

# **CONSTITUTION**

## **OF THE**

### **Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church of Osman at Fisher, McLean County, Illinois**

#### **PREAMBLE**

In accordance with God's word, as it may be applied to every congregation, (1 Cor. 14:40) "Let all things be done decently and in order", we, a number of Lutherans dwelling in this community, have united to organize a congregation, and here with in the undersigned document present the Constitution under which we would be united into a congregation and by which the affairs within and without the congregation are to be determined.

#### **ARTICLE I – NAME OF THE CONGREGATION**

The name of this congregation, affiliated with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, shall be IMMANUEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH of Osman of Fisher, McLean County, Illinois.

#### **ARTICLE II – CONFSSIONAL BASIS OF THE CONGREGATION**

The congregation accepts and acknowledges unreservedly as the norm according to which the doctrines in our congregation shall be taught and all arising controversy shall be settled:

1. All the canonical books of the Old and New Testament are the inspired and revealed Word of God.
2. All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of the year 1580 as a true and sound exposition of the Word of God. Those Symbolical Books are: The Ecumenical Creeds of the Christian Church (The Apostles', The Nicene and the Athanasian Creeds); The Unaltered Augsburg Confession; The Apology of the Augsburg Confession; The Smalcald Articles; Luther's Large Catechism; Luther's Small Catechism and the Formula of Concord.

*(While not explicitly stated, the "Smalcald Articles" includes also the "Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope".)*

#### **ARTICLE III -- OBJECT AND PURPOSE OF THE CONGREGATION**

The object and purpose of the congregation is, according to the Word of God, chiefly to establish and maintain the public ministry of the Gospel in our midst, in order that the means of grace may be properly administered. To this and it is necessary:

1. To conduct regular public worship, in which only purely Lutheran forms shall be used in all ministerial acts, and only hymns which are purely Christian in content shall be sung.
2. To exercise truly evangelical pastoral care in all branches, this includes especially a thorough catechetical instruction in Christian doctrine.
3. To found and maintain whenever possible a Christian parish school, and/or any other educational agency, in which, besides the Holy Scriptures and Luther's Small Catechism, such books and literature, shall be used for religious instruction, which are not at variance with the Word of God; and other books used in Christian instruction shall not be used to teach anything contrary to Lutheran doctrine.

4. Since every church is enjoined by Christ to do mission work, Matthew 28:18-20, therefore our church shall be affiliated with and support to the best of its ability, the work of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, as long as said Synod adheres to the doctrines and confessions of the Lutheran Church.

#### **ARTICLE IV – CONDITIONS OF MEMBERSHIP**

No person can become nor remain a member, much less be an officer of this congregation, nor enjoy the privileges and exercise and rights of a member, unless he:

1. Has been baptized in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.
2. Declares his adherence to all the ecumenical books of the Old and New Testaments as the only divine rule and norm of faith and life.
3. Declares his adherence to the doctrines of the Lutheran Church, and, while he yet may be deficient in the knowledge of all the Lutheran Symbols enumerated in Article II, he must be familiar at least with Luther's Small Catechism and declare his acceptance thereof.
4. Diligently hears the Word of God and frequently partakes of the Lord's Supper.
5. Does not live in manifest works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21), leads a Christian life.
6. Submits himself to the regulations of the congregation which have been and still may be adopted, provided they are not contrary to the Word of God and the Lutheran Symbols, and permits himself to be fraternally admonished and corrected when he has erred, according to Matthew 18:15-18.
7. Is not a member of a secret society, an anti-Christian lodge or any other anti-Christian organization whose nature and purpose is contrary to the Holy Scriptures.

#### **ARTICLE V – RIGHT TO VOTE AND ELIGIBILITY TO OFFICE**

The right to vote in the meeting of the congregation and to hold an elective office is granted only to its male and female communicant members who have become 18 years of age, and have signified their agreement with the Constitution and By-Laws of the congregation by signing it in one of their regular or special meetings, after they have been received by a vote of acclamation. All voting members are eligible to hold elective office with the exception that female voters may not hold the office of Chairman of the congregation or the office of Elder.

#### **ARTICLE VI --- DUTIES OF MEMBERS**

It shall be the Christian duty of all communicant members of this congregation to:

1. Put their time and talents into the service of their church.
2. Admonish erring members according to Matthew 18:15-18.
3. Bring their children to baptism at an early date, bring them with them to Sunday School and Church service, commit all unconfirmed children under their parental care to the Christian day-school or to Catechism instructions, and aid them in their spiritual growth at home.
4. Contribute, according to their ability, to the maintenance of all congregational property and expenses and to the payment of all debts of the congregation, and to support the work of the Synod.
5. In all other respects, comply with the provisions of the constitution.
6. It shall be the duty of every voting member to attend the voters' meetings of the congregation. By failing to attend a meeting, the member waives the right to vote in such meeting.

## **ARTICLE VII -- RECEPTION OF MEMBERS**

Fellow Lutherans of congregations in fellowship with ours shall be received into communicant membership upon a notification of transfer from such a congregation and the approval of such reception by the Church Council, which shall be acknowledged later by the Voters' Assembly. Converts shall be received into communicant membership after due instruction or questioning in the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith as are taught in accord with Article II of this Constitution and after such person or persons have made such knowledge and profession of their faith known before the pastor and the Church Council, confirmation itself being a reception into church membership. All who are thus received become communicant members; and those who are received by profession of faith.

## **ARTICLE VIII -- CHURCH DISCIPLINE AND EXCOMMUNICATION**

An erring member of this congregation shall be dealt with according to Matthew 18:15-18. Whom such a member, after due admonition and dealing with, refuses to conform to Christian doctrine and conduct, he shall cease to be a member and shall lose all rights and privileges of a member of this congregation and all claims upon its property. Any person under church discipline shall not have the right of suffrage in any proceeding pertaining to his excommunication.

## **ARTICLE IX – PROPERTY RIGHTS**

Should a separation in the congregation occur, (may God graciously avert it), the entire property of the congregation and all rights connected therein remain with that group which holds fast to this Constitution and keeps their loyalty and affiliation to the Central Illinois District of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. In the event of a final dissolution of the congregation, its property shall be sold by the remaining members of the Assembly of Voters, and after all legitimate financial obligations of the congregation have been met, the residual funds shall be allotted to such, as is agreeable to parties concerned.

## **ARTICLE X – POWER OF THE CONGREGATION**

The congregation, as a whole, has the supreme power to administer and manage its internal and external affairs. For the efficient management of its affairs, regular meetings of the voting members shall be held as occasion requires. Matters of doctrine and conscience shall be decided by the Word of God.

## **ARTICLE XI – OFFICES OF PASTOR AND TEACHER**

The offices of pastor and teacher in this congregation shall be conferred upon such ministers and teachers or candidates who:

1. Profess their acceptance of and adherence to all the canonical book of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and all the Symbols of the Lutheran Church, enumerated in Article II.
2. Have been examined by Synod and certified. (See Article III, 4).
3. Are properly and rightfully called by the congregation.

## **ARTICLE XII – OTHER OFFICES IN THE CONGREGATION**

The elected officers of the congregation shall be a Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Elders, Trustees, Finance Committee, Sunday School Superintendent and Assistant Sunday School Superintendent. These officers shall constitute the Church Council. Other officers or committees deemed necessary for the efficient, evangelical and progressive operation of this congregation shall be appointed by the Chairman or Church Council. The Church

Council is only advisory, not legislative. The congregation looks to this Council for leadership. The pastor is to be an Ex-Officio member of the Church Council and of all boards and committees.

### **ARTICLE XIII -- REMOVAL FROM OFFICE**

All officers of the congregation, including pastor and teacher, may be released from office in Christian and lawful order. Sufficient and urgent reasons for removing an officer are/can be: persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, willful neglect of official duties or the inability to perform his/her duties due to age, illness or other causes. For the removal of a called worker from office, an affirmative ballot by a majority of all the voting members shall be required.

### **ARTICLE XIV – ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION**

All societies, clubs and individual or group actions within the congregation and affecting its welfare shall be promoted, established and maintained only with the consent of the Assembly of Voters and remain under its guidance and control. Fraternal insurance organizations need consent of voters but operate under their own guidance and control.

### **ARTICLE XV – AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION**

The congregation may amend or repeal any article of this constitution, except Article II, CONFSSIONAL BASIS OF THE CONGREGATION, Article XI and paragraph 3 of Article III, which shall forever remain unalterable. Proposed amendments shall be presented in writing and read at any regularly called meeting of the congregation. Adoption of such proposed amendments shall require two-thirds majority vote of those present at a subsequent regularly called meeting. Such proposed alteration must be published in advance of the deciding meeting that such impending change might be known.

<b>BY-LAWS</b>
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### **ARTICLE I – MEETINGS**

Regular quarterly meetings shall be held on the first Sunday of each quarter, when possible, except the first quarterly meeting which shall be considered the Annual Meeting, which is to be held on the first Sunday after the first Monday of January, if possible. All regular meetings shall be announced at least one Sunday in advance. Special meetings may be called by two Council members, when necessary. The quorum to transact business shall be one-fourth (1/4<sup>th</sup>) of the voting members. The Church Council shall meet once a month.

Ordinarily, the voters present at a properly called meeting shall constitute a quorum to do business. However, for the purchase or sale of property, for the erection of buildings, for a separation in the congregation or total disbandment of the congregation, a majority of all voting members shall be required for a quorum. In the absence of a majority, those present may fix the date for an adjourned meeting for which at least five days written notice shall be given. The members who are present at such adjourned meeting shall constitute a quorum. For the removal of a called worker from office, an affirmative allot by a majority of all the voting members shall be required.

### **ARTICLE II – OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES AND OFFICIAL MEETINGS**

The Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer shall be elected every two years. There shall be four elders, two to be elected every year and to serve for two years. There shall be two trustees, one to be elected every year and to serve for two years. There shall be two Finance Committee members, one to be elected every year and to serve

for two years. An Assistant Superintendent of the Sunday School shall be elected every year and automatically become Sunday School Superintendent the following year. There shall be an Education, Stewardship and Mission Committee, composed of three members each to be appointed by the Chairman or committees. Women of the congregation may be represented on these committees. The Education Committee shall promote and supervise all phases of Christian education in the congregation. The Stewardship Committee shall encourage and promote all phases of stewardship in the congregation. The Mission Committee shall encourage and promote the mission work of the congregation.

**THE SECRETARY** shall write the minutes of the Assembly of Voters and Church Council meetings and take into custody all documents and papers of the congregation. He/She shall attend to all correspondence as designated by the congregation.

**THE TREASURER** shall receive all monies of the congregation, except the Building Fund money as need arises for a Building Fund Treasurer, and keep a records of receipts and disbursements for Current, Special and Mission offerings and make a report of the same at each Council Meeting and Voters' Assembly Meeting. He/She shall make payments in accordance with valid resolutions and regulations of the congregation, and shall keep on file all receipts and vouchers for payment made. His/Her records shall be audited each year before the Annual Meeting.

**THE TRUSTEES** shall act as stewards over the property of the congregation, to sign documents, and to fulfill all business which the congregation shall transact. They are authorized to spend small sums, not to exceed \$100.00 for necessary expenses in the care of the congregational property. They may expend greater amounts upon the approval of the Church Council or the Assembly of Voters. The Church Council is empowered to spend for necessary items or repairs up to \$500.00 without the consent of the congregation. Greater amounts shall be acted upon by the Voters' Assembly. The Trustees shall authorize the Building Fund Treasurer to pay all allowable bills.

**THE FINANCE COMMITTEE** shall count all monies contributed to the congregation and keep a record of them. They shall distribute offering envelopes to all who desire to use them. They shall keep the congregation informed as to its financial status and needs, as well as Synodical and special needs in harmony with the resolutions and wishes of the congregation. If they find that some members are in arrears they can, in all friendliness, remind them of their Christian duty in stewardship of giving. They shall receive pledges for the coming year as the congregation so wills it and shall explain to new members the financial system of the congregation. The Finance Committee, Church Council and Pastor are to set up the budget for the new year.

**THE SUNDAY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT** with his/her Assistant is to supervise the work of the Sunday School, to conduct the Sunday School services, and to render a yearly report at the Annual Congregational meeting

**THE AUDITING COMMITTEE** shall audit the books of the Treasurer before the Annual Voters' Meeting. The Church Council shall at its discretion appoint an auditing committee before the church's October quarterly meeting. Only such members are eligible to serve on this committee as at the time are not handling the finances of the congregation.

**THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE**, appointed by the Church Council, shall nominate such members of the congregation who, in their opinion, would qualify for such offices to which they nominate them. This committee shall present a slate for election at the Annual Meeting. One candidate shall be placed on the ballot for each office by the Nominating Committee. This ballot shall be finalized by the time of the Newsletter one month prior to the month of the Annual Meeting, and also presented in one church bulletin in that same month. At the Annual Meeting, the committee shall present this ballot. Additional names may be nominated from the floor. A vacancy for

any reason except expiration of term shall be filled by the Church Council until the next regularly scheduled Annual Voters' Assembly.

### **ARTICLE III – ELECTION OF A PASTOR OR TEACHER**

The right to call a pastor or teacher shall at all times remain with the Assembly of Voters. Whom such candidate shall have the received a majority vote, such vote shall be made unanimous before a formal Divine Call is issued. The process shall be the same if the candidate comes from a seminary. This call shall then be signed by the Chairman and Elders of the congregation and the vacancy Pastor.

### **ARTICLE IV -- RELEASE OF MEMBERS**

A communicant member in good standing who desires to withdraw from membership and join a sister congregation in fellowship with ours shall receive upon application to the pastor a certificate of release whereupon the Pastor shall notify the Church Council of such action and later the Voters' Assembly. Should such member be an officer of the congregation he/she shall, in a regular or special meeting of the Voters' Assembly, make his/her application for release which shall then be acted upon.

A communicant member in good standing who desires to withdraw from membership and join another church body not in fellowship with our congregation shall make his/her request known to the pastor and shall be warned against subject himself/herself to false doctrine. (John. 8:31, 32; Matthew. 7:15; 16:6, 11,12; Romans. 16:17). A communicant member, not in good standing, as deemed by the Pastor and the Church Council, shall be removed from membership of the congregation as seen fit by the Pastor and Church Council. Final authority over the decision of whether a person is in good or bad standing remains with the Pastor.

### **ARTICLE V – AMENDEMENTS TO BY-LAWS**

Proposed amendments to these By-Laws must be submitted in writing at any regularly called or special meeting of the Assembly of Voters. Adopting of such proposed amendments shall require a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of voters present at any subsequent regularly called or special meeting. Such proposed alteration must be published in advance of the deciding meeting that such impending change might be known.