

# **WISCONSIN LUTHERAN CHAPEL**

220 W. Gilman Street - Madison, WI 53703

## **CONSTITUTION**

(Constitution last amended 9/8/1986)

### **PREAMBLE**

It is the will of our Lord Jesus Christ that His disciples should preach the Gospel to the whole world (Mark 16:16, Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8). That Christ's mission for His Church might be carried out according to His will, He has commanded that Christians unite in worship (Hebrews 10:24-25), practice fellowship with one another (Acts 2:42), witness to all people (Acts 1:8), help each other grow in the Word (Ephesians 4:7-16, Mark 10:42-44, John 13:35, Galatians 6:10), administer the Office of the Keys as His Church (John 20:21-23, Matthew 18:15-20), and maintain decency and order (I Corinthians 14:40) in the Church.

Therefore, we, a congregation of Lutheran Christians incorporated under the laws of the State of Wisconsin and living in and near Madison, Wisconsin, do herewith in the name of the Triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) adopt and subscribe to the following Constitution and By-laws, 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 Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel of Madison, Wisconsin.

### **ARTICLE II - ARTICLES OF FAITH**

#### Section 1. The Holy Bible

This congregation accepts and confesses all the canonical books of the Old and the New Testaments as the verbally inspired, inerrant Word of God and submits to the Holy Bible as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life (II Timothy 3:15-17, John 14:26).

#### Section 2. The Book of Concord

This congregation accepts and confesses all the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of 1580 as true statements of Scriptural doctrine. They are:

- A. The three Ecumenical Creeds
  - 1. The Apostles'
  - 2. The Nicene
  - 3. The Athanasian
- B. The six Lutheran Confessions
  - 1. Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism
  - 2. Dr. Martin Luther's Large Catechism
  - 3. The Unaltered Augsburg Confession
  - 4. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession
  - 5. The Smalcald Articles
  - 6. The Formula of Concord

### Section 3. The Book of Concord: A Presentation, Explanation, and Summary of Faith and Doctrine

This congregation accepts and confesses these symbolical books without reservation, not insofar as, but because they are the presentation and explanation of the pure doctrine of the Word of God and a summary of the faith held by the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

### Section 4. False Doctrine

Hence, no doctrine shall be taught or tolerated in this congregation which is in any way at variance with these symbols (i.e. confessional writings) and the Holy Scriptures.

### Section 5. Controversies

Likewise, all controversies which may arise in this congregation shall be decided and adjusted according to this norm of doctrine and faith.

## **ARTICLE III: SYNODICAL AFFILIATION**

This congregation shall affiliate itself only with a synod that holds to all the truths of God's Word in doctrine and practice and is bound to the confession of faith as set forth in Article II, if, and as long as, such a synod exists (Romans 16:17-18, Ephesians 4:3, Titus 3:10, II John 10-11).

## **ARTICLE IV: A CAMPUS MINISTRY**

### Section 1. Central Purpose

This congregation is committed to serving the WELS Campus ministry in Madison. Our central purpose is to serve the spiritual needs of our WELS students who are away from their home congregations and attend local Madison schools (e.g. UW, MATC). Outreach with the Gospel is also to be carried out to others in accord with Jesus' Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

### Section 2. District Mission Board

Because the WELS established this campus ministry, it shall be understood that the District Mission Board has the right to review and direct the affairs of the congregation when, in the opinion of the DMB, the congregation is not properly adhering to its central purpose. Any difference of opinion between the DMB and the congregation shall be discussed at a meeting between the two. The DMB has final authority in such an event.

## **ARTICLE V: CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

### Section 1. Classification

A. Baptized Members of the congregation are those who have been baptized in the name of the Triune God.

B. Congregational Members are those communicant souls who confess the chief parts of Christian doctrine as written in Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism and who have declared their adherence to all the canonical books of the Old and the New Testaments, without qualification, as completely true and the only rule and norm of faith and life, and have declared their agreement with this Constitution and who have been accepted as members as provided for in the By-laws to this Constitution.

C. Associate Members are those communicant members of a congregation in fellowship with the Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel congregation who are full or part-time students enrolled in an institution of learning, who have been accepted as members as provided for in the By-laws to this Constitution and have declared their agreement with and adherence to this Constitution.

D. Voting Members are those male congregational or associate members (I Corinthians 14:34-38, I Timothy 2:12,13) who have reached their eighteenth year.

### Section 2. Privileges and Responsibilities

"God is love" (I John 4:8) and His love always moves Him to bless the members of His Church with innumerable physical and spiritual gifts (I John 3:1, James 1:17). In return for all of these undeserved blessings, we can do nothing less than to love Him with all our heart (I John 4:19), and to show that love with the works that we do. The giving of such expressions we acknowledge as both a privilege and a responsibility. Some of the privileges and responsibilities to be noted are the Following:

A. Our God has given us His Word, the one thing needful (Luke 10:42), which alone can save our souls and tell us how to live a God-pleasing life (II Timothy 3:15-17). Consequently, a member of His Church will consider it a distinct privilege and a responsibility to

1. Diligently hear and receive the Word of God (3rd Commandment);
2. Provide and promote opportunities for Christian education (Matthew 28:19,20);
3. Bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

B. Our God has given us two Sacraments: Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, which are means that our Lord uses to bring His grace to us. Consequently, a member of His Church will

1. Have his children baptized early in life, for “Baptism does also now save us” (I Peter 3:21);
2. Frequently partake of Holy Communion (I Corinthians 11:23-26), if he is recognized as one who can properly examine himself (I Corinthians 11:28). Only those in the confessional fellowship of faith are permitted to commune at our altar (Close Communion - II Corinthians 6:14-15; Romans 16:17).

C. Our God has given us the privilege of being stewards over a certain portion of His estate and of receiving the steward’s rich reward of grace (Matthew 25:14-30). Consequently, a member of His Church will

1. Continually remember that all his property, time, and abilities belong to God;
2. Conscientiously determine which part of his money, time, and abilities shall be devoted to that which the congregation has made its concern, not omitting the work of the Synod (Mark 16:15; I Corinthians 9:14; 16:2; I Peter 4:10);
3. If he is a voting member, regularly attend the voters’ meeting and lend the congregation his counsel and aid.

D. Our God has implanted within us who are Christians the New Man, who desires to live a holy life (II Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:24). Consequently, a member of His Church will

1. Not intentionally and persistently break God’s commands which will endanger his eternal soul (Hebrews 10:26,27) or
2. Not live in manifest works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21), but lead a Christian life (Galatians 5:22-25, John 14:15);
3. When he has erred, permit himself to be fraternally admonished and corrected in the spirit of Matthew 18:15;
4. Refuse to hold membership in any organization whose teachings and practices conflict with the Word of God (lodges, etc.) (John 5:23; 8:31,32; I Corinthians 6:14-18).

### Section 3. Church Discipline: Excommunication, Self-Exclusion, and Reinstatement

Christian discipline shall be exercised in this congregation in the Spirit of Matthew 18:15-20 toward those who err from the faith or who in other ways have given offense. At all times, this shall be done in the spirit of the Gospel, namely, to regain the erring as brethren. Those members who finally must be excommunicated, and those who have excluded themselves from the congregation by evading Matthew 18:15-20 or by persistently neglecting to join in the worship services and communion, relinquish all their rights in the congregation and in its property. Those who have seen their sin against the Lord, changed their sinful ways, and have requested from the Pastor and one or two elders (Matthew 18:16 “witnesses”) forgiveness and

reinstatement, the repentant individual(s) will be received back with great joy as the angels in heaven rejoice over each sinner who repents (Luke 15:10).

## **ARTICLE VI: POWERS AND RIGHTS OF THE CONGREGATION**

### Section 1. The Scriptures

In all matters of Christian faith and life, the Word of God is supreme.

### Section 2. The Majority

In all matters not decided by the Word of God, the majority rules, insofar as it is not in conflict with the constitutional changes as specified in Article XII.

### Section 3. Congregational Authority

The Church Council, any other elected committee or organization within the congregation, and any of its elected or appointed officers shall have no power or authority beyond that conferred upon them by the congregation. However, in rare occasions of emergency, the Church Council may act in the name and for the welfare of the congregation, provided that the congregation is informed of said action at the next voter's meeting.

### Section 4. Congregational Approval

No group or society may be organized within the congregation without the approval of the congregation. The congregation shall be assured that the aims of such a group are in complete harmony with the congregation's aims before it grants its approval. Such a group or society shall remain under the supervision of the Pastor and the Church Council.

## **ARTICLE VII: THE MINISTRY**

### Section 1. The Pastorate

The pastorate of this congregation shall be conferred upon such ministers or ministerial candidates as unqualifiedly and publicly profess their acceptance of and adherence to the ARTICLES OF FAITH as set forth in Article II of this Constitution. This shall be required of them in the call of vocation (I Timothy 3:1-7).

### Section 2. The Call Meeting

The Pastor shall be called by the District Mission Board. The District Mission Board may consult with the congregation or its officers prior to making the call.

### Section 3. Vacancy

In case of a vacancy in the position of the Pastor, the congregation shall take steps to notify the President of the local district of the Synod that he may assist in temporarily filling the vacancy and in giving his good counsel in regard to the calling of a new Pastor.

## **ARTICLE VIII: OFFICERS OF THE CONGREGATION**

### Section 1. Qualifications

The first New Testament congregation at Jerusalem chose men of “honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom” (Acts 6:1-6), to aid the Apostles in the administration of its temporal and spiritual affairs. Likewise shall this congregation choose male officers with like qualifications from among its voting members to aid the Pastor in administering its affairs.

### Section 2. Officers and Duties

The listing of the officers and their duties shall be set forth in the By-laws.

### Section 3. Respect and Conduct

These officers shall be given the respect and esteem of the congregation in the performance of their duties and they shall conduct themselves in a manner befitting their responsible office.

## **ARTICLE IX: REMOVAL FROM OFFICE**

### Section 1. Removal of Officer

If any officer of the congregation willfully neglects his duty and upon due admonition does not amend his ways, the congregation has the right and eventually the duty to remove him from office and to elect another in his place (I Timothy 3:8-13; Matthew 18:15-20).

### Section 2. Removal of Pastor

Sufficient and urgent causes for removing a Pastor are persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, willful neglect of duty, or established inability to perform the duties of his office (I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; Matthew 18:15-20). Such action shall only be taken by the District Mission Board and the appropriate district officers after consultation with the congregation.

## **ARTICLE X: MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION**

Meetings of this congregation shall be held at such times and in such manner as stated in the By-laws. The meetings shall give the voters of this congregation the opportunity to hear, discuss, and take necessary action in matters pertaining to the welfare of this congregation and of the church at large.

## **ARTICLE XI: SEPARATION OR DISSOLUTION**

### **Section 1. Separation within the Congregation**

If at any time a separation should occur in this congregation - may God graciously prevent it - the property and all equipment and assets which belong to this congregation shall remain with that portion of the membership which adheres to this Constitution, regardless of number.

### **Section 2. Termination or Dissolution**

In the event of termination or dissolution of the congregation, the Church Council shall, after paying or making provision for the payment of all the liabilities of the congregation, dispose of its remaining assets, if any, exclusively for the purposes of the congregation, by distributing, at the direction of the voters' assembly, the remaining assets to and only to one or more organizations with which the congregation is in fellowship, which shall at the time qualify as exempt organization(s) (under section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Code).

## **ARTICLE XII: REPEALS AND ALTERATIONS**

### **Section 1. Unalterable and Irrepealable Articles**

Articles II and III of this Constitution shall be and remain unalterable and irrepealable in their descriptive intent, to the extent that they express clear, Scriptural teachings.

### **Section 2. Proposals**

Proposals to alter or repeal any alterable or repealable provision of this Constitution, or to add any provision, shall be submitted in writing to the Church Council for its study and recommendation. Following this study, the Church Council shall publicly announce and print such proposal(s) in the bulletin on two Sundays immediately preceding the regular business meeting of the congregation at which they are to be presented.

### **Section 3. Procedure**

Such a proposal shall be discussed in the meeting at which it is presented and voted on at an ensuing regular meeting of the congregation.

### **Section 4. Two Thirds Vote**

A majority vote, consisting of not less than two-thirds of the voting members present at such a regular meeting of the congregation, shall be required to alter or repeal any alterable or repealable provision of this Constitution, or to add any provision thereto.

### **Section 5. Revisions**

If a revision of this Constitution is made, said revision shall be subject to approval by the Synod or its designated representative.

**Final Congregational Approval of Constitution and By-laws: March 14, 1983**  
**Amended: February 10, 1986**  
**Amended: September 8, 1986**