



EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN MISSION DIOCESE OF FINLAND

DIOCESAN ORDER

This Diocesan Order expresses the purpose and structure of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Diocese of Finland (below referred to as "the Mission Diocese" or "the Diocese"), and the rules governing its operation. All its member congregations and their workers are obliged to observe the Diocesan Order in their operation.

The Diocesan Order expresses the character, confession and mission of the Diocese, maintains a good administrative culture, fosters the connection between the congregations, and protects them from malpractice. The aim of the Diocesan Order is to create a sound framework for the best possible implementation of the mission of the Christian Church in preaching the Word and administering the sacraments. Because the original sin and evil tendencies remain in a Christian person, the Diocesan Order also protects the congregations and their workers from conflicts that could cause great damage in congregational life, if disputes or sins are not dealt with.

The Diocesan Order includes matters that are determined by the Word of God and cannot be rejected without jeopardizing individual salvation or the welfare of the congregation. There are also many issues in which the Word of God gives no detailed rulings. Even in such issues, the congregations, their workers and the members of the Pastoral College shall hold to the Diocesan Order, not as a divine provision that binds one's conscience as such, but for the sake of unity: the Word of God advises us in many ways to maintain good order in the congregations (1. Cor. 14:33, 40; Col. 2:5; Hebr. 13:17; 2. Cor. 7:15).

"Just as in all families and in all states concord should be nourished by mutual offices, and tranquillity cannot be retained unless men overlook and forgive certain mistakes among themselves; so Paul commands that there should be love in the Church in order that it may preserve concord, bear with the harsher manners of brethren as there is need, overlook certain less serious mistakes, lest the Church fly apart into various schisms, and enmities and factions and heresies arise from the schisms." (Apology of the Augsburg Confession IV)

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PART I: BASIS OF THE DIOCESE

Chapter 1: Confession and Character

1 § The Mission Diocese confesses the biblical faith and doctrine that is based on the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the New and Old Testaments and is expressed in the three principal Creeds of the Old Church: the Apostle's Creed, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed and the Athanasian Creed, and in all the books included in the Book of Concord of the Lutheran Church: Augsburg Confession, Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Small Catechism, Large Catechism, Smalcald Articles, Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, and Formula of Concord: Comprehensive Summary, Rule and Norm. The Mission Diocese considers as its highest guideline that all teaching, practice and life shall be tested, executed and directed by the Word of God.

2 § The Mission Diocese is an independent ecclesial structure under episcopal oversight, formed by congregations. It is part of the "One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church" confessed in the Creeds. As such, the responsibilities and promises God gives in His Word apply to the Diocese, and it is truly a church in accordance with the definition of the Augsburg Confession, Article VII, on account, and by the power, of the means of grace administered within it.

3 § The Mission Diocese was born within the ELCF, and it continues in the Lutheran faith and congregational life that continues in Finland since the 16th century, but it is not part of the present administrative structures of the ELCF.

The Mission Diocese is part of the Nordic and worldwide community of confessional Lutherans, and on that basis it seeks fellowship with all who hold to the same confession, both in Finland and abroad. The Mission Diocese enters into dialogue with other Christian confessions as well, and aims at cooperation within the limits that the Lutheran confession sets, with the purpose of the unity of Christianity in truth and love.

Chapter 2: Mission of the Mission Diocese

1 § The Mission Diocese carries out the mission, which the Church received from its Lord, by supporting the congregations, their pastors and all Christians to spread, maintain and renovate the true faith, to revive and strengthen Christian life and to implement Christian charity and *diaconia*.

2 § The Mission Diocese carries out this mission by creating an administrative framework within which the congregations, led by their pastors and functionaries, live and act in the Lutheran faith, doctrine and confession, and by leading the common domestic and foreign missionary work of the congregations.

The Diocese examines and ordains as pastors men who are found to be suited, and installs the ordained pastors in their offices as shepherds of the congregations according to the Apostolic order.

The Diocese fosters the necessary education and skills of its pastors and the functionaries of its congregations by teaching.

The Diocese regularly gathers the pastors and functionaries of its congregations to be strengthened by their shared faith, to counselling, to exchange experiences, and to all such interaction as edifies its congregations.

The Diocese conciliates conflicts in the lives of its pastors and congregations, and examines suspected cases of misconduct or fall, and, where necessary, implements the punishment referred to in this Diocesan Order.

The Diocese represents its member congregations and pastors in relations to other Finnish ecclesial actors, and establishes and upholds international relationships.

The Mission Diocese participates in theological discussion in Finland, in the Nordic Countries, and worldwide.

Chapter 3: Administrative Bodies

1 § The basis of the activities of the Mission Diocese is formed by its congregations. The representatives of the congregations constitute the Diocesan Assembly.

2 § The Diocesan Assembly exerts the highest authority in the administration. The Diocesan Assembly elects all the administrative bodies either directly or indirectly.

3 § The Diocesan Council plans and implements the practical side of administration.

The Diocesan Council may appoint advisory or preparatory work groups for defined tasks where necessary.

4 § The spiritual-theological pastoral responsibility in the Diocese lies with its Bishop.

The Bishop supervises the congregations and pastors of the Diocese. The pastors form the Pastoral College.

The Diocesan Consistory assists the Bishop. The Consistory may appoint a doctrinal board to consider specific theological issues. Theological expertise in the Diocese is provided by the Pastoral Institute.

5 § The Dean of the Diocese assists the Bishop in his supervision of the Diocese. The Dean of the Diocese also serves the Diocesan Council in implementing effective and careful administration.

Persons can be appointed to assist the Dean of the Diocese; they and the Dean constitute the Diocesan Office.

6 § The cooperation among the administrative bodies and other administration may be ruled through a separate administrative regulation accepted by the Diocesan Assembly.

PART II: FORMATION AND DUTIES OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE BODIES

Chapter 4: Congregations

1 § The Diocese is composed of its congregations. A congregation may apply for membership in the Diocese by written application. The Diocesan Council makes the decision on membership. The Consistory gives the Diocesan Council a statement of the rules and activities of the congregation applying for membership.

If the Diocesan Council rejects an application, the applicant is entitled to take the matter to the next Diocesan Assembly. The rejection shall be justified in writing.

2 § The congregations are free to be constituted in the way they prefer and to draw up the rules and regulations that guide their activities. To be admitted as member of the Diocese, however, a community shall meet the following qualifications.

- 1) The activities of the congregation must officially and in practice be based on the confession referred to in this Diocesan Order (Chapter 1, 1§).
- 2) The congregation shall assemble regularly to celebrate the Divine Service conducted in accordance with the Lutheran doctrine and liturgical tradition.
- 3) The congregation shall have properly established rules, finances and roll of members.
- 4) The congregation shall have an administrative body that is accepted by its members and enjoys its confidence.
- 5) The congregation shall have a pastor in charge of its Divine Service, counselling and administration of the Means of Grace, and the good practices in administration.

When a congregation is incorporated in the Diocese, its pastors automatically join the Pastoral College.

In connection with its membership application, a congregation may ask the Diocese to install a pastor for it.

3 § The congregations in the Mission Diocese are entitled to send their representatives to the Diocesan Assembly and to make proposals to the Assembly as described in Chapter 5, 3§.

The congregations are entitled to support and advise in their activities from the Bishop, Consistory, Dean and other administrative bodies of the Diocese.

The congregations are obliged to obey the decisions of the administrative bodies and to observe the Diocesan Order.

The congregations are obliged to contribute to covering the costs of the diocesan activities, in a way agreed jointly by the congregations in the Diocesan Assembly, observing balanced long-term financial management.

If the work of a congregation gives cause to criticism, the Diocesan Consistory or the Diocesan Council shall notify the congregation and give it instructions to correct the matter.

4 § A congregation may separate from the Diocese by written notice to the Diocesan Council. The separation becomes valid immediately after the Diocesan Council has dealt with the notice.

A congregation can be dismissed from the Diocese if, despite disciplinary sanctions by the Consistory (Chapter 17, 10§), it repeatedly violates the Diocesan rules or order, or if its activities harm the Diocese or avert its purpose in other ways.

The decision of dismissal is made by the Diocesan Assembly, on the Diocesan Council's initiative. The Consistory shall examine the matter and give a statement on it to the Diocesan Assembly before the decision.

SUPPORTIVE MEMBERS

5 § Communities, which do not meet all items 2 to 5 in 2§, but hold to the confession of the Mission Diocese and promote the objective of the Mission Diocese, may join the Diocese as supportive members.

Representatives of the supportive members have the right to attend and to speak in the Diocesan Assembly.

The regulations on entry and dismissal of congregations apply to the supportive members.

Chapter 5: Diocesan Assembly

1 § The Diocesan Assembly exerts the highest authority in the administration of the Diocese. Each congregation is entitled to two delegates in the Diocesan Assembly. Besides the delegates of the congregations, the delegates of the Pastoral College participate in the Diocesan Assembly.

Delegates in the Pastoral College are: the pastor in charge of each congregation, the members of the Consistory, and two further delegates elected by and from among the Pastoral College.

Each delegate has one vote in a ballot.

The Bishop is chairman of the Diocesan Assembly. The Diocesan Assembly elects the vice chairman from among it.

2 § The supportive members of the Diocese are entitled to two Diocesan Assembly delegates each. The representatives of the supportive members have the right to attend and to speak in the Diocesan Assembly.

The Diocesan Assembly may invite representatives of communities considering entry as congregation or supportive member, to observe the Diocesan Assembly.

3 § The Diocesan Assembly convenes no less than once annually, by summons of the Diocesan Council.

The Diocesan Council may summon an extraordinary Diocesan Assembly at its discretion, or when one of the congregations requests it in writing, for the purposes of a specific issue it announces. The Diocesan Council shall process the request for an extraordinary Diocesan Assembly in its next meeting. The Diocesan Council shall summon the Diocesan Assembly without undue delay. The Diocesan Council may, with justifiable reason, postpone the processing of such an issue to the next ordinary Diocesan Assembly or an extraordinary Diocesan Assembly already determined. If five congregations demand in writing the summoning of an extraordinary Diocesan Assembly, their request shall be taken up by the Diocesan Council as soon as possible, and an extraordinary Assembly shall take place no later than 6 weeks from the meeting of the Council.

The congregations shall be informed of the Diocesan Assembly by summons sent no later than three weeks prior to the Assembly, stating the time, venue and agenda of the Assembly.

The congregations may submit proposals to the Diocesan Assembly by sending the proposals to the Diocesan Council in writing. A proposal shall be taken in the agenda for the next Diocesan Assembly.

4 § If issues are submitted to the Diocesan Assembly, which relate to applying the confession of the Diocese, the Consistory shall give a proposed decision after hearing the pastors. Examples of such doctrinal issues are:

- 1) issues related to the ecumenical relationships of the Diocese, especially where connected to celebrating the Holy Communion;
- 2) the official doctrinal books, hymnbooks, liturgies and other doctrinal or liturgical material considered normative in the Diocese;
- 3) what is assigned by the Diocesan Order about the ordination, duties and qualifications of pastor and bishop.

If the Diocesan Assembly rejects the Consistory's proposal, the issue becomes void. The Diocesan Assembly cannot make doctrinal decisions without hearing the Consistory or against the Consistory's statement.

Hearing the pastors takes place as laid down in the Diocesan Order (Chapter 10, 5§).

5 § The Annual Meeting of the Diocese takes place by the end of November. The agenda of the Annual Meeting includes:

- 1) Annual report, closing of the accounts and the auditor's statement
- 2) Action plan and budget for the following year
- 3) Election of Diocesan Council members and their deputies to replace those who are due to resign
- 4) Election of the lay Consistory member and deputy to replace those who are due to resign
- 5) Election of the auditor and deputy auditor
- 6) Election of the arbitrator candidates
- 7) Division among the member congregations of the costs of Diocesan activities.

The financial year of the Diocese is the calendar year.

The Diocesan Assembly shall submit the annual report and the closing of the accounts of the Diocese to the congregations by the end of April.

6 § The Diocesan Assembly considers the amendments in the Diocesan Order according to the Diocesan Council's proposal. The doctrine and confession expressed in Chapter 1 cannot be amended.

The decision of the Diocesan Assembly is, unless the Diocesan Order rules otherwise, the opinion that was backed by more than half of the votes. When the votes are equal, the chairman's vote decides, except in the case of election, lots are drawn.

Items concerning technical amendments in the confession and character require a majority of three quarters ($\frac{3}{4}$) of the delegates entitled to vote who are present.

7 § Participation in the Diocesan Assembly can also take place by mail or data communications or other technical means during or before the meeting, if the Diocesan Council or the Diocesan Assembly so decides.

Chapter 6: Diocesan Council

1 § The Diocesan Council is in charge of the practical activities and administration of the Diocese. The Diocesan Council:

- 1) carries out the tasks laid down by the Diocesan Assembly;
- 2) makes the decisions of accepting congregations in the Diocese;
- 3) is in charge of the administrative and financial issues in the Diocese;
- 4) is in charge of information and publications;
- 5) is in charge of missionary work and diaconia;
- 6) is in charge of the Lutheran Pastoral Institute of Finland;
- 7) is in charge of contacts with various parties;

- 8) elects the officials of the Diocese, except those elected by the Diocesan Assembly directly;
- 9) drafts the annual report and action plan of the Diocese;
- 10) drafts the proposals for amendment of the Diocesan Order;
- 11) summons the Diocesan Assembly and prepares the issues in its agenda.

2 § The Diocesan Council consists of the Bishop, the Dean and six members elected by the Diocesan Assembly, and their personal deputies. Members of the Pastoral College can also be members of the Diocesan Council. The members of the Diocesan Council must be members of congregations in the Diocese.

The members and their deputies are elected for a period of two years at a time. However, three members are elected for one year in the first election of the Council. Members who are due to resign may be re-elected.

The Bishop is chairman of the Diocesan Council. The Diocesan Council elects the vice chairman from among it.

The Diocesan Council forms a quorum, when the chairman or vice chairman plus four members or deputy members are present.

3 § The Diocesan Council meets no less than twice annually, summoned by the Bishop.

4 § The decision of the Diocesan Council is, unless the Diocesan Order rules otherwise, the opinion that was backed by more than half of the votes given. When the votes are equal, the chairman's vote decides, except in the case of election, lots are drawn.

5 § Participation in the Diocesan Council can also take place by mail or data communications or other technical means during or before the meeting, if the Diocesan Council so decides.

Chapter 7: Bishop

1 § The Bishop is in charge of the spiritual supervision of the Diocese. It is the Bishop's duty to:

- 1) oversee that the Word of God is preached purely and the sacraments are administered correctly in the congregations of the Diocese;
- 2) foster the spiritual unity of the Mission Diocese and the entire Church of Christ;
- 3) conduct ordinations, install pastors in their congregations and consecrate other workers in their congregational or missionary service;
- 4) be a spiritual shepherd for the pastors and other workers;
- 5) preside over the Diocesan Assembly, the Diocesan Council, the Consistory and the Pastoral College;
- 6) be the theological negotiator and the representative of the Diocese when establishing church relationships;
- 7) represent the Diocese in public and international connections where necessary;
- 8) lead the domestic and international missionary work of the Diocese.

The Bishop may, where necessary and at the responsibility of his office, delegate part of these duties to other pastors in the Diocese.

2 § A member of the Pastoral College can be elected Bishop. The Bishop shall lead a blameless life, be profoundly acquainted with the Christian doctrine, and be sufficiently experienced in the pastoral office. The Bishop shall enjoy the confidence of all the congregations in the Diocese.

Election of Bishop

3 § When a new Bishop is elected, the Pastoral College assembles to call 1 to 3 candidates from among it. Each College member gives an equal number of votes to no more than three candidates. Three candidates with most votes are announced to the Consistory for the examination of qualifications.

The Consistory examines the candidates appointed by the College. If a candidate fails to meet the formal or substantive qualifications, he will be replaced by the candidate who received the next highest number of votes and is accepted by the Consistory.

After the examination of qualifications, the Diocesan Council announces the election among the candidates whom the Consistory has accepted. In this connection, the Council appoints an electoral board to organize the election.

If the Pastoral College is unanimous in its nomination and the Consistory accepts its candidate, the decision of the Pastoral College becomes the result of the election.

4§ The election takes place in the Diocesan Assembly or in a separate meeting summoned by decision of the Diocesan Council.

Voting may take place by mail or by electronic means, as established by the electoral board.

The pastors in the Pastoral College and the Diocesan Assembly delegates of the congregations are entitled to vote. Each person has one vote.

Unless one of the candidates receives more than half of the votes, another voting is conducted between the two candidates who received the most votes.

If two candidates receive an equal number of votes, the decision is made by lot.

5 § After the election, the new Bishop is consecrated to his office. The consecration is officiated, if possible, by the previous Bishop of the Mission Diocese, or, if he is prevented, by another bishop who holds to the confession of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. If no bishop is available, the Consistory elects a member of the Pastoral College to officiate the consecration. After the consecration, the Bishop assumes the duties laid down in the Diocesan Order.

6 § When the Bishop is prevented from his office, the Dean of the Diocese is his deputy until the Bishop returns to his duties or a new Bishop is consecrated.

7 § The office of the Bishop remains until death, unless the Bishop is dismissed as referred to in Chapter 17. The Bishop may request liberation from his duties, after which a new Bishop is elected for the Diocese. On account of a serious illness or a comparable exceptional reason, the Consistory may take the initiative to liberate the Bishop of his duties.

Chapter 8: Dean

1 § The Dean is in charge of the administration of the Diocese. The Dean of the Diocese:

- 1) assists the Bishop in his office and supervision duties;
- 2) prepares and presents the issues for the meetings of the Diocesan Council, the Diocesan Assembly and the Pastoral College;
- 3) leads the work of the Diocesan Office;
- 4) watches that the work in the administrative bodies and congregations is conducted in good order;

- 5) advises the congregations and pastors in practical matters, administration and the development of congregational work;
- 6) together with the Bishop, negotiates with parties outside the Diocese concerning joining the Diocese and other issues of cooperation.

The Dean may delegate his duties to the Diocesan Office and work groups appointed by the Diocesan Council. The Deacon is eventually in charge of the execution of these duties.

2 § A member of the Pastoral College can be elected Dean of the Diocese. The Dean shall lead a blameless life, be profoundly acquainted with the Christian doctrine, and be sufficiently experienced in the pastoral office. The Deacon shall enjoy the confidence of all the congregations in the Diocese.

3 § The Diocesan Assembly elects the Dean of the Diocese.

4 § When the Dean is prevented from his office, the Bishop or a pastor of the Diocese is his deputy until the Dean returns to his duties or a new Dean is elected by the Diocesan Assembly.

5 § The Dean of the Diocese attends to his duties until the Diocesan Assembly releases him from his duties, or the Consistory deems it necessary to dismiss the Dean of the Diocese as referred to in Chapter 17.

Chapter 9: Diocesan Office and Work Groups under Diocesan Assembly

1 § The Diocesan Office assists the Diocesan Assembly in administration. The Diocesan Assembly appoints the members of the Office.

2 § It is the Office's duty to:

- 1) serve the Diocese in implementing administrative details;
- 2) keep book of the income and expenses of the activities of the Diocese;
- 3) tend the archives of the Diocese;
- 4) assist the Bishop and the Dean of the Diocese in information tasks;
- 5) provide material for the congregations as instructed by the Diocesan Council;
- 6) assist the pastors and congregations in administrative issues.

3 § The Office is accountable to the Dean and the Diocesan Council.

4 § For limited tasks, the Diocesan Council may appoint advisory or preparatory work groups. The work groups can be permanent or project-oriented.

The workgroups are accountable to the Dean and the Diocesan Council.

5 § The Dean shall notify the Consistory and the Diocesan Assembly of forming the Diocesan Office and work groups under Diocesan Assembly, and of the persons appointed to these.

Chapter 10: Pastoral College

1 § All pastors in the Diocese are members of its Pastoral College. It is the Pastoral College's duty to:

- 1) assemble regularly in ministerial conventions to discuss theological issues and issues related to congregational work, with a view to mutual support and encouragement among the officials;

- 2) give statements to the Consistory on issues related to the theological outlines of the Diocese, as referred to in Chapter 5, 4§;
- 3) together with the Consistory and the Pastoral Institute, provide the Pastors opportunities to advance in theological subjects and professional skills;
- 4) encourage and support students in theology and provide a positive example of attending the office of shepherd;
- 5) elect from among its delegates to the Diocesan Assembly according to Chapter 5, 1§/2;
- 6) elect from among them the Pastoral Assessors to the Consistory;
- 7) elect from among them the candidates for the episcopal election.

2 § A pastor ordained by the Bishop of the Diocese becomes member of the Pastoral College without separate decision.

A pastor ordained earlier may become member of the College by application, if he:

- 1) was ordained according to the apostolic order;
- 2) meets the criteria related to doctrine, attendance of office and private life, set for pastors in the Diocesan Order (Chapter 16, 3§);
- 3) commits himself to the purpose of the Diocese and the Diocesan Order;
- 4) is member of a congregation in the Diocese, or otherwise partakes in the Divine Services of a congregation / congregations;
- 5) as his skill and strength permit, wants to serve the congregations in the Diocese and promote the purpose of the Diocese.

The Consistory processes the applications for entry in the College. Before this, the Bishop or a member of the Consistory authorized by the Bishop has an interview with the applicant, going through the above qualifications.

3 § A person may be dismissed from the Pastoral College, if he no longer fulfils the preconditions in 2§. The decision on dismissal is made by the Consistory, in accordance with Chapter 17.

4 § The members of the Pastoral College assemble in an annual Synodal by summons of the Bishop. The Synodal processes issues related to the pastoral office, and a doctrinal issue selected by the previous Synodal. The Bishop may appoint a member or members of the College to prepare the Synodal.

New members of the Consistory to replace those due to resign are elected in connection with the Synodal, or, the Bishop's decision, in another meeting by the College.

5 § When the Consistory prepares for the Diocesan Assembly issues related to the application of the confession, the Consistory shall hear the Pastoral College before submitting the issue to the Diocesan Assembly, as stated in Chapter 5, 4§.

The Pastoral College may be heard in a Synodal or other meeting of the Pastoral College, by written statement by the Pastors, or by other means the Consistory deems appropriate.

For compelling reasons, the members of the Pastoral College may propose taking up in the Synodal, an issue related to the application of the Diocese's confession. A written proposal shall be submitted to the Bishop no later than one month before the Synodal takes place. If at least one tenth of the College members or at least five pastors support the proposal, it shall be taken up in the Synodal. The Diocesan Assembly shall be notified of the proposal and its processing.

Chapter 11: Consistory

1 § The Consistory supports the Bishop in matters related to the spiritual supervision of the Diocese. It is the Consistory's duty to:

- 1) make proposals for the Diocesan Assembly of processing theological issues as directed in Part II, Chapter 2, 4§;
- 2) examine the pastors to be joined in the Pastoral College and the pastoral candidates to be ordained, as directed in Chapter 10, 2§ and Chapter 16, 4§.
- 3) examine the bishop candidates appointed by the College, according to Chapter 7, 3§ /2;
- 4) process disciplinary matters according to Chapter 17;
- 5) appoint members of the work groups under the Consistory and discuss the results of the work groups;
- 6) together with the Bishop, oversee that all the bodies, Pastors and congregations in the Diocese work in accordance with the confession;
- 7) attend to other tasks laid down to it in this Diocesan Order.

2 § The Consistory is made up of the Bishop, the Dean, three Pastoral Assessors elected by the Pastoral College, and one layman and his deputy elected by the Diocesan Assembly.

The chairman of the Consistory is the Bishop, and the vice chairman is the Dean.

3 § The Bishop may invite a legally trained assessor as member and a notary as member and as the secretary of the Consistory. The legally trained assessor and the notary are members of the Consistory, but they have no vote in it.

The right to be present and to speak in a meeting of the Consistory can further be granted to other persons deemed necessary in terms of the issues discussed.

4 § The term of the Pastoral Assessors and laymen in the Consistory is three years. When Pastoral Assessors are elected for the first time, one of them is elected for one year and another one for two years. A person due to resign may be re-elected in the Consistory in the same connection.

5 § The Consistory assembles by summons of the Bishop as often as necessary in terms of its work.

Chapter 12: Bodies under Consistory

1 § The Consistory may appoint a doctrine board to discuss doctrinal issues. The purpose of the board is to discuss theological issues at the request of the Consistory, the Diocesan Assembly or the Diocesan Council, and give statements on them to the Bishop and the Consistory.

The Consistory appoints members of the Pastoral College to the doctrinal board. The board submits an account of its work to the Bishop, the Dean and the Consistory.

2 § The Consistory may appoint work groups to process individual theological issues when necessary. The Consistory appoints the members of such work groups, which submit accounts of their work to the Bishop, the Diocesan Council and the Consistory.

3 § The Consistory may appoint one or several work groups to attend to missionary work, ecumenical discussions or international relationships. The Consistory appoints the members of such work groups, which submit accounts of their work to the Bishop, the Dean and the Consistory.

4 § The Consistory shall notify the Diocesan Council and the Diocesan Assembly of the bodies under it and of their members.

Chapter 13: The Lutheran Pastoral Institute of Finland

1 § Spiritual-theological education in the Diocese is provided by the Lutheran Pastoral Institute of Finland. It is the Pastoral Institute's duty to:

- 1) provide theological education rooted in the faith of the Church, to students preparing for work in the congregations of the Diocese, and to support their emerging pastoral identity;
- 2) provide further theological education to pastors who serve the congregations, and offer them opportunities to advance their pastoral skills;
- 3) support the lay education in the congregations in issues related to the doctrine and the practical life of congregations;
- 4) to provide theological expertise in the service of the Diocese.

2 § The Pastoral Institute works under the Diocesan Council. The Diocesan Council appoints its teachers, functionaries and the management group that coordinates its work.

PART III: ACTIVITIES OF THE DIOCESE

Chapter 14: Activities of the Congregations as part of the Diocese

EPISCOPAL VISITATION

1 § An episcopal visitation shall be conducted in each congregation at least once in three years.

During an episcopal visitation:

- 1) the Bishop discusses the circumstances, needs and challenges of the congregation with its Pastor, Board and other functionaries;
- 2) the Bishop tells the congregation members about the work of the Diocese and answers their questions;
- 3) the Bishop officiates an episcopal Mass.

2 § The Bishop may be assisted by the Dean, members of the Consistory or other members of the Diocese bodies whom the Bishop considers helpful.

3 § The Bishop defines the time of his visitation. If no insurmountable hindrance exists, the Bishop shall visit a congregation within six months of receipt of the invitation.

4 § If such serious matters arise during the visitation as may result in admonition or disciplinary measures, the matter is not dealt with during the visitation, but it is referred to the proper body for preparation.

5 § An initiative on an episcopal visitation can be launched by the Bishop, a congregation's Pastor, a congregation by decision of its Board or by a written request signed by one third or at least 20 members who are entitled to vote. In connection with such a request, a specific reason for it shall be expressed.

A protocol is written of the episcopal visitation and submitted to the Diocesan Consistory. If serious defects or defaults appear during the visitation as referred to in 4§, the further dealing with them shall be recorded in the protocol.

A copy of the protocol shall be submitted to the congregation, where it shall be available for all members of the congregation in two successive Divine Services.

LIABILITY OF THE CONGREGATIONS FOR THE ECONOMY OF THE DIOCESE

6 § The congregations are jointly liable to cover the expenses from the work of the Diocese. The Diocesan Assembly decides on the manner by which the congregations attend to their obligation. The financial obligation need not be equal for every congregation. When assessing it, a congregation's size and its general financial status can be taken into consideration.

7 § A congregation shall keep a record of diocesan property handed over to it.

REGIONAL WORK

8 § The congregations may form geographically or linguistically justified regions, by decision of the Diocesan Assembly. When necessary, the diocesan bodies may decide on certain diocesan work taking place at the regional level.

9 § The Consistory may appoint one of a region's pastors as Regional Dean. It is the Regional Dean's duty to assist the Bishop and the Dean of the Diocese to supervise the regional Pastors and to attend to diocesan work in the region as referred to in 8§.

Chapter 15: Divine Service and Rites

1 § The congregations in the Diocese are free to organize their work as they wish, as long as a congregation does not act against the confession of the Diocese or its purpose or otherwise deviate from the Diocesan Order.

2 § Working in one Diocese, the congregations commit themselves to accept each other's members, officials, ceremonies and other congregational life. To protect this unity, the congregations shall observe the guidelines of congregational work that the Diocesan Order defines.

BAPTISM AND MEMBERSHIP OF A CONGREGATION

3 § A congregation may accept as its member a baptized person who confesses the Evangelical Lutheran faith and wants to commit to the Evangelical Lutheran confession in faith and life. The parents decide the membership in the case of children less than 12 years old.

4 § Unbaptized persons shall enter the membership through baptism. If a person does not intend to join or a congregation does not intend to accept a person, baptism should not be officiated in a normal situation.

Emergency baptism may be officiated to anyone and immediately if there is reason to believe that the person's life is in danger.

5 § Baptism shall be officiated in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, using water. Baptism is officiated in accordance with the liturgical tradition of the Lutheran Church.

6 § In connection with baptism, the person to be baptized is appointed no less than two godparents/sponsors who confess the Lutheran faith and are blameless in doctrine and life, baptized and confirmed Christians.

7 § The members of congregations shall have their children baptized without undue delay.

DIVINE SERVICE IN CONGREGATIONS

8 § The centre of the congregation's work is the common Divine Service. It shall take place on Sundays, unless significant practical reasons argue for another time.

An effort shall be made to celebrate the Divine Service every week, unless lack of workers, financial matters, lack of premises or other such reason justifies less frequent gathering.

9 § The Pastor of the congregation or another Pastor he invites is in charge of the Divine Service. When the Pastor is prevented and a substitute cannot be found, the Divine Service shall be celebrated according to the Consistory's directions for such cases.

10 § The services are held in accordance with the Lutheran liturgical tradition. The Consistory may draft Chancel Regulations to guide the congregations' Divine Services.

HOLY COMMUNION

12 § The Holy Communion is celebrated in the congregations' Divine Service. The Pastor in charge of the Divine Service administers and dispenses the Holy Communion.

Where necessary, the Pastor can administer the Holy Communion outside the Divine Service, in connection with spiritual counselling or a congregational function.

13 § The Holy Communion is dispensed to members of the congregations and to baptized and confirmed Christians who want to hold to the Lutheran confession.

The Holy Communion is not dispensed to persons who hold to heresies or will not repent of public sin, as ruled in Chapter 17.

14 § A baptized child who has been taught the meaning of the Holy Communion may, by the Pastor's permission, partake of it together with its parent or other person in charge of the child's Christian education.

CONFIRMATION

15 § The pastors of the congregations may officiate confirmation by permission of the Bishop. In confirmation, a member of the congregation who has received Christian education confesses the faith of the congregation, receives a blessing and intercession. Confirmation entitles the person to partake of the Holy Communion independently and to become godparent.

CONSECRATION OF MARRIAGE

16 § A couple married by legal authorities may request consecration of their marriage. A Pastor officiates the consecration.

FUNERAL SERVICE

17 § A Pastor of the Diocese may, when requested, funeral service.

FURTHER REGULATIONS

18 § Pastors must not accept fees from the members of the congregations for officiating Church Ceremonies.

Chapter 16: Pastoral Ordination and Administration of Office

1 § The Pastor is responsible for the spiritual life of his congregation. It is the Pastor's duty to:

- 1) preach the Word of God purely and clearly, and to administer the holy sacraments according to the ordinance of Christ;
- 2) serve his congregation and the entire Church of Christ as pastor, and to assume responsibility for the salvation of the congregation members;
- 3) serve the members of his congregation by prayer and church ceremonies;
- 4) accept confessions and provide private counselling;
- 5) visit homes and administer the Holy Communion to the sick;
- 6) assume responsibility of Christian education in his congregation;
- 7) see that good administration practices are observed in his congregation;
- 8) maintain contacts with the Bishop, the Pastors, and with other congregations;
- 9) pray for himself, his congregation and anyone who needs intercession;
- 10) study the Word of God and advance his skills as theologian.

2 § A Pastor shall lead the spiritual life in his congregation as the shepherd. He bears the responsibility for all preaching and spiritual work in his congregation.

3 § A Pastor is obliged to observe the confession and purpose of the Diocese in his teaching and his office. All public speaking or writing by a Pastor is considered administration of his office, irrespective of whether or not it takes place within his normal congregational work. A Pastor is required to live an exemplary and blameless life, also privately.

ELECTION AND ORDINATION

4 § A congregation calls a Pastor for itself.

Before calling a Pastor, a congregation notifies the Consistory. The congregation agrees with the Bishop on the arrangements related to the call and installation of the Pastor. If a party is discontented with the manner of calling the Pastor, or if the matter is otherwise unclear, the Consistory shall investigate the matter. In this case, the call is not deemed valid and the installation cannot be officiated before the Consistory recommends it.

A congregation may call a member of the Pastoral College or ask the Bishop to recommend a suitable Pastor for it. A congregation may ask the Consistory to examine the qualifications of a man who is considered suitable but is not yet in pastoral office or member of the Pastoral College. A rejected candidate may be re-examined later.

The Diocesan Council may also call a Pastor to spiritual-theological tasks in the Diocese.

When a decision is made of an ordination, the Bishop has the right of veto.

5 § A man may be ordained Pastor, if he has been baptized and confirmed, practises his faith and confession in a congregation that celebrates the Divine Service; if a congregation calls him as its Pastor and if he has taken theological education accepted by the Consistory, or otherwise displays sufficient learning. He shall be exemplary in his life, theologically skilled, and committed to the confession and purpose of the Mission Diocese.

6 § The Bishop of the Diocese officiates the ordination, or if he is prevented, another bishop or a member of the Diocesan Consistory.

Pastoral ordination is officiated in accordance with the liturgical tradition of the Lutheran Church, by Word and prayer, through laying-on of hands.

FURTHER GUIDELINES OF THE PASTORAL OFFICE

7 § A Pastor is absolutely bound by the confessional secret in accordance with the principles in the regulations concerning the pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Finland.

A Pastor may not reveal a matter confided to him in private confession or other instance of counselling, nor the person who confided the matter to him.

8 § In line with the Lutheran Doctrine of the two Kingdoms, a pastor may not in his office further party-political pursuits nor take a stand on political parties or candidates.

9 § A Pastor shall observe the Consistory's guidelines, or in the absence of these, he shall negotiate with the Bishop before cooperating in spiritual matters with communities or pastors who do not share and carry out the confession of the Mission Diocese.

Chapter 17: Disciplinary Issues and Conflicts in Congregation

1 § The Bishop of the Diocese supervises and advises the pastors and, together with the Consistory, makes decisions on disciplinary measures and on resolving conflicts.

DISCIPLINARY ISSUES RELATING TO PASTORS

2 § The Diocese shall intervene with serious falls in a pastor's life. Such intervention comes into question, if a pastor's sin is:

- 1) an exceptionally serious act or neglect;
- 2) a continued sin related to his manner of life;
- 3) public or generally known by his congregation

4) a sin that immediately concerns his congregation, its members, or otherwise his office.

3 § If a pastor's fall is not generally known, the Bishop shall be contacted at first, and he shall decide on processing the issue.

The Bishop shall speak to the Pastor in question before the issue is forwarded to the Consistory. If the Bishop considers that the issue is minor and does not require processing by the Consistory, the Bishop may alone give the Pastor an admonition, after which the issue is deemed concluded. The Consistory is notified of the admonition in its next meeting. If the Bishop considers the issue ungrounded, it is not taken to the Consistory.

As advised in the Bible (1. Tim. 5:19), the Bishop should refrain from taking up issues notified by one member of a congregation only, unless it is unreasonable to expect a notification from more persons due to the nature of the act. Only in exceptional cases can a notification from outside the congregation be taken up.

The Bishop and the Consistory shall protect the Pastor's reputation by not disclosing a pending issue to outsiders.

If the Bishop considers that the suspected fall is generally known, the issue can be taken up in a meeting of the Consistory before a discussion referred to in 2§. Even then, the Bishop shall talk with the pastor privately before the Consistory makes its decision. In such a case, the Consistory shall protect the privacy as referred to in 4§. If the suspicion is not considered to call for a disciplinary punishment referred to in 5§, the Bishop and the suspected Pastor shall agree on how widely the decision of the Consistory is announced.

4 § Processing a disciplinary issue, the principles of good administration and fair trial shall be observed. The presumption of innocence prevails during the investigation.

A pastor is obliged to contribute to the processing of an issue that concerns him.

5 § If a pastor is found to be guilty of conduct not suited for a pastor in his private life or his office, the Consistory may implement a disciplinary punishment on him:

- 1) By admonition, the Consistory – or the Bishop alone – informs the Pastor of the impertinent kind of his conduct, and requires repentance.
- 2) The Consistory may caution a Pastor for a fall that is serious but does not give cause to suspension, or for a lesser, repeated fall, if admonition has been given earlier.
- 3) Suspension from pastoral work may be applied, if a pastor has committed a serious, generally known sin that essentially affects his capacity of shepherding the congregation, or if he repeatedly commits a sin which he has been cautioned for.
- 4) A pastor can be dismissed from office, if his repeated falls have proven him unable to control his conduct, due to poor attendance to his duties or due to having lost his credibility as pastor.

The Consistory may suspend a pastor for the time of investigation or until his disciplinary issue or charge of heresy has been processed by the Consistory. For cogent reasons, suspension from pastoral work may be inflicted without hearing the person concerned.

If a crime investigation is pending, the Consistory may implement a disciplinary sanction only after the criminal case is legally resolved.

When inflicting punishments, the Consistory may at its discretion also suspend or dismiss the person from his tasks in the Diocese.

6 § If the person concerned considers that the Consistory has committed a procedural fault when making its decision, and he is discontent with the decision, he may submit the case to the arbitrary court, as ruled in Chapter 18.

7 § A pastor cannot be dismissed from office without hearing his congregation.

8 § If a pastor is suspected of deviating from the confession of the Diocese, the issue will be investigated similarly as a fall in life. A charge of heresy will be taken up if the suspected heresy:

- 1) was publicly spoken or written, or becomes obvious in the pastor's work;
- 2) concerns a point of which the confession of the Diocese gives a clear statement that binds all.

If the Consistory finds that a pastor has taught or acted against the confession of the Diocese, the pastor shall remedy his teaching to comply with the confession, and – if reasonable – publish a correction or otherwise amend his earlier teaching so that the wrong idea no longer prevails with the members of the congregation.

If a pastor does not follow the Consistory's directions or is repeatedly guilty of heretic teaching, the Consistory inflicts a disciplinary punishment referred to in 5 §.

9 § If the Bishop of the Diocese is investigated, the procedure is similar to that in the case of a pastor, but the tasks of the Bishop in the procedure will be taken up by a person whom the Consistory appoints.

DISCIPLINARY MATTERS IN A CONGREGATION

10 § If a congregation neglects its duties or otherwise acts against the Diocesan Order, the Dean and the Bishop shall notify the pastor and functionaries of the congregation. If the congregation continues to act against the Diocesan Order, the matter shall be taken up by the Consistory of the Diocese.

When investigating the activities of a congregation, the principles are the same as in 4 §.

11 § If a congregation is found to have violated the Diocesan Order, the Consistory may implement a disciplinary punishment on it.

- 1) By admonition, the Consistory points out a defect in the congregation's activities, and guides the congregation to remedy its activities to conform to the Diocesan Order.
- 2) Warning may be given, if the congregation has not remedied its activities in spite of the admonition, or if the congregation has, due to obvious negligence, failed to fulfil its obligations in a point that is essential in its work.
- 3) The congregation may be dismissed from the Diocese, if, in spite of a warning, it continues to violate the Diocesan Order. In this case, the Consistory may propose dismissal to the Diocesan Council. The decision is made by the Diocesan Assembly on the basis of the proposal by the Diocesan Council.

When a congregation is dismissed or decides to secede, an account is made of any property of the Mission Diocese in the possession of the congregation; the property is returned to the Diocese.

12 § The disciplinary punishments inflicted on a congregation do not apply to its pastor as such, if the violation against the Diocesan Order was not due to his negligence.

DISPUTES IN CONGREGATIONS

13 § If a congregation is dissatisfied with its pastor, but he is under no suspicion referred to in 2§ or 8§, the Bishop or a person he authorizes shall act as arbitrator. If the dispute continues, it can be submitted to the Consistory.

Unless the pastor can be shown to be guilty of a fall referred to in 2§, heresy referred to in 8§, or neglect or exceptionally careless or unskilled attendance of his office, the pastor may only be dismissed by permission of the Consistory.

14 § Disputes or falls among the members of a congregation should primarily be dealt with by the pastor or the Board of the congregation, depending on how each congregation decides. The congregations shall observe the principles in 3§/4 and 4§ when dealing with their internal disputes.

If a member of a congregation feels mistreated in his or her congregation, he or she may appeal to the Bishop, who decides on the proceedings.

To foster the unity of the congregations, a person who is denied the Holy Communion in one congregation should not receive the Holy Communion in another congregation.

Chapter 18: Arbitration

1 § Disputes between the Diocese and its congregation related to the work, termination, membership or membership application in the Diocese, and civil law disputes between congregations or their members are processed and resolved by arbitration.

2 § A court of arbitration consists of two arbitrators appointed by the parties and a chairman they elect, who shall be a lawyer familiar with church law issues.

The arbitrators are elected among eight candidates whom the Diocese Assembly appoints.

3 § Arbitration proceedings follow the valid Arbitration Act (967/1992).

Chapter 19: Diocesan Archives

1 § The decisions of the Diocesan bodies and the work of the Diocese are recorded in the Diocesan Archives. The archives are tended by the Office which is under the Diocesan Council. The Dean of the Diocese is in charge of the archives and keeps the person registry that is formed in the archives.

2 § The Diocesan Archives retain:

- 1) the Diocesan Order in force, completed by information on what amendments have been accepted in it and when;
- 2) the annual reports and action plans of the Diocese;
- 3) the summons to and records of the meetings of the Diocesan Assembly, the Diocesan Council, the Consistory and the Pastoral College;
- 4) the official notices and declarations of the Diocese;
- 5) a record of Church Rites officiated in the Diocese.

3 § The Church Rites officiated in the Diocese are entered in a record. The congregations and pastors shall without undue delay give the Office details of the Rites officiated.

The following details are entered in the ceremonies record:

- 1) Baptism: The full name, date of birth and date of baptism, the godparents/sponsors, the officiating pastor and the congregation into which the baptized person was taken; in case of a child less than 15 years old, his or her guardians.
- 2) Confirmation: Name, date of confirmation, the confirmed person's congregation at the time, and the officiating Pastor.
- 3) Consecration of marriage: The names of the spouses (and any changing of name due to marriage), date of marriage, date of consecration, the spouses' congregation/s, place of consecration, and the officiating pastor.
- 4) Funeral: the deceased person's name, date of death, congregation, time and place of committal, and the officiating pastor.

Other church ceremonies are not entered in the record.

USE OF THE ARCHIVES

4§ The data in the archives shall be kept inaccessible to unauthorized users.

5§ Access to the data in the archives is as follows:

- 1) The Founding Document of the Diocese, Diocesan Orders, plans of action, annual reports and official notices and declarations of the Diocese are public.
- 2) The summons to and minutes of the meetings of the Diocesan Assembly, Diocesan Council, Consistory and Pastor's College are public to:
 - a) the Bishop and Dean of the Diocese, or persons authorized by them;
 - b) the current members of each body;
 - c) the members of a body, irrespective of whether they were present in the meeting concerned.
- 3) The data in the Rites Record are accessible to the person concerned, to the pastor of his or her congregation and to the Bishop.

Chapter 20: Termination of the Diocese

1 § The Diocese can be dissolved by a decision of the Diocesan Assembly, with no less than three fourths ($\frac{3}{4}$) of the votes cast. The summons to the meeting shall indicate the dissolution of the Diocese. If the Diocese is dissolved, its assets and other property shall be used to promote its purpose, in a way determined by the Assembly that makes the decision of dissolution. If the Diocese is abolished, its assets shall be used similarly.