

CONSTITUTION
Atonement Lutheran Church
New Brighton, Minnesota

May 2001

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Recognizing our unity in the Christian faith, and our common practice of it, and desiring to express a fellowship in worship and work, knowing our spiritual needs, mindful of our Christian privileges and duties, and wishing to observe an orderly cooperation, we adopt the following constitution:

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this congregation shall be ATONEMENT LUTHERAN CHURCH. This congregation shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of Minnesota.

ARTICLE II - CONFESSION OF FAITH

This congregation accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as a whole and in all their parts as the divinely inspired, revealed, and inerrant Word of God and submits to this as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life.

As brief and true statements of the doctrine of the Word of God, this congregation accepts and confesses the following symbols, subscription to which shall be required of all its members: (1) the ancient ecumenical creeds: the Apostolic, the Nicene, and the Athanasian; (2) the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism.

As further elaboration of, and in accord with these Lutheran Symbols, this congregation also receives the other documents in the Book of Concord of 1580: the Apology, Luther's Large Catechism, the Smalcald Articles, and the Formula of Concord, and recognizes them as normative for its theology.

This congregation accepts without reservation the Symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 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 of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

ARTICLE III - LITURGY

The order of public services of this congregation shall conform to the accepted liturgies and rituals of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The authorized hymnbooks of the church shall be used in its worship and in its schools. Such variations as are accepted by the congregation shall be permitted.

ARTICLE IV - PURPOSE

The object and purpose of this congregation shall be to proclaim and propagate the Christian faith through the Means of Grace, and to cooperate in the work and service of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

ARTICLE V - DISTRICT MEMBERSHIP

1. For the better attainment of its objectives and purposes, this congregation shall hold membership in the Saint Paul Area Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and be subject to the policy and discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

2. Being affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, this congregation is ready to be served by representatives of the church in the various capacities to which they have been called or appointed.

3. Severance of membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall require a two-thirds majority vote of all voting members present and voting at a legally called meeting. Such a decision shall not be effective until at least ninety days after the bishop of the synod has been notified and until the initial action has been ratified by a two-thirds majority vote at a subsequent legally called meeting.

ARTICLE VI - MEMBERSHIP

1. Members of this congregation shall be those who are defined as such at the time this constitution is adopted, or who are admitted hereafter; and who maintain membership in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and bylaws.

2. Members shall be classified as (a) baptized; (b) confirmed; (c) voting; (d) associate; (e) affiliate.

- (a) Baptized members shall be those who have been baptized in the Name of the Triune God and have been received by the congregation.
- (b) Confirmed members shall be the baptized members who have been confirmed in the Lutheran faith.
- (c) Voting members shall be confirmed who have communed or have made a contribution of record during the current or preceding year.
- (d) Associate members shall be persons holding membership in other Christian congregations who wish to retain such membership but desire to participate in the life and mission of this congregation. They have all the privileges and duties of membership except voting rights and eligibility for elected offices or membership on the church council.
- (e) Affiliate members shall be persons who have previously been baptized, confirmed, or voting members, and have lost such status as prescribed in the Bylaws, but desire to remain on the rolls of the congregation. Affiliate members may not vote or be elected to office or membership on the Church Council.

3. Members of this congregation shall be required:

- (a) To make diligent use of the means of Grace, both Word and Sacraments. This shall be evaluated on the basis of the Bylaw outlined in Part III, F. of Atonement Lutheran Church Constitution. Personal consultation shall be made with members where possible before any change in their membership status.
- (b) To live a "responsible" Christian life in accordance with the Word of God and the teachings of the Lutheran Church. This shall be understood as willing and active participation in:
 - (1) Service to congregation and/or community;

- (2) Prayerful and direct support of our membership as needs arise both individual and corporate;
 - (3) Responsible stewardship of time, talents, and possessions as described in II Corinthians 9:6-15 and I Peter 4:9-11.
- (c) To support the work of the congregation and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
4. Discipline in the congregation shall be exercised in accordance with Matthew 18:15-18.

ARTICLE VII - THE PASTORAL OFFICE

1. Authority to call a pastor shall rest in the congregation. Such authority to call shall be exercised by at least a two-thirds majority vote of members present and voting at a meeting properly called for that purpose. Before a call is issued, the officers, or a committee authorized by the congregation, shall seek the advice and help of the bishop of the synod.

2. Only a clergyman of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in good standing or one who is recommended for call by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may be called as a pastor of this congregation.

3. The pastor, as spiritual leader of the congregation, shall be ex officio a member of the Church Council and an advisory member of all other boards, committees, and organizations of the congregation.

4. No one shall serve in the pastoral office of this congregation as an interim pastor, nor officiate and preach at occasional services, who is not a member in good standing of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or who is not acceptable according to the standards of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

5. If, in the judgement of the congregation, the pastor is no longer able to serve it satisfactorily, he may be requested to resign. However, before the resignation is requested, the matter shall first be carefully considered at a meeting of the Church Council and in consultation with the bishop of the synod. A resolution requesting the pastor's resignation must be adopted by not less than a two-thirds majority of those present and voting at a meeting of the congregation especially called to consider such a resolution. Not less than ten days notice of such a meeting must be given. When the pastor's resignation has been requested in the manner here specified, he shall vacate the office at such a time as the congregation shall specify.

6. Matters of discipline involving the pastor for alleged defection in doctrine or for alleged conduct unbecoming a pastor, shall be referred by the Church Council to the bishop of the synod for action in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

ARTICLE VIII - POWER OF THE CONGREGATION

1. In all matters of Christian faith and life, the authority of the Word of God shall be supreme.

2. In all matters not decided by the Word of God and not subject to civil laws, the congregation itself, not any individual or group within it, shall have the right of decision.

ARTICLE IX - LEGAL OWNERSHIP

1. Title to all real or personal property acquired by the congregation, its organizations, or individuals for use by the congregation and its organizations, shall be held by the congregation.

2. Real property shall not be purchased, disposed of, or encumbered in any manner except by resolution adopted by not less than a two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting at a legally called meeting of the congregation.

3. Should the congregation, by means other than legal dissolution, cease to exist, or its property be abandoned, title to its land and other estates, real and personal, shall pass to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

ARTICLE X - THE CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

1. The power and authority of this congregation shall be exercised through the congregational meetings, called and held in conformity with civil laws and the provisions of the constitution and bylaws of the congregation.

2. The annual meeting of the congregation shall be held in January and the annual election meeting shall be held in May. Notice of the meeting shall be given as provided in the bylaws. The church council shall set the specified day and time of meeting.

3. A special meeting of the congregation may be called by action of the congregation, by petition of at least ten per cent of the voting members, or by any one of the following: the church council, the president of the congregation, the pastor, or the bishop of the synod. Official notice of a special meeting of the congregation shall be in writing and shall be posted conspicuously in the place where the congregation customarily worships. Such notice shall state the time, the place and the purpose of the meeting. It shall be signed by the president and the secretary of the congregation, or by the person or persons who have called the meeting, as authorized by this paragraph. The notice of a special meeting shall also be read at all public services of the congregation held during the ten days preceding the date of the meeting. If no services are held during the stipulated time, notice of the meeting shall be mailed to all voting members at least five days in advance of the meeting; provided, however, that written notice of a meeting called to consider a resolution requesting the pastor to resign must be mailed at least ten days in advance; and provided further that a meeting called to consider the disposition or encumbrance of real property must be called and held in conformity with such provisions of civil law as may be applicable.

4. The pastor shall be notified of the time and place at which a special meeting of the congregation is to be held.

5. Only the business for which a special meeting has been called shall be transacted at the meeting.

6. A meeting of the congregation may by majority vote recess to reconvene at a specified time and place. A meeting may also recess to reconvene upon call; provided, however, that the time and place of such a reconvened meeting must be announced at a public service of the congregation, or written notice be mailed to the voting members not less than three days in advance of the reconvened meeting.

ARTICLE XI - OFFICERS OF THE CONGREGATION

At its annual election meeting the congregation shall elect in the manner provided in the bylaws, a Church Council of not less than 6; nor more than 8 members including President, Vice President and Secretary. The Church Council shall:

1. Exercise only such authority as may be delegated to it by the congregation, and this authority shall be exercised in accordance with the constitution, bylaws, and resolutions of the congregation.
2. Work with the pastor in providing for the spiritual care of the congregation and in promoting its material welfare.
3. Act upon such disciplinary matters as may be referred to it, provided, however, that no member shall be excommunicated without action of the congregation.
4. Manage the financial affairs of the congregation.
5. The Church Council shall elect a treasurer of the congregation, who need not be a member of the Church Council.
6. Appoint such committees as may be necessary or advisable to facilitate the discharge of the above responsibilities.
7. All schools, societies, and other organizations within the congregation shall be organized only with the approval of the congregation or Church Council and shall operate in harmony with its policies.

ARTICLE XII - BYLAWS

1. The congregation shall adopt such bylaws as may from time to time be found necessary. No bylaw may conflict with this constitution.
2. Bylaws may be adopted or amended at any legally called meeting of the congregation by a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting. The proposed bylaw or amendment must be read at a public service of the congregation or mailed to the voting members, in either case at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

ARTICLE XIII - AMENDMENTS

1. The doctrinal basis and the confessional subscription as contained in Article II, the purpose as contained in Article IV, and this section of Article XIII shall be unalterable, and no amendment to this constitution shall conflict therewith.
2. A proposed amendment to this constitution shall be:
 - (a) read at a public service of the congregation or mailed to the voting members, in either case at least thirty days before the annual meeting at which it is to be considered;
 - (b) approved, with or without change, at the annual meeting following its announcement, by a majority vote of those present and voting;
 - (c) ratified without further change at the next congregational meeting, by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting.
3. If a proposed amendment fails adoption, it may be amended by majority vote of those present and voting, and adopted without change by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting at the next annual meeting.

BYLAWS March 1992

PART I - COMMUNION PARTICIPATION

1. Participants in Holy Communion shall be confirmed members of this or other Lutheran congregations, or meet the requirements of the pre-communion study program, or by the approval of the Pastor. Worthy participation requires sincere repentance, faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, and an earnest desire to amend one's sinful life, as well as acceptance of the Scriptural teaching regarding the Real Presence of Christ with His Body and Blood in the Sacrament. Registration forms or oral announcements shall be so devised as to make prospective participants aware of these requirements.

2. Record of participation in Holy Communion shall be entered upon the books of the congregation.

PART II - CONFLICTING LOYALTIES

1. This congregation rejects all fellowship with organizations which are avowedly religious or which practice forms of religion without confessing faith in the Triune God and in Jesus Christ as the only Savior from sin. Ceremonies of such organizations shall not be permitted in the church.

PART III - MEMBERSHIP

A. Admission to baptized Membership.

1. Children, one or both of whose parents or guardians are members of this congregation, shall, upon receiving Christian baptism, be received as baptized members of this congregation.

2. Children, neither of whose parents or guardians are members of this congregation, shall upon Christian baptism duly recorded as a ministerial act performed under the auspices of this congregation, be received as baptized members of this congregation unless there is understanding that, for good reason, they will be enrolled as baptized members of another congregation, in which case notice of the baptism shall be sent to the congregation in which the child is to be enrolled as a baptized member.

3. Children baptized in other congregations shall be received as baptized members of this congregation upon admission of one or both parents or guardians to membership, or by consent of one or both parents or guardians, or by action of the Church Council.

4. Unbaptized adults who have received instruction and have given evidence of having an adequate understanding and acceptance of the teachings of the Word of God as confessed by the Lutheran Church, shall upon confession of faith and Christian baptism duly recorded as a ministerial act performed under the auspices of this congregation, be received as baptized members of this congregation.

B. Admission to Confirmed Membership.

1. Baptized adults, not previously members of the congregation, who have received instruction and have given evidence of having adequate understanding and acceptance of the teachings of the Word of God as confessed by the Lutheran Church shall be admitted to confirmed membership through the rite of confirmation.

2. However, adults received as baptized members according to the provisions of Section A, 4 of this part of the bylaws shall be recognized as confirmed members, whether or not, at the discretion of the pastor, they have participated in the rite of confirmation.

3. Children who are baptized members of the congregation shall be admitted to confirmed membership through participation in the rite of confirmation.

4. Applicants for membership presenting Letters of Transfer showing them to be confirmed members in good standing in other Lutheran congregations shall be admitted to confirmed membership upon receipt of their Letters of Transfer by the Church Council and the report of their names to the congregation.

5. Applicants for membership who present evidence of confirmation in a Lutheran congregation but do not have Letters of Transfer shall be admitted to confirmed membership when the Pastor has determined that they meet the standards of Christian faith and life indicated in the constitution and bylaws and when they have reaffirmed their faith before the congregation.

C. Admission to Voting Membership

The Church Council shall be responsible for determining the voting membership in accordance with the qualifications specified in the constitution and bylaws. Any doubtful cases shall be decided by the congregation.

D. Admission to Associate Membership

Applicants for associate membership shall be admitted as associate members when the Pastor has determined that they are members in good standing in another congregation and wish to continue their membership in that congregation, that they meet the standards of Christian faith and life indicated in the constitution and bylaws of Atonement Lutheran Church.

E. Admission to Affiliate Membership

Baptized, confirmed or voting members shall become affiliate members when it has been determined that they have not participated in the Christian education program, in worship or sacrament, or do not have contributions of record during the preceding year, but still wish to be affiliated with Atonement Lutheran Church. Persons may remain in this membership status up to seven years. Affiliate members will not be counted in the statistics of active members of the congregation.

F. Change in Membership Status

1. Members who move away shall be encouraged to transfer their membership. A confirmed member in good standing desiring to change his membership to another Lutheran congregation shall, upon request, receive a letter of transfer.

2. At the beginning of each year the Stewardship/Finance and Life and Mission committees shall jointly review the status of all members with respect to participation in the Christian education program, participation in worship and Sacrament, and contributions of record. Those members who have not participated in the Christian education program, in worship and Sacrament, or do not have contributions of record during the preceding year will be recommended for a care plan for each such members.

Each such member shall be encouraged to resume their participation in the life of this or another congregation. If after personal consultation with each such member, it is mutually decided that this member no longer desires membership, he shall be dropped from the rolls. If the member desires to remain affiliated with this congregation, the person's membership status shall be changed to that of affiliate member. A person may remain an affiliate member up to seven years. If active participation is resumed at any time within that period, previous membership status shall be restored. If after seven years, there is not active participation, the person shall be dropped from the rolls.

3. Children, neither of whose parents or guardians are active members of the congregation, shall be dropped from the baptized membership roll if they fail to participate in the Christian education program of the congregation.

4. Members who have been excommunicated or dismissed, or who have resigned, and members who have transferred to other Lutheran congregations, or who are definitely known to have become members of another congregation without transfer, have thereby terminated their membership in the congregation and have surrendered all membership rights.

PART IV - PASTORAL CALL

1. When the congregation has voted to call a pastor, it shall issue a Letter of Call to the pastor-elect, in a form approved by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. It shall be signed by the chairman and the secretary of the meeting at which the call was voted, and shall be attested by the signature of the bishop of the synod. Calls to clergy to positions of assistance to the pastor shall be issued in consultation with the pastor and in accordance with the provisions of this paragraph.

2. The call shall normally be for an indefinite time.

3. If the pastor receives a call to another congregation, he/she shall consult with his/her present congregation, or at least with the Church Council, before coming to a decision. He/she should attempt to reach a decision as quickly as possible, normally within three weeks. He/she shall thereupon notify his/her present congregation and bishop of the synod. When a release has been granted and the call accepted, the pastor shall terminate his/her ministry and transfer to his/her new field of service as quickly as feasible, normally within one month.

4. A desire for a change in pastorate by either congregation or pastor shall be brought to the attention of the bishop of the synod, who shall advise in the matter in accordance with this constitution (Article VII) and with the established procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

5. The congregation requires that its pastor shall be loyal to the faith and purpose of the congregation, as stated in Articles II and IV of this constitution.

6. Clergy qualified according to Article VII, 4 of this constitution may occasionally perform pastoral functions in this congregation with the approval of the Church Council and its pastor, or, in case of a vacancy in the pastorate, with the approval of the Church Council.

PART V - THE ANNUAL MEETING

1. Announcement of the time and place of the annual meetings of the congregation shall be made at two public services immediately preceding the meeting, said services to be at least a week apart, and in such publications as the congregation or the pastor may periodically issue; or by written notice to the voting members mailed at least ten days in advance of the meeting.
2. The current roster of voting confirmed, and baptized members shall be determined prior to each annual meeting.
3. A quorum for the conduct of business at annual and special congregational meetings shall consist of not less than 10 per cent voting members.
4. The order of business at the annual meetings shall be:
 - (a) Opening devotion
 - (b) Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting
 - (c) Reports of the pastor, Church Council treasurer, committees, and others
 - (d) Approval of budget (in January)
 - (e) Elections (in May or as necessary to fill vacancies)
 - (f) Unfinished business
 - (g) New business
 - (h) Closing prayer
5. In the following cases voting shall be by written ballot:
 - (a) To elect the members of the Church Council;
 - (b) To adopt or amend the articles of incorporation, constitution or bylaws of the congregation;
 - (c) To call a pastor or to request his resignation;
 - (d) To excommunicate a member from the congregation or to remove a member from office in the congregation;
 - (e) To sever membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;
 - (f) To dispose of, encumber, or purchase real property;
 - (g) When requested by ten or more voting members present.
6. Except as otherwise provided in the constitution and bylaws, all matters shall be decided by majority vote of those present and voting.
7. No one shall be declared elected unless he has received a majority of the votes cast.
8. If more than one ballot is required in an election, a motion shall be in order to limit the balloting after the first ballot to the three candidates receiving the highest number of votes on the first ballot; and after the second ballot to limit the balloting to the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes.
9. Parliamentary procedures shall be in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order.

PART VI - THE CHURCH COUNCIL

A. Membership and Meetings of the Church Council

1. The Church Council shall consist of 6-8 members, elected each for a term of three years, but elected in such a manner that after the first election approximately one-third are elected each year.

2. In addition to the requirements of congregational membership stated in Article VI of the constitution, qualifications for membership on the Church Council shall include such practical ability as is needful in promoting the various interests of the congregation as outlined in the duties of the various committees of the council.

3. There shall be no limit to the term of a church officer except as it relates to the officer's term on the Church Council.

4. Immediately after the annual election meeting of the congregation, the Church Council shall elect the officers and committees prescribed by the constitution (Article XI, Sec. 6) and bylaws.

5. Any vacancies, up to two (2) in any given fiscal year, shall be filled by appointment by the council president and confirmed by two-thirds vote of council members present at the meeting when appointment is presented. He/she shall fill the remainder of the full term of the member he/she replaced. Any vacancies over two (2) shall be filled by action of the congregation.

6. The pastor shall be ex officio a member of the Church Council.

7. The Church Council shall not transact any business unless a majority of its members is present.

8. Meetings of the Church Council will be held monthly.

9. No member of the Council shall serve more than three consecutive terms.

10. A special meeting of the Church Council may be called by notice given at a public service or mailed to each member three days in advance. A special meeting may be called by the pastor or the president or by any three members of the Church Council.

11. If a member of the Church Council absents himself from three consecutive regular meetings without an excuse acceptable to the Council, he has forfeited his membership. A member having two consecutive unexcused absences from regular meetings shall be notified thereof by the secretary.

12. Since it is incumbent upon all members of the congregation to make diligent use of the Word of God in public worship, and to attend the Lord's Supper, any officer or board member who neglects these privileges shall forfeit the right to serve as an officer or board member.

13. A newly elected council member's term begins at the annual election meeting and continues until the annual election meeting of the year his/her term expires.

B. Committees

1. The Church Council shall facilitate committees on evangelism, on worship, on stewardship, on education, on property, on finance, on social concerns, on youth, and shall also have authority to appoint such other committees as may from time to time be necessary or advisable.

2. The Church Council shall at least three times a year invite the full membership of its regular committees together with representatives chosen by the organizations of the congregation to review the program of the congregation.

3. The treasurer shall be custodian of all funds of the congregation, and shall disburse all such funds in accordance with the decisions of the congregation or the Church Council. He shall present an audit report at the annual congregational meeting and such other reports to the Church Council as may be required.

4. The committee on evangelism shall have responsibility for the development of a sound program of evangelism.

5. The committee on worship shall have responsibility for matters pertaining to the congregation's worship and for the general spiritual care of the congregation.

6. The committee on stewardship shall have responsibility for the congregation's development in accordance with scriptural principles of stewardship and for the raising of funds.

7. The committee on education shall have responsibility to operate the Sunday School and other schools of the congregation, to promote adult education.

8. The committee on property shall have special responsibility for the care of the property.

9. The committee on finance shall assist the council in preparation of the congregational budget.

10. The committee on social concerns shall have special responsibility of educating the congregation in the area of social concerns; to foster a sense of community - caring for needs of neighbors, not only locally but urban, national and international, to create an awareness of legislation in these areas, and to coordinate with existing agencies in the areas of social ministry.

11. The committee on youth shall develop the youth program in the congregation.

C. Other Responsibilities of the Church Council

1. The Church Council shall be empowered to secure such help as is needed to carry on the work of the congregation, such as organist, choir director, parish worker, pastor's secretary, office secretary, intern, custodian, etc., and shall fix their salaries.

2. Adjustments in the salary of the pastor shall be the responsibility of the Church Council, subject to the congregation's approval of the budget.

3. The Church Council shall as far as possible operate within the limits of the approved budget of the congregation. Any expenditures in excess of the total voted budget must be approved by the congregation.

4. The auditing committee of three persons shall be appointed by the president with the approval of the Church Council. The auditing committee shall audit all financial records of the congregation proper, and shall present its report at the annual meeting in writing. The auditing committee shall carefully examine all insurance policies to determine the amount and kind of insurance in force and include this report in its statement.

5. Use of property:

- (a) The property of the congregation shall be for the use of the congregation in its normal function as a Lutheran Church and shall not be used in any way not in harmony with the purpose of the congregation.
- (b) Buildings which are the property of the congregation shall not be lent or rented to any group or individual not affiliated with the congregation or with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America unless application for such use has been approved by the Church Council by a two-thirds majority vote.

PART VII - NOMINATING COMMITTEE

1. The nominating committee shall be composed of four members, one of whom shall be elected by the Church Council from its own membership and three of whom shall be elected at the annual meeting nominations from the floor. The pastor shall serve as Convener and as an advisory member.

2. The members of the nominating committee shall serve for the year following their election. They shall nominate one or more candidates for each office to be filled and shall secure the consent of each candidate to serve if elected.

3. The candidates of the nominating committee shall be made known to the congregation in conjunction with the announcements of the special or annual meeting at which the election is to take place.

4. In addition to the candidates submitted by the nominating committee, additional nominations may be made from the floor.

5. A vacancy in the congregationally elected membership of the nominating committee shall be filled by a special congregational meeting called for that purpose.

PART VIII - REPORT OF ORGANIZATIONS

All committees and organizations handling funds within the congregation shall submit accounts to the treasurer of the church office at least 10 days prior to the annual meeting, and the treasurer shall include such accounts in his report to the meeting.

PART IX - PARISH RECORDS

The pastor shall be responsible for keeping accurate record of membership and of his ministerial acts, on forms provided by the congregation and which shall remain the property of the congregation. He shall report these statistics to the congregation annually and, when required, to the secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Upon leaving the congregation, he shall complete the records of his ministry up to the time of his departure from the parish.