

Constitution and Bylaws  
of  
St. Peter Lutheran Church  
Mishawaka, Indiana



***Ratified by the Voters' Assembly on May 21, 2006,  
for implementation on September 24, 2006  
Ratified by the Board of Directors, Indiana District,  
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod on May 24, 2007***

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# Constitution of St. Peter Lutheran Church Mishawaka, Indiana

## **Preamble**

**Christians** should practice fellowship (Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:24-25), keep unity of faith (Ephesians 4:3-6; I Corinthians 1:10), and administer decently and in order (I Corinthians 14:40) the Office of the Keys (John 20:21-23; Matthew 28:19-20; Matthew 18:17-20). Therefore, we, the members of St. Peter Lutheran Church, Inc., in Mishawaka, Indiana, accept and subscribe to this Constitution and Bylaws to govern the spiritual and material affairs of our congregation.

## **Article I Name**

The name of this congregation shall be St. Peter Lutheran Church, Inc.

## **Article II Mission**

The mission of St. Peter Lutheran Church is to preach, teach, and share a changeless Christ to a changing world. The congregation enables members to:

- A. Grow in faith in Jesus Christ;

- B. Be equipped to spread the Good News of salvation to one another, in the community, and around the world; and
- C. Use their time, talents, and treasures to the glory of God.

### **Article III Confession of Faith**

This congregation and all its members accept without reservation the canonical books of the Old Testament and the New Testament as the revealed and inspired Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and practice. It accepts all of the Symbolic Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, contained in *The Book of Concord* of the year 1580, to be the true and genuine expositions of the doctrines of the Word of God. These confessional writings are:

- A. The three Ecumenical Creeds: The Apostolic, The Nicene, and The Athanasian;
- B. The Unaltered Augsburg Confession;
- C. The Apology of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession;
- D. The Smalcald Articles;
- E. Luther's Small Catechism and Luther's Large Catechism; and
- F. The Formula of Concord.

### **Article IV Denominational Affiliation**

This congregation shall be affiliated with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod as long as the confessions and constitution of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod are in accord with the confessions and Constitution of this congregation as laid down in Article III.

## **Article V Membership**

The membership of this congregation includes the Baptized Members, Confirmed Members, and Voting Members, as defined in the Bylaws.

## **Article VI Organization**

### A. Voters' Assembly

The Voters' Assembly shall consist of all voting members present at a regular or special meeting of the congregation. The congregation, through the Voters' Assembly, shall have final authority in managing its internal and external affairs.

### B. Mission Leadership Team

The Mission Leadership Team shall be the governing body of the congregation and is responsible for administering all the congregation's affairs, except the following matters for action only by the Voters' Assembly to:

1. Call or remove a called worker;
2. Purchase or sell church property or buildings valued over 10% of the annual financial plan;
3. Incur a non-budgeted emergency expense valued over 5% of the annual financial plan; and
4. Adopt the annual financial plan.

### C. Officers and Boards

The officers of this congregation shall be such officers as the Bylaws of this Constitution prescribe. The officers and boards prescribed in the

Bylaws shall have no authority beyond that which has been conferred upon them in the Constitution or Bylaws.

## **Article VII**

### **Property Rights**

- A. If, at any time, a separation shall take place within this congregation, the advice of the officers of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod shall be sought. If, despite all efforts to resolve differences in peace and love, a division into factions of the congregation shall occur, the property of the congregation and all benefits connected shall remain with the majority voting at a duly called meeting of the Voters' Assembly.
  
- B. If the congregation dissolves, any assets remaining after settling all obligations will be disbursed at the discretion of the Voters' Assembly.

## **Article VIII**

### **Decisions**

All congregational matters decided by the Voters' Assembly shall be decided by a simple majority of the voting members present at a properly convened meeting of the Voters' Assembly, except as otherwise provided in this Constitution and Bylaws.

## **Article IX**

### **Amendments**

This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast in a meeting of the Voters' Assembly. The wording of the proposed amendment to the Constitution shall be distributed to all members in a mailing as far in advance as possible, but no fewer than two Sundays in advance. In addition, the proposed amendment shall be distributed to the congregation assembled for worship on two

different Sundays prior to the date upon which the amendment is presented for action.

# Bylaws of St. Peter Lutheran Church Mishawaka, Indiana

## Article 1 Baptized Membership

Baptized Members are all persons within the congregation who have been baptized in the name of the Triune God and come under the pastoral care of this congregation. It is expected that all Baptized Members will:

- A. Attend worship services faithfully and regularly;
- B. Lead a Christian life as taught in Galatians 5:19-26;
- C. Out of Christian love, submit to brotherly admonition, according to Matthew 18:15-17, when having erred or offended;
- D. Contribute, as God has blessed them, of their time, talents, and treasure toward the maintenance of the congregation and the extension of the church at large; and
- E. In due time, take a course of instruction in preparation for confirmed membership in this congregation.

## **Article 2**

### **Confirmed Membership**

Confirmed Members are all baptized persons within the congregation who have completed a course of instruction in Christian doctrine that meets with the approval of the Mission Leadership Team.

- A. Persons seeking to attain confirmed membership shall make that fact known to the Senior Pastor or any other designated pastor. The pastor shall ascertain the understanding and commitment to the purpose and theological commitment contained in Article III of the Constitution. The pastor will determine if additional training is needed and the appropriate method for that training. The pastor is authorized to extend confirmed membership to the person and shall announce that extension of confirmed membership in a public service.
  
- B. In addition to the duties of Baptized Members, it is expected of all Confirmed Members that they:
  - 1. Accept the confessions of faith listed in Article III of the Constitution;
  - 2. Familiarize themselves with the doctrines of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod;
  - 3. Partake of the Lord's Supper;
  - 4. Participate in continuing Christian education; and
  - 5. Provide for the Christian training of their children by making use of the educational agencies of the congregation.

## **Article 3**

### **Voting Membership**

Voting Members are all Confirmed Members who attend a Voters' Assembly meeting.

#### **Article 4 Termination of Membership**

A. Transfers

A member desiring transfer to another congregation shall make that fact known to the Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor shall cause the creating and mailing of a letter of transfer to the receiving congregation.

B. Whereabouts unknown or moved

The names of people whose whereabouts are unknown or who have moved from the area shall be removed from membership after a period of one year.

C. Discipline

All discipline in this congregation shall be administered in accordance with Matthew 18:15-20. The purpose of any disciplinary action is to renew a member's relationship with the Lord and with the church. A member shall be considered self-excluded when unresponsive to the witness and ministry of the church.

#### **Article 5 Voters' Assembly**

A. The Voters' Assembly shall meet at least once a year. The day and hour of the annual meeting shall be set by the Mission Leadership Team and publicized at least one month in advance. The notification shall contain an agenda of items to be considered, as well as the slate of nominees for election.

- B. The Voters' Assembly may meet at other times of the year, subject to a call by the Mission Leadership Team or at the request of any 20 voting members of the congregation. Notice of any such special meeting shall be publicized as far in advance as possible, but no less than two weeks in advance. The notice shall contain an agenda of items to be considered. No agenda items may be added after notification of a meeting is publicized. The President, Vice President, or their designated Mission Leadership Team member shall preside at all Voters' Assembly meetings.
- C. A quorum of 20 of the voting membership must be present to conduct the business of the Voters' Assembly.

## **Article 6**

### **Called Workers**

- A. Called Workers
  - 1. Calls will be issued only to such candidates who are approved by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.
  - 2. After authorization is received from the Voters' Assembly, the Mission Leadership Team shall create a Call Committee. At least half of the Call Committee members shall not be members of the Mission Leadership Team.
  - 3. The Call Committee shall consult with those in the affected ministry area and with the district office as part of their efforts to secure the names of candidates.
  - 4. The Call Committee will present a final list of candidates to the Voters' Assembly for issuance of the call.

B. Removal from Office of Called Workers

1. In Christian love and lawful order, any called worker may be removed from office by the Voters' Assembly for any of the following reasons: persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, or willful neglect or inability to perform the duties of office.
2. The Mission Leadership Team shall carefully investigate charges on any of these counts. Should charges be substantiated by clear evidence, and after consultation with the District President or his designated representative, the Mission Leadership Team shall notify the Voting Members of the situation and submit the matter for action at a special meeting of the voters. Such meeting shall be announced at regular worship services at least two weeks prior to the meeting and by mail at least two weeks prior to the meeting.
3. A two-thirds vote of the Voting Members present at the Voters' Assembly shall be required to remove any divinely called servant from office.

**Article 7**  
**Officers**

A. The President shall:

1. Preside at all meetings of the Voters' Assembly and the Mission Leadership Team;
2. Appoint any necessary boards, committees, task groups, or action teams in consultation with the Mission Leadership Team;
3. Ensure adherence to the Constitution and Bylaws; and
4. Perform the general duties as are common for the office, including such additional duties as may be directed by the Voters' Assembly from time to time.

B. The Vice President shall:

1. Perform all of the duties of the President in the latter's absence and such other additional duties which may be directed by the Voters' Assembly or by the President from time to time; and
2. Appoint and chair a Nominating Committee with the advice and consent of the Mission Leadership Team.

C. The Secretary shall:

Perform the duties commonly required of that office, especially the keeping and preserving of accurate minutes and records of all Voters' Assembly meetings and Mission Leadership Team meetings, and handling such correspondence as the congregation may require. These minutes and records are to be available to all Team members.

D. The Treasurer shall:

1. Keep and preserve the accurate records of all receipts and disbursements and submit a written report of them at all regular meetings of the Voters' Assembly and as required by the Voters' Assembly or the Mission Leadership Team; and
2. Assure accuracy and propriety of all financial transactions of the congregation.

E. Term of Office

Each officer shall serve for a term of two years and shall serve no more than two full successive terms in that position without a break of at least one year. The term of office commences immediately following the election.

## **Article 8**

### **Mission Leadership Team**

#### A. Membership

The Mission Leadership Team shall consist of the congregational officers listed in Article 7 and three members-at-large elected by the Voters' Assembly. Elected members of the Mission Leadership Team may not receive compensation from the congregation for duties of this position and may not chair any group that reports directly to the Mission Leadership Team, except a Call Committee or the Nominating Committee. The Senior Pastor is an *ex officio* non-voting member.

#### B. Term of Office

The term of office shall be two years, with approximately one-half of the Mission Leadership Team being elected each year. Team members shall serve no more than two full successive terms in that position without a break of at least one year.

#### C. Meetings

The Mission Leadership Team shall meet at least quarterly and may be called more frequently at the request of the President or any two Mission Leadership Team members. An elected officer shall be present and preside. A total of four members of the Mission Leadership Team, one of whom must be the President or Vice President, constitute a quorum for any meeting. Notice of each meeting shall be communicated to all Team members in a timely manner.

## **Article 9**

### **Powers of the Mission Leadership Team**

The Mission Leadership Team shall have the power to develop policies as required to execute the goals approved by the Voters' Assembly. Written policies shall be available upon request. The Team shall have no authority beyond that

which has been conferred upon it by the Constitution, Bylaws, or by the Voters' Assembly.

**Article 10**  
**Duties of the Mission Leadership Team**

- A. The Mission Leadership Team, as the chief governing council of the congregation, shall act in all matters pertaining to the legal and general welfare of the congregation, except those reserved for the Voters' Assembly in Article VI.B. of the Constitution.
- B. The Mission Leadership Team shall ensure that all activities of the church reflect the purpose and faith of the congregation.
- C. The Mission Leadership Team shall concern itself with the establishment of all policies governing the activities of the congregation and with the implementation of the mission, vision, budget, and plans adopted by the Voters' Assembly.
- D. The Mission Leadership Team may appoint any entity needed. The Team shall oversee and have authority over all other boards, committees, task forces, action teams, or other entities of the congregation.
- E. The Mission Leadership Team shall appoint a committee of three male members, any of whom may be a member of the Mission Leadership Team, to supervise the pastoral staff in matters of preaching, administration of the sacraments, and church discipline. This committee reports to the Mission Leadership Team.

## **Article 11**

### **Election, Removal from Office, and Vacancies**

#### A. Nomination

1. The Vice President shall annually appoint a Nominating Committee whose responsibility will be to develop a slate of candidates for officers and Mission Leadership Team members to be elected each year. The committee shall comprise a majority who are not on the Mission Leadership Team, shall function for one year only, and shall report their nominations to the annual Voters' Assembly. The Senior Pastor shall be a non-voting member of the Nominating Committee.
2. All nominees shall be voting members noted for their Christian knowledge, zeal, and experience in the spiritual work in the Kingdom. Specific criteria for elected officers shall be outlined by the Nominating Committee prior to accepting any nominations. In addition to the Nominating Committee's slate of candidates, any voting member may nominate candidates. Such nominations shall be called for in the annual Voters' Assembly meeting prior to the time that nominations are closed.

#### B. Election

Nominees who receive at least fifty-one percent of the ballots cast at the Voters' Assembly shall be the elected officials.

#### C. Removal from Office of Elected Officials

Any elected official who is unable or is willfully neglectful in the performance of his official duties may be removed from his position by the Voters' Assembly. Such action shall be initiated by the Mission Leadership Team.

#### D. Vacancy

In the event of a vacancy in any elected position, the Mission Leadership Team may appoint a person to fill the position, or if it deems appropriate, may convene the Voters' Assembly for an election of the vacated position.

## **Article 12**

### **Amendments**

The Bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast in a meeting of the Voters' Assembly. The wording of the proposed amendment to the Bylaws shall be distributed to all members in a mailing as far in advance as possible, but no fewer than two Sundays in advance. In addition, the proposed amendment shall be distributed to the congregation assembled for worship on two different Sundays prior to the date upon which the amendment is presented for action.