

**CONSTITUTION**  
**ST. PETER’S LUTHERAN CHURCH/ BIG FALLS, WI**

Preamble ..... Page 2

ARTICLE 1 Name and Incorporation ..... Page 2

ARTICLE 2 Confession of Faith..... Page 2

ARTICLE 3 Nature of the Church ..... Page 2

ARTICLE 4 Statement of Purpose & Belief ..... Page 3

ARTICLE 5 Church Affiliation..... Page 4

ARTICLE 6 Membership ..... Page 4

ARTICLE 7 Government ..... Page 4

ARTICLE 8 Congregation..... Page 5

ARTICLE 9 Senior Pastor ..... Page 5

ARTICLE 10 Elders ..... Page 5

ARTICLE 11 Overseers ..... Page 5

ARTICLE 12 Trustees ..... Page 5

ARTICLE 13 Officers ..... Page 5

ARTICLE 14 Church Ministry..... Page 5

ARTICLE 15 Church Discipline..... Page 5

ARTICLE 16 Bylaws ..... Page 5

ARTICLE 17 Amendments ..... Page 5

ARTICLE 18 Tax-Exempt Status..... Page 6

ARTICLE 19 Indemnification..... Page 6

## **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 bylaws 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

## **ARTICLE 1. NAME AND INCORPORATION**

**A1.01.** The name of this congregation shall be St. Peter's Lutheran Church-Big Falls, Wisconsin. For the purpose of this constitution and the accompanying bylaws, the congregation of St. Peter's Lutheran Church-Big Falls is hereinafter designated as "this congregation."

**A1.02.** This congregation shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of Wisconsin

## **ARTICLE 2. CONFESSION OF FAITH**

This congregation confesses the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**A2.01.** This congregation confesses the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**A2.02.** 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.

**A2.03.** 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.

**A2.04.** This congregation accepts the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of this congregation.

**A2.05.** We believe, teach and confess 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 expositions of the Holy Scriptures.

## **ARTICLE 3. NATURE OF THE CHURCH**

**A3.01.** 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. Thus we order our activities by seeking to know where God is at work around us and joining Him in that work. Congregational leaders have the responsibility to guide all members in following God's leadership.

**A3.02.** The Church exists both as an inclusive fellowship and as local congregations gathered around God's Word and Sacraments. Congregations find their fulfillment in the body of Christ, which is the universal community of the Church, and the universal Church exists in and through congregations. In length, this congregation acknowledges itself to be in the historic continuity of the communion of saints; in breadth, it expresses the fellowship of believers in our day.

**A3.03.** This congregation shall develop an organizational structure to be described in the bylaws.

## **ARTICLE 4. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

**A4.01.** The Church is a body 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.

**A4.02.** To participate in God's mission, this congregation as a 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. Meet human needs out of love for Christ, caring for those who are in any need.
- e. Nurture its members in the Word of God so as to grow in faith, 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 invisible unity of faith given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and service.

**A4.03.** 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 this congregation's ministry and Christian ministry in other parts of this country and the world.
- h. Foster and participate in interdependent relationships with other congregations.
- i. Foster and participate in ecumenical relationships consistent with God's Word and ARTICLE 2 of this constitution.

### **A4.04 Statement on Marriage and Sexuality**

1. We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary sexes together reflect the image and nature of God (Gen. 1:26-27).
2. We believe the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Gen. 2:18-25). We believe that marriage between one man and one woman, for life, uniquely reflects Christ's relationship with His Church (Eph. 5:21-33). We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (1 Cor. 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb. 13:4). We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.
3. We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of St. Peter's Lutheran Church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to St. Peter's Lutheran Church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by St. Peter's Lutheran Church in any capacity, agree to and abide by this Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality (Matt 5:16; Phil 2:14-16; 1 Thess 5:22).

4. We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 6:9-11).
5. We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31). Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of [the organization].

#### **A4.05 Statement on the Sanctity of Human Life**

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life. (Ps. 139.)

#### **A4.06 Statement of Final Authority**

##### **Final Authority for Matters of Belief and Conduct**

The statement of faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. For purposes of St. Peter's faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, Senior Pastor in consultation with the Board of Elders and Board of Overseers is St. Peter's final interpretive authority on the Bible's application.

### **ARTICLE 5. CHURCH AFFILIATION**

**A5.01.** This congregation shall be a member of Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (hereinafter "LCMC").

**A5.02.** This congregation accepts the Statement of Faith of LCMC and shall preach, teach and confess in accordance with it.

**A5.03.** Affiliation with LCMC may be terminated as follows:

- a. This congregation takes action to dissolve.
- b. This congregation ceases to exist.
- c. By simple majority of votes of the congregation cast in a legally called and conducted congregational meeting, after which a letter reporting such vote will be sent to the LCMC main office.

### **ARTICLE 6. MEMBERSHIP [See Article ONE of Bylaws]**

Members of this congregation shall be those baptized persons on the roll of this congregation at the time that this constitution and its bylaws are 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. The bylaws describe membership classification, voting eligibility requirements, termination of membership and the privileges and duties of being a member of St. Peter's Lutheran Church.

### **ARTICLE 7. GOVERNMENT [See Article TWO of Bylaws]**

St. Peter's is governed by: the Congregation, the Trustees of the Congregation, the office of the Senior Pastor, and the Overseers.

### **ARTICLE 8. CONGREGATION [See Article THREE of Bylaws]**

Article Three of the bylaws describes the authority to select a new senior pastor, with and without the participation of the departing Senior Pastor, and Congregation Meetings.

### **ARTICLE 9. SENIOR PASTOR OF THE CHURCH [See Article FOUR of Bylaws]**

The Pastor of the Church must be of irreproachable Christian character and having a good report per 1

Timothy 3:1-3. The role and administrative responsibilities of the Senior Pastor are described in the bylaws.

**ARTICLE 10. ELDERS [See Article FIVE of Bylaws]**

Elders are elected by the congregation and given responsibility for oversight of the church spiritually. The Bylaws describe the spiritual role, definition of, functions, nomination, appointment, term of service, and termination of Elders; and organizations within the congregation

**ARTICLE 11. OVERSEERS [See Article SIX of Bylaws ]**

Three to five active senior pastors of respected congregations who love St. Peter's who are willing to provide spiritual protection and guidance to St Peter's when needed. The Bylaws provide the details of the requirements to be an Overseer, selection and function of overseers and installing new overseers.

**ARTICLE 12. TRUSTEES [See Article SEVEN of Bylaws]**

A Board of Trustees, shall have a fiduciary obligation to the Congregation, and shall manage the financial affairs of the Congregation. The Bylaws describes the General Powers, Functions, Congregational Budget, Financial Guidelines; Appointment, Number, Term, and Qualifications of Trustees; Meetings (Frequency, Leadership, Regular Meetings, Trustee Action without Meetings, Teleconferencing, Quorum, Open meetings); and Compensation.

**ARTICLE 13. OFFICERS [See Article EIGHT of Bylaws]**

The officers of the Board of Trustees will serve the Congregation in the same capacity and shall be designated as President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

**ARTICLE 14. CHURCH MINISTRY [See Article NINE of Bylaws]**

The Commissioning for special ministry, role of the Board of Elders, application process, ability to limit special ministry, and ministry training details are stated in the bylaws.

**ARTICLE 15. CHURCH DISCIPLINE [See Article TEN of Bylaws]**

The Bylaws of St. Peter's Lutheran Church, has a detailed disciplinary process in the event such action is necessary for either a member or the senior pastor.

**ARTICLE 16. BYLAWS**

This congregation shall adopt St. Peter's Lutheran Church Bylaws and Bylaw Amendments consistent with this Constitution by a 2/3 or greater affirmative vote of the voting members attending a congregational meeting.

**ARTICLE 17. AMENDMENTS**

**A17.01. Amendments to the constitution**

This constitution may be altered, amended, or repealed, at any congregational meeting by a two-thirds or greater affirmative vote of the voting members attending a congregational meeting.

**A17.02. Amendments to the bylaws**

The bylaws may be altered, amended, or repealed, and new Bylaws may be proposed at any regular meeting by BOTH (1) a 5/7 or greater affirmative vote of the Trustees. At least five (5) days written advance notice of said meeting shall be given to each member of the Trustees. In the written notice, proposed changes must be explained. Any changes must be approved by a 2/3 affirmative vote of the voting members attending a congregational meeting.

## **ARTICLE 18 TAX EXEMPT STATUS**

- A18.01** Upon the dissolution of this congregation, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government for public purpose.
- A18.02** This congregation is organized exclusively for charitable, religious, educational, and/or scientific purposes under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. No part of the net earnings of this congregation shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the organization shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in the purpose clause hereof.
- A18.03** No substantial part of the activities of this congregation shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the organization shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.
- A18.04** Notwithstanding any other provision of this document, the organization shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by an organization exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or (b) by an organization, contributions to which are deductible under 170(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

## **ARTICLE 19 INDEMNIFICATION**

- A19.01** It is the responsibility of the St. Peter's Lutheran Church to provide appropriate liability, comprehensive property, workman's compensation, and bonding insurance through an Errors and Omissions Policy for all paid staff, voluntary church leaders, and those serving on the Board of Trustees and the Board of Elders and as congregational weekly offering counters.
- A19.02 Indemnification**  
The Congregation shall indemnify any person who was or is a party or is threatened to be made a party to any proceeding by reason of the fact that such person is or was an agent of the Congregation, to the fullest extent permitted under the laws of WISCONSIN, as it may be amended from time to time.
- A19.03 Definition of Agent**  
For the purposes of this ARTICLE, "Agent" means any person who is or was a Trustee, Elder, Officer, or Employee or other agent of this Congregation, or is or was serving at the request of the Congregation as a Director, Officer, Employee, or Agent of another foreign or domestic association, Congregation, partnership, joint venture, trust, or other enterprise, or was a Director, Officer, Employee, or Agent of a foreign or domestic organization which was a predecessor organization.

**SIGNATURE OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

We, the Board of Trustees and officers, and Senior Pastor of St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Big Falls, WI, do hereby certify that the above Constitution was adopted and approved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Senior Pastor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Congregational President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Congregational Vice President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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Treasurer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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Trustee

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Date