

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

Pilgrim Lutheran Church LC-MS
Kilgore, Texas

PREAMBLE

As Christian people we should be led and fed daily by God's Word in our individual lives (Psalm 119:105, 1 Peter 2:2). But the tasks before us are greater than one individual Christian (Matthew 28:18-20; John 20:21-23; Ephesians 4:11-14; Hebrews 10:23-25).

Therefore, we the members of Pilgrim Lutheran Church have voluntarily joined together for Christian worship, fellowship, and work. In doing so, we follow the teachings of Christ, the example of the apostolic church and the example of our forefathers.

For the sake of Christian order (1 Corinthians 14:40) we hereby adopt and subscribe to the following constitution and bylaws according to which all the affairs of this congregation, both spiritual and material shall be governed and conducted.

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this congregation shall be Pilgrim Lutheran Church of Kilgore, Texas.

ARTICLE II - PURPOSE

The purpose of this congregation shall be to glorify God by proclaiming the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ, through word and deed, in our midst, in our community, and throughout the world.

To achieve this purpose we intend, by the grace and guidance of God, to baptize and to provide regular opportunities for public worship, Bible study, the reception of Holy Communion, and Christian fellowship so that we and our children may come to faith and grow in the Christian faith. We also intend to share this faith in our community through personal witnessing and Christian service and share it world-wide through our support of the mission programs of the Texas District and The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod.

ARTICLE III - DOCTRINAL STANDARD

This congregation as a body, and all of its members as individuals, accepts without reservation:

- A. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice.
- B. All of the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God, to wit: the three Ecumenical Creeds (the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed), the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Large Catechism of Luther, the Small Catechism of Luther, and the Formula of Concord.

This congregation insists that all doctrine preached, taught, or practiced in its midst must be in accord with this doctrinal standard. All doctrinal disputes which may arise shall be judged and decided according to it.

ARTICLE IV - SYNODICAL MEMBERSHIP

- A. This congregation shall hold membership in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod as long as this Synod remains true to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions. The congregation shall send its pastor and a lay delegate to the District conventions of the Synod.
- B. It shall be the duty of the congregation and its individual members to support the work of their Synod according to their ability.

ARTICLE V - MEMBERSHIP

The membership of this congregation includes the following:

- A. Baptized members are all persons within the congregation, whether children or adults, who have been baptized in the Name of the Triune God and who come under the pastoral care of this congregation. (Admission into membership is set forth in the Bylaws.)

- A. Communicant members are those baptized persons of the congregation who have been instructed and confirmed in the Lutheran faith, confessing their personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; who accept the provisions of this Constitution and the doctrinal standard of this congregation, and who are not members of any church other than this congregation and are not members or supporters of any group or organization whose teachings and/or practices conflict with the Word of God.
- B. Voting members are those communicant members of the congregation, 18 years of age and older, who are eligible to vote and to hold and elected office in the congregation subject to the qualifications and regulations set forth in the Bylaws of this constitution.

The above provision for baptized, communicant, and voting membership in this congregation shall be applied equally to all persons, regardless of race or national origin.

ARTICLE VI – DUTIES OF MEMBERS

A. Baptized Members

1. The duties of baptized members are the same as those of communicant members in so far as they apply.
2. Baptized members shall in due time take a course of instruction in preparation for communicant membership in the congregation.

B. Communicant Members

In addition to the qualification for communicant membership set forth in Article V of this Constitution, it shall be the duty and privilege of all communicant members:

1. To conform their entire lives to the rule of God's Word and in all things to glorify the Triune God;
2. To attend worship services faithfully when physically able and to make diligent use of the Means of Grace (God's Word and the Sacraments) in order to grow spiritually;
3. To exercise faithful stewardship of God's gifts of time, Spiritual Gifts, and treasures, supporting the work of God's Kingdom at home and abroad;
4. Having parental responsibility to bring their children for baptism at an early age and to provide proper Christian training for them both at home and through the educational agencies of this congregation (Sunday school, confirmation classes, vacation Bible school, etc.);
5. To witness by word and deed to show God's love to others and to build up their fellow members in the Christian faith;
6. To accept brotherly admonition when they have erred or given offense;
7. For the sake of love and peace, to submit willingly to all regulations properly adopted by this congregation, providing such regulations do not conflict with the Word of God;
8. To become a voting member when reaching the age set for voting membership.

D. Voting Members are expected to:

1. Attend meetings of the Voters' Assembly faithfully. By being absent, a voting member forfeits the right to vote at that meeting;
2. Serve faithfully, according to their God-given Spiritual Gifts, in any capacity in which they may be called upon to serve.

ARTICLE VII – AUTHORITY OF THE CONGREGATION

- A. General. The voters' Assembly shall be the governing body of this congregation and shall be empowered to administer and to manage all of its affairs. The establishment and conduct of all organizations and societies within the congregation shall be subject to the approval and supervision of the Voters' Assembly.
- B. Bylaws. The Voters Assembly shall have the authority to adopt and to amend this Constitution as well as any Bylaws it deems necessary to the congregation.
- C. Right of Calling. The right of calling a pastor or a teacher for this congregation shall be vested in the Voters' Assembly and shall never be delegated to a smaller group or to an individual.
- D. Decisions. Any member of the congregation may appeal to the Voters' Assembly in any matter relating to government and affairs of the congregation.

The decisions of the Voters' Assembly shall be final and binding, but such decisions shall always be in accord with the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions, and, unless they are, shall be null and void. Doctrinal matters shall be decided by the Word of God. All other matters may be decided by a majority vote of the Voters' Assembly unless otherwise specified by this Constitution and Bylaws or the rules of parliamentary procedure.

Excommunication. The Voters' Assembly shall have the authority to exercise Christian Discipline according to Matthew 18: 15-18. The goal is to win the person back but, if necessary, he or she shall be excluded from membership in the congregation.

- F. Officers. The Voters' Assembly shall elect officers for the congregation as specified in the Bylaws. When necessary other offices and committees may be established and their duties defined by the Voters' Assembly. Congregational officers, boards and committees, whether elected or appointed, shall have no authority beyond that which has been conferred upon them, and whatever power may have been delegated to them at any time be altered or revoked by the Voters' Assembly.

ARTICLE VIII – THE OFFICES OF PASTOR AND TEACHER

A. The office of Pastor, Teacher, or Principle shall be conferred only upon such pastors, teachers, or candidates who:

1. Are theologically trained and qualified for their work;
2. Unreservedly pledge their acceptance of and adherence to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions which are the Doctrinal Standard of this congregation;
3. Are members of the same Synod to which this congregation belongs and
4. Have been properly called by the congregation, and have been publicly installed in their office. Only male candidates shall be considered for the office of Pastor. (The manner of calling is set forth in the Bylaws.)

B. Duties. The rights and duties of a pastor are to act as the chief enabling minister and spiritual leader of the congregation and its component and auxiliary groups, equipping the leaders and members to carry out the stated purpose of this congregation (Article ii of this Constitution); order and officiate at worship services of the congregation; proclaim and teach the Word of God; administer the Sacraments; minister to the entire congregation and to individuals; keep a church record of all official acts, which record is to be and remain the property of the congregation; and discharge all other duties which the Holy Scriptures lays upon the Office of the ministry.

Removal. The voter's assembly shall have the right to remove from office by a three-fourths majority vote by ballot, in Christian and lawful order, any pastor, teacher, or officer of the congregation for any of the following reasons: persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, inability to discharge duties or willful neglect of them. The Circuit Counselor and/or the District President shall be consulted before the Voters' Assembly acts on any proposed removal of a pastor or teacher.

ARTICLE IX – PROPERTY RIGHTS

- A. This congregation may receive, acquire, hold title to and manage such real estate and other property as it may need to accomplish its stated purpose and may, by decision of the Voters' Assembly, sell or dispose of all such real estate and other property or any part thereof.
- B. If at any time a division should take place in this congregation on account of doctrine, the property of the congregation and all benefits connected therewith shall remain with those voting members who continue to adhere in confession and practice to Article iii of this Constitution. If a division takes place for any other reason, the property shall remain with the majority of the voting members.
- C. In the event the congregation should disband, all property of the congregation shall, after due settlement of just claims, be conveyed to and become the property of the Texas District of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. The disposition of such property is to be determined in advance by the Voters' Assembly and the Texas District.

ARTICLE X – JOINT PARISH

This congregation may, by mutual agreement, establish and maintain a joint parish (sharing the services of one pastor) with a neighboring congregation with whom they are in fellowship. Such a joint parish may also be dissolved by mutual agreement. In a joint parish the congregations shall function as separate groups in all things except those matters which pertain to their pastor.

ARTICLE XI – CHANGING THE CONSTITUTION

- A. The members of this congregation declare their intention not to change the doctrinal standard upon which the congregation is based (Article III of this Constitution). All other portions of the Constitution and Bylaws may be changed provided such revision is not contrary to the Word of God.
- B. Notice of a proposed amendment to this Constitution shall be given in writing to any regular meeting of the Voters' Assembly. The proposed amendment shall be considered in the next regular meeting of the Voters' Assembly and must be passed by a two-thirds majority of voting members present at the meeting.
- C. Upon adoption, all amendments shall be submitted to the Teas District Committee on Constitutions for approval in accordance with the Bylaws of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. A master copy of the Constitution and Bylaws shall be kept in the church office and all additions or changes shall be recorded therein by the secretary with the date such changes were adopted by the congregation.

BYLAWS

SECTION I - MEMBERSHIP

A. Admission into Membership

- 1.01 BAPTISM. All persons baptized under the authority of the congregation become baptized members. Children already baptized into a Christian congregation may be received as baptized members with the consent of their parents or guardians.
- 1.02 Confirmation. After instruction in the Word of God, all children and adults who are confirmed in this congregation become communicant members.
- 1.03 Adult Baptism. When adults not previously baptized are instructed in the Word of God and baptizes in this congregation, they become communicant members.
- 1.03 Transfers. Applicants for communicant membership who have been instructed and confirmed in the Lutheran Church and bring a letter of transfer may be received by action of the Board of Elders provided they are qualified in all respects for membership in this congregation (see Article v of the Constitution).
- 1.05 Profession of Faith. Other persons who have been instructed and confirmed in the Lutheran faith, having given satisfactory evidence to the pastor and the Board of Elders that they are in full accord with the doctrine and practice of this congregation and are qualified for membership (see Article V), may be received as communicant members by action of the Voters' Assembly or in a public worship service upon recommendation of the Board of Elders.
- 1.06 Reinstatement. Any member whose membership has been terminated by excommunication or self-exclusion may be reinstated to communicant membership by action of the Voters' Assembly.
- 1.07 Voting Members. When a communicant member of this congregation reaches the age of 18 years, he or she shall be entitled to vote in all matters before the congregation. All prospective voting members shall be given a copy of the Constitution and Bylaws of the congregation and may vote by attending a meeting of the Voters' Assembly.
- 1.08 Reception. At a regular meeting of the Voters' Assembly, all new voting members shall affix their signatures to the Constitution and Bylaws signifying thereby they are familiar with its contents and accept its provisions and are now voting members of the congregation.

B. Termination of Membership

- 1.09 **Transfer.** Baptized and communicant members who desire to transfer to recognized sister congregations shall present their request for transfer to the pastor, to whom authorization is granted to issue such transfers without delay. Such transfers of membership shall be reported to the Voters' Assembly at the next regular meeting.
- 1.10 **Release.** Those wishing to join a congregation not in fellowship with this congregation may be granted a release by the Voters' Assembly.
- 1.11 **Whereabouts Unknown.** The names of members whose whereabouts are unknown and who cannot be contacted may be removed from the membership list by a resolution of the Voters' Assembly.
- 1.12 **Delinquent Members.** Upon the recommendation of the Board of Elders, providing the persons have been admonished in Christian love according to the word of God, the Voters Assembly may at any regular meeting by a two-thirds majority vote remove from the membership roll such members who have severed their connection with this congregation by neglecting the duties of membership set forth in Article VI of this constitution.
- 1.13 **Status of Membership.** All those whose membership has been terminated thereby forfeit all rights as members of this congregation so long as they are not reinstated.
- 1.14 **Soul Accounting.** All names added or removed from the membership in this congregation shall be entered into the minutes of the Voters' Assembly. In so far as possible all names removed from the membership list of this congregation shall be placed on a soul responsibility list of this or of some other congregation.
- 1.15 **Voting Membership.** Voting membership is terminated when a voting member is no longer a communicant member of this congregation.

SECTION 2 - MEETINGS

- 2.01 **Regular Meetings.** Regular meetings of the Voters' Assembly of this congregation shall be held quarterly during January, April, July, and October on a date to be set and announced to the congregation.
- 2.02 **Special Meetings.** Special meetings of the Voters' Assembly may be called by the pastor or the president or the Board of Elders. Business at special meetings shall be limited to the announced purpose.
- 2.03 **Announcement.** Every legal meeting of the Voters' Assembly, regular or special, shall be announced (orally or in the bulletin) at a Sunday service prior to it.
- 2.04 **Quorum.** When a meeting has been properly announced, the voting members present shall constitute the quorum.
- 2.05 **Parliamentary Authority.** In all questions not covered by the Constitution and Bylaws of this congregation, the rules contained in the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order shall be applied in Christian love.

SECTION 3 – CALLING A PASTOR OR TEACHER

- 3.01 **Interim Pastor.** In the event of a pastoral vacancy, the Board of Elders shall immediately arrange for a meeting of the Voters' Assembly with the circuit counselor to select an interim pastor.
- 3.02 **Nominations.** A Call Committee elected by the Voters' Assembly shall gather a list of candidates and their qualifications from the Texas District officials and from members of the congregation. At a properly convened meeting of the Voters' Assembly, the Call Committee shall present the names that have been received. Any voting member is entitled to make additional suggestions from the floor. The Voters' Assembly shall decide which names are to be included on the Call List.
- 3.03 **Election.** The Call List shall be publicly announced to the congregation on two successive Sundays before the Call Meeting. The election shall be by ballot. A two-thirds majority of all ballots cast shall be required to elect. The election shall, if possible, be made unanimous.
- 3.04 Should the Voters' Assembly decide to call a candidate from a seminary or teachers college of our Synod, the Board of Assignments shall be requested to appoint the person to whom the call shall be extended.

- 3.05 Teachers on the faculty of the Christian day school, other than called teachers, may be engaged by the Voters' Assembly on recommendation of the Board of Education. Their term of office may be terminated by a two-thirds majority vote of the Voters' Assembly.

SECTION - 4 - OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES

- 4.01 Officers. The congregation shall elect the following officers from its active voting membership: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, Sunday School Superintendent, a Board of Elders, a Board of Trustees, and a Board of Education.
- 4.02 Limitation. The office of Elder, President, and Vice President shall be filled by male members of the congregation who are at least twenty-one (21) years of age.
- 4.03 Committees. The following standing committees or their equivalent shall be established by the Voters' Assembly: The Missions and Evangelism Committee, the Stewardship Committee, and a Social Ministry Committee. Each committee shall elect its own chairman.
- 4.04 Other Offices. The Voters' Assembly may establish other offices and committees, either standing or special, as maybe deemed necessary from time to time to carry out its purposes.
- 4.05 Assignment of Duties. While the congregation is small, the Voters' Assembly may assign the duties of the major standing committees to the Board of Elders and the Board of Education.
- 4.06 Church Council. As the size of the congregation increases, the Voters' Assembly shall have the power to establish a Church Council, and to define its membership and duties.
- a. It shall consist of the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary, of the Congregation and Chairman of the Board of Elders, Board of Trustees, Stewardship Committee, Missions Evangelism Committee, and Social Ministry Committee.
 - b. It shall meet once a month to care for business of the congregation so that it may be properly submitted to the Voters' Assembly for approval.

SECTION - 5 - ELECTION OF OFFICERS

- 5.01 Nominating Committee. A Nominating Committee shall be selected by the Voters' Assembly in its July meeting. The Nominating Committee shall, if possible, propose a slate of two candidates for each office. Additional nominations may be made from the floor by any voting member.
- 5.02 Election. The annual election of officers shall be by ballot and shall take place in the October meeting of the Voters' Assembly. The newly elected officers shall assume their respective duties in January of the following year after being installed in a public worship service of the congregation. In the event of a vacancy in any office, the Voters Assembly may elect a successor to serve until the next annual election.
- 5.03 Term of Office. Officers shall be elected or appointed for a term of one year unless otherwise specified and shall hold office until their successors shall have been elected and qualified.

SECTION 6 – DUTIES OF OFFICERS

- 6.01 President. The duties of the president shall include presiding at all meeting of the Voters' Assembly and Church Council, appointing committees and seeing that the resolutions of the Voters' Assembly are carried out.
- 6.02 Vice President. The vice president shall perform the duties of the president in his absence, his disability, or at his request.
- 6.03 Secretary. The secretary shall record the proceedings of the Voters' Assembly and Church Council, register all members attending the meeting and submit those minutes for adoption at the following regular meeting. All such minutes shall be and shall remain the property of the congregation.
- 6.04 Treasurer. The treasurer shall pay promptly by check fixed and regular expenses of the congregation but all other expenditures must be authorized by the Voters' Assembly. The treasurer shall keep accurate records of the receipts and disbursements of the congregation in books which shall be and shall remain the property of the congregation. All of these books shall be audited annually and a report of such audit shall be submitted to the congregation by the April Voters' Assembly meeting.

6.05 Financial Secretary. The financial secretary shall be responsible for the deposit in the congregations bank account a; monies of the congregation. The financial secretary shall keep an accurate record of contributions given the congregation by its members and shall prepare an individual report for the members of their own contributions. The congregation may elect assistants to the financial secretary as necessary. The books and records of the financial secretary shall be audited annually and a report of such be submitted to the congregation by the April Voters' Assembly meeting.

6.06 Elders. The Board of Elders shall consist of at least three men (or one elder for each twenty families) elected for a two year term. Approximately one-half of the elders shall be elected each year. The board shall annually elect its own chairman and secretary.

The Board of Elders shall:

- a. Aid the pastor, teacher(s), and the congregation in work of a spiritual nature, exercise general watchfulness over doctrinal matters and matters pertaining to a godly life on the part of the pastor, teacher(s), officers, and other members of the congregation;
- b. Assist the pastor in arranging for pulpit assistance, special services, guest speakers, and distribution of Holy Communion;
- c. See that all worship services are conducted in a manner that aids the worship of those in attendance;
- d. Look after the temporal welfare of the pastor, teacher(s), and needy members of the congregation and make a report on the same at least once a year to the Voters' Assembly;
- e. Assist the pastor with their counsel in difficult pastoral cases, and to further, to the best of their ability, the office of the pastor;
- f. Divide the membership list of the congregation among them selves so the each may have a fair share of members to watch over, to encourage to attend church frequently, and to lead lives pleasing to their Savior, to visit those members while sick, report such to the pastor for visitation and to do whatever can be done to encourage these members in the practice of their Christian faith;
- g. Make every effort to induce members who have been negligent in their attendance at services, in the use of the Sacraments, and the financial support of the congregation, to mend their ways and fully enjoy the rights and privileges of their membership;
- h. Consider complaints and grievances of members of the congregation which cannot otherwise be adjusted, in accordance with Matthew 18:17-18;
- i. Regularly ascertain that accurate records of births, deaths, and other vital statistics are kept and preserved along with any material of historical nature;
- j. Be an example of Christian conduct and conversation.

6.07 Board of Trustees. Trustees shall consist of a least three members elected for a two year term with approximately one-half being elected each year.

The Board of Trustees shall:

- a. Serve as the legal representative of the congregation at its direction;
- b. Care for the property of the congregation as a sacred legal, equitable trust.
- c. See that it is kept in good repair and appearance;
- d. Recommend needed repair and improvements to the Voters' Assembly to which end they shall be empowered to spend not more than \$50.00 per month on incidentals that shall require immediate attention with out special order of the Voters' Assembly;
- e. See to it that the estate of the congregation is protected against loss or damage;
- f. Concern itself about, and from time to time, report to the Voters' Assembly on all matters relating to the congregation's property, including insurance;
- g. Represent the congregation in all legal and business transactions in which the congregation, as property owner, may be required to act upon and perform, or, as the Voters' Assembly may resolve, and shall sign all necessary documents and papers involved in such transactions.

6.08 Board of Education. The Board of Education shall consist of at least two members elected annually plus the Sunday School superintendent. The Board of Education shall be charged with supervision of the educational agencies and of the congregational societies, and to that end it shall:

- a. Cooperate with the principal and the pastor in the supervision of the Christian day school;
- b. Assist the superintendent in the supervision of the Sunday School;
- c. Encourage the development of a Bible class program in the congregation;
- d. Encourage all societies of the congregation to increase the effectiveness of their organization as an agency of Christian education;
- e. See to it that an adequate program of youth activity is sponsored by the congregation;
- f. Promote and supervise other educational agencies within the parish;
- g. Choose members of the teaching staff for the Sunday School.

6.09 Missions and Evangelism Committee. The Missions and Evangelism Committee of at least two members appointed annually by the Voters' Assembly shall supervise mission education and endeavor within the congregation, see that an up-to-date soul responsibility list is maintained, encourage lay visitation, and supervise the public relations of the congregation.

6.10 Stewardship Committee. The Stewardship Committee of at least three members appointed annually by the Voters' Assembly shall seek to discover the talents of the congregation members and enlist them in service to the Lord; instruct the members in grace of proportionate giving to the Lord's work in our own parish and in the world and supervise the annual every member visitation.

6.11 Social Ministry Committee. The Social Ministry Committee shall seek to discover the needs of individuals in the congregation and in the community, and promote support and help as dictated by Christian love; and to encourage support of the welfare agencies of the District and the Synod.

6.12 Sunday School Superintendent. The Sunday School Superintendent shall, under the direction of the Board of Education supervise all activities of the Sunday School.

SECTION 7 – ORDER OF BUSINESS

7.01 The order of business at regular meetings of the Voters' Assembly shall be:

1. Call to order
2. Opening devotion
3. Reception of new voting members
4. Reading of minutes
5. Pastor's report
6. Financial reports
7. Board reports
8. Committee reports
9. Other reports
10. Unfinished business
11. New business
12. Closing devotion and adjournment

SECTION 8 – AMENDMENTS

8.01 These bylaws may be amended in a regular meeting of the Voters' Assembly by a two-thirds majority vote, provided the propose change has been announced at least one week beforehand.

This Constitution and these Bylaws were adopted on May 11, 1978. Revisions made in all subsequent years.

This Constitution was retyped by Geo. A. Heil in 2005 for the sole purpose to make it more assessable to members of Pilgrim Lutheran Church. This copy has been carefully edited and does not contain any revisions if such exist.