

CONSTITUTION REGARDING GOVERNANCE

~~Strikethrough~~ = proposed deletions

[Bracket and underline] = Proposed additions

Chapter 10

CONGREGATION MEETING

- C10.01. The annual meeting of this congregation shall be held at a time specified in the bylaws.
- C10.02. A special Congregation~~[all]~~ Meeting may be called by the [Senior] [P] pastor ~~charged with primary administrative responsibilities by the Executive Committee~~, the Congregation Council, or the ~~p~~[P]resident of this congregation, and shall be called by the ~~p~~[P]resident of the congregation upon the written request of one-third of the voting members. The call for each special meeting shall specify the purpose for which it is to be held and no other business shall be transacted.
- C10.03. Notice of all meetings of this congregation shall be given at the services of worship on the preceding two consecutive Sundays and by mail [and/or e-mail] to all voting members at least 10 days in advance of the date of the meeting. The posting of such notice in the regular mail, with the regular postage affixed or paid, sent to the last known address [or the posting of such notice by e-mail to the most recent address supplied by the member for purpose of communication with the congregation] ~~of such members~~ shall be sufficient.
- C10.04. Ten percent (10%) voting members shall constitute a quorum.
- C10.05. Voting by proxy or by absentee ballot shall not be permitted.
- C10.06. All actions by the congregation shall be by majority vote except as otherwise provided in this constitution.
- C10.07. Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition, shall govern parliamentary procedure of all meetings of this congregation. [The Congregation Council shall appoint a voting member of the congregation to act as Parliamentarian during each Congregational Meeting. The appointed Parliamentarian shall advise the President or his/her designee concerning parliamentary matters during meetings. The President or his/her designee will have final authority to rule on questions of order.]

Chapter 11

OFFICERS

- C11.01. The officers of this congregation shall be a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.
- Duties of the officers shall be specified in the bylaws;
 - The officers shall be voting members of the congregation;
 - Officers of this congregation shall serve similar office of the Congregation Council and shall be voting members of the Congregation Council.
- C11.02. The officers shall be elected by this congregation by written ballot and shall serve for ~~one~~ [two] year[s] or until their successors are elected. Their terms shall begin at the close of the annual meeting at which they are elected.
- C11.03. No officer shall hold more than one office at a time. No elected officer shall be eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office.

Chapter 12
CONGREGATION COUNCIL

- C12.01. The voting membership of the Congregation Council shall consist of [not more than seven (7) voting members of the congregation, and the pastors serving under call. The membership shall include: [lettered subsections are added]
- a. the pastor(s)[including duly appointed interim pastors];
 - b. the officers of the congregation;
 - c. and ~~not more than 15~~ [up to three adult (18 years of age or above)] members of the congregation;
 - d. Any voting member of the congregation may be elected subject only to the limitation on the length of continuous service permitted for that office;
 - e. [A confirmed member of the congregation who is an active participant in the senior high ministry may be appointed to serve on the Congregation Council by the Executive Committee upon recommendation of the Leadership Development Committee with voice but no voting privileges. Because the position has no vote, it shall not be included in the count of seven voting members;]
 - f. A member's place on the Congregation Council shall be declared vacant if the member a) ceases to be a voting member of this congregation, or b) is absent from four successive regular meetings of the Congregation Council ~~without cause~~. Consistent with the laws of the state in which this congregation is incorporated, the congregation may adopt procedures for the removal of a member of the Congregation Council in other circumstances.
- C12.02. The members of the Congregation Council [who do not serve as Officers or Pastor(s) of the congregation.] ~~except the pastor(s),~~ shall be elected by written ballot to serve for two years or until their successors are elected. Such members shall be eligible to serve no more than two full terms consecutively. Their terms shall begin at the close of the annual meeting at which they are elected. [No member of the Congregation Council, including Officers, except Pastor(s) serving under call, may serve for more than six (6) consecutive years.]
- C12.03. Should a member's place on the Congregation Council be declared vacant, the Congregation Council shall elect, by majority vote, a successor until the next annual meeting. ~~Individuals who have served less than one-half of a regular term shall be eligible for nomination and possible election to a full term.~~ [The successor will serve the remaining portion of the term of the predecessor whose position was vacated. If the term of service for the vacated position has more than one year remaining it will be considered a full term served by the successor; if there is less than one year remaining, it will not count as a term served.]
- C12.04. The Congregation Council shall ~~have general oversight of the life and activities of this congregation, and in particular 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.~~ [insure that the congregation's ministry is carried out in accordance with its stated mission, vision, core values, and core beliefs in partnership with the Northern Illinois Synod (Synod) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).] The ~~duties~~ [functions] of the Congregation Council shall include the following:
- a. To lead this congregation in stating its mission, to do long-range planning, to set goals and priorities, and to evaluate its activities in light of its mission[, vision, values, and beliefs;] ~~and goals.~~

- b. To seek to ~~involve~~ [nurture] all members of this congregation in ~~worship, learning, witness, service, and support~~ [in personal growth as disciples of Jesus Christ and to corporately work and act as the Body of Christ with one another in our community and the world;]
- c. ~~To oversee and provide for the administration of this congregation to enable it to fulfill its functions and perform its mission.~~ [To provide strategic direction to and support for the Pastor(s), staff, and volunteers as they work to express the mission and ministry of the congregation;]
- d. ~~To maintain supportive relationships with the pastor(s) and staff and help them annually to evaluate the fulfillment of their calling or employment~~ [provide ends policies that guide the evaluation of the congregation's efforts to fulfill its mission, vision, core values and beliefs;]
- e. To be examples individually and corporately of the style of life and ministry expected of all baptized persons;
- f. To promote a congregational climate of peace and goodwill, and, [if] as differences and conflicts arise, to endeavor to foster mutual ~~understanding~~ [trust, respect and unity rooted in the peace of Christ];
- g. To arrange for pastoral service during the sickness or absence of the pastor;
- h. To emphasize partnership with the synod and churchwide units of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as well as cooperation with other congregations, both Lutheran and non-Lutheran, subject to established policies of the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;
- i. ~~To recommend and encourage the use of program resources produced or approved by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.~~ [encourage and promote strategies that faithfully express the mission of the congregation, Synod and ELCA;]
- j. To seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel.

C12.05. The Congregation Council shall ~~be responsible~~ [develop policies and strategies to insure the faithful stewardship of all human,] ~~for the financial and property matters~~ [resources] of this congregation.

- a. The Congregation Council shall be the board of trustees/directors of the congregation, and as such shall be responsible for [the establishment of policies and strategies that insure proper maintenance and management of the] ~~maintaining and protecting its property[,] and the management of its business and fiscal affairs.~~ It shall have the powers and be subject to the obligations that pertain to such boards under the laws of the State of Illinois, except as otherwise provided herein;
- b. The Congregation Council shall not have the authority to buy, sell, or encumber real property unless specifically authorized to do so by a meeting of the congregation;
- c. ~~The Congregation Council may enter into contracts which facilitate execution of the budget passed by the congregation and of up to 2% of the general operating budget for the current fiscal year for items not included in the budget.~~
- d. [c.] The Congregation Council shall ~~prepare~~ [present] an annual budget for adoption by this congregation, [and] shall ~~supervise~~ [establish policies that direct] the expenditure of funds in accordance therewith following its adoption;
- e. [d.] The Congregation Council may designate the authority to disburse funds and enter into contracts that facilitate execution of the budget adopted by the congregation to staff members called to such responsibility who are supervised by

the Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor may approve expenditures and contracts that are at variance with the budget adopted up to an amount that does not exceed 5% of the total expenses budgeted for the year.;

- f. [e. The Congregation Council] may incur obligations [, approve expenditures and enter into contracts] of up to more than ten percent (10%) in excess of the anticipated receipts only after approval by a Congregation Meeting. that are at variance with the budget adopted up to an amount that does not exceed 10% of the total expenses budgeted for the year. A Congregational Meeting is necessary to incur expenses that will exceed 10% of the budget adopted.] The budget shall include this congregation's full-indicated share in support of the wider ministry being carried ~~on~~ [out] in partnership with the synod and churchwide organization;
- g. [f.]The Congregation Council shall ~~ascertain~~ [establish policies that insure] that the financial affairs of this congregation are being conducted efficiently, giving particular attention to the prompt payment of all obligations and to the regular forwarding of benevolence monies to the ~~synodical~~ treasurer [of the Synod.;
- h. [g.] The Congregation Council shall ~~be responsible~~ [develop policies and strategies that reflect faithful stewardship of] the ~~for this~~ congregation's investments and [guide the implementation of] its total insurance program;
- i. [h. The Congregation Council shall establish policies that provide for an annual audit of financial records. Said policies will be developed in dialogue with recommendations and guidelines supplied by the ELCA. An audit may be performed by members of the congregation appointed by the Congregation Council upon recommendation of the Leadership Development Committee (as defined in C13.02); or the Congregation Council may call for an external audit performed by an outside firm. The Audit Firm may be assisted by members of the congregation appointed by the Congregation Council upon recommendation of the Leadership Development Committee.]

- C12.06. The Congregation Council shall see that the provisions of this constitution, its bylaws, and the continuing resolutions are carried out.
- C12.07. The Congregation Council shall ~~provide for~~ [establish strategies, policies and guidelines for] an annual review of the membership roster [of the congregation that attends to accuracy of numbers, growth in discipleship, and activity of members].
- C12.08. The Congregation Council shall [establish personnel policies that guide] insure that guidelines ~~for~~ the employment and supervision of the salaried lay workers of this congregation [and address such issues for rostered employees that are not addressed or set forth elsewhere in this document or in the policies of the Synod and/or ELCA] are in place.
- C12.09. The Congregation Council shall submit a comprehensive report to this congregation at an annual meeting [that:
- a. provides information about the way in which the congregation has engaged in and endeavored to live out its mission, vision, values and beliefs;
 - b. provides a summary of progress made toward the accomplishment of or progress toward strategic priorities and ends policies;
 - c. provides a summary of the stewardship of the financial, property, and human resources of the congregation].
- C12.14[0].The Congregation Council shall normally meet once a month. Special meetings may be called by the [Senior P] pastor or the p[P]resident, and shall be called by the p[P]resident at the request of at least one-half of its members. Notice of each special meeting shall be given to all who are entitled to be present [,and shall be given at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to the meeting in person, by phone or by e-mail.

- a. Meetings of the Congregation Council are open to voting members who will have no voice or vote at said meetings;
- b. Voting members of the congregation may be granted voice at a meeting of the Congregation Council by the Executive Committee by making a written request that details the topic of conversation;
- c. Meetings of the Congregation Council will be closed when considering and voting on specific motions relating to mission and ministries of the congregation, or when the Congregation Council votes to go into Executive Session].

C12.12[1].A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of a majority of the members of the Congregation Council, including the p[P]astor(s) or interim p[P]astor, except when the p[P]astor or interim p[P]astor requests or consents to be absent and has given prior approval to the agenda for a particular regular or special meeting, which shall be the only business considered at that meeting. Chronic or repeated absence of the p[P]astor or interim p[P]astor who has refused approval of the agenda of a subsequent regular or special meeting shall not preclude action by the Congregation Council, following consultation with the ~~synodical~~ bishop [of the synod].

C12.13[2] The Congregation Council is empowered to exercise authority on behalf of the congregation in all matters that are not expressly outlined in C5.03 a ~~thru~~ [through] j.

Chapter 13. CONGREGATION COMMITTEES

C13.01. The officers of this congregation and the [Senior P]pastor charged with primary administrative responsibilities of the congregation shall constitute the Executive Committee. [The functions of the Executive Committee shall include:

- a. Establishment of the agenda for meetings of the Congregation and Congregational Council;
- b. Providing a means of evaluation for the Senior Pastor;
- c. Establishment of policies for the stewardship of human resources serving as paid staff which include policies that provide for the evaluation and compensation of personnel employed by the congregation;
- d. Mentoring of other leaders in the congregation as disciples and as potential leaders called to the ministry of governance.]

C13.02. A ~~Nominating~~ [Leadership Development] Committee ~~of six voting members of this congregation, two of whom, if possible, shall be outgoing members of the Congregation Council, shall be elected at the annual meeting for a term of one year. Members of the Nominating Committee are not eligible for consecutive reelection. [shall be established that is responsible for raising up leaders in the congregation, insuring that the need for elected leaders is met each year with appropriate nominees, and mentoring leaders as disciples and leaders called to serve God through governance of the congregation.~~

- a. The Leadership Development Committee will be led by the immediate past President of the Congregation. In the event that this person is unable or unwilling to serve, the Executive Committee may appoint another past President or another member of the Committee to serve as chair;
- b. The Committee will include a pastor of the congregation and one Associate in Ministry (AIM) if an AIM is currently called by the congregation;
- c. The Committee will include two other members who have served as elected leaders in the last five (5) years.

- C13.03. ~~An Audit Committee of two voting members shall be elected by the Congregation Council. Audit Committee members shall not be members of the Congregation Council. Term of office shall be two years, with one member elected each year. Members shall be eligible for reelection.~~
- C13.04[3]. ~~A Mutual Ministry Committee (in the absence of a mutual ministry committee, their duties shall be fulfilled by the executive committee) shall be appointed jointly by the president and the pastor. Term of office shall be two years, with three members to be appointed each successive year. [A Mission & Ministry Advisory Committee shall be made up of the past five Presidents of the congregation who wish to serve; Congregation Council members of the congregation who have completed service within the last three (3) years who wish to serve; all rostered leaders serving the congregation; all rostered leaders who are members of the congregation and in good standing with the Synod who are retired, serving in specialized or non-congregational ministries who wish to serve; three voting members appointed by the President and three voting members appointed by the Senior Pastor. The committee will:~~
- a. ~~Provide counsel, insight, and wisdom about the mission and ministry of the congregation as requested by the President and/or Senior Pastor;~~
 - b. ~~Hold meetings of the committee as called by the Senior Pastor and/or the President of the Congregation which will be chaired by the Senior Pastor or the President in the Senior Pastor's absence; meetings shall be held quarterly and more frequently as needed;~~
 - c. ~~Help mentor and facilitate communication of mission, vision, beliefs, values and congregational programs and challenges in the congregation and the surrounding community;~~
 - d. ~~Provide a positive model for discipleship and congregational life.~~
- C13.05[4]. ~~When a pastoral vacancy occurs, a Call Committee of six (6) voting members, two alternate, non-voting members, and one staff person who will have voting privileges shall be appointed by the Congregation Council. [The Congregation Council shall appoint a chair from among the members of the committee.] Term of office will terminate upon installation of the newly called pastor.~~
- C13.06[5]. ~~Other committees [needed to aid the Congregation Council as it engages and lives out the mission, vision, values, and beliefs] of this congregation may be formed, as the need arises, by decision of the Congregation Council. [Said Committees will not assume duties of ministry teams, staff, or other resources dedicated to the day to day operations of the congregation or the execution of programs and procedures that implement the mission, vision, values and beliefs of the congregation].~~
- C13.07[6]. ~~Duties of committees of this congregation shall be communicated and supervised by the Congregation Council and may be specified in the bylaws and/or continuing resolutions.~~

BY-LAWS REGARDING GOVERNANCE

Chapter 2 THE ANNUAL MEETING

- B2.01 The annual meeting of this congregation shall be held no later than the final Sunday in January.
- B2.02 ~~The pastor(s), the ministerial staff, the officers, the Congregation Council, the Audit Committee, the Nominating Committee, and the Mutual Ministry Committee shall make report in writing at the annual meeting. Reports are due at a time to be assigned by the Congregation Council.~~

B2.03[2] It is the duty and privilege of all voting members to participate in [the] congregational meeting. However, when deciding on property issues or the borrowing or lending of money, only those members who have attained the age of 18 years may participate in the vote.

B2.04[3] The fiscal year of this congregation shall be from January 1 through December 31.

Chapter 3 OFFICERS AND CONGREGATION COUNCIL

B.3.01 Elected and appointed leaders of the congregation will be guided by faith as expressed in the Confession of Faith in the constitution. In addition, the mission, vision, ~~and values~~ [and beliefs] of the congregation will provide discipline and guidance for all we do. Leaders will be called upon to reflect ~~this~~ [the] mission, vision, ~~and these values~~ [and beliefs] in the role of leader and as a member of the congregation [in their daily lives]. ~~Leaders will be encouraged to lead by example as the values of the congregation become values for daily living.~~ Members of the Congregation Council [will] ~~are encouraged and expected to:~~

- a. Attend worship regularly and participate in ~~at least one Sunday morning ministry~~ [ministries of the congregation that support our worship life and hospitality];
- b. Pray for the staff, leaders, and mission of the congregation daily;
- c. Participate in learning opportunities that nurture growth in faith and understanding;
- d. Participate in a small group ~~or fellowship group~~ of the congregation;
- e. Commit to using their spiritual gifts in the life of the congregation and the world beyond;
- f. Commit to tithing (giving the first 10%) or working toward tithing as an act of faith and discipleship;
- g. Seek opportunities to invite and provide hospitality to others;
- h. [Keep all discussions that take place at Congregation Council meetings confidential];
- i. [Support the decision of the group once a decision has been made and/or vote has been taken by the Congregation Council];
- j. [Model spiritually healthy behavior that builds up the body of Christ.]

B3.02 The duties of the officers of this congregation are [to]:

- a. President:
 1. Preside at [Congregation C]ouncil and [C]ongregational meetings;
 2. Serve as liaison with the Northern Illinois Synod in the absence of the [Senior] Pastor or when conflicts exist between the congregation and pastor;
 3. [Chair the meetings of the Mission & Ministry Advisory Committee as outlined in C 13.03];
 4. [Develop and implement a plan for prayer and devotional life to be a part of every meeting of the Congregation and Congregational Council];
 5. [Work to establish and maintain a healthy line of communication between the Executive Committee, Congregation Council and Senior Pastor];

6. Execute the responsibilities of the President as outlined in the Constitution and By-Laws;
7. Work to ensure that continuity of leadership is maintained through mentoring others and development of leaders.]

b. Vice President

1. ~~Shall [E]function as p [P]resident in the absence of the p [P]resident;~~
2. ~~Shall be responsible for the Council's regular review of membership in cooperation with the pastor charged with administrative duties and Parish Administrator.~~
3. [2. Act as Chair of the Congregation's Preschool Board;
4. 3. Provide leadership for the Executive Committee and Congregation Council on matters relating to the establishment of policies and strategies that guide the stewardship of human resources;
5. 4. Execute the responsibilities of the Vice President as outlined in the Constitution and By-Laws;
6. 5. Carry out other duties as necessary and as assigned by the President;
7. 6. Work to ensure that continuity of leadership is maintained through mentoring others and development of leaders.]

c. Secretary:

1. Keep the minutes of [~~Congregation C]ouncil and [C]ongregational meetings.~~
2. [Provide leadership for the Executive Committee and Congregation Council on matters that pertain to establishing policies to m]M[aintain congregational archives;
3. ~~[Shall be responsible for the Council's [Provide leadership to the Congregation Council and Executive Committee on the policies that guide the] regular review of membership [status and records as outlined in C12.07:] in cooperation with the pastor charged with administrative duties and Parish Administrator].~~
4. [Execute the responsibilities of the Secretary as outlined in the Constitution and By-Laws;
5. Carry out other duties as necessary and as assigned by the President;
6. Work to ensure that continuity of leadership is maintained through mentoring others and development of leaders.]

d. Treasurer

1. ~~To have custody of all funds of this congregation and of all organizations of this congregation, unless a congregationally approved office have been enacted [Provide primary custodial oversight and accept primary responsibility and authority for all the funds of the congregation subject to policies established by the Congregation Council in a manner that insures proper cash control and security; provide guidance in developing policies and procedures that guide those staff and/or members assigned responsibilities for payables, receivables, and other day to day management of said funds that insure accepted principals of cash control and security;]~~

2. ~~To~~ [Provide leadership to the Executive Committee and Congregation Council as policies and strategies are developed to receive and disburse such funds;] in accordance with the decision of this congregation and council.
3. ~~To~~ [Provide leadership to the Executive Committee and Congregation Council in the establishment of policies and strategies that] ~~work with the Financial Secretary to ensure accurate and complete records of all contributions;~~
4. ~~To~~ [Lead the Executive Committee and Congregation Council in the review and response to budget recommendations presented by the staff through the Senior Pastor; to provide guidance to the Congregation Council in the presentation of the budget for congregational approval;] ~~be responsible for the preparation of a budget for action by this congregation at the annual meeting.~~
5. Carry out other duties as necessary and as assigned by the President;
6. [Provide leadership to the Executive Committee and Congregation Council in the establishment of policies and strategies that provide for financial review according to C.12.05i.]

B3.03 ~~The congregation shall elect members to lead teams that correspond to the values stated by the congregation. Each team leader shall be a member of the Council. In addition, a youth representative shall be elected to the council. [The duties of members of the Congregation Council not serving as officers or under call as Pastors are [to]:~~

- a. Attend the regular and specially called meetings of the Congregation Council;
- b. Be open to mentoring and leadership by officers and other leaders as part of a commitment to grow in service, knowledge, and maturity as a leader of the congregation;
- c. Participate in the prayer and spiritual life of the Congregation Council;
- d. Work in partnership with all members of the Congregation Council to develop strategies, policies, and leadership that advances the mission, vision, values, and beliefs of the congregation;
- e. Carry out other duties as necessary and as assigned by the President.]

B3.04 The work of all committees, task forces, organizational groups, ministry teams, and individuals shall be guided by the mission, vision, ~~and~~ values [and beliefs] of the congregation. The Congregation Council shall be informed as to the work of all and may provide direction, correction, guidance, [and] evaluation as necessary.

Chapter 6-[1]

MISSION, VISION, [BELIEFS] AND VALUES

B6 [1].02 [1] The leadership and staff of the congregation shall continually work to articulate the vision that guides the congregation in mission. The Council will approve Vision Statements that clarify the mission and work to communicate said vision.

B6 [1].04 [2] The mission statement of the congregation shall be: **Making Christ Known.**

[B1.03 [The Vision of this congregation expresses what it looks like when our mission is carried out. The vision is embodied in the image of Christ as Life-Light, which is rooted in John 1:5 & 9 as translated in *The Message*: “**The Life-Light** blazed out of the darkness; the darkness couldn't put it out. **The Life-Light** was the real thing; Every person entering Life (Christ) brings into Light”. The vision statement of the congregation shall be: **Life-Light: Life defeating death; light dispelling darkness.]**

B6 [1].03 [4] The Values of the congregation [~~are behavioral values that describe who we are and who we desire to be in Christ.~~] ~~may be changed by following procedures to amend the bylaws as a means of building consensus.~~ The stated values of the congregation which give shape to and inform the execution of our mission are:

- ~~Hospitality/Invitation [Love]~~
- ~~Worship [Wholeness]~~
- ~~Learning [Delete]~~
- ~~Prayer [Trust]~~
- ~~Fellowship [Faithfulness]~~
- ~~Service [Delete]~~
- Generosity
- [Love - Cross-shaped love that grows out of God's love for us in Jesus Christ and flows to others. Lives that exude the compassion, care, openness, and sacrifice that are present in love. The glue that holds a community together;
- Wholeness - Attention to the whole person - body, mind and spirit; attention to the whole cosmos; the past, present and future; a ministry that seeks to bind together what is broken and integrate what is fragmented - from relationships to the environment;
- Generosity - A willingness to share freely of all we have; time, gifts, money, goods; the openness to others that leads to hospitality and sharing with the stranger; generosity of spirit that keeps us open to each other;
- Trust - A dependence on God's love and presence to guide and direct us; taking risks when it is discerned that God calls us forward; seeing leadership as faithful servants; open, faithful communication;
- Faithfulness - Honoring the covenants and relationships with each other, with the Church across in every age and every place, our traditions and our obligations to serve.]

B6 [1].04 [5] The Core Beliefs of the congregation [~~cannot contradict or express the fullness of our faith as it is outlined in C.02, but rather proclaim and confess the faith that this congregation clings to in the times of trial and challenge most passionately and can be understood by all who come to experience Christ in this place. Our core beliefs]~~ shall be:

- ~~Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior of the Word.~~
- ~~Christ comes to us in God's Word, water, wine & bread.~~
- ~~We are welcomed, accepted, and saved by grace.~~
- ~~We know Christ by knowing the people of Christ.~~
- ~~Christ changes and challenges us.~~
- ~~Every member is a minister.~~
- [God made us, claimed us, and knows us by name. We believe that God created and sustains all that exists; that this same God has justified, redeemed, called and adopted us as children through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; that this same God inhabits our daily lives through the Holy Spirit;

- **Jesus Christ is Lord of our life, our death, and all creation.** By the power of the cross and resurrection, God has established rule over all things - including life and death - in the person of Jesus Christ. He is our master, Lord, and the one whom we ultimately trust for all things;
- **Jesus Christ is the one real hope for the world.** In the midst of all the things the world offers that we try, nothing gives us true hope that death is not the final word and chaos not the rule of life except Jesus Christ. In him there is a final word that speaks life in the face of death; hope in the face of despair; wholeness in the face of chaos; meaning in the face of meaninglessness;
- **Christ meets us and walks with us in our suffering.** God entered into our world not in a palace, but a stable; not among the rich, but the poor; not amidst the well, but the sick; not among the living, but the dead. The cross is the meeting place between God and humanity. God meets us in the depths of our failures, pain, suffering and death bringing redemption and life;
- **Nothing separates us from the love of Christ.** God's love in Christ is unconditional, eternal, and ultimate. Nothing we can do or not do; nothing that others say or do to us; nothing that happens in time or space can come between us and God's love and acceptance – period;
- **God's love is a free gift for all, paid for by Jesus Christ.** God accepts us, saves us, makes us holy because of what Jesus Christ has done, not by what we do, think, say, accomplish, prove, or experience. We were saved on a hill outside of Jerusalem on the day the blood of Jesus cleansed the world.]