

Minutes from the digital Congregational Meeting in Immanuel Church 24 January 2021

Present in the broadcast: Stephen James, Chairman of the Board
Ulla Marie Gunner, Senior Pastor
Cathrin Sjöström, Church Secretary
Roelof Hansman och Peter Dobers, incoming messages
Isak Wang, AV Technician
Michael Taubert, Camera and videographer

Simultaneous interpreter: Hanna Zuring Peterson

Online for broadcast: Approximately 150 people

§ 1 Introduction

Stephen James, the Chairman of the Board welcomed all present both physically and digitally to the digital annual meeting. He introduced the people present and described the possibility of participating through emails and text messages.

§ 2a Information on how the early voting was decided upon

The chairman of the board mentioned that all members have received informational material and vote cards via mail. 478 members have sent in their votes, which is about 35% of all members. The chairman of the board was very satisfied with the high number of voters and thanked the members for taking their time to mail their responses. According to the by-laws the inquiries are won with a majority vote, apart from the calling of a new pastor which is decided with two thirds majority vote.

§ 2b Presentation of the work of the tellers, encl. 1

Senior Pastor, Ulla Marie Gunner read the report that Cathrin Sjöström brought, who is the summoner of the tellers. The report described the procedure for control of the electoral register as well as the counting of valid votes. It described the protection of anonymity and comments had been handed in to management and the board.

§ 3 The setup of the meeting is presented as well as information regarding how members can contact the presidium during the meeting.

The Chairman of the Board repeated what the agenda for the meeting was and how members can get in contact with the presidium during the meeting.

§ 4 Early Voting

The Chairman of the Board described the congregation as lively, with a lot of dedication. Before this annual meeting the board have received a lot of comments and criticism, which the board is taking seriously. The board understands the congregations' need to receive clearer communication, which is not optimal at this moment. The Chairman of the Board has asked the congregation to be patient since we are in a very specific situation with the pandemic and the board, as well as the staff, have had to switch to different ways to work and of communicating on very short notice. A situation in which sometimes shows areas where there would have been a possibility to act differently.

The chairman of the board reported that the poll regarding allowing early voting resulted in a 97% “Yes” from the congregation (457 votes).

§ 5 Election of Tellers

The chairman referred to the report that had been presented already (encl. 1), where the tellers names are listed and where it has been declared that the congregation have voted yes with 98% (463 votes).

§ 6 Election of Adjusters

The chairman of the board presented that as adjusters of the minutes from today's annual meeting Lotta Hansman and Anders Andersson received 99% (469 votes), electing them as the adjusters.

§ 7 The ministry evaluation committees' suggestion for the nominating committee for the 2021 Annual Meeting

Senior Pastor Ulla Marie Gunner read the ministry evaluation committees' suggestion for the nominating committee for the 2021 annual meeting:

Karin Sandström, summoner, Linda Häss, Mikael Ivarsson, Sujata Kumar, Dan Svanell and Young-Sook Wennergren.

A question had been sent in from a member regarding why it is a requirement to be able to speak Swedish to be in the nominating committee. The chairman of the board responded that it is a recommendation from the ministry evaluation committee based on previous experiences. Swedish is the common language in the congregation and the work is easier if everyone speaks the same language. In the future it may be possible for this to be bilingual, in Swedish and English, but it is not relevant at this moment.

The chairman of the board reported that the congregation have voted Yes to the ministry evaluation committees' suggestion for the nominating committee with 97% (457 votes).

Karin Sandström emailed the meeting and said yes to this opportunity and thanked everyone for their trust in her.

§ 8 Suggestion on changes in articles in association for Probitas

The Chairman of the Board read the question that had been raised regarding the changes in the articles in association concerning the Probitas company. The three changes in question are:

- to change from two accountants to one
- that the articles in association for packaged companies can be assessed by Probitas
- to modernize the language used

The Chairman of the Board informed the members that several questions had been received by the board regarding this and explained that the congregation's possibility to review the company's articles in association will not change. Members are welcome to review the old as well as the new articles in association to take part in which changes have been made.

The Chairman of the Board reported that the congregation have voted Yes to the suggestion regarding changes in the articles in association for Probitas with 96% (454 votes).

§ 9 Suggestion to call Pastor Esther Kazen to the pastor team of Immanuel Church, encl. 2 & 3

The Chairman of the Board informed the members that Pastor Esther Kazen would have been called 10 months ago but the current pandemic situation made this impossible. Since then the board have received a lot of comments. This has been the topic of many conversations and a lot of criticism has been made regarding the process - that the process has been too short or that the process has taken too long.

The congregation have shown a lot of dedication. The board have spent a lot of time on comments and questions that they have received as well as had meetings with the fellowship councils, groups, etc. In two of the letters that have been received, the senders have asked to be added to the documents, which will be done. One question came in for the meeting as to whether the report from the Swedish fellowship council should also be added to the document, but the Chairman of the Board reported that no one in that council had made such a request.

The Chairman of the Board presented that regarding the question if Esther Kazen should be called to pastor in Immanuel Church, the congregation have voted Yes 82% (385 votes). Since this is way above two thirds of a majority that is required Pastor Esther Kazen is therefore called to pastor.

The Chairman of the Board concluded the presentation of the polls for the early votes with a prayer for the decisions that had been made, about wisdom and guidance for the nominating committee. He prayed for Probitas and thanked all employees and volunteers within the congregation's companies. That God's blessing should envelop them and that they will know how much they mean to the congregation. The Chairman of the Board thanked God for Pastor Esther and her willingness to serve. He prayed for God's richest blessing over her and that she will be accepted by all.

§ 10 Other matters

The Chairman of the Board clarified that "other matters" always should be on the agenda.

a) The staff in the Pandemic

Senior Pastor, Ulla Marie Gunner sent regards to everyone in the staff, whom she cannot meet because of the pandemic. She recalled things that the congregation managed to do before the pandemic and presented the challenges in which the church and the staff have had to handle since the month of March last year.

For example, finding Corona safe ways to have Community Lunch when it is not possible to gather indoors, all tech and technical thinking that is involved in starting web-based services and to adapt to new, alternative ways of working. Staff have had to adapt and sometimes do volunteer work that volunteers in the congregation would normally do. Some staff have cleared out storage rooms. The janitors don't need an extra janitor as before and it has not been necessary to fill vacancies or temporary positions at this time.

The deacons have a lot of work to do. The process of recording and editing services, concerts, Sunday School, etc. takes a lot of time and resources and in the middle of this the congregation's new website went live. It has required a lot of work and has some minor fixes to go. The music school is the only one of the congregation's activities that has been able to function relatively normally during the pandemic.

Ulla Marie also raised the fact that there are a lot of rules that need to be followed in regard to the staff work environment which decides what they can and cannot be subject to. The congregation's website shows a lot of new staff members in the congregation. Something that's possible thanks to the Probitasconcern. Ulla Marie would like to clarify that a lot of these staff members work part time.

b) How will the church reopen?

Senior Pastor, Ulla Marie Gunner informed that planning is being made for services and other activities so that the church can reopen as soon as possible, based on the current restrictions. In the meantime, alternative ways to work are being used based on the restrictions. For example, the church is now going to open, except for Wednesdays, as well as Sundays 13.00-14.30 for lighting of candles, self-reflection or conversation and the possibility to open a weekday evening is also being investigated. A pastor or deacon can be reached every day from 09.00-21.00. Ulla Marie encouraged everyone who feel lonely to call and say if someone's become sick or is extremely lonely. We must keep in contact with each other and take care of each other.

Ulla Marie looks forward to having an opening party when the restrictions allow it so that many people can meet and celebrate together.

c) Incoming questions and comments about Pastor Esther Kazen

The Chairman of the Board informed the participants that during the meeting questions and comments regarding the process to call Esther Kazen had been received. The board had been asked by some members to be more open and inclusive to the thoughts and concerns of the members.

One member is wondering if everything is about votes and not about what the congregation should be given an insight in, regarding other, different, opinions from groups. The Chairman of the Board was very clear in his answer that the democratic process is based on the voting in the polls. It is that way the congregation finds God's direction. The members pray over the polls and then vote from there. That is how we live and act in the vision of the congregation.

The Chairman of the Board informed that the board and the meeting had received comments that signal worry. One question that had been discussed thoroughly within the board is the congregation's road ahead. The board do their best to try to navigate in the best way possible, even though it is hard and even harder when neither the board nor the congregation can meet normally.

The Chairman of the Board ended with reading a couple of the positive and welcoming comments that had been sent in during the meeting after the result of the calling of Pastor Ester Kazen had been presented.

d) Information overview of constitution and organizational documents

The Chairman of the Board informed that the boards' work group that handles reviews of the constitution and organizational documents have informed the board that the timetable for the review is not going to suffice. The work they do is very thorough, and the board will therefore get back to the congregation on this matter.

e) Information on digitisation

The Chairman of the Board informed that at this time, all important member information is handled in text with letters in the mail. It is expensive, time-consuming, and not environmentally friendly. Digital tools are being processed, for this matter, as well as interactive meetings with a digital voting solution. The congregation's by-laws are behind in allowing these types of things and to be able to fully do this they need to be revised.

The board may come to ask the congregation for permission to, in the future, be able to go against the by-laws to enable digital meetings.

f) More other matters

One member has sent in a question on how the results from Probitas' financial statements will be for 2020. The Chairman of the Board responded that the financial statements are not finalized yet. The hotel is struggling, and the Chairman of the Board asked the congregation to pray for the management and staff who work there. The properties are what lifts Probitas and even if the result of 2020 won't come close to what 2019 resulted in, it is expected to still end in a positive result for the year.

One member asked if there will be a joint service any time soon in order to give thanks. Senior Pastor, Ulla Marie Gunner said yes and reminded of that there was a joint service that was aired on January 10th. It is available on the Immanuel Church YouTube channel.

§ 11 Conclusion

Senior Pastor,, Ulla Marie Gunner aimed a warm thank you to the board and especially to the Chairman of the Board, Stephen James, for all their hard work and dedication during the pandemic and the year of 2020.

Ulla Marie ended the meeting with a prayer for our city and our world, and the Chairman of the Board declared the meeting closed.

Secretary of meeting:

Cathrin Sjöström, secretary

Adjusted by:

Stephen James, Chairman of the Board
Lotta Hansman and Anders Andersson, Adjusters