

# THE CONSTITUTION

## ARTICLE 1

### NAME OF CONGREGATION

The name of this congregation shall be the United Free Lutheran Church of Greenbush, Roseau County, State of Minnesota.

## ARTICLE 11

### CONFESSION AND DENOMINATIONAL AFFILIATION

1. This congregation believes and confesses that the Holy Scriptures, the Canonical Books of the Old and New Testaments, are the Word of God, revealed for the salvation of men, and therefore, in union with Baptism and the Lord's Supper (2), the only source and rule of faith, doctrine, and life in the congregation.
2. This congregation accepts and adheres to the Apostolic, the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creeds / and in addition thereto / the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and the Luther's Small Catechism. All preaching and teaching in the congregation shall conform herewith.
3. This congregation is a free and independent congregation and acknowledges no other ecclesiastical authority above itself, but the Word and Spirit of God.
4. The public worship of this congregation, as well as the ministerial acts performed, shall be conducted in conformity with the altar-book and rituals recommended by the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations when the same have been endorsed by this congregation.
5. This congregation affiliates with the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, endorses the **Guiding Principles** as part of its doctrine, and endorses the **Rules for Work**, and supports its benevolences, that is, missions, at home and abroad, Christian Education and charities.

## ARTICLE 111

### MEMBERSHIP AND VOTING

1. Members of this congregation shall be those who have been legally received into the congregation and whose membership has not later been withdrawn or transferred, or who have not been expelled.
2. All children of parents who belong to the congregation become members through Baptism. Children of non-members become members of this congregation by act of confirmation.
3. Adults who are to be received into the congregation must:

- a. Be baptized with Christian Baptism;
  - b. Be confirmed or have a knowledge of Christian doctrine equivalent to that required for confirmation;
  - c. By confession and life show that they seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness;
  - d. Subscribe to this constitution and partake according to ability in the work and the expense of the congregation.
4. Admission as members to the congregation may be granted ~~on action of by~~ majority consensus between the Pastor and the Board of Deacons when applicant presents a letter of transfer duly issued from some other Lutheran congregation and accepts the **Fundamental Principles and Rules for Work** of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. All members who are of legal age (18 years) and not under church censure have the right to vote.
  5. A member of this congregation petitioning to be married in this church is to be granted permission (10) by majority consensus between the Pastor and the Board of Deacons (13). We believe that God has established marriage as between one man and one woman as stated in Genesis 2:22-25. (11)

## ARTICLE IV

### MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION

1. The power and authority of this congregation are exercised at the congregational meetings which shall consist of voting members, whose decisions shall be valid when the meeting has been called in a legal manner.
2. The duties of the congregational meetings are:
  - a. To elect all officers of the congregation.
  - b. To adopt such rules and make such decisions which are considered to be of benefit and edification, and which do not conflict with this constitution.
  - c. To decide regarding hymn books and books of instruction.
  - d. To determine the budget of the congregation and decide how it shall be raised.
3. The annual business meeting of this congregation shall be held sometime in the month of November at a date chosen each year by the Pastor of the congregation and the Church Council.
4. The chairman of the meetings shall be the President of the congregation, or in his absence, the Vice President.
5. Special meetings may be called by the President of the congregation, or the Pastor. Special meetings may likewise be called when five voting members request the same in writing.
6. All congregational meetings are legally called when they have been announced at the public services of the congregation on two Sundays previously.

7. 20% of the voting members shall constitute a quorum.

## ARTICLE V

1. The officers and standing committees of this congregation are:
  - a. Pastor
  - b. President of Congregation
  - c. Vice President of Congregation
  - d. Secretary
  - e. Board of Deacons (not less than 3 members)
  - f. Board of Trustees (not less than 3 members)
  - g. Treasurer
  - h. Christian Education Committee
2. The Pastor is the spiritual leader of the congregation.
  - a. He shall faithfully keep all the ministerial records of the congregation.
  - b. The election or discharge of a Pastor must take place at a legally called business meeting of the congregation and requires a 2/3 majority of votes cast.
  - c. If the Pastor wishes to resign, or in the event of his discharge, said resignation or discharge shall not be effective until 3 months shall have elapsed.
  - d. The Pastor shall be duly trained, examined or ordained for the ministry of the Word of God in Lutheran Congregations and so long as he is the pastor of this congregation he is required to encourage and work for the support of the institutions of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.
3. The secretary shall carefully record the minutes of the business meetings of the congregation, and as co-archivist shall preserve the records, and perform all other duties usually incumbent upon his office. He shall be elected by the annual meeting for a term of one year [(6), see By-Laws, Section II, 3a].
4. The treasurer shall keep all financial accounts of the congregation, receive all contributions for current expenses or benevolences and disburse the same according to decision of the congregation or the Board of Trustees. He shall be appointed by the Church Council, with no set length of service (5). All financial accounts shall be audited by the auditing committee, which shall report to the congregation.
5. The Deacons shall be persons known for their Christian life and character, being patterns of the flock and setting a good example in their manner of life. They shall assist the pastor in spiritual care of the congregation. One (or more) Deacons shall be elected each year at the annual meeting for a term of three years. Two additional members shall be elected when the congregation increases by 200 souls .
6. The Board of Trustees shall have charge of the financial and material affairs of the congregation. They are elected, one (or more) each year for terms of three

years each. Two additional members shall be elected when the congregation increases by 200 souls.

7. The Board of Deacons and Trustees together with the President and Vice President shall constitute the Church Council.
  - a. ~~A Board of Elders shall be established for the purpose of advising the Church Council (7).~~
  - b. ~~The Church Council shall put forth Board of Elders candidates who are of long service, and in good standing for congregational approval (7).~~
8. All the officers of the congregation are accountable to the congregation for their official acts.

## ARTICLE VI

### PROPERTY OF THE CONGREGATION

The property of the congregation cannot be disposed of or encumbered, except by decision made by a 2/3 majority of members present at a legal meeting of the congregation. Prior to intended sale of church property, notice of intent must be made known to the congregation four consecutive Sundays (I). In case of a division of the congregation, the property shall remain the possession of that part of the congregation which remains faithful to this Constitution.

## ARTICLE VII

### CHANGE OF CONSTITUTION AND AMENDMENTS

1. Sections 1 and 2 of Article II shall not be changed.
  2. This Constitution, except sections 1 and 2 of Article II, which cannot be changed, may be amended through the following procedure:

A motion for amendment to this Constitution must be made in writing at the Annual Meeting of the congregation and cannot be enacted until the said amendment has been considered again at the next Annual Meeting, at which time a 2/3 majority vote of those present shall be required for its adoption.
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## BY-LAWS

### SECTION I

#### DUTIES OF MEMBERS

1. It is the duty of every member of voting age to attend all legally called business meetings of the congregation, unless good and valid reasons should hinder.
2. The congregation desires that all its members should faithfully attend the Worship services of the church, and that everyone should work according to his measure of faith and the grace given him toward his own salvation and the edification of the brethren. All should support the congregation in its struggle against the world and the devil, as well as in its efforts to spread and establish the Kingdom of God among all men on earth.
3. Recognizing that all good gifts come from above, all members shall, according as God has prospered them, contribute toward the current expenses of the congregation, as well as to the Christian Schools, Missions, and charitable institutions of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.
4. All members, and especially parents, should exercise due concern for the instruction of the young in the Christian faith in the Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, and the confirmation class.

## SECTION II

### PROCEDURE AT CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

1. All meetings of the congregation shall open with Scripture reading and prayer, and shall close with prayer.
2. The order of business for the annual meeting is:
  - a. The reading of the minutes of the previous meeting of the congregation.
  - b. The report of the Pastor concerning the spiritual conditions of the congregation, ministerial acts performed, and recommendations by the Board of Deacons.
  - c. The report of the Board of Trustees concerning the business affairs of the congregation by the Chairman of the Board and treasurer.
  - d. The report of the Christian Education Committee.
  - e. Report from church organizations.
  - f. Unfinished business.
  - g. The election of officers.
  - h. New business.
3. The officers of the congregation to be elected at the annual business meeting are:
  - a. Three individual members-at-large, who shall at their discretion, assume the position of President, Vice-President and Council Secretary. Lengths of service shall be off-setting (6).
  - b. One or more members of the Christian Education Committee.
  - c. One or more Deacons.
  - d. One or more Trustees.
  - e. One head usher for one year. f Auditing Committee for one year.
  - f. Nominating Committee (3 members) for one year.



4. Special business meetings shall be conducted in the same order as the annual meeting, except in the election of officers.

### SECTION III

#### METHOD OF ELECTING OFFICERS

1. When calling a Pastor, the congregation shall proceed as follows:
  - a. At a legally called business meeting a nominating committee of ~~three~~ five members shall be elected by ballot to select candidates and report at the next meeting of the congregation. For this purpose, it is desirable that the President of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations be consulted. Nominations may also be made from the floor.
  - b. Election of a pastor shall be made by ballot, and a two-thirds majority of all votes cast shall be required.
  - c. In cases where more than two candidates are submitted, the one receiving the lowest number of votes in each balloting shall be eliminated from the next ballot until a decision shall have been reached.
  - d. A letter of call shall be executed by the Board of Deacons and the Secretary of the congregation according to the form appended to these By-Laws, signed as indicated, sent to the candidate, together with a copy of this Constitution and By-Laws.
  - e. If the call is accepted, the pastor shall be duly installed by a church official by the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations who shall have been agreed upon by the Pastor and the Board of Deacons.
2. All officers of the congregation shall be elected by ballot. All other election take place by acclamation, unless otherwise decided.
3. Nominations for all offices to be filled at the annual meeting shall be submitted by the nominating committee. At least two candidates for each office to be filled by election shall be submitted, but nominations shall not be closed for any office except by decision of the meeting.
4. No person shall serve for more than two consecutive terms in any office.
5. The same person shall not hold more than one office at any time.
6. No person shall be elected to any office who has not been a member of the congregation at least one year.
7. Vacancies shall be filled by elections at congregational meetings; those so elected shall hold the office for the remainder of the unexpired term.
8. ~~Members who may be elected to attend the annual conference of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations have the responsibility of giving a report of the conference to the congregation.~~

## SECTION IV

### DUTIES OF DEACONS

1. The Board of Deacons shall elect from its midst a secretary who shall carefully record all decisions.
2. They shall, during the absence of the Pastor, or during a vacancy, either personally or through some other qualified person, lead the congregation in Divine Worship.
3. They shall be mindful of the spiritual condition of the congregation, of the attendance at services, of the sick and needy, and shall consider plans which will further the spiritual growth of the congregation.
4. The Board of Deacons shall also function as a "Board of Stewardship" to disseminate information about the principles, practices, and blessings of Christian Stewardship; promote interest in the causes of our Common Endeavors of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations; supervise the regular and systematic ingathering of offerings for the same and provide for regular and prompt payment of such funds to the church treasurer, and through him to proper treasurers of our Common Endeavors.

## SECTION V

### DUTIES OF TRUSTEES

1. The trustees shall hold the property of the congregation in trust for the use and benefit of the congregation and shall preserve the deeds and other valuable papers and documents.
2. The trustees shall not buy, sell, or mortgage the property of the congregation without the consent of the congregation. (See Article VI of the Constitution)
3. The trustees have, under no circumstances, the right to hinder the Pastor or the congregation from using the church as directed by the congregation.
4. The trustees shall maintain the church and property in good and proper condition for the use of the congregation, and furnish the heat and light for the church as needed.
5. The trustees shall investigate the reasons for neglect with regard to participation in the expenses of the congregation and report concerning same to the congregation.
6. The Board of Trustees, together with the Treasurer, shall be individually and collectively responsible for the funds of the church. The Board may require a report or a personal meeting with the Treasurer at any time.
7. The congregation may elect separate treasures for special collections of funds, but their accounts, when finished, shall be turned over to the Board of Trustees which reports concerning the same to the annual meeting.

8. The Board of Trustees shall elect from its midst a chairman, and a secretary, who shall carefully record all the proceedings of the Board, and be responsible for all records of said Board.
9. The Chairman of the Board of Trustees shall report to the Annual Meeting concerning the business affairs of the congregation.
  - a. The Board of Trustees shall supervise the collection of funds for the expenses of the congregation. It shall also submit to the annual meeting a budget for the current and other necessary expenses for the ensuing year.
  - b. A Financial Secretary may be elected by the Board of Trustees to assist the Board in keeping a record of all monies received for the current expenses or benevolences, or for other purposes. His term shall be for one year. He may or may not be a member of the Board of Trustees (optional).
10. The church council shall elect the organist and choir director annually and shall hire the janitor for the church.
  - a. The church council may appoint a sexton for the purpose of cemetery care and maintenance (4) (9).

## SECTION VI

### ADMISSION OF NEW MEMBERS

1. When anyone who is eligible desires to become a member of the congregation shall apply to the pastor who shall, partly by conversation and partly by conferring with the Board of Deacons, make himself acquainted with the faith and life of the person in question. If the pastor and Board of Deacons approve of his admission, his application for membership shall be approved.
2. When non-Lutheran persons desire to become members of this congregation, aside from being able to satisfy the requirements for membership mentioned in Article III of this Constitution, they should be willing to receive instruction in Luther's Small Catechism, special attention to the "Articles of the Creed and the Lutheran interpretation of the two holy Sacraments. Christian truth as set forth in the Catechism must be accepted unreservedly by such applicants, either by rite of confirmation or in some other manner satisfactory to the Board of Deacons and Pastor, prior to their acceptance into membership.
3. New members shall be formally received and welcomed at a public service. The pastor shall ask the adult candidates if they have read the Constitution; secondly, if they accept it and will in the future be faithful to it; and thirdly, if they will contribute according to ability toward the expenses of the congregation. To these questions each one shall audibly answer, "yes". Thereupon he shall declare them members of the congregation and shall emphasize the meaning of this relationship



in a short talk or intercessory prayer in a manner that will be to the edification of both the congregation and those admitted into it.

4. The Pastor and his family shall automatically become members of the congregation where they shall reside by acceptance of the letter of call.

## SECTION VII

### THE EXERCISE OF THE RIGHT TO VOTE

1. A list of the voting members of the congregation shall always be available for the chairman at every meeting of the congregation, and shall be read upon demand of the congregation.
2. ~~The congregation may, when it finds it advisable, suspend the right to vote for each one who continuously fails to fulfill his duties in supporting the congregation financially except when the reason is poverty. Such suspension shall be in effect until all the demands of the congregation in this respect are satisfied.~~
3. Members who are under church discipline cannot exercise their right to vote from the time their case is laid before the congregation by the Board of Deacons until they are again received into full fellowship by the congregation.
4. New members must be members of the congregation for a period of ninety (90) days before they can vote.

## SECTION VIII

### CHURCH DISCIPLINE

1. The congregation zealously watches over the purity of doctrine and life of its members. and when anyone is overtaken in any trespass it strives in the spirit of meekness and love to restore such a one in accordance with Mathew 18:15.
2. With this purpose in mind, it is forbidden anyone to accuse a brother before the congregation without first having sought privately to admonish him in love.
3. If admonition fails the case may be brought before the Board of Deacons which whereupon, after careful consideration, shall seek through admonition and conviction by the Word of God to bring the erring one to confession and repentance.
4. If these methods fail, the Board of Deacons shall submit the matter to the congregation together with its recommendation as to the proper course to be pursued. The means the congregation may employ are:
  - a. Admonition and intercessory prayer in the assembly of the congregation.
  - b. Exclusion from participating in the Lord's Supper.

- c. Expulsion from the congregation.
5. Manifest indifference to the Word of God and persistent non-attendance at Divine Worship shall be investigated by the Board of Deacons, which shall by loving admonition and prayer in their behalf seek to bring the negligent members of the congregation back to the assembly of the church.
6. The congregation recognizes that the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments are the basic means by which the congregation purifies itself.

## SECTION IX

The church council has the right to charge for funerals or weddings and other special occasions for non-members (3) (8).

## SECTION X

### CHANGE OF BY-LAWS

A proposal for a change in or addition to these by-laws may be submitted in writing to any congregational meeting and cannot be acted upon until the annual meeting following. A two thirds majority vote of the members present is required for adoption.

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## APPENDIX

### CHRONOLOGICAL CHANGES AND ADDITIONS TO CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

- 1) Constitutional addition, confirmed by congregational vote, '1974 annual congregational meeting.
- 2) Constitutional clarification: The Lord's Supper is to be observed the second Sunday of each odd numbered month throughout the year. Confirmed by congregational vote, 1976 annual congregational meeting.
- 3) By-Law clarification of rates, as approved by congregational vote, 1981 annual congregational meeting: (12)

Church .....\$100  
Pastor .....\$25  
Pianist.....\$15  
Vocalist.....\$15 each  
Cemetery Plot.....\$150

- 4) Addition to By-Laws, approved by congregational vote, 1990 annual congregational meeting.
- 5) Change to Constitution, confirmed by congregational vote, 1992 annual congregational meeting. (Originally stated as: He (treasurer) shall be elected by the annual meeting for a term of one year.)
- 6) Change to By-Laws, approved by congregational vote, 1993 annual congregational meeting. (Originally stated as, the President, Vice-President and Secretary being directly elected to the positions at the annual business meeting.)
- 7) Addition to Constitution, confirmed by congregational vote, 1994 annual congregational meeting.
- 8) By-Law clarification, as approved by congregational vote, 1995 annual congregational meeting: Members of Poplar Grove and Bethlehem congregations are to be permitted the use of the church, free of charge.
- 9) By-Law clarification, as approved by congregational vote, 1996 annual congregational meeting: The Sexton is to hire individuals when necessary to maintain cemeteries.
- 10) Addition to Constitution, confirmed by congregational vote, 1998 annual congregational meeting. Clarification: Permission is to be granted divorced members requesting marriage. If desired, the marriage ceremony may be conducted within the church, after completion of counseling, when required. Counseling is to be conducted by the acting Pastor. ~~If counseling is not concluded to the Pastor's satisfaction, the petitioner may request the services of a Christian Pastor of his or her own choosing to conduct the marriage ceremony within the church.~~
- 11) Addition to Constitution on Page 2, Section 111 Item 5, confirmed by congregational vote, 2012 annual congregational meeting. The church and its pastor are responsible to God as well as to the State in conducting marriages. In the face of increasingly distorted attitudes toward marriage, we seek to help couples married in this congregation to establish their families in a bond of Christian love firmly rooted in God's Word. We believe that God has established marriage as between one man and one woman as stated in Genesis 2:22-25.
- 12) All charges for use of Church property and Congregational assistance will be determined by the Church Council subject to approval by Congregational vote. These were the figures determined by the Church Council and confirmed by congregational vote, 2012 annual congregational meeting for non-members.

Church .....	\$500
Pastor.....	\$250
Pianist .....	\$150
Vocalist.....	\$150 each
Sound Tech .....	\$150
Cemetery Plot .....	\$500

- 13) Anyone petitioning to be married in this church is to be granted permission by majority consensus between the Pastor and the Board of Deacons.

