



**BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
Gurnee, Illinois

# **BYLAWS OF THE CONGREGATION**

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

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- A. The following positions will be the officers of this Congregation:
1. Nine members of the Governing Board.
  2. Six or more Elders.
- B. Additional officers of the Congregation are defined in the Policy Manual.

## **ARTICLE II – TERMS OF OFFICERS**

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- A. The term of office of each elected official of the Congregation shall be three years (unless fulfilling an unexpired term due to vacancy). Officers are eligible for re-election.
- B. Election of one-third of the members of the Elders and Governing Board shall be conducted in each annual meeting of the Voters Assembly.
- C. Election of the Preschool Chairperson shall occur every two years.

## **ARTICLE III – ELECTION OF CONGREGATIONAL OFFICERS**

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- A. Candidates for offices of this Congregation shall be Voting Members who are 25 years of age or older.

Candidates for the office of Elder must also be a male Voting Member of the Congregation. All other Governing Board members and Elders are voted on at large (not for specified roles), except for the roles of Treasurer and Financial Secretary, which are voted on by role due to the specific requirements and experience needed for these roles.



- B. The President shall appoint a nominating committee to present a slate of candidates at the annual meeting of the Voters Assembly to fill any position vacancies and expiring terms. Additional nominations may be made from the floor by any Voting Member present at the meeting for any congregational office up for election.
- C. The election of officers of the Congregation shall be conducted by ballot vote. The ballot vote process may be conducted using paper or electronically and will be defined by the Governing Board. The nominees receiving the highest number of votes shall be declared elected to the respective offices. When only one name is running for a position, a voice vote may be utilized.

When multiple candidates for the at-large Governing Board positions are being voted on, the nominees with the highest number of votes, and the nominee with the next highest number of votes (and so on), shall be elected.

A tie vote shall be settled by an additional vote limited to the nominees who received the equal number of votes.

- D. Officers of the Congregation elected at an annual meeting shall take office on the following January 1. They shall be installed into office at a worship service on or near the beginning of their terms of office, but the election by the Voters Assembly and not the installation shall confer on them the duties and responsibilities of their respective offices.
- E. In the event of a vacancy in the Governing Board, the Governing Board shall appoint a candidate to fill the unexpired term until the next annual meeting, where the Voters Assembly will elect a candidate to fill the role for the remaining unexpired term. In the event of a vacancy in the Board of Elders, the Elders shall appoint a candidate to fill the unexpired term until the next annual meeting.

#### **ARTICLE IV – VOTERS ASSEMBLY MEETINGS**

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- A. The Governing Board is required to hold an annual Voters Assembly meeting, recommended to be conducted in the fourth quarter of the year.
- B. Special meetings of the Voters Assembly may be called for specific purposes by a majority vote of the members of the Governing Board, or upon a written request signed by at least ten Voting Members and submitted to the Governing Board.
- C. The date of the special or regular Voters Assembly and the elements on the agenda shall be announced in the weekly bulletins or in the worship services the week prior and the date of the Voters Assembly.
- D. Emergency Voters Meetings may be called for a specific purpose with the approval of a majority of the Governing Board Members present at a worship service in which the announcement of the meeting is made.
- E. The Voting Members present at any duly called regular or special meeting of the Voters Assembly shall constitute a quorum.
- F. Upon the motion and approval of a majority of the Voting Members present, any Voters Meeting may be



adjourned to be continued at a future date.

- G. The Pastor and other called workers are ex-officio members of the Voters Assembly. Ex-officio members shall participate in an advisory role and may not make motions or vote.
- H. All votes, unless stated otherwise in the Constitution or Bylaws, shall be decided by a simple majority.
- I. The Voters Assembly may, at the discretion of the Governing Board, meet in a virtual manner with some or all of the members attending via electronic communication. Persons attending virtually will be considered as attending the meeting and their votes will apply to all decisions.

## **ARTICLE V – GOVERNING BOARD**

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- A. Two at-large Governing Board members will be elected at the annual Voters Meeting for three-year staggered terms. The Treasurer and Financial Secretary shall be elected for staggered terms.
- B. The Governing Board shall elect amongst themselves to fill all offices with the exception of the Treasurer and Financial Secretary, who are directly elected by the Voters Assembly.
- C. The offices of the Governing Board consist of President, Recording Secretary, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, a representative from the Board of Elders and four at-large members.
- D. The voting members of the Governing Board are the nine elected members. This includes the Elder Representative.
- E. The President and Recording Secretary of the Governing Board shall also serve as President and Recording Secretary of the Congregation.
- F. The Pastor and other professional Church staff (as determined by the Governing Board) shall be ex-officio members of the Governing Board. Ex-officio members shall serve on the Governing Board only in an advisory role and may not make motions or vote.
- G. Any paid Church staff, board leader or congregation member may attend Governing Board meetings to share a report or raise a concern. The Governing Board may choose to go into executive session.
- H. In the absence of the President, the Church Governing Board shall appoint one of its members to preside at meetings.
- I. The Governing Board shall:
  - 1. Meet monthly or as necessary to accomplish its described responsibilities.
  - 2. Develop and implement policies to guide the daily and operational activities of the Church, via the Policy Manual and notify the congregation of any changes to the Policy Manual within one month of the adoption.
  - 3. Oversee and provide support for existing boards including the Board of Christian Education, Preschool Board, Property Board, Youth Board, and others as defined in the Policy Manual. Additionally, the Governing Board shall create or approve of additional boards and committees as needed to carry out the financial, operational, and ministerial aspects of the Church according to the Policy Manual. All boards and committees supported by the Church, except the Board of



Elders, report to the Voters Assembly through the Governing Board.

4. Develop an Annual Budget that is subject to the approval of the Voters Assembly prior to the start of the fiscal year.
5. Make expenditures and payments that are within the pre-approved budget.
  - a. Emergency expenditures (whether contained within the budget or not) less than \$10,000 may be approved in a responsible manner by the President with prompt notification of the Governing Board. Emergency expenditures greater than \$10,000 require the majority approval of the Governing Board Members.  
(Emergencies are defined in this context as an unexpected situation that represents a danger to Bethel's property or Congregation that could reasonably prevent ongoing ministry or make the conducting of such ministry a hazard).
  - b. Non-Emergency expenses over \$5,000 outside the defined and pre-approved budget, along with the sale of Church property (valued \$5,000, or greater), shall require prior approval from the Voters Assembly.  
Non-Emergency Expenses under \$5,000 may be made from savings or special funds by a majority vote of the Governing Board.
  - c. All Expenses above \$2,000 not defined in the pre-approved budget (Emergency or Non-Emergency) shall be announced (written or verbal means are acceptable) to the Congregation within two weeks of the expense.
  - d. The Governing Board shall delegate and define additional expenditure controls via the Policy Manual, including authorizations of the extended organization as defined in Article V.I.3 and management of savings and special funds, but must stay within the limit guidelines allowed by these Bylaws.
  - e. Act on behalf of the Congregation to acquire property of every kind and description, real, personal, or mixed; hold and use such property and deal with, or dispose of, any or all such property to carry out the purposes of the Congregation.
  - f. Arrange for an annual audit of the financial records of the Church. The auditor may be someone from inside or outside the Church but must be independent from financial involvement in the Church's financial operations.
  - g. Obtain a fidelity bond in the amount determined by the Governing Board for the officers, employees, volunteers and called workers of the Congregation.
  - h. Insure the property of the Congregation with an appropriate policy as defined by the Governing Board.
- J. The President and Recording Secretary shall represent the Church in all legal matters.
- K. The Treasurer shall be empowered to have custody and control over all of the Congregation's funds and shall submit the necessary financial or related reports or documents to the District, Synod, Internal Revenue Service, State of Illinois, or other agencies.
- L. The Financial Secretary shall document all receipts (monetary or in-kind) to the Congregation and shall keep this information confidential and be the only person who knows the aggregated giving from individual Members. Proper records shall be provided to Members to document their giving on an annual basis.



## **ARTICLE VI – BOARD OF ELDERS**

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- A. The six or more elected Elders after each annual Voters Meeting shall elect amongst themselves a Chairman and Secretary.
- B. The Elders shall:
  - 1. Meet monthly, or as necessary to accomplish described responsibilities.
  - 2. Be responsible for the oversight of all called workers including providing performance reviews and setting goals.
  - 3. Ensure called workers remain true to the confessional standards in Article III of the Constitution.
  - 4. Provide Spiritual care to the called staff, their families and the congregation.
  - 5. Make recommendations to the Governing Board for policy updates or benefit changes in the best interest of the called staff, aligned with the budget and ministerial direction of the Church.
  - 6. Elect one member to serve on the Governing Board and provide input regarding the spiritual welfare of the congregation.

## **ARTICLE VII – PRESCHOOL**

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- A. The Preschool shall provide, for a not-for-profit fee, Christian education and training for the preschool-age children of the Congregation and others as enrollment permits.
- B. The Chair of the Preschool Board, as elected by the Congregation, shall appoint individuals to the Preschool Board, with approval from the Governing Board. The board is defined in Article VII of the Policy Manual.
- C. The Chair of the Preschool Board shall recommend to the Governing Board for approval for the role of Preschool Director a candidate who complies with all licensing guidelines.
- D. The Preschool Director may make recommendations of qualified candidates who comply with all licensing guidelines to the Chairperson for Preschool to fill appropriate roles in the preschool.
  - 1. Roles that are filled by Bethel Communicant Members may be appointed by the Preschool board.
  - 2. Roles that are filled by staff who are not Bethel Communicant Members shall be brought to the Governing Board for review and approval.
- E. The paid preschool staff shall be installed at a worship service on or near the beginning of the school year. The approval of the Preschool Board or the Governing Board, not the installation, shall confer on the paid staff the duties of their respective roles.
- F. The Preschool shall comply with all policies as defined in Article VII of the Policy Manual.



## **ARTICLE VIII – PASTORAL OFFICE**

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- A. The pastoral office in this Congregation shall be conferred upon such ministers or ministerial candidates who qualify under Article V of the Constitution of the Congregation and have been properly called by the Voters Assembly in a regular or special meeting, provided that announcement of the intent to vote on a call has been made.

## **ARTICLE IX – CALLING A PROFESSIONAL CHURCH WORKER**

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- A. Once the Voters Assembly has voted to start the process to issue a call, the Board of Elders shall select two or more members of the congregation to serve on the Call Committee along with at least one Elder.

The Call Committee should seek input from leaders and members of the Congregation to determine the needs and desires in a called worker for the Congregation.

- B. When a vacancy occurs in the pastoral office, the Board of Elders shall:
1. Ensure coverage for immediate services with a substitute Pastor. Voters' approval is not required for a Substitute Pastor unless they move into a Vacancy Pastor role.
  2. Determine the functions and duties required of a Vacancy Pastor.
  3. Identify (via known available Pastors or via District resources) available Pastors and recommend a Vacancy Pastor and compensation package for approval by the Voters Assembly.
- C. When a vacancy occurs in the pastoral office, the Call Committee shall:
1. Obtain a list of Pastoral candidates with brief biographies by conferring with the District/Synod, and request names of candidates from Communicant Members. All such nominations from Communicant Members shall be submitted in writing to the Call Committee.
  2. Review the qualifications and availability of all candidates to identify those who may be an appropriate fit considering the needs and ministries desired by the Congregation.
  3. Provide a list of recommended Pastoral Candidates (including biographies) to the Communicant Members to provide an opportunity to present a valid objection to any candidate. Objections shall be reviewed but may not automatically disqualify a candidate based on the Call Committee's discretion.
  4. Conduct a Voters Assembly to present the final list of Pastoral candidates to the Voting Members. Only those candidates who are approved by majority vote of the Voters Assembly shall be considered for the Call list.  
Candidates left off the initial Call list may be added back to the Call list via a future Voters Assembly approval.
  5. Arrange for interviews and personal visits (as possible) from the Call list. When possible, the Congregation shall have an opportunity to meet and question candidates. If not possible, the Call committee shall provide details of interviews for consideration by the Congregation.



6. Issue a Call by conducting a Voters Assembly. The vote shall be conducted by ballot. The nominee receiving a majority of all votes cast shall be considered selected to receive a Call. In the event that no nominee receives a majority vote on the first ballot, then the nominee or nominees receiving the lowest number of votes shall be eliminated from the list and another ballot vote shall be taken, and this procedure shall be continued until one nominee receives a majority of the votes cast.
7. Prepare the official Call, Diploma of Vocation, and transmittal letter signed by the President of the Congregation for submission to the chosen Pastoral candidate after the candidate has been informed of the Call by the Circuit Visitor.
8. If a Call is declined, then the Call Committee shall revert to Bylaws Article IX.C.6 to bring a new list of candidates to the Voters Assembly. The original Call can be repeated or modified through a vote at this meeting.
9. This process is also a guide for calling other professional church workers.

## **ARTICLE X – MEMBERSHIP TERMINATION**

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### **A. Termination of Membership**

1. Termination may occur by transfer to a sister congregation, by joining a congregation outside of our fellowship, by death, or through administrative deletion.
2. In the event a Member's status or whereabouts cannot be determined and/or when a decisive response regarding the desire for disposition of their membership cannot be obtained, and after good faith attempts have been made to contact the person, the matter shall be referred to the Governing Board for consideration. A favorable two-thirds majority vote is needed to certify the administrative deletion.
3. Termination of membership shall be made public to the Congregation via written means (bulletin, newsletter, etc.).
4. Terminated Members are eligible for no rights or privileges within the Congregation. However, this administrative action is taken without prejudice. A Terminated Member may rejoin and should be encouraged to rejoin the faith community at any time through a statement reaffirming their beliefs. If at any time the former Member should request in person or through another Congregation or other agent acceptable to the Board of Elders that the membership be transferred or that peaceful release should be granted to permit affiliating with another faith community, this is allowed as if the Terminated Member had not been deleted from membership.

### **B. Christian Discipline, Excommunication, and Self-Exclusion**

Any Member who conducts themselves in an unchristian manner shall be admonished according to Matthew 18:15-20. If they refuse to amend their sinful life after proper admonition, they shall be excommunicated. If the Member refuses to attend the Voters Assembly meetings or to meet with a smaller group to discuss this case, they have excluded themselves. A level II vote (as defined in Article XI.B of the Constitution) shall be required for every resolution of the Voters Assembly for excommunication or self-exclusion. Excommunication or self-exclusion terminates membership.