

Congregational Constitution, Immanuel Church

The congregational constitution comprises foundational principles, congregational statutes and byelaws, adopted by Immanuel Church in Stockholm on 17 April 2016.

Immanuel Church is affiliated to the Uniting Church in Sweden (Equumeniakyrkan) and shares the view of the Church and congregation expressed in the theological foundation of the Uniting Church in Sweden.

Foundational Principles

About the Church

The Church is one, holy, universal and apostolic. The Church is one, which reflects the unity of the triune God, with whom the Church lives in fellowship. The foundation of this unity is in God as Father, Son, and Spirit. The Church is the body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit and the people of God. It is called to manifest its unity within the framework of the diversity of humanity and all creation. The Church is holy because it is created and chosen by God. The Church is universal because it transcends all boundaries and proclaims the Gospel to all people and all creation. The Church is apostolic because it is sent into the world. It rests on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and has Christ as its cornerstone. ⁽¹⁾

The Church is visible in the world, the small group and the local congregation, as well as in the denomination and the universal Church.

The Christian faith has its foundation in Christ and Holy Scripture. The Apostolic and Nicene creeds are summaries, testifying to this faith. On the basis of these creeds, the Uniting Church in Sweden affirms that it belongs to the whole of God's Church. ⁽²⁾

The Uniting Church in Sweden is a fellowship of both congregations and people confessing Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord. ⁽³⁾

The Uniting Church in Sweden is part of the worldwide Church and shares in its Christian confession and worship of God. The Uniting Church in Sweden traces elements of its heritage from the testimony of the apostles and God's dealings with his Church in all times and among all people. Prominent features of this heritage include the emphasis on personal commitment to Christ, the responsibility of the individual within the congregation and society, and democratic forms of decision-making. This heritage has its historic roots in the United Methodist Church of Sweden, the Baptist Union of Sweden and the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden.

In a divided world, the church aims to be a sign of a fellowship that is rooted in the unity of the triune God. It is through the unity of Christians that the world will come to faith. This unity needs to be continually renewed and confirmed, growing in diversity of faith and deed. Ecumenism involves prayer and working for unity between local congregations and between different denominations. The Uniting Church in Sweden is a temporal provision, awaiting the visible unity of the Church of Christ. ⁽⁴⁾

About the Congregation

The congregation is the body of Christ, where the divine and the human meet. The local congregation gathers regularly for worship, where the Word of God and the Gospel are shared, baptism takes place, and the Lord's Supper is celebrated. ⁽⁵⁾

Christ is made visible through the fellowship of believers and in the mission of the congregation to proclaim the Gospel and practise the ministry of love among fellow human beings. ⁽⁶⁾

The congregation is independent and democratically responsible for its own ministry; at the same time it is part of the Uniting Church in Sweden.

Notes to the Foundational Principles

1. Matt. 28:18–20, Mark 16:15, John 15:12–17, Col. 3:12–17, Eph. 2:4–22, 4:15–16
2. Isa. 40:8, 1 Cor. 3:11, 2 Tim. 3:16–17
3. Rom. 10:9, 1 Cor. 8:6, Phil. 2:9–11
4. John 17:21–23, Eph. 3:11–4:6, Phil. 2:1–5, 1 John 1:3
5. 1 Cor. 12:12–27, Col. 3:16–17
6. Matt. 25:31–40, James. 1:19–27

Congregational Statutes

The congregation of Immanuel Church has adopted these congregational statutes to describe its life, focus and goals.

The Congregation

The congregation is created by God and is a fellowship of all who have become members of the body of Christ through faith. The congregation is called to be the visible body of Christ. Only God knows who in truth belongs to God's people.

The congregation is affiliated to the Uniting Church in Sweden and shares the view of the Church and congregation expressed in the theological foundation and byelaws of the Uniting Church in Sweden.

The congregation, as a living fellowship, is described in different Biblical metaphors:

- branches that are one with, and take their strength from, the vine, ⁽¹⁾
- members of one and the same body, where Christ is the head of the Church, ⁽²⁾
- living stones in a house, where Christ is the cornerstone and the apostles and prophets the foundation, ⁽³⁾
- God's own people, whose citizenship and home are with God, ⁽⁴⁾
- a family, with God as the Father and the disciples God's children, ⁽⁵⁾ and
- those who belong to the Way. ⁽⁶⁾

The Church becomes visible when people join in worship around the Word of God and the sacraments in faithfulness to the Apostolic faith. This fellowship exists for the sake of the whole of God's world.

The congregation is called to be a sign of God's will for the future unity of mankind and accordingly aims to make diversity manifest: people of all ages, from different countries and with different languages, all with different gifts. The fellowship is enriched when different experiences, varied interpretations of the Bible and independent points of view on questions relating to the consequences of faith in life are shared in humility, openness, love and sensitivity. Each and every one serves the congregation and the surrounding world as they are able.

Centre and Spiritual Wellspring

Jesus Christ crucified, dead and risen is the centre of the congregation, which is nourished by and lives through the Word of God, the sacraments and fellowship in Christ, as a body both assembled and sent into the world. The assembled congregation is strengthened by communal worship: singing to the glory of God, prayer, confession, restoration and renewal, the preaching of God's Word, baptism and the Lord's supper, and intercessory prayer. An encounter with the Holy One and fellowship with God's people prepares the congregation for everyday service in word and deed among fellow human beings. ⁽⁷⁾

Purpose

The Church exists in the world and for the world. Through mission, witness, service and fellowship, the congregation manifests the presence of Christ and shares in the daily life of the people where it is situated.

The Church lives out this mission through:

- evangelism – carrying the Good News about Jesus Christ to all people,
- ministries of care – meeting everyone through acts of love, and
- fellowship – building signs of unity in a divided world, with joy in life and with expectation for and hope in God’s future.

The Church is holistic, seeking to meet the needs of people of all ages and in different life situations.

The Church is sent into the whole of creation. The congregation’s meetings with other churches, and with society and culture, enrich its own understanding of the richness and diversity of the Gospel. In this way, faith and responsibility are expanded. The congregation aims to work for unity with other Christians in the same locality through fellowship in worship, the Lord’s Supper, evangelism and ministries of care. The congregation’s mission is a part of the larger mission of the Uniting Church in Sweden, crossing all boundaries.

Therefore the congregation seeks to:

- show the way to faith in Jesus Christ and invite people into lifelong fellowship with him in the congregation, and share the calling of the whole Church in taking the Gospel to all nations,
- live in the everyday, at work and in society, assert everyone’s equal dignity, protect what is righteous and reveal what is unrighteous, encourage community participation, contribute to an equal sharing of global resources and be a responsible steward of God’s creation, and
- build a fellowship that is open to all, while serving as an instrument of reconciliation in the immediate surroundings and in the whole of God’s world.

Baptism into Christ

Baptism into Christ is a gift of God that is received in faith. Through the congregation’s openness to God’s work in different baptismal traditions, both child baptism and baptism based on personal confession are offered. The congregation also aims to help people renew the gift and promise of their own baptism and to live it out in their lives.

Children are baptised in the congregation at the request of their parents, with the pledged support of the fellowship. This is done in prayer and in the hope that the child will grow in faith and confirm their own relationship to God through membership of the congregation.

Children are dedicated to God in the congregation at the request of their parents. This is done in prayer and in the hope that the child will grow in faith and confirm their own relationship to God through baptism and membership of the congregation.

The congregation shares with parents the responsibility for the Christian training of children. The congregation also seeks a living dialogue with the parents of children who share in the life of the congregation without having ties to it through their family.

Membership of the Congregation

All who seek to approach Christ through prayer and dialogue, in worship or through acts of love among their fellow human beings, are part of the Church's fellowship and concern. All are on a journey, sharing their experience of seeking, growing and discovering how God reveals himself to humankind.

The congregation is made up of those who in faith and hope say "yes" to God's invitation to the fellowship of new life. Personal faith can be expressed in different ways at different times of life. This is an expression of the fact that Christian life and faith are held together by their centre, Jesus Christ, and not by boundary limits.

The Church invites into membership anyone who confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Historically and ecumenically, the Christian Church sees baptism and faith as the way into congregational membership. Baptism is God's gift offered by the Church. Personal confession of faith in Christ is a response to God's invitation.

Membership is an expression of the desire to belong to Jesus Christ and share the responsibilities of the congregation. Anyone wishing to become a member of the congregation talks with the Pastor about faith, baptism and Christian fellowship. The Pastor then enters their name in the congregational register and notifies the congregation. New members are normally welcomed into the congregation at a worship service.

When a member presents a certificate of transfer from another congregation, the Pastor enters their name in the congregational register and notifies the congregation. A member who moves away notifies the Pastor, who issues a certificate of transfer to a new congregation.

Any member wishing to leave the congregation reports this at a meeting with the Pastor. The congregation may ask a member to leave if they are clearly dividing or damaging the fellowship. This can only be done, however, after consultation with the regional church leader. Anyone asked to leave will continue to be included in the intercessory prayer and concern of the congregation. ⁽⁸⁾

Forms of Ministry

The task of the congregation is expressed in different forms of ministry. Congregational fellowship is important.

In worship the congregation expresses its desire to be a holistic Church. In thanksgiving and intercession it reflects the rhythm of life from beginning to end, in its choices, joys and sorrows. The congregation offers marriage and funeral ceremonies in the form of a public service or as a private act.

The congregation offers Christian teaching to support the development of faith and spiritual maturity, and the making of life choices. It has a special responsibility for those who have been baptised or dedicated in the congregation, as well as for all who are a part of its fellowship and concern. In the case of children, the congregation shares this responsibility with parents.

Confirmation classes are another expression of this offer, where the congregation and the confirmands share their life, fellowship and faith. This also provides an opportunity to confirm faith or to receive baptism and become a member of the congregation.

Ministries of care are part of the life and mission of a Christian congregation. The congregation aims to serve fellow human beings in homes and neighbourhoods, in working life and in the community. One expression of this is work among children and youth. Care and concern for individuals and the community are kept alive both through the congregation's worship and in members' everyday lives.

Work among children and youth in Immanuel Church takes place in cooperation with its Eumenia association, based on the confession that "Jesus Christ is Lord". All who participate in the work of the congregation's Eumenia association are part of the congregation's fellowship and concern. The congregation expresses its involvement in work among children and youth through financial support, intercessory prayer and active participation. One of the areas in which the congregation should recognise a particular responsibility for involvement is in leadership. The Eumenia association is an essential part of congregational life. The congregation seeks varied forms for belonging and shared responsibility. It has particular responsibility to be attentive to the ideas of young people about how the life and work of the congregation should be expressed.

The congregation can be divided into smaller groups to facilitate closer contact and fellowship. The leaders of these, chosen by the congregation, can work with the Pastor to arrange opportunities for discussion, Bible study and prayer. Groups can also be working fellowships within the congregation and a forum for discussion prior to the Congregational Meeting. Groups in the congregation may meet regularly and celebrate worship in different languages.

Joint Responsibility

The Congregational Meeting is the congregation's highest decision-making body, the democratic expression of everyone's opportunity to exert influence and share responsibility. The congregation constantly seeks ways to deepen participation.

As an expression of this joint participation, the congregation appoints a Board, leaders for various groups, communion servers, and individuals for other assignments as need arises. Together with the Senior Pastor, the Board plans and leads the work of the congregation. Members chosen to serve and be responsible for congregational unity in worship, fellowship, and service in the world are set apart for these tasks through the laying on of hands and prayer, as the Apostles did.⁽⁹⁾

The finances of the congregation and the Uniting Church in Sweden – as well as their shared responsibility for mission – are based on the joint responsibility of God's people. Conditions for acting on that responsibility can vary during different periods of life. It is, however, a basic principle that all contribute as they are able. Fellowship is free, but responsibility is jointly shared. Offerings are collected as specified by the congregation and the Uniting Church in Sweden.

Specific Responsibility

God has also equipped and called people to specific responsibilities within the congregation. Their task is to strengthen everyone who serves and take responsibility for diversity and unity in the life and purpose of the congregation. By ordaining women and men to be pastors and deacons, the Uniting Church in Sweden confirms the call these people have received from God to be Christ's servants in the congregation. Through ordination, the Church as a joint fellowship prays for the gift of the Holy Spirit and God's blessing, empowering pastors and deacons to serve in the congregation.

The congregation chooses and calls pastors and deacons according to the principles outlined in the congregation's byelaws. This is done in consultation with the regional church leader. At installation, the congregation receives pastors and deacons as servants of Christ in the congregation. A letter of welcome states whether a pastor is invited to serve as Senior Pastor.

A Pastor is Christ's servant in the congregation and the community with the task of gathering together and building Christ's body, preaching the Word, administering the sacraments, serving as a spiritual counsellor and leading the congregation in a life of worship and mission.⁽¹⁰⁾

A deacon is Christ's servant in the congregation with the task of upholding and strengthening the call of the congregation to ministries of care in the world. Through involvement with the community, and with an eye to the needs of the individual, a deacon clarifies the relationship between worship and service within the life of the Church and beyond.⁽¹¹⁾

Pastors, at the time of their ordination, make a vow of silence regarding what is revealed during confession and individual counselling. Deacons likewise make a vow of silence concerning what is revealed during counselling or in regard to people's individual circumstances. These vows are renewed at installation.

The duties of a Pastor in the congregation are to:

- proclaim the Word of God, teach, baptise and conduct the Lord's Supper and other ceremonies such as child dedications, weddings and funerals,
- offer counselling, receive confession and declare absolution,
- address the issue of membership and, as far as is possible, maintain personal contact with members and those who are part of the congregation's fellowship or in its vicinity,
- prepare and be responsible for the congregation's worship life,
- supervise and care for the life of the entire congregation,
- encourage and foster the ability of individuals and groups to take on various leadership roles in the congregation and in worship,
- lift the congregation and others to God in prayer and intercession,
- promote the congregation's presence in the surrounding community,
- monitor the development of the congregation, particularly concerning its future, and its relation to other congregations in the same area and to the surrounding community, and
- promote the visible unity of Christ's Church in the area where the congregation serves.

Further, the Senior Pastor will:

- maintain the congregational register (main register and registers of baptisms, child dedications, confirmations, weddings, and funerals) and provide statistical data to the Uniting Church in Sweden, and
- work with the Board to plan and lead the work of the congregation and, as appropriate, act as the congregation's official representative.

The duties of a deacon are to:

- have special responsibility for the congregation's ministries of care,
- convey the Word of God and lift the congregation and others to God in prayer and intercession,
- help maintain the vitality of the congregation's call to service in the world, monitor societal developments and be attentive to people's needs,
- encourage and foster the ability of individuals and groups to take on various leadership roles in the congregation and in worship,
- assist in congregational teaching and be responsible for the nurture and development of those engaged in ministries of care,
- visit and maintain personal contact with those in vulnerable life situations and offer them spiritual counsel, and
- take the Lord's Supper to those unable to attend church services.

Notes to the Congregational Statutes

1. John 15:1-8
2. Rom. 12:4-5
3. Eph. 2:20-22, 1 Pet. 2:4-5
4. 1 Pet. 2:10
5. Matt. 6:6, 9, 1 John 3:1-3
6. Acts 9:1-2, 24:14
7. 1 Cor. 15:14
8. Matt. 18:15-17
9. Acts 14:23
10. Acts 20:28, 1 Pet. 5:2-3
11. Acts 6:2-6

Congregational Byelaws

The congregation of Immanuel Church in Stockholm has adopted these byelaws based on the congregational statutes in order to regulate its structural framework and organisation.

§1 Congregation of Immanuel Church

- A The congregation of Immanuel Church is affiliated to the Uniting Church in Sweden and shares its view of congregation and Church as expressed in the theological foundation and byelaws of the Uniting Church in Sweden.
- B As far as possible, the congregation takes responsibility to implement the decisions of the Church Conference. The congregation's goals, focus, life and regulations are described in its statutes.
- C The congregation is based in Stockholm.
- D Decisions regarding the congregation and its property are taken by the congregation itself.
- E The instruments of the congregation are:
 - Congregational Meeting
 - Congregational Board
 - Senior Pastor
 - Election Committee
 - Auditors

§2 Membership

- A Anyone who confesses faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour may be received as a member of the congregation.
- B A member may leave the congregation. The congregation may exclude a member in the manner prescribed in the congregational statutes.

§3 Congregational Meeting

- A The Congregational Meeting is the highest decision-making body of the congregation. Each member present has one vote. Proxy voting is not permitted.
- B A Congregational Meeting is convened by the Board, or when at least one tenth of the congregation's members so request. It is held at a date decided by the congregation or the Board. The date is announced at least two weeks in advance. If

the meeting is to decide on calling a pastor or deacon, or if a matter of major financial importance is to be dealt with, this must be stated in the announcement.

- C Suggestions for matters to be addressed at a Congregational Meeting may be submitted by members to the Board no later than eight days prior to the meeting or, in the case of an Annual Meeting, no later than six weeks prior to the meeting. Proposals that concern spiritual care must be submitted to the Senior Pastor.
- D Decisions at Congregational Meetings are made by simple majority, except when the matter concerns calling a pastor or deacon, amending byelaws or dissolving the congregation, purchasing or selling fixed property or other major financial commitments, when decisions require a two-thirds majority. In case of a tied vote, the position supported by the Chairperson prevails, except at an election, when the matter is decided by drawing lots. Decisions are taken by open voting unless the byelaws specify otherwise or the meeting decides otherwise in a specific case.
- E The articles of association of a company in which the congregation has a controlling interest must be approved at a Congregational Meeting. The Chairperson and at least half the members of the board of such a company must be members of the congregation.

If the congregation intends to establish another legal entity, this must be approved by a Congregational Meeting.

- F One Congregational Meeting a year is designated an Annual Meeting, and must be held before the end of April on a date chosen by the Board.

Notice of the Annual Meeting must be given at a worship service at least four weeks in advance, and at least one week in advance through the congregation's usual channel of communication.

- G The Annual Meeting must deal with the following:
 1. election of Chairperson, Vice-Chair and Secretary for the Annual Meeting,
 2. election of two members to verify the minutes alongside the meeting's chairperson,
 3. whether the meeting was called according to the byelaws,
 4. presentation of the Annual Report and the Annual Financial Report for the previous financial year,
 5. presentation of the Auditors' Report,
 6. approval of the Statement of Income and the Balance Sheet,
 7. discharge of the Board from liability,
 8. approval of the operational plan,

9. election of the congregation's Chairperson for a one-year term,
10. election of other members of the Congregational Board,
11. election of two auditors, two deputy auditors, and a ministry evaluation committee,
12. confirmation of the Equmenia association's election of Youth Council and leaders,
13. elections to other posts and tasks within the congregation,
14. election of delegates to the Uniting Church in Sweden's annual Church Conference and representatives to the regional advisory council,
15. election either of an Election Committee or of a Nominating Committee for the Election Committee, and
16. other matters submitted to the Annual Meeting.

§4 Congregational Board

- A Together with the Senior Pastor, the Board leads and is responsible for the ministries and activities of the congregation in accordance with the foundational principles, the congregational statutes, the bylaws, and the decisions made at the Congregational Meeting.
- B The Board consists of the Chairperson and twelve members, each elected for a two-year term, half of whom are elected in any one year. If there are more candidates than open positions, election will be by closed voting.

The Chairperson is appointed by the congregation, while the Board chooses one or more Vice-Chair(s) and other such functionaries. The functionaries of the Board are also the congregation's functionaries.

Employees of the congregation, or those holding executive positions in the congregation's companies, may not be members of the Congregational Board.

- C The Senior Pastor and a representative of the Equmenia association are entitled to participate in the Board's deliberations and have their views noted in the minutes. However, they do not have the right to vote.
- D The duties of the Board include:
 - planning and leading the work of the congregation together with the Senior Pastor,
 - implementing the decisions of the Congregational Meeting,
 - being responsible for the congregation's financial administration,
 - preparing the call of pastors, deacons and other employees,
 - exercising employers' responsibilities for employees of the congregation,

- safeguarding confidentiality concerning contractual agreements, as appropriate,
 - reviewing and approving the byelaws and rules of procedure for organisations and working groups active within the congregation, and
 - appointing representatives to company and association meetings in the case of companies and cooperative associations wholly or partly owned by the congregation.
- E The Board may mortgage property owned by the congregation and take out loans using mortgage deeds as security.
- The Board may acquire or sell residential properties such as houses or tenant-owned apartments on behalf of the congregation. Such acquisitions must be intended to provide places to live for employees of the congregation.
- The Board must report decisions made under the first and second paragraph of this section at the next Congregational Meeting.
- Beyond what has been stated above, the Board may not acquire or sell property, or otherwise take action involving the congregation in major financial responsibility without specific approval from the congregation.
- F Guidelines regarding the use and/or rental of the worship spaces or other facilities are established jointly by the Board and Senior Pastor. Decisions in specific cases are then made by the Senior Pastor based on these guidelines.
- G The Board appoints and authorises person(s) as signatories for the congregation.
- H The Board meets when called by the Chairperson, or when the Senior Pastor or at least one third of the members of the Board request it. A quorum is established when at least seven members, including either the Chairperson or the Vice-Chair, are present. Decisions are taken by open voting, except when a member requests a closed vote on a certain matter. In the event of tied votes, the position supported by the Chairperson prevails, except at an election, when the matter is decided by drawing lots.
- I In matters that fall under a court of law or another authority's jurisdiction, the congregation is represented by a person appointed by the Board.

§5 Senior Pastor

- A There must be a Senior Pastor who serves as the congregation's spiritual leader, with responsibility for spiritual care.
- B Together with the Board, the Senior Pastor will plan and lead the work of the congregation in accordance with the congregational statutes and the decisions of the Congregational Meeting. The special duties of the Senior Pastor are described in the congregational statutes.

- C Anyone called to serve as Senior Pastor must have been ordained or received for service within the Uniting Church in Sweden. Prior to such a decision being made, consultation must take place with the regional church leader.

§6 Election Committee

- A The Election Committee must prepare for the Annual Meeting a list of nominees to serve as functionaries, as members of the Board, as auditors, and in other positions or assignments as required.
- B Any member may nominate candidates for membership on the Board or for other positions. Such nominations should be submitted to the Election Committee no later than six weeks prior to the meeting at which the election is to take place.

§7 Accounts, auditing, checking minutes

- A The calendar year is the congregation's fiscal year.
- B Accounts and administration must be examined by two auditors elected at the Annual Meeting. At least one of the auditors must be a chartered auditor.
- C In addition to the auditors, a three-person ministry evaluation committee is appointed. This committee has the particular task of monitoring the ministries and other activities of the church and assisting with their evaluation. This committee is elected by the Annual Meeting to serve for one year at a time. A committee member may be re-elected a maximum of four years in a row.
- D Minutes of all Congregational Meetings are kept, and are verified by the chairperson of the meeting and two members specifically elected for this purpose. Minutes of Board meetings are verified in a manner decided by the Board.

§ 8 Work among Children and Youth

- A The congregation's work among children and youth takes place in cooperation with the Equemenia association in Immanuel Church. The Equemenia association in Immanuel Church has its own byelaws.

§ 9 Dissolving the Congregation

- B In order to dissolve the congregation, unanimous decisions must be taken at two successive Congregational Meetings, one of which must be an Annual Meeting. At least six months must pass between these meetings. Such a decision requires a two-thirds majority.

- C If the congregation is dissolved, its assets and debts must be offered to the Uniting Church in Sweden.

§ 10 Amendments to Congregational Statutes and Byelaws

- A Amending the byelaws and/or congregational statutes can only take place through unanimous decisions at two successive Congregational Meetings, one of which must be an Annual Meeting. Such a decision requires a two-thirds majority.
- B Proposals to amend the byelaws must be submitted to the Board at least two months in advance of the Annual Meeting. The Board must present the proposals and its own opinion to the congregation.

Any such amendment to the congregational byelaws or statutes involving the Uniting Church in Sweden's view of the congregation and § 9 of the byelaws must be submitted to the Board of the Uniting Church in Sweden for an opinion.