

**CONSTITUTION
OF
ASCENSION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
of
Thousand Oaks, California, Inc.**

**First Approval September 26, 2010
Ratification 2012**

PREAMBLE

We, baptized members of the Church of Christ, responding in faith to the call of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, desiring to unite together to preach the Word, administer the sacraments, and carry out God's mission, do hereby adopt this constitution and solemnly pledge ourselves to be governed by its provisions. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 1 – NAME AND INCORPORATION

The name of this congregation shall be Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church of Thousand Oaks, California hereinafter designated as "the congregation". This congregation is incorporated under the laws of the State of California.

Chapter 2 - CONFESSION OF FAITH

- *C2.01. This congregation confesses the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- *C2.02. This congregation confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.
 - a. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God fashions a new creation.
 - b. The proclamation of God's message to us as both Law and Gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy through word and deed, beginning with the Word in creation, continuing in the history of Israel, and centering in all its fullness in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
 - c. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. Inspired by God's Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God's revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them God's Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.
- *C2.03. This congregation accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life.
- *C2.04. This congregation accepts the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of this congregation.
- *C2.05. This congregation accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to the Gospel, acknowledging as one with it in faith and doctrine all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.

- *C2.06. This congregation accepts the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise, the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, as further valid interpretations of the faith of the Church.
- *C2.07. This congregation confesses the Gospel, recorded in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain the Church for God's mission in the world.

Chapter 3 – NATURE OF THE CHURCH

- *C3.01. All power in the Church belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ, its head. All actions of this congregation are to be carried out under his rule and authority.
- *C3.02. The Church exists both as an inclusive fellowship and as local congregations gathered for worship and Christian service. Congregations find their fulfillment in the universal community of the Church, and the universal Church exists in and through congregations. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, therefore, derives its character and powers both from the sanction and representation of its congregations and from its inherent nature as an expression of the broader fellowship of the faithful. In length, it acknowledges itself to be in the historic continuity of the communion of saints; in breadth, it expresses the fellowship of believers and congregations in our day.

Chapter 4 – STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

- *C4.01. The Church is a people created by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, called and sent to bear witness to God's creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world.
- *C4.02. To participate in God's mission, this congregation as a part of the Church shall:
 - a. Worship God in proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments and through lives of prayer, praise, thanksgiving, witness, and service.
 - b. Proclaim God's saving Gospel of justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith alone, according to the apostolic witness in the Holy Scripture, preserving and transmitting the Gospel faithfully to future generations.
 - c. Carry out Christ's Great Commission by reaching out to all people to bring them to faith in Christ and by doing all ministry with a global awareness consistent with the understanding of God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of all.
 - d. Serve in response to God's love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity and justice for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, and standing with the poor and powerless, and committing itself to their needs.
 - e. Nurture its members in the Word of God so as to grow in faith and hope and love, to see daily life as the primary setting for the exercise of their Christian calling, and to use the gifts of the Spirit for their life together and for their calling in the world.

- f. Manifest the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives.

***C4.03.** To fulfill these purposes, this congregation shall:

- a. Provide services of worship at which the Word of God is preached and the sacraments are administered.
- b. Provide pastoral care and assist all members to participate in this ministry.
- c. Challenge, equip, and support all members in carrying out their calling in their daily lives and in their congregation.
- d. Teach the Word of God.
- e. Witness to the reconciling Word of God in Christ, reaching out to all people.
- f. Respond to human need, work for justice and peace, care for the sick and the suffering, and participate responsibly in society.
- g. Motivate its members to provide financial support for the congregation's ministry and the ministry of other parts of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- h. Foster and participate in interdependent relationships with other congregations, the synod, and the churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- i. Foster and participate in ecumenical relationships consistent with churchwide policy.

***C4.04.** This congregation shall develop an organizational structure to be described in the bylaws. The Congregation Council shall prepare descriptions of the responsibilities of each committee, task force, or other organizational group and shall review their actions.

***C4.05.** This congregation shall, from time to time, adopt a mission statement which will provide specific direction for its programs.

Chapter 5 – POWERS OF THE CONGREGATION

***C5.01.** The powers of this congregation are those necessary to fulfill its purpose.

***C5.02.** The powers of this congregation are vested in the Congregation Meeting called and conducted as provided in this constitution and bylaws.

***C5.03.** Only such authority as is delegated to the Congregation Council or other organizational units in this congregation's governing documents is recognized. All remaining authority is retained by the congregation. The congregation is authorized to:

- a. call a pastor as provided in Chapter 9;
- b. terminate the call of a pastor as provided in Chapter 9;
- c. call or terminate the call of associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers in conformity with the applicable policy of the

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;

- d. approve the annual budget;
- e. acquire real and personal property by gift, devise, purchase, or other lawful means;
- f. hold title to and use its property for any and all activities consistent with its purpose;
- g. sell, mortgage, lease, transfer, or otherwise dispose of its property by any lawful means;
- h. elect its officers and Congregation Council, and require them to carry out their duties in accordance with the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions; and
- i. terminate its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as provided in Chapter 6.

***C5.04.** This congregation shall choose from among its voting member's laypersons to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly as well as persons to represent it at meetings of any conference, cluster, coalition, or other area subdivision of which it is a member. The number of persons to be elected by the congregation and other qualifications shall be as prescribed in guidelines established by the Southwest California Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Chapter 6 – CHURCH AFFILIATION

***C6.01.** This congregation shall be an interdependent part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or its successor, and of the Southwest California Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This congregation is subject to the discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

***C6.02.** This congregation accepts the Confession of Faith and agrees to the Purposes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and shall act in accordance with them.

***C6.03.** This congregation acknowledges its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in which:

- a. This congregation agrees to be responsible for its life as a Christian community.
- b. This congregation pledges its financial support and participation in the life and mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- c. This congregation agrees to call pastoral leadership from the clergy roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in accordance with its call procedures except in special circumstances and with the approval of the bishop of the synod.
- d. This congregation agrees to consider associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers for call to other staff positions in the congregation according to the procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- e. This congregation agrees to file this constitution and any subsequent

changes to this constitution with the synod for review to ascertain that all of its provisions are in agreement with the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and with the constitution of the synod.

***C6.04.** Affiliation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may be terminated as follows:

- a. This congregation takes action to dissolve.
- b. This congregation ceases to exist.
- c. This congregation is removed from membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America according to the procedures for discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- d. This congregation follows the procedures outlined in ***C6.05**.

***C6.05.** This congregation may terminate its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by the following procedure:

- a. A resolution indicating the desire of this congregation to terminate its relationship must be adopted at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this congregation by a two-thirds majority of the voting members present.
- b. The secretary of this congregation shall submit a copy of the resolution to the synodical bishop and shall mail a copy of the resolution to voting members of this congregation. This notice shall be submitted within ten (10) days after the resolution has been adopted.
- c. The bishop of the synod shall consult with this congregation during a period of at least ninety (90) days.
- d. If this congregation, after consultation, still desires to terminate its relationship, such action may be taken at a legally called and conducted special meeting by a two-thirds majority of the voting members present, at which meeting the bishop of the synod or an authorized representative shall be present. Notice of the meeting shall be mailed to all voting members at least ten (10) days in advance of the meeting.
- e. A certified copy of the resolution to terminate its relationship shall be sent to the synodical bishop, at which time the relationship between this congregation and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall be terminated.
- f. Notice of termination shall be forwarded by the synodical bishop to the secretary of this church and published in the periodical of this church.

***C6.06.** If this congregation considers relocation, it shall confer with the bishop of the synod in which it is territorially located and the appropriate program unit of the churchwide organization before any steps are taken leading to such action. The approval of the Synod Council shall be received before any such action is effected.

Chapter 7 – PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

***C7.01.** If this congregation ceases to exist, title to undisputed property shall pass to the

Southwest California Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

- *C7.02. If this congregation is removed from membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America according to its procedure for discipline, title to property shall continue to reside in this congregation.
- *C7.03. If a two-thirds majority of the voting members of this congregation present at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this congregation vote to transfer to another Lutheran church body, title to property shall continue to reside in this congregation. Before this congregation takes action to transfer to another Lutheran church body, it shall consult with representatives of the Southwest California Synod.
- *C7.04. If a two-thirds majority of the voting members of this congregation present at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this congregation vote to become independent or relate to a non-Lutheran church body, title to property of this congregation shall continue to reside in this congregation only with the consent of the Synod Council. The Synod Council, after consultation with this congregation by the established synodical process, may give approval to the request to become independent or to relate to a non-Lutheran church body, in which case title shall remain with the majority of this congregation. If the Synod Council fails to give such approval, title shall remain with those members who desire to continue as a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Chapter 8 - MEMBERSHIP

- *C8.01. Members of this congregation shall be those baptized persons on the roll of this congregation at the time that this constitution is adopted and those who are admitted thereafter and who have declared and maintain their membership in accordance with the provisions of this constitution and its bylaws.
- *C8.02. Members shall be classified as follows:
 - a. *Baptized* members are those persons who have been received by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism in this congregation, or, having been previously baptized in the name of the Triune God, have been received by certificate of transfer from other Lutheran congregations or by affirmation of faith.
 - b. *Confirmed* members are baptized persons who have been confirmed in this congregation, those who have been received by adult baptism or by transfer as confirmed members from other Lutheran congregations, or baptized persons received by affirmation of faith.
 - c. *Voting* members are confirmed members. Such confirmed members, during the current or preceding calendar year, shall have communed in this congregation and shall have made a contribution of record to this congregation. Members of this congregation who have satisfied these basic standards shall have the privilege of voice and vote at every regular and special meeting of the congregation.
 - d. *Associate* members are 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, or persons who

wish to retain a relationship with this congregation while being members of other congregations. They have all the privileges and duties of membership except voting rights and eligibility for elected offices or membership on the Congregation Council of this congregation.

- *C8.03. All applications for confirmed membership shall be submitted to and shall require the approval of the Congregation Council.
- *C8.04. It shall be the privilege and duty of members of this congregation to:
 - a. make regular use of the means of grace, both Word and sacraments;
 - b. live a Christian life in accordance with the Word of God and the teachings of the Lutheran church; and
 - c. support the work of this congregation, the synod, and the churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America through contributions of their time, abilities, and financial support as biblical stewards.
- *C8.05. Membership in this congregation shall be terminated by any of the following:
 - a. death;
 - b. resignation;
 - c. transfer or release;
 - d. disciplinary action by the Congregation Council; or
 - e. removal from the roll due to inactivity as defined in the bylaws. Such persons who have been removed from the roll of members shall remain persons for whom the Church has a continuing pastoral concern.

Chapter 9 – THE PASTOR

- *C9.01. Authority to call a pastor shall be in this congregation by at least a two-thirds majority ballot vote of members present and voting at a meeting legally called for that purpose. Before a call is issued, the officers, or a committee elected by this congregation to recommend the call, shall seek the advice and help of the bishop of the synod.
- *C9.02. Only a member of the clergy roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or a candidate for the roster of ordained ministers who has been recommended for the congregation by the synodical bishop may be called as a pastor of this congregation.
- *C9.03. Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,
 - a. Every ordained minister shall:
 - 1) preach the Word;
 - 2) administer the sacraments;
 - 3) conduct public worship;
 - 4) provide pastoral care; and
 - 5) speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and

oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world.

- b.** Each ordained minister with a congregational call shall, within the congregation:
 - 1)** offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead;
 - 2)** supervise all schools and organizations of this congregation;
 - 3)** install regularly elected members of the Congregation Council; and
 - 4)** with the council, administer discipline.
- c.** Every pastor shall:
 - 1)** strive to extend the Kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad;
 - 2)** seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel;
 - 3)** impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through distribution of its periodicals and other publications; and
 - 4)** endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to the work of the churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and of the Southwest California Synod of the ELCA.

***C9.04.** The specific duties of the pastor, compensation, and other matters pertaining to the service of the pastor shall be included in a letter of call, which shall be attested by the bishop of the synod.

***C9.05.** Pastoral call:

- a.** The call of a congregation, when accepted by a pastor, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment, which, except in the case of the death of the pastor, shall be terminated only following consultation with the synodical bishop and for the following reasons:
 - 1)** mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term;
 - 2)** resignation of the pastor, which shall become effective, unless otherwise agreed, thirty (30) days after the date on which it was submitted;
 - 3)** inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in the congregation in view of local conditions, without reflection on the competence or the moral and spiritual character of the pastor;
 - 4)** the physical or mental incapacity of the pastor;
 - 5)** disqualification of the pastor through discipline on grounds of doctrine, morality, or continued neglect of duty;
 - 6)** the dissolution of the congregation or the termination of a parish arrangement; or
 - 7)** suspension of the congregation as a result of discipline proceedings.
- b.** When allegations of physical or mental incapacity of the pastor or

ineffective conduct of the pastoral office have come to the attention of the bishop of the synod, the bishop in his or her sole discretion may, or when such allegations have been brought to the synod's attention by an official recital of allegations by the Congregation Council or by a petition signed by at least one-third of the voting members of the congregation, the bishop shall, investigate such conditions personally in company with a committee of two ordained ministers and one layperson.

- c.** In case of alleged physical or mental incapacity, competent medical testimony shall be obtained. When such disability is evident, the bishop of the synod with the advice of the committee shall declare the pastorate vacant. Upon the restoration of a disabled pastor to health, the bishop of the synod shall take steps to enable the pastor to resume the ministry, either in the congregation last served or in another field of labor.
- d.** In the case of alleged local difficulties that imperil the effective functioning of the congregation, all concerned persons shall be heard, after which the bishop of the synod together with the committee described in ***C9.05.b.** shall decide on the course of action to be recommended to the pastor and the congregation. If they agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action shall be taken by the synod. If either party fails to assent, the congregation may dismiss the pastor at a legally called meeting after consultation with the bishop, either (a) by a two-thirds majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee did not recommend termination of the call, or (b) by a simple majority vote of the voting members present and voting where the bishop and the committee recommended termination of the call.
- e.** If, in the course of proceedings described in ***C9.05.d.**, the committee concludes that there may be grounds for disciplinary action, the committee shall make recommendations concerning disciplinary action to the synodical bishop who may bring charges, in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the constitution of this synod.
- f.** If, following the appointment of the committee described in ***C9.05.b.** or **d.**, it should become apparent that a pastoral office cannot be conducted effectively in the congregation(s) being served by the ordained minister due to local conditions, the bishop of the synod may temporarily suspend the pastor from service in the congregation(s) without prejudice and with pay provided through a joint synodical and churchwide fund and with housing provided by the congregation(s).

***C9.06.** At a time of pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor shall be appointed by the bishop of the synod with the consent of this congregation or the Congregation Council.

***C9.07.** During the period of service, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties in the congregation of a regularly called pastor and may delegate the same in part to a supply pastor with the consent of the bishop of the synod and this congregation or Congregation Council. The interim pastor and any ordained pastor providing assistance shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor.

***C9.08.** This congregation shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations

to a former pastor before calling a successor. A pastor shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to this congregation before beginning service in a call to another congregation or employment in another ministry setting related to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

***C9.09.** When a pastor is called to serve in company with another pastor or pastors, the privileges and responsibilities of each pastor shall be specified in documents to accompany the call and to be drafted in consultation involving the pastors, the Congregation Council, and the bishop of the synod. As occasion requires, the documents may be revised through a similar consultation.

9.10 Intentionally Left Blank

***C9.11.** With the approval of the bishop of the synod, the congregation may depart from ***C9.05.a.** and call a pastor for a specific term. Details of such calls shall be in writing setting forth the purpose and conditions involved. Prior to the completion of a term, the bishop or a designated representative of the bishop shall meet with the pastor and representatives of the congregation for a review of the call. Such a call may also be terminated before its expiration in accordance with the provisions of ***C9.05.a.**

***C9.12.** The pastor of this congregation:

- a.** shall keep accurate parochial records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, members dismissed, or members excluded from the congregation;
- b.** shall submit a summary of such statistics annually to the synod; and
- c.** shall become a member of this congregation upon receipt and acceptance of the letter of call. In a parish of multiple congregations, the pastor shall hold membership in one of the congregations.

***C9.13.** The pastor shall submit a report of his or her ministry to the bishop of the synod at least ninety (90) days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.

***C9.14.** The parochial records of this congregation shall be maintained by the pastor and shall remain the property of the congregation. The secretary of this congregation shall attest in writing to the bishop of this synod that such records have been placed in his or her hands in good order by a departing pastor before the installation of that pastor in another field of labor or the granting by the synod of retired status to the pastor.

Chapter 10 - CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

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

10.02. The financial affairs of the congregation shall be maintained on a fiscal year basis starting on July 1 and ending on June 30. The annual meeting of the congregation shall be held for the purpose as listed in the bylaws of the congregation. Elections will take place at the regularly called congregational meeting as listed in the bylaws. Terms of office of those elected shall commence on the first day of July.

10.03. Parliamentary procedures, voting requirements, and quorum definitions for congregational meetings are defined in the congregational bylaws.

10.04. Special Meetings:

- a.** A special meeting of the congregation may be called by action of the congregation, by petition of at least ten (10) percent of the voting members, or by any one of the following: The Congregation Council, the President of the congregation, or the Pastor. The President of the Congregation Council shall call a special meeting upon request of the Synod Bishop.
- b.** Official notice of a special meeting of the congregation shall be to each member in writing at least 10 days before the meeting. The form of the communication may include U.S. Mail, email or included with communications regularly sent to members. The notice 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 persons who have called the meeting, as authorized by this paragraph.
- c.** 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 ten 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 21 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.
- d.** The Senior Pastor and the President of the congregation shall be notified of the time and place at which a special meeting of the congregation is to be held, when said meeting is called by other than the Senior Pastor or the President.

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

Chapter 11 - OFFICERS

11.01. At the regularly called meeting, the congregation shall elect in the manner provided in the bylaws a Congregation Council who shall serve as the Board of Directors of the corporation. The congregation shall further elect the officers of the Church who shall serve on the Congregation Council, and be the duly elected officers of the corporation. These officers shall consist of the President (who shall serve as the Chief Executive Officer), President-Elect (who shall serve as Vice-President during the term of the President), Treasurer (who shall serve as the Chief Financial Officer), and Secretary. The duties of the officers and Congregation Council shall be specified in the bylaws of the congregation.

Chapter 12 – CONGREGATION COUNCIL

12.01. The congregation shall further confirm additional members from the congregation as nominated to serve in accordance with the recommendations of the council within the bylaws of the congregation.

12.02. The Congregation Council shall:

- a. Exercise only such authority as may be delegated to it by the congregation or under the laws of the State of California, and this authority shall be exercised in accordance with the constitution, bylaws and continuing resolutions of the congregation.
- b. Designate the President, President-Elect (serving as Vice-President), and Secretary to serve as signers of legal documents for the congregation.
- c. Work with the Pastors in providing for the spiritual care of the congregation and in promoting its material welfare.
- d. Act upon such disciplinary matters as may be referred to it, provided however, that no members shall be excommunicated without action of the congregation.
- e. Manage the legal and financial affairs of the congregation.
- f. Appoint such committees as may be necessary or advisable to facilitate the discharge of the above responsibilities.

Chapter 13 – CONGREGATION COMMITTEES

- 13.01.** The Executive Committee of this congregation and corporation shall consist of those members of the Congregation Council and others as defined in the Bylaws.
- 13.02.** A Nominating Committee shall consist of those members as defined in the Bylaws.
- 13.03.** A Call Committee shall be elected by the congregation when a pastoral vacancy occurs and be comprised of members as defined in the Bylaws. The term of office of the members will terminate upon installation of the newly called pastor.
- 13.04.** Standing Committees of this congregation are defined in the Bylaws. Chair persons of Standing Committees require election by the Congregation.
- 13.05.** Ministry Committees of this congregation are defined in the policies and procedures. Chair persons of Ministry Committees do not require election by the congregation.
- 13.06.** Other committees may be formed, from time to time, as the need arises, by decision of the Congregation Council. The members, responsibilities, mission and term of the committee and its members will be defined by the Congregation Council at the time established.
- 13.07.** The duties of all officers and Standing Committees of this congregation shall be specified in the Bylaws.
- 13.08.** The pastor(s) of this congregation shall be ex officio a member(s) of all committees and boards of the congregation. The president of this congregation shall be ex officio a member of all committees of the congregation, except the Nominating Committee.

Chapter 14 – ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION

- 14.01.** All organizations or divisions within this congregation shall exist to aid it in ministering to the members of this congregation and to all persons who can be reached with the Gospel of Christ. As outgrowths and expressions of this congregation's life, the organizations are subject to its oversight and direction. The Congregation at its meetings shall determine their policies, guide their activities, and receive reports concerning their membership, work, and finances. The Congregation Council as

specified in Chapter 5 of this Constitution shall have general oversight and responsibility of the life and activities of this congregation, particularly its worship life, to the end that everything be done in accordance with the Word of God and the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

- 14.02.** In addition to the activities, committees and organizations within the congregation, the congregation may establish divisions of the corporation to carry out certain specific responsibilities, duties and ministries of the congregation. These divisions may establish their own bylaws and shall report to the Congregation and the Council.
- 14.03.** A new division may be formed by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present at any annual, regularly called, or special congregational meeting of Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church.
- 14.04.** The dissolution of any existing division of Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church shall require a vote of at least two thirds of the voting members present at any two annual, regularly called, or special congregational meeting of Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church where the issue of the dissolution of the division has been duly noticed to the congregation in accordance with Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church Constitution, **chapter 10**. Any meeting where the final vote compelling the dissolution of any existing division of Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church shall be not less than one hundred and twenty (120) days after any meeting at which a vote was taken to approve the dissolution of any division.

Chapter 15 – DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS AND ADJUDICATION

- *C15.01.** Denial of the Christian faith as described in this constitution, conduct grossly unbecoming a member of the Church of Christ, or persistent trouble-making in this congregation are sufficient cause for discipline of a member. Prior to disciplinary action, reconciliation will be attempted following Matthew 18:15-17, proceeding through these successive steps: a) private admonition by the pastor, b) admonition by the pastor in the presence of two or three witnesses, and c) citation to appear before the Congregation Council. If for any reason, the pastor is unable to administer the admonitions required by a. and b. hereof, the president (if not the pastor) or vice president shall administer such admonitions.
- *C15.02.** The process for discipline of a member of the congregation shall be governed as prescribed by the chapter on discipline in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. If discipline against a member proceeds beyond counseling and admonition by the pastor, charges against the accused member(s) that are specific and in writing shall be prepared by member(s) of the congregation who shall sign the charges as the accuser(s). The written charges shall be filed with the pastor, who shall advise the Congregation Council of the need to issue a written citation to the accused and the accusers that specifies the time and place of the hearing before the Congregation Council. The written charges shall accompany the written citation to the accused. The written citation that specifies the time and place of the hearing before the Congregation Council and requests the presence of a member charged with the offence shall be sent at least ten days prior to the meeting. If the member charged with the offense fails to appear at the scheduled hearing, the Congregation Council may proceed with the hearing and may pass judgment in the member's absence.

***C15.03.**Members of the Congregation Council who participate in the preparation of the written charges or who present evidence or testimony in the hearing before the Congregation Council are disqualified from voting upon the question of the guilt of the accused member. Should the allegations be sustained by a two-thirds majority vote of the members of the Congregation Council who are not disqualified but who are present and voting, and renewed admonition prove ineffectual, the council shall impose one of the following disciplinary actions:

- a. censure before the council or congregation;
- b. suspension from membership for a definite period of time; or
- c. exclusion from membership in this congregation.

Disciplinary actions **b.** and **c.** shall be delivered to the member in writing.

***C15.04.**The member against whom disciplinary action has been taken by the Congregation Council shall have the right to appeal the decision to the Synod Council. Such right may not be abridged and the decision of the Synod Council shall be final.

***C15.05.**Disciplinary actions may be reconsidered and revoked by the Congregation Council upon receipt of: a) evidence that injustice has been done or b) evidence of repentance and amendment.

***C15.06.**For disciplinary actions in this congregation, “due process” shall be observed as specified in 20.41.04. in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.

***C15.07.**No member of a congregation shall be subject to discipline for offenses that the Congregational Council has previously heard and decided, unless so ordered by the Synod Council after an appeal.

***C15.08.**Intentionally Left Blank

***C15.09.**Intentionally Left Blank

***C15.10.Adjudication**

When there is disagreement among factions within this congregation on a substantive issue that cannot be resolved by the parties, members of this congregation shall have access to the synodical bishop for consultation after informing the chair of the Congregation Council of their intent. If the consultation fails to resolve the issue(s), the Consultation Committee of the synod shall consider the matter. If the Consultation Committee of the synod shall fail to resolve the issue(s), the matter shall be referred to the Synod Council, whose decision shall be final.

Chapter 16 – BYLAWS

***C16.01.** This congregation may adopt bylaws. No bylaw may conflict with this constitution.

***C16.02.**Bylaws may be adopted or amended at any legally called meeting of this congregation with a quorum present by a majority vote of those voting members present and voting.

***C16.03.**Changes to the bylaws may be proposed by any voting member provided, however, that such additions or amendments be submitted in writing to the Congregation Council at least sixty 60 days before a regular or special Congregation Meeting called for that purpose and that the Congregation Council notify the congregation’s members by mail of the proposal with the council’s recommendations at least thirty 30 days in advance of

the Congregation Meeting.

***C16.04.** Approved changes to the bylaws shall be sent by the secretary of this congregation to the synod.

Chapter 17 – AMENDMENTS

***C17.01.** Unless provision *C17.04. is applicable, those sections of this constitution that are not required, in accord with the *Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, may be amended in the following manner. Amendments may be proposed by at least ten (10) voting members or by the Congregation Council. Proposals must be filed in writing with the Congregation Council sixty (60) days before formal consideration by this congregation at a regular or special Congregational Meeting called for that purpose. The Congregation Council shall notify the congregation's members by mail of the proposal together with the council's recommendations at least 30 days in advance of the meeting.

***C17.02.** Any amendment to this constitution, proposed under *C17.01., shall:

- a. be approved at a legally called Congregation Meeting according to this constitution by a majority vote of those present and voting;
- b. be ratified without change at the next annual meeting by a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting; and
- c. have the effective date included in the resolution and noted in the constitution.

***C17.03.** Any amendments to this constitution that result from the processes provided in *C17.01 and *C17.02 shall be sent by the secretary of this congregation to the synod. The amendment shall become effective within **120** days from the date of the receipt of the notice by the synod unless the synod informs this congregation that the amendment is in conflict with the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or the constitution of the Southwest California Synod of the ELCA.

***C17.04.** This constitution may be amended to bring any section into conformity with a section or sections, either required or not required, of the *Model Constitution for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* – as most recently amended by the Churchwide Assembly – by a simple majority vote of those voting members present and voting at any legally called meeting of the congregation without presentation at a prior meeting of the congregation, provided that the Congregation Council has submitted by mail notice to the congregation of such an amendment or amendments, together with the council's recommendations, at least 30 days prior to the meeting. Upon the request of 10 voting members of the congregation, the Congregation Council shall submit such notice. Following the adoption of an amendment, the secretary of the congregation shall submit a copy thereof to the synod. Such provisions shall become effective immediately following a vote of approval.

Chapter 18 – CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS

***C18.01.** The congregation in a legally called meeting or the Congregation Council may enact continuing resolutions. Such continuing resolutions may not conflict with the constitution or bylaws of this congregation.

***C18.02.** Continuing resolutions shall be enacted or amended by a majority vote of a meeting of the congregation or a two-thirds vote of all voting members of the Congregation Council.

Chapter 19 – INDEMNIFICATION

***C19.01.** Consistent with the provisions of the laws under which this congregation is incorporated, this congregation may adopt provisions providing indemnification for each person who, by reason of the fact that such person is or was a Congregation Council member, officer, employee, agent, or other member of any committee of this congregation, was or is threatened to be made a party to any threatened, pending, or completed civil, criminal, administrative, arbitration, or investigative proceeding.