

# ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH BOARD OF ELDERS

## POLICY MANUAL

Approved by the Board of Elders September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020

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## **ST. JOHN'S LUTHERN CHURCH BOARD OF ELDERS**

### **WORSHIP SERVICE POLICIES**

**INTRODUCTION:** This document describes the Worship Service Policies for St. John's Lutheran Church.

#### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:**

Board of Elders & Senior Pastor

Creation, maintenance, and communication of policies

Board of Elders, Senior Pastor, Leadership Team and Voters

Approval of Worship Service Policies

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:** This policy will provide guidance for announcements made during worship services. This does not apply to weddings or funerals.

**POLICY:** All announcements should be submitted to a pastor before the worship service if possible.

Announcements dealing with special needs of the congregation, e.g. Stewardship, Trustees, Elders, etc. will be allowed.

The sale of items shall not be announced prior to or during the service. Sale of items for personal gain will not be allowed.

Greetings and worship directions are encouraged.

**BAPTISMS:** This policy will provide for a consistent understanding of the responsibility of overseeing all Baptisms. In general, our hope is that all are baptized.

**POLICY:** The Board of Elders assures that Baptisms are conducted in accordance with the teachings of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. This responsibility includes, but is not limited to:

Pastors will approve and schedule Baptisms

If sponsors are chosen, they shall be professing Christians who confess the Apostles' Creed and Luther's Small Catechism. Exceptions to this policy may be made at the discretion of the presiding pastor (see the policy on pastoral exceptions).

While baptisms that take place in a public worship service are encouraged, those who desire may schedule a private baptism.

Baptism of members that occurs on an emergency basis or by someone other than the pastor(s) should be included in the church records.

**CAMERA USE:** This policy will provide for a consistent use of cameras and video equipment use during all worship services.

**POLICY:** Video and still cameras may be used during services provided that they require no flash or auxiliary lighting and make no distracting noise.

Pictures may only be taken while seated in the pew, standing in a doorway, or from the ambulatory.

All other use of cameras is prohibited during the worship service. It is suggested that other pictures be posed after the completion of the service.

Use of cameras during weddings is covered in the wedding policy manual.

**DOOR OFFERINGS AND FUNDRAISING:** This policy will provide for a consistent application of the process for allowing door offerings and other fundraising efforts.

**POLICY:** Door offerings and special fundraising efforts will need to be approved in advance by the Board of Elders. Church members should contact the chairman of the board to have a request considered at a regular meeting of the elders well ahead of the proposed event date. Exceptions to the approval process may be made at the discretion of the board.

**FUNERALS:** This policy will provide for a consistent application of the use of the church for funerals.

**POLICY:** Active members will ordinarily be honored with funeral services and luncheons at the church, and the pastors will work with the family to plan relevant details. Pastors will consider funerals for non-active and non-members on an individual basis (see the policy on pastoral exceptions).

**WEDDINGS:** This policy will provide for a consistent understanding of the use of the church for weddings.

**POLICY:** Active members may ordinarily use the church for weddings with one of St. John's pastors officiating. At the discretion of the pastors, other LCMS clergy may be allowed to officiate. The booklet on Guidelines for Church Weddings must be followed. At a member request, pastors, at their discretion, may also arrange to officiate at weddings held at other LCMS churches or non-church venues. Requests to use the church for non-member weddings may be considered (see the policy on pastoral exceptions).

**COMMUNION:** This policy will provide for consistent application of the administration of the sacrament of communion.

**POLICY:** Church members in good standing are entitled to receive communion whether at church or other locations. Visitors who are communicant members of other LCMS congregations are welcome to commune. Upon request, in unusual, compelling circumstances communion for members of other Christian denominations may be considered at the discretion of the pastors (see the policy on pastoral exceptions).

**PASTORAL EXCEPTIONS:** This policy provides for a process to consider exceptions to usual policy regarding funerals, weddings, baptisms, youth confirmation, and communion.

**POLICY:** Pastors will prayerfully consider exceptions to ordinary policy. In considering exceptions, if timing allows, pastors will seek review and counsel of the Board of Elders for such decisions. If timing prohibits such consultation, pastors will inform the board of actions taken at their next meeting, providing the justification and rationale for these actions.

**WORSHIP SERVICES:** This policy will provide for a consistent understanding of the responsibility of overseeing all worship services.

**POLICY:** The Board of Elders oversees the worship services. The pastors and the Board of Elders will periodically review the appropriateness and impact of the worship services. This responsibility includes, but is not limited to:

Approval of forms of worship, liturgies, music, worship folders, and the use of technology in worship services, as well any proposed changes

Changes to the aesthetics of the sanctuary

The Elder Assistants and Ushers rules and procedures

The Acolytes

The Scripture Readers

**OTHER ACTIVITIES DURING WORSHIP SERVICES:** This policy will provide for a common understanding regarding other activities in the church and school facility during worship services.

**POLICY:** In order to encourage worship by our members, to indicate to others that worship is of first importance and to maintain good order during worship services, no events, meetings or activities will be held in St. John's facilities during worship services. This includes all regular, holiday, and special services. Exceptions to this policy must be approved by the Board of Elders.

Kitchen workers who are preparing food or cleaning up the kitchen after use should either have attended an earlier worship service or plan on attending a later service. An example is for an Easter Breakfast after the Sunrise service. Those preparing the breakfast should be attending one of the Easter services later in the day.

# **ST. JOHN'S LUTHERN CHURCH BOARD OF ELDERS**

## **GENERAL POLICIES**

**INTRODUCTION:** This document describes the general policies regarding the ministries and activities under the control of the Board of Elders.

### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:**

Board of Elders & Senior Pastor

Creation, maintenance, and communication of policies

Board of Elders, Senior Pastor, Leadership Team and Voters

Approval and implementation of policies

**CONTINUING EDUCATION:** The purpose of this policy is to encourage and support the continuing education and personal development of those who minister to us. This policy is intended to apply to congregational ministries under the direction of the Board of Elders.

**POLICY:** To encourage in-service professional training, the congregation will pay 100% of the tuition or seminar fees, travel expense, meals, and lodging for educational activities that are reviewed and approved in advance by the Board of Elders.

**CONFLICT RESOLUTION:** The purpose of this policy is to provide procedural guidelines for dealing with conflict within our congregation.

**POLICY:** I. Our congregation will recognize that all our members reserve the right to express their opinions about the quality and content of the ministries of the congregation. It will be the role of the elders to ensure, by word and example, that disagreements over non-essential matters take place in the context of Christian love and mutual respect.

II. Our congregation will operate with an understanding that its members may share their opinions directly with the pastors, leadership team, elected board members, staff members, and at congregational meetings, with the expectation that direct and respectful communication is the best and quickest way to resolve differences.

III. Differences of opinion that are not resolved by personal conversation and healthy debate will be resolved by the democratic process outlined in the constitution and bylaws. It is the elders' role to actively see that differences in opinion on non-essentials do not result in conflict or discord within the congregation.

IV. Any pastor or member may seek the assistance of the elders in mediating between parties in disagreement with the goal of

maintaining the context of our relationship as brothers and sisters of one God and servants of one Lord. The elders and pastors should strive to avoid becoming so strongly embroiled in the details of a disagreement that they lose their capacity to minister to the Christian context of our fellowship, for our Lord Himself says, "Blessed are the peacemakers."

**CHURCH DISCIPLINE:** The purpose of this policy is to provide procedural guidelines for dealing with public sin within our congregation.

In all matters of public sin that result in the administration of church discipline, such discipline will conform to all guidelines outlined by the Synod. In all matters involving church discipline within our membership, the words of Jesus in Matthew 18:15-20 will provide the basic process:

*"If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the fault. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. If that person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. If the church decides you are right but the other person won't accept it, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector. I tell you this: Whatever you prohibit on earth is prohibited in heaven, and whatever you allow on earth is allowed in heaven. I will tell you this: If two of you agree down here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you. For where two or three gather together because they are mine, I am there among them."*

The pastor(s) would ordinarily be involved in initiating such a process, though if the pastor is unable, it would fall to the Board of Elders. In any case, the elders should be involved with the pastor(s) in any such proceedings.

**PROGRESSION OF STEPS TO FOLLOW IN DEALING WITH CONFLICT:**

1. The elders should seek first to identify whether a matter is spoken to in Scripture and is truly sin, or whether it is a matter of culture or personal opinion. Members should be encouraged to quickly forgive personal wrong and to overlook that which is not sin, for "love covers over a multitude of faults."
2. Matters that are determined to be public sin should result in a direct, face-to-face talk with the member. If a member brings a charge against another member through direct knowledge they should be encouraged to first speak privately with the individual. After that, the pastor should initiate this contact, and may take one or two of the elders with him. All communication at this point must be absolutely confidential and go no further than the Board of Elders. If satisfactory resolution is achieved, it will go no further and will not be recorded in the minutes or any other record
3. If the conflict cannot be resolved in private, the full board may be involved, so that "every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses" (Matthew 18:16). The goal is to persuade the brother or sister to see the seriousness of his or her sin, that he or she might be led back in a manner that is fraternal and confidential. However, the elders may have to serve as arbitrators to work toward a God-pleasing resolution.

Should the above step fail, the matter shall be brought to the congregation. Jesus tells us to “tell it to the church” (Matthew 18:17). This is not to be interpreted as publicly shaming the person involved. Rather, the goal is to request assistance in resolving the matter in a way that honors the clear Word of God. The result of this procedure is to be binding on the members of the congregation. As we read in Matthew 18:18-20, the church speaks with the authority of Christ Himself when it acts pursuant to its biblical mandate to deal with sin.

4. As Christians we are required to be reconciled with other Christians. If a Christian refuses to do these things, he is violating God’s will. If he refuses to listen to his church’s counsel to repent of this sin, Jesus says the church should “treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector” (Matthew 18:17). If a person disregards the authority of Scripture and of Christ’s church, he should be treated as a nonbeliever. Treating someone as a nonbeliever serves three important purposes.
  - a. By revoking the person’s privileges in the church, it protects the Lord from being dishonored by someone who acts in a shameful and rebellious way and yet retains his good standing in a Christian church (Romans 2:23-24).
  - b. Other believers are protected from being led astray by a bad example (Romans 16:17).
  - c. It may help the rebellious person to realize the seriousness of his or her sin, turn from it, and be restored to God.

**MEMBERSHIP ACTION:** This policy will provide a consistent method for approving new members, transfers and releases.

**POLICY:** The Board of Elders will consider membership actions at their regular monthly meetings. Approved actions will be put before the congregation for final approval at the next voter’s meeting. All necessary communication and new member assimilation activities will be carried out by appropriate staff and volunteers. (See attached Membership Actions Process document for details.)

**MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS POLICY:** This policy will provide a consistent method of allocating Memorial Scholarship funds. The purpose is to provide qualified applicants with monetary assistance in achieving their educational goals. The Board of Elders manages Memorial Scholarship Funds, except those managed by the Board of Education, and will periodically review the selection criteria for these funds. The Board of Elders shall determine scholarship amounts unless specified by the scholarship fund.

Currently, the Board of Elders supervises the following scholarship(s):

1. St. John's Lutheran Church Memorial Scholarship Fund

**POLICY:**

- a. No recipient of this scholarship shall receive more than \$2,500.00 except by special action of the Board of Elders.
- b. Normally, scholarship recipients shall be active members of St. John's Lutheran Church, Midland, MI

- c. Applicants should make an application for scholarship to the Board of Elders on or before May 31 of each year in order to be eligible for the next school year.
- d. The applicant must be enrolled at the college or seminary level in an institution of higher education owned and operated by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod with the intention of preparing for work in said church body as a teacher with a four-year degree in teaching, or as a pastor or other full time church worker.
- e. All qualified applicants requesting funds will be granted funding based on the number of applicants and the amount of funding available.
- f. All memorials and contributions to the fund will be invested to provide dividend and interest income. Only the dividend and interest income will be used in the granting of scholarships.

**MEMORIALS:** The purpose of this policy is to provide for consistent procedural guidelines for dealing with memorial funds and the memorial committee.

**POLICY:**

- One Elder will be assigned responsibility over St. John's memorials.
- The Board of Elders or the responsible elder will meet on a semi-annual basis with the Memorial Committee Chairperson to assess needs and support the operation of the committee.
- The Board of Elders will appoint the Memorial Committee Chairperson if the chair becomes vacant.
- The Board of Elders is responsible for approving lay members to the Memorial Committee.
- The assigned elder, with input from the Board of Elders if needed, will provide guidance to the Memorial Committee regarding gift wishes that are non-monetary or don't fit into the current wish list.
- The REQUEST FOR MEMORIAL FUND USE forms will be used for requests that fall outside the current wish list for final approval by the Board of Elders, Leadership Team, or voters.
- When the family of the deceased has a non-monetary gift request involving worship or the sanctuary, the Memorial Committee will pass the request on to the Board of Elders for approval or rejection as appropriate.

**YOUTH CONFIRMATION:** This policy will provide guidance for the confirmation process for youth (7<sup>th</sup> and 8th graders) at St. John's.

**POLICY :**

- For those youth attending St. John's day school, confirmation education is built into the curriculum of religious instruction.
- For youth attending public, private, or home schooled, there is a two-year program of evening classes required for confirmation.
- Exceptions may be made at the discretion of the pastor.
- The Board of Elders will participate in the approval of confirmation candidates based on pastor recommendations.



**COMMITTEES AND OTHER MINISTRIES FALLING UNDER THE BOARD OF ELDERS:**

This policy will provide for a common understanding regarding other activities in the church that fall under the umbrella of responsibilities of the Board of Elders.

**POLICY:** The Board of Elders is responsible to charter and suspend committees and other efforts related to worship and the spiritual health of the members and staff. Committees such as stewardship, missions, memorials, music, and outreach are examples of ministry areas. Additional operating committees may be established by the Board of Elders as deemed appropriate.

Elders will encourage members in the various ministry areas; act as a resource to them; and facilitate communication between the teams and the Board of Elders. (See Elders Assistance and Communication Responsibilities document.)