

**THE  
CONSTITUTION  
OF  
ST. THOMAS  
LUTHERAN CHURCH  
MISSOURI SYNOD  
ROCKY RIVER, OHIO**

**As Amended June 2, 2019**

**Approval was granted at the September 6, 2019 meeting of the Ohio District Board of Directors.**

**PREAMBLE**

WHEREAS Christians should practice fellowship with those who profess the true faith (Acts 2:42, Heb. 10:24,25); and

WHEREAS they should endeavor to keep the unity of faith (Eph. 4:3-6, Cor. 1:10); and

WHEREAS as a body they should administer the office of the keys (John 20:21-23, Matt. 13:17-20); and

WHEREAS in such a body all things should be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40);

## The Constitution of Saint Thomas Lutheran Church

THEREFORE we, the undersigned, herewith adopt the following Constitution and its Bylaws according to which all the affairs of this congregation, both spiritual and material, shall be conducted.

### CONSTITUTION

#### **ARTICLE 1 - NAME**

The name of this congregation shall be:

ST. THOMAS LUTHERAN CHURCH

Rocky River, Ohio

#### **ARTICLE II - PURPOSE**

The purpose or purposes for which it is formed, are as follows: the diffusion of moral or religious knowledge according to the Evangelical Lutheran Church, based on the Unaltered Augsburg Confession; the preaching of God's Word and the administration of the Sacraments; the instruction of the children and the young people in God's Word and other useful knowledge; to buy, own, mortgage or sell or otherwise dispose of real or personal property to carry on the work of the Church; to erect and maintain buildings suitable and necessary for its meeting and work; to receive donations, gifts and bequests for the maintenance of the said organization; and to adopt the necessary Bylaws.

#### **ARTICLE III - DECLARATION OF CREED**

This congregation as a body and all its members as individuals accept without reservation:

1. The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and practice:

2. All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God, to wit, the three Ecumenical Creeds (The Apostles' Creed, The Nicene Creed, and The Athanasian Creed), the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, Treatise on the Primacy of the Papacy, the Apology thereof, the Smalcald Articles, the Large Catechism of Martin Luther, the Small Catechism of Martin Luther, and the Formula of Concord.

#### **ARTICLE IV - COMMUNICANT MEMBERSHIP**

A. Conditions of Membership.

Membership in this congregation can be obtained and held by such as:

1. Are baptized;

2. Declare their acceptance and adherence to the Declaration of Creed as contained in Article III of this Constitution (Heb. 10:23);

3. Are familiar with Luther's Small Catechism and declare their acceptance thereof (1 Peter 3:15);

4. Do not live in manifest works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21) but lead a Christian life;

## The Constitution of Saint Thomas Lutheran Church

5. Are not members of a secret society (lodge) or of any other organization conflicting with the Word of God and the conduct of a Christian (2 Cor. 6:14-18);

6. Apply for communicant membership presenting a letter of transfer or release from a recognized orthodox congregation

7. Apply for communicant membership and give satisfactory evidence of their qualifications for membership in an interview with the pastor, in the event they are affiliated with a non-recognized orthodox Lutheran Church; and

8. Apply for communicant membership and receive, or have received, an adequate course of instruction in the Chief Parts of the Christian religion and declare in the presence of witnesses, their acceptance of the doctrines of the Lutheran Church.

### B. Associate Communicant Membership.

Associate Communicant Membership can be obtained and held by such as:

1. Qualify under Section A, paragraph 1 through 5 of this Article;

2. Are members of a recognized orthodox congregation not located in the Greater Cleveland area, who will from time-to-time be visiting or living temporarily in the area;

3. Apply for Associate Communicant membership presenting evidence confirming their membership in a recognized orthodox congregation; and

4. Declare their intent to continue active membership and participation in their

## The Constitution of Saint Thomas Lutheran Church

home congregation.

5. Associate Communicant members are not eligible to become voting members.

### C. Duties of Members.

It shall be the duty of every Communicant Member:

1. To attend public worship, Bible Fellowship, and Voters' Assembly meetings diligently and to partake of Holy Communion frequently;
  
2. To send their children to our Early Childhood Center (ECC), to send the children of school age (1st to 8th grade) to a Lutheran Day School and to Catechetical Instruction, or to provide otherwise for their Christian education weekly and to bring their children to other educational opportunities offered by the church.
  
3. To contribute according to their ability their time, talent, and treasure toward the Lord's mission through St. Thomas.
  
4. To submit and conform to the rules and regulations established by the congregation.

## **ARTICLE V - SUFFRAGE AND ELIGIBILITY TO OFFICE**

1. All communicant members who have attained the age of eighteen (18) years, have declared their acceptance of this Constitution and its Bylaws, and have signed it in a regular meeting of the Voters' Assembly, shall be entitled to the rights and privileges of suffrage at the next scheduled meeting.

2. All members who have attained the age of twenty-one (21) years and are current voting members of this congregation shall be eligible to serve as members of elected or appointed boards or committees, except for the office of Chairman of the Board of Directors. This position may only be filled by a male member who has attained the age of twenty-four (24) years and is a current voting member of this congregation.

3. All members who have not attended one meeting in the past two (2) years forfeit all rights and privileges of suffrage. They can be reinstated into voting membership of the Voters' Assembly by making a request to the Secretary of the Board of Directors at a regular meeting of the Voters' Assembly, and shall then be entitled to vote at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

#### **ARTICLE VI - RELEASE AND WITHDRAWAL**

1. Members desiring a transfer to another Lutheran Church Missouri Synod congregation, or to a congregation which is in fellowship the LCMS, shall obtain a written transfer from our pastor, who, in turn, shall report such transfer to the congregation.

2. Members who leave without a transfer, or who are no longer exercising the rights and privileges nor performing the duties of members, shall, by action of the congregation, when not contrary to the Word of God, cease to be members, and shall lose all rights, privileges, property rights, and all other rights of membership.

#### **ARTICLE VII - CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

## The Constitution of Saint Thomas Lutheran Church

1. It shall be the duty of the congregation to discipline an erring member in accordance with the various grades prescribed in Matthew 18, verses 15-17.
2. Persons unwilling to submit to this divine rule shall be adjudged as having excommunicated themselves.
3. Manifest and impenitent sinners shall be excommunicated after fruitless admonition.
4. Excommunicated persons forfeit all rights and privileges of membership.
5. Excommunicated persons who repent and ask for forgiveness shall be reinstated into membership.

### **ARTICLE VIII - AUTHORITY OF THE CONGREGATION**

1. The Voters' Assembly shall have supreme authority and power to manage and adjust all spiritual and material affairs of the congregation.
2. Any enactment or decision, whether it proceeds from an individual or from a body within the congregation, shall be invalid, if contrary to or beyond the authorization granted by the Voters' Assembly.
3. The Voters' Assembly shall have no authority to enact or decide anything contrary to the Word of God and the Symbols of the Church.

**ARTICLE IX - OFFICES OF PASTOR AND CALLED STAFF**

The congregation shall confer the office of Pastor or Called staff only as:

1. Unreservedly pledge their acceptance of and adherence to the Declaration of Creeds as contained in Article III of this Constitution, and as have been prepared for their work, and are well qualified for it;
2. Are members of, or have applied for membership in, the same body to which the congregation belongs; and
3. Have been properly and rightfully Called by the congregation.

**ARTICLE X - REMOVAL FROM OFFICE**

1. A Pastor or Called staff member may be removed from office in only a Christian and rightful manner.
2. Valid reasons for removal are: persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, willful neglect of official duties, or protracted inability to perform the functions of the sacred office.
3. Paragraph two (2) of this Article shall also apply to other officers and board members of the congregation.



### **ARTICLE XI - SYNODICAL MEMBERSHIP**

1. If possible, the congregation shall hold membership in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS). The congregation shall send such delegates to the conventions and meetings of the Synod, the District, and the Circuit, as are required by the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod.

2. The congregation accepts the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod and of the District in which it holds membership, as its own. It shall, therefore, be the duty of the congregation, and its individual members, to support the work of their Synod in all its activities according to their ability.

### **ARTICLE XII – USE OF FACILITIES**

1. The Board of Directors has the authority to decide which individuals and/or groups may or may not use our facilities or property.

2. The congregation retains the right to refuse the use of its facilities or property to those individuals and/or groups that hold beliefs and/or practices contrary to the teachings of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod.

### **ARTICLE XIII - BOOKS AND FORMS**

1. Only approved Lutheran Hymn Books and Books of Forms shall be used in public worship, and in all official acts of the pastor.

2. In addition to the Bible and Luther's Small Catechism, only soundly Lutheran books and literature shall be used for the purpose of religious instruction.

#### **ARTICLE XIV – DIVISION AND/OR DISSOLUTION OF THE CONGREGATION**

If at any time a division of the congregation should take place for any reason, the following principles will govern:

1. The property of the congregation and all benefits connected therewith shall remain with those communicant members who continue to adhere in confession and practice to the confessional standards set forth in this constitution.

2. In the event that the congregation dissolves, all property shall be disposed of by the final voters' assembly for the payment of debt and all just claims against the congregation, and any and all surplus and all rights connected therewith shall be conveyed to the religious and charitable organizations (501) (c) (3) as determined by the final voters' assembly.

#### **ARTICLE XV – AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION**

1. Article III of this Constitution and all such other articles or sections as pertain to Scriptural doctrine and practice shall be unaltered or irrevocable.

2. Alteration or repeal of any alterable or repealable article or section of this Constitution shall require a two-thirds (2/3) vote in a meeting of the Voters'

## The Constitution of Saint Thomas Lutheran Church

Assembly duly announced, provided that the proposed amendment has been submitted in writing to the Voters at least two (2) weeks prior to the meeting.