

**APOSTLES LUTHERAN CHURCH
CONSTITUTION
JANUARY 31, 2016**

This constitution, approved by this congregation on January 31, 2016, is intended to and shall replace all prior governing documents referenced as Constitution, Proposed Constitution, Constitution & Bylaws, or any other such name. This constitution shall supersede and replace any provisions contained in the Apostles Lutheran Church Policy Manual previously approved by this congregation that are in conflict with these constitution articles.

PREAMBLE:

We, followers of Jesus Christ, responding to the call of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, desiring to unite together to proclaim the Word, administer the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion, and carry out the mission of the Church, do hereby adopt this constitution and commit ourselves to be governed by its provisions, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

ARTICLE I: NAME AND INCORPORATION

1. The name of this congregation shall be Apostles Lutheran Church.
2. For the purpose of this constitution and bylaws, the congregation of Apostles Lutheran Church located in Chesapeake, Virginia, is designated “this congregation.”
3. This congregation is incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia as pertaining to Articles of Incorporation dated October 11, 2006, and approved by the Commonwealth of Virginia October 20, 2006.

ARTICLE II: CONFESSION OF FAITH

1. We believe, teach, and confess the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. We believe, teach, and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe in him.
 - 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 in the person and work of Jesus Christ through whom God was pleased to reconcile all things to himself.
 - c. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the 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.

3. We believe, teach, and accept the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the sole authoritative source and norm of our proclamation, faith, and life.
4. We accept the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the scriptural faith we believe, teach, and confess.
5. We believe, teach, and accept the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and the Small Catechism as true witnesses to the Word of God, normative for our teaching and practice. We acknowledge that we are one in faith and doctrine with all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.
6. We believe, teach, and confess the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord as further valid expositions of the Holy Scriptures.
7. We believe, teach, and confess the gospel, recorded in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain the priesthood of all believers for God's mission in the world.

ARTICLE III: MISSION STATEMENT

Apostles Lutheran Church is a family in Christ called to share His gift of community with all people by equipping them through worship, fellowship, and deeds of love. It is committed to meeting spiritual, physical, and emotional needs as they relate to family issues of individuals in the Greater Hampton Roads community and beyond.

ARTICLE IV: NATURE OF THE CHURCH AND AFFILIATION

1. This congregation exists both as a local expression of the body of Christ and as a part of the universal Church made up of every believer in Jesus Christ.
2. This congregation acknowledges that Jesus Christ is the head of the Apostles Lutheran Church and commits itself to carry out its mission, ministry, and decisions in submission and obedience to His authority.
3. This congregation acknowledges and celebrates its foundation and history within the evangelical Lutheran expression of the Church.
4. This congregation may officially affiliate with any ministry association or organization that is in line with its confession of faith and is deemed by this congregation to contribute to the fulfillment of its mission and ministry.
5. This congregation may adopt or terminate its official affiliation with any ministry association or organization by votes taken at two consecutive special meetings with at least 35% of voting members of this congregation in attendance by a two-thirds majority written ballot. If, in the event, that action is taken at the first meeting, then, the consecutive meeting shall take place no sooner than 120 days after the original meeting.

6. This congregation shall always retain title to its property and all assets regardless of any decision to affiliate or terminate its official relationship with any ministry association or organization.
7. This congregation may choose to terminate its own existence or merge with another congregation by votes taken at two consecutive special meetings with at least 35% of voting members of this congregation in attendance by a two-thirds majority written ballot. If, in the event, that action is taken at the first meeting, then, the consecutive meeting shall take place no sooner than 120 days after the original meeting.
8. The title to real property and the distribution of all other assets shall be recommended by the church council and authorized by a simple majority written ballot at the same special meeting at which the vote is taken to terminate or merge.

ARTICLE V: AUTHORITY OF THE CONGREGATION

1. The authority of this congregation is that which is necessary to fulfill its mission and ministry according to the Scriptures.
2. This congregation delegates authority to the church council only as recognized in the bylaws. All remaining authority is retained by this congregation.
3. The authority of this congregation is primarily exercised at official meetings as provided for in the bylaws.
4. This congregation shall have authority to:
 - a. Extend a letter of call or terminate a letter of call of an ordained pastor by a two-thirds majority written ballot at an official meeting.
 - b. Elect the members of the church council.
 - c. Approve the annual Mission and Ministry Budget.
 - d. Acquire and dispose of real property and all assets, hold title to and use its property and all assets for any activities consistent with its mission and ministry.
 - e. Make any legal agreements as necessary to fulfill the mission and ministry of this congregation.
 - f. Adopt or terminate its official affiliation with any ministry association or organization.
 - g. Determine membership.
 - h. Honor the process of applying biblical principles toward conflict resolution, discipline, and restoration of church members.
 - i. Amend the bylaws.
 - j. Amend this constitution.

ARTICLE VI: CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT PROCESS

1. Amendments to this constitution may be proposed by any voting member and shall be submitted in writing to the church council at least 60 days in advance of the first meeting at which the vote will take place.

2. The church council retains the authority to recommend as submitted, amend and recommend, or deny these submissions for a vote of this congregation. If a recommendation for amendment is “denied”, the council will provide written/electronic notification to the person requesting the amendment, stating the reason for denial. A recommendation to “deny” by the church council may be overridden by written request from 10% of the voting members of this congregation.
3. This congregation must be notified of any proposed amendments to this constitution in writing at least 30 days in advance of a meeting at which the vote will take place.
4. This constitution shall be amended by votes taken at two consecutive special meetings with at least 35% of voting members of this congregation in attendance by a two-thirds majority written ballot. If, in the event, that action is taken at the first meeting, then, the consecutive meeting shall take place no sooner than 120 days after the original meeting.
5. The date of any additions or amendments to this constitution and bylaws shall be included next to such additions and amendments in the official copy of this constitution and bylaws.

ARTICLE VII: BYLAWS

1. This congregation shall adopt bylaws which are deemed appropriate to further clarify the intent of this constitution and fulfill the mission and ministry of this congregation. No bylaws may conflict with this constitution.
2. Bylaws may be adopted or amended at any official meeting of this congregation by a simple majority vote.
3. Recommendations for new bylaws or amendments to existing bylaws may be proposed by any voting member and shall be submitted in writing to the church council at least 60 days in advance of the meeting at which the vote will take place.
4. The church council retains the authority to recommend as submitted, amend and recommend, or deny these submissions for a vote of this congregation. If a recommendation for amendment is “denied”, the council will provide written/electronic notification to the person requesting the amendment, stating the reason for denial. A recommendation to “deny” by the church council may be overridden by a written petition from 10% of the voting members of this congregation.
5. This congregation must be notified of any proposed additions or amendments to the bylaws in writing at least 30 days in advance of the meeting at which the vote will take place.
6. The date of any additions or amendments to these bylaws shall be included next to such additions and amendments in the official copy of these bylaws.

ARTICLE VIII: PUBLICATION

1. Copies of this constitution and the bylaws shall be available to any member of this congregation and to persons considering membership in this congregation.
2. This constitution as well as the bylaws shall be available through our Web site.

Whereas the current constitution and bylaws of Apostles Lutheran Church were last updated in 1996 when this congregation was affiliated with the ELCA, and


Whereas a new constitution and bylaws are before the congregation for approval that account for the congregation's current affiliation with the LCMC, and

Whereas there are conflicts between the current constitution and the new constitution and bylaws before the congregation for approval which could cause confusion or prevent congregation business from going forward, and

Whereas the bylaws currently before the congregation for approval have been written specifically to support governance under the new constitution currently before the congregation for approval,


Therefore, be it resolved that the congregation of Apostles Lutheran Church agrees to operate under the provisions of the new constitution and bylaws, once approved, for the interim between approval of the new constitution and its ratification at a subsequent congregational meeting.

By order of the Congregation of Apostles Lutheran Church on 28 June 2015.



Anthony Roberts – President

Affirmed by order of the Congregation of Apostles Lutheran Church on 31 January 2015.



Doug Block – President