

Sharon Evangelical Lutheran Church (Donalda, AB) Constitution and Bylaws

CONSTITUTION

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

Preamble

Recognizing our unity in Christ and our common practice in the Christian faith, desiring to express our fellowship in worship and work, knowing our spiritual needs, being mindful of our Christian privileges and duties, desiring to unite as a congregation in our common Confession of Faith, and wishing to observe orderly cooperation, we adopt this constitution and pledge ourselves to be governed by its provisions.

Article I. Name and Incorporation

1. **Name:** The name of this congregation shall be Sharon Evangelical Lutheran Church (Donalda, AB).
2. **Incorporation:** This congregation shall be incorporated under the laws of the Province of Alberta.

Article II. Confession of Faith

1. **Triune God:** This congregation confesses the Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – as the one true God. We proclaim the Father as Creator and Preserver of all life. "...He who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it (Isaiah, 42:5)." We proclaim His Son Jesus Christ as Redeemer, Savior and Lord. "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace (Ephesians 1:7)." We proclaim the Holy Spirit as Regenerator and Sanctifier. "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you (Ezekiel 36:26)."
2. **Gospel:** This congregation confesses that the Gospel (the good news) is the revelation of God's saving will and grace in the person of his Son Jesus Christ: "...it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Romans 1:16)." The gospel is made known to humanity through the Word and the Sacraments. The Word is Jesus as the physical manifestation of God, both divine and human, whose life on earth was a living message of God's salvation: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us...No one has ever seen God, but God the only begotten Son who is at the Father's side, has made him known (John 1: 14a, 18)." The Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion awaken and confirm our faith in forgiveness of sins and salvation. Through these means of grace the Holy Spirit creates believers and unites them with their Lord and with one another in the fellowship of the Holy Christian Church.
3. **Scriptures:** This congregation confesses the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired word of God, His written message through which His will is revealed and through which He still speaks, and as the authoritative standard for faith and life: "All scripture is God-breathed, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness... (2 Timothy 3:16)."
4. **Doctrine:** This congregation accepts and confesses the following as statements of theological truths and expressions of the unity of the people of God and the continuity with Christians throughout history:
 - a. The Apostles Creed and Nicene Creed: Approved by the ancient Christian church, the creeds are ecumenical confessions of the Christian faith.
 - b. The Augsburg Confession: Written in 1530 as the first formal presentation of the faith from a Lutheran perspective, the Confession expresses the central belief of the Christian faith: people cannot be justified before God by their own strengths, merits or works, but are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favour and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins.

Article III. Nature and Mission

1. **Mission:** This congregation is a worshipping, learning, witnessing and serving community within which the Word is proclaimed and the Sacraments are administered according to the gospel.
 - a. **Worshipping:** This congregation shall gather for worship regularly, remembering God's mighty acts in the past, celebrating His abiding presence, and moving toward His promised fulfillment. We will listen to the Word of God in Scripture and preaching, receive the Sacraments of baptism and communion, and respond with confession, prayer, praise, thanksgiving, and with tithes and offerings. The congregation will use appropriate worship materials and make certain that worship has a place in other functions of the congregation.
 - b. **Learning:** This congregation shall develop educational programs designed to assist persons to grow in grace and faith and in the knowledge of the Scriptures. It shall provide learning opportunities with appropriate curriculum and shall ensure that adequate study undergirds all functions of the congregation.
 - c. **Witnessing:** This congregation, relying on the Holy Spirit, shall proclaim the Gospel by word and deed and thereby invite all people to repent and believe. Its members shall witness to their faith at every opportunity in daily life so that the Lord is glorified, the fellowship is strengthened, the lapsed are restored and new members are added to the congregation. It shall provide for the communication of the Gospel through fellowship in the wider Christian community and through global missions. It shall assure that all congregational functions witness to the faith.
 - d. **Serving:** This congregation shall live by Christian faith active in love, in daily life, as members of a caring community, in all the institutions and structures of society, and to promote justice and reconciliation, meet human needs and alleviate suffering.
2. **Support of the Mission:** The congregation shall provide support to enable the fulfillment of its mission of worshipping, learning, witnessing and serving, through leadership, organizational structures, facilities and funds. The congregation shall strive to maintain effective stewardship practices, evaluate regularly its mission, and recruit, equip and support members of the congregation to provide for these activities.

Article IV. Upon Dissolution

In the event that membership in the congregation so diminishes as to render it impossible or impractical for the congregation to function according to its constitution and bylaws, the remaining members shall call a Special Meeting to vote to dissolve the congregation. If upon dissolution there remains, after satisfaction of all its debts, liabilities and obligations, any property or assets whatsoever, the same shall not be paid or distributed generally among members but it shall be paid or transferred to such religious charities registered under the Income Tax Act, or other qualified donees allowed under the Income Tax Act in Canada, the objects of which, in the opinion of the members, most closely resemble those of the congregation.

BYLAWS

Part I. Membership

1. Persons who confess their faith in keeping with Article II Confession of Faith and who support Article III Nature and Mission shall be eligible to be members of the church.
2. Members shall be listed on a membership roster, signifying that they have affirmed that they will be governed by this constitution and bylaws.
3. The Congregational Council or its designate will meet with prospective members to review the requirements for membership and witness the signing of the roster.
4. All members on the roster shall be voting members.
5. Members shall be acknowledged at the next public worship service, or as soon thereafter as convenient, following their admission to the roster.
6. Members who have not been baptized in the name of the Triune God are encouraged to receive the sacrament of baptism. Adult members who received the sacrament of infant baptism are encouraged to affirm their faith through a program of learning and confirmation.
7. A member who does not engage in the church's mission as outlined in Article III Nature and Mission, through participating in the life of the congregation and supporting the mission through offerings, shall be considered to be inactive and in need of the church's prayer and concern. The Congregational Council or its designate will visit such members to encourage them to resume active participation and support.
8. Members who are inactive for a period of three years shall be considered for removal from the roster of members, at the discretion of the Congregational Council. Removal decisions can be appealed to the congregation.
9. Membership shall be terminated upon death of the member or at the written request of the member.
10. A member who advocates doctrines which are contrary to the constitution and bylaws or who conducts themselves in a manner that is unbecoming to a member of the body of Christ shall be subject to discipline.
11. Discipline shall be exercised in accordance with Matthew 18: 15-18.
12. Discipline shall be administered as deemed appropriate by the Congregational Council. Disciplinary decisions can be appealed to the congregation.

Part II. Authority

1. The congregation shall operate in accordance with its constitution and bylaws, owning its own property, making decisions in regard to its programming, and calling its own pastor(s).
2. The authority of the congregation shall be vested in the congregational meeting, called and conducted in the manner outlined in these bylaws, and in the Council and committees of the congregation as provided by the bylaws or as assigned by the congregational meeting.
3. Real property shall not be purchased, disposed of or encumbered in any manner except by resolution adopted by not less than two-thirds of the members present and voting at a legally called meeting of the congregation.

Part III. Sacraments

1. Baptism
 - a. This congregation recognizes the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing persons to Jesus Christ through both infant and adult baptism. Baptism is a sign of belonging, of entering into a community of faith in Christ. Baptism begins the process of becoming a disciple of Christ, a process that continues throughout one's life: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you (Matthew 28: 19, 20)."

- b. Candidates for baptism are:
 - i. Infants born to active, believing members. When these children reach an age at which they can decide, they are encouraged to undertake a program of learning with the nurturing support of the congregation, and make a public profession of personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.
 - ii. Adults who have not been baptized, and unbaptized children in their care. These persons are encouraged to undertake programs of learning with the nurturing support of the congregation, and make a public profession of personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.
 - c. Adults who received the sacrament of infant baptism but have not affirmed their faith as adults are encouraged to affirm their faith through a program of learning with the nurturing support of the congregation, and make a public profession of personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.
2. Holy Communion
- a. We believe that we participate with our Lord Jesus Christ when, by faith, we take part in the sacrament of Holy Communion. The elements of the bread and the wine are symbols representing Christ's body and blood, and through their consecration we meet our Lord in remembrance of both his enduring sacrifice on the cross and his promise to come again. "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Corinthians 11:26)."
 - b. Participation in Holy Communion is by Christ's invitation and is open to all persons who have a believing heart and have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. A person is well prepared and worthy to receive this Sacrament when they believe the words of our Lord: "Take and eat; this is my body...This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26: 26, 28)." But anyone who does not believe these words or doubts them is neither prepared nor worthy to participate.
 - c. Children who have been instructed in the meaning of Holy Communion, as set forth above, and come with a believing heart may participate in Holy Communion, according to the following:
 - i. Participation in Holy Communion shall be open to children when, at the discretion of their parent(s), they are deemed ready to receive the sacrament.
 - ii. Children who are deemed by their parent(s) to be not ready for participation in Holy Communion may receive a blessing.
 - iii. Children who present for Holy Communion without parental participation may receive a blessing and, in keeping with the mission of the church, may receive follow-up as delegated by the Congregational Council.
 - d. Oral announcements shall be devised so as to make prospective participants aware of these requirements.

Part IV. Ministry

1. The congregation may call a pastor (the Pastor) who shall be a person whose soundness in the faith, aptness to teach, and educational qualifications have been examined and approved by the Congregational Council, who has been properly ordained, and who accepts Article II Confession of Faith and Article III Nature and Mission.
2. Authority to call the Pastor shall rest in the congregation and shall be exercised by not less than two-thirds of the members present and voting at a meeting of the congregation legally called for that purpose.
3. The Pastor shall:
 - a. Preach the Word, administer the Sacraments and conduct public worship in accordance with Article II Confession of Faith and Article III Nature and Mission;

- b. Baptize, confirm and marry in accordance with the constitution and bylaws of the church and with the laws of the province of Alberta;
 - c. Visit the sick and distressed and bury the dead;
 - d. Inculcate piety in individual and family life and provide pastoral leadership to the congregation;
 - e. Install members of the Congregational Council;
 - f. Seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel and strive to extend the Kingdom of God in the community, at home and abroad;
 - g. Encourage members to be generous in support of the church;
 - h. Keep accurate membership records including baptisms, confirmations, marriages and deaths.
4. If the congregation does not have a relationship with a called Pastor, the congregation may invite visiting ordained pastors, appropriate lay persons/speakers and active church members to carry out the duties of the Pastor.
 5. Adequate compensation shall be provided to the Pastor and visiting pastors/speakers, comparable to the compensation provided by other Christian organizations.
 6. A relationship with the Pastor shall be terminated for the following reasons: resignation of the Pastor, physical or mental incapacity of the Pastor, continued neglect of ministry, or inability to conduct the pastoral office satisfactorily.
 7. Authority to terminate a relationship with the Pastor shall rest in the congregation and shall be exercised by not less than two-thirds of the members present and voting at a meeting of the congregation legally called for that purpose.

Part V. Congregational Meetings

1. An annual meeting of the congregation shall be held during the month of February.
2. A special meeting of the congregation may be called by action of the congregation, by petition of at least ten percent of the members or by any one of the following: any three members of the Congregational Council, the Chairperson of the Congregational Council, or the Pastor. The call for each special meeting shall specify the purpose for which it is to be held and no other business shall be transacted.
3. Notice of all congregational meetings shall be given at public worship services on the preceding two consecutive Sundays, or by mail/email to all members at least ten days in advance of the date of the meeting. The Pastor shall be notified of all meetings of the congregation.
4. Eight voting members shall constitute a quorum at all meetings of the congregation.
5. Unless otherwise specified, motions at congregational meetings will be approved by a simple majority vote of members present and voting.
6. The Rules of Order that shall be the governing parliamentary law of the congregation shall be identified at the outset of all meetings.
7. All congregational meetings shall open and close with the Word of God and prayer.

Part VI. Congregational Council and its Officers

1. At its annual meeting the congregation shall elect a Congregational Council of not less than six nor more than twelve members of the congregation for terms of three years each with approximately one-third of the terms expiring annually.
2. The Pastor shall be an ex officio member of the Congregational Council and all its committees.
3. All elected members of the Congregational Council shall be installed by a pastor at the next public worship service following their election or as soon thereafter as convenient.
4. At its first meeting following the annual meeting of the congregation the Congregational Council shall elect from its own membership a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Secretary of the congregation. The Council also shall elect a Treasurer who need not be a member of the Congregational Council.

5. The Congregational Council shall be the trustees of the congregation and shall have general oversight of the life and activities of the congregation, ensuring that everything is done in accordance with the constitution and bylaws of the church. The Congregational Council shall exercise such authority as is delegated to it by this constitution and bylaws and the resolutions of the congregation.
6. The Congregational Council shall hold regular meetings at least quarterly.
7. A majority shall constitute the quorum for transacting the business of the Congregational Council.
8. If a vacancy occurs on the Congregational Council, then the Council shall fill the vacancy at the next meeting of the congregation. Should the unexpired term be one year or less, it shall not be considered in determining eligibility of succession.
9. A member of the Congregational Council who is absent from two consecutive regular meetings without valid reason shall be contacted by the Chairperson. If the member is absent from three consecutive regular meetings without valid reason, then the Council may declare the position vacant.

Part VII. Duties of the Congregational Council and its Officers

1. The Chairperson shall preside at all meetings of the Congregational Council and of the congregation.
2. The Vice-Chairperson shall preside at these meetings in the absence of the Chairperson.
3. The Secretary shall keep the minutes of the Congregational Council and of the congregation in a volume provided by the congregation, which shall be permanently preserved in the congregational archives.
4. The Treasurer shall have custody of all funds of the congregation and shall receive and disburse such funds in accordance with the decisions of the congregation and the Congregational Council.
5. The Treasurer shall make written report of all financial transactions to the Congregational Council and the congregation with audit at the annual meeting.
6. The Congregational Council shall:
 - a. Lead the congregation in stating its mission, doing long-range planning, setting goals and priorities and evaluating its activities in the light of its mission and goals;
 - b. Seek to involve all members of the congregation in worship, learning, witness, service and support;
 - c. Provide support for the Pastor and other professional leaders, assist them to review and evaluate their ministry and review their financial compensation making adequate adjustments;
 - d. Exemplify for the congregation the life that is worthy of the high calling in Christ;
 - e. Promote congregational unity and good will, fostering mutual understanding in times of conflict and exercising discipline, when necessary;
 - f. Arrange for pastoral service during the absence of the Pastor;
 - g. Appoint or elect all staff, voluntary or salaried, for the effective administration of all aspects of congregational life;
 - h. Appoint such committees as may be necessary or advisable, consisting of members of the congregation;
 - i. Meet as required but not less than quarterly;
 - j. Be responsible for maintaining and protecting property of the congregation;
 - k. Prepare an annual budget, supervise the expenditure of funds and ensure that the financial affairs of the congregation are conducted effectively.

Part VIII. Congregational Committees

1. Committees of members of the congregation shall be elected or appointed to support the mission of the church through their activities (see Appendix B for discussion of suggested committees).
2. Committees shall be elected at the annual meeting for one year terms, unless specified otherwise.
3. As noted in Part VII of the bylaws, the Congregational Council also may appoint such committees as may be necessary or advisable.

4. All committees are responsible to report their activities to the Congregational Council and, at the annual meeting, to the congregation.
5. Each committee is responsible to provide appropriate orientation of its members to the responsibilities and processes of the committee.

Part IX. Auxiliaries and Organizations

1. All auxiliaries and organizations within the congregation shall exist to aid it in administering to its members and to all whom it can reach with the Gospel of Christ.
2. Regular reports concerning the work of these auxiliaries and organizations shall be made to the Congregational Council and, at the annual meeting, to the congregation.

Part X. The Annual Meeting

1. The annual meeting shall be held during the month of February.
2. The order of business at the annual meeting shall be:
 - a. Opening devotion;
 - b. Approval of the minutes of the previous annual meeting;
 - c. Reports of the Pastor, the Congregational Council, the Treasurer and other committees;
 - d. Election of the Congregational Council and Congregational Committees;
 - e. Approval of the budget;
 - f. Old business;
 - g. New business;
 - h. Closing prayers.
3. All committees handling funds within the congregation shall submit audited accounts to the annual meeting.

Part XI. Relationship to Other Christian Organizations

1. The church may choose to align itself with other Christian organizations upon resolution adopted by not less than two-thirds of the members present and voting at a legally called meeting of the congregation.
2. Such other organizations must profess faith as outlined in Article II Confession of Faith.
3. The 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 eternal Son of God incarnate to be our only Saviour from sin, and thus teach salvation by works.
4. Requests for use of the church premises by other organizations shall be considered by the Congregational Council on an individual basis.

Part XII. Amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws

1. Amendments to the constitution may be proposed by the Congregational Council and shall be proposed by the Council at the request of five members. Such proposed amendments shall be:
 - a. Read at two consecutive public worship services of the congregation, or mailed/emailed to the members not less than 28 days before the meeting at which it is to be considered;
 - b. Approved with or without change at the meeting by a simple majority vote of those members present and voting;
 - c. Approved without further change at a second congregational meeting to be held no less than 28 days later, by a two-thirds majority vote of those members present and voting.
2. The congregation may adopt such bylaws not in conflict with the constitution, as may be necessary. Such bylaws may be adopted or amended at any legally called and conducted meeting of the congregation by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting.

APPENDIX A. DOCTRINAL DOCUMENTS

The table summarizes theological documents that are true statements of the doctrine of the Word of God; that is, they define, describe and preserve essential truths about the message of good news in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The documents (along with others omitted from the table) have been collected into one volume titled “The Book of Concord” that gives a public statement of the Christian faith as understood by Lutherans (and other Protestant churches). A copy of the Book of Concord is available in the church’s library.

Document	Date	Author	Description
Apostles Creed	2 nd Century AD	Church of Rome	<p>Once thought to have been written by the Apostles, this actually was an ancient baptismal creed used in Rome. It has gained wide acceptance as a faithful expression of biblical teachings. The Apostles Creed is confessed during the service of worship.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.</p> <p>I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He shall come again to judge the living and the dead.</p> <p>I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.</p>
Nicene Creed	325 AD	Council of Nicea	<p>This creed is a statement of faith of the early Christian church that supports the full divinity of all three persons of the Trinity without dividing the Trinity into three gods. It is a statement of faith accepted as authoritative by Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant churches. The Nicene Creed traditionally is confessed during the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.</p> <p>We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.</p>

			<p>We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets.</p> <p>We believe in one holy Christian Church. We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.</p>
Augsburg Confession	1530	Philip Melancthon	Often considered the heart of the Book of Concord, this document was the first formal presentation of the faith from a Lutheran perspective to the church and Roman empire. Article IV of the document gives voice to the central belief of the Christian faith: people cannot be justified before God by their own strengths, merits or works, but are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favour and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins.
Small Catechism	1529	Martin Luther	<p>This is a short work to teach the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith that can be used as the basis for confirmation lessons. It is composed of five parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Apostle's Creed • The Ten Commandments • The Lord's Prayer • Holy Communion • Baptism
Large Catechism	1529	Martin Luther	This is a larger work that expands on the Small Catechism.

APPENDIX B. SUGGESTIONS FOR CONGREGATIONAL COMMITTEES

Nominating Committee

It shall be the duty of this committee to:

1. Select candidates who will let their names stand for election to the Congregational Council and committees;
2. Present the list of candidates to be voted on at the annual meeting.

Worship Committee

It shall be the duty of this committee to:

1. Arrange matters related to weekly and special worship services, including:
 - a. Music;
 - b. Audiovisuals;
 - c. Ushers;
 - d. Speakers to lead the service and bring the message (in the absence of the Pastor);
 - e. Lay readers;
 - f. Altar cloths and banners;
 - g. Communion elements.
2. Make recommendations to the Congregational Council for various forms of worship.

Education Committee

It shall be the duty of this committee to:

1. Supervise the educational work of the congregation, including the Sunday School and other groups the congregation may have for the purpose of Christian education;
2. Provide an orientation to the church to new members.

Outreach Committee

It shall be the duty of this committee to:

1. Plan programming to share the gospel with the wider community.

Pastoral Care Committee

It shall be the duty of this committee to:

1. Assist in the spiritual care of the congregation by arranging for members or pastors to visit the sick and distressed.

Janitorial and Yard Committee

It shall be the duty of this committee to:

1. Establish a list of necessary janitorial duties;
2. Arrange for and supervise paid janitorial staff;
3. Arrange for volunteers to perform additional janitorial duties not assigned to the paid janitorial staff (such as annual church cleaning);
4. Arrange for and supervise paid staff to complete regular yard work (such as grass mowing) and regular snow shoveling;

5. Arrange for volunteers to perform additional yard maintenance not assigned to paid staff (such as annual yard clean-up, hedge trimming).

Building Maintenance Committee

It shall be the duty of this committee to:

1. Inspect and review the physical condition and needs of the church building and report these findings to the Congregational Council;
2. Arrange for and supervise appropriate contractors to complete building maintenance, as deemed necessary by Council;
3. Arrange for volunteers to perform additional building maintenance not provided by contractors.

Bible Camp Committee

It shall be the duty of this committee to:

1. Represent Sharon Evangelical Lutheran Church (Donalda, AB) on the Board of the Living Hope Bible Camp Association.

Pastor Call Committee

It shall be the duty of this committee to:

1. Form when directed by a vote at a congregational meeting called for that purpose;
2. Seek out a suitable pastor;
3. Make recommendation to the congregation that the pastor be called;
4. Oversee the congregational meeting called to vote on the recommendation.

Auditors

It shall be the duty of this committee to:

1. Meet prior to the annual meeting to review and verify the financial records of the church, including:
 - a. Receipts maintained for all expenditures;
 - b. Money spent only with proper authorization;
 - c. Charitable donations receipts properly issued.