

Constitution & Bylaws
 for
Richland Lutheran Church
 of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
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 MODEL CONSTITUTION FOR CONGREGATIONS

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

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

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 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. 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.

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 churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

i. Foster and participate in ecumenical relationships consistent with churchwide 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.

C4.04.01 a. As the governing body of this congregation, responsible for ensuring this congregation's mission is carried out, the Congregation Council shall establish committees in five areas of ministry: Outreach, Worship, Nurture, Education, and Resources.

b. The Outreach Ministry shall assist the congregation in carrying out its witness to the love of God through evangelism, community service, public relations, and support of foreign missions.

c. The Worship Ministry shall assist the congregation in its worship of God by overseeing all aspects of its liturgical life, creating and encouraging groups devoted to worship arts, and providing the congregation extra-liturgical opportunities to benefit from worship-related arts such as concerts and drama.

d. The Nurture Ministry shall assist the congregation in its care for members through efforts that aid the assimilation of new members, promote the well-being of established members, and encourage congregational fellowship.

e. The Education Ministry shall assist the congregation in promoting the spiritual growth of its members through classes, programs, and other offerings which enable them to understand, apply, and confess God's Word in everyday life.

f. The Resource Ministry shall assist the congregation in its stewardship of all that God has entrusted to it, including financial resources, facilities, and property. It shall likewise encourage members in their personal stewardship of time, talent, and treasure. Members serving in this area of ministry shall work closely with those working in other areas of ministry to ensure needed support is provided in a timely manner consistent with the goals of the congregation's overall ministry.

g. Chairpersons, members, and job descriptions for committees in each ministry area shall be approved by the Congregation Council. Committee chairpersons and members serve at the discretion of the Council in accordance with its established policies and plans.

h. The Congregation Council shall seek input annually from the Lead Pastor, staff, and congregational members to create an annual ministry plan, gauge the effectiveness of its committees, and determine whether committees need to be created, altered, or abolished.

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

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. 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 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;
- d. approve the annual budget;
- e. acquire real and personal property by gift, devise, purchase, or other lawful means;
- f. hold title to and use its property for any and all activities consistent with its purpose;
- g. sell, mortgage, lease, transfer, or otherwise dispose of its property by any lawful means;
- h. elect its officers and Congregation Council, and require them to carry out their duties in accordance with the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions;
- i. 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 the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

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 Eastern Washington-Idaho 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.
 - 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.
 - 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 of this congregation to terminate its relationship must be adopted at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this congregation by a two-thirds majority of the voting members present.
 - b. The secretary of this congregation shall submit a copy of the resolution to the synodical bishop and shall mail a copy of the resolution to voting members of this congregation. This notice shall be submitted within 10 days after the resolution has been adopted.

c. The bishop of the synod shall consult with this congregation during a period of at least 90 days.

d. If this congregation, after consultation, still desires to terminate its relationship, such action may be taken at a legally called and conducted special meeting by a two-thirds majority of the voting members present, at which meeting the bishop of the synod or an authorized representative shall be present. Notice of the meeting shall be mailed to all voting members at least 10 days in advance of the 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.

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.

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

Chapter 7. PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

*C7.01. If this congregation ceases to exist, title to undisposed property shall pass to the Eastern Washington-Idaho 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. Before this congregation takes action to transfer to another Lutheran church body, it shall consult with representatives of the Eastern Washington-Idaho 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, 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.

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.

C8.02.01

1. Individuals baptized as infants or children who choose not to be confirmed by the age of 18 will be placed on the congregation's responsibility list and will not be counted as baptized members.

2. Individuals placed on the congregation's responsibility list shall be encouraged regularly to resume participation in the life and ministry of the church.

3. A person who has been on the congregation's responsibility list for five years may be counted as inactive and may be removed from membership at the discretion of the Council.

4. A baptized person who has been removed from membership but who later resumes participation in the life of the congregation may be restored to membership through public affirmation of faith with the rite of Confirmation.

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.

C8.02.02

1. Confirmed members who absent themselves from worship for two years may, at the Congregation Council's discretion, be placed on the congregation's responsibility list and shall not be counted as confirmed members.

2. Confirmed members who are unable to attend worship for any length of time due to poor health or infirmity shall remain confirmed members in good standing.

3. By vote of the Congregation Council, confirmed persons placed on the responsibility list or removed from membership who later resume participation in the life of the congregation may be restored as confirmed members with no further effort on their part.

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.

C8.02.03

1. To fairly determine who is eligible to vote according to the requirements of this Constitution, a confirmed member's attendance and offering must be recorded. The worship attendance slip and the offering envelopes are sufficient documentation. In the case of pastoral or ministry staff who do not fill out worship attendance slips, the bulletins recording their involvement in worship are sufficient documentation.

2. Voting eligibility shall be determined two weeks before each congregational meeting. The church secretary shall provide the Congregation Council with a list of eligible voting members and the number required for a quorum (C10.01.01.c). This list shall determine eligibility to vote at the annual meeting.

3. Eligible voters may vote on all matters except as limited by federal and state law.

d. Associate members are persons holding membership in other Christian 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. They have all the privileges and duties of membership except voting rights and eligibility for elected offices or membership on the Congregation Council of this congregation.

C8.02.04

1. Aside from the limitations mentioned in this constitution, associate members may be approved to serve on committees, teach classes, and take on other ministry tasks. Their participation in such roles assumes willingness to conform to the teachings, ethical standards, and practices of this congregation.

*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 churchwide 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; or
 - e. removal from the roll due to inactivity as defined in the 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

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

- 2) administer the sacraments;
- 3) conduct public worship;
- 4) provide pastoral care; and
- 5) 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 with a congregational call shall, within the congregation:

- 1) offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead;
- 2) supervise all schools and organizations of this congregation;
- 3) install regularly elected members of the Congregation Council; and
- 4) with the council, administer discipline.

c. 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 churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and of the Eastern Washington-Idaho 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.

C9.04.01 a. When calling a Lead Pastor, three key responsibilities shall be stated in the letter of call:

1. The Lead Pastor shall provide spiritual leadership to the congregation, participating as an integral member of the Congregation Council in formulation of all policies and congregational initiatives, and actively encouraging implementation of the Council's goals and objectives as stated in its annual ministry plan.

2. The Lead Pastor shall provide spiritual care for this congregation, serving as its primary preacher and theologian, overseeing pastoral care, and recommending policies, programs, plans, and staffing needed to promote the members' spiritual growth and well-being.

3. The Lead Pastor shall supervise and minister to the pastoral and lay ministry staff, guiding them in carrying out their responsibilities, redirecting them in cases where he or she deems their conduct of ministry to be contrary to congregational policy or well-being, and providing annual performance appraisals to assist in their professional development.

b. When calling a Lead Pastor, Associate Pastor, or certified church worker, the candidate's specific leadership responsibilities in regard to the five ministry areas shall be included in the letter of call.

c. When employing uncertified lay ministry staff, their specific leadership responsibilities in regard to the five ministry areas shall be included in their job description.

*C9.05. a. The call of a 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 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, 30 days after the date on which it was submitted;

3) inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in the congregation in view of local conditions, without reflection on the competence or the moral and spiritual character of the pastor;

4) the physical or mental incapacity of the pastor;

5) disqualification of the pastor through discipline on grounds of doctrine, morality, or continued neglect of duty;

6) the dissolution of the congregation; or

7) suspension of the congregation as a result of discipline proceedings.

b. When allegations of physical 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.

c. In case of alleged physical 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.

d. In the case of alleged local difficulties that imperil the effective functioning of the 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.

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.

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 churchwide fund and with housing provided by the congregation(s).

- *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 Congregation 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 providing assistance shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor.
- *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.
- *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
- C9.12.01 *1. The day-to-day fulfillment of these responsibilities shall be assigned to the Church Secretary, or to some other person the Congregation Council chooses to appoint.*
- 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.

- C9.20 Ecumenical Pastoral Ministry
- C9.21. Under special circumstances, subject to the approval of the synodical bishop and the concurrence of this congregation, an ordained minister of a church body with which the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America officially has established a relationship of full communion may serve temporarily under contract as pastor of this congregation.

Chapter 10.

CONGREGATION MEETING

- C10.01. The annual meeting of this congregation shall be held at a time specified in the bylaws.
- C10.01.01 a. The annual meeting of this congregation shall be held in October at a date and time selected by the Congregation Council.*
- b. At the annual meeting, the congregation shall elect officers and Council members, adopt the budget for the next year, receive ministry reports from the staff and Council, hear the ministry plan for the coming year, and conduct any old or new business.*
- c. The quorum for a congregational meeting shall be 10% of the voting members.*
- d. Officers and Council members elected at the annual meeting shall take office on January 1 of the following year.*
- e. The budget adopted at the annual meeting shall take effect on January 1 of the following year.*
- C10.02. A special Congregation Meeting may be called by the lead 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 twenty-five of the voting 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.
- 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 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. A quorum for congregational meetings will be specified in the bylaws.
- C10.05. Voting by proxy or by absentee ballot shall not be permitted.

- C10.06. All actions by the congregation shall be by majority vote except as otherwise provided in this constitution.
- C10.07. Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition, shall govern parliamentary procedure of all meetings of this congregation.

Chapter 11. OFFICERS

C11.01. The officers of this congregation shall be a president, vice-president, and secretary.

- a. Duties of the officers shall be specified in the bylaws.
- b. The officers shall be voting members of the congregation.

C11.01.01 1. President

a. The President shall preside at all congregational meetings.

b. The President shall be the chairperson of the Congregation Council and shall preside at all its meetings, but shall vote only in the case of a tie.

c. The President shall monitor Congregation Council and congregational decisions to insure that they are consistent with the policy established in congregation's Constitution and Bylaws, as well as the Continuing Resolutions of the Congregation Council.

d. The President shall serve as Council liaison to the Staff Relations Committee.

e. The President shall serve as an ex-officio member on a Call Committee.

f. The President shall be elected at the annual congregational meeting for a two-year term and may not serve more than two terms consecutively.

g. Any voting member who has served previously on the Richland Lutheran Congregation Council and is not affected by term limits shall be eligible for this position.

C11.01.02 2. Vice President

a. The Vice President shall assume the duties of the President in case of his or her absence or inability to serve and shall assist the President in carrying out his or her duties.

3. The Vice President shall fulfill the unexpired term of the President should that position become vacant for any reason.

b. The Vice President shall serve as Council liaison to the Richland Lutheran Church Foundation and Good News Media Ministry.

c. The Vice President shall serve as Council liaison to all community ministries created and/or supported by this congregation.

d. The Vice President shall be elected at the annual congregational meeting for a two-year term and may not serve more than two terms consecutively.

e. Any voting member not affected by term limits shall be eligible for this position.

C11.01.03 3. Secretary

a. The secretary shall keep the minutes of the meetings of the congregation and the Congregation Council, making sure that a file of approved copies is maintained in the church office and the library.

b. The Secretary shall maintain a current set of all Council Continuing Resolutions, as well as other pertinent policy statements adopted by congregational committees, making sure that a file of approved copies is maintained in the church office and the church library.

c. Two weeks before each congregational meeting, the secretary shall obtain a current roster of voting members, as described in C8.02, to determine eligibility to vote and the necessary quorum to conduct business.

d. The Secretary shall be elected at the annual congregational meeting for a two-year term and may not serve more than two terms consecutively in this position.

e. Any voting member not affected by term limits shall be eligible for this position.

C11.02. The congregation shall elect its officers at a congregational meeting as specified in the bylaws.

C11.03. No officer shall hold more than one office at a time. Eligibility and term of office shall be specified in the bylaws.

C11.04 The membership of the Congregation Council shall consist of the number of members called for in the bylaws plus above named officers.

Chapter 12. **CONGREGATION COUNCIL**

C12.01. The voting membership of the Congregation Council shall consist of the officers of the congregation and other members of the Congregation elected at-large to the Congregation Council. 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.

C12.01.01 a. In addition to this congregation's officers, the Congregation Council shall have five at-large members.

b. At-large members of the Congregation Council shall be elected at the annual congregational meeting for a two-year term. Three of the at-large members shall be elected in even years and two shall be elected in odd years.

c. At-large members of the Congregation Council may not serve more than two terms consecutively in an at-large position.

C12.01.02 a. The Congregation Council shall elect a Treasurer for a two year term. The Treasurer may serve two terms consecutively. The Treasurer shall not be a member of the council, but shall serve in an advisory capacity without voting privileges. The Treasurer is the chair of the Finance Committee and is responsible for safeguarding congregational assets. Specific duties will be evaluated annually as required in C12.06.01, and adjusted as needed to maximize congregational resources, and be recorded as a continuing resolution.

b. The Congregation Council shall hire a bookkeeper to maintain the checkbook, maintain all church accounts, prepare checks for signatures, retain and safeguard blank checks and financial records.

c. The Congregation Council shall hire a financial secretary to record contributions to individual accounts and prepare quarterly contribution statements.

d. A Finance Committee of four congregational members plus the church Treasurer shall be elected by the Congregation Council for a two-year term. Members shall be eligible for reelection. The Finance Committee shall assist the

Treasurer in carrying out the expectations of the Congregation Council as set forth in the continuing resolution.

C12.03. Should a member's place on the Congregation Council be declared vacant, the Congregation Council shall elect a successor by majority vote until the next congregational meeting, as specified in the bylaws.

C12.03.01 Congregation Council members elected at the congregational meeting to fill a vacant position shall serve the remainder of the unexpired term.

C12.03.02 Congregational Council members may serve two terms consecutively in addition to any partial term of less than one year.

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.

C12.04.01 a. All policies of Richland Lutheran Church not enacted at a congregational meeting shall require the approval of the Congregation Council in the form of a continuing resolution (see Chapter 18).

b. The Congregation Council shall work with the Lead Pastor, ministry staff, and lay leaders to create an annual ministry plan and budget, which shall be presented to the congregation at the annual meeting in October.

c. The Congregation Council shall work with the Lead Pastor, ministry staff, and lay leaders to maintain an on-going process of long-range planning.

d. The Congregation Council shall conduct an annual review of the Lead Pastor, and shall be the final approval authority for all other staff evaluations.

e. When necessary, the Congregation Council shall initiate the call process to fill any vacant pastoral positions.

f. When staff vacancies occur, the Congregation Council shall provide for temporary assistance in the affected areas of ministry.

g. The Congregation Council shall appoint delegates to represent the congregation at cluster and synod functions in accordance with ELCA guidelines.

h. The Congregation Council shall recommend members for the Nominating Committee to be elected at the annual meeting, in accordance with C13.02.

i. The Congregation Council shall elect the members of the Audit Committee in accordance with the provisions of C13.03 and all pertinent bylaws.

j. The Congregation Council shall elect the members of the Staff Relations Committee in accordance with the provisions of C13.04 and all pertinent bylaws.

k. The Congregation Council shall approve the agenda for the annual meeting.

C12.05. The Congregation Council shall be responsible for the financial and property matters of this congregation.

C12.06. The Congregation Council shall see that the provisions of this constitution, its bylaws, and the continuing resolutions are carried out.

C.12.06.01 The Congregation Council shall conduct an annual review of the bylaws and continuing resolutions before the end of June.

C12.07. The Congregation Council shall provide for an annual review of the membership roster.

C12.07.01 The Congregation Council shall review the membership roster at its December meeting.

C12.08. The Congregation Council shall be responsible for the employment of the salaried lay workers of this congregation.

C12.09. The Congregation Council shall submit a comprehensive report to this congregation at the annual meeting.

C12.11. 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 voting and ex-officio members.

C12.12. A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of a majority of the voting members of the Congregation Council.

C12.12.01 Decisions of the Congregation Council require a simple majority vote except as specified otherwise in the constitution or bylaws.

Chapter 13. CONGREGATION COMMITTEES

C13.01. The officers of this congregation and the Lead Pastor (ex-officio) shall constitute the Executive Committee.

C13.02. A Nominating Committee of six voting members of this congregation shall be elected by the congregation as specified in the bylaws. Members of the Nominating Committee are not eligible for consecutive terms.

- C13.02.01 *a. The Nominating Committee shall recommend voting members of this congregation for election at the annual meeting as officers and Congregation Council members.*
- b. Staff members, members of their immediate families, members of the Staff Relations Committee, and current members of the Congregation Council are not eligible to serve on the Nominating Committee.*
- c. The term of office shall be two years, with three members elected each successive year.*
- d. Any voting member not affected by term limits shall be eligible for this position.*
- e. The Nominating Committee shall actively solicit input from the congregation as part of the nominating process.*
- f. A list of nominees shall be announced three weeks before the annual congregational meeting*
- C13.03. 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. Members shall be eligible for reelection.
- C13.03.01 *a. The Audit Committee shall evaluate the financial records of the congregation to ensure financial activity has been properly recorded in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and the congregation's policies and procedures.*
- b. The Audit Committee shall provide a written annual report to the Congregation Council by a date specified by the Congregation Council.*
- c. Members of the Audit Committee shall serve three-year terms, with terms staggered so that one new member is elected each successive year.*
- d. In case of a vacancy, the Congregation Council shall appoint a replacement to fulfill the remainder of the term.*
- C13.04. A Staff Relations Committee of three shall be appointed by the Congregation Council, subject to Pastoral and ministry staff concurrence. Congregation Council, Nominating Committee, and staff members are not eligible to serve on this committee. Term of service shall be three years, with one member appointed each successive year. The Committee is responsible to the Congregation Council for assisting staff in resolving personnel issues. Specific duties shall be defined in the bylaws.

- C13.04.01 *a. This committee is responsible to the Congregation Council for assisting all staff in resolving personnel issues.*
- b. Members of this committee should have a professional background in personnel management, human resources, parish ministry, or the mental health professions, and they should have substantial understanding of this congregation's ministry.*
- c. This committee shall meet at least four times a year and as often as it feels necessary to carry out its responsibilities.*
- d. In the case of difficulties between staff members, or between staff members and members of the congregation, this committee shall serve as an intermediate step for conflict resolution. Ordinarily the persons involved shall come to this committee only after first seeking to work out differences between themselves, and if that is unsuccessful, with the assistance of the Lead Pastor. Should resolution not be attained with the assistance of the Staff Relations Committee, the issues may be brought to the Congregation Council, at the Executive Committee's discretion.*
- e. Confidentiality is required for this committee to work effectively. In order to maintain confidentiality, meetings of this committee are open only to its members and those it invites to attend. However, all who take part in said meetings shall do so with the understanding that confidentiality does not prevent the committee from alerting the Congregation Council that it has been asked to help resolve a conflict, naming the specific individuals involved in the conflict, and, if deemed necessary for the well-being of the congregation, describing the general nature of the conflict.*
- f. The committee shall notify the Executive Committee in a timely manner when it determines that it can no longer function effectively in dealing with issues before it and it believes the issues warrant Council attention.*
- C13.05. When a pastoral vacancy occurs, a Call Committee of six voting members shall be elected by this congregation. Term of office will terminate upon installation of the newly-called pastor.
- C13.06. Other committees of this congregation may be formed, as the need arises, by decision of the Congregation Council.
- C13.07. Duties of committees of this congregation shall be specified in the continuing resolutions.

Chapter 14.

ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION

- C14.01. 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.
- C14.02. 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.
- *C15.02. 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. A member charged with the offense shall appear before the Congregation Council after having received a written notice, at least ten days prior to the meeting, specifying the exact charges that have been made against the member. 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 members' absence.
- *C15.03. 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.

Disciplinary actions b. and c. shall be delivered to the member in writing.

- *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.
- *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.
- *C15.06. For disciplinary actions in this congregation, "due process" shall be observed as specified in 20.41.03. in the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- *C15.07. 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.
- *C15.10. Adjudication
- *C15.11. When there is disagreement among factions within this congregation on a substantive issue that cannot be resolved by the parties, members of this congregation shall have access to the synodical bishop for consultation after informing the chair of the Congregation Council of their intent. 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.

Chapter 16.

BYLAWS

- *C16.01. This congregation may adopt bylaws. No bylaw may conflict with this constitution.
- *C16.02. Bylaws may be adopted or amended at any legally called meeting of this congregation with a quorum present by a majority vote of those voting members present and voting.
- *C16.03. 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 Congregation Council notify the members of the proposal with its recommendations at least 30 days in advance of the Congregation Meeting.

- *C16.04. Approved changes to the bylaws shall be sent by the secretary of this congregation to the synod.

Chapter 17. AMENDMENTS

- *C17.01. Amendments to this constitution may be proposed by at least 10% 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 its regular or special meeting called for that purpose. The Congregation Council shall notify the members of the proposal with the council's recommendations at least 30 days in advance of the meeting.
- *C17.02. A proposed amendment to this constitution shall:
 - a. be approved at a legally called meeting according to this constitution by a majority vote of those present and voting;
 - b. be ratified without change at the next annual meeting by a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting; and
 - c. have the effective date included in the resolution and noted in the constitution.
- *C17.03. 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 Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod of the ELCA.
- *C17.04. Whenever the Model Constitution for Congregations is amended by the Churchwide Assembly, this constitution may be amended to reflect any such amendment by a simple majority vote at any subsequent meeting of the congregation without presentation at a prior meeting of the congregation, provided that the Congregation Council has submitted by mail notice to the congregation of such an amendment or amendments at least 30 days prior to the meeting. Following the adoption of an amendment, the secretary of the congregation shall submit a copy thereof to the synod, consistent with *C17.03.

Chapter 18.
CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS

- *C18.01. The Congregation Council may enact continuing resolutions. Such continuing resolutions may not conflict with the constitution or bylaws of this congregation.
- *C18.02. Continuing resolutions shall be enacted or amended by a two-thirds vote of all voting members of the Congregation Council.

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.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Missing numbers: Certain numbers in some chapters have been intentionally omitted from the numbering sequence and reserved for possible use as section headings in future editions. Therefore, in the sequence, for example, of Chapters 1, 9, and 12, these ".10." numbers do not appear.