

**Constitution of  
St. Pauls Evangelical Lutheran Church  
of the Village of Hilton, County of Monroe, State of New York**

**Preamble**

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. It is the will of our Lord Jesus Christ that His disciples should preach the Gospel to the whole world (*Mark 16:15, Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8*). So that Christ's great mission for His Church may be carried out according to His will, the Lord has commanded that Christians unite in worship (*Hebrews 10:24-25, Exodus 20:8*), practice fellowship with one another (*Acts 2:42*), witness to all people (*Acts 1:8*), help each other grow in the Word of God (*Ephesians 4:11-14*), serve the needs of all men in Christian love (*Ephesians 4:7-16, Mark 10:42-44, John 13:35, Galatians 6:10*), administer the Office of the Keys as His Church (*John 20:21-23, Matthew 18:15-20*), give liberally and gladly to the support and extension of His Kingdom (*I Corinthians 16:2*), and maintain decency and order in the Church (*I Corinthians 14:40*). Therefore, we, a congregation of Evangelical Lutherans, represented by the undersigned officers, adopt this constitution and make by-laws and policies to regulate the internal and external affairs of our congregation. This constitution supersedes any previous constitution and associated by-laws which may have been in force.

**Article I: Name**

The full name, in law, of the congregation is:

*Saint Pauls Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Village of Hilton, County of Monroe, State of New York.*

In common usage, the names "St. Paul Lutheran Church", and "St. Paul Lutheran Church and School" are both acceptable.

**Article II: Purpose**

The purpose of this congregation shall be to advance the Kingdom of God at home and abroad by preaching the Word of God, administering the Sacraments, and instructing youth and adults according to the confessional standards detailed in Article III. It shall also foster Christian fellowship, serve its members, and practice Christian love in every way.

**Article III: Articles of Faith and Confessional Stand**

In this congregation, all of the Canonical books of the Old and New Testaments are acknowledged as the inspired Word of God revealed to mankind.

All of the Symbolical writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, contained in the Book of Concord of 1580 A.D. are accepted as sound doctrine drawn from correct interpretation of God's Word. All teaching in our midst is to be conducted and tested, and all doctrinal disputes are

to be judged and decided by the standards set forth in these books. These confessional writings are:

- 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
- Luther's Small Catechism
- Luther's Large Catechism
- The Formula of Concord

**Article IV: Synodical Membership**

This congregation shall hold membership in the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, so long as the Confessions and Constitution of this Synod are in accord with Article III of this Constitution. The congregation shall, to the best of its ability, support and participate in this Synod in order to further the work of the Church.

**Article V: Membership**

The membership of this congregation consists of Soul members, Baptized members, Communicant members, and Voting members.

**A. Soul members**

Any and all persons under the spiritual care of the congregation and/or its Pastor shall be considered Soul members of the congregation.

**B. Baptized members**

All Soul members who have been baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, especially children of Communicant members who have not yet confirmed their baptismal vows, shall be considered Baptized members of the congregation.

**C. Communicant members**

All Baptized members who have been accepted into communicant fellowship (and so invited to partake of the sacrament of Holy Communion with this congregation) by confirmation, transfer, or profession or reaffirmation of faith shall be considered confirmed, Communicant members of the congregation. Communicant members must accept the confessions of our faith set forth in Article III, be familiar with Luther's Small Catechism, and earnestly desire to conform their life to the rule of God's Word

**D. Voting members**

All Communicant members who have reached the age of 18 years may vote in congregational meetings.

**Article VI: Powers of the Congregation**

The congregation, as a body, shall have all authority and is the highest power in the regulation of its internal and external affairs. It shall do so within the Word of God and the Confessional Stand in Article III, and within the framework of this constitution and its associated by-laws and policies.

The Pastor may not make any decisions or undertake any actions for the congregation without its consent in matters that are not commanded by the Word of God. Conversely, the congregation may not enact any by-laws, policies, or procedures, make any decisions, or undertake any actions which are contrary to the Word of God, the Symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, or this constitution.

No individual, group, committee, or board may make any decisions, arrangements, or take any actions on behalf of or affecting the congregation

unless they are made in the name of the congregation by virtue of authority granted by the congregation. Any such decisions, arrangements, or actions made or done by any individual, group, committee, or board with due authority of the congregation may be brought to the congregation, as the highest authority and ultimate arbiter, for final decision.

**Article VII: Government**

The congregation shall exercise its power to administer its temporal affairs as specified in Article VI, by establishing such offices, boards, and committees as the by-laws may prescribe. A Church Council shall exist, comprised of all of the elected officers of the congregation, as defined in the by-laws. Voluntary societies and organizations may also be formed, with the approval of the congregation, for the purpose of furthering the work of the Church or promoting Christian fellowship within the Church.

**Article VIII: Offices of the Pastor(s) and Teacher(s)**

**A. The Pastoral Office**

The congregation shall have the power to issue a Call to a pastor. The pastoral Office of this congregation may only be conferred upon ordained pastor(s) or qualified candidate(s) for ordination who have responded to such a divine Call and who are members of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod or such bodies with which it has "altar and pulpit" fellowship. The pastor must declare his acceptance of and adhere to the doctrinal and confessional standards set forth in Article III of this constitution.

**B. The Teaching Office**

The congregation shall have the power to Call teachers. The Called teaching Office may only be conferred upon qualified individuals who have responded to such a divine Call and who have received a degree from a synodical college or have completed a synodical colloquy program. Such teachers must declare their acceptance of and adhere to the doctrinal and confessional standards set forth in Article III of this constitution. In the event that no suitable candidates for a Call exist or that the congregation's needs do not require the long-term commitment implicit to a Call, the congregation shall have the authority to instead

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hire teachers and/or administrators. Such hiring shall be conducted as prescribed in the by-laws.

**C. Removal from Office**

The congregation may remove holders of the Pastoral or Teaching Offices from that Office for any of the following types of misconduct.

- Persistent adherence to false teaching, contrary to the standards set forth in Article III,
- Leading an ungodly life or persisting in willfully offensive conduct,
- Willfully neglecting the faithful administration of the Office,
- Exhibiting manifest incompetence to adequately administer the Office.

Holders of the Pastoral or Teaching Office should be admonished in Christian love should they give cause for the congregation to consider their removal (*Matthew 18:15-20*). Only if a diligent, thorough attempt at resolution and reconciliation fails should the congregation, upon recommendation by the Church Council, consider the action of removing them from their Office, as prescribed in the by-laws.

Additionally, because needs change over time, it may become necessary for the congregation to decrease or change its pastoral or teaching staff. Such changes shall be conducted as prescribed in the by-laws.

**Article IX: Property Rights**

If, despite diligent efforts to resolve matters in Christian peace and love, a separation should occur within the congregation, all of the property of the congregation and all the benefits connected with it shall remain with those members who continue to adhere to Articles III and IV of this Constitution and who pledge their pastor(s) to the same.

In the event of the dissolution of this congregation, the property of the congregation and all the benefits connected to it shall be transferred to the Eastern District of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod.

**Article X: Doctrinal Literature**

All hymns, prayers, and liturgies to be used in worship, devotions, and ministerial acts of this congregation must conform to the confessional stand of Article III. Likewise, all classes for instruction in the Christian faith and Lutheran doctrine must also conform to this standard.

**Article XI: By-Laws**

The congregation shall adopt such By-Laws as it deems necessary for its orderly governance and operation in fulfilling its Purpose in Article II.

**Article XII: Amendments**

Articles II, III, IV, VI, IX, and X are the foundation of this constitution. Amendments to this constitution may be adopted by an affirmative vote of a two-thirds majority of the membership present at a regular congregational meeting (as prescribed in the by-laws), provided:

- The amendment does not conflict with the Articles enumerated above and
- The proposed amendment has been submitted in writing at the previous regular congregational meeting. The amendment shall also be published in all worship service bulletin(s) for the two consecutive weeks prior to the meeting at which the amendment is to be considered.

**Article XIII: Adoption**

Upon ratification, this Constitution shall become effective January 1<sup>st</sup>, in the year of our Lord 2005. Any preceding Constitution shall then no longer be in effect.

**Officers' Signatures**

\_\_\_\_\_  
President

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Vice-President

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Recording Secretary

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Chairman, Board of Trustees