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**CONSTITUTION
FOR THE
AMERICAN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF PRESCOTT, ARIZONA**

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PREAMBLE

Since the Word of God requires that all things in the Church be conducted correctly and in order, we, the voting members of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church, a congregation of believing Lutherans located in the City of Prescott, County of Yavapai, State of Arizona, come together to proclaim God's Word and administer His Sacraments, do herewith, in the name of the Triune God, adopt the following Constitution and Bylaws, by which all spiritual and material affairs of our Congregation shall be governed.

CHAPTER 1 – NAME AND INCORPORATION

C1.01 The name of the Congregation shall be American Evangelical Lutheran Church.

C1.02 The Congregation shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of Arizona.

CHAPTER 2 – MISSION

The purpose of this Congregation shall be:

- A. To proclaim God's Word;
- B. To administer the Sacraments;
- C. To organize ourselves so that the body of Christ is nurtured and equipped to glorify God and grow His kingdom in the name of Jesus.

CHAPTER 3 – DOCTRINAL STANDARD

C3.01 According to this Confession of Faith (Sections A & B in this Chapter), all questions of doctrine and practice will be decided.

- A. This Congregation, as a member of the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) & North American Lutheran Church (NALC), accepts all of the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the revealed and inerrant Word of God, verbally inspired, and submits to them as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life.
- B. This Congregation acknowledges and accepts all the Confessional Writing of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church as the accurate and genuine expositions of Christian doctrine drawn from the Holy Scriptures, namely:
 - 1. The Three Ecumenical Creeds (The Apostolic, The Nicene and the Athanasian) (APPENDIX A)

2. The Unaltered Augsburg Confession
3. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession
4. The Smalcald Articles
5. Luther's Large and Small Catechism
6. The Formula of Concord

CHAPTER 4 – AFFILIATIONS

C4.01 This Congregation shall be members of the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) & North American Lutheran Church (NALC) as long as the confessions and constitutions of said body are in accord with the confessions and Constitution of this Congregation as stated in Chapter 3.

C4.02 The voting members of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church can change the Church's Affiliations through votes at meetings convened by the church council, as detailed in the BYLAWS.

CHAPTER 5 – MEMBERSHIP

C5.01 Membership of the Congregation shall be those who are designated as such at the time that this constitution is adopted and those who are admitted thereafter and who maintain their membership in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution and its Bylaws.

C5.02 Members shall be classified as (a) baptized, (b) confirmed, (c) voting, (d) associate. A description of each classification is shown below.

A. **Baptized members** are those 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 proper 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** must be present to vote and shall be members in good standing and at least eighteen years old or older. The term "in good standing" shall be defined to include:

1. Are baptized in the name of the Triune God.

2. Have declared their acceptance of the confessions of this Congregation as contained in Chapter 3 of this Constitution.
3. Remain faithful to the responsibilities of membership as contained in this Constitution and BYLAWS.
4. Members who contribute to the Congregational treasury according to the Congregation's record.
5. Are not members of any organization (secret or oath-bound society) in conflict with the Confession of Faith stated in Chapter 3 of this Constitution (II Corinthians 6:14-18).

D. A baptized, confessing Christian may become an **Associate Member** by submitting the *Associate Membership Form* obtained through the Church's Director of Administration.

1. An Associate Member may not vote in any official church meeting nor, hold an elected office, nor be included in the official membership roll of the Congregation but would enjoy all the other privileges and responsibilities affiliated with membership at AELC.

E. At the request of the member or the receiving Church, the Director of Administration shall provide a *Letter of Transfer* to anyone leaving our membership.

C5.03 Each member's membership and membership privileges shall remain in force as long as the member maintains eligibility according to the requirements outlined in paragraph C5.02. A member who voluntarily severs connection with this Congregation, or who has been released or transferred, or who has been excommunicated, or excludes themselves, shall be deemed to have terminated membership in this Congregation along with all rights and privileges of such membership.

CHAPTER 6 – WORSHIP

C6.01 As an expression of the unity of the body of Christ, the Congregation recognizes the desirability of conforming to the practices of other Lutheran Congregations.

CHAPTER 7 – ORGANIZATION

C7.01 General

This Congregation shall be represented by and administer all its affairs through its body of Voting Members known as the Congregational Voters Assembly (from now on, called the Voters Assembly). Only members who are qualified according to the

membership provisions of Chapter 5 shall be Voting Members of the Congregation.

C7.02 Officers of the Congregation

The officers of the Congregation shall consist of a President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary.

C7.03 Church Council

The members of the Church Council consist of the:

- President
- Vice President
- Treasurer
- Secretary
- And Coordinators as defined by the Bylaws

C7.04 OFFICERS AND BOARDS

On an annual basis, the Church Council shall appoint from the current members of the council the following officers, each for a term of one year:

- a) President – *shall serve as Church Council President;*
- b) Vice President – *shall serve as Church Council Vice President;*
- c) Secretary – *shall serve as Church Council Secretary*
- d) Treasurer – *shall serve as Church Council Treasurer*

Boards and Committees – Boards, committees, subcommittees, task forces, and working groups may be established by the Church Council as deemed necessary.

C7.05 Operations

The Congregation's day-to-day operations shall be administered per policies and directives established by the Church Council.

C7.06 Rights and Powers

The powers of the Congregation shall be vested in the Voters Assembly, called and conducted in such manner as is provided in this Constitution and its Bylaws as implemented in the Policies and Procedures and in the Council Coordinators elected by the Congregation. A quorum of 5% of the eligible voting members will be required to conduct a legal meeting. The Congregation is empowered to:

- A. acquire real and personal property by gift, devise, bequest, or other lawful means;
- B. hold title to and use its property for all activities consistent with its purpose
- C. enter into a contract;
- D. sell, mortgage, lease, transfer, or otherwise dispose of its property by any lawful means;
- E. sue and be sued; and
- F. elect officers and Council Coordinators in accordance with this Constitution and its BYLAWS and the resolutions of the Congregation

CHAPTER 8 – PASTOR(S)

- C8.01** A Pastor of the Congregation shall be a person whose soundness in the faith, aptness to teach, and educational qualifications have been examined and approved by the American Evangelical Lutheran Church and whose ordination is recognized by the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) or the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC), who accepts and adheres to the confession of faith of the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) and who strives in life and conduct to be above reproach.
- C8.02** Authority to call a pastor shall rest with the Congregation. Such authority to call shall be exercised by not less than a two-thirds majority vote of members present and voting at a meeting legally called for that purpose.
- C8.03** A call for a Pastor shall be from Clergy in good standing of the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) or with the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC)
- C8.04** In the case of an individual who has not yet been ordained, but who has met all other qualifications and is in the process of ordination, the Congregation may call such an individual to serve as Pastor with the understanding that their ordination must be completed within a reasonable time frame, as agreed upon by the Congregation and the candidate. The individual must be in good standing with either the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) or the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) and must fully adhere to the confession of faith of the NALC. This provision allows for a candidate to serve as Pastor while completing the ordination process, provided he or she maintains all other qualifications and demonstrates soundness in the faith, aptness to teach, and a commitment to living above reproach.

C8.05 If the need arises, the Church Council may hire a pastor on an interim basis. The Congregation will ratify a longer appointment if necessary.

C8.06 If, in the judgment of the Congregation, the pastor is no longer able to serve it satisfactorily, they may be requested to resign. The Church Council will follow the procedures and conditions outlined in the BYLAWS for this situation.

CHAPTER 9– MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION

C9.01 The power and authority of the Congregation shall be exercised through the Voters Assembly, which shall be called and conducted in conformity with civil laws and the provisions of this Constitution and its Bylaws.

CHAPTER 10 – BYLAWS

C10.01 With the recommendation of the Church Council, the Congregation shall adopt such Bylaws as may from time to time be necessary. No bylaw may conflict with this constitution.

C10.02 Bylaws may be adopted or amended at any legally called and conducted meeting of the Congregation by a-majority vote as defined in the BYLAWS.

CHAPTER 11 – AMENDMENTS

C11.01 The doctrinal basis and the confessional subscription of this Constitution shall be unalterable, and no amendment shall conflict in addition to that.

C11.02 A proposed amendment to this Constitution shall be:

- a) Read at a public service of the Congregation (Voters Assembly) or mailed to the voting members not less than thirty days before the legally called meeting at which it is to be considered;
- b) Approved without change at the legally called meeting following its announcement by a majority vote of those present and voting;
- c) Ratified without further change at the next annual meeting or a specially called meeting by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting.

C11.03 If a proposed amendment fails to be adopted, it may be amended by a majority vote of those present and voting and adopted without

change by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting at the next following annual meeting or a specially called meeting.

APPENDIX A

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell; on the third day, He rose again from the dead; He ascended into Heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there, He will come to judge the living and the dead.

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.

NICENE CREED

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen."

APPENDIX A (CONTINUED)

ATHANASIAN CREED

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

And the catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons; nor dividing the Essence. For there is one Person of the Father; another of the Son; and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one; the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is; such is the Son; and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreated; the Son uncreated; and the Holy Ghost uncreated. The Father unlimited; the Son unlimited; and the Holy Ghost unlimited. The Father eternal; the Son eternal; and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three eternals; but one eternal. As also there are not three uncreated; nor three infinities, but one uncreated; and one infinite. So likewise the Father is Almighty; the Son Almighty; and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet they are not three Almighties; but one Almighty. So the Father is God; the Son is God; and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods; but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord; the Son Lord; and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords; but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity; to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord; So are we forbidden by the catholic religion; to say, There are three Gods, or three Lords. The Father is made of none; neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone; not made, nor created; but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten; but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is before, or after another; none is greater, or less than another. But the whole three Persons are coeternal, and coequal. So that in all things, as aforesaid; the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved, let him thus think of the Trinity.

Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation; that he also believe faithfully the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess; that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God, of the Essence of the Father; begotten before the worlds; and Man, of the Essence of his Mother, born in the world. Perfect God; and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood. Who although he is God and Man; yet he is not two, but one Christ. One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh; but by assumption of the Manhood into God. One altogether; not by confusion of Essence; but by unity of Person.

For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man; so God and Man is one Christ; Who suffered for our salvation; descended into hell; rose again the third day from the dead. He ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of the God the Father Almighty, from whence he will come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men will rise again with their bodies; And shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire. This is the catholic faith; which except a man believe truly and firmly, he cannot be saved.

APPENDIX B

AMERICAN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH

- A. WE CONFESS THE HISTORICAL CHRISTIAN CREEDS AND THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS. This Congregation accepts the Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian Creeds as a true declaration of faith and the Lutheran Confessions as a true witness to the Word of God, normative for our teaching and practice.
- B. WE BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS LORD AND KING. John 14:6; Colossians 1:15-18; Philippians 2:9-11; John 18:36; Luke 17:20-21. Jesus is the head of the Church. Unity among the various expressions of the Body of Christ is achieved through focusing on Jesus, who alone is able to draw all people to Himself. Jesus is the King of the Kingdom of God and is establishing His Kingdom on earth by His effective will through His supreme power and authority. Jesus is the complete and ultimate expression of the living God and is a person of the divine Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- C. WE STAND UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE WORD OF GOD. John 1:1, 1:14; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Romans 15:4; Psalm 1. The Bible is our authority and sole guide for life and faith. We accept that all of the Scripture is inspired by God and is without error; however not all interpretation is without error. Therefore we support and encourage the study of the original manuscripts, recognizing the original audiences and purposes of a text, and allowing the Bible to interpret itself. For the Scriptures are a living Word that are always relevant and revealing God's purpose for all of creation.
- D. WE DESIRE GENUINE WORSHIP. John 4:23-24; Romans 12:1-2; Psalm 105:1-4. Worship establishes and encourages a right relationship between God and His people; God is the audience. Worship is essential for the believer and central to the life of the Church. In worship we cast our eyes to the cross, come under the instruction of God's Word, receive the gift of Baptism, are strengthened with the Lord's Supper, and grow together as Christ's body. Worship involves the whole person – body, mind, heart and soul.
- E. WE ARE CALLED BY GOD. John 15:16; 1 Peter 2:9; Ephesians 1:3-6 & 4:11-16. We believe in "the priesthood of all believers." All of God's people are called to ministry and each member of the Body of Christ must recognize and affirm that call. Jesus has given each believer the greatest "once-in-a-lifetime" opportunity to be His apprentice and, with His help, discover our spiritual gifts in order to learn how to effectively use them to build up the Body of Christ and grow His Kingdom.

- F. WE ARE FREE IN CHRIST. John 8:31-36; Romans 8:1-2; Galatians 5:1; Ephesians 2:13-22. Because of what Jesus has accomplished for us through the cross we are free from the bondage of sin and enjoy peace with God. We are free to serve God as the Lord leads us and not out of guilt, obligation or duty. We serve God joyfully in response to all that the Lord has done for us: past, present and future.
- G. WE WILL "GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES." Matthew 28:18-20; Matthew 4:18-20; Luke 19:10; 2 Corinthians 2:14. Jesus gave his disciples this command: "Go and make disciples of all nations." Disciples of Jesus make disciples of Jesus. A disciple of Jesus is one who believes in Him as Savior *and* Lord. Disciples of Jesus intentionally apprentice themselves to Him as the one Master of their life. They, in turn, act as the hands and feet of Jesus in order to spread His saving knowledge and grow His Kingdom—inviting every person to consider a personal, active and everlasting relationship with Him. We are called not only to spread His knowledge and way of life, but also to help cultivate this in all those who have come to believe.
- H. WE CELEBRATE THAT GOD IS CHANGING LIVES. John 8:1-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 3:15; Romans 8:29-30; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. It is God alone who spiritually regenerates and transforms people who can freely love and serve Him. It is God's will for every believer to be conformed to the image of His beloved Son. We accept that there is nothing in this world that ever stays the same except the solid rock of Christ. We trust that God will give us all that we could ever need to adapt to our changing surroundings and become "all things to all people" without compromising our obedience to Him. We worship Jesus, not our tradition, not our history and not ourselves.
- I. WE BELIEVE THAT IN BAPTISM THE LORD CLEANSSES US FROM OUR SIN AND GIVES US THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. Mark 1:4-5; Acts 2:37-41; Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3-4. God has commanded those who seek eternal life to be baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Baptism is an outward sign of the inner rebirth of the believer. Baptism has not been given to us to act as a proclamation of our faith. Baptism is not our work; it is God's work of grace. In baptism we are buried with Christ in His death and raised to new life in His resurrection. Without repentance and belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of our lives, Baptism alone has no promise of salvation.
- J. WE BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS PRESENT IN THE LORD'S SUPPER. 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-29; JOHN 6:32-58. WHEN WE RECEIVE THE LORD'S SUPPER (COMMUNION) WITH A REPENTANT HEART WE ARE ASSURED THAT OUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN AND ARE SPIRITUALLY NOURISHED AND RENEWED WITH CHRIST'S LIFE-GIVING BODY AND

BLOOD. IT IS AT THE LORD'S TABLE THAT WE TOGETHER PROCLAIM CHRIST'S DEATH ON THE CROSS FOR THE SINS OF THE WORLD.

- K. WE AFFIRM THAT GOD ESTABLISHED THE SACRED COVENANT OF MARRIAGE. Genesis 2:24-25; Matthew 19:4-6. God created us male and female, and it is His will and intention that all human sexual expression and fulfillment take place only within the boundaries of marriage between one man and one woman. Marriage is God's one-flesh complementary union and covenant that He established from the beginning to beautifully bind together husband and wife. All weddings performed in the facilities of American Evangelical Lutheran Church, or by any of its Pastors in any venue, are Christian worship services.
- L. WE MAKE IT OUR AIM TO LOVE AS SCRIPTURE TEACHES US TO LOVE. Matthew 22:37-40; John 14:15; John 17:26; 1 Corinthians 13; 1 John 4:7-21. Love of God and our neighbor is to be the sole focus of our lives. Without the love of God actively working in our lives, guiding, inspiring and directing our daily decisions, our actions come to nothing worthy of God's name. God is love and expects His followers to be controlled by His love. Love in us produces works of love toward others and empowers us to love all people regardless of their actions and beliefs.
- M. WE HOLD THAT ALL HUMAN LIFE IS UNIQUELY SACRED. Genesis 1:25-28; Psalm 139:13-16; John 1:12-13. In the beginning, God uniquely created humankind in His perfect image and likeness. Every person was first conceived in the mind of God, comes into being at physical conception and remains sacred in the eyes of God throughout their life. Because God alone is the giver and sustainer of life, all human acts with the intention to harm or destroy human life without just cause, are an affront to the Creator "who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).