

CONSTITUTION OF HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH

PREAMBLE

The Word of God requires that a Christian congregation shall conform to this Divine Word in doctrine and practice (Ps. 119:105; Matt. 28:18-20; Gal. 1:6-8; 2 Tim. 4:1-5) and that all things be done decently and in order (I Cor. 14:40). This congregation seeks to spread the kingdom of God by preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments according to the confessional standard of the Lutheran Church, to foster a body of believers dedicated to serving God and caring for one another, and to minister to its community in a spirit of Christian love. This Constitution and Bylaws should provide a framework for supporting the congregation in fulfilling this mission. Therefore, we, the members of Hope 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.

ARTICLE I

NAME

The name of this congregation shall be Hope Lutheran Church, of Birmingham, Alabama.

ARTICLE II

PURPOSE

The purpose of this congregation shall be to connect people to Jesus through Word and Sacrament Ministry.

ARTICLE III

CONFESSIONS

This congregation acknowledges and accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the revealed Word of God, verbally inspired, and acknowledges and accepts all the Confessional Writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, contained in the Book of Concord of the year 1580, to be the true and genuine exposition 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 Catechism
- The Formula of Concord

ARTICLE IV

DOCTRINAL LITERATURE

Only such hymns, prayers, and liturgies shall be used in the public services of the congregation and in all ministerial acts as conform to the confessional standards of Article III. Likewise, in all classes for instruction in Christian doctrine only such books shall be used as conform to this standard. All doctrinal literature disputes that arise may be judged and decided by the called Senior Pastor of the congregation.

ARTICLE V

MEMBERSHIP

The membership of this congregation includes the following:

- 1) Baptized Members are all members who have been baptized, including the children on the membership rolls who have not yet confirmed their baptismal vows.
- 2) Communicant Members are those who:
 - a) Are baptized in the Name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost;
 - b) Accept all canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the only divine rule and standard of faith and life;
 - c) Are familiar at least with Luther's Small Catechism and declare their acceptance of it;
 - d) Attend divine services faithfully;
 - e) Commit to regular study of the Word of God;
 - f) Lead Christian lives and do not live in manifest works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21);
 - g) Partake of the Lord's Supper frequently after receiving instruction;
 - h) Contribute regularly and faithfully through time, talents, and treasures;
 - i) Permit themselves to be fraternally admonished and corrected when they have erred;
 - j) Are not members, affiliates, or supporters of secret societies or other organizations conflicting with the Word of God;
- 3) Voting Members are those who:
 - a) Are Communicant Members;
 - b) Are at least eighteen (18) of age;
 - c) Have read and subscribed to this Constitution;
 - d) Have been received into voting membership according to the procedure specified in the Bylaws.

ARTICLE VI

THE OFFICE OF PASTOR AND TEACHER

The offices of pastor, teacher, and other called church workers shall be conferred upon such candidates only as profess and adhere to the confessional standard set forth in Article III of this Constitution and are well qualified for their work. Pastors and called church workers shall, in the call extended to and accepted by them, be pledged to this confessional standard.

ARTICLE VII

AUTHORITY OF THE CONGREGATION

1) General.

The final authority to administer and manage the external and internal affairs of the congregation shall be vested in the Voters' Assembly. The establishment and conduct of all organizations and programs within the congregation shall at all times be subject to the approval of the Voters' Assembly.

2) Right of Calling.

The right of calling pastors or called church workers shall be vested in the Voters' Assembly and shall never be delegated to a smaller body or to an individual.

3) Decisions.

a) Matters of doctrine and conscience shall be decided by the Word of God with reference to the Confessional Standard of Article III;

b) Other matters shall be decided by the Church Council or Voters' Assembly by a majority vote unless otherwise specified by the Constitution or Bylaws.

4) Authority of Officers.

Congregational officers or committees, whether elected by the Voters' Assembly or appointed, shall have no authority beyond that which has been conferred upon them, and whatever authority may have been delegated to them may at any time be altered or revoked by the Voters' Assembly.

5) Removal from Office.

a) Any officer may be removed from office by the Voters' Assembly, by ballot, in a Christian and lawful order, by majority vote, for neglect or inability to perform the duties required by the position.

b) Any pastor or called church worker may be removed from office by the Voters' Assembly, by ballot, in Christian and lawful order, by two-thirds majority, for one of the following causes: persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, and inability to perform his official duties or willful neglect of them.

6) The congregation shall not be empowered to decide anything contrary to the Word of God and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church (Article III), and any such doctrine shall be null and void.

ARTICLE VIII

OFFICERS

The officers of this congregation shall be such officers, boards, or committees as the Bylaws of this congregation may prescribe.

ARTICLE IX

PROPERTY RIGHTS

If at any time a separation should take place on account of doctrine, the property of the congregation and all benefits therewith connected shall remain with the voting members who continue to adhere in confession and practice to Article III of this Constitution. In the event the congregation should totally disband, the property and all rights connected therewith shall be transferred to the Southern District of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, another LCMS Church, LCMS School, or other non-profit organization as allowed by applicable laws. The distribution of the assets shall be in accordance with the Voter's Assembly's wishes. The decisions shall be by a two-thirds vote of the Voter's Assembly. In no event shall any member of the congregation be the recipient of any of the disposed assets of the disbanding church.

ARTICLE X

SYNODICAL MEMBERSHIP

This congregation shall hold membership in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, as long as the Synod conforms to the congregation's confessional standards as set forth in this Constitution.

ARTICLE XI

BYLAWS

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

ARTICLE XII

CHANGING THE CONSTITUTION

Amendments to Articles III, IV, and VI of this Constitution or sections thereof shall not destroy their essential meaning. Amendments to these articles must receive the unanimous approval of all Voting Members.

Any alteration of said articles jeopardizes membership of this congregation in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

Amendments to any remaining articles of this Constitution and the Bylaws may be adopted at a Voters' Assembly meeting, provided:

- 1) That they do not conflict with the provisions laid down in Article III or with any section of any other article that pertains to Scriptural doctrine and practice;
- 2) And that the proposed amendment has been published in the church bulletin for consideration for at least four consecutive Sundays.

The affirmative vote of two-thirds majority of the voting members present at a Voters' Assembly meeting shall be required for the adoption of an amendment. Nevertheless, a minimum of one-half of the voting members is necessary as a quorum for the vote to be taken.