

EMMANUEL ENGLISH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
OF ETNA, PENNSYLVANIA
C O N S T I T U T I O N

PREAMBLE

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

We, members of the Church of Christ, desiring to be blessed together with Word and Sacrament and to unite as a congregation in the common confession, defense and propagation of our faith in Jesus Christ our Savior, do hereby adopt this constitution and solemnly pledge ourselves to be governed by its provisions.

ARTICLE I

Name and Incorporation

Section 1. The name of this congregation shall be Emmanuel English Evangelical Lutheran Church of Etna, Pennsylvania.

Section 2. This congregation shall be incorporated.

Section 3. The seal of this congregation presents the inscription "Seal" in capitalized print in the center of the seal. The phrase "Incorporated July 28, 1900" surrounds the inscription. Around the inscription shall be a circle and between that circle and the outer edge of the seal shall be inscribed Emmanuel English Evangelical Lutheran Church Etna, Pa..

ARTICLE II

Confession of Faith

Section 1. This congregation confesses Jesus Christ as Lord of the Church. The Holy Spirit creates and sustains the Church through the Gospel and thereby unites believers with their Lord and with one another in the fellowship of faith.

Section 2. This congregation holds that the Gospel is the revelation of God's sovereign will and saving grace in Jesus Christ. In Him, the Word Incarnate, God imparts Himself to men.

Section 3. This congregation acknowledges the Holy Scriptures as the norm for the faith and life of the Church. The Holy Scriptures are the divinely inspired record of God's redemptive act in Christ, for which the Old testament prepared the way and which the New Testament proclaims. In the continuation of this proclamation in the Church, God still speaks through the Holy Scriptures and realizes His redemptive purpose generation after generation.

Section 4. This congregation accepts the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian creeds as true declarations of the faith of the Church.

Section 5. This congregation accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism as true witnesses to the Gospel, and acknowledges as one with it in faith and doctrine all churches that likewise accept the teachings of these symbols.

Section 6. This congregation accepts the other symbolical books of the evangelical Lutheran church, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, Luther's Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, as further valid interpretations of the confession of the Church.

Section 7. This congregation affirms that the Gospel transmitted by the Holy Scriptures, to which the creeds and confessions bear witness, is the true treasure of the Church, the substance of its proclamation, and the basis of its unity and continuity. The Holy Spirit uses the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship. As this occurs, the Church fulfills its divine mission and purpose.

ARTICLE III

Relation To The Lutheran Church In America

Section 1. This congregation is and shall remain a member of the Lutheran Church in America or its successor, of the Western Pennsylvania - West Virginia Synod, and of the district to which it is assigned by the Synod.

Section 2. This congregation claims for itself all the rights and privileges and accepts all the duties and obligations, connected with such membership. In so doing, this congregation recognizes the constitution, by-laws and constitutional enactments of the Lutheran Church in America and of the synod to which it belongs as having governing force in its life.

Section 3. This congregation covenants to support faithfully with prayer, personal service and offerings the common work of the church and of the synod for the Kingdom of God.

Section 4. This constitution, and all amendments thereof, shall be transmitted to the synod for review to ascertain that none of its provisions is in conflict with the constitution and by-laws of the Lutheran Church in America or with the synodical constitution. The article herein embodying the Confession of Faith and the section declaring the adherence of the congregation to the Lutheran Church in America shall not be altered without explicit action by the synod agreeing thereto.

Section 5. The president of the synod or his appointed representative shall have the right to be present at, and shall receive prior notice of, all meetings of the congregation and of the church council during a pastoral vacancy.

Section 6. Should the congregation desire to relocate, or merge with another congregation, it shall secure the advice and approval of the synod before any commitments to that end are entered into.

Section 7. In case of strife or division, if any part of this congregation rejects the faith set forth in Article II, or refuses to abide by its obligations as a member of the Lutheran Church in America, that part of the congregation, whether a majority or a minority of its membership, which continues in unity with the Lutheran Church in America and its faith shall be recognized as the lawful congregation and shall continue in possession of all the property of the congregation.

Section 8. If this congregation a) disbands, b) ceases or fails to maintain religious worship or services according to the tenets and usages of the Lutheran church, c) departs from membership in the Lutheran Church in America without the consent of the synod, or d) so decreases in numbers or financial strength as to render it impracticable for the congregation to fulfill the purposes for which it was organized or to protect its assets from waste and deterioration, the synod to which Emmanuel English Evangelical Lutheran Church of Etna, Pennsylvania belongs shall have the right to take charge and control of all property of the congregation and thereafter to hold, manage, and convey the same at the discretion of the synod.

ARTICLE IV

Membership

Section 1. This congregation shall consist of its pastor or pastors and other baptized persons within its fellowship. Child members are defined as those who have been baptized and are a part of the family of the congregation but who have not yet been confirmed. Adult or confirmed members are those who have been duly received into communicant membership of the congregation by adult Baptism, confirmation, certificate of transfer from another Lutheran congregation, or reaffirmation of faith. Each applicant for adult membership shall have been properly instructed in the Word of God and the faith of the Lutheran church prior to his or her reception. All applications for such membership shall be submitted to, and shall require the approval of, the church council.

Section 2. It shall be the duty of confirmed members to avail themselves faithfully of the Means of Grace, joining regularly in the services of worship of this congregation, hearing the Word of God preached, and partaking of the Lord's Supper. They shall earnestly study the Holy Scriptures and observe private and family devotions. As is fitting for those whom the Holy Spirit has called to faith and discipleship, the members of this congregation shall lead a Christian life in love, humility and peace, endeavoring through admonition, consolation and encouragement to edify one another. They shall endeavor to promote the unity and welfare of the congregation as a family of God.

Section 3. Parents shall present their children for Holy Baptism in early infancy and shall diligently nurture them in the Christian faith in the home and in the schools provided by the congregation.

Section 4. Acknowledging that all they are and all they have, come as good gifts from God, members shall, as one expression of their gratitude and obedience, contribute to the financial support of the congregation and for the general work of missions, mercy and education carried on by the Lutheran Church in America.

Section 5. Confirmed members who have received Holy Communion or made a contribution of record to the congregation within the preceeding (two) years shall be on the active roll of such members. Those confirmed members who no longer qualify for that roll because they have neither received Holy Communion nor made a contribution of record to the congregation within the preceeding (two) years shall be classified as inactive. As such, they shall remain within the continuing concern of the congregation and shall be given conscientious pastoral care. An inactive member shall be restored by the church council to the active roll of confirmed members when he again receives the Lord's Supper and makes a contribution of record to the congregation.

Section 6. A communing member is defined as a member who has received the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper at least once within the year.

Section 7. At the request of a confirmed member a certificate of standing or of transfer of membership to another Lutheran or other evangelical congregation shall be issued to him.

ARTICLE V

The Pastor

Section 1. A pastor of this congregation shall be a ^{MAN/WOMAN} ~~man~~ whose soundness in the faith, aptness to teach, and educational qualifications have been examined and approved by the church, and who has been properly ordained; who accepts and adheres to the Confession of Faith of the Lutheran Church in America and of this congregation (ARTICLE II); and whose life and conduct are above reproach.

Section 2. He/^{SHE} shall be a member of the Lutheran Church in America, or shall promptly apply to become a member thereof upon acceptance of the call of this congregation. Should the synod refuse to receive him, or should he be deposed from the office of the ministry, he shall automatically cease to be a pastor of this congregation.

Section 3. In the selection of a pastor, the congregation shall seek the counsel and guidance of the president of the synod.

Section 4. As soon as practicable after entering upon his duties, a pastor of this congregation shall be duly installed in his office by the president of the synod or his appointee.

Section 5. A pastor shall preach the Word, administer the Sacraments and conduct public worship in consistency with the faith and practices of the Lutheran Church in America. He shall care for his people individually and as a congregation, give catechetical instruction, confirm, marry in accordance with the teaching of the church and with the laws of the state, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead. He shall inculcate piety in individual and family life and supervise all schools and auxiliary organizations of the congregation. He shall install regularly elected members of the church council, and, with the council, administer discipline. He shall seek out and encourage qualified young men to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel and strive to extend the Kingdom of God in the community, in the homeland and abroad. He shall impart knowledge of the church and its wider ministry through distribution of its periodicals and other publications and shall endeavor to increase the liberality of this congregation in support of the work of the Lutheran Church in America and of the synod.

Section 6. In order that a pastor of this congregation may devote himself fully to the duties of his office, he shall receive an adequate salary, paid in semi-monthly or monthly installments. His expenses incident to attendance at conventions of the synod, except for travel, and attendance at meetings of the district shall be defrayed by the congregation.

Section 7. The pastor shall keep the membership rolls of the congregation, reporting thereon periodically to the church council. He shall record acts in the official parish register, which shall be and remain the property of the congregation. He shall be the custodian of the seal.

ARTICLE VI

Congregational Meetings

Section 1. All who are on the active roll of confirmed members shall be eligible to vote in all congregational meetings.

Section 2. An annual meeting of the congregation shall be held in the month of January at a time determined by the Church Council.

Section 3. Special congregational meetings may be called by the pastor or the church council, and shall be called at the written request of one tenth of those on the active roll of confirmed members. The call for each special meeting shall specify the purpose for which it is to be held, and no other business shall be transacted thereat.

Section 4. Notice of all congregational meetings shall be given at the services of worship on the preceding two consecutive Sundays or by mail to all who are on the active roll of confirmed members at least ten days in advance of the date of the meeting.

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Section 5. Twenty-five of those on the active roll of confirmed members who are eligible to vote in congregational meetings shall constitute a quorum.

ARTICLE VII

Elections

Section 1. Election of a pastor shall be by written ballot at a properly called congregational meeting presided over by the president of the synod or his appointee. Balloting shall be limited at any one meeting to a single nomination presented by the church council with at least two thirds of its members concurring. Two thirds of the votes cast shall be necessary for election. After the congregation has approved the salary and other emoluments to be offered to the pastor-elect, the church council shall execute a call accordingly and forward the same to him. Unless otherwise agreed the call shall normally become invalid unless a definite answer is received within thirty days after its receipt. If a nominee fails of election or declines the call, the church council shall make another nomination at a subsequent meeting.

Section 2. If this congregation unites with one or more other congregations in calling a pastor, the church councils of all congregations in the parish shall meet jointly and agree on a single nomination for election, the balloting to be done separately in each congregation. Two thirds of all the votes cast, and a majority of the votes cast in each congregation, shall be required for election. The joint church council shall issue the call.

Section 3. If this congregation receives salary aid for its pastor from the Board of American Missions of the Lutheran Church in America, prior approval of that board must be secured to the nomination of a pastor and the amount of compensation to be offered to him.

Section 4. Council members shall be elected by ballot for terms of three years by a majority vote at the annual congregational meetings. Their tenure shall be so arranged that one third of the terms expire annually. A council member shall be eligible to serve no more than two full terms consecutively. Vacancies occurring ad interim shall be filled by the church council, the appointee to serve until the next annual meeting of the congregation.

Section 8. When a pastor of this congregation desires to terminate his period of service, he shall submit his resignation to the church council for report to the congregation. Unless otherwise agreed, the resignation shall normally become effective two months after the date on which it is submitted.

Section 9.

- a. The regular call of this congregation when accepted by a pastor shall constitute a permanent relationship which shall be terminated only for the following causes: (1) the death of the pastor or the dissolution of the congregation; (2) the resignation of the pastor; (3) the attainment by the pastor of the age of seventy years, after which time his pastoral service may be extended from year to year by a two-thirds vote at a congregational meeting; (4) disqualification of the pastor through discipline; (5) the physical or mental disability of the pastor; (6) continued neglect of duty; (7) inability to conduct the pastoral office efficiently in this congregation in view of local conditions, without reflection on the moral and spiritual character of the pastor.
- b. In the last three contingencies, it shall be the duty of the president of the synod, when such difficulties are personally known to him or have been brought to his attention by the dean of the district, by an official recital of allegations by the church council, or by a petition signed by at least one third of the communing members, to investigate such conditions personally in company with a committee of two ministers and one layman.
- c. In case of alleged physical or mental disability, competent medical testimony shall be secured. When such disability is evident, the president of the synod with the advice of the committee shall declare the pastorate vacant.
- d. In case of alleged neglect of duty or of local difficulties which imperil the efficient conduct of the congregation, all those concerned shall be heard, after which the president of the synod together with an advisory committee, shall decide on the course of action to be recommended to the pastor and the congregation. If both agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action shall be taken by the synod. If either party fails to assent, the matter shall be reported to the subsequent convention of the synod and its action, based on the evidence submitted, shall be final. Such action shall not be regarded as an act of discipline but as an act of expediency based on the principles of Christian love.
- e. The foregoing procedure shall never be invoked when questions of doctrine or morality are involved, all such cases being treated as disciplinary matters.

Section 10. Charges against a pastor which, if sustained, would subject him to discipline shall be presented to the synod and adjudicated by it as set forth in the by-laws of the Lutheran Church in America.

Section 11. At a time of pastoral vacancy, a vice-pastor shall be appointed by the president of the synod with the consent of the congregation or the church council.

Section 12. During his period of service, a vice-pastor shall have the rights and duties of a regularly called pastor. He may delegate the same in part to an interim supply pastor with the consent of the president of the synod. The vice-pastor and any ministers who may assist him shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor.

Section 13. This congregation shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to the former pastor before calling a successor.

Section 14. The privileges and responsibilities of an associate or assistant pastor shall be specified in his call, which shall be drafted in consultation with the president of the synod.

ARTICLE VIII

Church Council

Section 1. The church council shall consist of the pastor or pastors and fifteen laymembers. Any person on the active roll of confirmed members who is of legal age may be elected a council member, subject only to the limitation on the length of continuous service permitted in that office. Should a council member cease to be on the active roll of confirmed members in the congregation, or should he without excuse fail to attend four successive regular meetings of the church council, his place shall at once be declared vacant.

Section 2. All lay members of the church council shall be installed by the pastor according to the prescribed order of the church at the next public service following their election or as soon thereafter as convenient.

Section 3. The duties of the church council shall include the following:

- a. To have general oversight of the spiritual life and activities of the congregation, and in particular of its public worship, to the end that everything is done in accordance with the Word of God and the faith and practices of the Lutheran Church in America.
- b. To provide schools and facilities for Christian education for children, youth and adults.
- c. To inculcate the motives and practice of stewardship in all members of the congregation, and to encourage liberal giving to the work of the church in all its aspects at home and everywhere.
- d. To support the pastor in fulfilling his calling, and in so doing to visit the sick, the infirm and the spiritually indifferent, the minister to the poor and distressed and to seek to bring the unchurched into the fold of Christ.
- e. To promote a spirit of peace and good will within the congregation and if differences arise, to endeavor to restore harmony and mutual understanding.
- f. To arrange for pastoral supply during the sickness or absence of the pastor.

Section 4. The Church Council shall be the Board of Trustees of the Congregation and as such shall be responsible for its property and the management of 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 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Church Council shall not, however, have the authority to buy, sell or encumber real property unless specifically authorized to do so by a meeting of the congregation. It shall prepare an annual budget for adoption by the congregation, shall supervise the expenditure of funds in accordance therewith following its adoption, and shall not incur any extra budgetary financial obligation exceeding \$750 without authority from the congregation except in case of emergency. ²⁰⁰⁰

Section 5. The church council shall see that the provisions of this constitution are obeyed and that the resolutions of the congregation are carried out.

Section 6. The church council shall be responsible for the employment and supervision of the salaried lay workers of the congregation.

Section 7. The church council shall elect persons on the active roll of confirmed members in the congregation who are of legal age as delegates in the permitted numbers to the conventions of the synod and the meetings of the district to which this congregation belongs. The expenses incurred by such delegates in connection with their attendance, except for travel to the conventions of the synod shall be paid by the congregation.

Section 8. The church council shall normally meet once a month. Special meetings may be called by the pastor, or the president of the congregation, and shall be called 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.

Section 9. The church council shall submit a comprehensive report to the congregation at the annual meeting.

Section 10. A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of a majority of the members of the church council, including the pastor or vice-pastor except with consent, or in cases in which he has given prior approval to the consideration of questions of a routine nature, in which event the business of the meeting shall be confined to such matters.

ARTICLE IX

Officers

Section 1. The pastor shall be ex officio president of the church council.

Section 2. At its first meeting in each congregational year, the Church Council shall elect from its membership a vice-president, a secretary, and a treasurer. The vice-president shall serve as president of the congregation. A financial secretary shall be elected and if not a member of Church Council shall be accorded the privilege of voice without vote in its meetings.

Section 3. All officers shall be chosen from the active roll of confirmed members of the congregation. If any of them ceases to be such, his office shall at once be declared vacant by the council, which shall fill the vacancy for the unexpired term.

Section 4. The vice-pastor may serve as president of the church council during a pastoral vacancy, except as provided in Article VII, Section 1.

Section 5. The secretary shall keep accurate minutes of all meetings of the congregation and of the council in a volume provided by the congregation, which shall be preserved permanently in its archives.

Section 6. The financial secretary shall receive and keep record of all income from contributing members and other sources.

Section 7. The treasurer shall keep the books of account of the congregation. He shall receive from the financial secretary all funds and disburse them on proper orders, making monthly remittance of benevolence receipts to the treasurer of the synod.

Section 8. The treasurer and the financial secretary shall make written report of their transactions to the church council monthly and to the congregation, together with a satisfactory audit, at its annual meetings. All financial officers shall give corporate surety, in amounts determined by the church council, for which the premium shall be paid by the Lutheran Church in America or the congregation.

ARTICLE X

Standing Committees

Section 1. At its first meeting in each congregational year, the church council shall appoint as many standing committees as the local and wider concerns of the congregation shall require. Each such committee shall be composed of two or more members of the council and, in addition, other persons on the active roll of confirmed members of the congregation. Although appointed by and responsible to the church council, these committees shall be recognized as representative of the interests of, and performing essential services for, the congregation as a whole. The pastor shall have voice and vote in all committees.

Section 2. Except as stipulated in the following paragraphs, the duties of all committees shall be assigned by the church council, along with such instructions as in its judgment are in the best interests of the congregation. All actions of committees shall be subject to review by the council.

Section 3. There shall be a Committee on Christian Education. This committee, in association with the pastor, shall oversee the conduct and promotion of the school(s) and the activities of all organizations within the congregation. It shall encourage the use of teaching and worship materials published or approved by the Lutheran Church in America, and seek to introduce the church's periodicals and books of family devotion into the homes of the congregation. One of the primary aims of the Committee on Christian Education shall be to bring the call to the ministry of the Gospel and to other full-time church vocations to the attention of qualified youth of the congregation.

Section 4. There shall be a Committee on Church Property. This committee shall see to the proper maintenance and protection of all property of the congregation, and shall take care that the same is kept in good repair.

Section 5. There shall be a Committee on Evangelism. This committee shall stimulate and lead all members of the congregation in continuous and, from time to time, concerted endeavors to reawaken the spiritually indifferent and to reach others, who are as yet unwon, with the Gospel and attach them to Christ's Church. To this end, the committee shall devote itself to deepening spiritual life and shall periodically study the congregation in the context of its surrounding community.

Section 6. There shall be a Finance Committee, of which the treasurer and financial secretary shall be members ex officio. It shall prepare a draft budget for the succeeding year, including this congregation's full indicated share in support of the wider ministry being carried on in its behalf by the Lutheran Church in America and the synod, and shall submit such draft budget to the church council for its action and later presentation to a congregational meeting. The committee shall exercise oversight of all the financial affairs of the congregation to make sure that they are being conducted efficiently, giving particular attention to the prompt payment of all obligations and to the regular forwarding of benevolence moneys to the synodical treasurer. It shall, subject to the approval of the church council, be responsible for the congregation's investments and its total insurance program. It shall also provide for annual audits of the accounts of the treasurer and the financial secretary.

Section 7. There shall be a Committee on Social Ministry. The purpose of this committee shall be to extend Christian compassion and helpfulness to the ill, the aged, the orphaned, the underprivileged, the imprisoned and, in general, to persons of all ages in need of aid in body or soul. It shall strive to enlist in these efforts as many possible of the individual members and organizations of the congregation. This committee shall further have the duty to study social conditions, primarily in the local community, in order to bring the cleansing and healing light of Christian truth to bear upon critical problems through thoughtful Christian discussion of facts and issues.

Section 8. There shall be a Committee on Stewardship, of which the treasurer and financial secretary shall be members ex officio. It shall be the function of this committee to evoke and promote the expression of Christian faith in daily living; to teach the Christian use of money; to diffuse knowledge of the congregation's local, national and world-wide ministries; and to lead all its members to higher levels of proportionate giving for the Lord's work. This committee shall also be responsible for other congregational efforts which lead to informed and grateful giving.

Section 9. There shall be a Committee on Worship and Music. It shall assist the church council in seeing that the services of God's house are conducted regularly and in accordance with the liturgy of the Lutheran Church in America, that competent ushers and acolytes are recruited and trained, and that hymnals and other devotional materials are provided and properly cared for. This committee shall supervise, and strive to advance the welfare and effective service of, the choirs of the congregation. It shall arrange for the care of paraments, vestments and musical instruments and, in consultation with the pastor, the organist and the choir director, it shall furnish music supplies appropriate for use in the worship of a congregation of the Lutheran Church in America.

ARTICLE XI

Organizations Within The Congregation

Section 1. All organizations within the congregation shall exist to aid it in ministering to its members and to all whom it can reach with the Gospel of Christ. As outgrowths and expressions of the congregation's life, the organizations are subject to its oversight and direction. The congregation at its meetings, or the church council, shall determine their policies, guide their activities and receive reports concerning their membership, work and finances.

Section 2. Special interest groups, other than the congregational units of the official auxiliaries of the Lutheran Church in America, may be organized only after authorization has been given by the church council.

ARTICLE XII

Discipline of Members

Section 1. The offenses for which a confirmed member of this congregation shall be subject to discipline are: denial of the Christian faith; immoral or scandalous conduct; persistent troublemaking, especially within the congregation; and, in general, behavior that is grossly unbecoming a member of the Church of Christ.

Section 2. Discipline shall be administered by the church council in behalf of the congregation, with the right to appeal to the synod in accordance with the provisions of the synodical constitution. The procedure which Christ instructed His disciples to follow (Matthew 18:15-17) shall be adhered to in every case, proceeding through these successive steps: 1) private admonition by the pastor, 2) admonition by the pastor in the presence of two or three witnesses, and 3) citation to appear before the church council.

Section 3. Persons cited to appear before the church council shall be served with a written summons at least ten days before the hearing. In addition to notifying the accused of the time and place to appear, the summons shall specify the exact charges that have been made against him. If the accused fails to appear at the appointed hour without valid excuse, the council may proceed with the hearing and may pass judgment in his absence.

Section 4. Should the accused be found guilty by the vote of at least a majority of the members of the church council and renewed admonition prove ineffectual, the council shall impose one of the following penalties: 1) censure before the council or the congregation; 2) suspension from membership until proof is given of sufficient repentance and amendment; or 3) excommunication. A resolution of the council suspending or excommunicating a member of this congregation shall be delivered to him in writing.

Section 5. Acts of discipline may be reconsidered and revoked by the church council upon receipt of evidence that injustice has been done.

ARTICLE XIII

By-Laws And Amendments

Section 1. By-laws may be adopted which are not in conflict with this constitution.

Section 2. Amendments to this constitution may be made at any congregational meeting by a two-thirds vote of the eligible confirmed members on the active roll who are present and voting, provided that such amendments have been proposed in writing by at least five voting members at a meeting of the congregation held at least ninety days earlier, or provided that they have been approved by the church council and by it submitted by mail to all persons who are on the active roll of confirmed members at least thirty days prior to the meeting at which final action is to be taken. Following the adoption of an amendment, the secretary shall forward a certified copy thereof to the president of the synod, and it shall go into effect only upon receipt of official notices that such amendment has either been agreed to by the synod or that it is not in conflict with the constitution and by-laws of the Lutheran Church in America or with the synodical constitution.

