FIRST LUTHERAN
CHURCH & SCHOOL

PROPOSED REVISION · 2026

Constitution and Bylaws

A side-by-side comparison of the current Constitution (2025) and the proposed draft (2026), section by section.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

1. The church council becomes the **Council of Ministry**, which makes the operational decisions needed to carry out the congregation's mission. Const. VI §3
2. Elected committees and the head usher are replaced by councilman positions, coordinators, Connect Groups and Ministry Teams. Bylaw IV §6, Bylaw V
3. Membership responsibilities, discipline, reinstatement and termination move from the Constitution into the Bylaws, and Article V is no longer listed as unalterable. Bylaw I, Const. XII §1
4. Consensus-building becomes the congregation's way of reaching decisions. Const. VI §2, Bylaw II §1
5. Voting members must also have attended at least half of regular worship services in the previous year and be in good standing. Bylaw II §2
6. Quarterly voters' meetings become one annual Business Meeting plus regular Open Forums. Five voters (was three) may request a meeting. Bylaw III

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

The current text is on the left and the proposed text on the right. The third column holds the drafter's explanatory notes.

highlighted words are changed or dropped

~~struck sections~~ are removed entirely

underlined words are added

A shaded proposed cell means the section is new or was rewritten too heavily to mark word by word.

7. Excommunication requires a unanimous vote of the pastor(s) and Council of Ministry instead of the voters' assembly, and a right of appeal is added. Bylaw I §4, §6
8. The Council receives new members without ratification by the voters. Bylaw I §2
9. Terms become two years, up to three in a row (was three years, up to two). The president fills vacancies by appointment. Bylaw IV §3
10. A School Ministry Team is created, with its charter in Appendix A. Bylaw V §4, Appendix A

CURRENT · 2025	PROPOSED · 2026	NOTES

Preamble

WHEREAS, the Apostle Paul sets forth, 1 Corinthians 14:40, that all things in the church shall be done “in a fitting and orderly way,” and WHEREAS, the history of the Christian church of all times shows that certain agreements and regulations are helpful properly to fulfill the purpose and attain the objectives of congregations; therefore be it RESOLVED, that we, a congregation of Lutheran Christians at the City of Elkhorn, Walworth County, Wisconsin, do herewith, in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and by subscribing our names hereto, adopt the following CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS.	WHEREAS, the Apostle Paul sets forth, 1 Corinthians 14:40, that all things in the church shall be done “in a fitting and orderly way,” and WHEREAS, the history of the Christian church of all times shows that certain agreements and regulations are helpful properly to fulfill the purpose and attain the objectives of congregations; therefore be it RESOLVED, that we, a congregation of Lutheran Christians at the City of Elkhorn, Walworth County, Wisconsin, do herewith, in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and by subscribing our names hereto, adopt the following CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS.	

Constitution

Article I · Name

The name of this congregation shall be The First Evangelical Lutheran Church of Elkhorn, Wisconsin.	The name of this congregation shall be The First Evangelical Lutheran Church of Elkhorn, Wisconsin.	

Article II · Articles of Faith

SECTION 1 This congregation accepts and confesses all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God and submits to this Word as the only infallible authority of all matters of faith and life (2 Timothy 3:15-17).	SECTION 1 This congregation accepts and confesses all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God and submits to this Word as the only infallible authority of all matters of faith and life (2 Timothy 3:15-17).	

CURRENT · 2025	PROPOSED · 2026	NOTES
SECTION 2 This congregation accepts and confesses all the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of 1580 as true statements of scriptural doctrine. They are: A. The three ecumenical Creeds 1) The Apostles' 2) The Nicene 3) The Athanasian B. The six Lutheran Confessions 1) Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism 2) Dr. Martin Luther's Large Catechism 3) The Unaltered Augsburg Confession 4) The Apology of the Augsburg Confession 5) The Smalcald Articles 6) The Formula of Concord	SECTION 2 This congregation accepts and confesses all the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of 1580 as true statements of scriptural doctrine. They are: A. The three ecumenical Creeds a. The Apostles' b. The Nicene c. The Athanasian B. The six Lutheran Confessions a. Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism b. Dr. Martin Luther's Large Catechism c. The Unaltered Augsburg Confession d. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession e. The Smalcald Articles f. The Formula of Concord	
SECTION 3 This congregation accepts and confesses these symbolical books without reservation, not insofar as, but because they are the presentation and explanation of the pure doctrine of the Word of God and a summary of the faith held by the Evangelical Lutheran Church.	SECTION 3 This congregation accepts and confesses these symbolical books without reservation, not insofar as, but because they are the presentation and explanation of the pure doctrine of the Word of God and a summary of the faith held by the Evangelical Lutheran Church.	
SECTION 4 Hence, no doctrine shall be taught or tolerated in this congregation which is in any way at variance with these symbolical books and the Holy Scriptures.	SECTION 4 Hence, no doctrine shall be taught or tolerated in this congregation which is in any way at variance with these symbolical books and the Holy Scriptures.	
SECTION 5 Likewise, all controversies which may arise in this congregation shall be decided and adjusted according to this norm of doctrine and practice.	SECTION 5 Likewise, all controversies which may arise in this congregation shall be decided and adjusted according to this norm of doctrine and practice.	

Article III · Purpose and Objectives

SECTION 1 The continuing purpose of this congregation, as a gathering of Christians, is to serve all people in God's world with the gospel of Jesus Christ on the basis of the Holy Scriptures (Matthew 28:18-20).	SECTION 1 The continuing purpose of this congregation, as a gathering of Christians, is to serve all people in God's world with the gospel of Jesus Christ on the basis of the Holy Scriptures (Matthew 28:18-20).	

CURRENT · 2025	PROPOSED · 2026	NOTES
SECTION 2 The primary objectives of this congregation shall be: to proclaim the law and the gospel, to lead sinners to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ for life and salvation (2 Timothy 4:2; Luke 24:26-48). To strengthen believers in faith and sanctification through the means of grace (Romans 10:17). To equip believers as disciples, stewards and witnesses for sharing the gospel of Jesus with our fellow men (Ephesians 4:11, 12).	SECTION 2 The primary objectives of this congregation shall be: A. To proclaim the law and the gospel, to lead sinners to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ for life and salvation (2 Timothy 4:2; Luke 24:26-48). B. To strengthen believers in faith and sanctification through the means of grace (Romans 10:17). C. To equip believers as disciples, stewards and witnesses for sharing the gospel of Jesus with our fellow men (Ephesians 4:11, 12).	
Article IV · Church Affiliation		
This congregation shall affiliate itself only with a church body that holds to all the truths of God's Word in doctrine and practice and is bound to the confession of faith as set forth in Article II, if, and as long as, such a church body exists.	This congregation shall affiliate itself only with a church body that holds to all the truths of God's Word in doctrine and practice and is bound to the confession of faith as set forth in Article II, if, and as long as, such a church body exists.	
Article V · Church Membership		
SECTION 1 · CLASSIFICATION A. Baptized members of the congregation are those who have been baptized into the Christian faith in the name of the Triune God. B. Communicant members are those baptized souls who confess the chief parts of Christian doctrine as written in Dr. Luther's Small Catechism and who have declared their adherence to all the canonical books of the Old and the New Testaments, without qualification, as the only rule and norm of faith and life. C. Voting members are those male communicant members (1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:12) who have declared their agreement with this Constitution by their signatures and who have been accepted by the voters' assembly of the congregation.	ARTICLE V (NO SECTIONS) The privileges and responsibilities of membership, as well as the process for the admission of new members and termination of membership, shall be set forth in the Bylaws of this congregation. The types of membership are as follows: A. Baptized members of the congregation are those who have been baptized into the Christian faith in the name of the Triune God. B. Communicant members are those baptized souls who confess the chief parts of Christian doctrine as written in Dr. Luther's Small Catechism and who have declared their adherence to all the canonical books of the Old and the New Testaments, without qualification, as the only rule and norm of faith and life. C. Voting members are those male communicant members (1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:12) who have declared their agreement with this Constitution by their signatures and who have been accepted by the Council of Ministry.	*The Council of Ministry handles all membership requests now. These actions are then reported to the congregation.*
SECTION 2 · PRIVILEGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES *Moved to the Bylaws. See the proposed text under Bylaw Art. I, §1.*	SECTION 2 · PRIVILEGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES *See Bylaw Art. I, §1.*	

CURRENT · 2025	PROPOSED · 2026	NOTES
SECTION 3 · CHURCH DISCIPLINE AND EXCOMMUNICATION *Moved to the Bylaws. See the proposed text under Bylaw Art. I, §4.*	SECTION 3 · CHURCH DISCIPLINE AND EXCOMMUNICATION *See Bylaw Art. I, §4.*	
SECTION 4 · REINSTATEMENT *Moved to the Bylaws. See the proposed text under Bylaw Art. I, §5.*	SECTION 4 · REINSTATEMENT *See Bylaw Art. I, §5.*	
SECTION 5 · TERMINATION OF FELLOWSHIP *Moved to the Bylaws. See the proposed text under Bylaw Art. I, §3.*	SECTION 5 · TERMINATION OF FELLOWSHIP *See Bylaw Art. I, §3.*	

Article VI · Powers and Rights of the Congregation

SECTION 1 In all matters of Christian faith and life the Word of God is supreme (Psalm 119:105).	SECTION 1 In all matters of Christian faith and life the Word of God is supreme (Psalm 119:105).	
SECTION 2 In all matters not decided by the Word of God the congregation, represented by the voters' assembly, shall have the right of decision (Romans 12:10; 14:19; Ephesians 5:21).	SECTION 2 In all matters not decided by the Word of God the congregation, represented by the Voters' Assembly, shall have the right of decision (Romans 12:10; 14:19; Ephesians 5:21). As much as possible, the congregation will use a process of consensus building to arrive at decisions.	*Adds consensus building as preferred decision making framework.*
SECTION 3 The church council, any other elected committee or organization within the congregation, and any of its elected or appointed officers shall have no power or authority beyond that conferred upon them by the congregation. However, the church council in an emergency may act in the name and for the welfare of the congregation. Such action must be submitted for approval at the next voters' meeting.	SECTION 3 The Council of Ministry, together with the called Pastor(s), shall have from the congregation the authority and responsibility to make and carry out the operational decisions necessary for the execution of the congregation's mission. The officers of the congregation shall be such as the Bylaws of this constitution prescribe. The Council of Ministry shall have no authority beyond that which has been conferred upon them in this Constitution or Bylaws. However, the Council of Ministry in an emergency may act in the name and for the welfare of the congregation. Such action must be submitted for approval at the next Voters' Assembly.	*Reworded based on the WELS recommendation.*
SECTION 4 No group or society may be organized within the congregation without the approval of the congregation. The congregation shall be assured that the aims of such a group are in complete harmony with the congregation's aims before it grants its approval (1 Corinthians 1:10; 12:25).	SECTION 4 No group or society may be organized within the congregation without the approval of the Council of Ministry. The Council of Ministry shall be assured that the aims of such a group are in complete harmony with the congregation's aims before it grants its approval (1 Corinthians 1:10; 12:25).	*Renames Church Council to Council of Ministry*

CURRENT · 2025	PROPOSED · 2026	NOTES
Article VII · The Ministry		
SECTION 1 The congregation has the exclusive right to call pastors and teachers.	SECTION 1 The congregation has the exclusive right to call Pastors and teachers.	
SECTION 2 The pastorate of this congregation shall be conferred only upon such men who are qualified for this ministry and publicly and without reservation profess their acceptance of and adherence to Article II of this Constitution, and such acceptance and adherence shall be required of them in the call of vocation extended by the congregation (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; Colossians 4:5-6).	SECTION 2 The pastorate of this congregation shall be conferred only upon such men who are qualified for this ministry and publicly and without reservation profess their acceptance of and adherence to Article II of this Constitution, and such acceptance and adherence shall be required of them in the call of vocation extended by the congregation (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; Colossians 4:5-6).	
SECTION 3 The teachers called by the congregation shall be such as are in accord with the confessional standard of the congregation (Article II) and are qualified for this field of work (Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 14:40).	SECTION 3 The teachers called by the congregation shall be such as are in accord with the confessional standard of the congregation (Article II) and are qualified for this field of work (Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 14:40).	
SECTION 4 In case of a vacancy in the office of pastor or teacher, the congregation shall notify the president of the district that he may assist in temporarily filling the vacancy and in giving his good counsel in regard to the calling of a new pastor or teacher.	SECTION 4 In case of a vacancy in the office of Pastor or teacher, the congregation shall notify the president of the district that he may assist in temporarily filling the vacancy and in giving his good counsel in regard to the calling of a new Pastor or teacher.	
Article VIII · Officers of the Congregation		
SECTION 1 The first New Testament congregation at Jerusalem chose men “full of the Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:1-6) to aid the apostles in the administration of its affairs. This congregation shall choose officers and committee members with like qualifications to aid the pastor in administering its affairs (1 Timothy 3:8-13).	SECTION 1 The first New Testament congregation at Jerusalem chose men “full of the Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:1-6) to aid the apostles in the administration of its affairs. This congregation shall choose officers with like qualifications to aid the Pastor in administering its affairs (1 Timothy 3:8-13).	*No committees required now.*
SECTION 2 The listing of the officers and their duties is given in the Bylaws.	SECTION 2 The listing of the officers and their duties is given in the Bylaws.	

CURRENT · 2025	PROPOSED · 2026	NOTES
SECTION 3 The respect and esteem of the congregation are due these officers in the performance of their duties, and they shall be given its cooperation. They shall conduct themselves in a manner befitting their responsible office (1 Timothy 3:8-13).	SECTION 3 The respect and esteem of the congregation are due these officers in the performance of their duties, and they shall be given its cooperation. They shall conduct themselves in a manner befitting their responsible office (1 Timothy 3:8-13).	
Article IX · Removal from Office		
SECTION 1 If anyone who holds an office in the congregation willfully neglects his duty and upon due admonition does not amend, the congregation has the right and eventually the duty to remove him from office and to elect another in his place (1 Timothy 3:8-13).	SECTION 1 If anyone who holds an office in the congregation willfully neglects his duty and upon due admonition does not amend, the congregation has the right and eventually the duty to remove him from office and to elect another in his place (1 Timothy 3:8-13).	
SECTION 2 Sufficient and urgent causes for removing a pastor or a teacher are persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, willful neglect of duty or established inability to perform the duties of his office (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9). In such a case the advice and good counsel of the appropriate district office shall be sought.	SECTION 2 Sufficient and urgent causes for removing a Pastor or a teacher are persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, willful neglect of duty or established inability to perform the duties of his office (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9). In such a case the advice and good counsel of the appropriate district office shall be sought.	
Article X · Meetings of the Congregation		
Meetings of this congregation shall be held at such times and in such manner as stated in the Bylaws. The meetings shall give the voters of this congregation the opportunity to hear, discuss and take necessary action in matters pertaining to the welfare of this congregation and of the church-at-large.	Meetings of this congregation shall be held at such times and in such manner as stated in the Bylaws. The meetings shall give the voters of this congregation the opportunity to hear, discuss and take necessary action in matters pertaining to the welfare of this congregation and of the church-at-large.	
Article XI · Separation or Dissolution		
SECTION 1 If at any time a separation should occur in this congregation – may God graciously prevent it – the property and all equipment of this congregation shall remain with that portion of the membership which adheres to this Constitution, regardless of number.	SECTION 1 If at any time a separation should occur in this congregation – may God graciously prevent it – the property and all equipment of this congregation shall remain with that portion of the membership which adheres to this Constitution, regardless of number.	

CURRENT · 2025	PROPOSED · 2026	NOTES
SECTION 2 In the event of termination or dissolution of the congregation, the church council shall, after paying or making provision for the payment of all the liabilities of the congregation, dispose of its remaining assets, if any, exclusively for the purposes of the congregation, by distributing, at the direction of the voters' assembly, the remaining assets to (and only to) one or more organizations with which the congregation is in fellowship, which shall at the time qualify as exempt organization(s) (under section 501 (c) 3 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Code).	SECTION 2 In the event of termination or dissolution of the congregation, the Council of Ministry shall, after paying or making provision for the payment of all the liabilities of the congregation, dispose of its remaining assets, if any, exclusively for the purposes of the congregation, by distributing, at the direction of the Voters' Assembly, the remaining assets to (and only to) one or more organizations with which the congregation is in fellowship, which shall at the time qualify as exempt organization(s) (under section 501 (c) 3 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Code).	

Article XII · Repeals and Alterations

SECTION 1 Articles II, III, IV, V, VI, Sections 1 and 2, VII, Sections 1-3, IX and XII, Section 1 of this Constitution shall be and remain unalterable and irrepealable, inasmuch as they express clear, scriptural teachings.	SECTION 1 Articles II, III, IV, VI, Sections 1 and 2, VII, Sections 1-3, IX and XII, Section 1 of this Constitution shall be and remain unalterable and irrepealable, inasmuch as they express clear, scriptural teachings.	*Removed V as it isn't a scriptural reference or stance.*
SECTION 2 Proposals to alter or repeal any article of this Constitution or to add an article shall be submitted in writing to the church council, and shall be publicly announced on two Sundays immediately preceding a regular business meeting of the voters' assembly and posted in the church during that period.	SECTION 2 Proposals to alter or repeal any article of this Constitution or to add an article shall be submitted in writing to the Council of Ministry, and shall be publicly announced on two Sundays immediately preceding a properly called congregational meeting of the Voters' Assembly and posted in the church during that period.	
SECTION 3 Such a proposal shall be discussed in the meeting in which it is presented and voted on in the next regular meeting of the voters' assembly.	SECTION 3 Such a proposal shall be discussed in the meeting in which it is presented and voted on in the next regular meeting of the Voters' Assembly.	
SECTION 4 A two-thirds vote of the voting members present shall be required to alter or repeal any article of this Constitution or to add an article hereto.	SECTION 4 A two-thirds vote of the voting members present shall be required to alter or repeal any article of this Constitution or to add an article hereto.	

CURRENT · 2025	PROPOSED · 2026	NOTES
SECTION 5 Any and all Bylaws may be repealed or amended by a majority vote of the voting members present at any quarterly meeting, provided that public notice of this proposed action shall have been given the congregation on at least two Sundays prior to the time of the meeting, and provided that the substance of the proposed amendment has been submitted to the church council for its study and recommendation.	SECTION 5 Any and all Bylaws may be repealed or amended by a majority vote of the voting members present at any properly called congregational meeting, provided that public notice of this proposed action shall have been given the congregation on at least two Sundays prior to the time of the meeting, and provided that the substance of the proposed amendment has been submitted to the Council of Ministry for its study and recommendation.	

Bylaws

The Bylaws have been substantially restructured, so they are shown here as proposed rather than side by side.

PROPOSED · 2026	NOTES

Bylaw Article I · Congregational Membership

Section 1 · Privileges and Responsibilities

A. "God is love" (1 John 4:8), and his love moves him to bless the members of his church with physical and spiritual gifts (1 John 3:1; James 1:17; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31). In return for these undeserved blessings, we love him (1 John 4:19) and demonstrate that love with the works that we do. The exercise of such love we acknowledge as both a privilege and a responsibility. Therefore, it is expected that members of this congregation will:

   a. worship regularly and faithfully (Hebrews 10:25),

   b. participate in on-going spiritual growth activities such as personal and/or group Bible study (2 Peter 3:18),

   c. partake of the Lord's Supper frequently, if they are recognized as those who can properly examine themselves (1 Corinthians 11:28) and who are willing and able to express confessional fellowship through participation in the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 10:16-17),

   d. share the good news about Jesus with others as God provides the opportunity (Acts 1:8),

   e. have their children baptized as soon as possible because baptism saves us (1 Peter 3:21),

   f. bring up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4),

   g. remember that all their possessions, time, spiritual gifts, and abilities are a trust from God and, therefore, cheerfully decide in their hearts (2 Corinthians 9:7) the portion of their possessions, time, spiritual gifts, and abilities which they will devote to the Lord for use in carrying out the congregation's ministry and programs, including the work of the church-at-large (1 Corinthians 9:14; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-11; 1 Peter 4:10; Matthew 20:18-20),

   h. stay informed of issues and opportunities which God places before the congregation and work together with fellow members for consensus by offering input guided by the Word of God, based on the congregation's mission, and shaped by the congregation's planning documents.

B. Our God has implanted within us Christians the new man, who desires to live righteously (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:24). Consequently, members of his church will:

   a. not live in obvious acts of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:19-21) but lead a Christian life (Galatians 5:22-25),

   b. permit themselves, when they have erred, to be admonished and corrected by their fellow Christians (Matthew 18:15-18),

   c. refuse to hold membership in any organization whose teachings and practices conflict with the Word of God (John 5:23; 8:31,32; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Moved from Constitution to Bylaws based on WELS recommendation. The Constitution holds what should never change: our confession of faith, our purpose and our church affiliation. Article V, Church Membership, is mostly procedure: how members are received, transferred, disciplined and reinstated. Moving it to the Bylaws lets the congregation update these practical matters as its ministry grows, without amending the Constitution. Our doctrine remains fully protected, and the scriptural basis for membership is unchanged.

PROPOSED · 2026

Section 2 · Reception into Membership

A. At baptism children become members of God's spiritual family. At the baptism of children whose parent(s) are members, those children are also then considered to be members of the congregation.

B. Adults who wish to be received into membership in the congregation shall bring their request to the attention of a Pastor(s). The Council of Ministry shall honor the request when accompanied by a letter of transfer from a congregation which is in agreement with this congregation in doctrine and practice. Notice of such receptions shall be reported to the entire congregation.

C. Adults who are not members of a congregation which is in agreement with this congregation in doctrine and practice and desire to become members shall meet with the Pastor(s) who will determine the level of instruction necessary for that person to be in a position to state oneness in faith with the members of the congregation. An adult who has completed a course of instruction in Lutheran Christian doctrine as determined by the Pastor(s) and Council of Ministry will be received into membership either by profession of faith or by adult confirmation.

Section 3 · Transfer, Release, or Removal from Membership

A. Those desiring a transfer or release from membership shall bring their request to the attention of the Pastor(s) or the Council of Ministry for action.

B. Transfer of membership shall apply only to those who desire membership in a congregation which is in doctrinal fellowship with our congregation (Acts 2:42).

C. Release from membership shall apply when affiliation is sought with a Christian church and/or denomination not in agreement with this congregation in doctrine and practice (Romans 16:17).

D. Members with whom the congregation has been unable to communicate, despite diligent efforts to do so, may be removed from the membership list.

E. Members who persist in an error that in itself does not make the presence of saving faith impossible may be removed from membership after they have been evangelically admonished by their fellow Christians (Matthew 18:15-16) and when their adherence to error becomes public and a matter of divisiveness (Titus 3:10) and thus an offense and obstacle to the truth of God's Word (Romans 16:17). This action shall not be used as a substitute for the loving act of excommunication when impenitence is clearly evident.

F. Members who persistently abstain from the congregation's public ministry of Word and Sacrament, despite being evangelically admonished by their fellow Christians, yet who give a confession that makes the presence of saving faith possible, may be removed from membership for self-exclusion as a loving attempt to remove the false security that congregational membership saves. This action shall not be used as a substitute for the loving act of excommunication when impenitence is clearly evident.

G. Members transferred, released, or removed have no further rights in this congregation and its property.

NOTES

The Council of Ministry handles all membership requests now. These actions are then reported to the congregation.

Section 4 · Church Discipline and Excommunication

Christian discipline shall be exercised in this congregation according to Matthew 18:15-18 toward those who err from the faith or who in other ways have given offense. Those members who become evident as impenitent sinners must be excommunicated. At all times this shall be done in the spirit of the gospel, namely, to regain the erring. A unanimous vote of the Pastor(s) and Council of Ministry is necessary for excommunication. This ministration must be reported to the church at the next congregational assembly. Those who have been excommunicated from this congregation lose all rights and privileges in the congregation and its property.

The Pastor and the Council of Ministry decide on excommunication by unanimous vote, instead of the full voters' assembly. WELS recommends this approach because a congregational vote can be swayed by family ties and personal relationships. For example, a father could block a vote concerning his own son. A new right of appeal in Section 6 makes sure every decision can still be reviewed.

Section 5 · Reinstatement

When, by the grace of God, a person who has been excommunicated or removed from membership for public sin repents of his or her sin, that person is to be reinstated with all former rights and privileges of this congregation (2 Corinthians 2:6-8).

Section 6 · Right of Appeal

Any person who has been subject to disciplinary action by this congregation shall be notified in writing by the congregation of the right of appeal. This notification shall occur within thirty days of the completion of the disciplinary action. Such appeal must be filed in writing with the district president of the church body with which the congregation is affiliated, with a copy to the congregation, within sixty days of the disciplinary action.

Bylaw Article II · Organization of the Congregation

Section 1 · Consensus-building

The congregation and its leaders shall make decisions regarding matters of congregational life, programs, and business through a process of congregational consensus-building, based on the congregation's mission statement and guided by the congregation's planning documents. By using verbal, print, and/or electronic communications, the congregation's leaders shall offer all members information on such matters. By using open forums, questionnaires, opinionnaires, and/or polls the congregation's leaders shall seek valued input from all communicant members.

Section 2 · Voting Membership

A. Sometimes the congregation will need to make authoritative and binding decisions for the good of others. Examples would be:
   a. the calling or removing of a called worker,
   b. the electing or removing of a member of the Council of Ministry,
   c. the adoption of a ministry plan and corresponding budget,
   d. the approval of major congregational loans or purchases,
   e. the dissolution or consolidation of the congregation.

The congregation shall make such decisions through its voters. When the consensus-building process has been utilized, the voting membership will take the result of the process into consideration in decision-making.

B. All communicant members who meet all the following criteria shall be considered voting members:
   a. Voting members must be male, since making authoritative, binding decisions is an exercise of headship (1 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:12).
   b. Voting members must have attained the age of eighteen, since making good decisions requires a level of experience and maturity.
   c. Voting members must have attended in-person a minimum of half of the regular worship services in the previous calendar year, since voters will make decisions for the good of other members which requires a familiarity with those members. (The Council of Ministry may waive this criterion for new members who meet the other criteria.)
   d. Voting members must be in good standing. (I.e. He must not be currently under some form of church discipline.)
   e. Voting members must have declared their agreement with the Constitution by their signatures.
   f. Voting members must have been accepted by the Council of Ministry.

   The voters present at a properly called meeting shall constitute a quorum to do business. A simple majority of the votes cast by the voting members present at a properly convened meeting of the congregation will be sufficient for such decisions except as otherwise provided in this constitution and Bylaws.

WELS recommends voting members attend at least half of regular worship services in the past year and be in good standing. This keeps decisions with members who are actively part of congregational life. It also prevents someone from bringing in members who haven't attended in a year just to sway a vote.

Bylaw Article III · Meetings of the Congregation

A. An annual congregational Business Meeting shall be held to approve the annual plan for ministry, the corresponding budget, and to elect members to the Council of Ministry as needed. This Business Meeting shall be called by the Council of Ministry by publicly announcing the date and place at least two Sundays prior to the date of the meeting.

B. Additional congregational meetings may be held at other times of the year subject to a call by the Council of Ministry, the Pastor(s), or at the request of five voting members within the congregation. Such meetings must be announced according to the general rule set forth in Section A of this Article with the purpose(s) clearly stated.

C. The president of the congregation, vice president, or their designated Council of Ministry member shall preside at all congregational meetings.

The presiding officer and the consensus-building facilitator need not be the same person. The presiding officer keeps order and follows the rules; the facilitator guides discussion and makes sure everyone is heard. A Council member may serve as facilitator, or someone trained in facilitation may be asked to lead part of the meeting.

PROPOSED · 2026	NOTES
D. No one shall bring to any meeting a charge or complaint against any member or against a Pastor or teacher unless he has first admonished him in a Christian manner in the spirit of Matthew 18:15-20. E. The meetings shall be conducted according to good, Christian order. Robert's Rules of Order may be followed for parliamentary procedure. F. Additional informal Open Forum gatherings should be held regularly throughout the year, preferably quarterly, to allow for gathering input from the congregation, providing updates on church programs, and updates to Church finances.	*Meetings can be simple, but also more formal when needed.*

Bylaw Article IV · Council of Ministry

Section 1 · Purpose of the Council of Ministry

The Council of Ministry shall be responsible for the spiritual and material affairs of the congregation. As servant-leaders, the Council of Ministry shall demonstrate selfless love and service for the well-being, spiritual growth, and unity of all the members. The Council of Ministry is accountable to God and all the members of the congregation.

The members of the Council of Ministry shall work together with and support the called workers in carrying out the ministry of the congregation in accord with Scripture and the stated mission of the congregation.

Section 2 · Responsibilities of the Council of Ministry

The congregation entrusts to the Council of Ministry the following responsibilities:

- Serve as an example to the congregation, adorning their high office with a godly way of life (1 Timothy 3:8-12)
- Care in love for their fellow members who have special needs (Galatians 6:9-10)
- Implement the decisions of the Voters' Assembly
- Oversee the doctrine and practice within the congregation
- Practice loving church discipline when necessary, following the principles established in Matthew 18:15-18
- Handle all issues related to membership changes
- See to the production and implementation of all congregational plans and budgets
- Oversee all of the congregation's programming
- Implement the congregation's policies and resolutions
- Administer the physical and financial resources of the congregation
- Serve as a link between the congregation and synod/district
- Create as many working groups and appoint coordinating managers as they find necessary to carry out the congregation's ministry and work
- Train, remove or replace coordinators or Connect Group members as necessary

- Be responsible for all other matters pertaining to the good and welfare of the congregation

The Council of Ministry shall make its decisions regarding important matters of congregational spiritual life and business based on a process of congregational consensus-building as described in Article II, Section 1 of these Bylaws.

The Council of Ministry shall control the corporate property of the congregation according to the direction given to it by the congregation. The Council of Ministry is hereby empowered to borrow money, pledge the assets of the congregation, sell, lease or otherwise dispose of the real and personal property of the congregation all at the direction of the congregation. It shall also have the right to acquire property by any legal means as directed by the congregation.

Section 3 · Structure of the Council of Ministry

A. The congregation shall elect at its annual Business Meeting, specified in Bylaw Article III, Section A, a Council of Ministry composed of the officers and councilmen listed in Section 6 of this Article. The voters shall elect each member to a specific position. The congregation may by resolution add, combine, or eliminate councilman positions, provided the Council of Ministry is never composed of fewer members than the number of corporate officers required by state law.

B. The term of office for each person elected shall be two years, and no person shall serve more than three consecutive full terms in the same office. He shall again be eligible for election to that office one year after the expiration of his third consecutive full term of office.

C. The term of one half of the members of the Council of Ministry, if possible, shall expire each year. Such expired terms are to be filled by election at the annual Business Meeting. Each member shall serve until his successor is installed.

D. The Pastor(s) of the congregation and principal of the school shall be members of the Council of Ministry in an advisory and non-voting capacity.

As non-voting members, the pastor(s) and principal take part in every Council discussion and give spiritual and educational guidance. They leave decisions to the elected lay leaders the congregation has chosen. This keeps the Council's voting body accountable to the congregation while keeping its called workers at the table.

Section 4 · Qualifications for the Council of Ministry

The first New Testament congregation at Jerusalem chose men “full of the Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:1-6) to aid the apostles in the administration of its affairs. This congregation shall choose Council of Ministry officers with like qualifications (1 Timothy 3:8-13). These officers must meet all the criteria for voting membership described in Article II, Section 2B of these Bylaws. The respect and esteem of the congregation are due these officers in the performance of their duties, and they shall be given its cooperation. They shall conduct themselves in a manner befitting their responsible office (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

Section 5 · Election to the Council of Ministry

A. The president shall appoint a nominating committee of not less than two members of the congregation and the Pastor(s).

B. The nominating committee shall solicit nominations for the Council of Ministry. Any communicant member who has reached the age of eighteen may make a nomination.

C. The nominating committee shall ensure that anyone nominated meets the criteria for voting membership described in Article II, Section 2B of these Bylaws. The nominating committee shall check with each qualified candidate as to his willingness to serve.

D. The nominating committee will submit their list of recommended candidates to the Council of Ministry. The Council of Ministry shall produce and publish a final list of nominees at least two Sundays prior to the date of the annual Business Meeting.

E. At its annual Business Meeting, after discussion, the voting membership shall elect the candidates. A majority of votes cast shall be necessary for election.

F. As soon as possible after the elections, the new members of the Council and any new officers shall be installed into their positions at a regular service and thus be presented to the congregation.

G. The Council of Ministry shall conduct an annual review of Council officer roles and responsibilities. Proposed amendments shall be submitted to the congregation during the annual Business Meeting; upon ratification, Section 6 of this Article shall be amended accordingly.

Section 6 · Duties of Council Officers

A. President

- The president shall have general supervision of the affairs of the congregation and conduct all its business affairs according to established good order.
- He shall preside as chairman at all congregational and Council meetings. (He may appoint a facilitator to oversee the process of consensus building.)
- He shall see to it that the councilmen carry out their responsibilities and offer reports to the Council and congregation.
- He shall oversee the congregation's financial operations, including providing oversight of any individuals appointed or hired to manage the congregation's finances, e.g. congregational treasurer, congregational financial secretary, business manager, etc.
- He is authorized to sign documents and supervise expenditures of the congregation and Council of Ministry.
- He shall perform such other duties as outlined in this Constitution and Bylaws, or as assigned to him by the congregation.

B. Vice-President

- The vice-president shall assume the responsibilities of the president in his absence.

- He shall oversee a process whereby annually the workload, health, and financial well-being of all called workers is assessed and any concerns are addressed.
- He is authorized to provide the required second signature for all legal documents directed to be executed by the congregation.

C. Secretary
- The secretary shall keep minutes of all congregational and Council meetings and submit them for revision and approval at each subsequent meeting.
- He is authorized to provide the required second signature for all legal documents directed to be executed by the congregation.

D. Treasurer
- The treasurer shall receive and deposit all contributions for the congregation and shall keep an accurate account of the same.
- He shall make disbursements according to instructions from the Council of Ministry or Voters' Assembly.
- He shall make a quarterly report to the congregational assembly and also monthly reports to the Council of Ministry. He shall submit his records to the congregation annually for audit or at any time the congregation so desires.
- In the absence of the secretary, he shall have the authority to provide the required second signature for all legal documents directed to be executed by the congregation.
- In the event the treasurer is unable to carry out his duties, the president or secretary has the authority to carry out his duties.

E. Building and Grounds Councilman
- Supervise the repair and upkeep of the congregation's property
- Coordinates the maintenance Connect Groups
- Coordinates large building and grounds initiatives

F. Soul Care Councilman
- Works with Soul Care Connect Groups
- If required by Matthew 18 the Soul Care Councilman would do that work in conjunction with the Pastor(s).

G. Outreach Councilman
- Responsible for guiding the Large Events Connect Groups
- Responsible for marketing coordination of the Church and School

H. Member Engagement Councilman
- Help guide Time Talents Treasures
- Oversees the Connect Group program as a whole
- Oversees Stewardship

I. School Ministry Councilman
- Oversees the ministry of the School
- The principal does not report to the School Ministry Councilman.

J. Pastor(s)
- Advisory role except in the case of Church discipline

K. Principal
- Advisory role

Section 7 · Meetings of the Council of Ministry

The Council of Ministry shall meet at regular intervals as determined by the Council of Ministry. Special meetings may be called by the Pastor(s) or the president. The Council shall not convene to transact business without the knowledge of the Pastor(s). A majority of the members of the Council shall constitute a quorum.

Section 8 · Council of Ministry Vacancies

In the event of a vacancy on the Council of Ministry, the vacancy shall be filled by appointment of the president, with approval of the Council of Ministry, and effective until that term expires.

Bylaw Article V · Coordinators & Connect Groups/Ministry Teams

Section 1 · Flexible Organization

A. The organizational structure of the congregation for carrying out ministry programs and activities shall be flexible. The Council of Ministry may use any or all of these methods:
   a. The Council of Ministry may appoint a coordinator who will receive training and direction and then work together with others to conduct a ministry program or activity.
   b. The Council of Ministry may appoint a standing Connect Group to conduct a ministry program or activity. These Connect Groups shall have a coordinator either appointed by the Council of Ministry or chosen by the Connect Group members.
   c. The Council of Ministry may appoint a Connect Group, limited in time and assignment, to carry out some ministry effort. This Connect Group shall have a coordinator either appointed by the Council of Ministry or chosen by the Connect Group members.
   d. When a more formal organizational structure is required of the congregation for carrying out specific ministry programs the Council of Ministry may delegate authoritative decisions to a Ministry Team (E.g. School Ministry Team).

B. All ministry programs and activities will be carried out in line with the congregation's mission and guided by the congregation's planning documents.

C. Any organized group or program intended to represent or serve the congregation shall exist only by consent and approval of the Council of Ministry.

Section 2 · Relationship to Council of Ministry

A. All organizational positions described in Bylaws Article V, Section 1A are service positions. Individuals serve at the discretion and under the authority of the Council of Ministry.

B. Communication between any Connect Group or Ministry Team occurs through reports produced by the coordinator and shared by the councilman and/or Pastor(s) who oversees that group.

C. If any group would need to make a recommendation for a binding decision (i.e. the type of decisions that would typically relate to responsibilities reserved for the voting membership or delegated to the Council of Ministry), that recommendation is passed up to the Council of Ministry through the communication process described in Bylaws Article V, Section 2B.

D. The Council of Ministry may choose to convene periodically with coordinators to discuss ministry plans and objectives.

E. Council of Ministry may delegate authoritative decisions to a Ministry Team (E.g. School Ministry Team).

   a. These Ministry Teams shall have a charter approved by the Council of Ministry that defines its roles and boundaries.

   b. The President by virtue of his office is ex-officio members of all Ministry Teams and are to be informed of all meetings of all Ministry Teams so that they may attend if they desire.

   c. The Pastor(s) by virtue of their position are advisory members of all Ministry Teams and are to be informed of all meetings of all Ministry Teams so that they may attend if they desire.

   d. The Council of Ministry may determine term limits for members of Ministry Teams if so needed.

Section 3 · Eligibility for Service

A. Any communicant member, man or woman, over the age of 18 and in good standing can serve on a Connect Group or Ministry Team.

B. Any communicant member, man or woman, over the age of 18 and in good standing can serve as a coordinator, pending the approval of the Council of Ministry.

Section 4 · School Ministry Team

A. The School Ministry Team is made up of six members – the Principal, School Ministry Councilman, and four members appointed by the Council of Ministry upon the recommendation of the Principal and School Ministry Councilman.

B. The appointed members will serve two year terms. Their terms will be staggered with no term limit.

C. Any communicant member, man or woman, over the age of 18 and in good standing can serve on the School Ministry Team.

D. The School Ministry Team shall operate according to the charter set forth in Appendix A, as approved by the Council of Ministry under Section 2E of this Article.

E. The School Ministry Team will be led by the Principal. The Principal is accountable to the Council of Ministry not the School Ministry Team.

PROPOSED · 2026	NOTES

Bylaw Article VI · Repeals and Amendments of the Bylaws

Any and all Bylaws may be repealed or amended by a majority vote of the voting members present at any properly called congregational meeting, provided that public notice of this proposed action shall have been given the congregation on at least two Sundays prior to the time of the meeting and provided that the proposed amendment has been submitted in writing to the Council of Ministry for its study and recommendation.

Appendix A: School Ministry Team Charter

The School Ministry Team assists the Principal in carrying out the mission of our congregation's formal school system: Wrap Around Care, Pre-Kindergarten, and Lutheran Grade School, especially in the areas of spiritual growth, school quality via accreditation, outreach and nurture strategy, and policy. The Council of Ministry has delegated the authority to carry out our school's disciplinary policy to the School Ministry Team. The School Ministry Team will be led by the Principal. The Principal is accountable to the Council of Ministry not the School Ministry Team.

The School Ministry Team is made up of six members – the Principal, School Ministry Councilman, and four members appointed by the Council of Ministry upon the recommendation of the Principal and School Ministry Councilman. The appointed members will serve two year terms. Their terms will be staggered with no term limit. Any communicant member, including staff, over the age of 18 and in good standing can serve on the School Ministry Team at the recommendation of the Principal.

School Ministry Team Duties: advisory, guidance, and assistance to carry out specific tasks

A. Administer / implement the accreditation School Improvement Plan (SIP)
B. Support and annually review the school's Mission Objectives (WELSSA Standard 1)
C. Provide teacher divine call recommendations to the Church Voters
D. Provide staffing recommendations that support the School's mission to the Council of Ministry
E. Annually review and revise the staff handbook based on recommendations from the Principal
F. Annually review and revise the school handbook based on recommendations from the Principal
G. Annually review and revise the athletics handbook based on recommendations from the Athletics Director and Principal
H. Serve as the appeal body to parents or staff not satisfied with a decision of the Principal. This task is delegated to the School Ministry Team by the Council of Ministry. Instances of this nature will be communicated to the Council of Ministry by the School Ministry Councilman, or in situations that are appropriate by the Principal.
I. Make final decisions regarding student expulsion. This task is delegated to the School Ministry Team by the Council of Ministry. Instances of this nature will be communicated to the Council of Ministry by the Principal.
J. Serve on school promotion Connect Groups for community outreach events

PROPOSED · 2026	NOTES
K. Represent the school to the congregation via presence at congregational meetings, open forums, graduations, etc. School Ministry Team shall meet as needed to assist the Principal with the duties above. The agenda shall be set by the Principal with input from the School Ministry Team. A formal agenda, minutes, and documentation should be created for each meeting and available for parents to review according to the WELSSA Standards.	