

**Bylaws**  
**of**  
**The Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
**of**  
**St. Stephen, the Martyr**

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**Revision Date:**  
**December 8, 2008, January 25, 2009**

**Mission Statement:**

**“St. Stephen Lutheran Church is a Christian community  
bringing God’s love to the world.”**

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## CHAPTER 1. ORGANIZATION

- B1.01** The membership rolls of the congregation shall be determined as follows:
- a. Active members: Confirmed members who have received Holy Communion or made a contribution of record to the congregation within the preceding year.
  - b. Inactive members: Confirmed members who have neither received Holy Communion nor made a contribution of record to the congregation within the preceding year. As such they shall remain within the continuing concern of the congregation and shall be given conscientious pastoral care. An inactive member shall be restored by the Congregation Council to the active roll of confirmed members when he or she again receives Holy Communion or makes a contribution of record to the congregation.
  - c. Communing members: Members who have received Holy Communion at least once within the year.
- B1.02** The congregation organization shall consist of the Executive Committee, Congregation Council, Standing Ministry Teams, Ad Hoc and Special Committees, Paid Staff, and Congregation Members.
- B1.03** The organization interaction is as follows:
- a. Ministry Teams, Ad Hoc, and Special Committees are responsible to the Congregation Council.
  - b. The Senior Pastor is the direct supervisor of all paid and non-paid staff.
  - c. The staff members are functionally responsible to their respective ministry teams as follows:
    1. Choir and Music Directors to Worship and Music Ministry Team.
    2. Children's Ministry Director to the Children's Ministry Team.
    3. Youth Ministry Director to the Youth Ministry Team
    4. Custodian to the Property Ministry Team.
    5. Parish Nurse to the Health Ministry Team.
- B1.04** **Executive Committee**  
The Executive Committee of the Congregation Council shall consist of the Pastor(s) and the Congregation Council President and Vice President. They shall meet once per month to plan the agenda for the monthly council meeting.
- B1.05** **Congregation Council**  
The Congregation Council shall consist of ten members of the congregation, elected by the congregation at the annual meeting. The Pastor(s) is/are ex-officio voting members of the Congregation Council. The organization, duties, and responsibilities of the Congregation Council are defined in the bylaws, Chapter 4.
- B1.06** **Standing Ministry Teams**  
The membership of the standing ministry teams shall consist of active members of the congregation. The ministry team chair shall be an active member of the congregation and ideally not a Congregation Council member or a staff person. The ministry teams are responsible for overseeing the conduct and assuring the implementation of programs, plans, and activities in their respective area. The ministry teams shall make recommendations to the Congregation Council for action and approval. All actions of the ministry teams shall be subject to review by the Congregation Council.
- The duties and responsibilities of the standing ministry teams are as follows:
- a. Mission and Benevolence
    1. Encourage and motivate the congregation toward support of the mission work of the congregation and the ELCA involving organizations and people throughout the local community and the world.
    2. Support our sister parish in Lukani, Tanzania, through prayer, mission trips, and financial assistance for scholarships, wells, and other appropriate projects.

- b. Evangelism
  - 1. Stimulate and lead all members of the congregation in continuous and, from time to time, concerted endeavors to reawaken the spiritually indifferent and to reach others, who are as yet unwon, with the Gospel and attach them to Christ's Church.
  - 2. Devote itself to deepening spiritual life and periodically study the congregation in the context of its surrounding community.
  - 3. Assure an effective advertising and public relations effort.
  - 4. Plan and organize new member receptions as required.
  - 5. Recruit and provide for new member sponsors.
- c. Social Ministry
  - 1. Extend Christian compassion and helpfulness to persons of all ages in need of aid in body or soul.
  - 2. Plan, organize and enlist the participation of individual members and organizations of the congregation to assist in these efforts.
  - 3. Study social conditions, primarily in the local community, in order to bring Christian truth to critical problems through the discussion of facts and issues.
- d. Worship and Music
  - 1. Assist the Congregation Council to ensure that the services of God's house are conducted regularly and in accordance with the teachings of the ELCA.
  - 2. Assure the availability of a competent organist or worship music leaders for all worship services.
  - 3. In consultation with the pastor(s) and the music staff, plan and arrange special worship services as may be deemed appropriate.
  - 4. Oversee the staffing and assure that competent people are available and trained to serve as greeters, ushers, acolytes, lectors, audio and video technicians, and for Children's Sermons.
  - 5. Address issues of hospitality.
  - 6. Assure that hymnals and other devotional materials are provided and properly cared for.
  - 7. Supervise and strive to advance the welfare and effective service of the choirs and instrumental groups of the congregation.
  - 8. Arrange for the care of paraments, banners, choir robes, vestments, and musical instruments.
  - 9. In consultation with the pastor(s), the organist and the choir directors, furnish worship and music supplies appropriate for use in the worship service, such as bulletins, candles, flowers, choir music, and communion supplies.
  - 10. Supervise the staffing and work of the Altar Guild.
- e. Children's Ministry
  - 1. In association with the pastor(s), oversee, conduct and promote the Sunday School and Wednesday night programs and additional children's educational activities.
  - 2. Encourage the use of teaching and worship within the Lutheran tradition and seek to introduce the church's periodicals and books of family devotion into the homes of the congregation, through the congregation library.
  - 3. Support the Children's/Youth Ministry Director in his or her duties.
  - 4. Oversee the staffing and support for the Cradle Roll, Nursery, Sunday School, and the Library.
- f. Youth Ministry
  - 1. Oversee the conduct and promotion of effective programs and Christian growth experiences to interest and maintain the youth as active members of the congregation.
  - 2. Support the Youth Director in his/her work with the youth of the congregation.

3. Assure that competent youth counselors are selected and trained.

g. Fellowship

1. Encourage and promote the active participation in fellowship activities of the congregation to build stronger relationships among the members of the church and those outside the church.
2. Plan, organize, and conduct fellowship activities, for example musical festival and auction, family camp, musical events, Bunco, Progressive Dinner, and other events which promote the gathering of members and non-members.

h. Adult Learning

1. Encourage all members of the congregation, particularly adult members (post-high school) to be involved in life-long learning opportunities.
2. Plan, organize, and implement a variety of adult learning events, varying both in length and schedule.
3. Plan, organize, and implement opportunities for families to learn together and foster family growth.
4. Advocate for lifelong education.

i. Staff Relations

1. Oversee the recruiting and selection of all paid staff of the congregation (excluding pastor[s]).
2. Participate in the evaluation of the performance of the paid staff.
3. Recommend to the Finance Committee and the Congregation Council salaries for the paid staff.

j. Finance

1. The treasurer is an ex-officio member of the finance committee.
2. Prepare a draft budget for the succeeding year, including the congregation's full indicated share in support of the wider ministry of the synod and the ELCA. Submit such draft budget to the Congregation Council for its action and later presentation to the annual meeting for action by the congregation.
3. Exercise oversight of all the financial affairs of the congregation to make sure that they are being conducted efficiently, giving particular attention to the prompt payment of all obligations and to the regular forwarding of benevolence moneys to the synod treasurer.
4. Subject to the approval of the Congregation Council, be responsible for the congregation's investments, and its total insurance program.
5. Provide for annual audits of the accounts of the treasurer, the financial secretary, and the accounts of the schools and organizations within the congregation. Auditing of the congregations financial records should comply with the most recent edition of the ELCA document *Congregation Audit Guide*.
6. Establish and assure the implementation of effective financial policies and procedures including offering counting, bank deposits, and bank accounts.
7. Supervise the staffing and work of the Memorial Fund Committee.
8. All financial procedures should comply with the most recent edition of the ELCA document *Resources For Congregational Treasurers And Bookkeepers*.

k. Stewardship

1. Evoke and promote the expression of Christian faith in daily living.
2. Teach the Christian use of money.
3. Communicate information of the congregation's local, national, and worldwide ministries.
4. Lead all congregation members to higher levels of proportionate giving for the Lord's work.
5. Organize and conduct the annual member response.
6. Monitor pledge commitments and issue quarterly statements to members.
7. Coordinate the information and documentation of the "Time and Talent"

response.

8. Extend messages of appreciation and ministry success to the congregation throughout the year.

I. Property

1. Oversee and assure the proper maintenance and protection of all property of the congregation and assure that the same is kept in good repair.
2. Support the work of the custodian.

**B1.07 Special Committees**

Special Committees are continuing committees that shall be established as needed to focus attention and effort on a specific area of ministry or a program. They generally report to a standing ministry team.

**B1.08 Ad Hoc Committees**

Ad hoc committees may be appointed by the Congregation Council to focus short-term attention and effort on specific needs. An ad hoc committee has a defined objective and once that objective has been accomplished, the ad hoc committee is disbanded. The Congregation Council shall define the objective and membership of the ad hoc committee when it is established. The ad hoc committee is responsible to the Congregation Council.

**B1.09 Definition of Property**

- a. Real Property: Includes land and the things permanently attached to it, such as buildings and trees.
- b. Personal Property: All other things are called personal property.

**CHAPTER 2. CONGREGATION MEETING**

**B2.01** The annual meeting of this congregation shall be held on a Sunday in January at a time and place determined and announced by the Congregation Council.

**B2.02** Voting members of this congregation are all persons on the active roll of confirmed members.

**B2.03** A special congregation meeting may be called by the pastor, the Congregation Council, or the president of this congregation. A special congregation meeting shall be called at the written request of ten percent (10%) of the voting members. The call for each special meeting shall specify the purpose for which it is to be held and no other business shall be transacted.

**B2.04** Notice of all meetings of this congregation shall be given at the services of worship on the two preceding consecutive Sundays and by mail to all voting members at least ten days in advance of the date of the meeting. The posting of such notice in regular mail, with regular postage affixed or paid, sent to the last known address of such members shall be sufficient.

**B2.05** Ten percent (10%) of the voting members shall constitute a quorum.

**B2.06** Voting by proxy or by absentee ballot shall not be permitted.

**B2.07** All actions by the congregation shall be by majority vote except as otherwise provided in the Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of St. Stephen the Martyr in sections C6.05(a,d), C7.03, C7.04, C9.01, C9.05(d), C15.03, C17.02(b), C18.02.

**CHAPTER 3. OFFICERS**

**B3.01** The officers of this congregation shall be a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and financial secretary. The Congregation Council shall elect the officers and they shall also be the officers of the congregation.

**B3.02 SELECTION**

- a. The president and vice president shall be chosen from the membership of the Congregation Council.

- b. The remaining officers will be chosen from the congregation by the Congregation Council. The remaining officers shall be accorded the privilege of voice but no vote during council meetings.
- c. All officers shall be chosen from the roll of active, voting members of the congregation. If any officer fails to meet this criteria, the office that was held shall at once be declared vacant by the Congregation Council. The Congregation Council then shall act to fill the vacancy for the unexpired term.
- d. No officer shall hold more than one office at a time.
- e. The officers shall be elected by voice, show of hands or by written ballot if requested and shall serve a one-year term. Approval must be by majority vote. The president shall be elected at the November meeting preceding each congregational year. The other officers shall be elected at the first Congregation Council meeting of each congregational year.
- f. The number of consecutive terms of office shall be as follows:
  - 1. President, vice president – limited to their membership on the Congregation Council.
  - 2. Secretary, treasurer, financial secretary – no limit.

### **B3.03 DUTIES**

- a. President
  - 1. Conduct Congregation Council meetings.
  - 2. Conduct congregation meetings.
  - 3. Provide council leadership and liaison between all ministry teams of the congregation.
  - 4. Responsible for communicating with the pastor(s), the vice president and council members.
  - 5. Member of the Executive Committee.
  - 6. Member of Staff Relations Ministry Team.
  - 7. Provide leadership to the council and congregation in support of mission and ministry of the congregation.
  - 8. Call special meetings as required.
- b. Vice President
  - 1. Serves as chair and presides over all meetings in the absence of the president.
  - 2. Is a member of the Executive Committee.
- c. Secretary
  - 1. The secretary shall keep accurate minutes of all meetings of the Congregation Council and of the congregation in a volume provided by the congregation, which shall be preserved permanently in its archives.
- d. Financial Secretary
  - 1. The financial secretary shall receive and keep record of all income from contributing members and other sources.
- e. Treasurer
  - 1. The treasurer shall keep the books of account of the congregation. The treasurer shall receive all funds and disburse them on proper orders, making monthly remittance of benevolence receipts to the treasurer of the synod.
  - 2. The treasurer shall make written report of all transactions to the congregation council monthly and to the congregation together with a satisfactory audit, at its annual meetings. All financial officers shall give corporate surety, in amounts determined by the Congregation Council, for which the premiums shall be paid by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

## **CHAPTER 4. CONGREGATION COUNCIL**

- B4.01** The voting membership of the Congregation Council shall consist of the pastor(s) and ten

members. Congregation Council members (except the pastor) shall be elected by voice, show of hands, or written ballot for terms of three years by a majority vote at the annual congregation meeting. Their tenure shall be so arranged that one-third of the terms expire annually. After having served one three-year term, a Congregation Council member may be elected to serve again. After having served two consecutive terms, a Congregation Council member may not be elected to serve again until at least one year shall have elapsed from the time of their retirement. All lay members of the Congregation Council shall be installed by the pastor according to the prescribed order of the church at the next public service following their election or as soon thereafter as convenient.

- B4.02** A member's place on the Congregation Council shall be declared vacant if the member:
- a. Ceases to be a voting member of this congregation or;
  - b. Is absent from four successive regular meetings of the Congregation Council without excuse.

**B4.03** The organization of the Congregation Council is as follows:

- a. The Congregation Council members provide liaison with the ministry teams working in their area. In addition to the standing ministry teams, ad-hoc or special committees may be assigned to one of the areas to assure direct Congregation Council liaison.
- b. Ideally, a Congregation Council member shall not serve as chair of a ministry team. Ministry team members shall be responsible for recruiting the chair of each ministry team. At least one Congregation Council member shall attend each meeting but only as support for the chair and as liaison between ministry team and full Congregation Council.
- c. The chair, working together with the Congregation Council liaison, shall be responsible for seeing that each ministry team is properly staffed. All members of the Congregation Council shall have an up-to-date roster of ministry team members.
- d. The president of the Congregation Council can be assigned to a particular area. In addition, it is his or her responsibility to maintain a supportive relationship with each of the other ministry teams.
- e. The Congregation Council is responsible to review goals and objectives for each of the ministry teams. Each ministry team has considerable discretion in the use of budgeted funds and availability of resources. Accountability and authority is maintained at the ministry team level where possible, rising to the Congregation Council level only where decisions of a broader nature are involved.
- f. Each of the ministry teams will meet prior to the Congregation Council meeting and develop a written report on ministry team activities in their area. The Congregation Council liaison for the ministry team will present the monthly report for their area to each Congregation Council meeting.
  1. The report must be in writing.
  2. The report should be a summary and highlights of key items for each ministry team.
  3. Report on activities and present proposals/recommendations to the Congregation Council for actions, not ideas for discussion.
  4. Copies of the group reports should be given to:
    - Each Congregation Council member by the Sunday before the monthly Congregation Council meeting
    - Each ministry team chair
    - Pastor(s)
    - Congregation Council secretary
    - Church secretary (for Congregation Council file)
    - Others as appropriate
  5. Recommendations requiring Congregation Council action shall be clearly indicated and highlighted.
- g. The Congregation Council will establish council liaisons for all ministry teams at the first Congregation Council meeting of each congregational year.

- h. The Congregation Council president will be elected in November of each year.
- i. The vice president will not necessarily become president of the Congregation Council.
- j. The Congregation Council retreat date will be set during the first Congregation Council meeting of each congregational year. It is expected that all Congregation Council members attend.

**B4.04** The duties/responsibilities of the Congregation Council are as follows:

- 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 provide and support programs and facilities for all ministry teams.
- d. To oversee and provide for the administration of this congregation to enable it to fulfill its functions and perform its mission.
- e. To communicate the motivation and practices of stewardship to all members of the congregation, and to encourage liberal giving to the work of the church in all its aspects at home and everywhere.
- f. To be examples individually and corporately of the style of life and ministry expected of all baptized persons.
- g. To support the pastor(s) in fulfilling their calling by visiting the sick, the infirm and the spiritually indifferent, by ministering to the poor and distressed and by seeking to bring the unchurched into the fellowship of Christ. And, to maintain supportive relationships with the pastor(s) and staff and help them annually to evaluate the fulfillment of their calling or employment.
- h. To promote a spirit of peace and good will within the congregation and if differences arise, to endeavor to restore harmony and mutual understanding.
- i. To arrange for pastoral supply during the sickness or absence of the pastor.
- j. To appoint a call committee to select and recommend a candidate to the Congregation Council when a pastoral vacancy occurs.
- k. To emphasize partnership with the synod and churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church In America as well as cooperation with other congregations, both Lutheran and non-Lutheran, subject to established policies of the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church In America.
- l. To seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the gospel.

**B4.05** The Congregation Council shall not incur any financial obligation exceeding one-tenth of the current expense offering received in the preceding financial year without authority from the congregation.

**B4.06** The Congregation Council shall elect persons on the active roll who are voting members in the congregation as delegates in the permitted numbers to the assembly of the synod and the meetings of the conference to which this congregation belongs. The expenses incurred by such delegates in connection with their attendance, except for travel to the assembly of the synod, shall be paid by the congregation.

**B4.07** The Congregation Council shall normally meet once a month. Special meetings may be called by the pastor, or president, or at the request of at least one half of its members. Notice of each special meeting shall be given to all who are entitled to be present.

**B4.08** Guidelines for conduct of Congregation Council meetings:

- a. Agenda items which require Congregation Council action shall be presented to either the Congregation Council president or vice president at least one week prior to the Congregation Council meeting. Urgent items requiring Congregation Council action may be added to the agenda at the beginning of the meeting if approved by a

majority vote of the members present.

- b. Congregation Council meetings will be called to order at the designated time. Members are expected to be present and prepared prior to the designated time of call to order.
- c. Congregation Council members will keep their discussions centered around the agenda item before them.
- d. The Congregation Council will adhere to parliamentary procedure.
  - 1. No discussion prior to making of a motion.
  - 2. No speaking without first being recognized by the chair.
  - 3. Etc.
- e. Congregation Council members may be limited by the presiding officer to the number of times they may speak to a motion (two times is a suggested number).
- f. Requests and presentations of members of the congregation must be worked through the appropriate ministry team and adhere to rule B4.08(a) above.
- g. Congregation Council meetings will be restricted to 3 hours maximum duration. To exceed 3 hours, a majority must approve.
- h. Each Congregation Council meeting shall begin with a brief devotion.
- i. If the Congregation Council does not approve of a committee's proposal/recommendation, it must be sent back to the committee for future consideration.
- j. If time permits, at the end of the Congregation Council meeting, issues beyond the prescribed agenda may be discussed.