

Constitution of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference

ARTICLE I Name

The name of this federation of churches shall be The Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference.

ARTICLE II Confession of Faith

Section 1. The Conference accepts the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God and submits to this Word of God as the only infallible rule and authority in all matters of doctrine, faith, and life.

Section 2. The Conference also accepts the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of 1580, not in so far as, but because they are a correct exposition of the pure doctrine of the Word of God.

ARTICLE III Purpose

The purpose of this conference of confessional Evangelical Lutheran churches is:

1. To give outward expression to the unity of spirit and oneness in faith and confession that binds the members of the Conference together;
2. To provide a forum for the members' mutual encouragement, spiritual growth, and strengthening in faith and confession;
3. To promote and strengthen the existing unity in scriptural doctrine and practice among the member churches and to seek to remove whatever might threaten to disturb or disrupt that unity;
4. To encourage the members of the Conference to be zealous in sharing their Lutheran heritage of the pure and unadulterated gospel of Jesus Christ with those who do not yet know and believe in Jesus as their Savior;
5. To give a clear, firm, and united testimony to the world concerning all that the Bible, the verbally inspired, inerrant, and authoritative Word of God, teaches;
6. To encourage and undertake the preparation and publication of clear Scripture-based confessional statements on issues that confront the church from time to time and which may or may not be addressed in the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of 1580.

ARTICLE IV
Membership

Section 1. Membership in the Conference may be acquired and held only by such Lutheran churches which have accepted without reservation the doctrinal and confessional basis of the Conference described in Article II and which are not in fellowship with churches that in their doctrine or practice deviate from the confessional standard of the Conference.

Section 2. Churches applying for membership in the Conference may be received at any convention of the Conference by an affirmative vote of two thirds of the delegates present and voting.

ARTICLE V
Authority

Section 1. The Conference has only advisory authority in all things with respect to which the member churches have not specifically given it power to act.

Section 2. Any member church of the Conference which enters into fellowship with another church shall submit its action to the next meeting of the Conference for ratification.

ARTICLE VI
Representation

Section 1. Each member church of the Conference shall be encouraged to send two male voting delegates to the regular meetings of the Conference.

Section 2. Other delegates are welcome at CELC meetings and may participate in the discussion, but they are not allowed to vote on matters of CELC business.

ARTICLE VII
Meetings

Regular plenary meetings of the Conference shall be held triennially. Recommendations as to the place and time of the meetings are to be made by the Planning Committee (see Article X) to the voting assembly three years in advance. Changes that become necessary are to be made and announced by the Planning Committee.

ARTICLE VIII
Officers

Section 1. Officers of the Conference shall be a president, vice president, and secretary.

Section 2. The officers of the Conference shall be elected from a slate of candidates presented by the Planning Committee, with opportunity for additional nominations from voting delegates at the meeting. Voting shall be by ballot. A majority is necessary for election.

Section 3. The officers of the Conference shall serve for a term of three years. After two terms an individual will be ineligible for reelection to the same office for a period of three years. If a vacancy occurs in the office of president, the vice president shall become president. If a vacancy occurs in the office of vice president or secretary, the person who received the next highest

number of votes for the office of vice president or secretary in the previous election shall succeed to the office for the remainder of the term.

ARTICLE IX World Regions

Section 1. For various purposes the Conference shall be divided into five world regions: North America, Latin America, Asia-Oceania, Europe, and Africa. Church bodies in these regions are encouraged to meet together for mutual support and for joint work, especially in missions and theological training.

Section 2. These regions may elect officers to oversee their activities, and they may choose to organize further. If regional constitutions are produced, these constitutions shall be shared with the CELC Planning Committee for approval and for circulation throughout the CELC.

Section 3. CELC membership issues—both applications and (God forbid) terminations—shall not be considered at regional meetings. The entrance point into the CELC shall be through the plenary meeting, since membership in the CELC involves membership in the entire world-wide fellowship.

Section 4. Funding for CELC regional activities shall be procured through the regions themselves. The CELC Operating Fund and the CELC Travel Assistance Fund shall not be used for regional purposes.

ARTICLE X Planning Committee

Section 1. The Planning Committee shall consist of the president, vice president, secretary, and two representatives elected by the plenary assembly. The latter two representatives shall serve for a maximum of two three-year terms.

Section 2. The Planning Committee shall plan the program and make all necessary arrangements for the plenary meetings of the Conference. It shall disseminate information regarding the meetings and work of the Conference. It shall meet as often as necessary to carry out these and any other duties that may be assigned to it.

ARTICLE XI Expenses

Section 1. Each member church shall pay the expenses of its own delegates to meetings of the Conference.

Section 2. The Planning Committee shall administer a CELC Operating Fund, from which the expenses of the CELC will be paid. All member churches shall be encouraged to contribute to this fund, in keeping with their abilities. The Planning Committee shall also administer a CELC Travel Assistance Fund, to be funded by special gifts. Member churches that need help in paying the expenses of their delegates may apply to the Planning Committee for assistance from this fund.

Section 3. The CELC funds shall be managed by a treasurer, who shall be appointed by the Planning Committee for a renewable term of three years, subject to ratification at the plenary meeting. The treasurer shall provide financial reports for ratification at each plenary meeting.

ARTICLE XII Amendments

Amendments to this Constitution may be made at any meeting of the Conference by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the voting delegates, provided that notice of such amendments shall have been sent through the Planning Committee to all member churches one year prior to the meeting of the Conference.

BYLAWS

1.1 There shall be a Commission on Theology consisting of five members. The members of the commission shall be appointed by the Planning Committee, subject to ratification by the convention. The term of the office shall be six years. Members will normally be eligible for appointment for a maximum of two terms. The president of the Conference shall be a non-voting member of the commission.

1.2 The commission shall prepare a position paper on the theological topic treated by the last convention. This statement shall be submitted for ratification by the CELC in convention.

1.3 The commission shall evaluate all requests for membership and shall bring membership recommendations to the triennial conventions.

2.1 There shall be a Global Theological Education Commission (GTEC) consisting of six members: one representative of WELS, one representative of the ELS, and one theological education leader from each of the four other CELC regions (Africa, Asia-Oceania, Europe, and Latin America). The members of the commission shall be appointed by the Planning Committee, subject to ratification by the convention. The term of the office shall be six years. Members will normally be eligible for appointment for a maximum of two terms. The president of the Conference shall be a non-voting member of the commission.

2.2 The GTEC shall facilitate the discussion of Lutheran theological education in and among CELC churches at pre-seminary, seminary, and continuing education levels. It shall facilitate and promote the sharing of curricula, Lutheran materials, and sound pedagogical practices between CELC seminaries worldwide. The GTEC, as funds are available, shall conduct theological education conferences, provide a website for sharing resources, and oversee other activities for the improvement of theological education in the CELC. The Commission shall report its activities to each convention.

Adopted 1993; Revised 1996, 2002, 2008, 2021

Appendix #1

Guidelines for Churches Seeking Membership in the CELC

A. Prerequisites for Membership

1. A church seeking membership in the CELC is expected to be in formal church fellowship with at least one of the churches of the CELC before making application for membership.
2. A church seeking membership in the CELC should have:
 - national clergy,
 - organized congregations with regular worship, with lay leadership, and with members providing support for the work of the church,
 - a constitution or other written document that provides for church organization and governance, and
 - an officially adopted doctrinal position.

B. Procedure for Attaining Membership

1. A church seeking membership in the CELC should:
 - request membership through a letter to the CELC President,
 - obtain a recommendation for membership from at least one CELC church that is in formal church fellowship with it, and
 - submit its constitution and doctrinal statement(s) to the CELC President at least one year before the triennial convention at which the membership request will be considered.
2. The CELC President will inform all CELC churches about the membership request and will make the required membership documents available for all CELC churches to review prior to the triennial convention at which the membership request will be considered.
3. The CELC Commission on Theology will officially evaluate the membership application together with any comments submitted by member churches and will bring a recommendation to the triennial convention.

Adopted 2002; Revised 2011, 2021

Appendix #2

Dispute Resolution Procedure for CELC Members

Should a theological dispute between member churches of the CELC surface, remain unresolved, and threaten the bonds of fellowship between those churches,

1. The churches unable to resolve the difficulty by themselves may approach the CELC president and ask for help in resolving the issue. In doing so, the churches retain their autonomous, self-governing status, but are voluntarily seeking and submitting themselves to the judgment of the CELC leadership in their effort to resolve the problem.
2. If the CELC president is unable on his own to bring about a resolution of the dispute, he shall enlist the help of four other individuals drawn from the CELC Theological Commission or

Planning Committee. This five-member ad hoc committee shall further investigate the matter, give counsel, and seek to resolve the dispute.

3. If the matter remains unresolved, the ad hoc committee shall recommend a course of action to the next triennial convention of the CELC. The ad hoc committee's recommendation to the CELC convention shall be reported to the member churches of the CELC at least three months prior to that convention. The decision of the convention in session will be the final resolution of the matter for CELC member churches.

Adopted 2008