

CONSTITUTION
OF
THE FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH OF VENICE, CALIFORNIA

(as of 1997)

ARTICLE I

The name of this congregation shall be THE FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH OF VENICE, CALIFORNIA. The Church is located at 815 Venice Boulevard, Venice, California. The effective date of this Constitution is April 12, 1997.

ARTICLE II

Articles of Faith

This congregation accepts and acknowledges all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God, and all the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, contained in the Book of Concord, as a correct presentation and true exposition of Christian Doctrine, taken from and in full agreement with the Holy Scriptures; and in this congregation no normative doctrine shall be taught or tolerated which is at variance with these symbols of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod viz:

1. The three Ecumenical Creeds: The Apostolic, The Nicene, The Athanasian.
2. The unaltered Augsburg Confession.
3. The Apology of the same.
4. The Smalcald Articles.
5. Luther's Catechisms, The Large and The Small.
6. The Formula of Concord.

According to this norm of doctrine, all doctrinal controversies which may arise in this congregation shall be decided and adjudicated.

ARTICLE III

Membership

No one may become or be a member of this congregation, or enjoy the rights and privileges of such membership unless he:

1. Is baptized in the name of the Triune God;
2. Accepts all the canonical books of the Old and the New Testaments as the only divine rule and standard of faith and life;
3. Is familiar at least with Luther's Small Catechism, and accepts it;
4. Leads a Christian Life and abstains from manifest works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21);
5. Attends divine services faithfully and partakes of the Lord's Supper frequently;
6. Submits, for the sake of love and peace, to the regulations already made, or still to be made, by this body, provided they do not conflict with the Word of God, and permits himself to be fraternally admonished and corrected when having erred or offended;
7. Is not a member of any secret, oathbound organization which is in conflict with the Word of God. Compare Ephesians 5:11, 12; II Corinthians 6:14-18; Matthew 5:34-37.

ARTICLE IV

Suffrage

Men and women who are confirmed members of the congregation and who have reached the age of eighteen years of age shall have the right to vote upon signature of this Constitution and its By-Laws.

Men and women who hold voting membership in the congregation may serve in any office and on any board created in this Constitution or in its By-Laws, provided that women shall not serve as Pastor.

ARTICLE V

Cessation of Membership

When a member has been excommunicated according to Matthew 18:15-20, all rights as a member of this congregation and all claims upon the property of this congregation shall have forfeited. The same shall hold good with reference to such members as may have refused to submit to church discipline and thus excluded themselves, and also such as may sever their connection with this congregation by removal to another place or by obtaining a release.

ARTICLE VI

Powers and Rights

1. The congregation, represented by the voters' assembly, shall have the right of choosing and calling pastors and principals, and of electing all other officers of the congregation. The congregation, acting through the Board of Christian Growth and Education, shall be empowered to call or hire teachers for the Christian day school. These powers shall never be delegated to an individual or to a minor body or circle within the congregation.

2. The congregation, represented by the voters' assembly, shall have supreme power in the external and internal administration of its affairs. No enactment in behalf of the congregation or with reference to a member of the same by an individual or body of individuals shall be valid or binding, unless such individual or body of individuals shall have been empowered thereto by the congregation in session assembled.

3. The congregation at all times reserves the right to withdraw or rescind its own actions or the actions of individuals through powers conferred.

4. The congregation may never enact or decide anything contrary to the Word of God and the Symbols of the Lutheran Church. Any such action shall be null and void.

5. The congregation shall have power under the charter granted to it by the state of California to buy, inherent, rent or receive lands, buildings, or other valuable things and property, to have and to hold them for its use for churches, schools, parsonages, income and the like; to manage, improve, sell or transfer such property over its seal and the signature of its trustees and secretary by its order.

ARTICLE VII

Pastors, Principals and Teachers

1. Only such pastors, principals and teachers shall be called by this congregation as unqualifiedly and publicly profess their acceptance of and adherence to Article II of this Constitution, and such acceptance and adherence shall be required of them in the call or vocation extended to them in writing by the congregation provided that such teachers may be hired by this congregation for the Christian day school as the Board of Christian Growth and Education deems necessary and proper to meet the needs of the Christian day school. In such event the Board shall give due regard to the tenets of Article II of this Constitution in evaluating candidates to be hired.

2. The form of electing pastors, principals and teachers shall be set forth in the By-Laws.

3. The pastor shall be an advisory member of all committees appointed by the congregation and of all committees and organizations within the congregation. He shall also have access to all meetings of the various organizations within the congregation whenever it is his pleasure.

4. The principal of the school shall be an advisory member of the Board of Christian Growth and Education and any other board or committee then voting on or constituted for the purpose of voting on matters directly affecting the school (other than the Board of Elders).

ARTICLE VIII

Officers

1. The Officers of the congregation shall be: President, Chairman of the Board of Trustees and Christian Parish Life, Secretary, Treasurer, and such other officers, boards and committees as are described in Article IX and as may be determined by the By-Laws.

2. The President shall be an advisory member of all committees appointed by the congregation and of all committees and organizations within the congregation (other than the Board of Elders).

3. The President may appoint a representative to attend meetings of any committee constituted under subsection 2 above, provided that such representative shall be considered as an advisory member of such committee.

ARTICLE IX

Organization of the Congregation

1. The activities of the congregation shall be organized around three Boards: The Board of Christian Growth and Education, the Board of Trustees and Christian Parish Life, and the Board of Christian Fellowship and Mission (collectively called the Parish Boards).
2. Elders shall be elected to advance, protect and defend the overall spiritual life of the congregation. One Elder shall be a voting member of each Board constituted above.
3. The duties of the Parish Boards and the Elders and the election and appointive procedures shall be set forth in the By-Laws.

ARTICLE X

Removal from office

Any officer of the congregation may in Christian order, by ballot, be removed from office. Sufficient and urgent causes for removing a pastor or school-teacher from office are persistent adherence to false doctrine, a scandalous life, willful neglect of duty, or evident inability to perform duty.

ARTICLE XI

Separation

If at any time a separation should occur in this congregation on account of doctrine, the property of this congregation, the titles thereto and the control thereof, and all of its benefits shall remain in the hands of those members who continue to confess and adhere to Articles II and VII of this Constitution. If division takes place for any other reason, or if each group professes adherence in confession or practice to the above Articles, the matter shall be submitted for review and ruling to the District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod of which the congregation is a member. The ruling of the District may be appealed to the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod for further review and ruling, which ruling shall be considered final.

ARTICLE XII

Amendments

To alter or repeal any alterable or repealable articles of this Constitution it shall be required that in two consecutive regular meetings two-thirds of the voting members present cast their votes in favor of such alteration or repeal.

ARTICLE XIII

Unalterable Articles

Of this Constitution, Articles 2 and 13 shall be and remain unalterable and irrepealable.

ARTICLE XIV

Property

The Property of this corporation (or congregation) is irrevocably dedicated to religious and charitable purposes and no part of the net income or assets of this organization shall ever inure to the benefit of any private individual.