

# Summary Report

## Prepared by Constitution Revision Task Force

Working Document  
Revised 5-10-2017

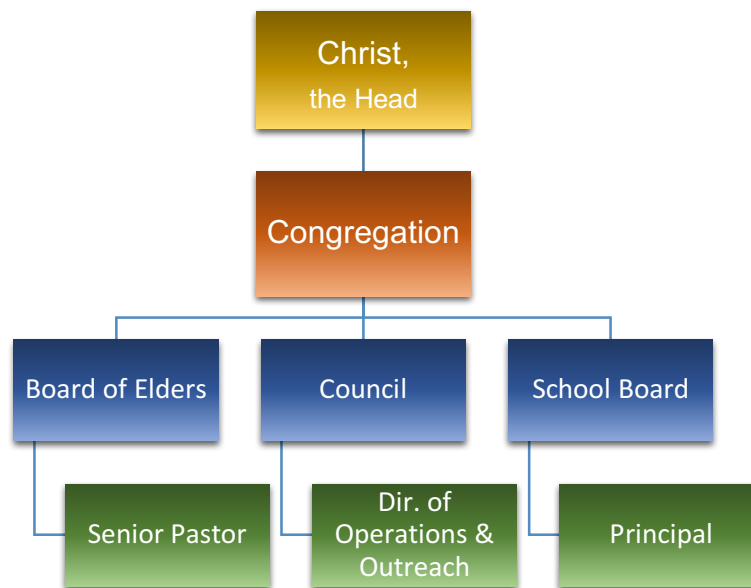
*This is a summary of the full detailed report available from the Task Force.*

In accord with its assignment, the Constitution Revision Task force proposes a three-board model for the new organizational structure for Trinity Lutheran Church for a number of reasons, including:

- In addition to organizing around the Great Commission, the current organizational structure was purposed to assign several responsibilities to eight administrative boards for carrying out ministry functions because the congregation only had two church staff persons – a full-time pastor and a part-time secretary.
- Since its adoption in October 1981, the congregation has called and employed several key staff who replace many of the responsibilities of the administrative boards. However, the governance structure (including Bylaws, Standard Operations Procedures, and Job Descriptions) have not been modified to reflect these major changes in ministry administration.
- The congregation has not followed many of the provisions of its current Constitution and Bylaws or Standard Operating Procedures for many years.
- As new positions were added and existing positions changed, job descriptions have been developed that conflict with Bylaws and Standard Operating Procedures, leading to confusion among key roles of boards and staff positions.
- It is becoming increasingly more challenging to find people not only to fill positions, but also to actively serve as required by the Bylaws. Over the years, some board chairpersons fail to participate actively in Parish Planning Council meetings or provide required reports. With most Voters Meetings attendance less than 30, the vast majority of the congregation (over 1100 communicant members with average weekly worship attendance around 400) and even the majority of people elected to boards fail to attend regular Voters Assembly meetings. Many Voters Assembly meetings have been canceled. Accordingly, key governing decisions are made by a small minority or delayed. This results in poor administrative practices and long delays in ministry decisions.
- Although many professional staff have been called and employed to replace the administrative functions of boards, the governing documents have not been amended to reflect these changes. Thus, many staff have responsibilities but lack the proper authority to fulfill their responsibilities.
- In a number of areas, the congregation currently operates as if it has already adopted a new model where staff have replaced several administrative boards. The boards often act as advisory boards rather than governing boards, and the staff implement plans for ministry. However, the official governing documents do not reflect the actual practice of the congregation, resulting in confusion as described above.

The Task Force proposes a three-board model that delegates the day-to-day operations to three key staff, reflecting much of our current practices and clarifying conclusions.

## Basic Organizational Chart



This proposed structure features these principles:

- The congregation remains the final governing authority.
  - Regular meetings once per year for election of officers and approval of annual ministry plan (with summary budget).
  - Special meetings for calling professional church workers and other major decisions.
- Three governing boards, elected by the congregation, govern ministry in three key areas.
- Board of Elders
  - Oversees the spiritual welfare and ministry functions of the congregation.
  - Delegates day-to-day spiritual ministry operations to the Senior Pastor.
  - Staff reporting to the Senior Pastor to fulfill spiritual ministry functions include Associate Pastor, Director of Youth and Parish Ministry, Director of Outreach, Music Director, and Administrative Secretary.
  - Informally, existing board members that will continue to serve as ministry teams under professional staff include those serving in Youth Ministry (under Director of Youth and Parish Ministry), Evangelism (under Director of Outreach), and Stewardship (for spiritual functions under Senior Pastor).
- Council
  - Oversees the social ministries and management of fiscal, property, and legal areas.
  - Delegates day-to-day operations to Director of Operations and Outreach.
  - Staff reporting to Director of Operations includes Financial Assistant and Janitorial staff.
  - Informally, existing board members that will continue to serve as committees under the Director of Operations include Parish Properties, Stewardship (for financial functions), Fellowship, and Public Relations.
- School Board
  - Oversees the governance of the school and day care.
  - Delegates day-to-day operations to Principal.
  - Current volunteer groups and ministry teams serve under the Principal or his designees.

## Questions and Answers

### **Q: For which kinds of policies would each level of leadership be responsible?**

**A:** The highest level of leadership is responsible for the broadest policies.

- As the overall governing authority, the congregation establishes broad policy through the bylaws which govern all other leadership levels. The congregation may also adopt broad policies if required by civil law or in other broad areas of governance.
- The three main boards (Elders, Council, School Board) implement the desires of the congregation by adopting the next level of policies which guide staff in their management responsibilities and establishing staff policies. This includes the mission statements of the congregation and school. All their decisions and policies are subject to the congregation's policies and the bylaws.
- The key staff (Senior Pastor, Director of Operations, and Principal) implement the policies of the boards, managing day-to-day operations and adopting detailed policies that guide the rest of staff and volunteers.

### **Q: How are the boards and staff held accountable for their responsibilities?**

**A:** The congregation holds boards and called staff accountable in two ways:

- By electing and/or removing board members for cause, and by calling and removing called professional church workers for cause (as in our current constitution and bylaws).
- By enacting more detailed bylaws or policies limiting the responsibilities of boards and staff.

The boards hold key staff accountable in similar ways:

- By employing and removing contracted staff, and by making recommendations to the congregation for calling or removing called professional church workers for cause.
- By adopting policies limiting the responsibilities of staff.

Key staff hold other staff accountable.

- By employing and/or removing contracted staff, and by making recommendations to the congregation for calling or removing called professional church workers for cause.
- By adopting policies limiting the responsibilities of the staff.

### **Q. What is meant by removing called professional workers for cause?**

The proposed constitution and bylaws will retain the same requirements for removing a called worker as in our current constitution and bylaws and as required by the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) Constitution and Bylaws. Cause for removing called workers include persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, and willful neglect of official duties or evident and protracted incapacity to perform the function of the sacred office.

In discussion with the Parish Planning Council in December 2016, it was noted that the bylaws should also note the possibility of eliminating a position because the congregation can no longer afford to fund the position in the budget.

**Q: How can individual congregational members keep informed in the proposed structure?**

**A:** The task force recommends that the bylaws or broad policies require that the boards and key staff provide regular reports on their work and make available minutes and policies available to congregational members.

**Q: How can individual congregational members provide input or communicate concerns between congregational meetings?**

**A:** In the Bible, Christians are taught to go directly to those with whom they are in conflict (Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-16; Romans 12:18; Galatians 6:1-2). For input or non-sin issues, members are encouraged to speak directly with staff or boards most responsible. In addition, each member family is assigned an elder who is responsible for guiding people in biblically faithful manners for addressing their concerns. The church also has a Reconciliation Ministry with reconcilers who can confidentially coach people in dealing with their concerns.

**Q. Why make the change in title from “Board of Lay Ministry” to “Board of Elders?” Will the qualification change that a lay minister or elder be male?**

Prior to 1981, Trinity’s constitution and bylaws used the title “elder” which had been the historical practice of congregations throughout the LCMS. When our present constitution and bylaws were adopted in 1981, the new term “lay ministry” replaced “elder.” This new term began to be used in some other LCMS congregations as recommended by Rev. Don Abdon, whose model our existing constitution and bylaws were based. In some churches, “lay minister” was used for both men and women who made calls on members, especially to shut-ins or hospitalized members. The definition of “lay minister” was not consistent in practice among LCMS congregations.

Either title may be used. However, since the 1980’s, the Synod and its districts developed a specifically trained position entitled “Lay Minister.” For example, Concordia University – Wisconsin, offers a four-year Bachelor of Arts degree in Lay Ministry. Several districts also adopted extensive training programs for certifying men for service as lay ministers. These certified positions prepare professional church workers for specific areas that go beyond what most congregational elders do.

Thus, many congregations who have used the title “lay minister” are returning to the original title “elder” to avoid confusion. The title “lay minister” used in Trinity’s present constitution and bylaws is outdated and creates confusion as to the special role of this office.

The qualification requiring a lay minister or elder to be male will not change, as is consistent with the official doctrine and practice of congregations in the LCMS. (See multiple reports and opinions from the Commission on Theology and Church Relations at [www.lcms.org](http://www.lcms.org). E.g., “The Service of Women in Office with Guidelines 2005” reviews many of the previous published documents on this subject and provides guidelines.)

**NOTE:** In its meetings with several boards, the task force was encouraged in the revised bylaws to provide that the Senior Pastor or his designee be an ex-officio member of any board. It was also recommended that no board meeting be held without the Senior Pastor’s knowledge.