

## Comments Received as of 18 April 2022 on Messiah's Constitution

A. We have been with the Messiah Lutheran Church since the beginning of our church when we met at the Rubber Workers Union Hall over thirty years ago. Scott built this Congregation from the ground up. He talked those of us in the body that it would be best, since we were a new Church, that it would be best "For the time being" that "he" be the President of the Congregation. So we stated so in the Constitution.

All of the Lutheran Churches that My Family attended previously had the President come from the Congregation and the pastor serve on the council.

Having a new Pastor coming into a Congregation to serve as the President does not sense to me.

Constitution should be changed to read that the: President and Vice President of the Congregation should be a Lay person from the church body/ congregation and not an Ordained Minister.

**B. Quorum for Congregation meetings:** I think there is broad support to reduce the percentage required for a quorum to put us more in line with other churches. This is due to the challenges we have experienced in making a quorum. I would like to consider allowing written, recorded absentee voting.

**Communications Updates:** The current constitution has dated communications requirements (10 days, via USPS). I would like to consider allowing email to be a valid form of official communications. It may be good to keep this simple in our constitution (simply state that email is valid and sufficient) and then in practice we may need to send a USPS mailing out to those without email communications.

**Council Structure and Leadership:** I assume there is a strong desire by some members of our congregation to update our constitution such that the senior pastor is not the President of the council. This has come up at both of our most recent Town Hall meetings. I cannot think of a reason to do this and I think changing this relationship would be a mistake for our congregation.

Is there a problem that this change would fix? I do not see one.

I think a stronger position would address why a Pastor filling the role of President and Pastor is good. Here are some thoughts on this:

1. **Pastor's knowledge and involvement:** MLCs Pastor knows more about what is happening at MLC than any other person in the congregation. This is an ideal quality for a council president in setting agendas and determining the areas where council

should dwell. The Pastor may be the only person with some information in the congregation.

2. **Pastoral Leadership:** A pastor has education, training and experience to be both a spiritual leader and an organizational leader for a church. The Pastor will be the most qualified to keep the council and church within the bounds of our charters, denomination beliefs and practices, theology, etc. There may be lay candidates that possess some of these qualities but our called Pastor should be the most qualified person to lead the Church.
3. **Pastoral responsibility:** The pastor has the responsibility to lead and guide the congregation on all matters. If the Pastor is not part of the council and church leadership, a pastor could elect to simply follow council instruction and refuse to lead or guide the council through an issue (or take a position). I think a Pastor should have a share of the vote, the responsibility and requirement to lead, and have a share of the responsibility for council decisions. If a pastor is unwilling to do this, I do not think that Pastor may be the best candidate for MLC.
4. **Unity of leadership:** In my experience, an organization works best if there is a single authority working with others (vs. a split authority structure). Having a Pastor as an advisor and a lay leader as council president has potential to split authority and introduce division. This is all dependent on personalities. I think there should be one single person charged with the responsibility to lead the church. The compensated, responsible, educated, trained, and experienced Pastor that we call would do this well.
5. **Staff Supervision:** By our constitution, the MLC staff works for the Church council. This has worked partly because our Pastor is the Council President. When actions need to be taken, our Pastor who provides direction, monitors, supervises, and works with staff on a daily basis, as the president, is part of the process.

My last thought on this is that I think that this change would increase scope and responsibility of the congregation lay leader role to such an extent that we would have an almost impossible role to fill in the role of President of the congregation council. It would also make the VP role more difficult to fill as a VP now has to support and work with another unknown lay leader (as opposed to the known pastor).

Our church council structure should not be an issue that divides us. It is clear that it works if the Pastor is the President of the council as evidenced by our last 33 years. It also works to have a lay leader as the president as evidenced by other churches who have apparently made this work. I hope we have healthy discourse on this topic. At this point, I do not see reason for a change and think we would be creating a significant problem for MLC.

C. The one recommendation that we want to see in the revision of the constitution is that the Pastor cannot be the President of the Church. That is a lay personnel position either elected by the membership or by the Council.

D. I believe that the constitution needs to be structured so that a pastor cannot control everything that happens at a church. These changes include, but are not limited to:

1. The pastor cannot be president of the church. (I believe this one so strongly that I may have to go elsewhere if this is not changed.)
2. The pastor cannot be a member of the nominating committee.

I also don't understand our election cycle being different from our budget cycle. New council members, especially the finance rep, have very little experience before they are asked to prepare a budget. I suggest we do them both at the same time and only have one meeting a year. Further, why elect executive committee members every year? Just elect them for a two year term like everyone else.

The treasurer and property jobs are more time consuming than the others. We should consider alternatives to accomplishing these tasks which may rely on vendors or employees.

We should change the quorum requirement for our congregation meetings to the number suggested by the model constitutions provided by the synod.

E. I don't think I am alone in asking the transition team to address the presidency in the constitution. I, for one, believe an elected member of the congregation should hold the position of president. The church is all members of the congregation, and, therefore, a member should direct the Council leadership. Certainly, the Pastor should remain in an advisory position at Council meetings and his or her opinion should be sought and heard. I hope the congregation will be surveyed concerning opinion on this issue. Thank you.

F. I would like to see a change in the council presidency. I believe the local church (Messiah Lutheran Church) belongs to the congregation and the pastor is called by the congregation. The pastor should be a non-voting member of the council and the president should be elected from the congregation.