

*Reformation Lutheran Church of Columbus  
Midland, Georgia  
Constitution*

- Section 13.02 amended October 20, 2013
- Section 2.02 d amended March 6, 2016

**THE CONSTITUTION OF THIS CONGREGATION**

Preamble

Article 1	Name and Incorporation
Article 2	Confession of Faith
Article 3	Ministry
Article 4	Statement of Purpose
Article 5	Powers of the Congregation
Article 6	Amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws
Article 7	Church Affiliation
Article 8	Property Ownership
Article 9	Membership
Article 10	The Pastor
Article 11	Congregational Meetings
Article 12	Officers
Article 13	Congregational Council
Article 14	Congregational Committees
Article 15	Organizations Within the Church
Article 16	Discipline of Members
Article 17	Indemnification

**Preamble**

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we, baptized members of the Body of Christ, responding in faith to the call of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, cognizant of our spiritual needs, and mindful of our Christian duties to preach the Word, administer the sacraments, and be disciples in God's mission, do hereby adopt this Constitution and solemnly pledge ourselves to be governed by its provisions.

**Article 1 – Name and Incorporation**

**1.01.** The name of this congregation shall be Reformation Lutheran Church of Columbus. The official abbreviation of this congregation shall be RLC, or Reformation Lutheran Church. For the purpose of this constitution, Reformation Lutheran Church hereinafter may also be designated as "this congregation."

**1.02.** This congregation shall be incorporated under the laws of the state of Georgia.

## **Article 2 – Confession of Faith**

**2.01.** This congregation believes, teaches, and confesses the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**2.02.** This congregation believes, teaches, and confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe in Him.

**a.** Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection, God fashions a new creation.

**b.** The proclamation of God's message to us as both law and gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy in the person and work of Jesus Christ through whom God was pleased to reconcile all things to Himself.

**c.** The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God. Inspired by God's spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God's revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them, God's Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.

**d.** The marriage policy of Reformation Lutheran Church of Cataula, Georgia, a member congregation of the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) is, and always has been, consistent with the LCMC belief on marriage. We steadfastly believe that marriage is a sacred union of one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24-25), and that God gave marriage as a picture of the relationship between Christ and his bride, the Church (Ephesians 5:25.) The official position of Reformation Lutheran Church and the LCMC is that homosexual unions come under categorical prohibition in the Old and New Testaments (Leviticus 18:22,24, 20:13, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:9-10) as contrary to the Creator's design (Romans 1:26-27). These positions and beliefs are based on the referenced Biblical passages, as well as our "Who We Are" and "Statement of Faith" as outlined on our LCMC website. The pastor of Reformation Lutheran Church will not officiate over any marriages inconsistent with these beliefs, and our church property may not be used for any marriage ceremony, reception or other activity that would be inconsistent with our beliefs and this policy.

**2.03.** This congregation accepts the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the scriptural faith we believe, teach, and confess.

**2.04.** This congregation believes, teaches, and accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession 1580 and the Small Catechism as true witnesses to the Word of God, normative for our teaching and practice. We acknowledge that we are one in faith and doctrine with all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.

**2.05.** This congregation accepts the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord as further valid expositions of the Holy Scriptures.

**2.06.** This Article cannot be repealed or so amended to alter its intent or meaning.

## **Article 3 – Ministry**

**3.01.** All power in this congregation belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ, its head. All actions of the congregation are to be carried out under His rule and authority.

**3.02.** Reformation Lutheran Church affirms the priesthood of all believers. This congregation commits itself in function and structure to the equipping and supporting of all members of this congregation for their ministries within and outside of the household of faith. It is within and from this context of ministry that we declare that some are called by God to the public ministry of Word and Sacrament and other specific ministries. At the same time, all baptized members of this congregation are priests called by God to ministries in their daily lives.

**3.03.** God's call of a pastor to the office of public ministry at RLC must be confirmed by the call of this congregation. All calls of other special types of ministries within RLC must meet or exceed the credential requirements of Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC).

## **Article 4 – Statement of Purpose**

**4.01.** This congregation is a people created by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

**4.02.** To participate in God's mission, this congregation shall:

- a.** Worship God in proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments and through lives of prayer, praise, thanksgiving, witness, and service.
- b.** Proclaim God's saving Gospel of justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith alone, according to the apostolic witness in the Holy Scripture, preserving and transmitting the Gospel faithfully to future generations.
- c.** Carry out Christ's Great Commission by reaching out to all people through witness and service, to bring them to faith in Christ and by doing all ministries with awareness consistent with the understanding of God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of all.
- d.** Serve in response to God's love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity and justice for all people, working for the peace of God to be known among nations, and standing with the poor and powerless, committing itself to their needs.
- e.** Nurture its members in the Word of God so as to grow in faith and hope and love, to see daily life as the primary setting for the exercise of their Christian calling, and to use the gifts of the Spirit for their life together and for their calling in the world.
- f.** Manifest the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives.

**4.03.** To fulfill these purposes, this congregation shall:

- a.** Provide services of worship at which the Word of God is preached and the sacraments administered.
- b.** Provide pastoral care and assist all members to participate in this ministry.
- c.** Challenge, equip, and support all members to participate in this ministry.
- d.** Live, teach, and preach the Word of God.
- e.** Witness to the reconciling Word of God in Christ, reaching out to all people.
- f.** Respond to human need, work for justice and peace, care for the sick and the suffering, and participate responsibly in society.
- g.** Motivate its members to provide financial support for this congregation's ministry and Christian ministry in other parts of this country and the world.
- h.** Foster and participate in ecumenical relationships consistent with God's Word, and Article 2 of this constitution

## **Article 5 – Powers of the Congregation**

**5.01.** This congregation shall be organized through a Congregational Council, committees, and compensated positions,

elected at a meeting of the congregation, and such other organizational tools as its members choose to adopt.

**5.02.** The Congregational Council of RLC shall meet frequently as provided in the bylaws of this congregation. All RLC representatives, including the Congregational Council and members to conventions, shall have only such authority as is specifically granted by this constitution, the bylaws of this congregation or otherwise granted by the members of the congregation. The RLC representatives shall faithfully represent the membership of the congregation. RLC representatives shall be selected as provided in the bylaws of this congregation. The manner of determining how RLC representatives cast votes is governed by the bylaws of this congregation.

**5.03.** Subject to the limitations imposed by this constitution, the bylaws of this congregation and restrictions as may be imposed by external authoritative bodies, the business and affairs of RLC shall be managed by or shall be under the direction of a Congregational Council.

**5.04.** Other matters of governance, organization, and order shall be addressed in the bylaws of this congregation.

## **Article 6 – Amendments to Constitution and Bylaws**

**6.01.** An amendment of the Congregational Council at the next Congregational Council meeting. Such proposed amendment shall to this constitution may be proposed in writing by a minimum of six (6) voting members of the congregation or by the Congregational Council. At least four months prior to the congregational meeting in which it will be presented for vote, the proposed amendment shall be referred to the RLC Congregational Council for review, comment and recommendation, and shall thereafter be re-submitted in final form, in writing to the Congregational Council. The recommendation [to the congregation] to approve any amendment shall require a two-thirds majority vote be presented to the members of this congregation as required by this constitution.

**6.02.** Changes to the bylaws may be proposed by at least six (6) voting members of the congregation. Additions or amendments shall be submitted in writing to the Congregational Council at least 60 days before a regular or special Congregational Meeting called for that purpose and the Congregational Council shall notify the congregation's members of the proposal with the council's recommendations at least 30 days in advance of the Congregational Meeting.

**6.03.** Voting procedures will be defined in the bylaws of RLC. (See section 11.04 of the bylaws)

**6.04.** Any proposed constitutional amendment or proposed change to the bylaws, regardless of origin or congregational council recommendation, must be voted upon by the congregation. Approval requires a two-thirds majority vote of the members of this congregation present and acting in and through a properly called congregational meeting, with each member entitled to one vote. Any amendment or change NOT approved by a two-thirds majority shall be deemed rejected.

## **Article 7 – Church Affiliation**

**7.01.** This congregation shall be an independent member of Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC).

**7.02.** Affiliation with LCMC may be terminated as follows:

**a.** This congregation takes action to remove itself from LCMC affiliation in accordance with 7.03.

**b.** This congregation ceases to exist.

**c.** This congregation is removed from the roles of LCMC as outlined in the LCMC Constitution Article 4 – Membership, 4.03.

**7.03.** A resolution indicating the desire of this congregation to terminate said affiliation with LCMC must be adopted at a legally called congregational meeting outlined in Article 11 of this Constitution. It will require a two-thirds majority vote of members present to terminate said affiliation. Notification of this congregation's vote to terminate its membership with LCMC will be provided to the headquarters of LCMC within two weeks of said action.

## **Article 8 – Property Ownership**

**8.01.** Any property obtained and held by this congregation shall be owned exclusively by the congregation. LCMC will not have any ownership rights or claim against said property under any circumstance.

**8.02.** If this congregation ceases to exist, any property or proceeds of the selling of said property will be donated to a Lutheran organization, cause, or charity that this congregation deems appropriate. In this event, only a majority vote of the members present at a called Congregational Meeting will be required to dispose of such property.

**8.03.** If a two-thirds majority of the voting members of this congregation present at a properly called and conducted meeting of this congregation vote to transfer to another Lutheran church body, title to the property shall continue to reside with the two-thirds majority.

## **Article 9 – Membership**

**9.01.** Members of this congregation shall be those baptized persons on the roll of this congregation at the time that this constitution is adopted and those who are admitted thereafter and who have declared and maintain their membership in accordance with the provisions of this constitution and its bylaws.

**9.02.** Members shall be classified as follows:

**a.** Baptized members are those persons who have been received by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism in this congregation, or, having been previously baptized in the name of the Triune God, have been received by certificate of transfer from other Lutheran Congregations or by affirmation of faith.

**b.** Confirmed members are baptized persons who have been confirmed in this congregation, those who have been received by adult baptism or by transfer as confirmed members from other Lutheran Congregations, or baptized persons received by affirmation of faith.

**c.** Voting members are confirmed members. Such confirmed members shall have communed and made a contribution of record at least twice during the twelve months preceding the date of a properly called Congregational Meeting.

**d.** Associate members are persons holding membership in other Christian Congregations who wish to retain such membership but desire to participate in the life and mission of this congregation. They have all the privileges and duties of membership except voting rights and eligibility for elected offices or membership on the Congregational Council of this congregation.

**9.03.** It shall be the privilege and duty of members of this congregation to:

**a.** Make regular use of the means of grace, both Word and sacrament;

**b.** Live a Christian life in accordance with the Word of God and the teachings of the Lutheran church; and

**c.** Support the work of this congregation and the LCMC through contributions of their time, abilities, and financial support as biblical stewards.

**9.04.** Membership in this congregation shall be terminated by any of the following:

**a.** Death;

**b.** Resignation;

**c.** Transfer or release;

**d.** Disciplinary action by the Pastor and a two-thirds vote of the Congregational Council;

**e.** Removal from the roll due to inactivity as defined in the bylaws. Such persons who have been removed from the roll of members shall remain persons for whom the church has a continuing pastoral concern.

**9.05.** Applicants for membership in this Congregation shall present their application(s) to the to the Pastor, who shall, in counsel with them, recommend whether they will join by Holy Baptism, Letter of Transfer, or Affirmation of Faith. The Pastor shall present their names to the Congregational Council for action at the Council meeting immediately prior to their acceptance into the Congregation at a Sunday service. In the absence of the Pastor, the Council President or Vice President shall fulfill these duties.

**9.06.** Members of this congregation shall be notified of the intent to remove their name from the rolls of this congregation if the records of the church indicate the member has neglected their duties under the Constitution by failing to commune or make a contribution of record to the church at least once during the last or current fiscal/church year. Notice of this intent shall be mailed to the member at their last known address. If no response to this mailing is received within 60 days of the date of such mailing or the mailing is returned by the post office, the member will be eligible to be purged from the church rolls. Should a member have extenuating circumstances that have prohibited him/her from meeting the requirements to remain on the membership rolls of the church, they must make an appeal to the Congregation Council by letter or in person and state the extenuating circumstance(s) that precluded them from communing or making a contribution or record to the church within the last or current fiscal/church year. This action must take place within 60 days of the date of the church mailing notifying him/her of the intent to remove them from the church membership rolls. Such member(s) will then be notified by mail of the decision of the Congregational Council. This

notification will include the rationale of the Congregational Council for the decision made and will be mailed to the member(s) within 10 days of their appeal to the Congregational Council

## **Article 10 – The Pastor**

**10.01.** Authority to call a pastor shall be in this congregation by at least a two-thirds majority ballot vote of members present and voting at a legally and properly called congregational meeting for said purpose.

**10.02.** Consistent with the faith and practice of RLC and LCMC:

**a.** Every ordained minister shall:

- 1.** Preach the Word;
- 2.** Administer the Sacraments;
- 3.** Conduct public worship;
- 4.** Provide pastoral care.

**b.** Each ordained minister with a congregational call shall, within the congregation:

- 1.** Offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead;
- 2.** Install regularly elected members of the Congregational Council;
- 3.** With the council, administer discipline; and
- 4.** Strive to extend the Kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad.

**10.03.** The specific duties of the pastor, compensation, and other matters pertaining to the service of the pastor shall be included in a letter of call.

**10.04.** The call of a congregation, when accepted by a pastor, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment, which, except in the case of the death of the pastor, shall be terminated for only the following reasons:

- a.** Mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term;
- b.** Resignation of the pastor, which shall become effective, unless otherwise agreed, 30 days after the date on which it was submitted;
- c.** Inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in the congregation in view of local conditions, without reflection on the competence or the moral and spiritual character of the pastor;
- d.** The physical or mental incapacity of the pastor;
- e.** Disqualification of the pastor through discipline on grounds of doctrine, morality, or continued neglect of duty;
- f.** The dissolution of the congregation.

**10.05.** At a time of pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor can be appointed with the consent of a simple majority of this congregation, at a legally and properly called congregational meeting, in accordance with article 11 of this constitution.

**10.06.** During the period of service, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties in the congregation of a regularly called pastor and may delegate the same in part to a supply pastor, with the consent of this Congregation. The interim pastor and any ordained pastor providing assistance shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor.

**10.07.** This congregation shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former pastor before calling a successor. A pastor shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to this congregation.

**10.08.** When a pastor is called to serve in company with another pastor(s), the privileges and responsibilities of each pastor shall be specified in documents to accompany the call and to be drafted in consultation involving the pastor(s), and the Congregational Council. As occasion requires, the documents may be revised through a similar consultation.

**10.09.** This congregation may depart from Article 10.04 and call a pastor for a specific term. Details of such calls shall be in writing setting forth the purpose and conditions involved. Such a call may also be terminated before its expiration in accordance with the provisions of 10.04.

**10.10.** The pastor of this congregation:

- a. Shall ensure that accurate parochial records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, first Communion, members received, members dismissed, or members excluded from the congregation are kept.
- b. Shall ensure that a summary of such statistics is submitted annually to the Congregation Council.
- c. Shall become a member of this congregation upon receipt and acceptance of the letter of call. In a parish of multiple congregations, the pastor shall hold membership in one of the congregations.

## **Article 11 – Congregational Meetings**

**11.01.** The annual meetings of this congregation shall be held at a time specified in the bylaws.

**11.02.** A special called Congregation Meeting may be called by the pastor and President or Vice-President of the Congregational Council; or two-thirds of the Congregational Council; or by a written resolution signed by at least six voting members of the congregation. The call for each special called meeting shall specify the purpose for which it is to be held and no other business shall be transacted.

**11.03.** Notice of all called meetings of this congregation shall be given at the services of worship on the preceding two consecutive Sundays and by mail to all voting members at least 10 days in advance of the date of the meeting. The posting of such notice in the regular mail, with the regular postage affixed or paid, sent to the last known address of such members shall be sufficient.

**11.04.** No less than fifteen percent of the voting membership shall constitute a quorum.

**11.05.** Voting by proxy or by absentee ballot shall not be permitted.

**11.06.** All actions by the congregation shall be by majority vote except as otherwise provided in this constitution.

**11.07.** Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition, shall govern parliamentary procedure of all meetings of this congregation.

## **Article 12 – Officers**

**12.01.** The officers of the Congregational Council shall be a president, a vice president, a secretary, and a treasurer.

- a. The president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer shall be elected by a majority ballot vote of members present at the annual meeting of the congregation.
- b. Duties and terms of the officers shall be specified in the bylaws.
- c. The officers shall be voting members of the congregation.

**12.02.** No officer shall hold more than one office at a time. No elected officer shall be eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office, except for the treasurer, who may serve longer with the approval of a two-thirds vote of the congregation.

## **Article 13 – Congregational Council**

**13.01.** The voting membership of the Congregational Council shall consist of the officers and not less than three or more than eight additional voting members of the congregation as elected to fill committee liaison seats as defined in the bylaws. Any voting member of the congregation may be elected to the Congregational Council, subject only to the limitation on the length of continuous service permitted in that office. A member's place on the Congregational Council shall be declared vacant if the member:

- a.** Ceases to be a voting member of this congregation; or
- b.** Is absent from four successive regular meetings of the Congregational Council without being excused in advance by the president.

**13.02.** The members of the Congregational Council shall be elected at the annual business meeting of the congregation. Members shall be eligible to serve no more than two full terms consecutively except for the treasurer, who may serve longer with the approval of a two-thirds vote of the congregation. Council members shall be installed at the worship service the Sunday prior to the date they assume office. Congregational Council membership shall be limited to two members of the same family. A Family is defined as persons related by blood or marriage in current or consecutive generations.

**13.03.** Should the position of any Congregational Officer or any other Congregational Council member be declared vacant, the Congregational Council shall elect, by majority vote, a successor until the next annual meeting.

**13.04.** The Congregational Council shall have general oversight of the life and activities of this congregation including long-range planning, policy making, financial accountability, and in particular its worship life. Its responsibility is to see that everything be done in accordance with the Word of God and the faith and practice of the Lutheran church.

**13.05.** The Congregational Council shall see that the provisions of this constitution and its bylaws are carried out.

**13.06.** The Congregational Council shall be responsible for supervision of the pastor(s) of this congregation and shall exercise this responsibility in accordance with the letter of call.

**13.07.** The Congregational Council is responsible for ensuring an annual performance review is conducted on all paid staff.

**13.08.** The Congregational Council is responsible for approving annual goals for the congregation.

**13.09.** A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of a majority of the members of the Congregational Council. The Senior Pastor shall only vote if a majority vote is not obtainable within the Council members present.

**13.10.** The Congregational Council shall be responsible for the employment and supervision of the salaried lay workers of this congregation.

**13.11.** The duties and terms of the Congregational Council shall be defined in the bylaws.

## **Article 14 – Congregational Committees**

**14.01.** The officers of this Congregation and the Senior Pastor shall constitute the Executive Committee.

**14.02.** A Nominating Committee of three voting members of this congregation, one of whom shall be a member of the Council, shall be appointed by the Council for a term of one year.

**14.03.** An Audit Committee of three voting members shall be appointed by the Council. Audit Committee members shall not be members of the Council and serve for a term of one year.

**14.04.** When a pastoral vacancy occurs, a Call Committee consisting of a minimum of six and no more than ten voting members shall be elected by the congregation. Terms of office will terminate at installation of the newly-called pastor.

**14.05.** A Mutual Ministry Committee of not less than three and not more than five voting members shall be appointed jointly by the President and the Pastor. Term of office shall be two years, with two or three members to be appointed each successive year. Members of Council shall not be eligible for appointment to this committee.

**14.06.** Other Congregational Committees may be formed as the need arises, by the decision of the Council.

**14.07.** Duties of the Congregational Committees shall be specified in the bylaws.

## **Article 15 – Organizations Within the Church**

**15.01.** All organizations within this congregation shall exist to aid it in ministering to the members of this congregation and to all persons who can be reached with the Gospel of Christ. As outgrowths and expressions of this congregation's life, the organizations are subject to its oversight and direction. The Congregational Council at its meeting shall oversee their policies and activities, and receive reports concerning their membership, work, and finances.

**15.02.** Special interest groups may be organized only after authorization has been given by the Council.

## **Article 16 – Discipline of Members**

**16.01.** Denial of the Christian faith as described in Article 2 of this Constitution, conduct grossly unbecoming a member of the Body of Christ, or persistent trouble-making in this congregation are sufficient cause for discipline of a member. Prior to disciplinary action, reconciliation will be attempted following Matthew 18:15-17, proceeding through the successive steps:

- a. Private admonition by the pastor,
- b. Admonition by the pastor in the presence of two or three witnesses, and
- c. Citation to appear before the Council.

**16.02.** A member charged with the offense shall appear before the Congregation Council having received a written notice, specifying the exact charges that have been made against the member, at least 10 days prior to the meeting.

**16.03.** Should the allegations be sustained by a two-thirds majority vote of the Council, the Council shall impose one of the following disciplinary actions:

- a. Censure before the Council; or
- b. Suspension from membership for a definite period of time; or
- c. Exclusion from membership in this Congregation.

Disciplinary actions b. and c. shall be delivered to the member in writing. If for any reason, the pastor is unable to administer the admonitions required in b. or c. hereof, the President or Vice President shall administer such admonitions.

**16.04.** The member against whom disciplinary action has been taken by the Council shall have the right to appeal the decision to the Congregation at a special called meeting. Such right may not be abridged and the decision of the Congregation shall be final.

**16.05.** Disciplinary actions may be reconsidered and revoked by the Council upon receipt of a) evidence that injustice has been done by the body that initiated the action or b) evidence of repentance and amendment.

## **Article 17 – Indemnification**

**17.01.** The church shall indemnify an officer or employee for any actions or inactions taken by such church officer or employee of the congregation acting within the scope of their assigned duties or employment responsibilities and within the limits of the liability insurance of the church. The church's indemnification will be secondary to any insurance the individual may have.