

# Report from the Ministry Evaluation Committee for the 2023 ministry year

To Immanuel Church Congregation

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## Introduction

The Ministry Evaluation Committee hereby submits its final report from the review of the 2023 ministry year. The committee's mission (MEC) is tasked with being a representative of the congregational members and review the board and its work from a ministry perspective in accordance with the church constitution and statutes and the decisions made at congregational and annual meetings.

The committee has worked to form an idea of the ministry in the congregation by reviewing and analyzing various sources of information such as interviews and text documents, by drawing conclusions and then compiling these in this report to the annual meeting.

This year's review is in connection with last year's review as we believe that the relationship between the board and the councils is a central point in Immanuel Church as an organization. The committee believes that the congregation is characterized by democracy, openness and acceptance, while the idea of the ministry can be seen as cohesive and based on a common understanding of the congregation's role in the world and society. The role and function of the board therefore, like other committees and groups - becomes strategically important and must be seen in relation to the board's overall, long-term and financial responsibilities as well as priorities.

## The board

Firstly, we can note that the board has completed its work in accordance with a good democratic process. The decisions that are made are carefully written in minutes and the board has followed up on the assignments it received from the annual meeting and congregational meetings. Furthermore, the board has initiated several reviews of some of the congregation's ongoing activities which are welcomed by the Ministry Evaluation Committee. Several of the board's initiatives are commented on below.

During the year, the board has drawn up a ministry plan which was adopted by the congregational meeting on November 26, 2023. In these four so-called focus areas, which, according to the board, need to be linked more strongly to the congregational core activities. These areas are:

- Diaconal work, people in vulnerable life situations
- Children and youth, young adults and families
- Volunteers and leadership
- Increased fellowship between the language groups

According to the committee, these areas correspond to a large extent to the prioritized areas that have been pointed out for many years as guidelines for the congregational development work. A newly added focus area is *Volunteers and leadership*, which intends to develop volunteer leadership and/or involvement within various parts of the congregation, such as diaconal work, church services, music, children's and youth work etc. In this area, for example, leadership training will be

implemented and mentoring programs developed.

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The Ministry Evaluation Committee welcomes these initiatives, which we believe must be carried out long-term and in close cooperation with the relevant councils and committees.

In addition to the listed focus areas, the ministry plan also mentions a number of other development areas which should therefore be seen as important for the life of the congregation. They are:

- Visibility in the society
- The Music ministry
- Staff issues and decision-making structure
- Strengthened communication
- Improved worship services in the Swedish-language group
- The Jubilee year

The Ministry Evaluation committee sees these areas as important, albeit somewhat different in nature. Questions about developing the ministry and "issues related to content" with plans for organization, planning and administration are found here. A particularly urgent area, as deemed by the committee, is the development of an efficient and transparent management and decision-making structure. In such a complex and multi-faceted ministry as this congregation, it is important that a robust yet comprehensible structure for governance and management is in place. We therefore welcome the initiative to review governance and management functions. In this context, however, it may be appropriate to point out, with regard to an expected increase of volunteer leaders and volunteers, that the staff job descriptions should be revised as a more meaningful organizational structure is being chiseled out.

A question that can be raised is which competencies should be included in the board. The congregation has for a long time had the privilege of being led by a competent and committed board, and the election committee has always strived to recruit candidates with broad association and leadership experience. Particularly, the recruitment of financial competence has been at the forefront, which the committee sees as important. One comment that emerged from our interviews, however, is whether the board work would be promoted if there was also a theological competence represented. Even if theological questions are mainly handled by employed pastors and deacons, we still want without making a sharp proposal, to refer the matter to the election committee for further consideration.

## The councils

Already during last year's review, the committee found that all councils have long since found their role, but that these roles vary internally. In short, it can be said that the councils' role involves monitoring and developing the ministry in consultation with responsible pastors and other employees. However, there are differences regarding how much the council is involved in the day-to-day planning and operations. The Korean and English-speaking councils follow and support their activities relatively closely, while the Swedish-speaking council works more long-term, over a period of a few years to follow and develop the ministry.

The Ministry Evaluation committee was also able to point out last year that the forms of interaction

between the board and the councils could be improved. The committee, therefore, welcomed this year the board's decision on establishing a Council committee with the aim of strengthening relations between the council and the board. Even if a concrete work has not yet taken shape, this committee is a good prerequisite for a clearer collaboration between the board's strategic work and the councils' more operational efforts. We see it as urgent that the committee develops the dialogue between the board and the various councils. In this regard, we would like to emphasize that the lack of language skills in Swedish can sometimes be an obstacle to good cooperation between the councils.

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According to the committee, a step towards increased collaboration between the board and the councils can also be an increased cooperation between the councils themselves. Even though they are responsible for different areas of activity and also operate in slightly different ways, we see a strength in the fact that the councils are familiar with each other's approach to various issues, such as children and youth work and the design of joint services.

The councils also have favorable conditions with regard to promoting and supporting the congregational democratic structure. The non-profit commitment is a cornerstone of this structure. Since the congregation is supported by its members, it is therefore important that members are given the opportunity to contribute as leaders, committee or board members or in other ways. Here the councils play a strategically important role. The councils can contribute to strengthening and developing the congregational democratic structure through their way of working and recruiting members, and when necessary training them. As the councils also have a good overview of the activities that are conducted and take place, the councils can also get a relatively clear picture of recruitment to different groups, leadership and volunteer needs as well as the requirements for different activities.

### Diaconal ministry

The diaconal ministry is one of the cornerstones of the congregation. In terms of diaconal efforts, there are increasing needs both in and outside the church. In addition, new forms of diaconal efforts are required in various contexts, as these needs are growing or changing. Furthermore, a discussion on how the diaconal ministry can and should be linked to the activities of the various language groups is needed. In this context, the committee wishes to point out that increased access to diaconal efforts within the English-speaking language group is sought after. In addition, the various language groups have different forms of volunteer efforts which can be spread to other worship groups to some extent.

With the above-mentioned points, the committee is pleased to note that the board set up an investigation into the future diaconal ministry and looks forward with anticipation to the congregation being able to take note the findings at an appropriate time.

### Children, youth and young adults

A common thread can be observed through the activities of all language groups regarding the congregation's work among children, young people and young adults. At the same time, a lack of children's and youth's presence and participation in the worship services is sometimes expressed, especially in the Swedish one. Especially in this area, we can state that a starting point for further

work lies in the investigation into children's and youth work carried out by the Senior Pastor. It clearly shows a great commitment from many young people and it is clear that the congregation can offer interesting and exciting activities in various ways, which can also open the way to an expanded church community. However, the conditions within the different language groups are somewhat different - the Korean group does not have many young people in their activities at the moment, and within the Swedish and English-speaking groups there are different perceptions of the degree of "ease" or spiritual deepening as a guiding principle in the design of the activities. The investigation carried out offers a number of different possibilities for a further development of the children and youth ministry and the committee wishes to remind all of the good intention to reactivate the ecumenical association as a way of protecting the democratic structure of the congregation.

Even if the conditions are somewhat different between the language groups, we still want to underline the need as far as possible for a cohesive and meaningful children and youth work. This does not mean that everything should be aligned or organized in a strict form. But we want to emphasize that all children and youth are the concern of the whole congregation and see this as

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urgent and strategically important from a future perspective. Taking into account the congregation's demographic structure, it is of great importance that young people are given space to develop and feel at home in the various ministries. The diverse experiences, approaches and forms of expression that the congregation represents is seen as a strength for a future development of the youth work.

In summary, the committee wishes to express its appreciation for the initiatives taken to develop the children and youth work and looks forward with anticipation to a presentation of how the planned youth floor will be used.

### Leadership and increased volunteer participation

It has already been mentioned that the church is supported by its members and their commitment. Immanuel Church congregation is no exception to this rule. A large number of volunteers visit the church every week for various activities and in various contexts. At the same time, there is a fear that sometimes a lack of volunteers and leaders inhibits the development of activities and church life. The committee is therefore pleased that the board has taken the initiative to develop its work with recruiting and training leaders and volunteers. Much remains to be done before these initiatives take shape, but the Committee would like to emphasize particularly, the possibility of exploring models for mentoring programs and other guiding initiatives aimed at recruiting and supporting young volunteers and leaders. There is a need to increase support for volunteers.

### Increased fellowship between the worship groups

As previously mentioned, another focus area is an increased fellowship between the worship groups. During the year, several measures have been taken to strengthen the fellowships. A starting point is to emphasize even more clearly that all pastors are for the whole congregation, even if the worship service is dedicated to a specific group. Another point of discussion is about the design of the common joint worship services. How to create a service that is inviting and inclusive without at the same time being too long and cumbersome? Here, the committee sees a need to develop, and

assess the important role the councils may play in the joint work.

## Music ministry

The Music ministry forms a large and vital part of the congregational activities. At the annual meeting in 2023, a motion was discussed, which led to the board being tasked with reorganizing it with the aim of creating a greater collaboration between the congregation's various music-oriented activities, and to create an overall music committee responsible for the entire congregational music activities as well as the music school. An important aspect in this was the motioners' intention to see the music school not as a separate part of the congregation, but rather as an essential part of the congregation's children and youth work.

During the year, an investigation regarding these issues was conducted and proposals were submitted to the board, which are in line with the motioners' intentions. Based on these proposals, the board has dealt with the issue and intends to create a joint music committee whose area of responsibility includes all language groups and the music school. The Ministry Evaluation committee is pleased to note that the board handled the issue well and looks forward to the committee also paying attention to last year's ministry evaluation committee's wishes for a "closer collaboration and coordination of the Music School's activities as part of Immanuel Church's overall congregational activities."

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## Conclusion

In conclusion, we would like to summarize the committee's comments and suggestions in these points, based on the above-mentioned points of discussion.

1. The board has identified and decided on four focus areas, where volunteers and leadership appear as an important newly added area. According to the committee, this ministry in all focus areas must be carried out long-term in cooperation with the relevant councils and committees.
2. The board should ensure that the staff job descriptions are reviewed and updated, where necessary.
3. The board's great competence could be expanded by supplementing it with theological competence.
4. The councils' collaboration with the board should be strengthened and developed. We welcome the fact that the board has established a Ministry committee.
5. Based on the ongoing investigation into the diaconal ministry, we are calling for a discussion on how the diaconal work can and should be linked to the needs and activities of the various language groups in an appropriate way.
6. Children and youth work should be developed with the underlying idea that all children and youth are the concern of the whole congregation.
7. We have noticed that the board has started working on recruiting and training leaders and volunteers. The committee would like to emphasize in particular the possibility of investigating models for mentoring programs and other guiding initiatives. Support for volunteers should be increased.
8. The pursuit of an increased fellowship between the worship groups should be long-term and seen as an important part of the congregation's internal work.
9. The committee welcomes the decision the process of appointing a new music committee with joint overall responsibility.

There is a risk that a ministry evaluation focuses mainly on the weaker or more problematic parts of the ministry while disregarding the more stable and successful parts. Lastly, we would like to therefore underline that we recognize the good job the board is doing with high ambitions to develop and in some cases reform the ministry, and we would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to all those who contribute in various ways to make Immanuel Church a living and inclusive congregation, safeguarding both the rich historical heritage we manage and caring for all the people in the church or its neighborhood.