

Fundamental Principles

Guiding Principles of the Lutheran Free Church and Association of Free Lutheran Congregations since 1897.

1. According to the Word of God, the congregation is the right form of the Kingdom of God on earth.
2. The congregation consists of believers who, by using the means of grace and the spiritual gifts as directed by the Word of God, seek salvation and eternal blessedness for themselves and for their fellow men.
3. According to the New Testament, the congregation needs an external organization with membership roll, election of officers, stated times and places for its gatherings, and other similar provisions.
4. Members of the organized congregation are not, in every instance, believers, and such members often derive false hope from their external connection with the congregation. It is therefore the sacred obligation of the congregation to purify itself by the quickening preaching of the Word of God, by earnest admonition and exhortation, and by expelling the openly sinful and perverse.
5. The congregation directs its own affairs, subject to the authority of the Word and Spirit of God, and acknowledges no other ecclesiastical authority or government above itself.
6. A free congregation esteems and cherishes all the spiritual gifts which the Lord gives for its edification, and seeks to stimulate and encourage their use.
7. A free congregation gladly accepts the mutual assistance which congregations can give one another in the work for the advancement of the Kingdom of God.
8. Such assistance consists partly in the mutual sharings of spiritual gifts among the congregations through conferences, exchange visits, lay activities, etc., whereby congregations are mutually edified, and partly in the voluntary and Spirit-prompted cooperation of congregations for the accomplishing of such tasks as exceed the ability of the individual congregation.
9. Among such tasks may be mentioned specifically the training of pastors,

Georg Sverdrup

“The congregation is not organized, unless there is work for all. It is not for a congregation to hire a preacher to work for it, so they themselves can escape their duty. No, the congregation in this way is likened to a choir [which] has to have a song leader to instruct and lead. Shall the instructor sing alone? Shall not all join in? Such is the congregation; it is a gathering of God’s servants who work for God’s Kingdom, for Christ’s cause. The leader is not superfluous, but is the more necessary so that they may sing in unison.”

distribution of Bibles and other Christian literature, home missions, foreign missions, Jewish missions, deaconess homes, children's homes and other work of mercy.

10. Free congregations have no right to demand that other congregations shall submit to their opinion, will, judgment, or decision: therefore, domination by a majority of congregations over a minority is to be rejected.
11. Agencies found desirable for conducting the joint activities of congregations, such as conferences, committees, officers, etc., cannot in a Lutheran Free Church impose any obligations or restrictions, exert any compulsions, or lay any burden upon the individual congregation, but have the right only to make recommendations to, and requests of, congregations and individuals.
12. Every free congregation, as well as every individual believer, is constrained by the Spirit of God and by the privileges of Christian love to do good and to work for the salvation of souls and the quickening of the spiritual life, as far as its abilities and power permit. Such free spiritual activity is limited neither by parish nor by synodical boundaries.

Rules for Work

As adopted at the AFLC Annual Conference in 1967.

1. The name of this association shall be "The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations."
2. Its aim shall be to work toward making Lutheran congregations free and living, so that, according to their calling and ability, they may work in spiritual freedom and autonomy for the cause of the Kingdom of God at home and abroad through such agencies and institutions as the congregations themselves may designate.
3. It endeavors to realize this aim in particular by training men and women for Christian work in and for the congregations, by conducting larger and smaller conferences, by distributing suitable literature, by sending out evangelists, and by any other means which from time to time will be found necessary or advisable.
4. The AFLC consists of congregations which, in their constitutions, unreservedly subscribe to the ancient ecumenical symbols, *Luther's Small Catechism*, the *Unaltered Augsburg Confession*, *Fundamental Principles and Rules for Work of the AFLC*, and report the same to the secretary of the Coordinating Committee.
5. The AFLC shall hold an Annual Conference which usually opens the evening of the second Wednesday in June and which shall elect the necessary committees and officers. and determine what church activities in particular it shall recommend to the congregations.
6. The right to vote in the Annual Conference of the AFLC shall be held by all ordained pastors and lay pastors in regular standing in the AFLC and by all voting members of congregations affiliated with the AFLC. Individual Lutherans who are not members of a Lutheran congregation, but who are interested in supporting the work of the AFLC, may be granted speaking and voting privileges by the Coordinating Committee after said committee has received and approved their credentials. Voting members of other Lutheran congregations may be granted the right to vote in the Annual Conference providing they have at least two (2) weeks previously signed and sent to the secretary of the Annual Conference the special blank provided for that purpose, signifying that they approve the *Fundamental Principles and Rules for Work of the AFLC* and will work for the aim set forth in paragraph 2 of the *Rules for Work*.

7. The officers of the AFLC shall be a president, a vice-president, and a secretary, who shall be chosen from the membership of the AFLC and elected by the Annual Conference. Voting shall be by ballot.
 - a. The president shall be elected for a term of three years and shall devote all of his time to the service of the AFLC. He shall preside at the Annual Conference and shall report to it on the work of the AFLC in general, on church dedications, installations, celebrations, etc. He shall be an advisory member of all boards and committees. He shall assist congregations and pastors by giving counsel and guidance when this is desired, and he shall also, as ordainer, assist the congregations in ordaining men with the proper and adequate training who have been duly called as pastors. His salary shall be determined by the Coordinating Committee and shall be paid out of the AFLC General Fund.
 - b. The vice-president shall be elected for a term of one year and performs the duties of the president in the latter's absence.
 - c. The secretary shall be elected for a term of one year. He shall keep the minutes of the Annual Conference and is the custodian of the archives.
 - d. The term of office of the officers of the AFLC shall begin October 1 and shall expire September 30.
 - e. The executive officers after having served three (3) consecutive terms can be elected for additional terms only by a three-fourths majority vote.
8. The Annual Conference shall nominate members of the Coordinating Committee. This committee shall consist of seven members: three (3) pastors and four (4) laymen chosen from the membership of the AFLC. The number of those whose terms expire shall determine the number to be nominated by the Annual Conference each year. No member can serve more than two (2) consecutive terms.
9. Duties of the Coordinating Committee.
 - a. The Coordinating Committee shall seek to make known the *Fundamental Principles and Rules for Work of the AFLC* and further the discussions of the same throughout the congregations, so that the task of the AFLC, in an ever increasing degree, may be more clearly understood and more generally put into practice.
 - b. It shall seek to have the congregations as fully and as generally represented at the Annual Conference of the AFLC as possible.
 - c. When desired, it shall assist congregations and pastors by giving counsel and guidance.
 - d. It shall compile parochial statistics and report thereon to the Annual Conference. It shall maintain the clergy and congregational rosters of the AFLC.
 - e. It shall have charge of the AFLC General Fund, from which shall be paid the salaries of the president, secretary, transportation secretary, traveling expenses, and expenses incurred in connection with the Annual Conference.
 - f. It shall elect the editor of the church organ.
 - g. Any duty not assigned to any other committee shall be the responsibility of the Coordinating Committee.
10. The Annual Conference shall nominate members for the following boards and corporations of the AFLC: Coordinating Committee, Board of Trustees and Corporation of the Free Lutheran Theological Seminary, Board and Corporation of Missions, Board of Publications and Parish Education, Youth Board, Stewardship Board, and Benefits Board. The editor of the church organ shall be nominated by the Annual Conference.
 - a. No member can serve for more than two (2) consecutive terms.
11. Reports shall be given by the following at the Annual Conference of the AFLC: The President, the Coordinating Committee, Board of Missions, Schools, Benefits Board, Board of Publications and Parish Education, Youth Board, Luther League Federation, special committees elected by the Annual Conference, and by such institutions and activities within the church as may be given permission to report to the Annual Conference.
12. The president and secretary shall constitute the Annual Conference Committee, whose duties shall be: To fix time and place of the Annual Conference in the event that the Annual Conference did not do so at least two years in advance, arrange the program for the Conference, prepare the calendar for the business sessions, and to make any other arrangements that are necessary for the conduct of the Conference. The Conference Committee shall announce the Annual Conference at least two (2) months previous to the date of the meeting. It shall publish an Annual Report of the AFLC.
13. The manuscript for the Annual Report shall be kept on file by the

secretary at least two (2) years after the publication of the report. The president and secretary shall determine how much of the manuscript of the Annual Report shall be kept on permanent file.

14. The secretary shall send notices to all concerned as to resolutions passed by the Annual Conference, election of committees, etc., by September 1.
15. These Rules for Work may be amended in the following manner: A motion to make an amendment shall be presented in writing to the Annual Conference and shall be voted upon at the following Annual Conference. For the adoption of the motion, a two-thirds majority of the ballots cast is required. All amendments must be in agreement with the *Fundamental Principles*, especially 5 and 10.
16. The *Rules for Work* of the AFLC shall take precedence over all other orders and decisions in effect.

A Statement on the Historical Situation

“... We speak out of the world view which we have and in the light of the Scriptures as we have read them. We are subject to error and human failing, and our work must be exposed to the test of time...”

“We have tried to speak in Christian love ... we have not wanted to charge others with sinning against their consciences in taking a course unlike ours. We have said, ‘This is what we believe we must do and for these reasons, in the sight of God.’

“We have not cut ourselves off from the Lutheran faith or the Lutheran family. We are ready to work together with our fellow Lutherans when we can do so without compromising the principles mentioned in this statement ... We realize that we have no claim to the right of this fellowship from those from whom we outwardly separate now, but for our part will stand ready to act in common witness wherever we can.

“... Let us now confess our sins, let us do what we can to heal the wounds, let us be willing to forgive; where we must differ from others, let it be done in love. And if we can go on to think positively about the work we would like to do together in God’s Kingdom, we have the chance of doing something which can have real value in the world and which would carry God’s blessing.”

*Presented at the special conference at
Thief River Falls, Minnesota, October 1962.*

Martin Luther

“It is the duty both of preachers and of hearers first of all and above all things to see to it that they have a clear and sure evidence that their doctrine is really the true word of God, revealed from heaven to the holy, original fathers, the prophets and apostles, and confirmed and commanded to be taught by Christ Himself. For we should by no means ever let doctrine be manhandled according to the pleasure and fancy of the individual who adapts it to human reason and understanding. Nor should we let men toy with Scripture, juggle the Word of God, and make it submit to being explained, twisted, stretched, and revised to suit people or to achieve peace and union; for then there could be no secure or stable foundation on which consciences might rely.

On John 7:40-44

“... For the church is an organism, like the union of body and soul, and has members. A hand that has been cut off does not live, does not adhere to the body. Just so a heretic is also cut off from the Christian Church through false doctrine and unbelief and is dead.

“The Christian Church does not consist of a pile of bishops’ or cardinals’ hats. These may be called a council or may become one, but they are not the Christian Church. It is impossible to bring the Christian Church together at one place; rather it is scattered throughout the world.”
