

Saint Matthew Ecumenical Catholic Church

Parish Constitution

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PARISH CONSTITUTION
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PARISH CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

We are an emergent, autocephalous, catholic church practicing an ancient faith in new ways guided by the Holy Spirit in an ever-widening circle of diversity and inclusivity. We are following the Gospel or Good News of Jesus Christ whose life modeled and teachings proclaim that in the Kingdom of God on this earth “All are welcome.” Therefore, we do hereby adopt this constitution and solemnly pledge ourselves to be governed by its provisions. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

I. NAME

The name of this parish community shall be: Saint Matthew Ecumenical Catholic Church.

For purposes of this Constitution and accompanying bylaws, “Saint Matthew Ecumenical Catholic Church” is hereinafter designated as “this faith community,” “parish,” or simply “Saint Matthew Church.”

This faith community shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of California.

II. ARTICLES OF FAITH

A. Jesus Christ

Saint Matthew Church is a Christian community that is committed to the person of Jesus Christ and to His teaching. We accept and believe the testimony of His apostles who were His disciples and the eyewitnesses of His life, death, and His resurrection from the dead. Their testimony is called the apostolic tradition that is embodied in the collected writings of the New Testament that together with the ancient Hebrew Scriptures has been passed on to the Catholic Church founded by the same apostles.

B. Historic Background

Our Church is “Old Catholic” in that we derive our apostolic succession from the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands. The Old Catholic Church is an ecclesial body, which descends from the Roman Catholic Church. Becoming independent of Roman jurisdiction over conflicts with ever-expanding papal authority, the Catholic Church of Utrecht, the Netherlands, maintained an authentic Catholic identity and a valid apostolic succession since the early 18th century. When Rome proclaimed the Dogma of Papal Infallibility in 1870, Old Catholic Churches were formed by dissenting Catholics in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Poland. Deriving their apostolic succession from the independent Catholic Church in the Netherlands, these Catholic Churches continue to this day.

Since that time, other independent Catholic Churches have come into being, many of which derive their apostolic succession from the Old Catholic Church. Saint Matthew Church not only

possesses a valid apostolic succession through the Old Catholic Church of Utrecht, but also shares with other Old Catholic bodies, a commitment to the foundational document known as the Declaration of Utrecht, dated September 24, 1889 (see Appendix A and Appendix B).

C. Sacraments

Saint Matthew Church follows an authentic Catholic faith tradition in that we participate in the full sacramental ministry of the Church. The seven sacraments of the historic Catholic Church are affirmed and practiced: baptism, confirmation, Holy Eucharist, reconciliation, anointing of the sick, marriage, and Holy Orders (see Appendix C). Although we have an authentic Catholic identity, we welcome Protestant, Evangelical, Eastern Orthodox, and other Christians at the Eucharistic Table where all are welcome.

D. Distinctives

We, the faith community of Saint Matthew, practice an authentic Catholic tradition with the following distinctives:

- The Catholics of Saint Matthew Church, though recognizing the importance of the Pope and his role as a sign of unity and as an important source of leadership within the Church, reject the proclamation of the First Vatican Council (1869) promulgated by Pope Pius IX concerning the dogma of papal infallibility. We view such a dogma as being inconsistent with Catholic theology and as not being part of an authentic Catholic tradition. We see this dogma as an abuse of power that reinforces authoritarianism within the Church, which runs counter to the spirit and teachings of Jesus. The dogma of the infallibility of the Pope, though an effort to create unity within the Church, has had the opposite effect. It now stands as an immense obstacle to the unity of the Church and actually diminishes the important ministry of the Pope as the successor of Peter and as a sign of unity. At best, the dogma of papal infallibility is sectarian and not truly catholic.
- The deacons, priests, and bishops of Saint Matthew Church are free to marry and raise families or to remain celibate.
- At Saint Matthew Church, women are given the opportunity to respond to a genuine vocation and to participate in the ministerial priesthood. As Saint Paul writes, “There is neither Jew or Greek, slave nor free, male or female, all are one in Christ Jesus” Galatians 3:28”.
- People who have gone through the painful experience of divorce and have chosen to remarry are not excluded from the sacramental life of the Church. A divorced person may remarry with the blessing of the Church without being required to seek an ecclesial annulment.
- We entrust married couples with the responsibility of following their own conscience “primacy of conscience” in regard to the use of artificial contraception.

- We recognize the dignity of all human beings regardless of their race, ethnic identity, differing abilities, gender identification, or sexual orientation.
- We recognize that each baptized person is an equal member of the historic Church. The lay people, the clergy, and the bishops all play important and distinct roles in the governance of the Church.
- All baptized Christians, whether Catholic or Protestant, are welcomed into the worship and to share in the celebration of the sacraments and the sacramental life of our ecumenical community.

III. PURPOSE AND MISSION

A. Purpose

Saint Matthew Church is a Christian community dedicated to the practice of a Catholic faith where all are welcome. Together we are called to realize our baptismal promises by following Christ's teachings. We encounter the loving and forgiving presence (grace) of the risen Christ in one another and in our communal celebration of the sacraments. Together we endeavor to comfort and give hope to all through acts of loving kindness.

B. Mission

We are a loving and inclusive faith community, following the teachings of Jesus, honoring the dignity and equality of each person through the work of the Holy Spirit in our authentic catholic tradition.

IV. MEMBERSHIP

Members of Saint Matthew Church are those who identify themselves as members, participate in liturgies and church ministries, make monetary or other service contributions to the parish community, have built relationships with other community members, and are 18 years of age or older.

V. CLERGY

As in the historic Catholic Church, we recognize three orders of ordained ministry: Bishops, Priests/Presbyters, and Deacons. It shall be the shared responsibility of all clergy to:

- Provide spiritual leadership to the faith communities they serve.
- Foster the healthy development and growth of all faith communities according to the doctrine and theology of our articles of faith and parish distinctives.

- Ensure that church decisions and actions reflect the purpose and mission statements of Article III of this Constitution.

A. The Bishop and the Auxiliary Bishop

The parish shall have two Bishops: The Bishop/Pastor (local ordinary) and the Auxiliary Bishop.

1. The Bishop

The Bishop is a priest who has been elected by the majority of the congregation (priests, deacons and laity) to serve the parish as the authorized vicar of Christ. To this end, the person chosen to be Bishop will be validly consecrated in Apostolic Succession. The primary function of the Bishop is to safeguard the unity and tradition of the Church.

The responsibilities of the Bishop are:

- to teach the Gospel and the doctrine of the church in the present age (a prophetic function)
- to lead worship (chief liturgist)
- to administer the Sacraments and Sacramentals (priestly function)
- to lead the pastoral governance of the parish (servant leader function).

The Bishop delegates these duties to the priests and deacons who serve with him/her.

The Bishop grants faculties (permission to minister) to the deacons and priests in the parish. The Bishop may withdraw faculties.

The Bishop receives and gives final approval for clergy incardinating from other jurisdictions.

The Bishop gives final approval and presides at all ordinations of clergy.

The Bishop gives final consent and presides at all confirmations.

The Bishop/Pastor

The Bishop is the Pastor and the spiritual leader of the faith community. While the Bishop/Pastor is responsible for the general wellbeing of the parish, his/her areas of special authority in the parish are theological, pastoral, and liturgical. The duties of the Bishop in his/her role as Pastor are:

- To oversee and guide the activities of all clergy in their parish responsibilities.
- To oversee and approve the liturgical programs of the parish.
- To serve as a non-voting member on the parish Council.
- To serve as a non-voting member on the Clergy Council.
- To assist in the budgeting and business planning of the parish.

- To supervise the Parish Administrator and/or Business Office Manager.
- To develop and maintain relationships with all the members of the faith community.
- To reserve the right to veto the appointment of any parishioner to a Parish Ministry Team or Council without explanation. This protects the privacy of the parishioner, while allowing the Bishop/Pastor to exercise privileged information in the best interests of the parish.

a. Selection of the Bishop/Pastor

The steps in selecting a new Bishop/Pastor are as follows:

1. The Parish Council appoints a Selection Committee of lay members and clergy.
2. Selection Committee performs the search for potential candidates.
3. Selection Committee presents their recommendation to the acting Bishop/Pastor, Parish Council, and Clergy Council.
4. Approved candidate is presented to the Parish Council and to the Clergy Council. A simple majority vote of the full Parish Council is required as well as a simple majority vote of the full Clergy Council.
5. Approved candidate is then presented to the Church members at a special meeting. A majority vote of attending adult members is required.
6. If the Bishop/Pastor elect has not been consecrated as a Bishop, appropriate arrangements will be made.

b. Removal of the Bishop/Pastor

Criteria/Grounds for Removal

In the event that irreconcilable differences develop between the Bishop/Pastor and the parish community, a good faith effort at reconciliation must be made between the Bishop/Pastor and the faith community. Reconciliation and resolution should be sought between the Bishop/Pastor and the complainant(s) who have verbally addressed their complaints to him/her as well as providing written statements to the Bishop/Pastor the Clergy Council and the Parish Council. The written statement must include an explanation of why information addressing one or more of the following criteria is applicable:

- Incompetence
- Unconstitutional behavior
- Abuse of power
- Physical health or mental/emotional health impairment
- Doctrinal misconduct
- Criminal conduct

The Bishop/Pastor may or may not write a response to resolve the issue. If this informal procedure fails, the Clergy Council will then appoint an appropriate committee of clergy and laity to investigate the complaints, call witnesses, and write a summary of findings and their recommendation for resolution. They may request consultation from physicians or mental health professionals if appropriate. The Bishop/Pastor may then write a response. Arbitration may be required. If the investigation and/or arbitration fails to resolve the issues, then the process for removal will move forward with a recommendation from the committee that will be voted on. The final written report by the select committee will summarize the findings while excluding any confidential information.

Final Conditions for Removal

All the following constituencies shall proceed with a vote:

- Two-thirds vote of the full Parish Council in favor of removing the Bishop/Pastor.
- Two-thirds vote of the full Clergy Council in favor of removing the Bishop/Pastor.
- A special meeting shall be called of all adult parish members. Of the members attending the meeting, a majority vote in favor of removing the Bishop/Pastor.

2. The Auxiliary Bishop

The Auxiliary Bishop is a bishop assigned to assist the Bishop/Pastor in meeting the pastoral and administrative needs of the parish. Along with the Bishop/Pastor, they possess the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders and has been consecrated in Apostolic Succession.

The Auxiliary Bishop exercises his/her authority with the permission of and in harmony with the Bishop/Pastor (local ordinary).

The Auxiliary Bishop does not hold the right of succession should the office of the Bishop/Pastor be vacated.

In the event that the Bishop/Pastor becomes incapacitated, the Auxiliary Bishop shall perform the sacramental, liturgical, and pastoral functions of the Bishop/Pastor until the Bishop/Pastor resumes his/her duties or retires or until a new Bishop/Pastor is selected by the congregation and consecrated, if necessary.

3. Selection of Auxiliary Bishop

a. Qualifications

The Qualifications for the Office of Auxiliary Bishop are:

1. Must be thirty-five years of age or more.

2. Must have been ordained a priest.
3. Must be a member of Saint Matthew Church Clergy Council.
4. Must provide a profession of faith in writing.

b. Selection of Auxiliary Bishop

The steps in selecting the Auxiliary Bishop are as follows:

1. The Clergy Council appoints a nominating committee consisting of the Bishop/Pastor, a Priest, and a Deacon.
2. The nominating committee puts the names of those priests meeting the qualifications to be Auxiliary Bishop on a list of candidates.
3. Each willing candidate completes a written application form including a written profession of faith.
4. The nominating committee interviews eligible candidates and identifies a slate of nominees.
5. The slate of nominees is forwarded to the Clergy Council for a vote. The names of the two nominees who receive the highest number of votes are forwarded to the Parish Council.
6. The Parish Council shall give the two final nominees an opportunity to write statements regarding their qualifications and interest in serving as Auxiliary Bishop. The statements are to be distributed to the congregation.
7. The Parish Council shall hold a special meeting of the congregation for a formal vote on the two nominees. The nominee receiving the majority vote of those members present shall be elected Auxiliary Bishop. The nominee for Auxiliary Bishop, once elected by the majority vote, must be granted a formal appointment prior to consecration.
8. The Bishop/Pastor shall contact an appropriate ecclesial body of bishops to arrange the consecration of the Auxiliary Bishop elect.

In the event that the office of Bishop/Pastor is vacant, the nominating committee for selecting the Auxiliary Bishop shall consist of two priests and a deacon who are members of the Clergy Council.

In the event that there is a simultaneous vacancy of the offices of Bishop/Pastor and Auxiliary Bishop, the Auxiliary Bishop shall be the first elected.

c. Removal of the Auxiliary Bishop

Criteria/Grounds for Removal

In the event that irreconcilable differences develop between the Auxiliary Bishop and the parish community, a good faith effort at reconciliation must be made between the

Auxiliary Bishop and the faith community. Reconciliation and resolution should be sought between the Auxiliary Bishop and the complainant(s) who have verbally addressed their complaints to him/her as well as providing written statements to the Auxiliary Bishop, the Clergy Council and the Parish Council. The written statement must include an explanation of why information addressing one or more of the following criteria is applicable:

- Incompetence
- Unconstitutional behavior
- Abuse of power
- Physical health or mental/emotional health impairment
- Doctrinal misconduct
- Criminal conduct

The Auxiliary Bishop may or may not write a response to resolve the issue.

If this informal procedure fails, the Clergy Council will then appoint an appropriate committee of clergy and laity to investigate the complaints, call witnesses, and write a summary of findings and their recommendation for resolution. They may request consultation from physicians or mental health professionals if appropriate. The Auxiliary Bishop may then write a response. Arbitration may be required. If the investigation and/or arbitration fails to resolve the issues, then the process for removal will move forward with a recommendation from the committee that will be voted on. The final written report by the select committee will summarize the findings while excluding any confidential information.

Final Conditions for Removal

All the following constituencies shall proceed with a vote:

- Two-thirds vote of the full Parish Council in favor of removing the Auxiliary Bishop.
- Two-thirds vote of the full Clergy Council in favor of removing the Auxiliary Bishop.
- A special meeting shall be called of all adult parish members. Of the members attending the meeting, a majority vote in favor of removing the Auxiliary Bishop.

B. Priests/Presbyters

The ministry of the Priest/Presbyter is particularly one of pastoral care as delegated by the Bishop/Pastor among the members of the faith community, focused upon the celebration of the Seven Sacraments and spiritual guidance. Priests also visit the sick, oversee religious education programs, provide pastoral care to parishioners, and support the operation of the parish. In the early Church presbyters participated in advisory councils to their bishops.

C. Deacons

The ministry of Deacon is particularly one of service under the sole authority of a bishop. Deacons assist the Bishop/Pastor in pastoral responsibilities both inside and outside the parish such as visiting the sick, teaching, counseling, and working on parish committees. Deacons are given the responsibility of reading the Gospel at Mass. They can also baptize, witness marriages, perform funeral and burial services outside of Mass, distribute communion, and preach homilies all as delegated by the Bishop/Pastor. A permanent Deacon is one who serves as such for life. Transitional Deacons are in the last phase of their training before being ordained priests.

VI. PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Council is a decision-making body established for the purpose of fulfilling the mission of Saint Matthew Ecumenical Catholic Church. Authority is delegated to the Parish Council from the Bishop/Pastor for making and implementing decisions on (but not limited to):

- The physical needs of the parish environment
- The financial and budget needs of the parish
- Acquisitions and purchases for the parish
- Legal and financial responsibilities of the parish
- Lay ministry teams
- Outreach ministries
- Employment of parish staff and other issues related to human resources
- Appointments of delegates to the ECC House of Laity

The Parish Council shall form ministries within the community to help develop and implement these areas of Church life, as appropriate. Procedures for the Parish Council operation, member selection, and membership duration are defined in the Parish Bylaws Article I.

VII. CLERGY COUNCIL

The Clergy Council is a body of duly ordained priests and deacons, each of whom has ecclesial authority and pastoral ministries in keeping with their clerical vocation. They are members of Saint Matthew Church.

The Clergy Council was established to discern and to serve the sacramental and spiritual needs of the community in the context of the ministries and mission of Saint Matthew Church. The Clergy Council acts in an advisory role to the Bishop/Pastor, to the parish staff, and to the Parish Council, especially in discerning the will of God for our faith community. This advisory role includes but is not limited to:

- Advising and assisting the faithful in their various ministries
- Enacting policies that deal with liturgy, pastoral care, and the sacraments
- Engaging the faithful in programs of spiritual formation

Procedures for Clergy Council, membership, and responsibilities are enumerated in the Parish Bylaws Article III.

VIII. PARISH DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Ordinary parish decision-making authority is distributed as follows:

A. Bishop/Pastor

The ordinary decision-making processes of the Bishop/Pastor are specified in Article V of the Constitution and in the Bylaws.

B. Parish Council

The ordinary decision-making responsibilities of the Parish Council are specified in Article VI of the Constitution and in the Bylaws.

C. Clergy Council

The ordinary decision-making responsibilities of the Clergy Council are specified in Article VII of the Constitution and in the Bylaws.

D. Business Office Manager

The Business Office Manager is authorized to:

- Negotiate and bid all contractual services, to be presented to the Parish Council for final approval.
- Act as business liaison to financial institutions and business associations.
- Implement the approved parish budget.
- Prepare and distribute financial reports, as required.
- Make purchases within amount limits set by the Parish Council.

E. Special Decision-Making Provisions

Special decision-making provisions are stated in Article VIII of the Bylaws.

IX. ECCLESIAL AFFILIATION

A. Covenant Relationships

The Bishop/Pastor may sign agreements with bishops of other independent jurisdictions or other religious organizations acknowledging the validity of their Holy Orders and allowing their clergy to preside or participate in parish liturgies. The Bishop/Pastor may enter into agreements with clergy from other liturgical denominations to conduct shared liturgies, most especially the Eucharist. Such agreements presuppose the validity of Holy Orders of those denominations.

B. Diocese Affiliation

1. Diocese Membership

To seek membership in another diocese all the following conditions must be met:

- Two-thirds vote of the full Parish Council in favor.
- Two-thirds vote of the full Clergy Council in favor.
- Assent of the parish Bishop/Pastor.
- A special meeting shall then be called of all adult parish members (the congregation). A majority vote in favor by members present.

The parish Bishop/Pastor (local ordinary) retains all episcopal functions regarding the internal life of the parish while in an external diocese and those functions cannot be overruled or abrogated by the diocesan Bishop (diocesan ordinary).

The Parish Constitution takes precedence over the Diocesan Constitution in all internal parish matters.

2. Separation from a Diocese

If issues develop between the parish and Diocese which cannot be reconciled, the parish may decide to leave a Diocese under the following conditions:

- Two-thirds vote of the full Parish Council in favor of leaving the Diocese.
- Two-thirds vote of the full Clergy Council in favor of leaving the Diocese.
- Consent of the Bishop/Pastor to rescind diocesan affiliation.
- A special meeting shall be called of all adult parish members (the congregation). The members attending the meeting need a majority vote in favor of leaving the Diocese.

The Bishop/Pastor has the final authority to rescind membership in an external Diocese.

C. Affiliation with the Ecumenical Catholic Communion (ECC)

The ECC is an association of independent self-governing ecclesial bodies (faith communities). We are a founding member of the ECC. We endorse, but are not bound by, the Ecumenical Catholic Code of Ethical Conduct. The number of registered members in the parish community determines the number of Ecumenical Catholic Communion house of Laity (HOL) delegates.

X. LAY MEMBER EXPULSION FROM THE PARISH

Sufficient causes for discipline and possible expulsion from the parish of a member of the faith community include: apostasy, immoral conduct, persistent trouble making, or illegal activity.

Prior to disciplinary action or expulsion, the matter shall be presented by the Bishop/Pastor to a joint meeting of the Parish Council and Clergy Council. Reconciliation should be attempted, proceeding through these successive steps in accordance with Matthew 18:15-17:

1. Private admonition by the Bishop/Pastor.
2. Admonition by the Bishop/Pastor in the presence of one Parish Council member and one Clergy Council member.

If the above steps fail, the Bishop/Pastor will ask the member to leave the parish. Reinstatement to the community may be considered by the Bishop/Pastor in consultation with the Parish Council and the Clergy Council.

XI. DISSOLUTION OF PROPERTY RIGHTS

In the event that the parish is dissolved as an entity, its assets are dispersed as specified by the Parish Articles of Incorporation. Once all debts and obligations are paid, the remainder of the parish assets must be donated to a similar non-profit entity. The Bishop/Pastor and Parish Council shall decide where to donate the remaining assets as follows:

- If less than half of the Parish Council remains, the decision shall be made by the Bishop/Pastor.
- If the Bishop/Pastor is no longer involved, the decision shall be made by a majority vote of the remaining Parish Council.
- If agreement cannot be reached between the Bishop/Pastor and a majority of the remaining Parish Council, the decision shall be made by the Parish Council if they have a two-thirds consensus of the remaining members. Otherwise, the decision shall be made by the Bishop/Pastor.

XII. AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION OR THE BYLAWS

The process for the amendment of the Constitution or the Bylaws is specified in Article VII of the Bylaws.

APPENDIX A
THE DECLARATION OF UTRECHT

THE DECLARATION OF UTRECHT,
A TRANSLATION OF THE PROFESSION OF FAITH, OR DECLARATION,
FORMULATED BY THE OLD CATHOLIC BISHOPS ASSEMBLED AT UTRECHT.
SEPTEMBER 24TH, 1889

We adhere faithfully to the Rule of Faith laid down by St. Vincent of Lerins in these terms: “*id teneamus, ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est; hoc est etenim vere proprieque catholicum.*” For this reason, we persevere in professing the faith of the primitive Church, as formulated in the ecumenical symbols and specified precisely by the unanimously accepted decisions of the Ecumenical Councils held in the undivided Church of the first thousand years.

We therefore reject the decrees of the so-called Council of the Vatican, which were promulgated on July 18th, 1870 concerning the infallibility and the universal Episcopate of the Bishop of Rome, decrees which contradict the faith of the ancient Church, and which destroy its ancient canonical constitution by attributing to the Pope the plenitude of ecclesiastical powers over all Dioceses and over all the faithful. By denial of his primatial jurisdiction we do not wish to deny the historic primacy, which several Ecumenical Councils and the Fathers of the ancient Church have attributed to the Bishop of Rome by recognizing him as the *Primus inter pares*.

We also reject the dogma of the Immaculate Conception promulgated by Pius IX in 1854 in defiance of the Holy Scriptures and in contradiction to the tradition of the first centuries.

As for other Encyclicals published by the Bishops of Rome in recent times – for example, the Bulls *Unigenitus* and *Auctorem fidei*, and the *Syllabus* of 1864 – we reject them on all such points as are in contradiction of the doctrine of the primitive Church, and we do not recognize them as binding on the conscience of the faithful. We also renew the ancient protest of the Catholic Church of Holland against the errors of the Roman Curia, and against its attacks upon the rights of national Churches.

We refuse to accept the decrees of the Council of Trent in matters of discipline, and as for the dogmatic decisions of that Council, we accept them only so far as they are in harmony with the teaching of the primitive Church.

Considering that the Holy Eucharist has always been the true central point of Catholic worship, we consider it our duty to declare that we maintain with perfect fidelity the ancient Catholic doctrine concerning the Sacrament of the *Alta*, by believing that we receive the Body and the Blood of our Savior Jesus Christ under the species of bread and wine. The Eucharistic celebration in the Church is neither a continual repetition nor a renewal of the expiratory sacrifice which Jesus offered once for all upon the Cross, and it is the act by which we represent upon earth and appropriate to ourselves the one offering which Jesus Christ makes in Heaven, according to the Epistle to the Hebrews ix. 11, 12, for the salvation of redeemed humanity, by appearing for us in the presence of God (Heb. ix. 24). The character of the Holy Eucharist being thus understood, it is, at the same time, a sacrificial feast, by means of which the faithful, in

receiving the Body and Blood of our Savior, enter into communion with one another (I Cor. X. 17).

We hope that Catholic theologians, in maintaining the faith of the undivided Church, will succeed in establishing an agreement upon all such questions as caused controversy ever since the Churches became divided. We exhort the priests under our jurisdiction to teach, both by preaching and by the instruction of the young, especially the essential Christian truths professed by all the Christian confessions, to avoid, in discussing controversial doctrines, any violation of truth or charity, and in word and deed to set an example to the members of our churches in accordance with the spirit of Jesus Christ our Savior.

By maintaining and professing faithfully the doctrine of Jesus Christ, by refusing to admit those errors which by the fault of men have crept into the Catholic Church, by laying aside the abuses in ecclesiastical matters, together with the worldly tendencies of hierarchy, we believe that we shall be able to combat efficaciously the great evils of our day, which are unbelief and indifference in matters of religion.

APPENDIX B
A BRIEF HISTORY OF SAINT MATTHEW CHURCH'S INCLUSIVITY

All Are Welcome: A Brief History of Saint Matthew's Inclusivity

Over the past thirty-five years Saint Matthew Church has evolved in its pastoral understanding of who we are as the People of God. We have been guided on this journey by our founding pastor, Bishop Peter Elder Hickman, who has been prophetically guided by the Spirit to realign the pastoral practices of the parish with the traditions of Jesus followed by the primitive church and guided by the realities of late twentieth and early twenty-first century life.

When Father Peter began Saint Matthew Church as an Old Catholic Mission in 1985, his focus was on the plight of disenfranchised Roman Catholics who because they had divorced could not be remarried in the church or receive the sacraments. In the Old Catholic Church in which he was validly ordained, divorce and remarriage are permitted. Father Peter began Saint Matthew as a haven and spiritual home for divorced Roman Catholics wishing to remarry, to receive the sacraments, and to practice the Catholic faith.

The Old Catholic churches also allow married priests. As early as 1986 married priests who were not allowed to function as priests in the Roman Catholic Church and their families were finding a spiritual home at Saint Matthew Church.

In 1994 Father Peter experienced a prophetic moment when he was introduced to a gay Catholic couple who were seeking to be married and have their union blessed by a priest. After much prayer and premarital counseling with the couple, Father Peter presided at their wedding. This was some twenty years before gay marriage became a divisive issue in some denominations. For Saint Matthew Church it was the third major step toward the Spirit's call to inclusivity.

In 1999 Father Peter, now Bishop Peter, was challenged again. This time the Spirit brought to him a woman being called to ordained ministry as a priest. Kathy McCarthy, a former Glenmary sister, was presented to Bishop Peter by her parish pastor Father Ned Reidy, a Roman Catholic priest, who believed her call was from God. Obviously, this circumstance created much consternation, debate, reflection, and prayer among the existing clergy and the young Bishop at Saint Matthew Church. Could a woman actually be "in Persona Christi" (in the person of Christ) at the altar of Christ in a Catholic church? In the end Bishop Peter's answer was "yes." Part of that decision was guided by the theology of martyrs in the Old Catholic Church where it has long been recognized that a martyr, male or female, is "in persona Christi", the presence of Christ in the world. Bishop Peter has since ordained a number of other women as deacons and priests whom the Spirit has led to him for ordination. Two of them have since become bishops themselves.

In the early 2000's Bishop Peter was given another challenge by the Spirit that has to do with the institutional structure of the Church itself. After the publicity generated when he ordained Mary Rammerman a Catholic priest in Rochester, New York in November 2001, a number of independent Catholic parishes unaffiliated with a diocesan bishop contacted Bishop Peter in the hope of possible episcopal affiliation with him. The outcome of these discussions resulted in a

new ecclesial polity being created known as the Ecumenical Catholic Communion (ECC), understood as a communion of independent catholic communities. These communities sought to preserve their catholic identity while transforming the institutional structure of the church to include both laity and clergy in the governance of the church. This ideal came to be known as “the three-legged stool” and was formalized in the ECC Constitution as a threefold leadership structure: The Episcopal Council, the House of Pastors, and the House of Laity. In effect this threefold structure attempts to incorporate the best elements of church polity that have existed separately in the Western Church for the past five hundred years, namely churches with an Episcopal organizational polity, a Presbyterian polity, and a Congregational polity. At the beginning Bishop Peter was the only Bishop within this institutional structure.

Later as the ECC grew, it was taken for granted that the ECC would develop diocesan structures headed by diocesan bishops copying the institutional structure of the Roman Catholic Church from which many of the independent ECC parishes had come. In some quarters of the ECC there has been enormous pushback by parishes against establishing a Diocesan structure because of hierarchical, authoritarian decisions made by bishops in the Roman Catholic Church, previously Ordinaries to those parishes. At the time such concerns were not an issue at Saint Matthew Church because Bishop Peter had been elected bishop by the congregation in 1995 so that the parish would be an autocephalous (self-governing) church. He was consecrated in the Old Catholic Church in 1996, becoming the local ordinary and the ordinary of the Diocese of California, which he formed.

Bishop Peter was the Presiding Bishop of the ECC for its first eleven-and-one-half years. He remained the pastor of Saint Matthew Church during that time and to the present day. Saint Matthew Church is the Mother Church of the ECC.

In Advent of 2009, the existing parishes in California came together to write and adopt a constitution for the Diocese following the institutional governance model of the Roman Catholic Church. The ECC Diocese of California was reestablished at that time. However, the existing Constitution of Saint Matthew Church required an affirmative vote by the congregation to join the Diocese. That vote was never held and consequently Saint Matthew Church remains an autocephalous Catholic parish with its own Bishop to this day. This fact, along with others below, is highly relevant for understanding and justifying the need for a major revision of the Constitution of Saint Matthew Ecumenical Catholic Church.

In April 2018, Bishop Peter had two major strokes, creating an unforeseen crisis in leadership for the parish. There were no comprehensive directives in the language of the existing Parish Constitution governing the immediate provisional transfer of authority in the event that the Pastor suddenly became incapacitated. At the time, Saint Matthew Church had at least twelve active priests and several deacons, all of whom regarded Saint Matthew Church as their parish home. These clergy immediately organized themselves to meet the liturgical, pastoral, operational, and administrative affairs of the parish in Bishop Peter’s absence. However, the clergy were effectively excluded from participating in any decision-making with regard to the Parish. Instead, the Parish Council, assuming all institutional authority, began an unsuccessful search for an interim pastor. When the parish clearly needed clergy leadership and pastoral care, the existing polity left the clergy with no voice and no representation in the church.

As the “balance of power” between the clergy, Parish Council, and laity became increasingly disproportionate, parish governance consolidated in the Parish Council. Efforts to find an interim pastor failed. Despite good intentions, selfless efforts, and heartfelt concern for the church and community by those assuming power, this state of affairs created tension with the clergy, who were committed to offering pastoral, liturgical, and spiritual leadership to the parish for which they were formally trained and ordained.

Unfortunately, the efforts of the clergy were met with unexpected resistance and censure by members of the Parish Council. Guided by episcopal leadership at the national and diocesan level, the Parish Council was advised to bring in an interim Pastor currently unaffiliated with the parish to act in Bishop Peter’s place. In this effort they were following a strict interpretation of the existing Parish Constitution which placed all decision making either in the hands of the Pastor or in the hands of the Parish Council. However, an interim pastor could not be found leaving all decision making in the hands of the Parish Council who now, by default, became the sole source of authority for the parish

This state of affairs created tension with the clergy who were committed to offering pastoral, liturgical, and spiritual leadership to the parish for which they were formally trained and ordained. Over the following months clergy organized the weekly Liturgies and Children’s Education, conducted Grief Counseling, held Bible Study, led Rosary, visited parishioners, held healing services, and divided the pastoral work of Bishop Peter among themselves.

By the fall of 2019, it was becoming clear that although Bishop Peter had made great strides in his recovery (some would say it was miraculous) some members of the Parish Council wanted Bishop Peter to retire and resisted his return as Pastor. They sought the aid of episcopal leadership in the ECC to declare Bishop Peter incompetent and force his retirement as directed in the existing Parish Constitution.

Once this plan came to light, push back from rank-and-file members of the community followed with serious, unintended consequences. The Constitution required that a search committee of laity and clergy be formed to find pastor candidates if Bishop Peter was retiring. However, the Parish Council had not formed a search committee and no selection process had been determined as required by the Constitution. The current Bishop of the Diocese of California had put members of the Parish Council in touch with such a pastor candidate who was unknown to the community at large.

In the meantime, members of the community learned that the existing Parish Constitution required a community vote that had never been held for Saint Matthew Church to join the ECC Diocese of California. The community decided to delay such a vote until after the seating of a new Parish Council.

In December 2019, a new Parish Council consisting of twelve members of the laity was formed. Previously, on November 24, 2019, the clergy created its own council to share in the governance of Saint Matthew Church. The clergy also endorsed Father Arturo Querijero as the interim Pastor

or the parish until such time as Bishop Peter retires and a duly constituted search committee of clergy and laity finds his permanent replacement.

The new Parish Council and the Clergy Council have appointed a joint committee that has been charged with rewriting the Parish Constitution.

A new paradigm for parish institutional governance is being envisioned. It is a parish version of the three-legged stool that guided the original governance model of the ECC. In this governance model there are three complimentary yet distinct spheres of parish governance and authority: The Bishop/Pastor, the Clergy through their Clergy Council, and the laity through the Parish Council.

It has become clear that an institutional paradigm that places all authority in the hands of the Pastor and a Parish Council yet excludes the voice of the clergy does not work at Saint Matthew Church. Here priests are not only allowed to marry but they bring their spouses and children to church and are active members of the community. They consider the parish their home. Often with secular occupations or ministries outside the parish, these ordained parishioners are a gift and deserve to have a part in the governance decisions of the Church, otherwise not possible because they are not laity. Moreover, their volunteer contributions to the pastoral and sacramental ministries of the church have often gone unrecognized. The creation of the Clergy Council whose membership, responsibilities, and duties are incorporated into the Constitution of the parish resolves all of these issues.

Similarly, the membership, terms of office, duties and responsibilities of the Parish Council in relationship to the Pastor and the Clergy Council need to be carefully formulated.

Third, the role of the Bishop/Pastor of the parish needs to be carefully described in this new constitution in order for the parish to function independently of a diocese. This description includes both the internal relationship of the Bishop/Pastor to the Parish Council and the Clergy Council as well as externally to a diocese and to the ECC.

Finally, we believe that the heart of the Christian tradition was established in the first one thousand years of Christianity and that the primitive church as it developed during the first three hundred years offers Christians in the twenty-first century the most reliable guide toward a reconstituted institutional, liturgical, and theological future. In some ways our evolution as a parish paradoxically reconstitutes the past insights of early Christianity.

The primitive churches were not bound together in a diocesan structure. When they came into being, dioceses were established as copies of the political institutional structures of Rome. The Church was laminated into the political structure of the Roman Empire under Constantine.

In the primitive church, the leadership of the church was comprised of a bishop(s), deacons, and later presbyters. Leadership was conceived as servant leadership. Leadership in the early Church included married men as well as women. All members of the church contributed through the charisms they were given.

In the West at the time of the Protestant Reformation, institutional polity was questioned and varied: Episcopal (governance by bishops), Presbyterian (governance by the ordained presbyters: elders or deacons), Congregational (governance by the congregation or laity). The concept of the “three-legged stool” comes from this institutional Christian history. The “three legs” are the voice of the bishop, the voice of the clergy, and the voice of the laity.

The pastor of each autocephalous parish should be a bishop. There is no need for parishes to be absorbed into a diocesan structure headed by a distant bishop who may or may not offer effective spiritual leadership to a parish. A Bishop/Pastor is the model given to us by the early, primitive church. It is how Saint Matthew Church is currently governed.

The purpose of the comprehensive revision of the Saint Matthew Ecumenical Catholic Church Constitution is an effort to reconstitute the governance structure of our parish through the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the light of our established distinctives, our institutional experience as a parish over the past thirty-five years, and an awareness that the normative Roman Catholic paradigm for parish governance has proven to be inadequate to our unfolding vision of a progressive, inclusive Christian community.

APPENDIX C
THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS AND THE SACRAMENTALS

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS

1. **Trinitarian Baptism** – The rite of entrance or initiation into the Christian community. The baptismal formula during baptism that must be used are the words: “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” In the waters of baptism, we receive a new identity in Christ. Buried with Christ in the mystery of His death, we rise with Him to a new way of life.
2. **Confirmation** – Through the anointing with oils and the laying on of hands, the Bishop confers the Holy Spirit upon a Christian. In receiving the Spirit, a Christian is empowered with the charismata, the gifts of grace, in order to participate more fully in the continuing saving ministry of Christ in the Church.
3. **Holy Eucharist** – The communal celebration through which we renew and participate in Christ’s birth (Incarnation), sacrificial death, resurrection, and ascension into Heaven. During this celebration, we encounter and receive the Real Presence (soul and divinity of Christ) and we receive the actual Body and Blood of Christ, given to us under the forms of bread and wine for our continuing spiritual nourishment and growth in Christ.
4. **Reconciliation** – Along with Catholic and other Christian communities, we acknowledge that a sincere prayer of sorrow to our God will bring the response of His forgiveness. We also believe that Christ left us a special sacrament that is a powerful encounter with the Risen Christ and His loving forgiveness. Also called the sacrament of penance, reconciliation can be celebrated in two ways:
 - a. General absolution is sacramental absolution, given at one time to the gathered community.
 - b. Individual absolution is usually preceded by a Christian’s confession of personal sins in the presence of a Priest. The Priest’s prayer of forgiveness or absolution is said for the sincere penitent, at which time the penitent’s sins are forgiven.
5. **Anointing of the Sick** – Consists of the anointing of ill or injured members of the Christian community with oil for the sick and prayers for their healing and forgiveness. The effects of this sacrament are strength and peace for the Christian in the face of his/her illness, and physical healing and recovery according to God’s will.
6. **Marriage** – Two people join their two lives together into one common life. This sacrament is administered by the two partners themselves, with the Priest or Deacon acting as a witness on behalf of God and the Church. The Holy Spirit breathes God’s own love into the couple’s love, so that each becomes a grace for the other.
7. **Holy Orders** – Is the sacrament through which the Church sets aside individuals for a special service of ministry to the Christian community. This sacramental act is called ordination. There are four ranks or orders in the ministry of the Church. They are the

Laitly (the baptized, the People of God), Deacon, Priest, and Bishop. The latter three require ordination.

THE SACRAMENTALS

The Church teaches that Jesus Christ instituted the Seven Sacraments as visible signs of the invisible source of grace for His Church. The Sacramentals are devotional prayers, symbols, and rites of the Church that can help us cooperate with divine grace, enhance our acts of worship, and focus us closer to our personal and social growth in spirituality.

Examples of Sacramental practices include:

- Sign of the Cross
- Prayer Postures - standing, sitting, kneeling, genuflecting, outreached hands, bowing, etc.
- Holy Water, Holy Oils, Blessed Candles, etc.
- Devotional Medals
- Scapulars
- Statues, Icons, Images
- Pilgrimages
- Relics (example: Shroud of Turin)
- The Rosary
- Consecration of a House of Worship (sacred space)
- Exorcisms
- Liturgical Vestments and Vessels
- Bible Study
- Catechism for Children
- Animal Blessings