



# Constitution

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Last Amended July 2019

# CONSTITUTION

## EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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## PREAMBLE

In the name of the triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.

Believing in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

Remembering the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ that his followers may be one.

Responding to the Holy Spirit who continues to call and gather the church.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada hereby resolves to adopt the following constitution to govern our life and witness in our country and throughout the world.

## ARTICLE I Name and Incorporation

- Section 1. This constitution has been passed pursuant to and is subject to the provisions of the *Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada Act* and the administrative bylaws enacted pursuant to that Act.
- Section 2. For purposes of this constitution and accompanying administrative bylaws, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada is hereby referred to as “this church.”

## ARTICLE II Confession of Faith

- Section 1. This church confesses the triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—as the one true God. It proclaims the Father as Creator and Preserver; his Son, Jesus Christ, as Redeemer and Lord; and the Holy Spirit as Regenerator and Sanctifier.
- Section 2. This church confesses that the gospel is the revelation of God’s saving will and grace in Jesus Christ, which he imparts through Word and Sacrament. Through these means of grace the Holy Spirit creates believers and unites them with their Lord and with one another in the fellowship of the Holy Christian Church.
- Section 3. This church confesses the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God, through which God still speaks, and as the only source of the church’s doctrine and the authoritative standard for the faith and life of the church.
- Section 4. This church subscribes to the documents of the *Book of Concord of 1580* as witnesses to the way in which the Holy Scriptures have been correctly understood, explained and confessed for the sake of the gospel, namely:
- a. The Apostles’, the Nicene and the Athanasian Creeds as the chief confessions of the Christian faith;
  - b. The unaltered *Augsburg Confession* as its basic formulation of Christian doctrine;
  - c. *Luther’s Small Catechism* as a clear summary of Christian doctrine; and
  - d. *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Luther’s Large Catechism, the Smalcald Articles with the Treatise* and the *Formula of Concord* as further witnesses to the unaltered *Augsburg Confession*.

## **ARTICLE III**

### **Nature of this Church**

- Section 1. Jesus Christ is Lord of the Church. All power belongs to him as its head. All actions of this church are to be carried out under his rule and authority.
- Section 2. The Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies this church, which exists as congregations and synodically recognized ministries gathered for worship, witness, education and service, and as an inclusive fellowship which has its own identity and integrity. Congregations and synodically recognized ministries find their fulfilment in the universal community of this church, and the universal Church exists in and through congregations and synodically recognized ministries.
- Section 3. This church derives its character and its powers from its congregations, synodically recognized ministries and from its inherent nature as part of the universal Church. It regards itself as standing in the historic continuity of the communion of saints and as being an expression of that Christian fellowship in today's world.

## **ARTICLE IV**

### **Mission of this Church**

- Section 1. The mission of this church, as an expression of the universal Church and as an instrument of the Holy Spirit, is to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with people in Canada and around the world through proclamation of the Word, celebration of the sacraments, and through service in Christ's name.
- Section 2. In seeking to achieve its mission, this church shall:
- a. receive, establish and maintain congregations and synodically recognized ministries in which the gospel is rightly preached and the sacraments rightly administered;
  - b. safeguard the faith and life of its congregations, synodically recognized ministries, rostered pastors and rostered deacons, deciding all questions relating thereto on the basis of the Word of God and in accordance with its Confession of Faith;
  - c. admit persons to the rosters of pastors and deacons by ordination or transfer, and be responsible for their nurture, support and discipline;
  - d. study issues in contemporary society in the light of the Word of God and respond publicly to social and moral issues as an advocate for justice and as an agent for reconciliation;
  - e. publish materials for the education and the edification of its own members and others interested in the life of the Lutheran Church;
  - f. develop the worship life of this church, providing or recommending service books and other material for congregational and personal use;
  - g. establish church agencies and create regional synods for the administration of its programs;
  - h. have relationships with other Lutheran Church bodies and with other Christian churches for the furtherance of its mission; and
  - i. estimate the financial needs of this church, and solicit and disburse funds for its programs.
- Section 3. In seeking to achieve its mission, this church may:
- a. establish and maintain seminaries for the education and continuing development of rostered pastors, rostered deacons and other church leaders;
  - b. establish and maintain, or otherwise recognize and support, schools for the education of its members and others for leadership in church and society; and

- c. establish and maintain, or otherwise recognize and support, institutions and agencies to minister to human need in the name of Christ.

## **ARTICLE V**

### **Membership**

- Section 1. As provided in the administrative bylaws, the membership of this church consists of member congregations and synodically recognized ministries. Baptized individuals who are members of a congregation or synodically recognized ministry shall exercise their privileges and responsibilities through participation in the congregation or synodically recognized ministry in which they are members.
- Section 2. United in one Lord, one Faith and one Baptism, the baptized members of this church are to be constant in worship and in the study of the Holy Scriptures, regularly nourishing their life in Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar, presenting their children for Holy Baptism and providing for their Christian instruction. They are called by the Spirit to lead godly lives, to promote the unity and welfare of this church in the bond of peace, to proclaim the gospel and to renounce the evil one. The commitment of each baptized member to this call is to be expressed through this church, its synods, its congregations and its synodically recognized ministries by a life of repentance, faith, prayer and the sharing of resources.

## **ARTICLE VI**

### **Congregations**

- Section 1. A congregation, the corporate existence which is recognized by this church, is a worshipping, learning, witnessing and serving community of persons baptized in the name of the triune God among whom the Word is proclaimed and the sacraments are administered according to the gospel.
- Section 2. Each congregation shall operate in accordance with its constitution and bylaws, owning its property, making decisions in regard to its programming, calling its rostered pastors and/or rostered deacons after consulting with the bishop of the synod, and retaining authority in all other matters that have not been committed to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada or its synods in this constitution or by subsequent enactments.
- Section 3. Reception of a congregation shall be by action of the synod on whose territory it is located. Each congregation shall, in its application for reception into this church, agree to abide loyally by the constitution, administrative bylaws and enactments of this church and those of the synod of which it becomes a part.
- Section 4. Each congregation normally shall be a part of the synod on whose territory it is located.
- Section 5. Congregations shall be only members of this church. Multiple memberships are prohibited with the exception of membership in a partner church of The Lutheran World Federation by virtue of ethnic origin.
- Section 6. Congregations shall have the right to petition this church according to procedures set forth in the administrative bylaws.

- Section 7. A synod, acting for this church, may exclude a congregation from the membership of this church for proper cause by the disciplinary process prescribed in the administrative bylaws. This action may be appealed to the Court of Appeal whose decision therein shall be final.
- Section 8. A congregation which desires to sever its relationship with this church, shall make written application to its synod for a proper release. The synod shall grant such release following the process set out in the administrative bylaws of this church.

## **ARTICLE VII**

### **Synodically Recognized Ministries**

- Section 1. A ministry recognized by any synod of this church shall be a worshipping, learning, witnessing and serving community of persons who desires to belong to this church and commit themselves to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and subscribe to Articles II and III of the constitution of this church.

## **ARTICLE VIII**

### **Rostered Pastors**

- Section 1. The administrative bylaws of this church shall define the standards for acceptance into ordained ministry as a pastor, and for the admission and continuance of individuals on its roster of pastors in a manner consistent with this article. Each synod shall establish and maintain a roster of pastors in accordance with such standards.
- Section 2. Each pastor shall covenant to abide loyally by the constitution, administrative bylaws, and enactments of this church and of the synod under which they serve.

## **ARTICLE IX**

### **Rostered Deacons**

- Section 1. The administrative bylaws of this church shall define the standards for acceptance into ordained ministry as a deacon, and for the admission and continuance of individuals on its roster of deacons in a manner consistent with this article. Each synod shall establish and maintain a roster of deacons in accordance with such standards.
- Section 2. Each deacon shall covenant to abide loyally by the constitution, administrative bylaws, and enactments of this church and of the synod under which they serve.

## **ARTICLE X**

### **Full Communion Partners**

- Section 1. Ordered ministers of churches with which this church has a full communion agreement, who are serving in this church under the provisions of that full communion agreement, shall have the same rights and privileges as the equivalent order of ministry in this church.

## **ARTICLE XI**

### **Synods**

- Section 1. This church shall be organized regionally into synods whose number and boundaries are to be determined by this church in its administrative bylaws.
- Section 2. Each synod shall be incorporated in keeping with the terms of appropriate documents ratified by the National Church Council. Amendments thereto shall be subject to ratification by the National Church Council.
- Section 3. Each synod shall have a constitution and bylaws ratified by the National Church Council. Amendments thereto shall be subject to like ratification by the National Church Council.
- Section 4. As a regional expression of this church, each synod shall have jurisdiction in its affairs and be responsible for its life and ministry as delineated in its constitution and administrative bylaws.
- Section 5. It shall be the responsibility of each synod to:
- a. operate in accordance with this church's constitution and administrative bylaws;
  - b. shepherd congregations, synodically recognized ministries, rostered pastors, rostered deacons and lay workers located within its jurisdiction;
  - c. advance this church's mission within its jurisdiction;
  - d. conserve unity in the true faith and guard against any departure from it;
  - e. develop the resources of God's people for the advancement of God's kingdom at home and throughout the world; and
  - f. co-operate with this church and other synods in implementing its programs.
- Section 6. Synods shall carry out such additional duties and responsibilities as are assigned to them in the administrative bylaws.
- Section 7. Each synod shall have the right to petition this church according to the procedures set forth in the administrative bylaws.

## **ARTICLE XII**

### **Conventions**

- Section 1. The convention of this church shall be its highest legislative authority.

## **ARTICLE XIII**

### **National Church Council**

- Section 1. There shall be a National Church Council comprised of:
- a. the officers of this church, who shall serve as the officers of the council;
  - b. additional members from the synods as provided in the administrative bylaws of this church; and
  - c. other representatives from full communion partner agreements.

The synod bishops shall be advisory members of the council.

Section 2. The purpose, duties and expectations of council shall be as defined in the administrative bylaws of this church.

## **ARTICLE XIV Officers**

Section 1. This church shall be served by a bishop who shall be its chief pastor and chief executive officer. The bishop shall be on the roster of pastors of this church. The other officers shall be a vice-chair, a secretary and a treasurer, all of whom shall be lay members of this church.

Section 2. The purpose, duties and expectations of the officers shall be defined in the administrative bylaws.

## **ARTICLE XV Benefit and Pension Plans**

Section 1. The administrative bylaws shall provide for the establishment of a pension plan and a group benefits plan for rostered and lay employees of this church and entities associated with it. The administrative bylaws may establish rules providing for the participation in such plans on a compulsory basis.

## **ARTICLE XVI Special Interest Conferences and Recognized Independent Organizations and Institutions**

Section 1. This church may authorize, as provided in the administrative bylaws, the organization of special interest conferences having common linguistic or cultural heritages. Such conferences may hold periodic meetings for fellowship and discussion of common concerns. Any recommendations arising out of their special sphere of interest, shall be made to the National Church Council. Reports of meetings shall be made to the convention of this church.

Section 2. This church may recognize independent Lutheran organizations and institutions of a national scope established for Christian education, for the care of the ill, the aged and the infirm or for missionary endeavour as approved by the National Church Council.

## **ARTICLE XVII Court of Appeal**

Section 1. There shall be a Court of Appeal.

Section 2. The purpose, duties and procedures of the Court of Appeal shall be defined in the administrative bylaws of this church.



**ARTICLE XVIII**  
**Administrative Bylaws**

- Section 1. This church may adopt such administrative bylaws, not in conflict with this constitution, as may be necessary. Such administrative bylaws may be amended at any convention by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the delegates present and voting. At least twenty-four (24) hours shall lapse between first presentation and convention action unless unanimous consent to amendment is given.
- Section 2. Administrative bylaws relating to convention procedure may be suspended by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the delegates present and voting.

**ARTICLE XIX**  
**Amendments**

- Section 1. ARTICLE II on "Confession of Faith" shall be unalterable.
- Section 2. Amendments to this constitution shall be in writing and may be proposed by:
  - a. the National Church Council provided that the amendment is published on the official website of this church no fewer than forty-five (45) days prior to the convention; or
  - b. twenty (20) or more convention delegates representing a majority of synods.
- Section 3. All proposed amendments must be reported to the convention no later than the first full day of business. The National Church Council shall make a report and recommendation during that convention on all proposed amendments.
- Section 4. Adoption of an amendment shall require two (2) separate readings separated by at least twenty-four (24) hours. Each reading must be passed by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the delegates present and voting.

Adopted by the delegates in convention on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Bishop*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Secretary*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*