

**Constitution and By-laws of
St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
of Linthicum, Maryland**

PREAMBLE

We, baptized members of the Church of Christ, responding in faith to the call of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, desiring to unite together to preach the Word, administer the sacraments, and carry out God's mission, do hereby adopt this constitution and solemnly pledge ourselves to be governed by its provisions, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 1
NAME AND INCORPORATION

- C1.01 The name of this congregation shall be St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church of Linthicum, Maryland.
- C1.02 For the purpose of this constitution, the St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church of Linthicum, Maryland, congregation is hereinafter designated as "this congregation."
- C1.11 This congregation shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of Maryland.

Chapter 2
CONFESSION OF FAITH

- C2.01 This congregation confesses the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- C2.02 This congregation confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.
- a. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God fashions a new creation.
 - b. The proclamation of God's message to us as both Law and Gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy through word and deed, beginning with the Word in creation, continuing in the history of Israel, and centering in all its fullness in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
 - c. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. Inspired by God's Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God's revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them God's Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.

- C2.03 This congregation accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life.
- C2.04 This congregation accepts the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of this congregation.
- C2.05 This congregation accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to the Gospel, acknowledging as one with it in faith and doctrine all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.
- C2.06 This congregation accepts the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise, the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, as further valid interpretations of the faith of the Church.
- C2.07 This congregation confesses the Gospel, recorded in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain the Church for God's mission in the world.

Chapter 3 NATURE OF THE CHURCH

- C3.01 All power in the Church belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ, its head. All actions of this congregation are to be carried out under his rule and authority.
- C3.02 The church exists both as an inclusive fellowship and as local congregations gathered for worship and Christian service. Congregations find their fulfillment in the universal community of the Church, and the universal Church exists in and through congregations. This church, therefore, derives its character and powers both from the sanction and representation of its congregations and from its inherent nature as an expression of the broader fellowship of the faithful. In length, it acknowledges itself to be in the historic continuity of the communion of saints; in breadth, it expresses the fellowship of believers and congregations.

Chapter 4
STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

- C4.01 The Church is a people created by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, called and sent to bear witness to God's creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world.
- C4.02 To participate in God's mission, this congregation as a part of the Church shall:
- a. worship God in proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments and through lives of prayer, praise, thanksgiving, witness, and service.
 - b. proclaim God's saving Gospel of justification by grace, for Christ's sake through faith alone, according to the apostolic witness in the Holy Scripture, preserving and transmitting the Gospel faithfully to future generations.
 - c. carry out Christ's Great Commission by reaching out to all people to bring them to faith in Christ and by doing all ministry with a global awareness consistent with the understanding of God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of all.
 - d. serve in response to God's love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity and justice for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, and standing with the poor and powerless, and committing itself to their needs.
 - e. nurture its members in the Word of God so as to grow in faith and hope and love, to see daily life as the primary setting for the exercise of their Christian calling, and to use the gifts of the Spirit for their life together and for their calling in the world.
 - f. manifest the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives.
- C4.03 To fulfill these purposes, this congregation shall:
- a. provide services of worship at which the Word of God is preached and the sacraments are administered.
 - b. provide pastoral care and assist all members to participate in this ministry.
 - c. challenge, equip, and support all members in carrying out their calling in their daily lives and in their congregation.

- d. teach the Word of God.
- e. witness to the reconciling Word of God in Christ, reaching out to all people.
- f. respond to human need, work for justice and peace, care for the sick and the suffering, and participate responsibly in society.
- g. motivate its members to provide financial support for the congregation's ministry and the ministry of other parts of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- h. foster and participate in interdependent relationships with other congregations, the Synod, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- i. foster and participate in ecumenical relationships consistent with churchwide policy.

C4.04 This congregation shall maintain a written organizational structure. The Bylaws shall provide for descriptions of the duties and responsibilities of each officer, committee, task force, and any other organizational group.

C4.05 This congregation shall adopt one or more mission statements to provide specific directions for its programs.

Chapter 5 POWERS OF THE CONGREGATION

C5.01 The powers of this congregation are those necessary to fulfill its purposes.

C5.02 The powers of this congregation are vested in the congregational meeting called and conducted as provided in this constitution.

C5.03 Only such authority as is delegated to the Congregation Council or other organizational units in the congregation's governing documents is recognized. All remaining authority is retained by the congregation. The congregation is authorized to:

- a. call a pastor;
- b. terminate the call of a pastor;
- c. appoint or terminate the appointment of associates in ministry in conformity with the applicable policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;

- d. approve the annual budget;
- e. acquire real and personal property by gift, devise, purchase, or other lawful means;
- f. hold title to and use its property for any and all activities consistent with its purposes;
- g. sell, mortgage, lease, transfer, or otherwise dispose of its property by any lawful means;
- h. elect its Congregation Council and require it to carry out its duties in accordance with this constitution, and
- i. terminate its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as provided in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6 CHURCH AFFILIATION

- C6.01 This congregation shall be an interdependent part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or its successor and of the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This congregation is subject to the discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- C6.02 This congregation accepts the Confession of Faith and agrees to the Purposes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and shall act in accordance with them.
- C6.03 This congregation acknowledges its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in which:
- a. this congregation agrees to be responsible for its life as a Christian community.
 - b. this congregation pledges its financial support and participation in the life and mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
 - c. this congregation agrees to call pastoral leadership from the clergy roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in accordance with its call procedures except in special circumstances with the approval of the bishop of the synod.
 - d. this congregation agrees to consider associates in ministry for appointment to other staff positions in the congregation according to the procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

- e. this congregation agrees to file this constitution with the synod for review to ascertain that all of its provisions are in agreement with the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or with the constitution of the synod.

C6.04 Affiliation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may be terminated as follows:

- a. This congregation takes action to dissolve.
- b. This congregation ceases to exist.
- c. This congregation is removed from membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America according to the procedures for discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- d. This congregation follows the procedures outlined in C6.05.

C6.05 This congregation may terminate its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by the following procedure:

- a. A resolution indicating the desire of this congregation to terminate its relationship must be adopted at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this congregation by a two-thirds majority of the voting members.
- b. The secretary of this congregation shall submit a copy of the resolution to the synodical bishop and shall mail a copy of the resolution to voting members of the congregation. This notice shall be submitted within 10 days after the resolution has been adopted.
- c. The bishop of the synod shall consult with this congregation for a period of at least 90 days.
- d. If this congregation, after consultation, still desires to terminate its relationship, such action may be taken at a legally called and conducted special meeting by a two-thirds majority of the voting members, at which meeting the bishop of the synod or an authorized representative shall be present. Notice of the meeting shall be mailed to all voting members at least 10 days in advance of the meeting.
- e. A certified copy of the resolution to terminate its relationship shall be sent to the synodical bishop, at which time the relationship between this congregation and ELCA shall be terminated.

- f. Notice of termination shall be forwarded by the synodical bishop to the secretary of this church and published in the periodical of this church.

C6.06 If this congregation is considering relocation, it shall confer with the bishop of the synod before any steps are taken leading to such action. The approval of the Synod Council shall be received before any such action is effected.

Chapter 7 PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

C7.01 If this congregation ceases to exist, title to undisposed property shall pass to the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

C7.02 If this congregation is removed from membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America according to its procedure for discipline, title to property shall continue to reside in this congregation.

C7.03 If a two-thirds majority of the voting members of this congregation vote at a regularly called and conducted special meeting of this congregation to transfer to another Lutheran church body, title to property shall continue to reside in this congregation.

C7.04 If a two-thirds majority of the voting members of this congregation vote at a _ legally called and conducted special meeting of this congregation to become independent or relate to a non-Lutheran church body, title to property of this congregation shall continue to reside in this congregation only with the consent of the Synod Council. The Synod Council, after consultation with the congregation by the established synodical process, may give approval to the request to become independent or to relate to a non-Lutheran church body, in which case title shall remain with the majority of the congregation. If the Synod Council fails to give such approval, title shall remain with those members who desire to continue as a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Chapter 8 MEMBERSHIP

C8.01 Members of this congregation shall be those baptized persons on the roll of the congregation at the time that this constitution is adopted and those who are admitted thereafter and who have declared and maintain their membership in accordance with the provisions of this constitution.

- C8.02 Members shall be classified as follows:
- a. Baptized members are those persons who have been received by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism in this congregation, or, having been previously baptized in the name of the Triune God, have been received by certificate of transfer from other Lutheran congregations or by affirmation of faith.
 - b. Confirmed members are baptized persons who have been confirmed in this congregation, those who have been received by adult baptism or by transfer as confirmed members from other Lutheran congregations, or baptized persons received by affirmation of faith.
 - c. Voting members are confirmed members who have communed and made a contribution of record during the current or preceding year.
 - d. Associate members are persons holding membership in other Christian congregations who wish to retain such membership but desire to participate in the life and mission of this congregation. They have all the privileges and duties of membership except voting rights and eligibility for elected offices or membership on the Congregation Council of this congregation.
- C8.03 All applications for confirmed membership shall be submitted to and shall require the approval of the Congregation Council.
- C8.04 It shall be the privilege and duty of members of this congregation to:
- a. make regular use of the Means of Grace, both Word and Sacraments;
 - b. live a Christian life in accordance with the Word of God and the teachings of the Lutheran church; and
 - c. support the work of this congregation and of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America through contributions of their time, abilities, and financial support as biblical stewards.
- C8.05 Membership in this congregation shall be terminated by any of the following:
- a. death;
 - b. resignation;
 - c. transfer or release;
 - d. disciplinary action by the Congregation Council; or

- e. removal from the roll for failure to commune and make a contribution of record for two consecutive years.

Such persons who have been removed from the roll of members shall remain persons for whom the church has a continuing pastoral concern.

Chapter 9 THE PASTOR

- C9.01 Authority to call a pastor shall be in this congregation by at least a two-thirds majority ballot vote of members present and voting at a meeting regularly called for that purpose. Before a call is issued, the officers, or a committee appointed by the Congregation Council to recommend the call, shall seek the advice and help of the bishop of the synod.
- C9.02 Only a member of the clergy roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or a minister who has been recommended for that roster by the synodical bishop may be called as a pastor of this congregation.
- C9.03 Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:
 - a. Every ordained minister shall:
 - 1) preach the Word;
 - 2) administer the sacraments;
 - 3) conduct public worship;
 - 4) provide pastoral care; and
 - 5) speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world.
 - b. Each ordained minister with a congregational call shall, within the congregation:
 - 1) offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead;
 - 2) supervise the schools, committees and organizations of the congregation;
 - 3) install regularly elected members of the Congregation Council; and
 - 4) with the Council, administer ecclesiastical discipline.
 - c. Every pastor shall:
 - 1) seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel; and strive to extend the Kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad;

- 2) impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through distribution of its periodicals and other publications; and
- 3) endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to the work of the ELCA churchwide organization and of this ELCA synod.

C9.04

The specific duties of the pastor, compensation, and other matters pertaining to the service of the pastor shall be included in a letter of call.

- a. The call of a congregation, when accepted by a pastor, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment which, except in the case of the death of the pastor, shall be terminated only following consultation with the synodical bishop and for the following reasons:
 - 1) mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term years;
 - 2) resignation of the pastor;
 - 3) inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in the congregation in view of local conditions, without reflection on the competence or the moral and spiritual character of the pastor;
 - 4) the physical or mental incapacity of the pastor;
 - 5) disqualification of the pastor through discipline on grounds of doctrine, morality, or continued neglect of duty; or
- b. In the case of alleged physical or mental incapacity of the pastor or ineffective conduct of the pastoral office, it shall be the responsibility of the bishop of the synod, when such difficulties are personally known or have been brought to the synod's attention by an official recital of allegations by the Congregation Council, or by a petition signed by at least one-third of the voting members of the congregation, to investigate such conditions personally in company with a committee of two ordained ministers and one layperson.
- c. In case of alleged physical or mental incapacity, competent medical testimony shall be obtained. When such disability is evident, the bishop of the synod with the advice of the committee shall declare the pastorate vacant. Upon the restoration of a disabled pastor to health, the bishop of the synod shall take steps to enable the pastor to resume the ministry, either in the congregation last served or in another field of labor.
- d. In the case of alleged local difficulties which imperil the effective functioning of the congregation, all concerned persons shall be heard, after which the bishop of the synod together with the committee described in C9.04 shall decide on the course of action to be recommended to the pastor and the congregation. If they agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action shall be taken by the synod. If either party fails to assent, the congregation may dismiss the

pastor by a two-thirds majority vote of the voting members present at a regularly called meeting after consultation with the bishop.

- e. The foregoing procedure shall never be invoked when questions of doctrine, morality, or continued neglect of duty are involved, all such cases being treated as disciplinary matters.
- f. If in the course of the proceedings, it should become apparent that the pastoral office cannot be conducted effectively in the congregation being served by the ordained minister due to local conditions, the bishop of the synod may temporarily suspend the pastor from service in the congregation without prejudice and with pay provided through a joint churchwide/synod fund and with housing provided by the congregation.

C9.05

- a. The call of a congregation, when accepted by a pastor, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment which, except in the case of the death of the pastor, shall be terminated only following consultation with the synodical bishop and for the following reasons:
 - 1) mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term;
 - 2) resignation of the pastor, which shall become effective, unless otherwise agreed, 30 days after the date on which it was submitted;
 - 3) inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in the congregation in view of local conditions, without reflection on the competence or the moral and spiritual character of the pastor;
 - 4) the physical or mental incapacity of the pastor;
 - 5) disqualification of the pastor through discipline on grounds of doctrine, morality, or continued neglect of duty;
 - 6) the dissolution of the congregation; or
 - 7) suspension of the congregation as a result of discipline proceedings.
- b. When allegations of physical or mental incapacity of the pastor or ineffective conduct of the pastoral office, has come to the attention of the bishop of the synod, the bishop in his or her role discretion may, or when such allegations have been brought to the synod's attention by an official recital of allegations by the Congregation Council or by a petition signed by at least one-third of the voting members of the congregation, the bishop shall investigate such conditions personally in company with a committee of two ordained ministers and one layperson.
- c. In case of alleged physical or mental incapacity, competent medical testimony shall be obtained. When such disability is evident, the bishop of the synod with the advice of the committee shall declare the pastorate vacant. Upon the restoration of a disabled pastor to health, the bishop of the synod shall take steps to enable the pastor to resume the ministry,

- either in the congregation last served or in another field of labor.
- d. In the case of alleged local difficulties that imperil the effective functioning of the congregation, all concerned persons shall be heard, after which the bishop of the synod together with the committee described in C9.05b shall decide on the course of action to be recommended to the pastor and the congregation. If they agree to carry out such recommendation, no further action shall be taken by synod. If either party fails to assent, the congregation may dismiss the pastor by a two-thirds majority vote of the voting members present at a regularly called meeting after consultation with the bishop.
- e. If, in the course of proceedings described in C9.05d, the committee concludes that there may be grounds for disciplinary action, the committee shall make recommendations concerning disciplinary action to the synodical bishop who may bring charges, in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the constitution of this synod.
- f. If, following the appointment of the committee described in C9.05b. or d., it should become apparent that the pastoral office cannot be conducted effectively in the congregation(s) being served by the ordained minister due to local conditions, the bishop of the synod may temporarily suspend the pastor from service in the congregation(s) without prejudice and with pay provided through a joint churchwide/synod fund and with housing provided by the congregation(s).

- C9.06 During the period of service, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties of a regularly called pastor and may delegate the same in part to a supply pastor with the consent of the bishop of the synod and this congregation or Congregation Council. The interim pastor and any ordained pastor providing assistance shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor.
- C9.07 This congregation shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former pastor before calling a successor. A pastor shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to this congregation.
- C9.08 When a pastor is called to serve in company with another pastor or pastors, the privileges and responsibilities of each pastor shall be specified in documents to accompany the call and to be drafted in consultation involving the pastor, the congregation council, and the bishop of the synod. As occasion requires, the documents may be revised through a similar consultation.
- C9.09 With the approval of the bishop of the synod the congregation may depart from C9.04 and call a pastor for a specific term of years. Details of such calls shall state in writing the purpose and conditions involved. Prior to the completion of a term, the bishop or a designated representative of the bishop shall meet with

the pastor and representatives of the congregation for a review of the call. Such call may also be terminated before its expiration in accordance with the provisions of C9.04a.

- C9.10 The pastor of this congregation shall keep accurate parochial records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants members received, members dismissed and members excluded from this congregation and shall submit a summary of such statistics annually to the synod. The Pastor shall become a member of this congregation upon receipt and acceptance of the letter of call.
- C9.11 The pastor(s) shall submit a report of his or her ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.

Chapter 10 CONGREGATION MEETING

- C10.01 This congregation shall hold an annual meeting.
- C10.02 A special Congregation Meeting may be called by the pastor, the Congregation Council, or the president of this congregation, and except as provided in C6.05 shall be called at the written request of ten percent of the voting members. The call for each special meeting shall specify the purpose for which it is to be held and no other business shall be transacted.
- C10.03 Notice of all meetings of this congregation shall be given at the services of worship on the preceding two consecutive Sundays and by mail to all voting members at least 10 days in advance of the date of the meeting. The posting of such notice in the regular mail, with the regular postage affixed or paid, sent to the last known address of such members shall be sufficient.
- C10.04 Any number of voting members shall constitute a quorum.
- C10.05 Voting by proxy or by absentee ballot shall not be permitted.
- C10.06 All actions by the congregation shall be by majority vote except as otherwise provided in this constitution.
- C10.07 Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition, shall govern parliamentary procedure of all meetings of this congregation.

Chapter 11 OFFICERS

- C11.01 The officers of this congregation shall be a president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer.
- a. Duties of the officers shall be specified as required by C4.04 and defined in the by-laws section C18.02.
 - b. The officers shall be voting members of this congregation and shall be elected members of the Congregation Council.
- C11.02 The Congregation Council shall elect its officers and they shall be the officers of the congregation. Their terms shall begin at the time of their elections. They shall serve for one year or until their successors are elected.
- C11.03 No officer shall hold more than one office at a time.

Chapter 12 CONGREGATION COUNCIL

- C12.01 The voting membership of the Congregation Council shall consist of the pastor(s), the officers of the congregation, and not more than fifteen members of the congregation. Any voting member of the congregation except paid lay employees of the congregation may be elected to the Congregation Council. A member's place on the Congregation Council shall be declared vacant if the member: a) ceases to be a voting member of this congregation, b) is absent from four successive regular meetings of the Congregation Council without cause or c) becomes a paid lay employee of the congregation. Consistent with the laws of the state in which the congregation is incorporated, the congregation may adopt procedures for the removal of a member of the Congregation Council in other circumstances.
- C12.02 The members of the Congregation Council except the pastor(s) shall be elected by written ballot to serve for three years or until their successors are elected. Such members shall not serve two full terms consecutively. Their terms shall begin at the close of the annual meeting at which they are elected.
- C12.03 Should a member's place on the Congregation Council be declared vacant, the Congregation Council shall elect, by majority vote, a successor until the next annual election.
- C12.04 The Congregation Council shall have general oversight of the life and activities of this congregation, and in particular its worship life, to the end that everything be done in accordance with the Word of God and the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The duties of the Congregation Council shall include the following:

- a. To lead this congregation in stating its mission, to do long-range planning, to set goals and priorities, and to evaluate its activities in light of its mission and goals.
- b. To seek to involve all members of this congregation in worship, learning, witness, service, and support.
- c. To oversee and provide for the administration of this congregation to enable it to fulfill its functions and perform its mission.
- d. To maintain supportive relationships with the pastor(s) and staff and help them annually to evaluate the fulfillment of their calling, appointment, or employment.
- e. To be examples individually and corporately of the style of life and ministry expected of all baptized persons.
- f. To promote a congregational climate of peace and goodwill and, as differences and conflicts arise, to endeavor to foster mutual understanding.
- g. To arrange for pastoral service during the sickness or absence of the pastor.
- h. To emphasize partnership with the synod and churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as well as cooperation with other congregations, both Lutheran and non-Lutheran, subject to established policies of the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- i. To recommend and encourage the use of program resources produced or approved by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

C12.05 The Congregation Council shall be responsible for the financial and property matters of this congregation.

- a. The Congregation Council shall be the board of directors of this congregation and, as such, shall be responsible for maintaining and protecting its property and the management of its business and fiscal affairs. It shall have the powers and be subject to the obligations that pertain to such boards under the laws of the State of Maryland except as otherwise provided herein.
- b. The Congregation Council shall not have the authority to buy, sell, or encumber a real property unless specifically authorized to do so by a meeting of the congregation.

- c. The Congregation Council may enter into unbudgeted contracts of up to five percent of the adopted budget.
- d. The Congregation Council shall prepare an annual budget for adoption by this congregation, shall supervise the expenditure of funds in accordance therewith following its adoption, and may not incur obligations of more than five percent of the adopted budget without approval at a Congregation Meeting. The budget shall include this congregation's fair share in support of the wider ministry being carried on in partnership with the synod and churchwide organization.
- e. The Congregation Council shall ascertain that the financial affairs of this congregation are being conducted efficiently, giving particular attention to the prompt payment of all obligations and to the regular forwarding of benevolence monies to the synodical treasurer.
- f. The Congregation Council shall be responsible for this congregation's investments and its total insurance program.

C12.06 The Congregation Council shall see that the provisions of this constitution are carried out.

C12.07 The Congregation Council shall provide for an annual review of the membership roster.

C12.08 The Congregation Council shall be responsible for the appointment and supervision of the salaried lay workers of this congregation.

C12.09 The Congregation Council shall submit a comprehensive report to this congregation at the annual meeting.

C12.10 The Congregation Council shall normally meet once a month. Special meetings may be called by the pastor or the president and shall be called at the request of at least one-half of its members. Notice of each special meeting shall be given to all who are entitled to be present.

C12.11 A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of a majority of the members of the Congregation Council, including the presiding officer, except when he/she requests or consents to be absent and has given prior approval to an agenda of routine matters which shall be the only business of the meetings.

Chapter 13
CONGREGATIONAL COMMITTEES

- C13.01 The officers of this congregation and the pastor shall constitute the Executive Committee.
- C13.02 The Nominating Committee shall be the members of the Congregation Council.
- C13.03 The Congregation Council shall secure an annual audit. The same auditor shall not conduct the audit in consecutive years.
- C13.04 A Staff Support Committee shall be appointed by the Congregation Council. This committee shall be titled the Mutual Ministry Committee.
- C13.05 When a pastoral vacancy occurs, a Call Committee of at least five members shall be appointed by the Congregation Council. Term of office will terminate at the installation of the newly-called pastor.
- C13.06 Other congregation committees may be formed as the need arises by decision of the Congregation Council.
- C13.07 Duties of congregation committees shall be as specified under the provisions of C4.04 and defined in the by-laws section C18.04.

Chapter 14
ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION

- C14.01 All organizations within this congregation shall exist to aid it in ministering to the members of this congregation and to all persons who can be reached with the Gospel of Christ. As outgrowths and expressions of this congregation's life, the organizations are subject to its oversight and direction. This congregation at its meeting shall determine their policies, guide their activities, and receive reports concerning their membership, work, and finances.
- C14.02 Special interest groups, other than those of the official organizations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, may be organized only after authorization has been given by the Congregation Council.

Chapter 15
DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS

- C15.01 Denial of the Christian faith as described in this constitution, conduct grossly unbecoming a member of the Church of Christ, or persistent trouble-making in this congregation are sufficient cause for discipline of a member. Prior to disciplinary action, reconciliation will be attempted following Matthew 18:15-17 proceeding through these successive steps: a) private admonition by the

pastor, b) admonition by the pastor in the presence of two or three witnesses, and c) citation to appear before the Congregation Council. If for any reason, the pastor is unable to administer the admonitions required by a. and b. hereof, the president (if not the pastor) or vice president shall administer such admonitions.

- C15.02 A member charged with an offense shall appear before the Congregation Council after receiving a written notice, at least 10 days prior to the meeting, specifying the exact charges that have been made against the member.
- C15.03 Should the allegations be sustained by a two-thirds majority vote of the Congregation Council, the council shall impose one of the following disciplinary actions:
- a. censure before the council or congregation;
 - b. suspension from membership for a definite period of time; or
 - c. exclusion from membership in this congregation.
- Disciplinary actions b and c shall be delivered to the member in writing.
- C15.04 Disciplinary actions may be reconsidered and revoked by the Congregation Council upon receipt of a) evidence that injustice has been done or b) evidence of repentance and amendment.
- C15.05 The member against whom disciplinary action has been taken by the Congregation Council shall have the right to appeal the decision to the Synod Council. Such right may not be abridged and the decision of the Synod Council shall be final.

Chapter 16
BYLAWS REQUIREMENTS
See Chapter 18

- C16.01 This congregation may adopt bylaws. No bylaw may conflict with this constitution.
- C16.02 Bylaws may be adopted or amended at any legally called meeting of this congregation with a quorum present by a majority vote of those voting members present.
- C16.03 Changes to the bylaws may be proposed by any voting member provided, however, that such additions or amendments be submitted in writing to the Congregation Council at least 60 days before a regular or special Congregation Meeting called for that purpose and provided that the Congregation Council

notify the congregation of the proposal with its recommendations at least 30 days in advance of the Congregation Meeting.

C16.04 Approved changes to the bylaws shall be sent to the Synod.

Chapter 17 AMENDMENTS

C17.01 Amendments to this constitution may be proposed by at least five voting members or by the Congregation Council. Proposals must be filed in writing with the Congregation Council 60 days before formal consideration by this congregation at its regular or special meeting called for that purpose. At least 30 days in advance of the meeting, the Congregation Council shall notify the congregation of the proposal with its recommendations.

C17.02 A proposed amendment to this constitution shall:

- a. be approved at a legally called meeting according to this constitution by a majority vote of those present;
- b. be ratified without change at the next annual meeting by a two-thirds majority vote of those present; and
- c. have the effective date included in the resolution and noted in the constitution.

C17.03 Any amendments to this constitution shall be sent by the secretary of this congregation to the synod. The amendment shall become effective within 120 days from the date of the receipt of the notice by the synod unless the synod informs this congregation that the amendment is in conflict either with the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or with the constitution of the Maryland Synod.

C17.04 Whenever the Model Constitution for Congregations is amended by the Churchwide Assembly, this constitution may be amended to reflect any such amendment by a simple majority vote at any subsequent meeting of the congregation without presentation at a prior meeting of the congregation, provided that the Congregation Council has submitted by mail notice to the congregation of such an amendment or amendments at least 30 days prior to the meeting. Following the adoption of an amendment, the secretary of the congregation shall submit a copy thereof to the synod, consistent with C17.03

Chapter 18
BY-LAWS

- C18.01 Is the structure of St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church. (see page 21).
- C18.02 Duties of the Elected Officers
- a. Duties of the President
 - 1. The President shall preside at all congregation meetings.
 - 2. The President shall preside at all Congregation Council meetings.
 - 3. The President shall preside at all Executive Committee meetings.
 - 4. The President shall have the option to call special meetings of the Executive Committee, the Congregation Council, and the Congregation.
 - b. Duties of the Vice-President
 - 1. The Vice-President shall assume the responsibilities of the President when the President, either because of choice or in response to a request, so delegates his authority.
 - 2. The Vice-President shall assist the President and the Pastor as requested.
 - c. Duties of the Congregation Secretary
 - 1. The Secretary shall take minutes at all congregation meetings. These minutes shall be prepared by the secretary and submitted to the Congregation Council within sixty days of the meeting.
 - 2. The Secretary shall take minutes of all Congregation Council meetings. These minutes shall be made available to the Council members one week prior to the regularly scheduled council meeting, except when there are fewer than ten days between meetings.
 - 3. The Secretary shall maintain records of formal communications between the Congregation and the Synod Office.
 - 4. The Secretary, at the direction by the Council, shall communicate with persons/companies doing business with the congregation.
 - 5. The Secretary shall maintain a permanent file of all minutes,

correspondence and secretarial records. These files shall be submitted annually to the church office for permanent storage.

d. Duties of the Treasurer

1. The Treasurer is responsible for overseeing the following:
 - a. the procedure for counting and recording all contributions.
 - b. the handling and depositing of all monies received.
 - c. the administration of specially allocated contributions.
2. The Treasurer shall be responsible for the preparation of monthly financial reports for the Congregation Council. Included shall be the status of any special funds, any fiscal abnormalities, any unanticipated fiscal burdens, and the status of all accounts, deposits, and expenditures.
3. The Treasurer shall have the authority to disburse funds to satisfy congregation financial obligations.
4. The Treasurer shall keep the congregation apprised of the fiscal status at the Annual Congregational Meeting and through a final report to be printed in a congregation publication.

C18.03 Duties of the Executive Committee

1. The Executive Committee shall assist and support the Pastor and/or President.
2. The Executive Committee shall provide guidance and take action appropriate toward the resolution of any unforeseen contingencies which by nature demand immediate attention.
3. The Executive Committee shall review and act upon proposals for continuing education appropriately submitted by members of the staff.
4. The Executive Committee shall report all its meetings to the Congregation Council with details given as appropriate.

C18.04 Duties of the Standing Committees

All members of standing committees shall be voting members of the congregation. The committee members shall be appointed by the pastor(s) and shall serve for *at least two years. Each committee, after consulting with the pastor (s) and Council as necessary, will choose its own chairperson. New members for each committee shall be appointed each year as needed. There shall be a member of the Congregation Council on each committee to function as a liaison between the committee and the Congregation Council.* The terms

of appointment *for all committee members* shall begin with the committee meetings of September. Committee persons may be relieved of their committee responsibilities by a conference with the pastor (s).

The September meeting of each standing committee shall address the following:

The rationale and objectives of the committee as defined in the by-laws of the congregation; a brief presentation by the chairman from the previous year to familiarize the new committee persons with any ongoing programs; a slate of programs and goals for the coming year; completion of a budget for the next fiscal year to be submitted to the Finance Committee no later than 10 October.

a. STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

The purpose of the Stewardship Committee is to help ensure that the time, talents, and treasures of the members of St. John Lutheran Church are fully utilized to support the Lord's ministry. For that purpose, the committee will:

1. assess the status of congregational life;
2. solicit and be receptive to suggestions and comments made by members concerning their needs at St. John and how those needs can best be met;
3. educate members to understand the role stewardship plays in the life and mission of the church by encouraging members to make the best possible use of these resources;
4. find ways to increase the time, talents, and treasures that individual members contribute to the on-going ministry of St. John Lutheran Church.

The committee will recommend to the Congregation Council specific actions to remedy needs and problems and will refer concerns of members to appropriate committees. The Stewardship Committee will also, as needed, recommend new ministries that can be undertaken by the church. The goal of the committee is that all members of St. John Lutheran Church will be involved in and contribute to the life of the church. To evaluate progress toward that goal, the committee will annually:

1. ascertain whether needed programs or ministries have been initiated;
2. assess new participation in existing programs;

3. determine if individuals and various interest groups are being served by St. John Lutheran Church;
4. determine if established groups are serving St. John Lutheran Church.

b. PROPERTY COMMITTEE

The Property Committee is responsible for the physical condition, maintenance, improvement, and preservation of all church properties.

The goal of the committee is to provide maintenance and improvements to the church properties as economically as possible.

The duties and functions of the committee shall include:

1. contract negotiation for repairs, improvements and services for the church properties.
2. development and implementation of new improvements to the church property.
3. arrange for repairs and improvements using volunteer church members when suitable.

The committee shall meet to evaluate any repairs or improvements that have been made or that have been scheduled. The result of these meetings shall be reported to the Congregation Council wherein Council action is required.

c. FINANCE COMMITTEE

The purpose of the Finance Committee is to monitor, record, and report the financial status of St. John Lutheran Church.

The Finance Committee will be responsible for the preparation of a budget for presentation annually to the Congregation Council. This budget will be prepared through:

- a. solicitation of input from all other standing committees;
- b. evaluation of said input once received;
- c. application of said input as deemed appropriate in light of the anticipated congregational response.

A budget acceptable to the Congregation Council is the measure of the committee's successful completion of its annual responsibilities.

d. CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Following the example and mandate of our Lord Jesus Christ to teach all people, this committee shall provide opportunities for the congregation to learn, teach, study and grow in faith. It is important that people of all ages continue to learn and grow in faith. Learning opportunities will be varied, and accessible to all age groups.

Knowledge and understanding of the Holy Scripture.
Knowledge and understanding of Church Doctrine and Dogma.
Deepened faith in Jesus Christ.
Knowledge and understanding of God's will and purpose for our lives.
Living out our faith as Christians in our everyday lives.
Prepare catechumenates for an active, informed life in the church.

The committee shall see that opportunities to study the Holy Scripture are provided for the congregation. These learning opportunities will be lead by the Pastor or trained lay people.

The committee shall from October to May provide weekly classes for the catechumenates.

The committee shall provide special lecturers, forums, classes for all ages. These classes will provide additional opportunities (aside from Sunday mornings) for learning.

The committee shall provide for special fellowship opportunities among the members of St. John Lutheran Church.

The committee shall act as a liaison between the congregation and St. John Cooperative Nursery School.

The committee will be evaluated on the number of opportunities it provides for learning among the members of St. John. Its success will be determined on its ability to provide continuing educational opportunities for the Christian, as they grow in faith and love. Written and verbal responses of participants shall be considered in the evaluation of said strategies.

e. YOUTH MINISTRY COMMITTEE

The Youth Ministry Committee provides leadership and direction in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of a comprehensive program that contributes to the Christian growth and development of youth generally in grades 6 through 12.

The goal of the committee is to plan and organize events, activities, and meetings to foster the spiritual and social growth of our youth.

The duties of the committee include 1) attending committee and youth group meetings, conferences, and training sessions to provide support to youth and advisors, 2) managing the Youth Ministry budget to ensure that money is used efficiently in the program and 3) work with representatives of other churches in the Synod to coordinate participation and involvement of Youth in sponsored events.

The committee measures the achievements of the Youth Ministry Program by reviewing goals, activities, and accomplishments at regular monthly meetings.

f. MUTUAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE

The purpose of the Mutual Ministry Committee is to help ensure that the professional, emotional and personal need of the Pastor(s), staff and congregation of St. John Lutheran Church are fulfilled. With this as its goal the committee will:

1. Act as a "Standing Board" for counsel in routine concerns, and in times of personal and professional need.
2. Ensure that physical and emotional needs of the staff have been satisfied, showing concern for the staff's well-being.
3. In advance of budget preparation, confer with the staff concerning salary, wage and allowances prior to forwarding those concerns to the Finance Committee.
4. Solicit and be receptive to comments made by members of St. John, apprising the Pastor (staff) of suggestions and keeping the Pastor advised of any discontent within the staff or congregation, averting potential conflicts.
5. Provide an annual presentation of the staff performance reviews, providing a forum for discussion of the review.

The committee will bring to the Congregation Council specific actions to rectify problems and address needs, and will refer concerns of members to the appropriate committee.

g. EVANGELISM COMMITTEE

RATIONALE:

To fulfill the Lutheran doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

OBJECTIVES:

To encourage proclamation of the Gospel in such a way that others are called

by the Spirit, working through us, into the community of believers known as the Church.

STRATEGY:

Develop and continuously amend as needed a program of evangelism which will inspire the members of this congregation to accept and fulfill the Great Commission given by our Savior: to go to all the world proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ and inviting all others to membership in the family of God.

EVALUATION:

Assess the retention of current members, restoration of lapsed members, and acceptance of new members.

h. **SOCIAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE**

RATIONALE:

To make the congregation aware that there are those less fortunate than themselves.

OBJECTIVE:

To provide opportunities for the congregation to reach out and minister to the needs of others.

STRATEGY:

Develop, implement, and publicize on-going programs and projects for which members of the congregation may volunteer to serve.

EVALUATION:

Number of programs and projects conducted in the past years; number of members participating.

i. **VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE**

RATIONALE:

To ascertain the personal resources of the members of the congregation.

OBJECTIVE:

To maintain a current list of resources for use by the committees and organizations of the congregation.

STRATEGY:

To periodically distribute to members the Volunteer Skill Finder to be updated; to solicit the appropriate information from each class of new members. To act as the liaison between the compilation of data and the committee or organization requesting the information.

EVALUATION:

Periodically assess the availability and currency of the resource information.

j. WORSHIP AND MUSIC COMMITTEE

RATIONALE:

To review the plans presented by the Pastor(s) for weekly services, special services, and festival days in accordance with Lutheran liturgical practices.

OBJECTIVE:

To provide opportunities for the worship of our Lord that are inspirational, uplifting, spiritually enriching, and of a celebratory nature.

STRATEGY:

Assure the proper preparation of the choirs, orchestra, soloists, guest musicians, acolytes, ushers, and altar guild to meet the worship needs and requirements of the congregation. Meet monthly to review and evaluate the worship and music program of the congregation, using both traditional and non-traditional worship opportunities afforded the congregation.

EVALUATION:

Monthly discussion and review of previous worship services, seasonal worship services, and seasons of the church year and the congregation's responses to them.

C18.05 VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS

a. WOMEN OF THE ELCA

RATIONALE:

To bring the women of St. John together in Christian fellowship so that they may grow in faith and support one another in all aspects of daily life.

OBJECTIVE:

To be instruments of Christ as individuals and as an organization in service to others so that many are encouraged to participate in programs and outreach.

STRATEGY:

Offer opportunities to be of service to members, church, community, and the world. Provide informative programs at monthly meetings to inspire members to action.

EVALUATION:

Maintenance and growth of active membership.

b. ALTAR GUILD

RATIONALE:

To provide the appropriate liturgical setting for worship services.

OBJECTIVE:

To care for the altar, sanctuary, and chancel: the furnishings, linens, paraments, and appointments; to prepare the altar, sanctuary, and chancel for all worship services.

STRATEGY:

Maintain teams of members of the congregation which are responsible for preparation of the altar, sanctuary, and chancel prior to services. Carry out plans and directions from the pastor(s) and the Worship Committee. Order supplies and keep financial records.

EVALUATION:

Biannual meetings to review the status of preparation for worship services during the previous six months; feedback from the pastor(s) and the Worship Committee.

c. SENIOR FELLOWSHIP

RATIONALE:

To provide a church organization for people 55 years of age or older.

OBJECTIVE:

To foster good fellowship among older members of St. John Church.

STRATEGY:

Monthly meetings and frequent activities and excursions.

EVALUATION:

Maintenance of active membership.

d. USHERS

RATIONALE:

To help provide order and logistical support before and during worship services.

OBJECTIVE:

To assist worshippers and St. John Church with the conduction of worship services.

STRATEGY:

Provide a staff of members before and during worship service to help with bulletins, seating, offerings, Holy Communion, attendance records, and appropriate sound, light, and temperature environment.

EVALUATION:

Feedback from the pastor(s) Worship Committee and from the congregation.

e. **TUESDAY WORK GROUP**

RATIONALE:

To foster fellowship among men of St. John Church and the giving of time and talents for maintenance and modifications of the church building and grounds.

OBJECTIVE:

To perform maintenance and complete projects on the church building and grounds; to practice stewardship by saving significant costs of maintenance and labor.

STRATEGY:

Provide carpentry, electrical, plumbing, cleaning, and yard work, as well as odd jobs and special projects as needed or desired by the congregation.

EVALUATION:

The physical results evident in the building and on the grounds; feedback from the church staff and the congregation.

f. **CHOIRS AND MUSICIANS**

RATIONALE:

To provide an opportunity for our members to serve God and the church through music; to enhance our worship through music.

OBJECTIVE:

To gather and lead those who are interested in musically serving St. John; to involve as many people as possible in the music program. To lead the congregation toward new and different worship experiences.

STRATEGY:

Lead the congregation musically; provide opportunities for members to participate in a variety of musical presentations; recruit, organize, and plan rehearsals for members and guests to offer the congregation musical presentations in its worship of God.

EVALUATION:

Congregational feedback; number of people involved within the various musical groups; Directors consultations with other church musicians.

g. SUNDAY CHURCH SCHOOL

RATIONALE:

To provide an environment of structured Christian educational opportunities for all members of St. John Lutheran Church.

OBJECTIVE:

To introduce our children at an early age to teachings of Christ and Christian values. To provide a program to enrich those values and put them into practice for every member.

STRATEGY:

Provide the teaching staff and ELCA curriculum and other enhancements to obtain the objectives.

EVALUATION:

Growth in attendance. Success of the perfect attendance program. Dedication of teachers and willingness to serve.

h. VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

RATIONALE:

To offer Christian education to children of the community during the summer vacation.

OBJECTIVE:

To provide organized fun in a Christian educational setting for children for one week.

STRATEGY:

Expose children to the Bible and its lessons; plan and carry out organized fun activities; provide an opportunity for children to be with other children.

EVALUATION:

The number of children that attend; the number of teen volunteers; feedback from children and parents.

i. KIDS FOR CHRIST

The purpose of the Kids for Christ (K.F.C.) is to build Christian community within the youth of St. John and the surrounding community, with youth and adults working together so that the youth might continue to grow and actively participate in their relationship with Christ, their families, themselves, their

friends, and the world through the means of grace and the ministries of community, worship, learning, witness, fellowship and service.

The K.F.C. recognizes that the youth are the church of today as well as the church of the future, and will involve the youth in every aspect of the church's ministry from dreaming, to planning, to doing, to leading and to evaluating.

The K.F.C. will seek to create a Christ-centered atmosphere that involves shared responsibility, learning, mutual support, trust, communication, and commitment to goals in the development, affirmation and use of the leadership skills of the youth.

The K.F.C. will measure the achievements of the youth by their active involvement in the various ministries of the church (within the congregation, community and the world), their individual spiritual growth, and their development of a Christ-centered community in which all are welcome and feel secure in order to facilitate their personal growth in Christ.

Chapter 19 INDEMNIFICATION

C19.01 Consistent with the provisions of the laws under which this congregation is incorporated, this congregation may adopt provisions providing indemnification for each person who, by reason of the fact that such person is or was a Congregation Council member, officer, employee, agent, or other member of any committee of this congregation, was or is threatened to be made a party to any threatened, pending, or completed civil, criminal, administrative, arbitration, or investigative proceeding.

* * *

Adopted by this congregation at its annual meeting on the 24th day of January 1988.

Amended 24th day of January 1993.

1997 AMENDMENTS as approved by the 1997 Churchwide Assembly entered 12/12/97

Amendment to By-law C18.04 as approved by the January 23, 2000 Annual Congregational Meeting.

NOTES