

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church
Stony Ridge, Ohio

Church Bylaws

Updated and Revised January 24, 2024

St. John's Lutheran Church Bylaws
Table of Contents

Section I.	Mission Statement, Philosophy of Ministry, and Vision Statement	pg. 3
Section II.	Annual Meeting	pg. 4
Section III.	Nominating Committee	pg. 5
Section IV.	Duties of Officers	pg. 5
Section V.	Audit and Surety Bond	pg. 5
Section VI.	Ministries and Committees	pg. 5
Section VII.	Boards	pg. 7
Section VIII.	Removal of Inactive Members	pg. 8
Section IX.	Proportionate Representation	pg. 8
Section X.	St. John's Memorial and Outreach Fund	pg. 8
Section XI.	St. John's Property and Improvement Fund	pg. 12

**BYLAWS OF ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
STONY RIDGE, OHIO**

(Amended at the January 22, 2023 Annual Meeting)

Section I. MISSION STATEMENT, PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY AND VISION STATEMENT (C4.05.) (Mission Statement and Philosophy of Ministry adopted at a Special Congregation Meeting October 28, 2007; Vision Statement adopted at the Annual Congregation Meeting January 30, 2011)

A. Mission Statement:

Saved by the grace of God to witness and to serve others.

B. Philosophy of Ministry

For seven generations, St. John's Lutheran Church in Stony Ridge, Ohio has spread the Good News of Jesus Church. As Lutheran Christians we confess the faith of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that we are saved by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. We are all one body in Christ, blessed with a variety of gifts, according to God's grace. **"For with God all things are possible." Mark 10:27**

We seek to understand the Word of God through inspiring sermons and relevant scripture readings that provide guidance in today's world as we embrace our Christian call to worship. When we share the Sacrament of Holy Communion we are nourished and sustained by God's abiding presence. We honor God always with thanks and praise. On the Sabbath, St. John's offers an early informal contemporary praise gathering enthusiastically supported by our fine congregational musicians. Our magnificent pipe organ and harmonious choirs highlight a later, traditional liturgical service for reflective, contemplative worship. We trust God's guidance in everything that we do and actively seek spiritual time with Him that we may more fully understand His will for us. Through prayer we give thanks for our joys and surrender our concerns. Regular prayer and worship supports and inspires us to fulfill the Great Commission, **"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." Matthews 28:19**

We embrace our mission by sharing the truth of God's love in the world and honoring God's earthly kingdom through faithful stewardship. God is abundant and we have much for which to thank Him. We pledge to generously share our time, our talents, and our treasure, confident that God will always provide. All have needs and all have something to offer. **"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." I Corinthians 12:4**

As Christian learners, we actively seek the path that God has set for each of us. St. John's offers a generous range of educational opportunities beginning with our Hilltop Preschool, ongoing throughout life's journey to integrate our daily lives with the timeless teachings of Christ. God in Christ is always with us and whatever the question, God always provides the answer. **"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Hebrews 11:1**

Beyond our Sunday worship together we share fellowship through small groups and prayer chains, formal and informal gatherings, committee meetings, many social opportunities, and communal meals. Willingly, we accept the responsibility to alleviate the plight of our neighbor in our community and in the world. We share God's love to meet compassionate needs, to care for the sick and aged, to advocate dignity and justice for all and to stand up for the poor and powerless. St. John's is committed to all those in need, supporting the mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. **"I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these my brothers of mine, you did for me."** Matthew 25:40

From many backgrounds, our shared Christian faith is our unbreakable bond. St. John's was built on a solid foundation of worship, prayer, education, and stewardship. Today we enjoy a rich heritage of Christian fellowship throughout our region as we enthusiastically support our ministry. **"We being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."** Romans 12:5

C. Vision Statement

St. John's Lutheran Church in Stony Ridge, Ohio, is a church inspired by God's vision. Proverbs 29:18 states, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." However, where there is a vision God is glorified and the Kingdom of God is exalted. God's vision is that we become *a church of fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ who are dedicated to spiritual growth for the sake of the world.*

God calls us to reach out to young families, children, and our neighbors in Stony Ridge and the tri-township area (Perrysburg, Troy and Lake). Through a pathway of spiritual growth, church leaders will equip new and established believers to develop into fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. As written in Ephesians 4: 12, we are "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ".

God envisions a Church where everyone grows deep and wide in their love for God through **Daily Prayer** and **Daily Bible Reading**. God envisions a Church where the entire community gathers to **Worship Weekly** as we pray, praise, and give thanks to God. God envisions a Church where all **Give Generously** and enthusiastically share their time, talents, and treasures for the glory of God. God envisions a church where compassionate people **Serve Others**. God works through our hands and hearts to alleviate the plight of people in need. God envisions a Church that **Lovingly Invites** young families, children, and our neighbors into a deeper relationship with God and one another.

This is God's vision for St. John's – *a church of fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ who are dedicated to spiritual growth for the sake of the world!*

Section II. ANNUAL MEETING (C10.01)

The regular annual congregation meeting shall be held during the month of January, the date and time to be set by the Congregation Council.

Section III. NOMINATING COMMITTEE

At least 90 days prior to the annual congregation meeting, the Congregation Council shall appoint a nominating committee of a minimum of 5 voting members who are not then members of the Council. The committee shall include, if they are available and willing to serve, the chairman of the prior year's nominating committee and those persons who have retired from the Council during the previous year. Thirty (30) days prior to the annual meeting, the committee shall report to the Council the nominees for election to the Congregation Council, which nominees shall have indicated their willingness to serve.

Section IV. DUTIES OF OFFICERS (C11.02.a.)

- A. The president shall preside at meetings of this congregation and the Congregation Council. In the event of the president's inability to serve, the vice-president shall preside.
- B. The secretary shall be responsible for the keeping of accurate minutes of all meetings of the congregation and of the Congregation Council, which minutes shall be permanently preserved.
- C. The treasurer shall keep the books of account of the congregation. The treasurer or assistant treasurer shall receive all funds and disburse them on proper orders, making monthly remittance of benevolence receipts to the treasurer of the Synod.

Section V. AUDIT and SURETY BOND

- A. At least 10 days prior to the annual congregation meeting, the treasurer of this congregation and the treasurers of each organization of this congregation shall present their books of account to the Audit Committee.
- B. The treasurer of this congregation and the treasurer of each organization of this congregation shall be covered by a corporate surety bond in amounts determined by the Congregation Council, for which the premium shall be paid by the congregation.

Section VI. MINISTRIES and COMMITTEES (C4.04.)

Promptly after its reorganization each year, the Congregation Council may appoint the following committees as deemed necessary:

- A. **CHRISTIAN LEARNING MINISTRIES:** This ministry will oversee all the educational and missional learning opportunities within the congregation for children, students, and adults. This ministry will recruit, equip, and support volunteer leaders, secure educational materials, and offer studies to help the congregation live out its mission and vision.
- B. **WITNESS:** This committee shall develop ways for the people of St. John's to grow in witness to their faith and help them invite others to share in the Kingdom of God. It shall seek to restore those who have lapsed from regular worship attendance, see that

prospective members are visited and prepared for membership, and provide mentors for all new disciples.

- C. **SOCIAL MINISTRIES:** This committee shall provide the opportunity for the congregation and the community to come together and share our Christian love and compassion to those in our community. All people in this community should be able to offer their resources to help those in need through a well managed ministry that can effectively do the work.

Social Ministries will do this through the food pantry where it is our mission that no child should go to bed hungry and no senior should have to choose between food and medicine. We will also provide for all ages in between. Shared Bounty will do this through the provision of clothing, hygiene and household items.

Additionally the members of these ministries will provide encouragement, support, and hope to those we serve. We will continue to encourage the clients of these ministries to join us in worship and to grow our church family.

This committee will also provide guidance to the congregation as it pertains to our annual benevolent giving.

This committee will continue to work with other agencies, businesses, and churches to foster Christian compassion through outreach and will continue to meet the immediate ever changing needs of our community and beyond our community with our global ministries.

We will encourage all to continue to carry out our mission statement of “Saved by the grace of God to witness and to serve others”.

- D. **WORSHIP AND MUSIC:** This committee, in cooperation with the pastor(s) and in accordance with God’s Word and the worship and sacramental practices of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, will oversee the planning of worship services that give thanks, praise, and glory to God. It will support volunteer worship leaders as needed. It will provide appropriate materials, resources, programs, and opportunities to enhance the meaning, quality, and variety of corporate and personal worship.

- E. **STEWARDSHIP:** This committee shall encourage generous giving and liberal use of time and talents in the work of the church by providing resources to foster and develop faithful stewardship attitudes and practices.

- F. **FINANCE:** This committee shall prepare a budget for the succeeding year, including this congregation’s share in support of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, for recommendation to the Congregation Council. This committee shall oversee the financial affairs of the congregation to ensure that they are conducted properly, that obligations are promptly paid, and that benevolence monies are regularly forwarded. This committee may appoint an investment sub-committee. It may recommend to the appropriate committees an investment program for available funds. This committee shall be responsible for the purchase and an annual review of all the insurance of the congregation including property, general, liability and surety insurance.

- G. **PROPERTY:** This committee shall be responsible for the maintenance, improvement, and protection of all property of the congregation.

- H. FELLOWSHIP: This committee shall foster friendship among the members of the congregation through social activities consistent with the purposes and functions of the congregation. It shall be responsible for the celebration of special occasions within the life of the church.
- I. PERSONNEL: This committee shall be responsible for employee performance reviews, writing and maintaining employee job descriptions, and handling disputes and/or concerns with and among the paid Church staff. This Committee shall make recommendations to the Congregation Council regarding hiring, compensation and termination of paid Church staff. This Committee shall be made up of three (3) active voting members appointed by the Congregation Council and the Vice-President of the Congregation Council, who will serve as the chairperson. Term of office for appointed members will be three years with one member appointed each year. Committee members shall not serve more than six years consecutively.
- J. MUTUAL MINISTRY: This Committee shall be responsible for dealing with the ministries and concerns of called pastors and pastoral staff. It shall receive input from the congregation relative to the performance of duties and shall endeavor to resolve any misunderstanding amicably. The focus of this committee is to strengthen and affirm the mission of the church through mutual support of the pastor and congregation. This committee is to serve as a liaison between the pastoral staff and congregation and help identify and clarify expectations of pastor and congregation. It will remain a supportive and advisory entity, maintain strict confidentiality, and support and assist the pastor with the establishment of ministry goals.
- K. LIBRARY: This committee shall be responsible for maintaining and improving the church library; securing and training library volunteers; recommending funding for library equipment, supplies and contents; promoting the library's use by parish, community members, and Hilltop Dayschool; and maintain a library policy.

Section VII. BOARDS (C4.04)

- A. DAYSCHOOL: St. John's Hilltop Dayschool is a ministry of St. John's Lutheran Church. The mission of Hilltop Dayschool is: "Where young children of the community begin to grow and learn with Christian values". The Dayschool board, staff, community, and congregation, will aspire to this mission by offering a premier Christian educational program that will prepare God's children to excel in their academic, social, and spiritual development. The Dayschool Board will oversee Hilltop Dayschool and operate according to the policy and procedures developed by the Dayschool Board and approved by the Congregation Council.

Section VIII. REMOVAL OF INACTIVE MEMBERS (C8.05.e)

When a member has failed to receive Holy Communion and to make a contribution of record for a period of two (2) consecutive calendar years, the Congregation Council shall consider the removal of that person from voting to inactive status. After three (3) additional years of inactivity, the member will be removed from the roll of membership but shall remain a person for whom the church has a continuing pastoral concern. This procedure will take place only when there is a pastor

under call to serve this congregation or with the approval of the bishop of the synod and after such members has been counseled about the matter, if possible.

Section IX. PROPORTIONATE REPRESENTATION

In filling elected and appointed positions, this congregation shall strive for proportionate representation of the various demographics of its adult membership.

Section X. ST. JOHN’S MEMORIAL AND OUTREACH FUND (C5.05)

(Adopted at the January 31, 1999 Annual Meeting; Amended at the January 30, 2000 Annual Meeting; Amended at the January 31, 2010 Annual Meeting)

PREAMBLE: In order to provide our members a means of exemplifying Christ’s ministry through gifts and bequests, we hereby establish the St. John’s Memorial and Outreach Fund. Through contributions and bequests to this Fund, and earnings there from, we can undertake a more effective ministry to our members, to others in our community, and through wider church agencies, to those throughout the world.

ARTICLE I. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FUND

There is hereby established the Memorial and Outreach Fund of St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, Stony Ridge, Ohio, hereinafter referred to as “the Fund”. The assets of the fund shall be owned and held in the name of St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, Stony Ridge, Ohio. Hereinafter referred to as “the Church”.

ARTICLE II. ADMINISTRATION OF THE FUND

- A. The fund shall be administrated by The Memorial and Outreach Fund Committee, hereinafter referred to as “the Committee”. The Committee shall consist of nine (9) persons. The Pastor and the President of the Congregation shall be ex officio members of the Committee. The Church Council, hereinafter referred to as “the Council”, shall annually appoint one of its other members to serve on the Committee for a term of one (1) year, commencing at the beginning of the new Council year.
- B. The remaining six (6) members shall not be members of Council. The Council shall annually appoint two members of the Congregation, for a period of three (3) years commencing February 1. No persons shall be eligible for immediate reappointment pursuant to this paragraph if they have served in excess of one full term.
- C. Vacancies shall be filled by the Council for the unexpired term.

ARTICLE III. COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION

- A. Upon its initial appointment, and in the month of February each year thereafter, the Committee shall organize by electing from its members a Chairman, a Vice Chairman, and a Secretary.

- B. At its organizational meeting each year the Committee shall appoint a Treasurer. The Treasurer, if not a member of the Committee, shall become a member of the Committee ex officio, without vote. The Treasurer shall be eligible for reappointment each year, but shall serve at the pleasure of the Committee.

- C. **Scholarship Subcommittee**
 A three (3) member Scholarship Selection Committee shall be appointed annually at the organizational meeting. This committee shall consist of: the Pastor (or pastor's designee), one (1) member appointed by the Memorial and Outreach Committee, and one (1) member by the Council. All scholarship awards shall be approved by the Memorial and Outreach Committee and the Council.

ARTICLE IV. COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Committee shall meet at least quarterly and the minutes of its meetings shall be promptly submitted to the Council. The Committee shall report annually to the Congregation at its annual business meeting.

ARTICLE V. FUNCTION OF THE COMMITTEE

- A. The Committee shall be responsible for the receipt and administration of the non-monetary gifts, bequests, and memorials. Such gifts, bequests, and memorials shall be accepted by the congregation only upon approval by the Committee and approval by the Council after review by the appropriate standing committee(s) of the congregation to which the matter may have been referred by the Council.

- B. The Committee shall be responsible for the receipt and administration of monetary gifts (excluding contributions to other specific established funds and regular offerings and all offerings received at church services or functions, except as may be directed by the congregation or council), bequests, and memorials designated for a specific purpose. Such gifts, bequests, and memorials shall be accepted by the congregation only upon approval by the Committee and approval by the Council after review by the appropriate standing committee(s) of the congregation to which the matter shall be referred by the Council. Such gifts may be received subject to its being sufficient to cover the cost of the designated purpose or subject to additional funds covering the full cost thereof being raised, or may be received subject to any other conditions established as set forth in this paragraph.

- C. The Committee shall be responsible for the receipt and administration of undesignated monetary gifts (excluding regular offerings and all offerings received at church services or functions), bequests, and memorials. Upon receipt, all such monetary memorials, gifts, and bequests shall be allocated as follows:
 - 1. All undesignated Memorials received on behalf of a deceased, or gifts given on behalf of another, will be accumulated and held in the Memorial & Outreach Escrow Account. The committee shall communicate the amount of such memorials received to the family of the deceased or to the person in whose honor given and allow for the suggestion(s) of the use of such funds based on the gift guide described in Article VI, or other

designation. The acceptance of such suggestion(s) will be processed in the same manner as designated monetary gifts. In the event there is (1) no family, (2) the family or the person in whose honor the gift was given, does not suggest a specific use or project, or (3) the committee, council, or appropriate standing committee does not approve the family's suggestion(s), then the funds are considered undesignated and are allocated as other undesignated gifts and bequests in (2) below;

2. ALL UNDESIGNATED GIFTS, BEQUESTS, AND MEMORIALS DESCRIBED ABOVE SHALL BE ALLOCATED TO BENEVOLENCE, ENDOWMENT & PROJECT ACCOUNTS.

Distribution of the funds will be reviewed annually by the committee to meet anticipated needs. All recommended changes in percentages of allocations must be approved by the Council and the Church.

i. Benevolence Account.

This Account shall be allocated to and expended for benevolence purposes over, above, or beyond those budgeted by the Congregation, within a reasonable time after its receipt. Between receipt and expenditure, it may be invested and any earnings therefrom shall be added to the balance in this unexpended benevolence account. Allocation and expenditure of this Account shall be made upon the approval by the Committee, the Council, and any appropriate standing committee to which the Council may refer the matter.

ii. Endowment Account.

a. Investment income from the principal of the Endowment Account shall normally be added to the Benevolence Account and/or the Projects Account and distributed at least annually. Said investment income may, however, be allocated by the Committee in special circumstances by:

- i. adding said investment income to the Endowment Account principle; or
- ii. reinvesting said investment income for later allocation; or
- iii. adding said investment income to any scholarship fund of the Congregation.

b. The principal of the Endowment Account shall not be expended except for an extraordinary need that cannot feasibly be expected to be met by other means available to the Church and shall be expended only upon approval of the Committee by a majority vote of its full membership, and the approval of council by a majority vote of its full membership, and approval by the Congregation by a majority of those votes

cast by ballot vote at a regular or special congregational meeting called for such purpose. (C16.02)

iii. Projects Account.

This Account and earnings there from and any further accounts allocated thereto by the Committee pursuant to sub-paragraph (ii) above, shall be expended for the following purposes only:

- a. permanent improvements to the buildings or property of the Church, which improvements will serve a particular need or purpose;
- b. special items or equipment to be used for the direct benefit of members of the Congregation or others to whom we minister or serve;
- c. start up of special ministries or programs of a temporary nature for a specific non-recurring purpose;
- d. specific projects of a benevolent nature;
- e. loans to students who are preparing for full-time church related vocations. The Committee shall establish provisions for such loans.

The Projects Account shall not be used for general maintenance or repair to buildings or grounds or other usual budgetary items. All expenditures from the Projects Account shall be subject to approval by the Committee and approval by the Council after review by the appropriate committee(s) of the Congregation to which the matter may be referred by the Council. Expenditures of less than \$250 from the encumbered funds need not be approved by Council.

Prior to the annual distribution of investment income from the Endowment Account, the Committee shall seek from the congregation direction and input for dispersing the investment income allocated from the Endowment Account to the Benevolence Account and the Projects Account.

D. The Committee shall be responsible for selecting applicants and potential recipients for consideration by the congregation.

1. In selecting recipients for consideration by St. John's Lutheran Church, the Committee should keep in mind certain priorities:
 - i. Projects related directly to the ministry of Jesus Christ should be considered as being of first priority.
 - ii. Secular projects through which by our gifts we can witness to God's message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ should be considered as being of second priority.

- iii. Donations of a personal nature should be considered as being of third priority.
- iv. Monetary gifts, purchase of property, construction, equipment or any addition to the physical assets of St. John's Lutheran Church in Stony Ridge should be considered as being of fourth priority.

ARTICLE VI. GIFT GUIDE

The Committee shall maintain and publish a Gift Guide. The Guide shall include items, projects, and benevolence opportunities to which persons may refer when considering the making of a designated gift, memorial, or bequest to the church. The Committee shall review and republish the Guide at least annually. Items may be added to or deleted from the Guide by action of the Committee and the Council. Items in excess of the maximum spending level, in accordance with the church constitution (C12.05.c), shall be presented for approval by Council and by a vote of the Church.

ARTICLE VII. MANAGEMENT AND INVESTMENT OF FUNDS

- A. The Fund shall be invested in a combination of (1) investment funds offered by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, or (2) investment funds offered by a Lutheran Fraternal Organization, and (3) in deposits, securities, or investments issued by or insured by the United States Government or an agency thereof.
- B. Investments shall be made by action of the Committee. The Committee may consider recommendations from the Investment subcommittee. (B Sec.VI)
- C. With regard to investments made in other than an ELCA related fund, the primary investment goals shall be the preservation of the principal of the fund and the maximization of yield.

Section XI. ST. JOHN'S PROPERTY AND IMPROVEMENT FUND

(Adopted at the January 23, 1994 Annual Meeting and amended at the January 31, 2010 Annual Meeting)

- A. St. John's Property Improvement Fund is limited to expenditures in excess of \$750 and is intended for improvements to all of St. John's real estate this includes buildings, parking areas, and grounds. These improvements include new construction, major repairs, and replacement, or upgrading, of those systems necessary for the operation of the church (for example: a new roof, carpeting, air conditioning system, resurfacing parking lot). Some examples of items not covered by this fund are: furnishings, office and teaching equipment, and maintenance equipment.
- B. All requests for expenditures from the Property Improvement Fund must be referred to Church Council by the Property Committee.

- C. In accordance with the church, constitution (C12.05.c) expenses from \$750 to \$10,000 are subject to Church Council approval. Expenditures in excess of \$10,000 must be approved by the congregation.
- D. The money in the Property Improvement Fund shall be kept in an interest-bearing account. The account shall be maintained by the Church Treasurer for the purpose of writing checks and reconciling the account. The Church Treasurer shall administer the account as directed by the Church Council. Long term investments may be made by the Treasurer after consideration of recommendations by the investment sub-committee and upon approval of the Church Council. (B Sec.VI. F).
- E. At the discretion of the Church Council, monies in the fund may be used as collateral for loans made to the church by a bank. However, direct loans from the fund are prohibited.