

Circle of Faith Parish Agreement

ARTICLE I – PURPOSE

The purpose of this Parish Agreement is to authorize a relationship between the following congregations: St. Peter Lutheran, Ceylon, Minnesota; Trinity Lutheran, Welcome, Minnesota; and Waverly Lutheran, Trimont, Minnesota.

ARTICLE II - MISSION STATEMENT

Saved by Grace – Gathered in Faith - Called to Serve.
(Short version)

Saved by grace, gathered in faith, and nurtured by Word and Sacrament, we commit ourselves to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, share a hope for the future, to use our resources and talents as guided by the Holy Spirit, and to work together to grow our ministry, welcome our neighbors, and serve others in Christ's name.
(Long version)

ARTICLE III – Parish Identity

The name by which the Parish is to be known will be Circle of Faith (also referred in this document by the term: the Parish).

ARTICLE IV – Congregational Identity

Each congregation will maintain its own identity as it now exists, and will be accountable for representation at Southwestern Minnesota Synod and Watonwan River Conference events and for the expenses of such representation at those functions.

ARTICLE V – Property

1. Each congregation retains ownership of its church property and parsonage (if applicable).
2. Each congregation will be responsible for the physical upkeep of their own parsonage (if applicable) and congregational property.
3. Parsonages used by the Parish (if any) will be rented from respective congregations with rental based on a fair monthly rental value, determined annually by the Parish Council.

ARTICLE VI – Worship

1. Each congregation may determine its own order of worship.
2. We affirm the integrity of each congregation, therefore we commit to ensuring weekly worship.

ARTICLE VII – Financial Obligations

1. Each congregation will be responsible for their own financial obligations, including their property, debt and other staff not included in the Parish.
2. To fund the shared staff and shared ministry of the Parish, each congregation will pay to the Parish a base contribution, plus a percentage of the shared expenses, with the percentage being based on congregational worship attendance. The full formula and timeline is specified in the Budget section of the By-Laws.

ARTICLE VIII –Parish-Council

The Parish Council will consist of two to three members from each congregation, preferably one of whom will be a member of their respective congregational council. Each Church Council may appoint an alternate to attend the Parish Council in case one or both of their elected representatives are not able to attend a meeting, as a quorum is not possible without at least one representative from each congregation present.

1. The Parish Council will meet at least quarterly, at times and dates as established by the officers. The meeting locations may be rotated among the churches of the Parish.
2. The president or any two members of the Executive Board, may call a special meeting.
3. The major areas of responsibility for the Parish Council will be:
 - a. To continually develop and refine the vision for the ministry and mission of Circle of Faith.
 - b. To identify leadership needs of the Parish and oversee sharing the staff in an equitable way, ensuring pastoral presence and leadership in each congregation.
 - c. Annually review the terms of the Letter of Call and the ministry expectations of the Parish, pastors and staff.
 - d. Be a supportive group for pastors and spouses.
 - e. Coordinate the scheduling of occasional ministry worship services for Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas Eve/Day, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, etc.
 - f. Draw up, monitor, and administer the Parish budget and all joint expenses.
 - g. Approve pastoral and support staff salary and reimbursement.
 - h. Initiate the Parish Call Committee, according to Article XI.
 - i. Designate a special purpose for offerings for special joint ministry worship services or loose offerings will go to the host congregation and each offering envelope will go to the individual ministry designated on the envelope.
 - j. Actively participate in the worship and congregational life of the Parish.
 - k. Mediate conflict within the Parish.
 - l. Annually review the Parish and the Parish Agreement.
 - m. Draft and present Continuing Resolutions for approval by the Parish congregations.

4. Each congregation will elect their own representatives to the Parish Council at their annual meetings, with nominee(s) being nominated by mutual consent of the Congregation's Council in consultation with current Parish Council members from their congregation, following the announcement of the position and consultation with any interested persons. This is a Congregational Council decision, in consultation with that congregation's current Parish Council members, not a Nominating Committee decision.
5. The length of term will be two years, not to exceed two consecutive terms. A member can be off the board one term and be eligible for reelection, structured so that not all the representatives from any congregation change in any single year.
6. A quorum will be at least one representative from each congregation.
7. Two-thirds majority needed on all votes.
8. Ex-officio¹ members of the Parish Council will be the Pastor(s), the president *or* a Congregational Council appointed representative, and other staff of the Parish with non-voting rights.
9. All Parish Council meetings are open to any member of the Parish congregations.
10. Meeting agendas will be the responsibility of the current president, in consultation with the Lead Pastor. Additional agenda items may come through the representatives to the Parish Council president one week prior to any meeting.
11. Minutes of Parish Council meetings, all joint Parish account financial records, all employment records and any other joint Parish documents will be kept in a central location determined by the Parish Council for safe and easy access. Copies of Parish financials and Parish Council minutes will also be maintained by each congregation for reference.
12. Support staff (administrative assistant, secretary, coordinator, etc.) may also be hired to handle paperwork, office type duties, coordinate appointments, be a central contact, etc. if requested by the pastoral staff and with the approval of all congregations involved (through the Parish Council).

ARTICLE IX – Parish Officers and Executive Board

The Parish Council will elect from among its membership four officers: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The length of term will be one year, not to exceed four consecutive terms.

1. There will be an Executive Board of the Parish Council whose voting membership will be:
 - a. President
 - b. Vice President
 - c. Secretary
 - d. Treasurer
 - e. One member from any congregation whose membership is not represented by an officer of the Parish
 - f. Lead Pastor (ex-officio²)

¹ "Ex-officio" means "non-voting."

² "Ex-officio" means "non-voting."

2. The duties and responsibilities of the Executive Board will be:
 - a. To serve as a personnel committee
 - i. To be responsible for staff review, and report to the Parish Council at their 3rd quarter meeting each year;
 - ii. To be responsible for salary and benefit recommendations, to submit a report to the Parish Council at their 4th quarter meeting each year.
 - b. To hold meetings as needed between Parish Council meetings for the purpose of handling emergency Parish business and to investigate pertinent topics and make recommendations to the Parish Council as necessary.
3. The Executive Board will:
 - a. Only spend monies authorized it by a two-thirds vote of the Parish Council.
 - b. Keep minutes of its meetings, these minutes will become part of the Parish Council records.
 - c. All actions of the Executive Board are to be ratified by the full Parish Council.
4. Duties of Officers
 - a. The President will preside at meetings of the Parish Council and Executive Board.
 - b. The Vice President will preside at meetings in the absence of the President.
 - c. The Secretary will keep the minutes of Parish Council meetings and will have custody of the archives of the Parish.
 - d. The Treasurer will have oversight of all funds of the Parish and will receive and disburse such funds in accordance with the decisions of the Parish Council and will maintain records of all contributions and make regular reports to the Parish Council and to the members as required by the Council.

ARTICLE X – Pastoral Staff

1. Pastoral Staff will be nominated for call or contract by the Parish Call Committee, with the approval of the Parish Council. Called Pastoral Staff will need a 2/3 majority vote at individual duly called congregational meetings. Contracted Pastoral Staff will require a unanimous vote of the Parish Council. The staffing required will be determined by the Parish Council, based on the current needs of the Parish, and with approval of all the congregations.
2. Pastoral Staff may include:
 - a. Pastors: Any pastor will be on the clergy roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or other denominations in full communion with the ELCA and approved by the Southwestern Minnesota Synod office.
 - b. Synodically Authorized Ministers as defined by the Southwestern Minnesota Synod.
 - c. Interns: Seminary interns preparing for ministry in the ELCA or other denominations in full communion with the ELCA.
 - d. Other: Any other pastoral staff (parish nurse, lay, etc.) must meet approval of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod to provide pastoral care in this setting.

3. Duties of Pastoral Staff - coordinate and provide spiritual leadership through worship, sacraments, visitation, and education for all congregations in this parish. Respecting each individual congregation's traditions and needs is an important priority. Other Pastoral duties may be specific to that pastor's Letter of Call or contract.

ARTICLE XI – Call Process

1. The Parish Council will initiate a review of the Parish, begin the call process and establish the Call Committee.
2. The Call Committee will consist of at least one member and one alternate from each congregation. Each congregation will have one vote on the Call Committee.
3. Both the Parish Council and Call Committee will coordinate with the Southwestern Minnesota Synod Office during the call process.
4. The Call Committee will recommend the candidate(s) and the proposed compensation to the Executive Council, who must approve it before sending it to the congregations for a vote.
5. Each congregation will vote on the recommendation of the Call Committee in accordance with its constitution. A call will not be issued unless approved by all of the congregations.

ARTICLE XII – Terms of Agreement

1. Each congregation will commit to this Agreement for a minimum of three years from the formal start date. This is to ensure adequate time is given to develop a successful working relationship. After the initial three years, if a congregation wants to terminate its participation for any reason, it must consult with the Southwestern Minnesota Synod staff, the Parish Council and notify the other congregations at least six months in advance. During this six-month period it is understood they will remain part of this Agreement and meet all financial obligations.
2. The Parish Agreement will be reviewed annually.
3. Amendments to the Parish Agreement must be passed by a majority vote of each congregation at their annual meeting.
4. Additional congregations may join the Circle of Faith Parish, upon a majority vote from all currently participating congregations, and will agree to abide by the terms of this agreement. Interested congregations must first apply to the Parish Council for consideration. Upon approval, the Parish Council will forward their recommendation to the Congregational Councils for consideration, and onto the congregations for a vote.
5. The Parish budget will be submitted for approval at each congregational annual meeting, and must be approved by a majority vote.
6. Any other Parish business submitted to the congregations for approval must pass by a majority vote.
7. The Parish Council cannot supersede any constitutional powers of any congregation in the Parish Agreement.

ARTICLE XIII – Adoption

Circle of Faith Parish was officially formed when St. Peter Lutheran – Ceylon, Trinity Lutheran – Welcome, and Waverly Lutheran – rural Trimont, voted to ratify and adopt the Parish Agreement, per their individual constitutions, on August 5, 2012. The Parish began business on January 22, 2013.

This revision has been approved and adopted by all Circle of Faith Parish Congregations in January, 2015..

Congregation

Church Council President

Date of Approval

Circle of Faith Parish By-Laws

Section I. Adopting By-Laws

A. By-Laws

1. This Parish will adopt By-Laws.
2. No By-Laws may conflict with the Circle of Faith Parish Agreement.

B. Adoption and Amendment

These By-Laws may be adopted or amended at any legally called meeting of this Parish Council with a quorum present by a majority vote, and will be re-evaluated at least annually.

Section II. Parish Budget

A. Budget Formula

The budget for the Parish will be divided equitably between all of the congregations using the following formula:

1. The Parish Council will establish the budget for the Parish each year. This budget will be presented to the Parish Council for preliminary approval at their November meeting, and sent to the Congregational Councils for approval at their December meetings. The budget must then be approved by each congregation at their annual meetings in January.
2. Each congregation will contribute a Base Contribution, known as the Total Fixed Cost Per Congregation, in the amount of \$150.00 per week, or \$7800.00 per year.
3. The balance of the Parish Budget will be shared equitably among the congregations, with each paying a percentage based on their average weekly attendance for the period of the previous October 1st through September 31st. Each congregation's percentage will be determined by dividing the Congregation's Worship Attendance by the total cumulative Worship Attendance of all congregations in the Parish.

B. Assessment

Congregational contributions will be reassessed each year, on or before, and no later than, February 15th.

C. Reserve

This Section will be reviewed at a later date

D. Contribution Dates

Congregations will submit their assessed(?) contributions to the Area Parish on or before the first of each quarter, January, April, July, and October 1st, respectively.

Section III. Standing Committees

A. The Standing Committees of Circle of Faith Parish shall be:

1. Finance and Audit
2. Administrative
3. Other committees may function at the direction of the Parish Council to facilitate the mission and ministry of Circle of Faith Parish.

B. Membership

1. A Parish Council member will be a member, of each Standing Committee.
2. The minimum number of members required on each Committee will be determined by the Parish Council.

C. Duties

The duties of the Standing Committees will be governed by the Parish Council.

1. Each Committee will submit a report of its activities to the Parish Council at their quarterly meetings.
2. Each committee will initiate and carry out such activities and programs with the Parish as will enable it to effectively perform the function and duties assigned it by the Agreement and Continuing Resolutions, or by specific resolutions of the Parish.

D. Purposes

The purposes for the standing committees will be:

1. The Finance and Audit Committee
 - a. will consist of one representative from each member church
 - b. will include the Parish Council Treasurer as an ex-officio member
 - c. will prepare a draft budget for the succeeding year and will submit such draft budget to the Parish Council for approval at its third quarter meeting.
 - d. will present Parish Council approved budget, which will become effective February 1st of the succeeding year, to Congregation Councils for their approval prior to the fourth quarter Parish Council meeting
 - e. will exercise oversight of all the financial affairs of the Parish to make sure that they are being conducted efficiently, giving particular attention to the prompt payment of al obligations.
 - f. will make an annual audit of the accounts of the Treasurer in January for the preceding year and provide a statement of findings to the Parish Council and Congregation Councils
 - g. will annually review Parish Budget section of the By-Laws, and make recommendations to the Parish Council for review, as needed.

2. The Administrative Committee
 - h. will consist of at least one representative from each member church
 - i. will include any member of the Parish Council not serving on the Finance Committee
 - j. will, upon assignment of the Parish Council, prepare recommendations for the Parish Council on matters concerning the administration of the Parish
 - k. will annually review the Parish Agreement and By-Laws of Circle of Faith Parish, and recommend changes to the Parish Council for review, as needed

Section IV. Congregational Records

- A. The records of the individual congregations will be and remain the property of the congregation.