



# **Praise & Worship**

A Christ-Centered, Disciple-Making Community

## Constitution and Bylaws

Approved by Missouri District Board of Directors  
on October 24, 2013

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## **1 Constitution**

### **1.1 Name**

The name of this congregation shall be Praise and Worship Lutheran Church of Branson, Taney County, Missouri.

### **1.2 Mission**

A Christ-centered ministry, encouraging and equipping disciples of Jesus Christ to bring people into a living and growing relationship with Him.

### **1.3 Confession of Faith**

We accept without reservation:

- ▶ 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.
- ▶ 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, the Athanasian Creed), the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Large Catechism of Luther, the Small Catechism of Luther, and the Formula of Concord.

### **1.4 Denominational Affiliation**

This congregation shall be affiliated with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as long as the confessions and Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod are in accord with the confessions and Constitution of this congregation as laid down in Article 1.3.

### **1.5 Membership**

The membership of this congregation includes the Baptized Members, Communicant Members, and Voting Members as defined in the Bylaws.

### **1.6 Organization**

#### **1.6.1 Voters' Assembly**

The Voters' Assembly shall consist of all voting members present at a regular or special meeting of the congregation. The congregation, through the Voters' Assembly, shall have final authority in managing its internal and external affairs.

#### **1.6.2 Officers**

The congregation shall have the following elected officers: a President, who shall conduct the meetings of the Voters' Assembly and the Leadership Team; a Vice-President, who shall serve in the President's absence or inability to serve; a Secretary, who shall keep the minutes of the

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meetings of the Voters' Assembly and the Leadership Team; and a Treasurer, who shall be responsible for the payment of bills and keeping the financial records of the congregation.

## **1.6.3 Leadership Team**

The Leadership Team shall be the governing body of the congregation and is responsible to administer all the congregation's affairs except the following matters for action only by the Voters' Assembly:

- ▶ Call or remove a called worker.
- ▶ Purchase or sell church property or buildings valued over 10% of the annual operating budget.
- ▶ Adopt the Annual Financial Plan.
- ▶ Dissolve the congregation

## **1.6.4 Spiritual Support Team**

The Spiritual Support Team shall concern itself with the spiritual health of the congregation and its members. It shall:

- ▶ Pray regularly for this ministry.
- ▶ Nurture and encourage the spiritual development and discipleship of all members.
- ▶ Oversee membership.
- ▶ Serve as advisors and assistants to the pastor(s) in matters of worship and preaching, congregational care, administration of the sacraments, and church discipline.
- ▶ Serve as congregational representatives monitoring and advocating for the spiritual and emotional well-being of the professional leadership of the congregation.

## **1.6.5 Officers and Teams**

The officers of this congregation shall be such officers as the Bylaws of this Constitution prescribe. The officers and teams prescribed in the Bylaws shall have no authority beyond that which has been conferred upon them in the Constitution or Bylaws.

## **1.7 Property Rights**

If, at any time, a separation shall take place within this congregation that cannot be resolved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Voters' Assembly, the advice of the officers of the Synodical district shall be sought. If, despite all efforts to resolve differences in peace and love, a division into factions of the congregation shall occur, the ownership of the congregation's property and all benefits connected shall be decided by officers of the Missouri District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

In the event that the congregation dissolves, all property shall be disposed of by the final voters assembly for the payment of debts and all just claims against the congregation, and any and all

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surplus and all rights connected therewith shall be conveyed to and become the property of the Missouri District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

## **1.8 Decisions**

All congregational matters decided by the Voters' Assembly shall be decided by a simple majority of the voting members present at a properly convened meeting of the Voters' Assembly, except as otherwise provided in this Constitution and Bylaws. The presiding officer shall not vote except in the case of a tie vote.

## **1.9 Amendments**

This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast in a meeting of the Voters' Assembly. The wording of the amended Constitution shall be distributed to all members in a conventional mailing or by e-mail or by both no less than four Sundays in advance. In addition, the revisions will be distributed in printed form to the congregation assembled for worship on at least two different Sundays prior to the date upon which the amendment is presented for action.

The revised constitution shall, as a condition of continued membership in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, be submitted to the President of the Missouri District for review by the district's Constitution Committee and favorable action by the district's Board of Directors before being implemented by the congregation.

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## **2 Bylaws**

### **2.1 Membership**

Members of this congregation shall conform their entire lives to the authority of God's Word and to that end shall make diligent use of the means of grace, exercise faithful stewardship of God's many gifts and talents, impart and accept fraternal admonition as the need of such admonition becomes apparent and be readily available for service in the kingdom of Christ within and beyond the congregation. Membership in organizations whose principles and conduct conflict with the Word of God is prohibited.

#### **2.1.1 Baptized Membership**

Baptized members are all who have been baptized in the name of the Triune God and are under the spiritual care of this congregation, including the children who have not yet been confirmed into communicant membership.

#### **2.1.2 Communicant Membership**

Communicant members are those baptized members who have been instructed in the Christian faith, accept the confessional standard of section 1.3 of our Constitution, and have been received into membership by the Spiritual Support team,

#### **2.1.3 Voting Membership**

Voting members are communicant members who are at least 18 years of age.

#### **2.1.4 Termination of Membership**

Membership shall be terminated by transfer to a sister congregation, by death, by joining a congregation outside the fellowship of this congregation, by removal of membership, or by self-exclusion. In cases of removal of membership or self-exclusion, each case shall be presented individually for a decision to the Spiritual Support Team. A two-thirds majority of the Spiritual Support Team shall be required for termination.

Communicant members who conduct themselves in an un-Christian manner shall be admonished according to Matthew 18:15-20. If they remain impenitent after proper admonition, they shall be removed from membership.

### **2.2 Voters' Assembly**

The Voters' Assembly shall meet at least once a year to elect Leadership Team and Spiritual Support Team members and to approve the annual budget and financial plan.

The Voters' Assembly may meet at other times of the year subject to a request by the pastor, President, the Leadership Team, or at the request of any 10% of the voting members of the congregation.

The day and hour of each meeting shall be publicized at least two weeks in advance. The notification shall contain an agenda of items to be considered as well as the slate of nominees for election if applicable. No agenda items may be added once notification of any meeting is publicized. The President, Vice-President, or a designated Leadership Team member shall preside at all Voters' Assembly meetings.

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All Voting Members present at a properly called meeting shall constitute a quorum.

## **2.3 Called Workers**

### **2.3.1 Calling into Office**

When a vacancy occurs in an office of an ordained or commissioned minister, the congregation shall notify the president of the district to receive assistance in filling the vacancy and to receive his counsel in calling a new church worker.

After authorization is received from the Voters' Assembly, the Leadership Team shall appoint a Call Team, consisting of 4 to 7 members. At least half of the Call Team members shall be non-Leadership Team members.

A list of candidates of rostered church workers shall be compiled by the Call Team. The Team should seek candidate names through soliciting the congregation membership, by contacting official sources in denominational offices, and through consultation with other appropriate sources related to the area of ministry for which a staff member is being sought. The Call Team shall secure all pertinent information regarding each candidate in order that appropriate information can be shared with the Voters' Assembly at the time the call is to be considered.

### **2.3.2 Election**

At a subsequent regular or special meeting of the Voters' Assembly one of the proposed candidates shall be elected by ballot and simple majority.

It shall be the duty of the Chairman of the Call Team to see that notice of the candidate's election is delivered within 3 days to the candidate in whatever manner is deemed advisable.

### **2.3.3 Removal from Office of Called Workers**

In Christian love and lawful order, any Called worker may be removed from office by the Voters' Assembly for any of the following reasons: persistent adherence to false doctrine, a scandalous life, willful neglect, or the inability to perform the duties detailed in the applicable Call document.

The Leadership Team shall carefully investigate charges on any of these counts. Should such charges be substantiated by clear evidence, and after consultation with the District President or his designated representative, the Leadership Team shall notify the Voting Members of the situation and submit the matter for action at a special meeting of that body. Such meeting shall be announced by written correspondence at least two weeks in advance of the meeting and at regular worship services on the preceding two weekends.

A two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Voting Members present at the Voters' Assembly shall be required to remove any divinely called servant from office.

### **2.3.4 Elimination of Offices Filled by Called Church Workers**

Whenever it becomes clear that the responsibilities of a called church position are no longer needed by this congregation or when it is clear a called position cannot be compensated without the congregation taking on debt, the position may be cancelled and the call suspended by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Voting Members present at Voters' Assembly. If required and approved, good Christian love should prevail, and a generous separation should be provided for the called worker involved.

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## **2.4 Officers**

The officers of the congregation shall consist of a President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Any voting member may hold one of these offices.

The President and Secretary shall be elected by the voting members at the annual election meeting every even numbered year. The Vice-President and Treasurer shall be approved by the voting members at the annual election meeting every odd numbered year.

Officers shall serve for a term of two years and may not serve for more than two consecutive terms in the same office.

The Nominating Team may nominate one or more candidates to fill any officer position.

The Leadership Team shall be authorized to appoint a person to fill an unexpired term.

The President may be, at his or her discretion, an ex-officio member of any team.

## **2.5 Leadership Team**

### **2.5.1 Membership**

The Leadership Team shall consist of church voting members including the church officers, a representative from the Spiritual Support Team, the pastor(s), and 3 members at large. The congregational President is the presiding officer of the Leadership Team.

### **2.5.2 Term**

The term of office for members at large shall be two years, with approximately one half of the members at large being elected each year. Members at large may not serve for more than two consecutive terms.

### **2.5.3 Meetings**

The Leadership Team shall meet at least quarterly at a time and place determined by the President. The Pastor(s) or President may call special meetings of the Leadership Team by informing members of the time and place of such meetings at least 24 hours in advance. All Voting Members are welcome to attend unless confidential matters are being discussed.

The President is required to call a meeting if so requested by at least two other members of the Leadership Team.

### **2.5.4 Quorum and Decisions**

A majority of Leadership Team members must be present to constitute a quorum. Decisions of the Leadership Team will be made by a simple majority of those members voting. The presiding officer shall not vote except in case of ties. The pastor(s) are not voting members of the Leadership Team.

### **2.5.5 Powers of the Leadership Team**

The Leadership Team shall have the power to develop policies as required to execute the strategy and the Mission and Ministry Plan (budget) approved by the Voters' Assembly. Written policies shall be available upon request. The Group shall have no authority beyond that which has been conferred upon them by the Constitution, its Bylaws, or by the Voters' Assembly.

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## **2.5.6 Duties of the Leadership Team**

Under the President and with the guidance of the pastoral staff the Leadership Team shall:

- ▶ Be responsible for establishing policies, formulating long term strategic plans, and developing annual operating plans and budgets to direct the overall ministry of the congregation towards it's mission (see section 1.2 of the Constitution);
- ▶ Maintain the financial integrity of the congregation; annually appoint a person or team to do a financial review;
- ▶ Encourage the Ministry Staff in their work through prayer, word and action and provide for the spiritual and physical health and welfare of the Ministry Staff and their families;
- ▶ Authorize the Ministry Staff to administer the day-to-day operations of the congregation in accordance with its own policies and directives and those established by the congregation through its Voters' Assembly;
- ▶ Appoint such Teams as necessary to carry out the mission of this congregation;
- ▶ Direct the calling of special meetings of the Voters' Assembly as requested by the Pastor(s) or voting members;
- ▶ Be responsible for the receiving of and acting upon, if necessary, feedback and/or complaints from members of the congregation regarding aspects of its operations;
- ▶ Post notices of meetings. The minutes of these meetings shall be available to voting members upon request, excluding discussion of confidential matters
- ▶ Appoint persons to fill unexpired terms of Officers, members of the Leadership Team or the Spiritual Support Team;
- ▶ Be available for any additional functions that the Voters' Assembly may confer on it.

The President, in consultation with the pastoral staff, has the responsibility of recommending the establishment of or the dissolution of teams. They also have the responsibility of recommending who shall chair such teams. Their recommendations shall be referred to the Leadership Team for decision. The Leadership Team shall furnish to each team chairperson a job description for their respective team.

## **2.6 Spiritual Support Team**

The Spiritual Support Team shall consist of two or more men serving staggered two-year terms. They are to be voting members of the congregation, recommended by the pastor, and approved by the Leadership Team. The members are to select their own Chairman from their membership. The Chairman of the Spiritual Support Team or his appointed substitute from the Spiritual Support Team is a voting member at Leadership Team meetings. The Spiritual Support Team should submit a written report of activities to the Leadership Team at least on a quarterly basis. Members of the Spiritual Support Team may not serve for more than two consecutive terms.

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## **2.6.1 Removal from Spiritual Support Team Office**

Spiritual Support Team members may be removed from service upon a majority vote of the Leadership Team for one of the following reasons: persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, willful neglect, or inability to perform duties.

## **2.7 Nominations, Election, Removal from Office, and Vacancies**

### **2.7.1 Nominations**

The President of the Leadership Team shall annually appoint a Nominating Team, consisting of 4 to 7 members, whose responsibility will be to develop a slate of candidates for officers, Leadership Team members and Spiritual Support Team members to be elected. At least half of the Nominating Team should not be current Leadership Team members. Group members shall function for one year only, and shall report their nominations at the election meeting of the Voters' Assembly. One or more of the congregation's pastoral staff shall serve as non-voting member(s) of the Nominating Team. The Vice-President shall chair the Nominating Team.

All nominees shall be voting members noted for their Christian knowledge, zeal, and experience in the spiritual work in the Kingdom. In addition to the Nominating Team's slate of candidates, any voting member may nominate candidates. A call for nominations will be distributed to the congregation no less than two months prior to the election meeting. Once the meeting agenda and slate of candidates has been distributed, the list of nominations will be closed. Those elected by the voters may not receive compensation from the congregation.

### **2.7.2 Election**

Nominees who receive a majority of the ballots cast at the Voters' Assembly shall be the elected.

### **2.7.3 Removal from Office of Elected Officials**

Any elected official, who is unable or is willfully neglectful in the performance of their official duties, may be removed from office by two-thirds secret ballot vote of the Voters' Assembly. Such action shall be initiated by the Leadership Team.

## **2.8 Rules of Order**

In addition to principles laid down in Scripture and in the Constitution and Bylaws of this congregation, accepted parliamentary procedures such as Robert's Rules of Order shall be followed in the conduct of meetings of the Voters, the Leadership Team, the Spiritual Support Team and by any teams appointed by the Leadership Team.

## **2.9 Amendments**

The Bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast in a meeting of the Voters' Assembly. The wording of the amended Bylaws shall be distributed to all members in a conventional mailing or by electronic email or by both four Sundays in advance of the Voter's Assembly. In addition, the revisions will be distributed in printed form to the congregation assembled for worship on two different Sundays prior to the date upon which the amendment is presented for action.

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The revised bylaws shall, as a condition of continued membership in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, be submitted to the President of the Missouri District for review by the district's Constitution Committee and favorable action by the district's Board of Directors before being implemented by the congregation.