

Structuring a Parish

PREAMBLE:

In the belief that the advancement of the Kingdom of God can best be attained through closer cooperation and a joint ministry in the churches, we hereby set forth the plans and agreement for such a cooperative venture between _____ and _____.

We are separate, independent congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. As such, we assume responsibility for our own programs, call a pastor in cooperation with adjacent congregations, and seek to promote the lordship of Christ among our members and in our community.

We believe in “the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints.” We believe that the church is more than our own congregation. We join hands with neighboring congregations in order to support a pastor, but more, because we are only one part of the body of Christ. The parts are meant to fit together and work together, and only together are we able to witness to Christ’s love and life-giving power for changed lives in our community.

I. NAME

The name of our parish shall be _____.

II. PARISH COUNCIL

- A. Each congregation will elect representatives who will serve on the parish council. The parish council shall be made up of three (3) representatives from each church, two of whom must be members of their respective church boards. These 3 are to be chosen by each congregation as it sees fit. These representatives must be members in good standing in their churches. The chairman and any two members of the parish council may call a special meeting upon a week’s notice. A quorum shall consist of 2 members from each church. The representatives shall be selected for two-year terms. No member shall succeed himself/herself. The pastor shall be an advisory member of the council.
- B. Expenses will be distributed according to the following formula:
(confirmed membership or households, etc.)
- C. Duties of the parish council shall be:
 - 1. To advise on the salary, travel allowance and parsonage, subject to the approval of each congregation.
 - 2. To determine the schedule of services in each church, subject to the approval of each congregation.
 - 3. To advise and assist the pastor.
 - 4. To draw up a parish budget as needed for expenses incurred by the parish council, such as: bulletins, postage, copies, etc.

5. To consider other business and recommend policies of matters pertaining to the entire parish.
- D. Officers: the officers shall include a chairman, a vice-chairman, and a secretary-treasurer. The parish council shall elect the officers from among the members of the council each year. A record of all proceeding shall be kept.
- E. Each congregation shall delegate to the parish council the responsibility of reviewing the work of the pastor, consulting with the pastor regarding salary and benefits. Prior to the annual meeting of the congregations, the parish council shall prepare a recommendation stating the specific dollar amounts to be paid by each congregation for parish expenses. An individual congregation may request that the recommendation of the parish council be reconsidered. After consideration of appeals, the parish council's recommendation is final.
- F. Each congregation will submit monthly to the parish treasurer the agreed upon amount of dollars. The pastor's salary and benefits will be paid by the parish treasurer.
- G. The parish council shall make recommendations on all matters shared in common, such as parsonage matters, parish travel expenses, parish office supplies, etc.
- H. The parish council will assist in the calling of a pastor, but has no authority to extend a call. That remains with each congregation, which must vote separately by a 2/3 majority of those present and voting.

III. MEETINGS

- A. The parish council will meet at least quarterly, or more often as needed.
- B. The minutes of each parish council meeting are to be made public, and shared with each of the participating congregations.

IV. CONGREGATIONS

- A. Each congregation shall maintain its present identity and program.
- B. Each congregation shall be responsible for having its elected representatives attend the regular meeting of the parish council.
- C. Each congregation agrees to fulfill its financial obligations.
- D. Each congregation agrees not to withdraw from this parish agreement, until after due notice has been given.

V. AMENDMENTS AND ADOPTION

- A. This agreement shall be in effect when approved by a majority voting in each congregation at a duly called meeting of the congregation.
- B. The parish council may propose amendments to this agreement. Adoption of these amendments must be in the same manner as the original adoption.