

Holy Trinity, our church home.

When Sue and I were first married and looking for a house to purchase, our realtor gave us the best piece of advice we could have asked for. He said:

“You’re not looking for a house. You’re looking for a home”. Well, we finally did find our home and it has become a part of us, a part of our family.

Holy Trinity has also become our home as it has for all who gather there. It is our collective place of refuge and prayer, of joy and of sadness shared. Some of you have asked me as council president to address questions concerning our home in light of the resolution that recently passed as well as the upcoming resolution vote.

For this we will refer to the constitution of this congregation. Holy Trinity’s constitution mirrors the SEPA (Southeastern Pennsylvania) Synod’s constitution in matters of property, in particular in how it relates to the possibility of a congregation leaving the ELCA to join another Lutheran body. In this manner, we are taking the same steps and abiding by the same guidelines as the Synod. Below, I have taken word for word, the salient “sections” of our constitution as it relates to the issues. Underneath each “section” is the “result” in relation to the action taken to our home here at Holy Trinity.

CHAPTER 6 CHURCH AFFILIATION

C6.05 This congregation may terminate its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by the following procedure:

a : A resolution indicating the desire of this congregation to terminate its relationship must be adopted at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this congregation by a two-thirds majority of the voting members present.

RESULT- This initial step was taken and the resolution was passed.

b. The secretary of this congregation shall submit a copy of the resolution to the synodical bishop and shall mail a copy of the resolution to voting members of the congregation. This notice shall be submitted within 10 days after the resolution has been adopted.

RESULT- This step has been completed in a timely manner.

c. The bishop of the synod shall consult with this congregation during a period of at least 90 days.

RESULT- Synod has visited and consulted.

d. If this congregation, after consultation, still desires to terminate its relationship, such action may be taken at a legally called and conducted special meeting by a two-thirds majority of the voting members present, at which meeting the bishop of the synod or an authorized representative shall be present. Notice of the meeting shall be mailed to all voting members at least 10 days in advance of the meeting

RESULT : This meeting will occur on Sept 12th.

e. A certified copy of the resolution to terminate its relationship shall be sent to the synodical bishop, at which time the relationship between this congregation and the ELCA shall be terminated.

RESULT: Ownership of the building (Holy Trinity) would remain with the congregation.

f. Notice of termination shall be forwarded by the synodical bishop to the secretary of this church and published in the periodical of this church

RESULT: Ownership of the building (Holy Trinity) would remain with the congregation.

g. If this congregation was a member of the Lutheran Church in America it shall be required, in addition to the foregoing provisions in C.6.05, to receive synodical approval before terminating its membership in the ELCA.

RESULT: Ownership of the building (Holy Trinity) would remain with the congregation once approval received. If approval denied, ownership remains with the congregation even if ultimately the congregation is expelled from the ELCA. (see below, C7.02)

CHAPTER 7 PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

C7.01 If this congregation ceases to exist, title to un-disposed property shall pass to Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA.

RESULT: Ownership of un-disposed property passes to SEPA/ ELCA only in the event of loss of entire congregation.

C7.02 If this congregation is removed from membership in the ELCA according to its procedure for discipline (ie we are “kicked out of the ELCA”) title to property shall continue to reside in this congregation.

RESULT: Ownership of the building (Holy Trinity) would remain with the congregation.

C7.03. If a two-thirds majority of voting members of this congregation present at a regularly called conducted special meeting of this congregation vote to transfer to another Lutheran church body, title and property shall continue to reside in this congregation. Before this congregation takes action to transfer to another Lutheran church body, it shall consult with representatives of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod (SEPA).

RESULT- Ownership of the building (Holy Trinity) would remain with the congregation.

C7.04 If a two-thirds majority of the voting members present at a regularly called and conducted special meeting of this congregation vote to become independent or relate to a non-Lutheran church body, title property of this congregation shall continue to reside in this congregation only with the consent of Synod Council. The Synod Council, after consultation with the congregation by the established synodical process may give approval to the request to become independent or to relate to a non-Lutheran church body, in which case title shall remain with the majority of the congregation. If the Synod Council fails to give such approval, title shall remain with those members who desire to continue as a congregation of the ELCA.

RESULT : Holy Trinity is voting to leave the ELCA *and* join the NALC, a Lutheran Church body. Holy Trinity is *not* voting to become an independent congregation or to join a non-Lutheran denomination. Ownership of the building (Holy Trinity) would remain with the congregation.

Please feel free to call me with any questions or concerns you may have.

Yours in Christ,
Tom Schied, Council President.
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