

(These Statutes were enacted as a law 1935 in Independent Estonia. They have since, 1967 and 1974, been amended in due legal course in exile.)

Constitution of the **ESTONIAN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH (E.E.L.C.)**

Part 1. THE CHURCH

Chapter 1: Nature, Objectives, Tasks and Doctrines of the Church

Article 1.

The Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church is a free church of the people and is administered by its own autonomous governing body All members of the congregations of the E.E.L.C. are its members.

Article 2.

The aims and tasks of the E.E.L.C. are to preach the word of God, to promote the living faith and Christian love, to respond to religious, moral, charitable and education needs, to undertake missionary work at home, abroad and among seamen, and to guide, coordinate, assist and supervise the work of its congregations and their officers.

Article 3.

Members of the congregations of the E.E.L.C. include all present members and those who is in future will be accepted to membership according to the Statutes and the Common Service Book, and their children under the age of 16 or older if they have not cancelled their membership.

Article 4.

The teachings of the E.E.L.C. are based upon the prophetic and apostolic scriptures in the Old and the New Testament, explained through Apostolic, Nicean and Athanasian confessions, the unaltered confession of Augsburg, and other teachings to be found in the Liber Concordiae.

Chapter 2: The Officials

Article 5.

The following are the clergy of the Church: archbishop, bishop, deans, pastors, assistant pastors, vicars, adjuncts and deacons. In addition to the clergy, the Church and its congregations may appoint officials such as parish clerks, organists, sisters, office workers and others.

Article 6.

The archbishop, as the holder of the highest clerical office, is responsible for the work of the whole Church; deans guide the work of the church districts and are responsible to the archbishop; pastors guide the work of their congregations and supervise such functions as youth work, evangelical and missionary work and work in the diaspora, and are responsible to the deans and the archbishop, Assistant pastors, adjuncts and deacons are responsible to the archbishop, deans and the pastors to whom they have been assigned.

Article 7.

The members of the clergy give their oath of office to the archbishop in the name of the Holy Trinity. The oath of office may be combined with ordinations.

Article 8.

A candidate for the office of pastor must have completed higher theological education, must have passed the consistory examinations and must have completed one year of probationary service in order to be certified by the archbishop for candidacy and must be at least 25 years of age. In exceptional circumstances with the approval of the archbishop, the age requirement can be waived if all other qualifications are met.

Article 9.

A candidate for the office of dean must have served as pastor for at least 10 years and must be at least 35 years of age. Only in exceptional circumstances may the consistory, on the proposal of the archbishop, waive these requirements in appointing a candidate to the office of acting dean.

Article 10.

A candidate for the archbishop must be at least 40 years of age and must have served as pastor, dean or member of the consistory for at least 15 years. The archbishop may also be elected from among the ordained evangelical Lutheran members of the theological faculty of the University of Tartu, provided the candidate is at least 40 years of age and has served for 15 years as pastor or as a member of the faculty.

Article 11.

Clerical assessor members of the consistory must have the same qualifications as the deans, as stated in Article 9; the bishop must have the same qualifications as the archbishop, as stated in Article 10.

Article 12.

To be eligible for the office of parish-clerk, or organist, candidates must have an adequate professional training and must be so certified by the consistory on the proposal of the archbishop.

Article 13.

The details on qualifications of the officials are determined through the by-laws of the Church.

Article 14.

Deans, pastors, parish-clerks and organists are appointed by the consistory on the proposal of the archbishop. The consistory is notified of the election or appointment of other officials. Approval of the dean is required for the election of vicars in church districts; approval of the pastor is required for election of pastoral adjuncts, parish-clerks, organists and other officials of the congregations.

Chapter 3: Mandatory Services of the Church

Article 15. The E.E.L.C. has the following mandatory services: church service, baptism, confirmation, confession, holy communion (Sacrament of the Altar), church marriage, burial, installation and investiture of the archbishop and bishop, ordination of the clergy, installation (introduction) of dean and pastor, installation of parish-clerk and other officials as determined by the archbishop.

Article 16.

Procedure and content of the above, listed in article 15, and other services will be detailed in the Common Service book, called the Agenda.

Chapter 4: Rights of the Church and its Congregations

Article 17.

The E.E.L.C. has the status of a legal (corporate) person and as such it can sue and be sued in the courts of law, interact with agencies of the government (state), conclude contracts and own real estate as well as any other kind of property, and sell or mortgage the same.

Article 18.

Congregations which are truly registered as legal persons (incorporated) have the same rights as stated in the previous article.

Chapter 5: Organization and Administration of the Church

Article 19.

The E.E.L.C. consists of congregations and the congregations may have sub-congregations. Congregations may consist of separate chapters under a joint council and executive board, but each chapter may have its own committee and executive solely for the management of its own

separate matters. Congregations are joined into Church Districts, except such congregations that are directly affiliated with the archbishop and the consistory.

Article 20.

The Church and its congregations have the following organization:

- 1) archbishop
- 2) bishop
- 3) consistory
- 4) church concilium
- 5) archepiscopal council
- 6) church congress
- 7) conference of theologians
- 8) deans
- 9) synods and councils of church districts
- 10) pastoral conferences of church districts
- 11) congresses of church districts
- 12) pastors of congregations
- 13) congregational assemblies, councils and executive boards
- 14) retreats of congregations
- 15) meetings of church officials

Chapter 6: Archbishop and Bishop

Article 21.

The archbishop is the highest ranking member of the clergy and guides the entire work of the E.E.L.C.

Article 22.

The archbishop is elected with no fixed term by the church concilium according to article 41.1.

Article 23.

The archbishop assumes his duties immediately after election; the ceremonial investiture following later in accordance with the provisions of the Common Service book.

Article 24.

The archbishop is assisted and represented by the bishop. The bishop is elected with no fixed term by the church concilium on the proposal of the archbishop.

If both the archbishop and the bishop are hindered from carrying out the duties of the office, the duties of the archbishop are carried out by the oldest member of the consistory at the seat of the consistory.

The bishop assumes his duties immediately after election; with ceremonial investiture following later in accordance with the provisions of the Common Service book.

Details of the duties of the bishop will be determined by the consistory on the proposal of the archbishop.

When engaged in his official functions the bishop has the same rights and the same duties as the archbishop.

The detailed description of the attire of the bishop is determined by a by-law of the Church.

Article 25.

In guiding the church and its congregations, the duty and right of the archbishop is to assure that the performance of official functions and the personal conduct of pastors and other church officials is above reproach, to give them pastoral support, and to undertake visitations to the congregations.

The archbishop has the right to preach at any of the church services of the E.E.L.C.

The archbishop's duty is to ordain and install the clergy. If he is hindered from doing that personally, he can delegate the bishop, an appropriate dean, or another senior member of the clergy to perform the required service.

The archbishop has the obligation to visit congregations in which a dean is pastor as well as those which are directly affiliated with the archbishop and the consistory. Visitations take place according to the schedule adopted by the consistory. The archbishop visits other congregations, according to need.

The archbishop has the right to dismiss a member of the clergy or any other church official or employee. He can also transfer them to another congregation or place. His decisions are final.

The archbishop approves the candidates for the ministry and for the position of parish clerks.

On special occasions the archbishop prescribes the text for sermons, especially on Penitence Day, Thanksgiving Day, Reformation Day and All Saints Day. He can also require special church services in addition to the regular services on Sundays and Holy days.

The archbishop authorizes vacations for deans and pastors up to one month.

On the proposal of the consistory, the archbishop decides questions of pardons.

Article 26.

Visitations to the congregations in which the archbishop himself is pastor are undertaken by a special commission appointed by the consistory.

Article 27.

The archbishop informs the consistory of all his important decisions.

Article 28.

At ceremonial services and other special occasions, the archbishop wears his official vestment: alb, coloured belts, black ornament, white collar, the gold cross of the archbishop, episcopal staff and mitre. At other services he wears the attire of a pastor with the gold cross of the archbishop.

Article 29.

The official seal of the archbishop carries the following title: “Sigillum Archiepiscopi Evang. Luth. Per Estoniam”.

Article 30.

The duties of the archbishop are terminated:

- 1) by death,
- 2) by resignation.

Chapter 7: Church Concilium

Article 31. The concilium is the highest legislative organ of the E.E.L.C. It can issue by-laws and ordinances with binding force upon the Church and the congregations.

Article 32.

Voting members of the concilium are:

- 1) archbishop
- 2) bishop
- 3) members of the consistory
- 4) congregations through their executive boards, each congregation having one vote.

Article 33.

Decision-making is by written ballot. The consistory forwards proposals which have been adopted by its plenary session to the members of the concilium. The consistory counts the ballots and promulgates the majority decision as the decision of the concilium. Decisions are made by the majority of those voting.

Decisions concerning the real estate, objects of historical or cultural value, and amendments to the Statutes require a two-thirds majority of all members of the concilium.

Article 34.

The following matters must be decided by the concilium:

- 1) election of archbishop and bishop
- 2) salary and pension of archbishop and bishop
- 3) appointment of the members of the consistory on proposal of the archbishop
- 4) election of members of the auditing commission
- 5) approval of budget and audit of the Church
- 6) estimates of membership fees of the Church
- 7) enactment of by-laws and ordinances, discussion of important matters, especially proposals by the archbishop or consistory, and directives to the consistory and other organs and officials of the Church.
- 8) discussion and amendment of the Statutes of the E.E.L.C.
- 9) creation and dissolution of church districts
- 10) all decisions affecting the real estate and objects of historical and cultural value belonging to the Church.

Article 35.

Decisions of the concilium are recorded in the minutes of the consistory and are published in a circular letter by the consistory and in “Estonian Church”, the official journal of the E.E.L.C.

Article 36.

Each member of the concilium can make proposals to the concilium through the consistory; proposals having to be accompanied by explanation of intent.

Article 37.

The archbishop can defer the implementation of the decisions of the concilium, except decisions on complaints against the archbishop himself. Deferred decisions must be presented to the next concilium for a new decision, which is final.

Chapter 8: Consistory

Article 38.

The consistory is the administrative organ of the E.E.L.C. It consists of the archbishop as its president, the bishop as his deputy, a lay vice-president, and at most seven assessors. The archbishop can assign to each member of the consistory a special sector of church functions for his supervision.

Article 39.

Members of the consistory are appointed by the concilium on the proposal of the archbishop.

A member of the consistory can leave his office by resignation or on the proposal of the archbishop, in which case the archbishop must inform the concilium.

The offices of all members of the consistory terminate with the election of a new archbishop.

Article 40.

Members of the consistory are appointed for a five-year term. The term of a member replacing another who has resigned or has been dismissed ends with the normal term of the latter.

Article 41.

The consistory decides all questions pertinent to the administration of the Church, including financial and current matters. It also is responsible to ensure that the teaching by pastors and their subordinates is in accord with the prescriptions in article 4 of these Statutes.

The following matters are specifically within the competence of the consistory:

- 1) the presentation of a candidate or candidates for archbishop for election by the concilium, taking into consideration the opinion of the concilium.
- 2) making proposals to the concilium for decision-making
- 3) determining the results of balloting by the concilium and implementation of these decisions
- 4) assuring that the Evangelical Lutheran teaching founded upon the Holy Scriptures and other pertinent sources is undiluted, and that the church services and sacraments are in accord with the prescriptions in the Agenda.
- 5) supervising the work and conduct of pastors and pastoral candidates
- 6) regulation and supervision of services and teaching of religion to the Evangelical Lutheran youth
- 7) on the proposal of the archbishop, establishing the system of examinations and probation, examination of the pastoral candidates for their accreditation *pro venia concionandi* and *pro ministerio*
- 8) on the proposal of the archbishop supervising the ordination, installation, investiture and dismissal of pastors
- 9) establishing qualifications, examination and accreditation of parish clerks and organists, and their appointment and dismissal
- 10) on the proposal of the archbishop, appointing and dismissing deans and the dep. Deans
- 11) issuance of accreditation letters to pastors and deans
- 12) approving vacations for pastors and deans in excess of one month
- 13) approving merit rewards to church officials for exceptional services
- 14) scheduling visitations and supervising that the visitations are properly carried out
- 15) asking the executive boards of congregations to convene special meetings of councils or assemblies
- 16) approval of the decisions of congregational meetings and councils
- 17) creation of new congregations; creation and liquidation of the congregational chapters
- 18) designation of congregations into church districts
- 19) proposing to the concilium creation of new church districts
- 20) supervision of pension and assistance funds of church officials, their widows and orphans
- 21) supervision of the management of properties of the E.E.L.C.
- 22) establishment and maintenance of relations with other churches

- 23) supervision of the activities of church organizations
- 24) approval of budgets and audits of church organizations
- 25) supervision over the organizations of the congregations
- 26) all other functions in the administration of the Church which are not by law or by these Statutes assigned to any other organ of the Church.

Article 42.

The consistory represents the Church in its role as a legal person at the agencies of the government and at the courts of law. Its seat coincides with the residence of the archbishop. The consistory does not need any special authorization for carrying out the functions which are stated in these Statutes. The consistory can delegate its authority for purposes of representation at governmental agencies, at the courts, for management of properties and for writing of contracts. Its official letters, documents, contracts and authorizations are signed by the archbishop or, for him, by the bishop or the vice-president of the consistory, and by the secretary-general or his deputy.

Article 43.

In emergencies, when a decision by the concilium is not possible, the consistory can on approval of the archbishop enact binding rules, but those rules must be presented for ratification at the next concilium.

Article 44.

The consistory can defer the implementation of decisions and regulations of church councils and executive boards of congregations and ask for their reconsideration. The consistory can also dissolve the councils and executive boards of congregations and dismiss their individual members, asking for replacements by election or temporarily appointing the replacements until the regular elections.

Article 45.

The archbishop can give instructions to the members of the consistory in matters which have been assigned to their supervision.

Article 46.

Sessions of the consistory are convened by the archbishop or by the vice-president of the consistory or by their deputies.

Article 47.

The consistory has two kinds of sessions: partial sessions and plenary sessions. The archbishop, bishop, vice-president and, if necessary, assessors concerned with the subject matter under discussion, participate in the partial sessions. A quorum is at least three members, including either the archbishop or his deputy, or vice-president or his deputy.

Church budget, audit, by-laws, ordinances and other regulations, and appointment of the deans must be dealt with at plenary sessions.

Article 48.

At least half of the members of the consistory, including either the archbishop or his deputy, or vice-president or his deputy, make the quorum for plenary sessions.

Article 49.

Decisions are made by the majority vote of the members present. In case of a tie vote, the vote of the presiding officer is decisive.

Decisions are recorded and the minutes are signed by all who are present.

Article 50.

The archbishop can make decisions on behalf of the partial sessions in case of emergency but he has to report these to the next session of the consistory.

Article 51.

The sessions are presided over by either the archbishop or his deputy, or, in their absence, the vice-president or his deputy. The secretary-general of the consistory keeps the minutes.

Article 52.

Sessions of consistory are in private (closed), except ceremonial sessions which the consistory itself can declare to be public (open).

Article 53.

For special tasks, the consistory can create special commissions to which, besides the members of the consistory, can be elected any member of the E.E.L.C. who is in good standing. Commissions work in accordance with instructions given them by the consistory.

Article 54.

The consistory determines the rules of procedure for the consistory as well as for the special commissions.

Article 55.

The consistory has an official seal with the following title: "Consistory of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church".

Article 56.

The consistory must keep a list of congregations with information on each congregation about how many fee-paying members they have and how many of them have paid their membership fee.

Article 57.

The consistory must keep a record of service for all clergy, parish clerks and organists, and a list of all other church officials.

Article 58.

The clergy assessors of the consistory have the attire of pastors, except at ceremonial services and on special occasions when acting in official capacity they wear a white collar instead of the white tie and wear the gold cross of the consistory assessor.

The bishop can defer implementation of the decisions of the consistory.

Chapter 9: Archbishopal Council

Article 60.

The archbishopal council consists of the archbishop, bishop, members of the consistory, deans or acting deans, and one lay member from each district. The latter are elected by the district synod or in extraordinary circumstances by the district council.

The archbishop can invite other officials and expert members of the church to attend sittings of the archbishopal council.

Article 61.

The archbishop convenes the archbishopal council according to need and presides over it.

The vice-chairman and secretary are elected by the council.

Article 62.

The sessions of the archbishopal council are of two kinds: partial and plenary. The partial sessions are attended by all clergy members of the archbishopal council. The task of the partial session is to interpret theological issues as the highest authority and to discuss matters presented by the archbishop, especially those matters within the competence of the conference of theologians and of district clergy meetings.

The plenary sessions are attended by all members of the archepiscopal council. The task of the plenary session is to discuss all important matters of principle concerning church life. The minutes of the archepiscopal council are to be presented to the consistory for the information of its members.

Chapter 10: Conference of Theologians

Article 63.

Members of the conference of theologians with the right to vote are pastors of the E.E.L.C. and other theologians with higher education who are in the service of the church, and all pastors emeritii.

Members without vote are other members of the E.E.L.C. with higher theological education.

Article 64.

The conference of theologians is convened by its chairman or his deputy, who are elected by the conference from among its members for five-year terms. The quorum of the conference is at least one-fourth of its voting members.

Article 65.

The executive committee of the conference is elected by the conference and consists of the chairman and two assistant chairmen, of whom one is the deputy of the chairman and the other is the treasurer, and the secretary.

Article 66.

The decisions of the conference of theologians are recorded in the minutes and signed by the members of the executive committee.

Article 67.

The function of the conference of theologians is to discuss the issues of teaching and liturgy.

Article 68.

The archbishop is informed of the decisions of the conference and must receive the minutes within a month from the date of the conference.

Chapter 11: Church Congress

Article 69.

The church congress is convened by the archbishop according to need and its function is to

discuss the most important issues in principle, to review the status of the church, and to deal with current problems of importance.

Article 70.

The agenda of the congress is set by the consistory on the proposal of the archepiscopal council.

Article 71.

The Church congress adjourns after the agenda has been dealt with or when the archbishop so requires.

Article 72.

The congress is presided over by the archbishop or his deputy. In addition, the congress elects for the duration of the session associate presiding officers, secretaries and commissions as needed.

Article 73.

Decisions of the congress are decisions only in principle, of which the archbishop must be informed, and he informs the consistory, church concilium and archepiscopal council.

The minutes of the congress are passed to the archbishop within two months.

Article 74.

The Church congress is opened and closed with church services.

Article 75.

Voting members of the church congress are:

- 1) archbishop and bishop
- 2) members of the consistory
- 3) deans
- 4) all pastors
- 5) parish clerks
- 6) three representatives elected from each council
- 7) one delegate elected by each congregational assembly
- 8) all emeritii officials

All other officials and employees of the Church and its active members can participate in the congress and the presiding officers may recognize their right to speak from the floor.

Article 76.

The Church congress has no set quorum. Decisions are made by a simple majority vote. In case of a tie vote the presiding officer can break the tie.

Chapter 12: Organizations Affiliated with the Church

Article 77.

For special tasks the Church can establish special organizations, such as organizations for missionary work at home, abroad or among seamen, for work in the diaspora or among the youth, a secretariat of church music and others.

Regulations, programmes, reports and budgets of these organizations are approved by the consistory on the proposal of the archbishop.

Article 78.

Regulations, budgets and reports of similar organizations at the level of congregations or church districts are approved by congregational councils or synods of the church districts respectively.

Article 79.

The archbishop can convene meetings of officials of the Church and for that purpose invite either all or only certain officials of the Church. The agenda for such meetings is set by the consistory on the proposal of the archbishop.

Chapter 13: Revenues of the Church, Manager of Properties

Article 80.

The sources of church revenue are: Income from church properties, donations and bequests to the church, assessments from congregations, and other incomes within the law.

Article 81.

Assessments from congregations are determined by the church concilium. Congregations are responsible for regular payments of their contributions; the due dates of which are June 30 and December 31 each year.

Article 82.

The consistory is responsible for management of economic, pensionary and financial matters of the Church. In these matters, the consistory is assisted by the economic council which is headed by the assessor for economic matters of the consistory.

Article 83.

The economic council, in addition to the assessor for economic matters, consists of at least two members who are appointed by the consistory.

Article 84.

The economic council is convened and presided over by the assessor for economic matters.

The assessor for economic matters informs the archbishop of the meetings and their agenda. If necessary the archbishop informs the consistory thereof.

Article 85.

The assessor for economic matters can invite experts to the meetings of the council.

Article 86.

The minutes of the economic council are signed by all who are present and forwarded to the consistory.

Article 87.

The economic council can deal with any economic questions.

Article 88.

The consistory, together with the archbishop, is not prohibited from making decisions on matters which have not been discussed in the economic council.

Article 89.

The Church can have pension and other special funds which are supervised by the assessor for economic matters.

The structures and operation of the funds are established through by-laws of the Church.

Chapter 14: Auditing Commission

Article 90.

The auditing commission undertakes the audit of economic management by the consistory in general; specifically it audits financial transactions, management of pension and other funds, cash disbursements and corresponding documents, financial ledgers and reports. The auditing commission is elected by the church concilium for each year and consists of at least three members, among them a chairman; and an equal number of substitute members.

Article 91.

Except for the office of chairman, the other offices in the commission are decided by the members themselves. The quorum for the meetings of the commission is at least three members or substitutes.

Article 92.

Findings of the commission are recorded in the minutes of the commission and signed by the members present. The auditing commission reports to the church concilium through the consistory.

Article 93.

The consistory can appoint resident-instructors for auditing and advising congregations, church districts and affiliated organizations on matters of economic management and on their economic relations with the consistory. Instructions for the procedures are given by the consistory.

Part II: THE CONGREGATIONS OF THE CHURCH AND DISTRICTS

Chapter 15: The Offices of the Congregation

Article 94.

The spiritual leader of the congregation is the pastor, whose duty it is to hold divine services and to perform other religious functions. He is assisted by a parish-clerk and, where needed, an adjunct pastor. Religious duties not prescribed solely for pastors may be performed by other persons on the authorization of the pastor. Other clergy may serve within the boundaries of the congregation only on the authorization of the pastor; but the archbishop, bishop and the district dean have that right by virtue of their office. No one may conduct funeral services or other services of the Evangelical Lutheran Church within the boundaries of the congregation without the consent of the pastor.

The pastor is obliged to fulfil the instructions of the archbishop, the dean, or the consistory, always remembering that he is directly responsible to them.

Article 95.

It is the responsibility of the pastor to keep the parish registers and to issue statements and certificates as required or directed. The pastor submits reports of parish activities to the district dean at the times designated by the consistory.

Article 96.

The pastor is elected by the congregational meeting from among the candidates nominated by the congregational council, these candidates having the consent of the consistory on the proposal of the archbishop. The council may nominate not more than three candidates. Before the balloting, the congregational council must determine the salary of the pastor, which must be approved by the consistory.

Article 97.

The official vestment of the pastor consists of a wide, black woollen or silken robe, a white necktie with two parts that hang down over his chest, a silver pectoral cross and a velvet beret, which is worn only outside the church.

The cross and chain are in the style of the plain Latin passion cross, in silver, with Christ's monogram and the letters Alpha and Omega in gold on the front. The cross is supplied by the consistory according to the fixed design.

At the service of ordination of a pastor, the presiding clergyman places the cross around the neck of the ordainee.

The official cross is worn at each pastoral function.

Article 98.

Each parish pastor has a seal of office approved by the consistory.

Article 99.

The assistant pastor is elected by the congregational council, with the consent of the pastor, from among not more than three candidates approved by the archbishop and the consistory.

The pastor may have a personal adjunct pastor, whose salary he must pay himself, provided he obtains the consent of the congregational council.

Article 100.

The parish-clerk is elected by the congregational council from among not more than three candidates who have the approval of the consistory upon the proposal of the archbishop. The parish-clerk is installed in office by the local pastor.

Chapter 16: The Congregational Meeting

Article 101.

All adult confirmed members of the congregation who have paid their annual membership fees to the congregation and who have been on the membership roll for at least one year may attend the congregational meeting.

Article 102.

The congregational meeting is called by the congregational council officers on the authority of the council at least once every five years. The procedures for calling the meeting are to be determined by the congregational council. The notice of meeting is to include the time, place and agenda of the meeting as well as the wording of Article 101 of these statutes. The meeting is

called to order and chaired by the president of the congregational council or his deputy. Minutes are written by the secretary of the council or his deputy.

Article 103.

A congregational meeting which has been properly announced and called to order is deemed to have decision-making powers regardless of how many members attend.

Article 104.

Decisions of the congregational meeting are made by majority vote. The pastor and members of the congregational council are elected by secret ballot. The minutes of the meeting are signed by the chairman, the secretary and three persons authorized by the meeting. The election of the pastor and the congregational council may be organized on the basis of regional balloting by order of the consistory.

Article 105.

The congregational meeting elects the pastor, the members of the congregational council and their alternates and delegates to the church congress.

Article 106.

The decisions of the congregational meeting are subject to the approval of the consistory.

Chapter 17: The Congregational Council

Article 107.

The congregational council consists of 10 to 30 members, with a suitable number of alternates. Before elections, the council determines the number of members and alternates to be elected. The pastor and the parish-clerk are automatically members of the council.

Article 108.

Candidates for election to the congregational council are to be nominated by the executive four weeks before the election. Members of the congregation in good standing may also nominate candidates. Nominations are to be in writing, signed by at least 15 and not more than 25 members of the congregation, and must be filed with the executive of the council at least 30 days before the election. Each member of the congregation may sign only one nomination form.

Article 109

Candidates nominated for election to the congregational council must be members of the congregation in good standing, at least 21 years of age, must satisfy the requirements of religious and moral behaviour, and be able to fulfil the obligations of Article 115 of these statutes.

Article 110.

Members are elected by majority vote. If any two candidates receive an equal number of votes, the older candidate is declared elected.

Article 111.

The election of congregational council members is subject to the approval of consistory and their term of office begins immediately upon such approval.

The names of elected members are announced to the congregation. In the case that a member leaves the council, the alternate with the largest number of votes replaces him. The new member's term of office expires at the end of the departed member's term.

Article 112.

Any member or officer of the congregational council who is deemed not fit for church work can be expelled from his office by the pastor, the dean or the archbishop. The alternate with the largest number of votes replaces him.

Article 113.

The consistory has the right to call new elections to the congregational council whenever the council does not fulfil its duties or hinders the life of the congregation.

The consistory also has the right to call new elections when the membership of the council drops to less than two-thirds of the fixed number of members. In the first case, the procedure for the nomination of new members is established by the consistory.

Article 114.

The members of the congregational council are elected for terms not to exceed five years.

Article 115.

The duties and rights of the congregational council are as follows:

- 1) To assist the pastor in the spiritual and moral affairs of the congregation.
- 2) To supervise the financial affairs of the congregation and to maintain the upkeep of church officials.
- 3) To prepare annual budgets and financial reports and to present these to the consistory for approval.
- 4) To undertake any required mortgages, exchanges or leasing of the real estate or other church properties and assets with historical or cultural value for periods of more than six years, with the approval of the consistory.
- 5) To care for the sick and the poor of the parish.
- 6) To keep good order in the church and church buildings and to see that these buildings are not used for the purposes contrary to the teachings and aims of the church.

- 7) To organize the election of the pastor and to propose candidates for this office.
- 8) To organize the election of the parish-clerk.
- 9) To elect any required representatives, with the exception of positions mentioned in Article 105, and to elect an auditing committee.
- 10) To determine the annual fees of the congregation and to organize collection procedures.
- 11) To examine complaints concerning the roll of voting members prepared by the congregational officers.
- 12) To ensure that only members in good standing attend the congregational meetings.
- 13) To elect the assistant pastor and to approve the appointment of the pastor's personal adjunct.
- 14) To organize the congregational meetings.

Article 116.

For special tasks, the congregational council may establish sub-committees whose members may be either members of the council or of the congregation at large.

Article 117.

The officers of the congregational council are authorized to call meetings of the council as need arises, but there must be at least one meeting each year. Decisions by the council are by majority vote. In the case of a split vote, the chairman's vote is decisive, except in the case of elections, when a lot is to be cast.

Elections within the council are decided by open vote, unless more than one-fifth of the members ask for a different procedure.

Decisions of the council are considered official if at least one-third of the members are present at a meeting, including the president or his deputy.

All decisions of the church council are submitted to the consistory for approval.

Chapter 18: The Executive of the Congregation

Article 118.

The executive officers of the congregation are elected from the members of the congregational council for terms not exceeding five years, and are: the president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary and one member-at-large. The pastor is automatically a member of the executive.

The executive board is authorized to make decisions when there is a quorum of at least three members, including the president or his deputy. The president is also president of the congregational council and the secretary is also the council's secretary.

Article 119.

The duties of the executive board are as follows:

- 1) To manage the properties and assets of the congregation and to determine their use.

- 2) To prepare motions requiring the attention of the council.
- 3) To propose candidates for election to the council.
- 4) To call the congregational meeting on the authorization of the council.
- 5) To keep the financial books of the congregation.
- 6) To hire and install clerical workers and to regulate their holidays, including those of the parish clerk, but excluding the pastor.
- 7) To attend to all other matters not requiring the attention of the council or the congregational meeting.

Article 120.

The executive has its own seal, approved by the consistory.

Article 121.

The executive board is the legal representative of the congregation and requires no special authorization to this effect. It may delegate its rights on its own volition. Official documents are signed by the president or his deputy, and the secretary and the pastor.

Chapter 19: Enrollment of New Members; Resignation or Expulsion of Members from the Church Roll

Article 122.

New members are received into the church by the pastor.

Article 123.

The procedure for enrolling new members is given in the Common Service book and the by-laws of the church.

Article 124.

Anyone may terminate his membership in the congregation by submitting of his own free will a written statement to the pastor. The pastor may require verification of the signature. Upon terminating his membership, a member must pay all outstanding fees to the church and to the congregation, including those of the current year. Unless decided differently, all children under 16 years of age of parents who leave the church are also to be considered non-members. Should a child be without parents, termination of church membership or entrance into another congregation is decided by the child's guardians.

Article 125.

A member who is in contempt of the church or who reviles Christianity may be expelled from the congregation by the congregational council on the recommendation of the pastor or the executive board. Expulsion is decided by majority vote. A member may also be expelled for an immoral or offensive lifestyle or actions.

Chapter 20: Income of the Congregation

Article 126.

A congregation receives its income from its properties annual fees, collections, sale of religious literature, donations, bequests, official duties and from any other source allowed by the constitution of the E.E.L.C.

Chapter 21: The Auditing Committee of the Congregation

Article 127.

The church council elects yearly from its membership an auditing committee consisting of at least three members and their alternatives. The duty of the committee is to oversee the activities of the executive board and to audit all financial statements, documents, bookkeeping records and reports.

Article 128.

The elected members of the auditing committee determine the chairing of their functions themselves. Their decisions are considered official when made by three members.

Article 129.

The results of an audit are written into the minutes of the committee and signed by all members who took part in the audit. Their report is presented to the congregational council.

Article 130.

The consistory has the right to audit every congregation, using its own auditors.

Chapter 22: Retreats of the Congregation

Article 131.

The pastor may organize congregational retreats in order to discuss in principle any problems of activities of the congregation.

Article 132.

The guidelines and organization of retreats are specified by the consistory.

Article 133.

The retreat is chaired by the pastor. Assistants may be elected as required. Minutes are taken and submitted by the pastor to the archbishop via the dean's office.

Chapter 23: The Districts.

Article 134.

The church concilium has the right to organize, amalgamate or liquidate the districts, on the proposal of the consistory. The consistory, on the proposal of the archbishop, has the right to designate which congregations belong to any district.

Article 135.

The dean is the head of the district. In the case of absence or illness, his duties are carried out by the assistant dean.

Article 136.

The dean and assistant dean are elected by the synod of the church district from among the pastors of the district and are confirmed in their office by the consistory on the proposal of the archbishop.

Article 137.

The term of office for the dean and assistant dean is five years.

Article 138.

The rights and duties of the dean are as follows:

- 1) To be spiritual guide to his district pastors and other church workers.
- 2) To advise and assist all his district pastors and church workers in the fulfillment of their duties.
- 3) To supervise and guide his district pastors and church workers in their official tasks and moral life.
- 4) To visit his congregations and inspect their services, requiring from pastors the outline of their sermons.
- 5) To inspect his district congregations to ensure conformity to the by-laws of the church.
- 6) To settle by admonition and guidance all misunderstandings and problems that may arise in his district congregations.
- 7) To conduct investigations and where necessary to discipline his district pastors and other church workers.
- 8) To grant vacations to his pastors, up to seven days.
- 9) To provide all necessary information about the church life of his district to the archbishop and the consistory.
- 11) [sic] To organize meetings of his district pastors to discuss matters of theology, pastoral work, mission work, youth work, etc.
- 12) To organize and call the synods of his district.
- 13) To organize meetings of church workers in his district to discuss problems in their work.
- 14) To submit a report about his and his district's church work to the archbishop on the date set by the consistory.

15) To conscientiously fulfill the tasks and instructions given by the archbishop and the consistory, remembering that his office is directly responsible to them.

16) To organize and guide church life in those of his district congregations which do not have a pastor.

Article 139.

The dean is responsible for calling the district congress to discuss problems that may arise in his district church life. He or his assistant chairs the congress. The participants in a district congress are designated by the church by-law.

Minutes are taken at a district congress and are submitted to the archbishop by the dean.

Article 140.

The dean is assisted in his duties by a district council consisting of the dean, the assistant dean and three members elected by the district synod, one of whom shall be secretary and another the treasurer.

Article 141.

In all official correspondence, the dean uses a seal approved by the consistory.

Article 142.

At church services and in the performance of pastoral duties, the dean wears the same vestment as a pastor. On official occasions and at ceremonial services, he wears a white collar instead of the pastor's two-part tie, and the dean's gold cross.

Article 143.

The highest decision-making body of the district is the synod.

Article 144.

Voting members of the synod are all district pastors, parish-clerks and two members from the executive boards of each congregation, elected for this purpose by the council of each congregation. Associate congregations are represented by their pastors, parish-clerks and one member from their executive boards, provided such boards exist.

If a parish has several associate congregations with their own pastors, then each associate congregation is represented at the synod by its pastor, parish-clerk and two members of its executive board. These representatives are accorded full voting privileges.

Vicars, adjuncts, pastors emeriti and pastoral candidates may attend the synod with speaking privileges.

The archbishop and the members of the consistory may attend the synod and make motions. The archbishop and bishop have voting rights at the synod.

Article 145.

Sessions of the synod are closed to the public unless the synod decides differently. Visitors may attend the synod with the dean's permission and have the right to speak from the floor.

Article 146.

The term of the elected members of the synod is determined by the council of each congregation. If a member of the synod leaves his office before completion of his term, his term is to be completed by his alternate.

Article 147.

The synod is convened by the dean at least once every year. The dean is responsible for notifying all the executive of his district congregations at least two weeks before the synod, providing details about the synod's time, place and agenda.

Article 148.

The synod is opened and closed by the dean, who also acts as chairman of the synod. The synod elects its deputy chairman and secretaries. The synod begins and ends its work with hymns and prayers.

Article 149.

The dean is responsible for the organization of the synod and for putting its decisions into effect.

Article 150.

The synod is empowered to make decisions when at least one-fifth of its members are present. Decisions are made by majority vote, with the chairman casting the decisive vote in the case of a split vote. In the case of elections, a lot is cast to decide a split vote. Minutes must be kept and these are to be signed by the officials of the meeting. The dean is to submit within one month of the synod a copy of the minutes of the meeting to the consistory via the archbishop's office. The minutes and all other documents relating to the synod are kept in the archive of the dean.

Article 151.

The duties of the synod are as follows:

- 1) To elect the dean and assistant dean.
- 2) To discuss and decide all motions received from the archbishop and consistory.
- 3) To propose motions to the archbishop and consistory.
- 4) To discuss the motions of the dean.
- 5) To approve the report of the district.
- 6) To discuss and decide all motions raised in regard to the district.
- 7) To establish and to support agencies for charity work.
- 8) To set fees for the support of the district.

- 9) To approve the financial reports and budgets of the district.
- 10) To study and discuss matters of religion and morals.
- 11) To establish and elect an auditing committee and other necessary agencies.

Article 152.

Decisions of the synod are subject to the approval of the consistory on the proposal of the archbishop.

Decisions of the synod are binding on the entire district, all its congregations and officials.

Article 153.

The archbishop may veto all decisions and motions of the district and return them for further study and consideration.

End