

Dear Friends in Christ,

A couple of years ago, it was suggested at an annual meeting that we should review our constitution to see if any updates were needed. The main concern was that the church council was too large. We had already downsized from 16 to 14 members on the council, but it still seemed too large. Also, our constitution was 28 pages long and in need of some simplification. And finally, the constitution had language that reflected the structure and practices of the ELCA rather than our current association in LCMC.

So a team of 5 (Vicki Carstens, Kayla Jacobs, Craig Olson, John Taggs, and myself) went to work studying our constitution and other LCMC constitutions. We made no changes to the chapter on "Confession of Faith". What Immanuel believes and teaches has not changed. We did, however, find some things that we believed could be improved.



1. We simplified and cut out extra wording to reduce the text of the constitution from 28 to 18 pages. We removed chapters on "Nature of the Church" and "Property Ownership" as unnecessary leftovers from our history in the ELCA.
2. We simplified the Statement of Purpose to focus on the Great Commission in Matthew 28 and on Luther's Small Catechism explanation to the third article of the Creed. Our purpose is simply to make disciples of Jesus by calling, gathering, enlightening, and sanctifying for service.
3. We updated language on Communion participation to allow freedom to welcome younger children to the sacrament and to reflect Luther's language in the Small Catechism. We have already begun to do this, but now it is clearly explained how.
4. We downsized the Church Council from 14 to 12 members with 3-year terms instead of 2-year terms. The congregation will elect 4 members each year to the council and then the council will elect its own officers and committee representatives for each year. Last year the nominating committee had to replace 7 members (half of the church council). This change will mean that the nominating committee can focus on finding no more than 4 candidates for church council each year.
5. We added bylaws to address complaints against a pastor. Not that we are expecting complaints, but there was no clear process for dealing with conflict. In LCMC we don't have a bishop to tell us what to do.
6. We reduced council committees from 6 to 5 by combining the Fellowship and Education committees. This enabled us to reduce the council to 12 members while still keeping 2 council people on each committee. Hopefully the new Fellowship and Education committee can recruit enough people to take care of both areas of our ministry.
7. We changed terms on the Trust and Memorial Committee from two 3-year terms to a single 5-year term. This will help with continuity as only one new member will be added to the committee each year.

In order to amend the constitution, we need two congregational votes. Our first one will be November 22 at 10:00 AM. If the proposal passes at the November meeting a ratifying vote will be held at our annual congregational meeting in January. Immanuel has been blessed with good leaders and good organization. I think that these small changes will help us continue that tradition into the future.

Yours in Christ, *Phil Nielsen*