

# CONSTITUTION of PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Rockdale, Texas

*In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

## **PREAMBLE**

Recognizing our unity in Christ and our common practice in the Christian faith; desiring to express our fellowship in worship and work; knowing our spiritual needs; mindful of our Christian privileges and duties; and wishing to observe orderly cooperation, we adopt the following constitution:

## **CHAPTER 1 – NAME AND INCORPORATION**

- 1.01. The name of our congregation shall be Peace Lutheran Church (PLC).
- 1.02. The congregation shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of Texas.

## **CHAPTER 2 – CONFESSION OF FAITH**

Peace Lutheran Church incorporates Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the North American Lutheran Church (NALC), confessing:

- 2.01. The Triune God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.02. 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 the Holy Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and

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<sup>1</sup>The NALC does not require congregations to adopt a particular constitution. However, it does require a subscription to the NALC constitution and confession of faith.

announce God's revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them the Holy Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.

- 2.03. 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, "according to which all doctrines should and must be judged." (Formula of Concord, Epitome, Part I)
- 2.04. The Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of the Church.
- 2.05. 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.
- 2.06. 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.
- 2.07. 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 Church for God's mission in the world.
- 2.08. PLC honors and accepts The Common Confession (2005), attached in an appendix hereto, as a summary of teachings otherwise affirmed in the Lutheran Confessions.

### **CHAPTER 3 – NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE CONGREGATION**

As an expression of the unity of the church in Christ the congregation recognizes the desirability of conforming to the practices of other member congregations in using such forms of worship, including liturgies and hymn books, as are recommended by the NALC. Only such variations as are authorized by the congregation shall be permitted.

- 3.01. This congregation is organized and operated exclusively for religious, charitable and educational purposes within the meaning of Internal Revenue Service Code Section 501 c) (3).
- 3.02. The Church is the universal assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. (Augsburg Confession VII)
- 3.03. The hearers of the Gospel are a people, called and sent by God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to be a community of faith, hope and love, who witness to Christ and His coming Kingdom before all the world.
- 3.04. All authority in the Church belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ and is manifested through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. The structures and meetings of PLC exist and exercise their ministry in the service of Christ and His authority.

- 3.05. All structures within PLC, in accord with the NALC affirm that they share a common mission: to bear witness to Christ.
- 3.06. The Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies all who believe in Jesus Christ to be priests for service to others in Jesus' name, and desires to make use of the spiritual gifts He has given through the priesthood of all believers. In its structures, the church equips and supports its members for their ministries in the world and in the Church.
- 3.07. This congregation exercises ministry within the mission of the NALC. This congregation embodies the Church in its community and, for the sake of mission, lives in cooperative partnership with other congregations and within the other structures of the NALC. The congregation shall share responsibility for the decision-making processes of the NALC.
- 3.08. This congregation shall develop an organizational structure to be described in the bylaws.
- 3.09. This congregation shall, from time to time, adopt a mission statement which will provide specific direction for its programs.
- 3.10. Should this congregation be dissolved, the official records of this congregation shall be deposited in the archives of the North American Lutheran Church or its successor.

#### **CHAPTER 4 – POWERS OF THE CONGREGATION**

- 4.01. All power in the congregation has its source in the Word of God which is the norm for its faith and life. All individuals and groups within the congregation shall submit to the authority of the Word; and the life and activity of the congregation and its organizations shall conform to it.
- 4.02. The powers of the congregation shall be those necessary to fulfill its purposes, as set forth in this constitution.
- 4.03. The powers of the congregation shall be vested in the congregational meeting, called and conducted in such manner as is provided in this constitution, and, to the extent conveyed by this constitution or as assigned from time to time by the congregational meeting, in the committees elected by the congregation.
- 4.04. In the fulfillment of its purpose, the congregation is empowered to:
  - a. acquire real and personal property by gift, devise, bequest, purchase, or other lawful means;
  - b. hold title to and use its property for any and all activities consistent with its purpose;
  - c. sell, mortgage, lease, transfer, or otherwise dispose of its property by any lawful means;
  - d. enter into contracts;
  - e. sue and be sued;
  - f. elect its Church Council, boards, and committees, and require the members of the council, boards, and committees to carry out their duties in accordance with the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions;
  - g. approve the annual budget;

- h. adopt amendments to this constitution as provided in chapter 12, and amendments to the bylaws, as specified in chapter 11;
  - i. establish or terminate a relationship with a church body.
- 4.05. This congregation may select voting members of this congregation to serve as lay delegates and alternates to represent it at meetings of any conferences, convocations, and other meetings where this congregation is entitled to such representation.

## **CHAPTER 5 – RELATIONSHIP TO THE NORTH AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH**

- 5.01. This congregation is an interdependent part of the NALC or any successor and is subject to the disciplinary rules of the NALC.
- 5.02. This congregation subscribes to the constitution of the NALC and will act in accordance with it.
- 5.03. This congregation will conduct its ministry in a manner consistent with its membership in the NALC:
- a. this congregation is responsible for its life as a Christian community;
  - b. this congregation pledges its participation in the life and mission of the NALC, including the prayerful consideration of appropriate financial support;
  - c. this congregation shall call only pastors who are members of the NALC or otherwise are authorized by the NALC to serve; and
  - d. this congregation shall appoint only commissioned lay leaders who are members of the NALC or otherwise are authorized by the NALC to serve.
- 5.04. Affiliation with the NALC may be terminated as follows:
- a. this congregation dissolves;
  - b. this congregation ceases to exist;
  - c. this congregation is removed from membership in the NALC according to the procedures for discipline of the NALC; or
  - d. this congregation, at a legally called and conducted special meeting, approves by at least a majority of those present and voting a resolution directing that this congregation withdraw from the NALC. If this congregation adopts a resolution withdrawing from the NALC, all provisions of this constitution binding this congregation to the NALC shall be immediately ineffective. The congregation shall promptly deliver a copy of the withdrawal resolution to the NALC General Secretary.

## **CHAPTER 6 – MEMBERSHIP IN THE CONGREGATION**

- 6.01. Members of the congregation shall be those who are designated as such at the time that this constitution is adopted, and those who are admitted thereafter; and who maintain their membership in accordance with the provisions of this constitution and its bylaws. There shall be no membership restrictions with respect to race, color, national origin, or sex.
- 6.02. Members shall be classified as follows:

- a. *Baptized* members shall be those who, as provided in the bylaws, have been baptized in the name of the Triune God.
- b. *Confirmed* members shall be those baptized members who have been admitted to confirmed membership as provided in the bylaws.
- c. *Voting* members shall be those who are confirmed members in good standing, as provided in the bylaws.

6.03. It shall be the privilege and duty of members of the congregation to:

- a. make diligent 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 the congregation and the NALC.

6.04 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 Church 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 7 – THE PASTOR**

7.01. Authority to call a pastor shall be in this congregation by at least a two-thirds majority vote of members present and voting at a meeting legally called for that purpose.

7.02. Consistent with the faith and practice of the NALC,

- a. Every ordained minister shall:
  1. preach the Word;
  2. administer the sacraments;
  3. conduct public worship
  4. provide pastoral care;
  5. serve as the chief evangelist in his or her ministry, and
  6. proclaim God’s love to 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 Church Council; and
  4. with the Church 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; and

3. impart knowledge of the NALC and its wider ministry through public provision of information, distribution of publications and other appropriate means.
- 7.03 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.
- 7.04. The Pastoral call:
- 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 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; or
    6. the dissolution of the congregation.
  - b. If the Church Council determines that it may be appropriate to end a call of one of the reasons set out in sub-section (a), the Council shall consult with the pastor regarding the matter in accord with Biblical principles, set forth in St. Matthew 18:15-17. If the Church Council and pastor do not reach agreement, the Congregation shall inform the Bishop of the NALC, who shall consult with the Church Council and the pastor and shall attempt to reach an agreed resolution. If the Bishop fails to facilitate an agreed resolution, the Church Council may terminate the pastor's call by a vote of two-thirds of all members of the Church Council. In all events, the Church Council can suspend a pastor with pay by majority vote if the Church Council determines that such suspension is necessary to protect the congregation and all whom it serves.
- 7.05. At a time of pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor may be appointed by the Church Council.
- 7.06. 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 Church Council. The interim pastor and any ordained pastor providing assistance shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor.
- 7.07. 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.
- 7.08. The pastor of this congregation:
- a. is responsible for maintaining accurate parochial records of:
    1. baptisms

2. confirmations
  3. marriages
  4. burials
  5. communicants
  6. members received
  7. members dismissed, or
  8. members excluded from the congregation, and  
these records shall remain the property of the congregation;
- b. shall submit a summary of such statistics annually to the Church Council;
  - c. upon leaving this congregation, shall complete the parochial records up to the time of departure; and
  - d. shall become a member of this congregation upon receipt and acceptance of the letter of call.

## **CHAPTER 8 – MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION**

- 8.01. The power and authority of the congregation shall be exercised through the congregational meeting, which shall be called and conducted in conformity with civil laws and the provisions of the constitution and bylaws of the congregation.
- 8.02. Regular meetings of this congregation shall be held semi-annually each year as specified in the bylaws.
- 8.03. A quorum for any regular or special meeting of the congregation shall be fifteen percent (15%) of the voting members.
- 8.04. A special meeting of the congregation may be called by action of the congregation, by petition of at least fifteen percent (15%) of the voting members, or by any one of the following: Church Council, the president of the congregation or the pastor. Official notice of a special meeting of this congregation shall be in writing and shall be posted conspicuously in the place where the congregation customarily worships. Such notice shall state the time, the place, and the purpose of the meeting. It shall be signed by the president and the secretary of the congregation, or by the person or persons who have called the meeting, as authorized by this paragraph. Notice of a special meeting shall be made known at all public services of the congregation held during the ten days preceding the date of the meeting. If no services are held during the stipulated time, the notice of the meeting shall be mailed to all voting members at least 5 days in advance of the meeting; provided, however, that written notice of a meeting called to consider a resolution requesting the pastor to resign shall be mailed at least 10 days in advance and provided further that a meeting called to consider the disposition or encumbrance of real property must be called and held in conformity with such provisions of civil law as may be applicable.
- 8.05. The pastor shall be notified of the time and place at which a special meeting of the congregation is held.
- 8.06. Only business for which a special meeting has been called shall be transacted at the meeting

- 8.07. Voting by proxy or by absentee ballot shall not be permitted.
- 8.08. A meeting of the congregation may, by majority vote, recess to reconvene at a specified time and place. A meeting may also recess to reconvene upon call; provided, however, that the time and place of such a reconvened meeting must be announced at a public service of the congregation and not less than three days' written notice be given of the reconvened meeting.
- 8.09. *Robert's Rules of Order*, latest edition, shall govern parliamentary procedure of all meetings of this congregation.

## **CHAPTER 9. OFFICERS AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION CHURCH COUNCIL**

- 9.01. A selection of members of the congregation are elected to serve as the church council. Number of members is determined in bylaws. Officers of the council are elected by the council members (Chapters 9.03.)
- 9.02. The officers of this congregation shall be a president, vice-president, and secretary.
- 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 Church Council and shall be voting members of the Church Council.
  - d. The treasurer is appointed from voting church membership by the council. The treasurer shall have voice but not vote at the meetings of the Church Council. The treasurer cannot be a member of the church council.
- 9.03. The officers identified in this Chapter shall be elected by majority vote of the Church Council and shall serve for one year or until their successors are elected.
- 9.04. No officer shall hold more than one office at a time. No elected officer shall be eligible to serve more than six consecutive years in the same office.
- 9.05. If any elected office enumerated in this Chapter becomes vacant, the Church Council shall elect a replacement from within or outside the council as soon as practicable to serve the remainder of the unexpired term. The time served under this Section shall not count for purposes of term limits.

## **CHAPTER 10. CHURCH COUNCIL**

- 10.01 The voting membership of the Church Council shall consist of the officers and the other elected members from 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 Church Council may 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 Church 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 Church Council in other circumstances.
- 10.02 The pastor is a non-voting member of the council with voice.



- 10.03 The members of the Church Council except the pastor(s) shall be elected by majority vote at the annual mid-year meeting of the congregation. Newly elected Church Council members shall be installed at worship on any Sunday prior to the date they assume office.
- 10.04 Should a member's place on the Church Council be declared vacant, the Church Council shall elect, by majority vote, a successor until the term normally expires.
- 10.05 The Church 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, the Lutheran Confessions and the faith and practice of the NALC. The duties of the Church 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 foster resolution of such conflicts according to Biblical principles.
  - g. To arrange for pastoral service during the sickness or absence of the pastor.
  - h. To emphasize partnership with the NALC as well as cooperation with other Christian congregations, both Lutheran and non-Lutheran.
  - i. To seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel.
- 10.06 The Church Council and treasurer shall be responsible for the financial and property matters of this congregation.
- a. The Church 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 Church Council shall not have the authority to buy, sell, or encumber real property unless specifically authorized to do so by a meeting of the congregation.
  - c. The Church 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 no more than eight percent (8%) in excess of the total annual budget without congregational approval.
  - d. The Church Council may enter into contracts of up to eight percent (8%) of the annual budget for items not included in the budget without congregational approval.
  - e. The Church 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 designated recipients.

- f. The Church Council shall be responsible for this congregation's investments and its total insurance program.

10.07 The Church Council shall see that the provisions of this constitution and of the congregation's bylaws and continuing resolutions are carried out.

10.08 The Church Council shall provide for periodic reviews of the membership roster.

10.09 The Church Council shall be responsible for the employment and supervision of the salaried lay workers of this congregation.

10.10 The Church Council shall submit a comprehensive report to this congregation at the semi-annual meetings.

10.11 The Church Council shall normally meet once a month. Special meetings may be called by the pastor, the president, or at the request of at least one-half of the council members. Notice of each special meeting shall be given to all who are entitled to be present.

10.12 A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of a majority of the members of the Church Council. In addition, the pastor or interim pastor must be present, except when the pastor or interim pastor requests or consents to be absent.

## **CHAPTER 11. COMMITTEES OF THE CONGREGATION**

11.01 All committee are specified in the bylaws.

## **CHAPTER 12. ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION**

12.01. 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 their oversights and directions by the council.

## **CHAPTER 13 – DISCIPLINE**

10.01. A member who advocates doctrines which are contrary to Holy Scripture and the Confessions of the church, or who is guilty of conduct that is grossly unbecoming a member of the Body of Christ, shall be subject to discipline in accordance with Mathew 18:15-18.

10.02. Provisions for the exercise of discipline shall be those provided in the Bylaws.

## **CHAPTER 14 – BYLAWS**

11.01. The congregation shall adopt such Bylaws as may from time to time be necessary. No Bylaws may conflict with this constitution.

11.02. Bylaws may be adopted; or amended at any legally called and conducted meeting of the congregation.

## **CHAPTER 15 – AMENDMENTS**

- 15.01. The doctrinal basis and the confessional subscription contained in Chapter 2, and this paragraph of Chapter 15, shall be unalterable; and no amendment of this constitution shall conflict therewith.
- 15.02. A proposed amendment to this constitution shall be:
- a. read at a public service of the congregation or mailed to the voting members, not less than thirty days (30) before the legally called congregational meeting at which it is to be considered,
  - b. approved without change at the legally called congregational meeting following its announcement, by a majority vote of those present and voting, and
  - c. ratified without further change at the next legally called congregational meeting, by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting.
- 15.03. If a proposed amendment fails to be adopted, it may be amended in accordance with the Bylaws.

## **APPENDIX: The Common Confession (2005)**

### 1. The Lord Jesus Christ

We are people who believe and confess our faith in the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We trust and believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.

### 2. The Gospel of Salvation

We believe and confess that all human beings are sinners, and that sinners are redeemed by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God alone justifies human beings by faith in Christ—a faith that God creates through the message of the Gospel. As ambassadors for Christ, God uses us to speak His Word and build His kingdom.

### 3. The Authority of Scripture

We believe and confess that the Bible is God's revealed Word to us, spoken in Law and Gospel. The Bible is the final authority for us in all matters of our faith and life.

### 4. A Common Confession of Faith

We accept and uphold that the Lutheran Confessions reliably guide us as faithful interpretations of Scripture and that we share a unity and fellowship in faith with others among whom the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached and the sacraments are administered in accordance with the Gospel.

### 5. The Priesthood of All Believers

We believe and confess that the Holy Spirit makes all who believe in Jesus Christ to be priests for service to others in Jesus' name, and that God desires to make use of the spiritual gifts he has given through the priesthood of all believers.

### 6. Marriage and Family

We believe and confess that the marriage of male and female is an institution created and blessed by God. From marriage, God forms families to serve as the building blocks of all human civilization and community. We teach and practice that sexual activity belongs exclusively within the Biblical boundaries of a faithful marriage between one man and one woman.

#### 7. The Mission and Ministry of the Congregation

We believe and confess that the church is the assembly of believers called and gathered by God around Word and Sacrament, and that the mission and ministry of the church is carried out within the context of individual congregations, which are able to work together locally and globally.

#### **Revision History**

6/30/2024: Replaced with “Officers, Council and Committees” with current Chapters 9-11. The goal of the amendment was to decrease the council size. Further, this brought PLC in line with best practices of the NALC.

1/16/2012