

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
of
Virginia Beach, Virginia

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

The Constitution and Bylaws, contained herein, were adopted by this congregation on September 17, 2017 and supersede all documents of similar nature previous to this date.

PREAMBLE

God requires that a Christian congregation shall conform to His divine Word in doctrine and practice, (Ps. 119:105; Mt. 28:18-20; Gal. 1:6-8; 2 Tim. 4:1-5) and that all things be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40). And whereas the Augsburg Confession, in Article 7, states that...one holy, Christian church.... is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. Therefore, we the members of Prince of Peace 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.

I. Name

This congregation shall bear the name of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church of Virginia Beach, Virginia.

II. Purpose

A Mission Statement

Members of Prince of Peace Lutheran Congregation, we are agents on a mission for God. We have been sent to bring God's salvation, with all that word means in Holy Scripture, to people in need of God's love. We have been sent to bring deliverance from sin and evil, healing, renewal, release from the prisons of life, wholeness and quality of life. This task is given to the Church, God's people, and therefore to everyone who is a member of the Body of Christ, to each and every one of us who has been baptized into Jesus Christ. God's mission is to reach out to the whole world, therefore the local gathering of God's people must be reaching inwardly to minister to its own members, and then outwardly to minister to the local community, then the greater community, and finally the whole world must be included in our concern and effort. All that we do as Prince of Peace Lutheran Congregation must be focused on accomplishing this mission.

III. Doctrinal Standard

This congregation acknowledges and accepts all the canonical books of the Old Testament and the New Testament as the revealed and inerrant Word of God, verbally inspired, and submits to them as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life. This congregation acknowledges and accepts all the confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, contained in the Book of Concord of the year 1580, as true and genuine expositions of the doctrines of the Bible. These confessional writings are the three Ecumenical Creeds (Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasian), the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, Luther's Large and Small Catechisms, and the Formula of Concord.

IV. Statement of Belief

A. Prince of Peace Lutheran Church is part of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS or Synod). The LCMS is a mission-oriented and Bible-based denomination that confesses the historic, orthodox Christian faith in the Triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), and a faith built on “the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (Eph. 2:20). With the universal Christian Church, The Lutheran Church—

Missouri Synod teaches and responds to the love of the Triune God, who created all that exists; became man to suffer, die, and rise again for the world's redemption; and brings people to faith and new life through His Word and Sacraments. The three persons of the Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – are coequal and coeternal, one God.

- B. LCMS congregations voluntarily choose to belong to the Synod, and, although diverse in many ways, all hold to a shared confession of Jesus Christ as taught in Holy Scripture. We believe without reservation that the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament are the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice. In addition, the Synod accepts without reservation the writings contained in the Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.
- C. Believing in the authority of Holy Scripture and that the Lutheran Confessions are a correct interpretation and presentation of biblical doctrine, our congregations agree to conform all their teaching and practice to the Scriptures and the Confessions.
- D. The Synod “is not an ecclesiastical government, exercising legislative or coercive powers” (LCMS Constitution, Article VII) concerning its member congregations and ministers. However, the voluntary association of member congregations and ministers includes their agreement to respect and honor and uphold (Bylaw 1.7.2, 1.8.1) decisions (resolutions) made by the Synod in its national conventions regarding the understanding of the teachings of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions and practices that are consistent with such teaching. The Synod in convention is the “principle legislative assembly” of the LCMS (Bylaw 3.1.1) and its resolutions and statements are the position of the Synod in matters of doctrine and life. The Constitution and Bylaws of the LCMS provide specific guidance for the implementation and supervision of the teaching and practice of its members (congregations and rostered church workers).
- E. Congregations of the LCMS, while upholding teachings and practices that are consistent with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions and while honoring Synod convention resolutions, are self-governed and establish policies based on local circumstance and expediency. An LCMS congregation or ministry operates according to its own constitution and bylaws – which are required by the Synod Bylaws to be reviewed by the District through which the congregation holds membership in the Synod – and therein establishes an orderly way of making decisions and determines which individuals or entities in the congregation (e.g., the pastor, church council, board of elders) will have authority to act on behalf of the congregation in specific circumstances. The Constitution and bylaws of this Church govern our decision-making and policies. A copy is available upon request.
- F. We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life (Ps. 139).
- G. We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31). Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church.
- H. We believe that the term marriage has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Gen. 2:18-25). We believe that

God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (1 Cor. 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb. 13:4). We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of sexual immorality is sinful and offensive to God (Matt. 15:18-20; 1 Cor. 6:9-10).

- I. We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Rom. 10:9-10; 1 Cor. 6:9-11).
- J. We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the Prince of Peace Lutheran Church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by this Statement of Belief (Matt. 5:16; Phil. 2:14-16; 1 Thess. 5:22).

V. Membership

The membership of this congregation includes the following:

A. Baptized Membership

- 1. Definition. Baptized members are all members who have been baptized in the name of the Triune God and who are under the spiritual care of the pastor of this congregation, including the children who have not yet confirmed their baptismal vow.
- 2. Reception. Baptized members are received through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, through transfer, or with the consent of one or both parents or guardians in the case of children who have been baptized in another Christian congregation.
- 3. Duties. Baptized members shall conform their lives to their baptismal vow.
- 4. Termination. Baptized members who have not been received as communicant members shall have their membership terminated for the same reasons that communicant membership is terminated insofar as these reasons are applicable.

B. Communicant Membership

- 1. Definition. Communicant members are those baptized members who have been confirmed in the Lutheran faith, accept the doctrinal standards of Article III of this Constitution, are familiar at least with the contents of Luther's Small Catechism, and who are not members of organizations whose principles and conduct conflict with the Word of God.
- 2. Reception. Communicant members are received through the rite of confirmation, by transfer from a sister congregation, upon profession of faith, or by reaffirmation of faith, provided they conform to the requirements for membership in this congregation.
- 3. Duties. Communicant members shall conform their entire lives to the rule of God's Word and to that end make diligent use of the means of Grace, exercise faithful stewardship of God's gifts, and impart and accept fraternal admonition as the need for such admonition becomes apparent.
- 4. Termination.
 - a. Communicant members in good standing may be transferred by the Pastor to a sister congregation immediately upon their request. Members who move out of the community and thereby become inactive shall be encouraged to transfer their membership to the sister congregation nearest to them.
 - b. Communicant members who join congregations outside of our fellowship thereby terminate their membership. Their names shall be removed from the membership list.

- c. Communicant members of whom the whereabouts are unknown and for whom addresses cannot be established shall have their names removed from the membership list.
- d. Communicant members who conduct themselves in an unchristian manner shall be admonished according to Matthew 18:15-20; if they remain impenitent after admonition, they shall be excommunicated. Each case shall be reviewed and acted upon by the Elders and Pastor, and a report given to the Voters Assembly. If such member deliberately absents himself from the meetings at which his case is to be discussed, or in some other manner make it impossible to deal with him, he thereby excommunicates himself.
- e. Neither can anyone become or remain a member of this congregation as long as he maintains memberships in any organization, secret and/or oath-bound, whose teaching or practices conflict with the Word of God (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

C. Voting Membership

- 1. Definition. A voting member of the congregation shall be any communicant member who has attained the age of 18 years and who has signed the Constitution and Bylaws of this congregation.
- 2. Duties. Voting members shall attend the meetings of the Voters Assembly regularly, participate in the work of the congregation, and willingly accept responsibility according to ability.
- 3. Termination. Voting membership may be terminated by resolution of the Voters Assembly because of continued unexcused absence. Termination of communicant membership automatically terminates voting membership.
- 4. Reinstatement. A member whose voting membership has been terminated may be reinstated by a resolution of the Voters Assembly after the Assembly has received written request for reinstatement. The Voters Assembly will ordinarily act on the request at the next regular or special meeting of the Voters Assembly. However, the Voters Assembly may defer action on the request, not more than one (1) regularly scheduled meeting after receipt of the request, in order to properly assess the merit of the request.

D. "Friend of the Church"

- 1. Definition. A "Friend of the Church" is any person who participates in church functions, but who does not wish formal affiliation with the church. Friends of the Church acknowledge the Church's Mission Statement, and accept the Statement of Belief as described above.
- 2. Duties. The proper conduct of those duties agreed to in accordance with Church beliefs and standards.
- 3. Termination.
 - a. Friends of the Church who move out of the community, whose whereabouts are unknown and for whom addresses cannot be established, or who join congregations outside of our fellowship will thereby become inactive.
 - b. Friends of the Church who conduct themselves in an unchristian manner shall be admonished according to Matthew 18:15-20; if they remain impenitent after admonition, they shall be removed.
 - c. Neither can anyone become or remain a member of this congregation as long as he maintains memberships in any organization, secret and/or oath-bound, whose teaching or practices conflict with the Word of God (2 Cor. 6:14-18).
 - d. Reinstatement. A Friend of the Church who has been denied access to the church may be reinstated by a resolution of the Voters Assembly after the Assembly has received written request for reinstatement. The Voters Assembly will ordinarily act on the request at the next regular or special meeting of the Voters Assembly. However, the Voters Assembly may defer action on the request, not more than one (1) regularly

scheduled meeting after receipt of the request, in order to properly assess the merit of the request.

VI. Offices of Pastor and Teacher

The pastoral office of this congregation, as well as the office of a called teacher in the parochial school, shall be conferred only on such ministers, teachers, and candidates who profess and adhere to the confessional standards set forth in Articles III and IV of this Constitution and who are qualified for their work. Pastors and teachers shall be pledged to this confessional standard.

VII. Authority of the Congregation

A. General. The Voters Assembly shall be the governing body of this congregation and shall be empowered to administer and manage all its affairs. The establishment and conduct of all organizations and societies within the congregation shall be subject to the approval and supervision of the Voters Assembly.

B. Right of Calling. The right of calling pastors or teachers shall be vested in the Voters Assembly and shall never be delegated to a smaller group or to an individual.

C. Decisions. All matters of doctrine and of conscience shall be decided only by the Word of God. All other matters shall be decided by a majority vote of the Voters Assembly unless otherwise specified by this Constitution or Bylaws.

D. Removal from Office.

1. Any pastor, teacher, or officer may be removed from office by the Voters Assembly by a two-thirds majority ballot vote, in Christian and lawful order, for one of the following reasons: persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, or willful neglect of duties.
2. The congregation may request the resignation of any pastor, teacher, or officer from his position in the congregation in the case of prolonged incapacity or general incompetence.
3. Removal from Membership. The Voters Assembly shall have the authority to exclude any communicant member according to Matthew 18:15-18. The person so excluded (excommunicated) shall forfeit all rights of a member (see Article IV.B.4.d).

VIII. Officers

A. All officers must be voting members of the congregation and at least 21 years of age. The elected officers of this congregation shall be the following:

1. President
2. Vice President
3. Secretary
4. Financial Secretary
5. Treasurer
6. Head of Christian Education Committee
7. Head of Stewardship Committee
8. Head of Outreach Committee
9. Head of Personnel Committee
10. Head of Fellowship Committee
11. Head of Youth Committee
12. Head of Assimilation Committee
13. Head of Social Ministry Committee
14. Elders – One (1) Elder for up to 25 family units plus one elder to serve as Head Elder without family unit responsibility.
15. Trustees – Ten (10) Trustees

- B. The Church Council shall consist of the following sixteen (16) officers:
1. President
 2. Vice President
 3. Secretary
 4. Financial Secretary
 5. Treasurer
 6. Head Elder
 7. Head Trustee
 8. Immediate Past President
 9. Head of Christian Education Committee
 10. Head of Stewardship Committee
 11. Head of Outreach Committee
 12. Head of Personnel Committee
 13. Head of Fellowship Committee
 14. Head of Youth Committee
 15. Head of Assimilation Committee
 16. Head of Social Ministry Committee
- C. The Church Council will function as the governing body of the congregation between meetings of the Voters Assembly. Actions of the Church Council are subject to recall and review by the Voters Assembly.
- D. Officers and committee chairmen shall have no authority beyond that which has been conferred upon them by this Constitution and Bylaws. Such authority is subject to alteration or revocation by the Voters Assembly.

IX. Division

If at any time a division should take place on account of doctrine, 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 Article III of the Constitution. If division takes place for any other reason, the property shall remain with the majority of the communicant members. In the event the congregation should totally disband, the property and all rights connected therewith shall be transferred to the Southeastern District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.

X. Doctrinal Conformity

Only such hymns, prayers, and liturgies shall be used in the public worship services of the congregation and in all ministerial acts as conform to the confessional standard of Articles III and IV.

XI. Synodical Membership

This congregation shall hold membership in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod as long as this Synod remains true to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions. It shall, whenever possible, send its pastor(s), called teacher(s), and a lay delegate to the district conventions of the Synod.

XII. Standing Committees

There shall be such standing committees as the bylaws of this congregation may prescribe.

XIII. Bylaws

This congregation may adopt such Bylaws as may be required for the accomplishment of its purpose.

XIV. Changing the Constitution and Its Bylaws

Amendments to this Constitution and its Bylaws may be adopted at a regular Voters Assembly provided:

- A. That they do not conflict with the provision laid down in Articles III or IV, or with any other article that pertains to a Scriptural doctrine and practice; and
- B. That the proposed amendment has been submitted in writing at a previous meeting of the Voters Assembly and published prior to the meeting at which the proposed amendment will be acted upon.
- C. That the proposed amendment is approved by an affirmative vote of two thirds of the voters present.
- D. That the amendment is submitted and receives the approval of the Southeastern District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.