

Minutes from the Congregational meeting in Immanuel church on 24 November 2019

Present: about 80 members

§ 1 Welcome and opening of the meeting

The congregation's Chair, Stephen James, welcomed everyone and prayed for the meeting.

§ 2 Election of verifiers

Brenda Taylor and Claes Eriksson were elected to verify the minutes.

§ 3 Agenda

The agenda was approved.

§ 4 Further development of the Congregational meetings

- a) The Chair is concerned about the Congregational meetings which he described as a member paradox. The congregation has over 1,300 members of different ages from some 50 countries, but the Congregational meetings do not reflect this diversity.

The Congregational meeting is an important part of our church fellowship and the statutes state what the Congregational meeting is and is responsible for. What do we want to do with these meetings? Where will we be with these meetings in 10 years? How can we make our children want to take over the baton for these parts of the church engagement? What *can* we do and what do we *want* to do?

- b) The Chair gave the floor to Senior Pastor Ulla Marie Gunner who reported from the former Democracy and Participation group. That group was appointed by the Board and all the worship groups were represented. The group's main task was to find ways to get more members involved.

In their work, the group asked what democracy really is and concluded that there were different views depending on where one comes from. For Swedes and Western Europeans democracy is something good and gives opportunity to influence. For someone else it is not a good word because one's experience is a government that is a pseudo-democracy. For someone else it is not important because one has great confidence that the leaders make wise decisions and one follows what the leaders have decided.

The group also asked themselves what participation is. To feel that one belongs and feels at home also turned out to mean different things. Some come to church a few times a year, but may anyway experience Immanuel church as their church in the same way as those who attend all worship services and are engaged in everything.

The group worked mainly on the basis of four issues:

- What information channels are strategic for creating participation?
- What does belonging mean? We can feel it. How can we help encouraging it?
- How do we develop the Congregational meetings?
- Can we find new ways for members to have influence which will increase participation and belonging?

The result of the Democracy and Participation group's work was to change the forms around the Annual Meetings. This was done by interviewing Board candidates who were thus made visible in a way that had not happened before. The group also introduced an opportunity before the Annual Meeting with stations for various topics in the church life. This made it possible for members to ask their questions in a small group, and those who were not able to attend the Annual meeting had a chance to obtain information on this day instead.

- c) Before the issue was opened to the floor, the Chair mentioned a couple of ideas for the future. Should the meetings be broader so that various groups in the church can give their

reports at the Congregational meetings? Should it be a strict “Immanuel Church Business Meeting” with a standing agenda where only finances are dealt with and where we are in relation to the Ministry action plan?

Several members wanted to share their thoughts and suggestions:

- Go from group to group, have a short worship service and end with a Congregational meeting.
- Short information films on the website on topics that will be addressed at the meeting would help the engagement. As it is now, one does not know what topics that will be discussed, their background or what one should have acquainted oneself with for decisions that will be made
- The younger generation is more interested in development than stewardship. But the Congregational meetings are a stewardship.
- For what are we expected to take responsibility? Do we want to continue in the same way? Which are the main values?
- The connection between the Equmenia association and the congregation was again called for. There are children who still wait for an invitation. The former SMU (*Svenska Missionsförbundets Ungdom*) provided a solid democracy education.
- The church has a wide program for children and young people. Ask them what can make them come to the meetings.
- On the day of the Annual meeting, just have a short worship service of 10 minutes, then start the Annual meeting and end with lunch and music together.
- Would it be helpful to stream the meetings, for instance via Youtube?
- It is difficult to communicate participation in the meetings when we want a deeper conversation at the same time as the meetings are expected to be short.
- Let the meeting take more time, give opportunity to discuss in smaller groups and collect suggestions and thoughts.
- For instance, the Portuguese group has many members, but only a few attend church. Still a church dialogue is conducted with the group. What do they want to take responsibility for in the future, especially with all the distractions that are offered to young people today?
- Inspiration from other congregations wrestling with the same issues was called for. How have they solved these issues?

The Chair was grateful for valuable thoughts and the issue will be taken up again at the next Congregational meeting on 2 February 2020.

§ 5 Information on a Swedish lead pastor

The Chair provided brief information on the intensive work that is going on regarding a new Swedish lead pastor. The Board hopes to soon be able to present a solution and an extra Congregational meeting might be needed.

§ 6 Finances

The Chair gave feedback on the question of index that Rune Larsson asked at the Annual meeting in 2019. The Board was instructed to revert to the congregation on this matter and the Chair reported that the issue was partly about the church rent and partly about the annual dividend.

The rent paid by the church to Probitas will be increased by 500,000 SEK to 5,200,000 in 2020. Thereafter, from 2021 the rent will be calculated every third year with an average CPI (consumer price index).

The dividend paid by Probitas to the church has remained unchanged since 2015. It has now been decided that the dividend will be adjusted to the church's cost of salary development, which is approximately SEK 450,000 each year. Therefore, Probitas' dividend will be increased by SEK 500,000 for 2020 and from 2021 onwards it will be increased annually by an index calculation of 3%.

These increases and changes will cover the costs that are known and do not change the need for increased offering from the members of the congregation.

§ 7 Church coffee – fee abolished

At present it differs in our language groups whether or not the fee for church coffee that comes in covers the cost of the coffee. The Finance Sub-committee is of the opinion that the fee of the church coffee takes a lot of time to handle for the volunteers and also for the Finance department. The Board has therefore decided to abolish the fee for church coffee in all the language groups. The Board considers fellowship more important than to cover the cost of coffee.

However, everyone is encouraged to remind each other to add the coffee fee to their offering instead.

The change is introduced from the turn of the year 2019/2020.

§ 8 Update on election to Church leader and information on nomination to the Church Board

a) Church leader

The Church Board has reported that 59 nominations have been received, of which 29 persons remain. The Church Board is conducting discussions with these, whose names at this stage are anonymous. From these the Church Board will propose two candidates as assistant Church leaders. Of course, the Church conference is free to propose counter-candidates.

Lasse Svensson is the Church Board's main candidate for the post of Church leader for another four years. The focus is now to find two candidates who together with Lasse will function in joint leadership. The goal is to have a broad knowledge together and provide a wide platform to stand on.

The profile of the three leaders together is:

- to possess spiritual maturity, wisdom and theological depth
- to be bearer of the identity, profile and theological foundation of the Uniting Church
- to protect the depth and breadth of the entire Church, to care for the young
- to see and understand the different needs of the congregations
- to have experience and knowledge of international work and ecumenical contexts
- to possess good skills as a leader with the ability to gather and lead the entire Church
- to dare to make necessary and sometimes uncomfortable decisions
- to have a desire to live in and work for both renewal and deepening.

The congregation was asked to pray for the process.

b) The Church Board

Election to the Church Board takes place every year at the Church conference. The Nomination committee sees a need to strengthen competences in the Church Board and seeks candidates with the following competences:

- good financial skills
- good experience of the Church's international work
- good theological knowledge
- good knowledge of marketing
- good insight in educational issues

Proposals must be submitted to the Nominating committee of the Uniting Church by 23 January 2020. Feel free to contact the Chair with your proposals.

Email: ordforande@immanuelskyrkan.se

§ 9 Any other business

There were no other questions.

§ 10 Conclusion

Ulla Marie Gunner prayed a prayer and the Chair declared the meeting closed.

Secretary: Cathrin Sjöström

Minutes approved by: Stephen James, Chair; Brenda Taylor, Claes Ericsson