

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS
FOR
GRACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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 solemnly pledge ourselves to be governed by its provisions. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 1.

NAME AND INCORPORATION

- C1.01.** The name of this congregation shall be **GRACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**.
- C1.02.** For the purpose of this constitution and the accompanying bylaws, the congregation of **GRACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH** is hereinafter designated as "this congregation."
- C1.11.** This congregation shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of **Texas**.

Chapter 2.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

- *C2.01.** This congregation confesses the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- *C2.02.** 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.
- *C2.03.** 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.
- *C2.04.** This congregation accepts the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of this congregation.
- *C2.05.** This congregation accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to the Gospel, acknowledging as one with it in faith and doctrine all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.
- *C2.06.** This congregation accepts 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 interpretations of the faith of the Church.
- *C2.07.** This congregation confesses the Gospel, recorded in the Holy Scripture and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain the Church for God's mission in the world.

Chapter 3.

NATURE OF THE CHURCH

- *C3.01.** 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.
- *C3.02.** The Church exists both as an inclusive fellowship and as local congregations gathered for worship and Christian service. Congregations find their fulfillment in the universal community of the Church, and the universal Church exists in and through congregations. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, therefore, derives its character and powers both from the sanction and representation of its congregations and from its inherent nature as an expression of the broader fellowship of the faithful. In length, it acknowledges

itself to be in the historic continuity of the communion of saints; in breadth, it expresses the fellowship of believers and congregations in our day.

Chapter 4.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

- *C4.01.** The Church is a 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.
- *C4.02.** To participate in God's mission, this congregation as a part of the 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. Serve in response to God's love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity and justice for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, and standing with the poor and powerless, and committing itself to their needs.
 - e. Nurture its members in the Word of God so as to grow in faith and 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 unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives.
- *C4.03.** 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 the congregation's ministry and the ministry of other parts of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
 - h. Foster and participate in interdependent relationships with other congregations, the synod, and the churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
 - i. Foster and participate in ecumenical relationships consistent with churchwide policy.
- *C4.04.** This congregation shall develop an organizational structure to be described in the bylaws. The Congregation Council shall prepare descriptions of the responsibilities of each committee, task force, or other organizational group and shall review their actions.
- *C4.05.** This congregation shall, from time to time, adopt a mission statement which will provide specific direction for its programs.

Chapter 5.

POWERS OF THE CONGREGATION

- *C5.01.** The powers of this congregation are those necessary to fulfill its purpose.
- *C5.02.** The powers of this congregation are vested in the Congregation Meeting called and conducted as provided in this constitution and bylaws.
- *C5.03.** Only such authority as is delegated to the Congregation Council or other organizational units in this congregation's governing documents is recognized. All remaining authority is retained by the congregation. The congregation is authorized to:
- a. call a pastor as provided in Chapter 9;
 - b. terminate the call of a pastor as provided in Chapter 9;
 - c. call or terminate the call of associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers in conformity with the applicable policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;
 - d. adopt amendments to the constitution, as provided in Chapter 17, and amendments to the bylaws, as specified in Chapter 16.
 - e. approve the annual budget;
 - f. acquire real and personal property by gift, devise, purchase, or other lawful means;
 - g. hold title to and use its property for any and all activities consistent with its purpose;
 - h. sell, mortgage, lease, transfer, or otherwise dispose of its property by any lawful means;

- i. elect its Congregation Council and require the members of the council to carry out their duties in accordance with the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions; and
- j. terminate its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as provided in Chapter 6.

***C5.04.** This congregation shall choose from among its voting members, laypersons to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly as well as persons to represent it at meetings of any conference, cluster, coalition, or other area subdivision of which it is a member. The number of persons to be elected by the congregation and other qualifications shall be as prescribed in guidelines established by the Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Chapter 6.

CHURCH AFFILIATION

- *C6.01.** This congregation shall be an interdependent part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or its successor, and of the Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This congregation is subject to the discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- *C6.02.** This congregation accepts the Confession of Faith and agrees to the Purposes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and shall act in accordance with them.
- *C6.03.** This congregation acknowledges its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in which:
- a. This congregation agrees to be responsible for its life as a Christian community.
 - b. This congregation pledges its financial support and participation in the life and mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
 - c. This congregation agrees to call pastoral leadership from the clergy roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in accordance with its call procedures except in special circumstances and with the approval of the bishop of the synod.
 - d. This congregation agrees to consider associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers for call to other staff positions in the congregation according to the procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
 - e. This congregation agrees to file this constitution and any subsequent changes to this constitution with the synod for review to ascertain that all of its provisions are in agreement with the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and with the constitution of the synod.
- *C6.04.** Affiliation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may be terminated as follows:
- a. This congregation takes action to dissolve.
 - b. This congregation ceases to exist.
 - c. This congregation is removed from membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America according to the procedures for discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
 - d. This congregation follows the procedures outlined in ***C6.05**.
- *C6.05.** This congregation may terminate its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by the following procedure:
- a. A resolution indicating the desire of this congregation to terminate its relationship must be adopted at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this congregation by a two-thirds majority of the voting members present.
 - b. The secretary of this congregation shall submit a copy of the resolution to the synodical bishop and shall mail a copy of the resolution to voting members of this congregation. This notice shall be submitted within 10 days after the resolution has been adopted.
 - c. The bishop of the synod shall consult with this congregation during a period of at least 90 days.
 - d. If this congregation, after consultation, still desires to terminate its relationship, such action may be taken at a legally called and conducted special meeting by a two-thirds majority of the voting members present, at which meeting the bishop of the synod or an authorized representative shall be present. Notice of the meeting shall be mailed to all voting members at least 10 days in advance of the meeting.
 - e. A certified copy of the resolution to terminate its relationship shall be sent to the synodical bishop, at which time the relationship between this congregation and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall be terminated.
 - f. Notice of termination shall be forwarded by the synodical bishop to the secretary of this church and published in the periodical of this church.
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- g.¹ Since this congregation was a member of the Lutheran Church in America, it shall be required, in addition to the foregoing provisions in ***C6.05**., to receive synodical approval before terminating its membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- *C6.06.** If this congregation considers relocation, it shall confer with the bishop of the synod in which it is territorially located before any

¹ This provision is to be used in the constitutions of all congregations that formerly were a part of the Lutheran Church in America, in accord with provision 9.62.h. in the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

steps are taken leading to such action. The approval of the Synod Council shall be received before any such action is effected.

Chapter 7.

PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

- *C7.01. If this congregation ceases to exist, title to undisposed property shall pass to the **Southwestern Texas Synod** of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- *C7.02. If this congregation is removed from membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America according to its procedure for discipline, title to property shall continue to reside in this congregation.
- *C7.03. If a two-thirds majority of the voting members of this congregation present at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this congregation vote to transfer to another Lutheran church body, title to property shall continue to reside in this congregation. Before this congregation takes action to transfer to another Lutheran church body, it shall consult with representatives of the **Southwestern Texas Synod**.
- *C7.04. If a two-thirds majority of the voting members of this congregation present at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this congregation vote to become independent or relate to a non-Lutheran church body, title to property of this congregation shall continue to reside in this congregation only with the consent of the Synod Council. The Synod Council, after consultation with this congregation by the established synodical process, may give approval to the request to become independent or to relate to a non-Lutheran church body, in which case title shall remain with the majority of this congregation. If the Synod Council fails to give such approval, title shall remain with those members who desire to continue as a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- C7.05. Notwithstanding the provisions of *C7.02. and *C.7.03. above, where this congregation has received property from the synod pursuant to a deed or other instrument containing restrictions under provision 9.71.a. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, this congregation accepts such restrictions and:
 - a. Shall not transfer, encumber, mortgage, or in any way burden or impair any right, title, or interest in the property without prior approval of the Synod Council.
 - b. Shall—upon written demand by the Synod Council, pursuant to †S13.23. of the constitution of the **Southwestern Texas Synod** reconvey and transfer all right, title, and interest in the property to the synod.

Chapter 8.

MEMBERSHIP

- *C8.01. Members of this congregation shall be those baptized persons on the roll of this congregation at the time that this constitution is 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.
- *C8.02. Members shall be classified as follows:
 - a. **Baptized** members are those persons who have been received by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism in this congregation, or, having been previously baptized in the name of the Triune God, have been received by certificate of transfer from other Lutheran congregations or by affirmation of faith.
 - b. **Confirmed** members are baptized persons who have been confirmed in this congregation, those who have been received by adult baptism or by transfer as confirmed members from other Lutheran congregations, or baptized persons received by affirmation of faith.
 - c. **Voting** members are confirmed members. Such confirmed members, during the current or preceding calendar year, shall have communed in this congregation and shall have made a contribution of record to this congregation.
 - d. **Associate** members are persons holding membership in other Lutheran congregations who wish to retain such membership but desire to participate in the life and mission of this congregation, or persons who wish to retain a relationship with this congregation while being members of other congregations. They have all the privileges and duties of membership except voting rights and eligibility for elected offices or membership on the Congregation Council of this congregation.
- *C8.03. All applications for confirmed membership shall be submitted to and shall require the approval of the Congregation Council.
- *C8.04. It shall be the privilege and duty of members of this congregation to:
 - a. make regular use of the means of grace, both Word and sacraments;
 - b. live a Christian life in accordance with the Word of God and the teachings of the Lutheran church; and
 - c. support the work of this congregation, the synod, and the churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America through contributions of their time, abilities, and financial support as biblical stewards.
- *C8.05. Membership in this congregation shall be terminated by any of the following:
 - a. death;

- b. resignation;
- c. transfer or release;
- d. disciplinary action by the Congregation Council; or
- e. removal from the roll due to inactivity as defined in the bylaws.

Such persons who have been removed from the roll of members shall remain persons for whom the Church has a continuing pastoral concern.

Chapter 9.

THE PASTOR

- *C9.01.** Authority to call a pastor shall be in this congregation by at least a two-thirds majority ballot vote of members present and voting at a meeting legally called for that purpose. Before a call is issued, the officers, or a committee elected by this congregation to recommend the call, shall seek the advice and help of the bishop of the synod.
- *C9.02.** Only a member of the clergy roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or a candidate for the roster of ordained ministers who has been recommended for the congregation by the synodical bishop may be called as a pastor of this congregation.
- *C9.03.** Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,
- a. Every ordained minister shall:
 - 1) preach the Word;
 - 2) administer the sacraments;
 - 3) conduct public worship;
 - 4) provide pastoral care; and
 - 5) speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world.
 - b. Each ordained minister with a congregational call shall, within the congregation:
 - 1) offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead;
 - 2) supervise all schools and organizations of this congregation;
 - 3) install regularly elected members of the Congregation Council; and
 - 4) with the council, administer discipline.
 - c. Every pastor shall:
 - 1) strive to extend the Kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad;
 - 2) seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel;
 - 3) impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through distribution of its periodicals and other publications; and
 - 4) endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to the work of the churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and of the Southwestern Texas Synod of the ELCA.
- *C9.04.** The specific duties of the pastor, compensation, and other matters pertaining to the service of the pastor shall be included in a letter of call, which shall be attested by the bishop of the synod.
- *C9.05.**
- a. The call of a congregation, when accepted by a pastor, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment, which, except in the case of the death of the pastor, shall be terminated only following consultation with the synodical bishop and for the following reasons:
 - 1) mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term;
 - 2) resignation of the pastor, which shall become effective, unless otherwise agreed, 30 days after the date on which it was submitted;
 - 3) inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in the congregation in view of local conditions, without reflection on the competence or the moral and spiritual character of the pastor;
 - 4) the physical or mental incapacity of the pastor;
 - 5) disqualification of the pastor through discipline on grounds of doctrine, morality, or continued neglect of duty;
 - 6) the dissolution of the congregation; or
 - 7) suspension of the congregation as a result of discipline proceedings.
 - b. When allegations of physical or mental incapacity of the pastor or ineffective conduct of the pastoral office have come to the attention of the bishop of the synod, the bishop in his or her sole discretion may, or when such allegations have been brought to the synod's attention by an official recital of allegations by the Congregation Council or by a petition signed by at least one-third of the voting members of the congregation, the bishop shall, investigate such conditions personally in company with a committee of two ordained ministers and one layperson.

- c. In case of alleged physical or mental incapacity, competent medical testimony shall be obtained. When such disability is evident, the bishop of the synod with the advice of the committee shall declare the pastorate vacant. Upon the restoration of a disabled pastor to health, the bishop of the synod shall take steps to enable the pastor to resume the ministry, either in the congregation last served or in another field of labor.
- d. In the case of alleged local difficulties that imperil the effective functioning of the congregation, all concerned persons shall be heard, after which the bishop of the synod together with the committee described in *C9.05.b. shall decide on the course of action to be recommended to the pastor and the congregation. If they agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action shall be taken by the synod. If either party fails to assent, the congregation may dismiss the pastor at a legally called meeting after consultation with the bishop, either (a) by a two-thirds majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee did not recommend termination of the call, or (b) by a simple majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee recommended termination of the call.
- e. If, in the course of proceedings described in *C9.05.d., the committee concludes that there may be grounds for disciplinary action, the committee shall make recommendations concerning disciplinary action to the synodical bishop, who may bring charges in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the constitution of this synod.
- f. If, following the appointment of the committee described in *C9.05.b. or d., it should become apparent that the pastoral office cannot be conducted effectively in the congregation(s) being served by the ordained minister due to local conditions, the bishop of the synod may temporarily suspend the pastor from service in the congregation(s) without prejudice and with pay provided through a joint synodical and churchwide fund and with housing provided by the congregation(s).

- *C9.06. At a time of pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor shall be appointed by the bishop of the synod with the consent of this congregation or the Congregation Council.
- *C9.07. During the period of service, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties in the congregation of a regularly called pastor and may delegate the same in part to a supply pastor with the consent of the bishop of the synod and this congregation or Congregation Council. The interim pastor and any ordained pastor providing assistance shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor.
- *C9.08. This congregation shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former pastor before calling a successor. A pastor shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to this congregation before beginning service in a call to another congregation or employment in another ministry setting related to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- *C9.09. When a pastor is called to serve in company with another pastor or pastors, the privileges and responsibilities of each pastor shall be specified in documents to accompany the call and to be drafted in consultation involving the pastors, the Congregation Council, and the bishop of the synod. As occasion requires, the documents may be revised through a similar consultation.
- *C9.11. With the approval of the bishop of the synod, the congregation may depart from *C9.05.a. and call a pastor for a specific term. Details of such calls shall be in writing setting forth the purpose and conditions involved. Prior to the completion of a term, the bishop or a designated representative of the bishop shall meet with the pastor and representatives of the congregation for a review of the call. Such a call may also be terminated before its expiration in accordance with the provisions of *C9.05.a.
- *C9.12. The pastor of this congregation:
 - a. shall keep accurate parochial records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, members dismissed, or members excluded from the congregation;
 - b. shall submit a summary of such statistics annually to the synod; and
 - c. shall become a member of this congregation upon receipt and acceptance of the letter of call. In a parish of multiple congregations, the pastor shall hold membership in one of the congregations.
- *C9.13. The pastor(s) shall submit a report of his or her ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.
- *C9.14. The parochial records of this congregation shall be maintained by the pastor and shall remain the property of the congregation. The secretary of this congregation shall attest in writing to the bishop of this synod that such records have been placed in his or her hands in good order by a departing pastor before the installation of that pastor in another field of labor or the granting by the synod of retired status to the pastor.

C9.20. Ecumenical pastoral ministry

- *C9.21. Under special circumstances, subject to the approval of the synodical bishop and the concurrence of this congregation, an ordained minister of a church body with which the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America officially has established a relationship of full communion may serve temporarily as pastor of this congregation under a contract between the congregation and the ordained minister in a form proposed by the synodical bishop and approved by the congregation.

Chapter 10.

CONGREGATION MEETING

- C10.01.** The annual meeting of this congregation shall be held at a time specified in the bylaws.
- C10.02.** A special Congregation Meeting may be called by the pastor, the Congregation Council, or the president of this congregation, and shall be called by the president of the congregation upon the written request of 10 of the voting members. The call for each special meeting shall specify the purpose for which it is to be held and no other business shall be transacted.
- C10.03.** Notice of all meetings of this congregation shall be given at the services of worship on the preceding two consecutive Sundays and by mail to all voting members at least 10 days in advance of the date of the meeting. The posting of such notice in the regular mail, with the regular postage affixed or paid, sent to the last known address of such members shall be sufficient.
- C10.04.** Twenty (20) voting members shall constitute a quorum.
- C10.05.** Voting by proxy or by absentee ballot shall not be permitted.
- C10.06.** All actions approved by the congregation shall be by majority vote of those voting members present and voting, except as otherwise provided in this constitution or by state law.
- C10.07.** *Robert's Rules of Order*, latest edition, shall govern parliamentary procedure of all meetings of this congregation.

Chapter 11.

OFFICERS

- C11.01.** The officers of this congregation shall be a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.
 - a. Duties of the officers shall be specified in the bylaws.
 - b. The officers shall be voting members of the congregation.
 - c. Officers of this congregation shall serve similar offices of the Congregation Council and shall be voting members of the Congregation Council.
 - d. If the Congregation Council elects its officers, the president, vice president, and secretary shall be selected from the elected membership of the Congregation Council. If the treasurer is not selected from the elected membership of the Congregation Council, the treasurer shall have voice but not vote at the meetings of the Congregation Council.
- C11.02.** The Congregation Council shall elect its officers and they shall be the officers of the congregation. The officers shall be elected by written ballot and shall serve for one year or until their successors are elected. Their terms shall begin at the close of the annual meeting at which they are elected.
- C11.03.** No officer shall hold more than one office at a time. The Treasurer and Secretary will be eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms. No other elected officer shall be eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office.

Chapter 12.

CONGREGATION COUNCIL

- C12.01.** The voting membership of the Congregation Council shall consist of the pastor(s) and not more than 14 nor fewer than 7 members of the congregation. Any voting member of the congregation may be elected, subject only to the limitation on the length of continuous service permitted in that office. A member's place on the Congregation Council shall be declared vacant if the member a) ceases to be a voting member of this congregation or b) is absent from four successive regular meetings of the Congregation Council without cause. Consistent with the laws of the state in which this congregation is incorporated, the congregation may adopt procedures for the removal of a member of the Congregation Council in other circumstances.
- C12.02.** The members of the Congregation Council except the pastor(s) shall be elected at a legally called meeting of the congregation during the month of December. Their term of office shall be for three years, with the term of office beginning on the 2nd Sunday of January and ending on the 2nd Sunday of January. Newly elected Congregation Council members shall be installed at worship on that Sunday. Such members shall be elected to serve no more than two (2) full terms consecutively.
- C12.03.** Should a member's place on the Congregation Council be declared vacant, the Congregation Council shall elect, by majority vote, a successor until the next annual meeting. Individuals who have served less than one-half of a regular term shall be eligible for nomination and possible election to a full term.
- C12.04.** The Congregation Council shall have general oversight of the life and activities of this congregation, and in particular its worship life, to the end that everything be done in accordance with the Word of God and the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The duties of the Congregation Council shall include the following:
 - a. To lead this congregation in stating its mission, to do long-range planning, to set goals and priorities, and to evaluate its activities in light of its mission and goals.
 - b. To seek to involve all members of this congregation in worship, learning, witness, service, and support.
 - c. To oversee and provide for the administration of this congregation to enable it to fulfill its functions and perform its mission.
 - d. To maintain supportive relationships with the pastor(s) and staff and help them annually to evaluate the fulfillment of their calling or employment.

- e. To be examples individually and corporately of the style of life and ministry expected of all baptized persons.
 - f. To promote a congregational climate of peace and goodwill, and, as differences and conflicts arise, to endeavor to foster mutual understanding.
 - g. To arrange for pastoral service during the sickness or absence of the pastor.
 - h. To emphasize partnership with the synod and churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as well as cooperation with other congregations, both Lutheran and non-Lutheran, subject to established policies of the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
 - i. To recommend and encourage the use of program resources produced or approved by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
 - j. To seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel.
- C12.05.** The Congregation Council shall be responsible for the financial and property matters of this congregation.
- a. The Congregation Council shall be the board of directors of this congregation, and as such shall be responsible for maintaining and protecting its property and the management of its business and fiscal affairs. It shall have the powers and be subject to the obligations that pertain to such boards under the laws of the State of Texas, except as otherwise provided herein.
 - b. The Congregation Council shall not have the authority to buy, sell, or encumber real property unless specifically authorized to do so by a legally called meeting of the congregation.
 - c. The Congregation Council may enter into contracts of up to \$ 4000 for items not included in the budget.
 - d. The Congregation Council shall prepare an annual budget for adoption by this congregation, shall supervise the expenditure of funds in accordance therewith following its adoption, and may incur obligations of more than \$ 4000 in excess of the anticipated receipts only after approval by a Congregation Meeting. The budget shall include this congregation's full indicated share in support of the wider ministry being carried on in partnership with the synod and churchwide organization.
 - e. The Congregation Council shall ascertain that the financial affairs of this congregation are being conducted efficiently, giving particular attention to the prompt payment of all obligations and to the regular forwarding of benevolence monies to the synodical treasurer.
 - f. The Congregation Council shall be responsible for this congregation's investments and its total insurance program.
- C12.06.** The Congregation Council shall see that the provisions of this constitution, its bylaws and continuing resolutions are carried out.
- C12.07.** The Congregation Council shall provide for an annual review of the membership roster.
- C12.08.** The Congregation Council shall be responsible for the employment and supervision of the salaried lay workers of this congregation.
- C12.09.** The Congregation Council shall submit a comprehensive report to this congregation at the annual meeting.
- C12.11.** The Congregation Council shall normally meet once a month. Special meetings may be called by the pastor or the president, and shall be called by the president at the request of at least one-half of its members. Notice of each special meeting shall be given to all who are entitled to be present.
- C12.12.** A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of a majority of the members of the Congregation Council, including the pastor or interim pastor, except when the pastor or interim pastor requests or consents to be absent and has given prior approval to the agenda for a particular regular or special meeting, which shall be the only business considered at that meeting. Chronic or repeated absence of the pastor or interim pastor who has refused approval of the agenda of a subsequent regular or special meeting shall not preclude action by the Congregation Council, following consultation with the synodical bishop.

Chapter 13.

CONGREGATION COMMITTEES

- C13.01.** The officers of this congregation and the pastor shall constitute the **Executive Committee**.
- C13.02.** A **Nominating Committee** of four voting members of this congregation, in addition to the pastor, two of whom, if possible, shall be outgoing members of the Congregation Council, shall be elected at the annual meeting for a term of one year. Members of the Nominating Committee are not eligible for consecutive reelection.
- C13.03.** An **Audit Committee** of three voting members shall be elected by the Congregation Council. Audit Committee members shall not be members of the Congregation Council. Term of office shall be three years, with one member elected each year. Members shall be eligible for reelection.
- C13.04.** A **Mutual Ministry Committee** (in the absence of a mutual ministry committee, the duties shall be fulfilled by the executive committee) shall be appointed jointly by the president and the pastor. Term of office shall be two years, with the number to be agreed upon by pastor and president, one third to be appointed each successive year. Members may serve consecutive terms.
- C13.05.** When a pastoral vacancy occurs, a **Call Committee** of at least six voting members shall be elected by this congregation. Term of office will terminate upon installation of the newly called pastor.
- C13.06.** Other committees of this congregation may be formed, as the need arises, by decision of the Congregation Council.

- C13.07.** Duties of committees of this congregation shall be specified in the bylaws.
- C13.08.** The pastor of this congregation shall be *ex officio* a member of all committees and boards of the congregation. The president of this congregation shall be *ex officio* a member of all committees and boards of the congregation, except the Nominating Committee.

Chapter 14.

ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION

- C14.01.** All organizations within this congregation shall exist to aid it in ministering to the members of this congregation and to all persons who can be reached with the Gospel of Christ. As outgrowths and expressions of this congregation's life, the organizations are subject to its oversight and direction. This congregation at its meeting shall determine their policies, guide their activities, and receive reports concerning their membership, work, and finances.
- C14.02.** Special interest groups, other than those of the official organizations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, may be organized only after authorization has been given by the Congregation Council.

Chapter 15.

DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS AND ADJUDICATION

- *C15.01.** Denial of the Christian faith as described in this constitution, conduct grossly unbecoming a member of the Church of Christ, or persistent trouble-making in this congregation are sufficient cause for discipline of a member. Prior to disciplinary action, reconciliation will be attempted following **Matthew 18:15-17**, proceeding through these successive steps: a) private admonition by the pastor, b) admonition by the pastor in the presence of two or three witnesses, and c) citation to appear before the Congregation Council. If, for any reason, the pastor is unable to administer the admonitions required by a. and b. hereof, the president (if not the pastor) or vice president shall administer such admonitions.
- *C15.02.** The process for discipline of a member of the congregation shall be governed as prescribed by the chapter on discipline in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. If discipline against a member proceeds beyond counseling and admonition by the pastor, charges against the accused member(s) that are specific and in writing shall be prepared by member(s) of the congregation who shall sign the charges as the accuser(s). The written charges shall be filed with the pastor, who shall advise the Congregation Council of the need to issue a written citation to the accused and the accusers that specifies the time and place of the hearing before the Congregation Council. The written charges shall accompany the written citation to the accused. A member charged with the offense shall appear before the Congregation Council after having received a written citation, at least ten days prior to the meeting. If the member charged with the offense fails to appear at the scheduled hearing, the Congregation Council may proceed with the hearing and may pass judgment in the member's absence.
- *C15.03.** Members of the Congregation Council who participate in the preparation of the written charges or who present evidence or testimony in the hearing before the Congregation Council are disqualified from voting upon the question of the guilt of the accused member. Should the allegations be sustained by a two-thirds majority vote of the members of the Congregation Council who are not disqualified but who are present and voting, and renewed admonition prove ineffectual, the council shall impose one of the following disciplinary actions:
- a. censure before the council or congregation;
 - b. suspension from membership for a definite period of time; or
 - c. exclusion from membership in this congregation.
- Disciplinary actions b. and c. shall be delivered to the member in writing.
- *C15.04.** The member against whom disciplinary action has been taken by the Congregation Council shall have the right to appeal the decision to the Synod Council. Such right may not be abridged and the decision of the Synod Council shall be final.
- *C15.05.** Disciplinary actions may be reconsidered and revoked by the Congregation Council upon receipt of a) evidence that injustice has been done or b) evidence of repentance and amendment.
- *C15.06.** For disciplinary actions in this congregation, "due process" shall be observed as specified in 20.41.04. in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.
- *C15.07.** No member of a congregation shall be subject to discipline for offenses that the Congregation Council has previously heard and decided, unless so ordered by the Synod Council after an appeal.
- *C15.10. Adjudication**
- *C15.11.** When there is disagreement among factions within this congregation on a substantive issue that cannot be resolved by the parties, members of this congregation shall have access to the synodical bishop for consultation after informing the chair of the Congregation Council of their intent. If the consultation fails to resolve the issue(s), the Consultation Committee of the synod shall consider the matter. If the Consultation Committee of the synod shall fail to resolve the issue(s), the matter shall be referred to the Synod Council, whose decision shall be final.

Chapter 16.

BYLAWS

- *C16.01. This congregation may adopt bylaws. No bylaw may conflict with this constitution.
- *C16.02. Bylaws may be adopted or amended at any legally called meeting of this congregation with a quorum present by a majority vote of those voting members present and voting.
- *C16.03. Changes to the bylaws may be proposed by any voting member provided, however, that such additions or amendments be submitted in writing to the Congregation Council at least 60 days before a regular or special Congregation Meeting called for that purpose and that the Congregation Council notify the congregation's members by mail of the proposal with the council's recommendations at least 30 days in advance of the Congregation Meeting.
- *C16.04. Approved changes to the bylaws shall be sent by the secretary of this congregation to the synod.

Chapter 17.

AMENDMENTS

- *C17.01. Those sections of this constitution that are not required, in accord with the *Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, may be amended in the following manner. Amendments may be proposed by at least 10 voting members or by the Congregation Council. Proposals must be filed in writing with the Congregation Council 60 days before formal consideration by this congregation at a regular or special Congregation Meeting called for that purpose. The Congregation Council shall notify the congregation's members by mail of the proposal together with the council's recommendations at least 30 days in advance of the meeting.
- *C17.02. An amendment to this constitution, proposed under *C17.01., shall:
 - a. be approved at a legally called Congregation Meeting according to this constitution by a majority vote of those present and voting;
 - b. be ratified without change at the next annual meeting by a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting; and
 - c. have the effective date included in the resolution⁴ and noted in the constitution.*****
- *C17.03. Any amendments to this constitution that result from the processes provided in *C17.01. and *C17.02. shall be sent by the secretary of this congregation to the synod. The amendment shall become effective within 120 days from the date of the receipt of the notice by the synod unless the synod informs this congregation that the amendment is in conflict with the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or the constitution of the Southwestern Texas Synod of the ELCA.
- *C17.04. Whenever the *Model Constitution for Congregations* is amended by the Churchwide Assembly, this constitution may be amended to incorporate any such amendment by a simple majority vote of those voting members present and voting at any subsequent meeting of the congregation without presentation at a prior meeting of the congregation, provided that the Congregation Council has submitted by mail notice to the congregation of such an amendment or amendments, together with the council's recommendations, at least 30 days prior to the meeting. Following the adoption of an amendment, the secretary of the congregation shall submit a copy thereof to the synod. Such provisions shall become effective immediately following a vote of approval.

Chapter 18.

CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS

- *C18.01. The Congregation Council may enact continuing resolutions. Such continuing resolutions may not conflict with the constitution or bylaws of this congregation.
- *C18.02. Continuing resolutions shall be enacted or amended by a two-thirds vote of all voting members of the Congregation Council.

Chapter 19.

INDEMNIFICATION

- *C19.01. Consistent with the provisions of the laws under which this congregation is incorporated, this congregation may adopt provisions providing indemnification for each person who, by reason of the fact that such person is or was a Congregation Council member, officer, employee, agent, or other member of any committee of this congregation, was or is threatened to be made a party to any threatened, pending, or completed civil, criminal, administrative, arbitration, or investigative proceeding.

⁴ Such an effective date must be stated in relation to the requirements of *C17.03. to allow time for synodical review of the amendment.

BYLAWS
OF
GRACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

As per ***C4.05**, this congregation's mission statement is:

God's purpose for Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church is welcome to grace, welcome the message.

The guiding principles for the congregation are

Jesus is Lord

God's love is life changing

Everyone is welcome

We seek and share the message

All serve in different ways.

Section 1

THE CONGREGATION as per chapter 8.

- BL1.01 Membership of this congregation shall be its pastor (s) and other baptized persons who have been received into its membership and who have declared and maintained their membership in accordance with the provisions of this constitution and bylaws.
As per ***C8.02**. Members shall be classified as follows:
- a. **Baptized** members are those persons who have been received by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism in this congregation, or, having been previously baptized in the name of the Triune God, have been received by certificate of transfer from other Lutheran congregations or by affirmation of faith.
 - b. **Confirmed** members are baptized persons who have been confirmed in this congregation, those who have been received by adult baptism or by transfer as confirmed members from other Lutheran congregations, or baptized persons received by affirmation of faith.
- BL1.02 Voting members are confirmed members who have received Holy Communion and have made a contribution of record within the current or preceding year.
- BL1.03 As per **C8.02***
- d. **Associate** members are persons holding membership in other Lutheran congregations who wish to retain such membership but desire to participate in the life and mission of this congregation, or persons who wish to retain a relationship with this congregation while being members of other congregations. They have all the privileges and duties of membership except voting rights and eligibility for elected offices or membership on the Congregation Council of this congregation.
- BL1.04 As per **C8.05***
- Membership in this congregation shall be terminated by any of the following:
- a. death;
 - b. resignation;
 - c. transfer or release;
 - d. disciplinary action by the Congregation Council; or
 - e. removal from the roll due to inactivity as defined in the bylaws.
- Such persons who have been removed from the roll of members shall remain persons for whom the Church has a continuing pastoral concern.
- BL1.04.01 Removal from the church roll due to inactivity:
- a. Those confirmed members who no longer qualify as voting members (C8.02) shall be classified as inactive. As such, they shall remain within the continuing concern of the congregation and shall be given conscientious pastoral care.
 - b. The pastor shall report to the Congregation Council when members have been inactive for two (2) years. The pastor will have attempted to contact each member prior to report to council. If, after 8 weeks of this report, those members have still chosen not to fulfill the obligations of active, voting members, they will be removed from the roll of the church.

Section 2

CONGREGATION MEETING as per Chapter 10

- BL2.01 Legally called and specially called meetings shall be held at a time and place specified by the Congregation Council.

BL2.02 As per **C10.03**
Notice of all meetings of this congregation shall be given at the services of worship on the preceding two consecutive Sundays and by mail to all voting members at least 10 days in advance of the date of the meeting. The posting of such notice in the regular mail, with the regular postage affixed or paid, sent to the last known address of such members shall be sufficient.

BL2.03 The annual meeting of the congregation may be held in January on a date and time set by the Congregation Council. If it is held in two (2) parts, Part 1 shall be held in December on a date and at a time determined by the Congregation Council. The purpose of Part 1 shall be to adopt a budget for the succeeding year and elect new council members.

a. The business for a single annual meeting shall include:

Devotions, Determination of a Quorum, Appointment of Parliamentarian, Approval of Agenda, Approval of Minutes from Previous Congregation meeting, Pastor's Report, Treasurer's Report, Nominations and Elections of Members to Congregation council, Additional Elections, Adoption of Budget, Committee Reports, Unfinished Business and New Business.

b. The business for a two-part meeting shall include:

Part I: Devotions, Determination of a Quorum, Appointment of Parliamentarian, Approval of Agenda, approval of Minutes from Previous Congregation Meeting, Nominations and Elections of Members to Congregation Council, and Adoption of Budget.

Part II: Devotions, Determination of a Quorum, Appointment of Parliamentarian, Approval of Agenda, Approval of Minutes from Previous Congregation Meeting, Pastor's Report, Treasurer's Report, Additional Elections, Committee Reports, Unfinished Business and New Business.

BL2.04 As per **C10.02**
A special Congregation Meeting may be called by the pastor, the Congregation Council, or the president of this congregation, and shall be called by the president of the congregation upon the written request of 10 of the voting members. The call for each special meeting shall specify the purpose for which it is to be held and no other business shall be transacted.

BL2.05 As per **C10.04**
Twenty (20) voting members shall constitute a quorum.

BL2.06 As per **C10.05**
Voting by proxy or by absentee ballot shall not be permitted.

BL2.07 As per **C10.06**
All actions approved by the congregation shall be by majority vote of those voting members present and voting, except as otherwise provided in this constitution or by state law.

Section 3

THE OFFICERS as per Chapter 11

BL3.01 Offices of this congregation shall be President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The Secretary and Treasurer may or may not be a member of the Congregation Council as specified in the constitution.

BL3.02 As per **C11.02**
The Congregation Council shall elect its officers and they shall be the officers of the congregation. The officers shall be elected by written ballot and shall serve for one year or until their successors are elected. Their terms shall begin at the close of the annual meeting at which they are elected.

BL3.03 As per **C11.03**
No officer shall hold more than one office at a time. The Treasurer and Secretary will be eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms. No other elected officer shall be eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office.

BL3.04 The **President** is an officer of the congregation,

- And shall preside over meetings of the congregation and the Congregation Council, unless the meeting decides otherwise
- Shall sign all official instruments on behalf of the congregation
- Shall be ex-officio member of the Ministry Committees and organizations of the congregation except the Nominating Committee

BL3.05 The **Vice President** is an officer of the congregation,

- And shall preside in the absence, disability, or resignation of the President unless the meeting decides otherwise
- Shall assist the President in carrying on her/his duties

BL3.06 The **Secretary** is an officer of the congregation,

- And shall countersign all instruments on behalf of the congregation
- Shall keep the minutes of all Congregation Meetings and all meetings of the Congregation Council and any written reports submitted at these meetings.
- Shall enter the Congregation Report and or minutes of all meetings of said groups in the permanent record book. A scribe may be appointed by the Secretary to assist with recording minutes.
- Shall conduct all official correspondence of the Congregation Council and committees under the supervision of the President.
- Shall perform the duties of the President in the absence of the President and the Vice President. If not a regular voting member of the Congregation Council, secretary would preside over meetings only.

BL3.07 The **Treasurer** is an officer of the congregation,

- And shall provide for financial record keeping and be accountable for all funds of the Congregation.
- Prepare the monthly or quarterly financial reports for the Congregation Council
- File all of the required Federal and State tax forms
- Monitor the cash position of the congregation and invests available funds as directed
- Empowered to borrow funds as directed by the Congregation Council
- Provide the congregation with any requested financial information
- Assists in the preparation of the Annual Budget for the Congregation Council
- In the absence of the Secretary shall counter-sign all official instruments on behalf of the congregation
- Shall be an ex-officio member of the Property and Stewardship Committees and other Ministry Committees as designated by the President.

Section 4

CONGREGATION COUNCIL as per chapter 12

- BL4.01 The congregation Council shall consist of the pastor(s) and not less than 7 and not more than 14 elected members. Any voting member may be elected, subject only to the limitation on the length of continuous service permitted in that office.
- BL4.02 A member's place on the Congregation Council shall be declared vacant if the member a) ceases to be a voting member of this congregation or b) is absent from four successive regular meetings of the Congregation Council without cause. Consistent with the laws of the state in which this congregation is incorporated, the congregation may adopt procedures for the removal of a member of the Congregation Council in other circumstances.
- BL4.03 As per **C12.02**
The members of the Congregation Council except the pastor(s) shall be elected at a legally called meeting of the congregation during the month of December. Their term of office shall be for three years, with the term of office beginning on the 2nd Sunday of January and ending on the 2nd Sunday of January. Newly elected Congregation Council members shall be installed at worship on that Sunday. Such members shall be elected to serve no more than two (2) full terms consecutively.
- BL4.04 As per **C12.03**
Should a member's place on the Congregation Council be declared vacant, the Congregation Council shall elect, by majority vote, a successor until the next annual meeting. Individuals who have served less than one-half of a regular term shall be eligible for nomination and possible election to a full term.
- BL4.05 The Congregation Council shall usually meet on the 2nd Tuesday of each month unless otherwise agreed upon and at a mutually agreed upon time.
- BL4.06 The order of Business shall include the following:
- Devotions
 - Approval of Agenda
 - Approval of Minutes
 - Pastor's Report
 - Treasurer's Report
 - Committee Reports
 - Unfinished Business
 - New Business
- BL4.07 Council meetings are open to all members and associate members where they may speak but may not participate in voting. Executive council meetings shall be closed or by invitation by the President or Pastor only.

Section 5

COMMITTEES as per chapter 13

BL5.01 As per **C13.01**

The officers of this congregation and the pastor shall constitute the **Executive Committee**.

BL5.02.01 At the January Congregation Meeting, the Congregation Council shall recommend four (4) qualified voting members to serve as the Nominating Committee. After additional nominations are received from the floor, a committee of four (4) voting members shall be elected by a simple majority.

BL5.02.02 Nominating Procedure. Up to sixty (60) days prior to the December Congregation Meeting, the voters may submit to the Nominating committee the names of possible candidates for office. Additional names will be obtained through voluntary sign-up. The Nominating Committee shall prepare a list consisting of at least one candidate for each open council position from the voting membership of the Congregation. The list shall then be made available to voting members of the congregation thirty (30) days prior to the December Congregation Meeting. Following the publication of the Nominating Committee's list, any voting member of the Congregation may submit to the committee additional names for inclusion on the list.

Such names shall be submitted at least three (3) weeks before the date of the December Congregation Meeting. This procedure is in-lieu-of taking nominations from the floor.

The Nominating Committee shall have investigated the status of the proposed candidates and found those eligible for office and willing to serve. The Nominating Committee, at least two (2) weeks before the December Congregation Meeting, shall post or publish the list of candidates for the Congregation Council.

BL5.02.03 Election Procedure. From the list of candidates submitted by the Nominating Committee, the voting membership shall, at its December Congregation Meeting, elect by written ballot and simple majority all Congregation Council members.

BL5.03 As per **C13.03**

An **Audit Committee** of three voting members shall be elected by the Congregation Council. Audit Committee members shall not be members of the Congregation Council. Term of office shall be three years, with one member elected each year. Members shall be eligible for reelection.

BL5.03.01 The Audit Committee shall audit or supervise the audit of all financial books of the Treasurer and submit a written audit at the May congregation Council meeting with notification to members of the audit presentation. The Audit Committee elections will be held each Fall by the Congregation Council.

BL5.04 As per **C13.04**

A **Mutual Ministry Committee** (in the absence of a mutual ministry committee, the duties shall be fulfilled by the executive committee) shall be appointed jointly by the president and the pastor. Term of office shall be two years, with the number to be agreed upon by pastor and president, one third to be appointed each successive year. Members may serve consecutive terms.

BL5.04.01 The basic objective is to affirm and strengthen the mission of the congregation and the ministry of the pastor through listening and clarifying, sharing and communicating, reviewing and reflecting.

- Committee members are accountable to one another for maintaining discretion or confidentiality when personal information is shared during a meeting
- Develop open communication about the expectations, attitudes and concerns within the congregation, the community and the pastor
- Identify early warning signs of misunderstandings
- Become a "listening post" for pastor and people
- Serve as a group where the pastor could test new ideas
- Conduct annual review and affirmation of pastor
- Act as a "sounding board" in time of personal and professional stress
- Help plan continuing education that benefit both the mission of the congregation and the ministry of the pastor
- Annually assess the working conditions, compensation, housing, benefits, provided for the pastor and makes recommendations to Council and or appropriate committee
- Reports to the Congregation Council summarized work of the committee during the past year and committee's plans for the coming year and states formal recommendations without disclosing confidential items or detailed background information when the matters are personal.

BL5.05 At its first meeting in each congregational year, the Congregation Council shall appoint Standing Committees as outlined in these Bylaws. Each committee shall be composed of one or more members of the Council, and, in addition at least one other confirmed member of the congregation in good standing. Although appointed by and responsible to the Council, these committees shall be recognized as representative of the interests of, and performing essential services for, the congregation as a whole. The pastor (s) shall have voice and vote in all committees.

BL5.06 Standing Committees shall include, but not be limited to the following:

- a. **Worship and Music**
- b. **Stewardship and Finance**
- c. **Christian Education**
- d. **Evangelism / Social Ministry**
- e. **Service**
- f. **Property / Maintenance**
- g. **Constitution and Bylaws**
- h. **Youth**
- i. **Long range Planning**

General duties and powers of the Congregation Committees shall be:

- Submission of a report / minutes of its ministry and activities at each meeting of the congregation Council and on such other occasions as the Congregation shall require. Such reports shall include specific recommendations (if any) for Congregation and/or Congregation Council action. Specific resolutions and/or requests for action may be brought to any Congregation Council meeting
- Initiating and carrying out such activities and programs within the congregation as will enable it to effectively perform the functions and duties assigned to it by the Constitution and Bylaws, or by specific resolution of the Congregation
- Administration of all funds set aside for its work, by budget appropriation or by special resolution of the Congregation, provided that the voting membership or Congregation council may, at its discretion, restrict such expenditures to conform with the actual financial situation of the Congregation at any given time
- Usually meet on the 4th Tuesday of each month unless agreed upon differently
- To publicize upcoming ministry programs, activities, and past accomplishments in the newsletter
- To submit an annual budget request in the form and at the time requested by the Stewardship Committee
- To submit an annual report of the committee's ministry in the form and at the time requested by the Congregation President.

Committee members may serve an indefinite number of terms. Congregation members will be encouraged to volunteer to serve on ministry committees as they are gifted. Due to the nature and ministry of the Youth Ministry Committee, a minimum of one (1) and a maximum of three (3) unconfirmed youth may serve. Committee members can be members of only two (2) committees at a time, excluding the constitution and bylaw, long range planning, and memorial committees.

BL5.06.01 There shall be a **Worship and Music Committee** which shall include the Organist(s) and the Choir Director..

The basic objective of this committee is to plan and implement the worship life of the congregation. The duties shall include but are not necessarily limited to:

- Encourage spiritual programs in the congregational organization
- Share in the planning and implementation of the music program with the organist(s) and Choir Director of the congregation
- Provide for substitute pastors and guest speakers as needed
- Coordinate, train and supervise the ushers
- Coordinate, train and supervise the acolytes
- Coordinate, train and supervise assisting ministers and lectors
- Coordinate, train and supervise the altar guild
- Set the time and schedule for worship services in conjunction with the Pastor and the Congregation Council
- Plan, approve and enable appropriate forms of worship, liturgies and hymns for use in public worship
- Care for the use and maintenance of the worship items, the altar furnishings, and vestments, etc.
- Maintain an adequate supply of expendable items for worship such as communion wine and bread, baptismal napkins, candles, etc.
- Be responsible for the preparation of the worship space for special occasions
- Plan and publicize the services for the year
- Maintain, supervise, and evaluate adequate nursery facilities and personnel
- Be responsible for the distribution of altar flowers to the sick / shut-ins
- Assist, encourage and empower the drama group in the selection of appropriate materials and timing for worship presentation.

BL5.06.02 There shall be a **Stewardship and Finance Committee** which shall include the Treasurer and Memorial Chair.

The basic objectives of this committee are: to initiate programs for the development of good stewardship attitudes in the members of the congregation in regard to time, talents, and treasures; to provide for the training and utilization of members of the congregation for the work of Christ's Kingdom; and to ensure the financial stability of the congregation and its work through a developed program

of dedicate, proportionate, first fruits giving. The duties shall include but are not necessarily limited to:

- Study the Scriptural principles regarding the total stewardship calling of the Christian as a member of their own family, as a neighbor and citizen, and as a congregation Member, and share these insights with Congregation Members
- Contact and encourage new members for service to the congregation and endeavor to stir up the talents of present members for use in Christ's work
- Maintain a program to discover and enlist for Kingdom service the talents God has given all members
- Be responsible for maintenance of congregational time and talent file at all times, and provide for the immediate recording of these gifts and abilities of incoming members
- Conduct an intensive program annually to inform every member personally of the basic Biblical stewardship principles and practices and the ministries of this congregation
- Encourage the Gospel-motivated practice of joyous, worshipful, liberal, proportionate, first fruits giving in response to received blessings and recognized needs
- Annually give every member an opportunity to make a commitment to the Congregation's Mission and Ministry
- Initiate an annual preparation and presentation to the congregation of a ministry program, determine anticipated receipts and recommend a budget for adoption by the voters
- Evaluate and make recommendations to the Congregation Council for use of undesignated gifts of love by individuals
- Screen all appeals for funds and make the appropriate recommendations to the voters or initiate the necessary action appropriate to such an appeal review and make recommendations to Council to accept or decline each offer of non-solicited gifts to the congregation
- Evaluate various programs for endowments, remembrance of the congregation in wills, bequests, etc., and develop ways of implementation
- Be concerned, together with the Treasurer, for safe deposit and recording of all funds, monthly remissions of offerings for mission and church agencies, and prompt payment of salaries and bills as authorized by the congregation and the appropriate commissions
- Encourage stewardship programs in organizations of the congregation
- Establish and vigorously pursue a program for endowing the congregation through wills, bequests, foundations, and other sources
- Annually review the budgeting procedures of the congregation and recommend to the congregation any necessary improvements or revisions
- Annually review all insurance contracts in conjunction with the Church Property Committee and the Council Secretary
- Recommend to the Congregation council the use of outside legal counsel for review of contracts, deeds, and other contractual matters.

BL5.06.03 There shall be a **Properties / Maintenance Committee**

The basic objectives of this committee are the proper maintenance and repair of church property; and the general protection of the congregation against loss or damage of whatever nature. The duties shall include but are not necessarily limited to:

- Make an annual inspection of church properties and equipment and recommend to the congregation needed repairs, improvements, or replacements
- Conduct an annual inventory of all church properties, equipment, and supplies, including acquisition date and approximate value of each item
- Carry out all resolutions of the voters on purchases, repairs, replacement of church property and equipment
- Determine and engage adequate custodial help. The committee shall also meet periodically with the custodian to discuss the care of the buildings, needs and problems in custodial service, etc.
- Prepare for the custodial help a detailed list of the required daily and weekly, monthly or annual maintenance of the facilities and equipment
- Annually evaluate the performance of all custodial help
- Recommend to the Congregation Council all policies governing the use of church property and equipment
- Have made and issue keys for church property, and keep and review annually a list of the keys issued
- Supervise, control and recommend adequate storage facilities for all church property, equipment, and supplies and the orderly maintenance of the same
- Annually check the adequacy of all types of insurance for church property and equipment in conjunction with the Stewardship committee and the congregation Council Secretary
- Check all property twice a year for fire hazards

- Enlist work crews for special repair, improvement, cleaning, painting, decorating, landscaping, and other projects
- Arrange for immediate repairs of an urgent nature and all normal repairs and alterations for which budget funds have been allocated
- Be responsible for the negotiation of service contracts for the organ, office machines, etc.
- Make an annual inventory of official documents in safekeeping, and enter the inventory in the official minutes of the congregation.

BL5.06.04 There shall be a **Evangelism / Social Ministry Committee**

The basic objectives of this committee are the bringing of the Gospel to those outside the congregation; the enlistment of all of god's people in the work of spreading the Gospel; the developing of plans and adoption of outreach programs for mission and ministry outside the congregation; and the developing of effective communication tools for the congregation, its officers and commissions to that end. The duties shall include but are not necessarily limited to:

- Share with the Pastor in the proclamation of the Gospel to all people
- Foster a climate of mission and ministry that encourages congregation Members to witness Christ to one another and to our neighbors and the community as a whole
- Promote congregation-wide mission and ministry outreach activities
- Maintain an ongoing visitation program
- Take responsibility for a new member/sponsor ministry with quarterly tracking
- Develop specific ministries for the reception, orientation, and integration of new members into the congregation
- Evaluate and utilize appropriate media for enhancement of the Congregation's image
- Maintain a current and up-to-date web site for the congregation
- Seek to use all available technology to promote the activities of the congregation
- Foster support for missions and charities through an ongoing program of mission information and education through education agencies, committees and organizations, rallies, festivals, web site promotions, videos, letters and tracts
- Present a list of benevolence projects for the congregation as an outreach and suggest the source of revenue designated for these purposes
- Promote the activities of community based organizations and represent the congregation in community activities
- Evaluate and foster relationships with social service agencies for help with addictive substance abuse (e.g. drugs and alcohol), mental health concerns, unplanned pregnancies, and the like

BL5.06.05 There shall be a **Christian Education Committee**

The basic objectives of this committee are to plan and administer the total education program of the congregation; to determine policies; to select personnel for the various ministries; to provide the necessary means and facilities for the ministries; and to direct and supervise the entire educational program of the congregation. The duties shall include but are not necessarily limited to:

- Be responsible for the Christian nurture of the children, youth, and adults in the congregation and, through them, in the home, community, and beyond
- Establish objectives, set policies for, and supervise the total education program for the education of the congregation including Sunday Church School, Vacation Bible school, confirmation classes, first communion classes, and other education groups
- Provide for active expression of Christian love and concern as an integral part of the total education program
- Select curriculum and analyze performance of each educational program and seek constant improvement
- Regular review of existing organizations to determine whether all groups are being served and recommend revisions and additions as deemed advisable
- Make annual analyses, by age groups, to determine the degree of participations of the total membership of the congregation in its total education program
- Work with organizations and other committees to coordinate educational activities through special classes, courses, conferences, and retreats
- Encourage increasing participation of every congregation member in Bible Study and other various opportunities
- Delegate administration of educational programs to qualified persons exercise leadership in gathering lists of candidates for vacancies in teachers and leaders
- Supervise the performance of teachers in the educational programs of the congregation
- Enlist, train, and place lay teachers and leaders as the congregation's needs require
- Be concerned about the spiritual, emotional and physical health and welfare of teachers and leaders of the educational programs

- Establish a system of communication for, and recognition of, faithful congregation services by all persons involved in the educational task of the congregation
- Consider providing special educational opportunities for the mentally and physically challenged
- Encourage participation in conferences, conventions, and continuing educational opportunities
- Maintain, improve, cultivate and promote the use of a church library, library subscriptions, and the use of all audio visual aids

BL5.06.06 There shall be a **Long Range Planning Committee**

The basic objectives of this committee are to project the activities of the congregation five to ten years by analyzing the community of which the congregation is a part as well as the activities of the congregation. The duties shall include but are not necessarily limited to:

- This committee should meet at least three times per year
- The committee should develop and maintain a list of future needs of the congregation as the committee sees fit
- The committee will represent the future plans and dreams of Grace's members
- The "future needs document" should be updated annually
- Contents of the "future needs document" should be reported annually through the annual Congregation Report
- If any item is deemed to need further development the LRP committee will present a proposal concerning the need to the proper committee
- Periodic surveys of the congregation will be considered in order to facilitate input to the LRP committee

BL5.06.07 There shall be a **Service Committee**

The basic objectives of this committee are to provide meals to members during distressful times, visit home-bound and elderly members and adequately maintain the fellowship hall kitchen. The duties shall include but are not necessarily limited to:

- A light meal will be provided before or after the funeral or memorial service of a deceased member
- When there is a need, upon request, a meal(s) will be provided for the member families when the primary caregiver is incapacitated
- A meal will be provided, upon request of the pastor, for occasional meetings of the Ministerial Alliance or other pastoral meetings
- On occasion "snack baskets" or a meal will be taken to home-bound or elderly members to let them know the congregation is thinking of them
- Will ensure that the fellowship hall kitchen is maintained and adequately equipped

BL5.06.08 There shall be a **Youth Committee**

The basic objectives of this committee are to involve the young people (high school age and younger) of the congregation in the work of Christ, provide for their spiritual growth and nurture, and to promote genuine Christian fellowship for the young people of the congregation. The duties shall include but are not necessarily limited to:

- Provide for the continuing spiritual growth of the young people of the congregation through Bible study, prayer, and Christian service
- Promote attendance and involvement of the congregation's youth at all Grace youth activities, and whenever possible ELCA churchwide and Synod youth activities
- Plan and carry out a year-round program involving worship, service, fellowship and spiritual growth for the young people of the congregation
- Involve the youth of the congregation in developing a planned youth program
- Actively engage in the selection and training of leaders for the young people's programs
- Under the approval and supervision of the Pastor, provide for the continual education of young people on topics of current interest to them
- Provide opportunities for involvement of youth as servants in the life of the community such as civic, school, cultural, humanitarian, and recreational groups
- Provide for public recognition of various youth achievements and accomplishments
- Plan and coordinate activities for youth outside the congregation, particularly with other Lutheran young people's groups at various levels
- In conjunction with the Evangelism / Social Ministry Committee, train and involve the young people of the congregation in bringing others to faith in Christ
- Provide counseling for the spiritual, moral, social, and vocational development of young people

- Encourage young people to consider full time service in the church as pastors, teachers, Associates in Ministry, etc.
- Provide opportunities for the nurturing of parent/youth relationships
- Supervise the work of all youth groups in the congregation

BL5.06.09 There may be a confirmed **Youth Representative** on the Congregation Council. The youth member shall have voice but no vote at Council meetings. This member of the Congregation Council shall be elected by their peers through written ballot, by a simple majority, at a duly called youth meeting and shall serve for one (1) year or until their successor is elected. Such member shall be eligible to serve no more than two full terms consecutively. Their term shall begin at the same time as the rest of the Congregation Council.

BL5.06.11 There shall be a Constitution and Bylaw Committee

The basic objectives of this committee are to annually review and update the constitution and bylaws of this congregation. The duties shall include but are not necessarily limited to:

- Shall meet a minimum of once a year
- Shall review recommendations from the national meetings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the meetings of the Southwestern Texas Synod.
- Shall propose to the Congregation Council and the Congregation changes as needed and supervise or implement the procedure for said changes in accordance with this constitution and its bylaws.

Section 6

ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION as per chapter 14

BL6.01 All committees and organizations handling funds within the congregation shall submit accounts to the treasurer or the church office at least twenty-one (21) days prior to each Congregation Meeting and the treasurer shall include such accounts in his/her report to the meeting. Financial reports for these accounts shall also be submitted to the treasurer on a quarterly basis.

BL6.02 Other on-going Special interest groups/committees include: Altar Guild, WELCA, Medical Mission Team, and Choir.

Section 7

AMENDMENTS TO THE BYLAWS

BL7.01 The Bylaws may be amended at any time by majority vote of the Congregation Council and ratified by this congregation.