Rules for Work, and supports its benevolences, that is, missions at home and abroad, Christian education and charities.

Article III
Membership and Voting

1. Members of this congregation shall be those who have been received into the congregation and whose membership has not been withdrawn, transferred, terminated, or expelled.
2. Members of this congregation shall be classified as:
 - a. Baptized:

shall be those who have been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and have been received into the congregation.
 - b. Confirmed:

shall be those baptized members who have been instructed in the Lutheran faith.
 - c. Confessional voting members:
 - 1) baptized into “the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,”;
 - 2) 18 years or older;
 - 3) confess personal knowledge of and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ;
 - 4) maintain a good reputation in the community;
 - 5) accept the responsibilities given to members within this constitution.
3. Any new members shall not have membership in any secret society or other organization which in its official statements or rites assert that individuals are reconciled to God outside of Jesus Christ and His atonement.
4. Membership will be granted following the approval by the pastor and Church Council.

ARTICLE IV
Meetings of the Congregation

1. The power and authority of this congregation are exercised at the congregational meetings, which shall consist of voting members, whose decisions shall be valid when the meeting has been called in a legal manner.
2. The duties of the congregational meetings are:
 - a. To elect all officers of the congregation;
 - b. To adopt such rules and make such decisions which are considered to be of benefit and edification, and which do not conflict with this Constitution;
 - c. To decide regarding a change in hymnbooks (books of instruction);
 - d. To determine the budget of the congregation.

3. The annual business meeting of this congregation shall be held some time in the month of January at a date to be chosen each year by the Pastor and Church Council.
4. The President of the congregation shall preside at all congregational meetings and the meetings of the Council. In the absence of the President, the Vice-President shall preside.
5. In addition to the annual meeting, the congregation shall hold one (1) semi-annual meeting to receive the report of the annual Conference of the A.F.L.C. and to update the congregation of the progress at mid-year. Special meetings may be called by the Pastor or by the President of the congregation. Special meetings may likewise be called when five (5) voting members request the same in writing presented to the Pastor and President of the Council.
6. All congregational meetings are legally called when they have been announced at the public services of the congregation on two (2) Sundays previously.
7. A quorum for the conduct of business of annual and special congregational meetings shall consist of twenty-five (25) voting members or 50% of the eligible voting members whichever is the lesser.

ARTICLE V
Congregational Officers and Committees

1. The officers and standing committees of this congregation are:
 - a. Pastor
 - b. President
 - c. Vice-President
 - d. Secretary
 - e. Treasurer
 - f. A Board of Deacons consisting of three (3) members
 - g. A Board of Trustees consisting of three (3) members
 - h. A Parish Education Board consisting of two (2) members-chairman and vice-chairman
 - i. Sunday School Superintendent
 - j. Assistant Sunday School Superintendent
 - k. Financial Secretary consisting of two (2) members
 - l. A Nominating Committee consisting of two (2) members elected at the annual meeting in January.
 - m. An Auditing Committee consisting of two (2) members appointed by the Council

- n. A Parish Education Committee consisting of the two (2) Parish Education Board members, a Deacon member, Sunday School Superintendent and Assistants, and two (2) volunteers from within the congregation not currently involved in Sunday School.
 - o. A Memorial Committee consisting of five (5) members appointed by the Council.
2. Pastor's Call and responsibilities:
- a. The Pastor is the spiritual leader of the congregation and advisor to all boards, committees, and officers of the congregation as well as of all subsidiary societies in the congregation. He shall faithfully keep all the ministerial records of the congregation and function as co-archivist with church office Secretary.
 - b. The selection of a Pastor must take place at a legally called business meeting of the congregation and requires a three-fourths majority of votes cast.
 - c. The discharge of a Pastor must take place at a legally called business meeting of the congregation and requires a two-thirds majority of votes cast.
 - d. The Pastor shall be duly trained, examined and ordained for the ministry of the Word of God (lay pastors on the A.F.L.C. Clergy Roster may be an exception) and, so long as he is the Pastor of this congregation, he is required to encourage and work for the support of the institutions of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.
 - e. If the Pastor wishes to resign, or in the event of his discharge, said resignation or discharge shall not be effective until a date (not less than 30 days or more than 60 days after the date of resignation) mutually agreed upon by the Pastor and Council.
 - f. The Pastor shall adhere to Article 1 and Article 2 of the Constitution of United Lutheran Church.
3. The President of the congregation shall preside at all the business meetings and will serve a term as President for one (1) year.
4. The Vice-President will be elected for a term of two (2) years serving as Vice-President one (1) year and as President of the congregation for the second year and will, in the absence of the President preside at business meetings.
5. The Secretary shall carefully record the minutes of all the business meetings of the congregation and Council and perform all other duties usually incumbent upon the office. The Secretary shall be elected at the annual meeting for a term of three (3) years.

6. The Treasurer shall keep all financial accounts of the congregation, receive all contributions for current expenses or benevolence and reimburse the same, according to the decision of the congregation or the Church Council. The Treasurer shall be elected at the annual meeting for a term of three (3) years. All financial accounts shall be audited by the Auditing Committee which shall report to the congregation. The Treasurer shall present a monthly report at each Church Council meeting.
7. The Financial Secretaries shall procure and secure the offerings and shall deliver those records to the Treasurer. The Financial Secretaries shall be elected at the annual meeting for a term of one (1) year.
8. The Sunday School Superintendent shall have charge of the Sunday School and with the necessary assistance shall conduct it according to the rules of the congregation. The Sunday School Superintendent shall serve a term of one (1) year as Superintendent.
9. Superintendents and assistants terms last a total of two and half (2 1/2) years. It is an elected position at the annual meeting in January. The following June he/she will move from 2nd Assistant to 1st Assistant for one (1) year. The final year from June to June he/she will progress to be Superintendent.
10. The Deacons shall be persons known for their Christian life and character; setting a Godly example in their manner of life. They shall assist the Pastor in the spiritual care of the congregation. One Deacon shall be elected each year at the annual meeting for a term of three (3) years each.
11. The Board of Trustees shall have charge of the financial and material affairs of the congregation. They are elected, one each year, for a term of three (3) years each.
12. The Church Council shall be a twelve (12) member Council, and shall consist of the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Board of the Deacons, Board of the Trustees, Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Parish Education Board.
13. The Parish Education Board shall supervise the educational work of the congregation, including the Sunday School, the Vacation Bible School, Weekday and/or Sunday School. They shall also be responsible for obtaining names and assisting the nominating committee for the election of an Assistant Sunday School Superintendent and securing teachers for the Sunday School. Serving on the Parish Education Board is a congregational elected Council position with a term of two (2) years.

14. All the officers of the congregation are accountable to the congregation for their official acts. Officers of the congregation shall be qualified as specified in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1:6-11.

ARTICLE VI
Property of the Congregation

1. Real property shall not be purchased, disposed of, or encumbered in any manner except by resolution adopted by vote of two-thirds or more of the members present and voting at a legally called meeting of the congregation.
2. In the case of a division or dispute among the members of the congregation concerning the synod or association affiliation, then a motion for a vote on the affiliation must be made at a legally called meeting. If said motion passes, then a second meeting not less than 45 days from the first meeting, shall be called for the vote on the synod or association change. At that second meeting, a two-thirds majority vote of those present at the meeting shall decide which synod or association the congregation shall be affiliated with. The assets of the congregation shall remain the sole and separate property of the deciding two-thirds majority of the congregation.
3. Should the congregation for any reason be dissolved, title to the land and other assets, real and personal, shall pass to the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, unless other arrangements have been made.

ARTICLE VII
Change of Constitution and Amendments

1. Sections 1 and 2 of Article II shall not be changed.
2. This Constitution, except Sections 1 and 2 of Article II, which cannot be changed, may be amended through the following procedure: A motion for amendment of this constitution must be made in writing at the annual meeting of the congregation. If said motion passes, then a special congregational meeting not less than forty-five (45) days from the annual meeting will again consider the amendment. At that special congregational meeting, a two-thirds majority vote present at the meeting shall be required for passage of said amendment.

BY-LAWS

SECTION I Duties of Members

1. It is the duty of every member of voting age to attend all legally called business meetings of the congregation, unless good and valid reasons shall hinder.
2. The congregation desires that all its members shall faithfully attend the worship services of the church and that everyone shall work according to his measure of faith and the grace given him toward his own salvation and the edification of the brethren. All shall support the congregation in its struggle against the world and the devil, as well as in its efforts to spread and establish the Kingdom of God among all mankind on earth.
3. Recognizing that all good gifts come from above, all members, as God has prospered them, shall contribute toward the current expenses of the congregation, as well as to the Christian schools, missions and charitable institutions of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.
4. All members and especially parents shall exercise due concern for the instruction of the youth in the Christian faith in Sunday School, Vacation Bible School and the Confirmation Class.

SECTION II Procedure at Congregational Meetings

1. All meetings of the congregation shall open with Scripture readings and prayer and shall close with prayer.
2. The order of business for the annual meeting is:
 - a. The reading of the minutes of the previous meeting of the congregation;
 - b. The report of the Pastor concerning the spiritual conditions of the congregation, ministerial acts performed and recommendations by the Board of Deacons;
 - c. The report of the Board of Trustees concerning the business affairs of the congregation by the Chairman of the Board, the Financial Secretary and the congregational Treasurer;
 - d. The report of the Superintendent of the Sunday School and the Parish Education Board;
 - e. Old Business;
 - f. New Business, including election of officers and reports from all church organizations.

3. The officers of the congregation to be elected at the annual business meeting are:
 - a. Vice-President
 - b. Secretary (term not to coincide with Treasurer)
 - c. Treasurer
 - d. Assistant Sunday School Superintendent
 - e. One (1) Deacon
 - f. One (1) Trustee
 - g. One (1) member to the Parish Education Board
 - h. Two (2) Financial Secretaries
 - i. Two (2) or more members for the Nominating Committee for one (1) year.
4. Special business meetings shall be conducted in the same order as the annual meeting, except in the election of officers.

SECTION III Methods of Electing Officers

1. When calling a Pastor, the congregation shall proceed as follows:
 - a. At a legally called business meeting a Nominating Call Committee of five (5) members shall be elected by ballot to select candidates and report at the next meeting of the congregation. The President and the Vice-President of the Church Council are ex-officio members of the call committee. For this purpose, it is desirable that the President of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations be consulted. Nominations may also be made from the floor.
 - b. Election of a Pastor shall be by ballot and a three-fourths majority of all votes cast shall be required.
 - c. A letter of Call shall be executed by the Board of Deacons and the President of the congregation.
 - d. If the call is accepted, the Pastor shall be duly installed by a church official of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations who shall have been agreed upon by the Pastor and the Board of Deacons.
2. All election of officers of the congregation shall be elected by ballot.
3. Nomination for all offices to be filled at the annual meeting shall be submitted by the nominating committee. Nominations shall not be closed for any office except by vote at the meeting.
4. No member of the Church Council shall succeed himself/herself in a given office. The filling of an unexpired term of less than one (1) year shall not be deemed to be a term of office.

5. The same person shall not hold more than one (1) elected office at the same time.
6. No person shall be elected who has not been a member of the congregation for at least one (1) year.
7. Vacancies shall be filled by elections at congregational meetings. An unexpired term does not disqualify him/her from running for an office. (see section III #4)

SECTION IV Duties of the Deacons

1. The Board of Deacons once established, shall appoint from its midst a chairperson, who is serving his/her third year as Deacon and will preside at their meetings. They also shall appoint a Secretary, who is serving his/her second year as Deacon, who shall carefully record all proceedings of the Board and be responsible for all records of said Board.
2. The Board of Deacons shall appoint from its midst one member to serve on the Parish Education Committee which consists of seven (7) to eight (8) members. (see Article V, # 1n of the Constitution)
3. They shall, during the absence of the Pastor, or during a vacancy, either personally or through some other qualified person, lead the congregation in divine worship.
4. They shall be mindful of the spiritual condition of the congregation, of the attendance at services, of the sick and needy and shall consider plans which will further the spiritual growth of the congregation.
5. Manifest indifference to the Word of God, and persistent non-attendance at divine worship shall be investigated by the Board of Deacons, which shall, by admonition and prayer in their behalf, seek to bring the negligent members of the congregation back to the assembly of the church.
6. They shall also function as a “Board of Stewardship”, to disseminate information about the principles, practices and blessings of Christian Stewardship; promote interest in the causes of our Common Endeavors of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations and supervise the regular and systematic ingathering of offerings for the same.
7. Upon the recommendation by the Board of Deacons, the organists and choir director shall be hired by the Church Council.

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SECTION V Duties of the Trustees

1. The Board of Trustees once established, shall appoint from its midst a chairperson, who is serving his/her third year as Trustee and will preside at their meetings. They also shall appoint a Secretary, who is serving his/her second year as Trustee, who shall carefully record all proceedings of the Board and be responsible for all records of said Board.
2. The Trustees shall hold the property of the congregation in trust for the use and benefit of the congregation and shall preserve the deeds and other valuable papers and documents.
3. The Trustees shall not buy, sell, rent or mortgage the property of the congregation without the consent of the congregation. (See Article VI of Constitution)
4. The Trustees have under no circumstances the right to hinder the Pastor of the congregation from using the church as directed by the Council.
5. The Trustees shall maintain the church and property in good and proper condition for the use of the congregation.
6. The Trustees shall investigate the reasons for neglect, with regard to participation in the expenses of the congregation and report concerning same to the congregation.
7. The Board of Trustees, together with the Treasurer and the Financial Secretary shall be individually and collectively responsible for the funds of the church. The Board may require a report or a personal meeting of the Treasurer at any time.
8. The Chairman of the Board of Trustees in conjunction with the Treasurer and the Financial Secretary shall report to the annual meeting concerning the business affairs of the congregation and submit a budget for the ensuing year.
9. Upon the recommendation by the Board of Trustees, the Janitor and Church Secretary shall be hired by the Church Council.

SECTION VI
Admission of New Members

1. When anyone who desires to become a member of the congregation, they shall apply to the Pastor who shall, partly by conversation and partly by conferring with the Board of Deacons, make themselves acquainted with the faith and life of the

- person in question. If the Pastor and Board of Deacons approve of their admission, their application for membership shall be recommended to the next business meeting of the Church Council.
2. When persons desire to become members of this congregation, aside from being able to satisfy the requirements for membership mentioned in Article III of this constitution, they should be willing to receive instruction in Luther's Small Catechism, with special attention to the "Articles of the Creed" and the Lutheran interpretation of the two Holy Sacraments. Christian truth, as set forth in the Catechism, must be accepted unreservedly by such applicants.
 3. The Council shall act upon each application for membership at a business meeting of the Council and a simple majority of votes shall be necessary to accept the application.
 4. When new members have been accepted by the Council at a business meeting, they shall be formally received and welcomed at a public service. The Pastor shall ask the adult candidates if they have read Article II and Article III of the Constitution and Section I of the By Laws, secondly, if they accept it and will in the future be faithful to it; and thirdly, if they will contribute according to ability toward the expenses of the congregation. To these questions each one shall audibly answer, "Yes." Thereupon he shall declare them members of the congregation and shall emphasize the meaning of this relationship in a short talk or intercessory prayer in a manner that will be to the edification of both the congregation and those admitted into it.
 5. The Pastor and his family shall automatically become members of the congregation where they shall reside by his acceptance of the Letter of Call.

SECTION VII

The Exercise of the Right to Vote

1. A list of the voting members of the congregation shall always be available for the President at every meeting of the congregation and shall be made available to any member for personal examination upon request.
2. The congregation may, when it finds it advisable, suspend the right to vote for each one who continuously fails to fulfill his/her duties in supporting the congregation. Such suspension shall be in effect until all the demands of the congregation in this respect are satisfied.
3. Members who are under church discipline cannot exercise their right to vote from the time their case is laid before the congregation by the Board of Deacons until they are again received into full fellowship by the congregation.

SECTION VIII
Church Discipline

1. The congregation zealously watches over the purity of doctrine and life of its members, and when anyone is overtaken in any trespass it strives in the spirit of meekness and love to restore such a one in accordance with Matthew 18:15-17.
2. With this purpose in mind, it is forbidden for anyone to accuse a brother before the congregation without first having sought privately to admonish him in love.
3. If such admonition fails, the case may be brought before the Board of Deacons, which thereupon, after careful consideration, shall seek through admonition and conviction by the Word of God to bring the erring one to confession and repentance.
4. If these methods fail, the Board of Deacons shall submit the matter to the congregation, together with its recommendation as to the proper course to be pursued. The means the congregation may employ are:
 - a. Admonition and intercessory prayer in the assembly of the congregation;
 - b. Exclusion from participating in the Lord's Supper;
 - c. Expulsion from the congregation.
5. Manifest indifference to the Word of God, and persistent nonattendance at divine worship shall be investigated by the Board of Deacons, which shall, by loving admonition and prayer in their behalf, seek to bring the negligent members of the congregation back to the assembly of the church.

SECTION IX
Change of By-Laws

A proposal for a change in, or addition to, these By-laws may be submitted in writing at the annual meeting of the congregation. If said motion passes, then a special congregational meeting not less than forty-five (45) days from the annual meeting will again consider the change of the By-Laws. At that special congregational meeting, a two-thirds majority vote present at the meeting shall be required for passage of said by-law.

This revision signed on the _____ day of _____, 2005 by:

_____, Council President

_____, Council Vice-President

_____, Council Secretary

_____, Council Treasurer

_____, Deacon

_____, Deacon

_____, Deacon

_____, Trustee

_____, Trustee

_____, Trustee

_____, Parish Education Board

_____, Parish Education Board