

1 **Resolution 1-05 To Affirm the Church’s Essential Nature and Freedom to Celebrate the Divine**
2 **Service**

3 **(Derived from Overture 1-05.)**

4 Overview: During the course of the pandemic the Government issued orders that shut down all
5 religious services by including them among “non-essential activities.” It later restricted religious
6 services to ten people or less, and eventually required those attending to wear masks. All these
7 actions placed restrictions on the Church’s ability to celebrate the Divine Service, and on God’s
8 people who wish to attend and receive the Means of Grace. This has raised questions that
9 need to be addressed about the Government’s right to dictate restrictions to the Church
10 regarding the celebration of the Divine Service.

11 Resolution:

12 WHEREAS, to obtain saving faith God has given the Word and Sacraments and instituted the
13 Office of the Ministry to administer these gifts (Matthew 28;18-20; John 20:21-23; AC V.1-3; AC
14 XIV), and

15 WHEREAS, the Church is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is purely
16 preached and the holy sacraments are administered according the Gospel (AC VII.1), and God
17 has commanded his people to gather to hear his Word and receive His Sacraments (Acts 2:42; 1
18 Timothy 4:13; Hebrews 10:25; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25), just as the Lutheran Church confesses
19 that the Sacrament of the Altar is celebrated every Lord’s day (Ap. XXIV.1), and

20 WHEREAS, this is the essential function which only the Church fulfills as God brings salvation to
21 the whole person, body and soul (Romans 5:1; Philippians 1:23; John 11:25-26; Philippians
22 3:21), and

23 WHEREAS, God has designed His creation with three estates – the Family, the Church, and the
24 Government, and

25 WHEREAS, these Three Estates remain (and continue their defining functions) until the end of
26 time, even during pandemic, famine, war, etc., and

27 WHEREAS, the authority of the Government in relation to the Fourth Commandment is derived
28 from the estate of the Family, “For all other authority is derived and developed out of the
29 authority of parents” (LC I.141), and

30 WHEREAS, the government is given by God to reward good and punish evil and maintain order
31 as defined by God’s holy will (Romans 13; AC XVI.1-2), and deals with bodies and goods, not
32 spiritual matters (AC XXVIII.11), and

33 WHEREAS, the Church rightfully operates in God’s right hand rule through the Gospel as she
34 seeks to bring forgiveness and salvation through Christ’s Means of Grace, and

1 WHEREAS, the Government rightfully operates in God's left hand rule, as it works through the
2 Law to maintain order and restrain sin, and

3 WHEREAS, the Church is not entirely independent of the Government's left hand rule as she
4 deals with non-spiritual matters of operation (zoning laws, building permits, occupancy permits,
5 etc.), and

6 WHEREAS, the Government has no God given authority over the spiritual matters of the
7 Church's administration of the Means of Grace as they take place in the Divine Service;
8 therefore be it

9 RESOLVED, that we affirm the Church's essential nature, purpose, and ongoing function in this
10 world until Christ comes again in His glory, and be it further

11 RESOLVED, that we affirm the Church's and Family's status as having their God-given role in
12 caring for both body and soul, and be it further

13 RESOLVED, that we confess that the Government has no God given authority to place
14 restrictions on the Church's ability to celebrate the Divine Service, and on God's people who
15 wish to attend and receive the Means of Grace, and be it further

16 RESOLVED, that we affirm that in time of pandemic or public crisis the Church in Christian
17 freedom should seek to implement measures that serve the public good while continuing to
18 carry out her essential role of offering the Word and the Sacraments in the Divine Service, and
19 be it further

20 RESOLVED, that we exhort and encourage one another to confess boldly the essential nature
21 and function of the Church, especially in the event of future government mandated shut downs
22 or restrictions to the celebration of the Divine Service, and be it further

23 RESOVLED, that we confess to the world that only the Gospel of the death and resurrection of
24 the Lord Jesus Christ can provide final victory over sin, sickness, and death; and finally, be it

25 RESOLVED, that the congregations of the SID will take notice of all government actions
26 regarding public health and while "seeking to live at peace with all men" the Church will
27 implement those actions that in her own judgment do not interfere with her God-given
28 functions, while respectfully disregarding any government decree, mandate, executive action,
29 law, or court order which does so interfere.