

**1. PROPOSED CONSTITUTION OF HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN
CHURCH**

~~2011~~ **2021**

**1500 HOOPER AVENUE, TOMS RIVER, NJ 08753
TOWNSHIP OF TOMS RIVER, COUNTY OF OCEAN, STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

~~APPROVED~~ **PROPOSED** AT ~~APRIL 3, 2011~~ **January 31, 2021** ~~SPECIAL~~
CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Red indicates changes to update dates and to keep in line with the Model Constitution

Strikethroughs indicate eliminations to keep in line with the Model Constitution

*Highlighted Sections indicate sections that we are proposing which are not in the Model
Constitution*

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(2011 2021)

1500 HOOPER AVENUE, TOMS RIVER, NJ 08753
TOWNSHIP OF TOMS RIVER, COUNTY OF OCEAN, STATE OF NEW JERSEY

***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 Holy Cross Lutheran Church of Toms River in New Jersey.

C1.02. For the purpose of this constitution and the accompanying bylaws, the congregation of Holy Cross Lutheran Church is hereinafter designated as "this congregation".

C1.11. This congregation shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of New Jersey

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~~ **Scripture** 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.** This church confesses the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church and is resolved to serve Christian unity throughout the world.

***C3.02 03.** 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. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 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 in our day.

***C3.04.** This church, inspired and led by the Holy Spirit, participates in The Lutheran World Federation as a global communion of churches, engaging in faithful witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ and in service for the sake of God's mission in the world.

***C3.05.** The name Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA or "this church") as used herein refers in general references to this whole church, including its three expressions: congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization. The name Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is also the name of the corporation of the churchwide organization to which specific references may be made herein.

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 church wide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- i. Foster and participate in ecumenical relationships consistent with church wide policy.

***C4.04.** This congregation shall develop an organizational structure to be described in the bylaws. The Congregation Council shall prepare descriptions of the responsibilities of each committee, task force, or other organizational group and shall review their actions. [Such descriptions shall be contained in continuing resolutions in the section on the Congregation ~~Council~~ **Committees.**]

***C4.05.** This congregation shall, from time to time, adopt a mission statement, which will provide specific direction for its programs.

***C4.06.** References herein to the nature of the relationship between the three expressions of this church--congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization—as being interdependent or as being in a partnership relationship describe the mutual responsibility of these expressions in God's mission and the fulfillment of the

purposes of this church as described in this chapter, and do not imply or describe the creation of partnerships, co-ventures, agencies, or other legal relationships recognized in civil law.

Chapter 5.

POWERS OF THE CONGREGATION

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

***C5.02.** The powers of this congregation are vested in the Congregation Meeting called and conducted as provided in this constitution and bylaws.

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

- a. call a pastor as provided in Chapter 9;
- b. terminate the call of a pastor as provided in Chapter 9;
- c. **call a minister of Word and Service;**
- d. ~~call or terminate the call of associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers in — conformity with the applicable policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America~~ **terminate the call of a minister of Word and Service in conformity with the constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;**
- ~~d~~e. adopt amendments to the constitution as provided in Chapter 17 and amendments to the bylaws as specified in Chapter 16;
- ef. approve the annual budget;
- fg. acquire real and personal property by gift, devise, purchase, or other lawful means;
- gh. hold title to and use its property for any and all activities consistent with its purpose;
- hi. sell, mortgage, lease, transfer, or otherwise dispose of its property by any lawful means;
- ij. elect its Congregation Council and require the members of the council to carry out their duties in accordance with the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions; and
- jk. terminate its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as provided in Chapter 6.

***C5.04.** This congregation shall choose from among its voting members laypersons to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly as well as persons to represent it at meetings of any conference, cluster, coalition, or other area subdivision of which it is a member. The number of persons to be elected by the congregation and other qualifications shall be as prescribed in guidelines established by ~~this synod~~ **the New Jersey Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.**

C5.05. This congregation shall have a mission endowment fund that will operate as specified in this congregation's

bylaws and continuing resolutions. The purpose of the mission endowment fund is to provide for mission work beyond the operational budget of this congregation.

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 New Jersey 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 and with the approval of the bishop of the synod.~~ This congregation agrees to call pastoral leadership from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in accordance with its call procedures except in special circumstances and with the approval of the bishop of the synod. These special circumstances are limited either to calling a candidate approved for the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or to contracting for pastoral services with a minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America officially has established a relationship of full communion.

d. ~~This congregation agrees to consider associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers for call to other staff positions in the congregation according to the procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.~~ This congregation agrees to consider ministers of Word and Service for call 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 and any subsequent changes to 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 and 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~~ **intent** of ~~this congregation~~ to terminate its relationship must be adopted at a **two** legally called and conducted special meetings of this congregation by a two-thirds ~~majority~~ **vote** of the voting members **present at each meeting**. The first such meeting may be held no sooner than 30 days after written notice of the meeting is received by the bishop of the synod, during which time this congregation shall consult with the bishop and the bishop's designees, if any. The times and manner of the consultation shall be determined by the bishop in consultation with the Congregation Council. Unless he or she is a voting member of this congregation, the bishop and the bishop's designees, if any, shall have voice but not vote at the first meeting.
- b. Within 10 days after the resolution has been voted upon at the first meeting, the secretary of this congregation shall submit a copy of the resolution to the ~~synodical~~ **bishop**, **attesting that the special meeting was legally called and conducted and certifying the outcome of the vote**, and shall ~~mail a copy~~ **send copies** of the resolution and **certification** to voting members of this congregation. ~~This notice shall be submitted within 10 days after the resolution has been adopted.~~
- c. ~~If the resolution was adopted by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present at the first meeting, the bishop of the synod shall consult with this congregation and this congregation shall continue in consultation, as specified in paragraph a. above, during a period of at least 90 days after receipt by the bishop of the attestation and certification as specified in paragraph b. above.~~
- d. If this congregation, after **such** consultation is still ~~desires to terminate~~ **considering termination** of its relationship **with this church**, such action may be taken at a legally called and conducted special meeting by a two-thirds ~~majority~~ **vote** of the voting members present. ~~at which meeting the bishop of the synod or an authorized representative shall be present.~~ Notice of the **second** meeting shall be ~~mailed~~ **sent** to all voting members **and to the bishop** at least 10 days in advance of the meeting. Unless he or she is a voting member of this congregation, the bishop and the bishop's designees, if any, shall have voice but not vote at the **second 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 the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall be terminated. Within 10 days after the resolution has been voted upon, the secretary of this congregation shall submit a copy of the resolution to the bishop, attesting that the second special meeting was legally called and conducted and certifying the outcome of the vote, and shall send copies of the resolution and certification to the voting members of the congregation. If the resolution was adopted by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present at the second meeting, the relationship between the congregation and this church shall be terminated subject to Synod Council approval as required by paragraphs f. and g. below.~~
- 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. Unless this notification to the bishop also certifies that this congregation has voted to affiliate with another Lutheran denomination, this congregation shall be deemed an independent or non-Lutheran church, in which case *C7.04. shall apply.~~
- g. ~~Since this congregation was a member of the Lutheran Church in America, it shall be required, in addition to the foregoing provisions in *C6.05., to receive synodical approval before terminating its membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This congregation shall abide by these covenants by and among the three expressions of this church:~~
 - 1) Congregations seeking to terminate their relationship with this church which fail or refuse to comply with each of the foregoing provisions in *C6.05. shall be required to receive Synod Council approval before terminating their membership in this church.
 - 2) Congregations which had been members of the Lutheran Church in America shall be required, in addition to complying with the foregoing provisions in *C6.05., to receive synodical approval before terminating their membership in this church.
 - 3) Congregations established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall be required, in

addition to complying with the foregoing provisions in *C6.05., to satisfy all financial obligations to this church and receive Synod Council approval before terminating their membership in this church.

h. If this congregation fails to achieve the required two-thirds vote of voting members present at this congregation's first meeting as specified in paragraph a. above or fails to achieve the required two-thirds vote of voting members present at this congregation's second meeting as specified in paragraph d. above, another attempt to consider termination of relationship with this church must follow all requirements of *C6.05. and may begin no sooner than six months after the meeting at which the two-thirds vote was not achieved.

***C6.06.** If this congregation ~~is considering~~ **considers** relocation, it shall confer with the bishop of the synod in which it is territorially located **and the appropriate unit of the churchwide organization** before any steps are taken leading to such action. The approval of the Synod Council shall be received before any such action is ~~effected~~ **taken**.

***C6.07.** If this congregation considers developing an additional site to be used regularly for worship, it shall confer with the bishop of the synod in which it is territorially located and the appropriate ~~program~~ unit of the church-wide organization before any steps are taken leading to such action.

Chapter 7.

PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

***C7.01.** If this congregation ceases to exist, title to undisposed property shall pass to the New Jersey 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 present at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this congregation vote to transfer to another Lutheran church body, title to property shall continue to reside in this congregation, **provided the process for termination of relationship in *C6.05. has been followed**. Before this congregation takes action to transfer to another Lutheran church body, it shall consult with representatives of the New Jersey Synod.

***C7.04.** If ~~a two-thirds majority of~~ the voting members of this congregation present at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this congregation vote to become independent or relate to a non-Lutheran church body **and have followed the process for termination of relationship in *C6.05.**, 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 this 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 this 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. **In neither case does title to this congregation's property transfer to the synod.**

***C7.05.** Notwithstanding the provisions of *C7.02. and *C7.03. above, where this congregation has received property from the synod pursuant to a deed or other instrument containing restrictions under provision 9.71.a. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, this congregation accepts such restrictions and:

a. Shall not transfer, encumber, mortgage, or in any way burden or impair any right, title, or interest in the property without prior approval of the Synod Council.

b. Shall—upon written demand by the Synod Council, pursuant to †S13.23. of the constitution of the New

Jersey Synod—reconvey and transfer all right, title, and interest in the property to the synod.

Chapter 8.

MEMBERSHIP

*C8.01. Members of this congregation shall be those baptized persons on the roll of this 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 and its bylaws.

*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. Such confirmed members, during the current or preceding calendar year, shall have communed in this congregation and shall have made a contribution of record to this congregation. Members of this congregation who have satisfied these basic standards shall have the privilege of voice and vote at every regular and special meeting of the congregation **as well as the other rights and privileges ascribed to voting members by the provisions of this constitution and its bylaws.** They shall not have voted as a seasonal member of another congregation of this church in the previous two calendar months.

d. *Associate* members are persons holding membership in other Lutheran congregations who wish to retain such membership but desire to participate in the life and mission of this congregation, ~~or persons who wish to retain a relationship with this congregation while being members of other congregations.~~ **These individuals** have all the privileges and duties of membership except voting rights and eligibility for elected offices or membership on the Congregational Council of this congregation. ~~or other rights and privileges ascribed to voting members by the provisions of this constitution and its bylaws.~~

e. *Seasonal* members are voting members of other congregations of this church who wish to retain such membership but desire to participate in the life and mission of this congregation, including exercising limited voting rights in this congregation. The Congregation Council may grant seasonal membership to such persons provided that this congregation is a member of a synod where the Synod Council has approved seasonal member voting on its territory. Such seasonal members shall have all the privileges and duties of voting members except that:

- 1) they shall not be eligible for elected office in, or for membership on the Congregation Council or on a call committee of, this congregation;
- 2) they shall not have the right to vote on any matter concerning or affecting the call or termination of call of any minister of this congregation;
- 3) they shall not have the right to vote on any matter concerning or affecting the affiliation of this congregation with this church;
- 4) they shall not be eligible to serve as voting members from this congregation of the Synod Assembly or the Churchwide Assembly;
- 5) they shall not, even if otherwise permitted by this congregation, vote by proxy or by absentee ballot; and
- 6) they shall not, within any two calendar month period, exercise voting rights in this congregation and in the congregation where they remain voting members.

***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, the synod, and the church-wide organization 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~~ in accordance with Chapter 20 of the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; or
- e. removal from the roll due to inactivity ~~as defined in the bylaws~~ in accordance with the provisions of this constitution and its bylaws.

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 ROSTERED MINISTER

***C9.01.** Authority to call a pastor shall be in this congregation by at least a two-thirds ~~majority ballot~~ vote of **voting** members present and voting at a meeting legally called for that purpose. Before a call is issued, the officers, or a committee elected 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 **Ministers of Word and Sacrament** of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or a candidate for the roster of ~~ordained ministers~~ **Ministers of Word and Sacrament** who ~~have~~ **has** been recommended for ~~the~~ **this** congregation 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 **of Word and Sacrament** shall:
 - 1) preach the Word;
 - 2) administer the sacraments;

- 3) conduct public worship;
- 4) provide pastoral care; ~~and~~
- 5) ~~seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel;~~
- 6) ~~impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through available channels of effective communication;~~
- 7) ~~witness to the Kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad; and~~
- 8) 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~~ pastor with a congregational call shall, within the congregation:

- 1) offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead;
- 2) relate to all schools and organizations of this congregation;
- 3) ~~install regularly elected members of the Congregation Council; and~~
- 4) ~~with the council, administer discipline;~~
- 5) ~~endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to the work of the churchwide organization and of the New Jersey Synod; and~~
- 6) ~~encourage adherence to covenantal relationship with this church as expressed in the Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.~~

e. ~~Every pastor shall:~~

- ~~1) strive to extend the Kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad;~~
- ~~2) seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel;~~
- ~~3) impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through distribution of its periodicals and other publications; and;~~
- ~~4) endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to the work of the church wide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and of the New Jersey Synod of the ELCA.~~

***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, which shall be attested by the bishop of the synod.

***C9.05.** ~~The provisions for termination of the mutual relationship between a minister of Word and Sacrament and this congregation shall be as follows:~~

- a. The call of a ~~this~~ 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 ~~by death or,~~ 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, **no later than 30 days** after the date on which it was submitted;
- 3) inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in ~~the~~ **this** congregation in view of local conditions;~~,- without reflection on the competence or the moral and spiritual character of the pastor;~~
- 4) ~~the~~ physical disability or mental incapacity of the pastor;
- 5) ~~disqualification~~ **suspension** of the pastor through discipline ~~on grounds of doctrine, morality, or continued neglect of duty~~ **for more than three months**;
- 6) **resignation or removal of the pastor from the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church;**
- 7) **termination of the relationship between this church and this congregation;**
- 68) the dissolution of ~~the~~ **this** congregation; or the termination of a parish arrangement; **or**
- 79) suspension of ~~the~~ **this** congregation ~~as a result of discipline proceedings~~ **through discipline for more than six months.**

b. When allegations of physical **disability** or mental incapacity of the pastor ~~or ineffective conduct of the pastoral office have come to the attention of the bishop of the synod, the bishop in his or her sole 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.~~ **under paragraph a.4) above, or ineffective conduct of the pastoral office under paragraph a.3) above, have come to the attention of the bishop of this synod,**

- 1) **the bishop in his or her sole discretion may investigate such conditions personally together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one layperson, or**
- 2) **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 this congregation, the bishop personally shall investigate such conditions together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one layperson.**

c. In case of alleged physical **disability** 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.~~ **under paragraph a.4) above, the bishop's committee shall obtain and document competent medical opinion concerning the pastor's condition. When a disability or incapacity is evident to the committee, the bishop of this synod may declare the pastorate vacant. When the pastorate is declared vacant, the Synod Council shall list the pastor on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament with disability status. Upon removal of the disability and the restoration of the pastor to health, the bishop shall take steps to enable the pastor to resume the ministry, either in the congregation last served or in another appropriate call.**

d. In the case of alleged local difficulties that imperil the effective functioning of ~~the~~ **this** congregation,

~~all concerned persons shall be heard, after which the bishop of the synod together with the committee described in *C9.05.b. 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 at a legally called meeting after consultation with the bishop, either (a) by a two-thirds majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee did not recommend termination of the call, or (b) by a simple majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee recommended termination of the call.~~ **under paragraph a.3) above, the bishop's committee shall endeavor to hear from all concerned persons, after which the bishop together with the committee shall present their recommendations first to the pastor and then to this congregation. The recommendations of the bishop's committee must address whether the pastor's call should come to an end and, if so, may suggest appropriate severance arrangements. The committee may also propose other actions that should be undertaken by the congregation and by the pastor, if appropriate. If the pastor and congregation agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action need be taken by the synod.**

- e. ~~If, in the course of proceedings described in *C9.05.d., 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.~~ **If either party fails to assent to the recommendations of the bishop's committee concerning the pastor's call, this congregation may dismiss the pastor only at a legally called meeting after consultation with the bishop, either (a) by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee did not recommend termination of the call, or (b) by a majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee recommended termination of the call.**
- f. ~~If, following the appointment of the committee described in *C9.05.b. 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 synodical and church wide fund and with housing provided by the congregation(s).~~ **If, in the course of proceedings described in paragraph c. or paragraph d. above, the bishop's committee concludes that there may be grounds for discipline, the committee shall make recommendations concerning disciplinary action in accordance with the provisions of this church's constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions.**

***C9.06.** At a time of pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor shall be appointed by the bishop of the synod with the consent of this congregation or the Congregational Council.

***C9.07.** During the period of service, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties in the congregation 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~~ **rostered minister** providing assistance shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor. **Unless previously agreed upon by the Synod Council, an interim pastor is not available for a regular call to the congregation served.**

***C9.08.** 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 before beginning service in a call to another congregation or employment in another ministry setting related to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

***C9.09.** 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 pastors, the Congregation Council, and the bishop of the synod. As occasion requires, the documents may be revised through a similar consultation.

***C9.11.** With the approval of the bishop of the synod, the congregation may depart from *C9.05.a. and call a pastor for a specific term. Details of such calls shall be in writing setting forth 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 a call may also be terminated before its expiration in accordance with the provisions of *C9.05.a.

***C9.12.** The pastor of this congregation:

- a. shall keep accurate parochial records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, members dismissed, or members excluded from the congregation.
- b. shall submit a summary of such statistics annually to the synod; and
- c. shall become a member of this congregation upon receipt and acceptance of the letter of call. In a parish of multiple congregations, the pastor shall hold membership in one of the congregations.

***C9.13.** 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.

***C9.14.** The parochial records of this congregation shall be maintained by the pastor and shall remain the property of the congregation. The secretary of this congregation shall attest in writing to the bishop of this synod that such records have been placed in his or her hands in good order by a departing pastor before the installation of that pastor in another field of labor or the granting by the synod of retired status to the pastor.

~~C9.20. Ecumenical pastoral ministry~~

~~C9.21~~**15.** Under special circumstances, subject to the approval of the synodical bishop and the concurrence of this congregation, ~~an ordained minister~~ a **minister of Word and Sacrament** of a church body with which the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America officially has established a relationship of full communion may serve temporarily as pastor of this congregation under a contract between ~~the this~~ congregation and the ~~ordained minister~~ **pastor** in a form proposed by the synodical bishop and approved by ~~the this~~ congregation.

~~*C9.21.~~ Authority to call a deacon shall be in this congregation by at least a two-thirds vote of voting members present and voting at a meeting legally called for that purpose. Before a call is issued, the officers, or a committee elected by the Congregation Council to recommend the call, shall seek the advice and help of the bishop of the synod.

~~*C9.22.~~ Only a member of the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or a candidate for the roster of Ministers of Word and Service who has been recommended for this congregation by the synod bishop may be called as a deacon of this congregation.

~~*C9.23.~~ Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, every minister of Word and Service shall:

- a. Be rooted in the Word of God, for proclamation and service;
- b. Advocate a prophetic diakonia that commits itself to risk-taking and innovative service on the frontiers of the Church's outreach, giving particular attention to the suffering places in God's world;
- c. Speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world, witnessing to the realm of God in the community, the nation, and abroad;

- d. Equip the baptized for ministry in God's world that affirms the gifts of all people;
- e. Encourage mutual relationships that invite participation and accompaniment of others in God's mission;
- f. Practice stewardship that respects God's gift of time, talents, and resources;
- g. Be grounded in a gathered community for ongoing diaconal formation;
- h. Share knowledge of the ELCA and its wider ministry of the gospel and advocate for the work of all expressions of this church; and
- i. Identify and encourage qualified persons to prepare for ministry of the gospel.

***C9.24.** The specific duties of the deacon, compensation, and other matters pertaining to the service of the deacon shall be included in a letter of call, which shall be attested by the bishop of the synod.

***C9.25.** The provisions for termination of the mutual relationship between a minister of Word and Service and a congregation shall be as follows:

a. The call of this congregation, when accepted by a deacon, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment, which shall be terminated only by death or, following consultation with the synod bishop, 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 deacon, which shall become effective, unless otherwise agreed, no later than 30 days after the date on which it was submitted;
- 3) inability to conduct the ministry of Word and Service effectively in this congregation in view of local conditions;
- 4) physical disability or mental incapacity of the deacon;
- 5) suspension of the deacon through discipline for more than three months;
- 6) resignation or removal of the deacon from the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of this church;
- 7) termination of the relationship between this church and this congregation;
- 8) dissolution of this congregation or the termination of a parish arrangement; or
- 9) suspension of this congregation through discipline for more than six months.

b. When allegations of physical disability or mental incapacity of the deacon under paragraph a.4) above, or ineffective conduct of the office of minister of Word and Service under paragraph a.3) above, have come to the attention of the bishop of this synod,

- 1) the bishop in his or her sole discretion may investigate such conditions personally together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one layperson, or
- 2) 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 this congregation, the bishop personally shall investigate such conditions together with a committee of two rostered ministers and one layperson.

c. In case of alleged physical disability or mental incapacity under paragraph a.4) above, the bishop's committee shall obtain and document competent medical opinion concerning the deacon's condition. When a disability or incapacity is evident to the committee, the bishop of this synod may declare the position vacant. When the position is declared vacant, the Synod Council shall list the deacon on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service with disability status. Upon removal of the disability and the restoration of the deacon to health, the bishop shall take steps to enable the deacon to resume the ministry, either in the congregation last served or in another appropriate call.

d. In the case of alleged local difficulties that imperil the effective functioning of this congregation under paragraph a.3) above, the bishop's committee shall endeavor to hear from all concerned persons, after which the bishop together with the committee shall present their recommendations first to the deacon and then to this congregation. The recommendations of the bishop's committee must address whether the deacon's call should come to an end and, if so, may suggest appropriate severance arrangements. The committee may also propose other actions that should be undertaken by this congregation and by the deacon, if appropriate. If the deacon and congregation agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action need be taken by the synod.

e. If either party fails to assent to the recommendations of the bishop's committee concerning the deacon's call, this congregation may dismiss the deacon only at a legally called meeting after consultation with the bishop, either (a) by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee did not recommend termination of the call, or (b) by a majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee recommended termination of the call.

f. If, in the course of proceedings described in paragraph c. or paragraph d. above, the bishop's committee concludes that there may be grounds for discipline, the committee shall make recommendations concerning disciplinary action in accordance with the provisions of this church's constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions.

***C9.26.** This congregation shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former deacon before calling a successor. A deacon shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to this congregation before beginning service in a call to another congregation or employment in another ministry setting.

***C9.27.** When a deacon is called to serve in company with another rostered minister or other rostered ministers, the privileges and responsibilities of each rostered minister shall be specified in documents to accompany the call and to be drafted in consultation involving the rostered ministers, the Congregation Council, and the bishop of the synod. As occasion requires, the documents may be revised through a similar consultation.

***C9.28.** With the approval of the bishop of the synod, this congregation may depart from *C9.25.a. and call a deacon for a specific term. Details of such calls shall be in writing setting forth 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 deacon and representatives of this congregation for a review of the call. Such a call may also be terminated before its expiration in accordance with the provisions of *C9.25.a.

***C9.29.** The deacon shall become a member of this congregation upon receipt and acceptance of the letter of call. In a parish of multiple congregations, the deacon shall hold membership in one of the congregations.

***C9.31.** The deacon(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. ~~The annual meeting of this congregation shall be held at a time specified in the bylaws.~~ This congregation shall have at least one regular meeting per year. The regular meeting(s) of the congregation shall be held at the

time(s) specified in the bylaws. Consistent with the laws of the State of New Jersey, the bylaws shall designate one regular meeting per year as the annual meeting of this congregation.

C10.02. A special Congregation Meeting may be called by the pastor, the Congregation Council, or the president of this congregation, and shall be called by the president of the congregation upon the written request of ten percent of the voting members. ~~The president of the Congregation Council shall call a special meeting upon request of the synod bishop.~~ 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 or ~~electronically~~ **electronic means, as permitted by state law**, 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. 10 percent of the voting members shall constitute a quorum.

C10.05. Voting by proxy or by absentee ballot shall not be permitted.

C10.06. All actions **approved** by the congregation shall be by majority vote **of those voting members present and voting**, except as otherwise provided in this constitution **or by state law**.

C10.07. *Robert's Rules of Order*, latest edition, shall govern parliamentary procedure of all meetings of this congregation.

C10.08. This congregation may hold meetings by remote communication, including electronically and by telephone conference, as long as there is an opportunity for simultaneous aural communication. To the extent permitted by state law, notice of all meetings may be provided electronically.

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 in the bylaws.

b. The officers shall be voting members of the congregation.

c. Officers of this congregation shall serve similar offices of the Congregation Council and shall be voting members of the Congregation Council.

~~d. The officers shall be selected from the elected membership of the Congregation Council. If the Congregation Council elects its officers, the president, vice president, and secretary shall be selected from the elected membership of the Congregation Council. {If the treasurer is not selected from the elected membership of the Congregation Council, the treasurer shall have voice but not vote at the meetings of the Congregation Council.}~~

C11.02. ~~The Congregation Council shall elect its officers and they shall be the officers of this congregation. The officers shall be elected by the Congregation Council by written ballot at a meeting held between the annual meeting and the next regular council meeting. They shall serve for one year. The term shall begin on 1st day of February following the annual meeting and end on the last day of January one year later.~~ **and shall serve for one year. The term shall begin on the day of the first Congregation Council meeting following the Annual Congregation meeting and end on the day of the next Congregation Council meeting following the next Annual Congregation meeting.**

C11.03. No officer shall hold more than one office at a time. ~~The president and vice president shall not~~ **No elected officer shall** be eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office.

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 8 members of the congregation. **It is encouraged that** at least one of whom shall be a youth (between the ages of 16-19) and at least one of whom shall be a young adult (between the ages of 20-29). Any voting member of the congregation may be elected, subject only to the limitation on the length of continuous service permitted in that office. 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 or b) is absent from four successive regular meetings of the Congregation Council without cause. Consistent with the laws of the state in which this 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 at a legally called meeting of the congregation during the month of January. Their term of office shall be for three years, with the term of office beginning on February 1st and ending on January 31st. Such members shall be eligible to serve no more than two full terms consecutively. Newly elected Congregation Council members shall be installed at worship prior to the date they assume office.~~ **The members of the Congregation Council except the pastor(s) shall be elected by written ballot of the Congregation to serve for 3 years or until their successors are elected. Such members shall be eligible to serve no more than 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~~ **may** elect, by majority vote, a successor until the next annual meeting.

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)~~ **rostered minister(s)** and staff and help them annually to evaluate the fulfillment of their calling 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~~ **support of** 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.

j. To seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel.

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~~ **managing** 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 New Jersey, except as otherwise provided herein.

b. The Congregation Council shall not have the authority to buy, sell, or encumber real property unless specifically authorized to do so by a meeting of ~~the~~ **this** congregation.

c. The Congregation Council may enter into contracts of up to five percent of the approved budget for items not included in the 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 incur obligations of more than five percent in excess of the anticipated receipts only after approval by a Congregation Meeting. The budget shall include this congregation's full indicated share in support of the wider ministry being carried on in ~~partnership~~ **collaboration** 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~~ **mission support** 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, its bylaws, and the continuing resolutions are carried out.

C.12.07. The Congregation Council shall provide for an annual review of the membership roster.

C.12.08. The Congregation Council shall be responsible for the employment and supervision of the ~~salaries and non-salaried lay workers~~ **staff** of this congregation. **Nothing in this provision shall be deemed to affect this congregation's responsibility for the call, terms of call, or termination of call of any employees who are on a roster of this church.**

C.12.09. The Congregation Council shall submit a comprehensive report to this congregation at the annual meeting.

C.12.11. The Congregation Council shall normally meet once a month. Special meetings may be called by the pastor or the president, and shall be called by the president 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.

C.12.12. A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of a majority of the members of the Congregation Council, including the pastor or interim pastor, except when the pastor or interim pastor requests or consents to be absent and has given prior approval to the agenda for a particular regular or special meeting, which shall be the only business considered at that meeting. Chronic or repeated absence of the pastor or interim pastor who has refused approval of the agenda of a subsequent regular or special meeting shall not preclude action by the Congregation

Council, following consultation with the ~~local~~ bishop.

C.12.13. The Congregation Council and its committees may hold meetings by remote communication, including electronically and by telephone conference and, to the extent permitted by state law, notice of all meetings may be provided electronically.

Chapter 13.

CONGREGATION COMMITTEES

C.13.01. The officers of this congregation and the pastor shall constitute the *Executive Committee*.

C.13.02. A *Nominating Committee* of four voting members of this congregation, two of whom, if possible, shall be outgoing members of the Congregation Council, shall be elected by the Council at least 60 days prior to the annual meeting, to serve until the election is completed. Members shall ~~not~~ be eligible for re-election the following year. **Committee Members shall be responsible for seeking out congregation members to run for the Congregation Council.**

C.13.03. An *Audit Committee* of three voting members shall be elected by the Congregation Council. Audit Committee members shall not be members of the Congregation Council. Term of office shall be three years, with one member elected each year. Members shall be eligible for reelection.

C.13.04. A *Mutual Ministry Committee* ~~(in the absence of a mutual ministry committee, the duties shall be fulfilled by the executive committee)~~ **of six voting members** shall be appointed jointly by the president and ~~the pastor~~ **rostered minister**. Term of office shall be ~~two~~ **three** years, with ~~three~~ **two** members to be appointed each successive year.

C.13.05. When a ~~pastoral~~ vacancy occurs **in a position for which this congregation calls a rostered minister**, a *Call Committee* of six voting members **of this congregation** shall be elected by the Congregation Council. Term of office will terminate upon installation of the newly called ~~pastor~~ **rostered minister**.

C.13.06. Other committees of this congregation may be formed, as the need arises, by decision of the Congregation Council.

C.13.07. Duties of committees of this congregation shall be specified in the continuing resolutions.

C.13.08. The pastor of this congregation shall be *ex officio*, a member of all committees and boards of ~~the~~ **this** congregation. The president of ~~the~~ **this** congregation shall be *ex officio*, a member of all committees and boards of ~~the~~ **this** congregation, except the Nominating Committee.

Chapter 14.

ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION

C.14.01. 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 **annual** meeting shall determine their policies, guide their activities, and receive reports concerning their membership, work, and finances.

C.14.02. 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 and specified in a continuing resolution.

Chapter 15.

DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS AND ADJUDICATION

~~*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.~~ Persistent and public denial of the Christian faith, willful or criminal conduct grossly unbecoming a member of the Church of Christ, continual and intentional interference with the ministry of this congregation, or willful and repeated harassment or defamation of member(s) of this congregation is sufficient cause for discipline of a member. Prior to disciplinary action, reconciliation and repentance will be attempted following Matthew 18:15-17, proceeding through these successive steps, as necessary: a) private counsel and admonition by the pastor, b) censure and admonition by the pastor in the presence of two or three witnesses, c) written referral of the matter by the Congregation Council to the vice president of the synod, who will refer it to a consultation panel drawn from the Consultation Committee of the synod, and d) written referral of the matter by the consultation panel to the Committee on Discipline of the synod. If, for any reason, the pastor is unable to administer the admonitions required by paragraphs a. and b. hereof, those steps may be performed by another pastor chosen by the Executive Committee of the Congregation Council.

~~*C.15.02. The process for discipline of a member of the congregation shall be governed as prescribed by the chapter on discipline in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. If discipline against a member proceeds beyond counseling and admonition by the pastor, charges against the accused member(s) that are specific and in writing shall be prepared by member(s) of the congregation who shall sign the charges as the accuser(s). The written charges shall be filed with the pastor, who shall advise the Congregation Council of the need to issue a written citation to the accused and the accusers that specifies the time and place of the hearing before the Congregation Council. The written charges shall accompany the written citation to the accused. The written citation that specifies the time and place of the hearing before the Congregation Council and requests the presence of a member charged with the offense shall be sent at least ten days prior to the meeting. If the member charged with the offense fails to appear at the scheduled hearing, the Congregation Council may proceed with the hearing and may pass judgment in the member's absence.~~ The process for discipline of a member of this congregation shall be governed as prescribed by the chapter on discipline in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. If the counseling, censure, and admonitions pursuant to *C15.01. do not result in repentance and amendment of life, charges against the accused member(s) that are specific and in writing may be prepared by the Congregation Council, signed, and submitted to the vice president of the synod. The vice president shall select from the synod's Consultation Committee a panel of five members (three laypersons and two ministers of Word and Sacrament). A copy of the written charges shall be provided to the consultation panel and the accused member(s). The consultation panel, after requesting a written reply to the charges from the accused member(s), shall consider the matter and seek a resolution by means of investigation, consultation, mediation, or whatever other means may seem appropriate. The panel's efforts to reach a mutually agreeable resolution shall continue for no more than 45 days after the matter is submitted to it.

~~*C.15.03. Members of the Congregation Council who participate in the preparation of the written charges or who present evidence or testimony in the hearing before the Congregation Council are disqualified from voting upon the question of the guilt of the accused member. Should the allegations be sustained by a two-thirds majority vote of the members of the Congregation Council who are not disqualified but who are present and voting, and renewed admonition prove ineffectual, 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.~~

If the consultation panel fails to resolve the matter, that panel shall refer the case in writing, including the written charges and the accused member's reply, to the Committee on Discipline of the synod for a hearing. A copy of the panel's written referral shall be delivered to the vice president of the synod, the Congregation Council, and the accused member(s) at the same time it is sent to the Committee on Discipline of the synod. The Executive Committee of the Synod Council shall then select six members from the Committee on Discipline to decide the case and shall appoint a member of the Synod Council to preside as nonvoting chair. Those six members, plus the nonvoting chair, comprise the discipline hearing panel for deciding the case. The Congregation Council and the accused member(s) are the parties to the case.

~~*C15.04. 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. The discipline hearing panel shall commence and conduct the disciplinary hearing in accordance with the provisions governing discipline of congregation members prescribed in the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.~~

~~*C15.05. 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. By the vote of at least two-thirds of the members of the discipline hearing panel who are present and voting, one of the following disciplinary sanctions can be imposed:~~

- ~~a. suspension from the privileges of congregation membership for a designated period of time;~~
- ~~b. suspension from the privileges of congregation membership until the pastor and Congregation Council receive evidence, satisfactory to them, of repentance and amendment of life;~~
- ~~c. termination of membership in the congregation; or~~
- ~~d. termination of membership in the congregation and exclusion from the church property and from all congregation activities.~~

~~*C.15.06. For disciplinary actions in this congregation, "due process" shall be observed as specified in 20.41.04. In the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The written decision of the discipline hearing panel shall be sent to the vice president of the synod, the accused member(s), and the Congregation Council as required by the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The decision of the discipline hearing panel shall be implemented by the Congregation Council and recorded in the minutes of the next council meeting.~~

~~*C.15.07. No member of a congregation shall be subject to discipline for offenses that the Congregation Council has previously heard and decided, unless so ordered by the Synod Council after an appeal. No member of the congregation shall be subject to discipline a second time for offenses that a discipline hearing panel has heard previously and decided pursuant to this chapter.~~

***C.15.10 Adjudication**

~~*C.15.11. When there is disagreement between or among factions within this congregation on a substantive issue that which cannot be resolved by the parties, members of this congregation may petition shall have access to the synodical bishop for consultation after informing the chair president of the Congregation Council this congregation of their intent to do so. If the consultation fails to resolve the issue(s), the Consultation Committee of the synod shall consider the matter. If the Consultation Committee of the synod shall fail to resolve the issue(s), the matter shall be referred to the Synod Council, whose decision shall be final. The synod bishop shall seek a timely resolution of the dispute. If the issue relates directly to the pastor, the bishop may begin the process in †S14.18.d. In all other matters, if the bishop's consultation fails to resolve the issue, the bishop shall refer the matter to the Consultation Committee of the synod, which shall undertake efforts to find an appropriate solution. If the Consultation Committee's efforts fail to resolve the dispute, the entire matter shall be referred to the Synod Council~~

for adjudication by whatever process the Council deems necessary. The Synod Council's decision shall be final.

Chapter 16.

AMENDMENTS

***C1716.01.** Unless provision *C1716.04 is applicable, those sections of this constitution that are not required, in accord with the Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, may be amended in the following manner. Amendments may be proposed by at least ten percent of the 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 a regular or special Congregation Meeting called for that purpose. The Congregation Council shall notify ~~the this~~ congregation's members ~~by mail or electronically of the proposal together with the council's recommendations at least 30 days in advance of the meeting.~~ ~~of the proposal together with the council's recommendations at least 30 days in advance of the meeting.~~ Notification may take place by mail or electronic means, as permitted by state law.

***C1716.02.** An amendment to this constitution, proposed under *C1716.01, shall:

- a. be approved at any legally called ~~Congregation Meeting according to this constitution~~ meeting of this congregation by a majority vote of those voting members present and voting;
- b. be ratified without change at the next annual regular meeting of this congregation held pursuant to C10.01 by a two-thirds majority vote of those voting members present and voting; and
- c. have the effective date included in the resolution² and noted in the constitution.

***C1716.03.** ~~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 with the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or the constitution of the New Jersey Synod of the ELCA. Any amendments to this constitution that result from the processes provided in *C16.01. and *C16.02. shall be sent by the secretary of this congregation to the synod. The synod shall notify this congregation of its decision to approve or disapprove the proposed changes; the changes shall go into effect upon notification that the synod has approved them.~~

***C1716.04** This constitution may be amended to bring any section into conformity with a section or sections, either required or not required, of the *Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* as most recently amended by the Churchwide Assembly. ~~by a simple~~ Such amendments may be approved by a majority vote of those voting members present and voting at any legally called meeting of ~~the this~~ this congregation without presentation at a prior meeting of ~~the this~~ this congregation, provided that the Congregation Council has a submitted by mail or electronic ~~notice~~ means, as permitted by state law, notice to ~~the this~~ this congregation of such an amendment or amendments, together with the council's recommendations, at least 30 days prior to the meeting. Upon the request of ~~ten percent of the~~ at least two (2) voting members of ~~the this~~ this congregation, the Congregation Council shall submit such notice. Following the adoption of an amendment, the secretary of ~~the this~~ this congregation shall submit a copy thereof to the synod. Such provisions shall become effective immediately following a vote of approval.

⁴² Such an effective date must be stated in relation to the requirements of *C1716.03 to allow time for synodical review of the amendment.

Chapter 17.

BYLAWS

*C.17.01. This congregation may adopt bylaws. No bylaw may conflict with this constitution.

*C.17.02. Bylaws may be adopted or amended at any legally called meeting of this congregation with a quorum present by a ~~majority~~ **two-thirds** vote of those voting members present and voting.

*C.17.03. 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 that the~~ **The Congregation Council shall notify the this congregations** members of the proposal with ~~it's the council's~~ **recommendations** at least 30 days in advance of the Congregation Meeting. **Notification may take place by mail or electronic means, as permitted by state law.**

*C.17.04. Approved changes to the bylaws shall be sent by the secretary of this congregation to the synod

Chapter 18.

CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS

*C.18.01. The congregation in a legally called meeting or the Congregation Council may enact continuing resolutions, ~~which describe the function of the various committees or organizations of this congregation.~~ Such continuing resolutions may not conflict with the constitution or bylaws of this congregation.

*C.18.02. Continuing resolutions shall be enacted or amended by a majority vote of a ~~legally called~~ meeting of ~~the~~ **this** congregation or a two-thirds vote of all voting members of the Congregation Council.

*C.18.03. **Adopted or amended continuing resolutions shall be sent by the secretary of this congregation to the synod.**

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.

Chapter 20.

PARISH AUTHORIZATION

*C.20.01. This congregation may unite in partnership with one or more other congregations recognized by the synod named in *C.6.01. to form a parish. Except as provided in *C.20.02. ~~And~~ **and** *C.20.03., a written agreement, developed in consultation with the synod and approved by the voting members of each congregation participating in the parish, shall specify the powers and responsibilities that have been delegated to ~~a~~ **the** Parish Council. **The Parish Agreement shall identify which congregation of the parish issues calls on behalf of the member congregations or shall establish a process for identifying which congregation issues calls on behalf of the member congregations.**

~~*C.20.02. Whenever a letter of call is being recommended for extension to an ordained minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or a candidate for the roster of ordained ministers who has been recommended to the congregation by the synodical bishop to serve the congregations of a parish, such letter of call shall be first approved by a two-thirds vote at congregational meetings of each of the congregations forming the parish. If any congregation of the parish should fail to approve extending this call, the other congregation(s) in the same parish shall have the right to terminate the parish arrangement.~~ **One congregation of a parish shall issue a call on behalf of the member congregations to a minister of Word and Sacrament or a candidate for the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament who has been recommended by the synod bishop to serve the congregations of the parish. Such a call shall be approved prior to issuance by a two-thirds vote at a congregational meeting of each congregation forming the parish. If any congregation of the parish should fail to approve the call, the other congregations of the parish shall have the right to terminate the parish agreement.**

***C.20.03.** One congregation of a parish may issue a call on behalf of the member congregations to a minister of Word and Service or a candidate for the roster of Ministers of Word and Service who has been recommended by the synod bishop to serve the congregations of the parish. Such a call shall be approved prior to issuance by a two-thirds vote at a congregational meeting of each congregation forming the parish. If any congregation of the parish should fail to approve the call, the other congregations of the parish shall have the right to terminate the parish agreement.

~~*C.20.03~~**04.** Any one of the congregations of a ~~the~~ parish may terminate ~~the call of a~~ **their relationship with the** pastor as provided in ~~†S14.43~~**18.d.** of the ~~synodical~~ **real** constitution of the synod named in *C.6.01. In such case, the other congregation(s) in the same parish shall have the right to terminate the parish arrangement.

***C.20.05.** Any one of the congregations of the parish may terminate their relationship with a minister of Word and Service as provided in ~~†S14.43~~**18.d.** of the synod constitution of the synod named in *C.6.01. In such case, the other congregation(s) of the same parish shall have the right to terminate the parish agreement.

~~*C.20.04~~**06.** Whenever a parish arrangement is terminated, the call of any rostered ~~person~~ **minister** serving that parish is terminated. Should any congregation that **was** formerly ~~was~~ part of the parish arrangement desire to issue a new call to that rostered ~~person~~ **minister**, it may do so in accordance with the call process of this church.