



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 nature, 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 iniquities 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 Nature

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 a Lutheran church in Finland. On account, and by the power, of the means of grace correctly administered, it is part of the "One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church" confessed in the Creeds of the Church, in accordance with Article VII of the Augsburg Confession. The responsibilities and promises God gives in His Word apply to it.

3 § The Mission Diocese continues for its part the Lutheran faith and congregational life that has had an impact in Finland.

The Mission Diocese is part of the Nordic and worldwide community of confessional Lutherans, and on that basis it creates connections 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 founding and supporting congregations, their pastors and all Christians, and by working 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 its mission by the following means:

The Diocese admits new congregations and sustains their work.

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

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

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

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

The Diocese carries out publication work in accordance with its confession.

The Diocese carries out missionary work in Finland and abroad.

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.

The Mission Diocese acts mainly in Finnish and Swedish languages.

Chapter 3: Administrative Bodies

1 § The basis of the activities of the Mission Diocese is formed by its congregations. The representatives of the congregations and the Pastoral College together 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 § Practical administrative matters are planned and implemented by the Diocesan Council.

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

The meetings of the Diocesan Council are prepared and its decisions are implemented by an executive group appointed by the Council, together with the Diocesan Office.

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

The Bishop supervises the congregations and pastors of the Diocese. Deans assist the Bishop in supervising the deaneries. The pastors constitute the Pastoral College.

The Diocesan Consistory assists the Bishop. The Consistory may appoint working groups to consider specific theological issues. The Pastoral Institute serves the Diocese by providing theological education.

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.

6 § The Diocesan Office is in charge of implementing the administration of the Diocese. The Dean of the Diocese directs the work of the Diocesan Office.

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

8 § The Mission Diocese is divided into deaneries led by deans. The deaneries can be organized on the basis of regional, linguistic or functional connection.

PART II: FORMATION AND DUTIES OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE BODIES

Chapter 4: Congregations

1 § The Diocese is composed of 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 applying community 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, a congregation shall meet the following qualifications:

- 1) The activities of the congregation shall, 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, responsibly administered finances and an updated roll of members.
- 4) The congregation shall have an administrative body that is accepted by its members and enjoys their confidence; it acts as the Council.
- 5) The congregation shall have a responsible pastor in charge of its Divine Service, counselling and other administration of the Means of Grace, and the good practices in administration. The responsible pastor of the congregation is member of its Council.

A prerequisite for joining the Diocese is that the Consistory has accepted the pastors of the congregation as members of the Pastoral College.

In connection with its membership application, a congregation may ask the Diocese to install a pastor to supervise 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, the Consistory, the supportive members, the background organizations that bear financial responsibility, the 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 admonition, the Diocesan Consistory or the Diocesan Council shall notify the congregation and give it instructions for correcting 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 18, 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 proceedings.

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 act in ways that promote the objective of the Mission Diocese, may affiliate with the Diocese as supportive members.

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

If a supportive member has employer responsibilities or financial or legal responsibilities for the operations of the Diocese or its congregation, the cooperation between the Diocese and the supportive member is agreed on in a separate ordinance.

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

Chapter 5: Diocesan Assembly

1 § The Diocesan Assembly exerts the highest power of decision in the Diocese.

Each congregation is entitled to send two delegates in the Diocesan Assembly. Besides the delegates of the congregations, the delegates of the Pastoral College participate in the Diocesan Assembly. Delegates of the Pastoral College are the pastor in charge of each congregation and two further delegates elected by and from among the Pastoral College.

The Bishop, the Dean of the Diocese, the pastor assessors of the Consistory and the lay member have the vote in the Diocesan Assembly.

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 send 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 that 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 to 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, place 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 contrary to 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 next 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 nature (Chapter 1, 1 and 2§) 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 contacts with various parties;
- 7) elects the Dean of the Diocese. If the election results in employment, the election takes place in cooperation with the organization holding employer responsibilities.
- 8) elects the officials of the Diocese, except those elected by the Diocesan Assembly directly. If the election results in employment, the election takes place in cooperation with the organization holding employer responsibilities.
- 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 of the Diocese 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.

The Secretary of the Diocese has the right to be present and to present matters in the Diocesan Council.

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.

6 § The Diocesan Council appoints an executive group that prepares the meetings of the Diocesan Council and executes their decisions.

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) oversee for his part that the congregations and administrative bodies of the Diocese observe the Diocesan Order;
- 3) foster the spiritual unity of the Mission Diocese and the entire Church of Christ;
- 4) conduct ordinations, install pastors in their congregations and consecrate other workers in their congregational service or missionary work;
- 5) be a spiritual shepherd for the pastors and other workers;
- 6) preside over the Diocesan Assembly, the Diocesan Council, the Consistory and the Pastoral College;
- 7) be the theological negotiator and the representative of the Diocese when establishing church relationships;
- 8) represent the Diocese in public and international connections where necessary;
- 9) 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 meets 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 of bishop, 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 of candidates 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.

All 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 by the Bishop of the Mission Diocese, or, if he is prevented, by a bishop of a sister church of the Mission Diocese.

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 a Bishop is dismissed as referred to in Chapter 18. A Bishop may request liberation from his duties from the Consistory, after which a new Bishop is elected for the Diocese. On account of a serious illness or a similar exceptional reason, the Consistory may take the initiative to liberate a Bishop of his duties.

Chapter 8: Dean of the Diocese

1 § The Dean of the Diocese 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) is in charge of preparing and presenting the issues for the meetings of the Diocesan Council, the Consistory, the Diocesan Assembly and the Pastoral College;
- 3) leads the work of the Diocesan Office;
- 4) watches for his part 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 about joining the Diocese and other issues of cooperation.

The Dean of the Diocese may delegate his duties to the Diocesan Office and working groups appointed by the Diocesan Council. The Dean of the Diocese 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 of the Diocese shall lead a blameless life, be profoundly acquainted with the Christian doctrine, and be sufficiently experienced in the pastoral office. The Dean of the Diocese shall enjoy the confidence of all the congregations in the Diocese.

3 § The Diocesan Council elects the Dean of the Diocese. If the election results in employment, the election takes place in cooperation with the organization holding employer responsibilities.

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

5 § The Dean of the Diocese attends to his duties until the Diocesan Council releases him from his duties, or the Consistory deems it necessary to dismiss the Dean of the Diocese as referred to in Chapter 18.

Chapter 9: Diocesan Office and Working Groups under Diocesan Assembly

1 § The Diocesan Office assists the Diocesan Council in administration. The Diocesan Council 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 of the Diocese and the Diocesan Council.

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

The working groups are accountable to the Dean and the Diocesan Council.

5 § The Dean of the Diocese shall notify the Consistory and the Diocesan Assembly of forming working groups under the Diocesan Office and the Diocesan Council, 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 of the Diocese 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 studies and professional skills;
- 4) encourage and support students in theology and provide a positive example of attending the office of shepherd to those aiming at the office;
- 5) elect from among it delegates to the Diocesan Assembly according to Chapter 5, 1§/2;
- 6) elect from among it the Pastor Assessors to the Consistory;
- 7) elect from among it 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 blameless private life, set for pastors in the Diocesan Order (Chapter 17, 3§);
- 3) commits himself to the purpose of the Diocese and to the Diocesan Order;
- 4) is member of a congregation in the Diocese, and partakes in its Divine Services;
- 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 prerequisites.

3 § A person may be dismissed from the Pastoral College, if he no longer fulfils the prerequisites in 2§. The decision on dismissal is made by the Consistory, in accordance with Chapter 18.

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, by 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 next 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 Chapter 5, 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 17, 4§.
- 3) examine the bishop candidates appointed by the College, according to Chapter 7, 3§ /2;
- 4) process disciplinary matters according to Chapter 18;
- 5) appoint members of the working groups under the Consistory and discuss their results;
- 6) together with the Bishop, oversee that all the bodies, pastors and congregations in the Diocese work in accordance with the confession;
- 7) be in charge of the Lutheran Pastoral Institute of Finland;

- 8) appoint the deans;
- 9) attend to other tasks laid down to it in this Diocesan Order.

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

The Consistory forms a quorum, when no less than half of its members are present; nonetheless, either the Bishop or the Dean of the Diocese shall be present. In any situation of incapacity, the Consistory elects a competent chairman from among it.

Unless a meeting forms a quorum, a personal deputy member present is entitled to participate in decision-making along the ordinary member. If there are several personal deputies whose ordinary members are present, the deputy member who was elected earliest participates in decision-making. If the deputies were elected simultaneously, the lot decides who participates in decision-making.

The decision of the Consistory is the opinion that was backed by more than half of the votes given. When the votes are equal, the decision is the one that the chairman supports.

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

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

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 Pastor Assessors and laymen in the Consistory is three years. When Pastor 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 form working groups when necessary to process specific theological issues. The Consistory appoints the members of the working groups, and they report their work to the Consistory.

2 § The Consistory may form one or several working groups to process attend to missionary work, ecumenical negotiations or international relationships. The Consistory appoints the members of such working groups, and they report their work to the Consistory.

3 § 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 rising from 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 Consistory. The Consistory appoints its responsible teachers, who coordinate 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 regularly. 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 acquaints himself with the administration and management of finances in the congregation;
- 3) the Bishop tells the congregation members about the work of the Diocese and answers their questions;
- 4) the Bishop officiates an episcopal Mass.

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

3 § 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.

4 § 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.

5 § 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.

6 § A protocol is written of the episcopal visitation and saved in the congregation's archive. If serious defects or defaults appear during the visitation as referred to in 5§, the further dealing with them shall be recorded in the protocol submitted to the Bishop.

LIABILITY OF THE CONGREGATIONS FOR THE ECONOMY OF THE DIOCESE

7 § 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 accomplish their obligation. The financial responsibility need not be equal for every congregation. When assessing it, a congregation's size and its general financial status can be considered.

8 § A congregation shall look after diocesan property handed over to it.

Chapter 15: Deaneries

1 § The Mission Diocese is divided into deaneries. The Diocesan Assembly makes the decisions of dividing the Mission Diocese into deaneries and administrative regions. The division may take place on geographic, linguistic or functional bases. The Diocesan Council decides on which deaneries the congregations belong to. When necessary, the diocesan administrative bodies may decide on certain diocesan work taking place at the regional level.

2 § The Consistory may appoint one of a deanery's pastors as Regional Dean who can be in charge of one or more deaneries. It is the Regional Dean's duty to be the close superior of the pastors in his deanery, to support the congregations, to manage the deanery work and to assist the Bishop and the Dean of the Diocese in diocesan work. The term of a Regional Dean is two years. The number of terms is not limited.

Chapter 16: Divine Service and Church Ceremonies

1 § The congregations in the Diocese may organize their work in the way they want, as long as a congregation does not act against the confession or the purpose of the Diocese or otherwise deviate from the Diocesan Order.

2 § Working in one Diocese, the congregations engage to acknowledge each other's members, officials, ceremonies and other congregational life. To shelter 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 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 and on church festivals.

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, observing the guidelines of the Consistory.

HOLY COMMUNION

11 § The Holy Communion is celebrated in the congregations' Divine Service. The pastor administers 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.

12 § 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 18.

The pastor in charge of the Divine Service decides on administering and dispensing the Holy Communion, at his discretion.

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

CHURCH CEREMONIES

14 § The church ceremonies are primarily officiated by the pastor of each congregation or by another pastor, when mutually agreed.

CONFIRMATION

15 § The pastors of the congregations may officiate confirmation. In confirmation, a member of the congregation who has received Christian education confesses the faith of the congregation, is blessed and the congregation prays for him or her. Confirmation entitles the person to partake of the Holy Communion independently and to become godparent.

MARRIAGE CEREMONY

16 § Church marriage ceremony can be officiated to a man and a woman who have been baptized and who confess the Christian faith.

The church marriage ceremony must be preceded by a civil ceremony. If the spouses started their married life after the civil ceremony, the pastor can apply the consecration of marriage instead of the marriage ceremony.

According to God's Word, marriage is a lifetime union. If person to be married was married before and the marriage ended in divorce, the marriage ceremony or consecration of marriage can only be officiated by consent of the Bishop.

FUNERAL SERVICE

17 § A pastor of the Diocese may officiate a 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 souls of the congregation members;
- 3) serve the members of his congregation by prayer and church ceremonies;
- 4) accept confessions and provide private counselling;
- 5) warn against abandoning Christian faith and life, and to call back to the congregation those who have left the Divine Service;
- 6) visit homes and administer the Holy Communion to the sick;
- 7) assume responsibility of Christian education in his congregation;

- 8) see that good administration practices are observed in his congregation, and to promote the strengthening of the community spirit;
- 9) maintain contacts with the Bishop, and with other pastors;
- 10) pray for himself, his congregation and anyone who needs intercession;
- 11) invite those without faith to know Christ and create conditions for the birth of new congregations;
- 12) study the Word of God and advance his skills as theologian.

2 § A pastor leads 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 obligated to observe the confession and purpose of the Diocese in all situations. A pastor is required to live an exemplary and blameless life, also privately.

CALLING AND ORDINATION

4 § A man may be called to be pastor, if he has been baptized and confirmed, commits in his faith and life to the confession of the church stated in Chapter I, 1§, is a member of a congregation in the Diocese and participates in its Divine Service regularly. He shall be suited as pastor by his personal qualities, capable of teaching, blameless in his life and willing to serve the church according to the confession and purpose of the Mission Diocese. He shall have taken the education accepted by the Consistory, or he shall otherwise show sufficient theological proficiency.

5 § The Consistory shall examine the pastoral candidates before they are called, ascertaining that the prerequisites in 4§ are filled before the candidates are accepted. The examination takes place at the proposal by the Bishop before the proposal to the congregation referred to in 6§/3. The Bishop has the veto concerning passing the examination.

6 § A congregation calls a pastor. This takes place by decision of a meeting of the congregation's members.

Before a pastor is called, the Bishop and the representatives appointed by the congregation's Board discuss the congregation's needs and expectations. The Bishop notifies the Pastoral College members about the congregation. The pastors and pastor candidates may notify the Bishop of their willingness to serve in the task.

The Bishop proposes to the congregation one or more candidates whom he deems suitable. The Bishop's proposal is considered given in the meeting of the congregation's members. If there is only one candidate, the congregation shall vote for or against accepting him. If there are more candidates, an election is held between them. If no one receives more than half of the votes given, a new election is held between the two candidates who received most votes, after which the congregation votes for or against accepting the candidate who won the election.

Unless the meeting of the congregation's members elects a candidate proposed by the Bishop, the Bishop proposes new candidates according to the above.

If the pastor called will also hold a paid employment in his pastoral office, the Bishop shall negotiate with the organization holding employer responsibilities before proposing candidates to the congregation.

If the pastor called becomes assistant to the congregation's ordinary pastor and the task does not involve employment, the notification of the Pastoral College referred to above is not necessary.

The Diocesan Council may also call a pastor to spiritual-theological tasks in the Diocese. The procedure is similar to the election of a pastor for a congregation, in the applicable parts.

7 § If a candidate called by a congregation has served as pastor before but is not member of the Pastoral College of the Diocese, the Consistory shall examine him and admit him as member of the Pastoral College. The call is not deemed valid before this. If a candidate is called but has not been ordained, he shall be ordained as described in 8§.

8 § The pastoral office is received in the ordination. Only a man who has been called can be ordained. The pastoral office may not be administered without ordination.

Pastoral ordination is officiated in accordance with the liturgical tradition of the Lutheran Church, by Word and prayer, through laying-on of hands. The Bishop of the Diocese officiates the ordination, or if he is prevented, another bishop or a pastor appointed by the Diocesan Consistory.

The Bishop agrees with the congregation about the installation of the pastor. The installation is officiated by the Bishop or by a pastor he has authorized in the Diocese.

A pastor who was ordained in another church can be accepted as pastor in the Mission Diocese by decision of the Consistory; he can be ordained, if the earlier ordination cannot be considered correctly performed.

The pastoral office given in the ordination, with its rights and responsibilities, is a lifetime office, unless a pastor is dismissed because of falls in his life or heresy, or he asks the Consistory for dismissal from the pastoral office.

9 § If one of the candidates, a member of the calling congregation or persons who notified their interest to the Bishop as referred to in 6§/2 is discontented with the manner of calling, or if the procedure deviated from the Diocesan Order and good administration, a written statement shall be made to the Consistory without delay. In this case, the call is not deemed valid and the ordination or installation cannot be officiated before the Consistory has processed the matter.

FURTHER GUIDELINES OF THE PASTORAL OFFICE

10 § A pastor may not disclose a matter confided to him in private confession or other instance of counselling, nor the person who confided the matter to him.

The secrecy based on confessional secret is absolute in accordance with the principles in the regulations concerning the pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Finland.

11 § In line with the Lutheran Two Kingdoms Doctrine, a pastor may not further party-political pursuits or take a stand on political parties or candidates in his congregational work.

12 § 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 18: Disciplinary Issues and Disputes in a 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 disputes.

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 is otherwise related to the attendance of 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 a 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 point 2. Even then, the Bishop shall talk with the pastor in private before the Consistory makes its decision. Even in such a case, the Consistory shall protect the privacy as referred to in point 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 obligated 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 inflict 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) Caution can be given by the Consistory to 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) Temporary 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 for which he has been cautioned.
- 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 inflict a disciplinary sanction only after the criminal case is legally resolved. The Consistory shall consider the decision by a court or other secular authority when making its decision, unless cogent reasons require otherwise.

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 made 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 19.

7 § If a pastor is suspected of deviating from the confession of the Diocese, the issue will be investigated as described in 2§ and 3§. 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 matter in which the confession basis of the Diocese or the guideline of the Consistory contains a clear position 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 §.

8 § 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

9 § If a congregation neglects its duties or otherwise acts against the Diocesan Order, the Dean of the Diocese 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 §.

10 § If a congregation is found to have violated the Diocesan Order, the Consistory may inflict 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) Caution 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) Permanent or temporary dismissal from the Diocese can take place, if, in spite of caution, it continues to violate the Diocesan Order. In this case, the Consistory may propose dismissal to the Diocesan Council. The decision of permanent dismissal 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.

11 § 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

12 § 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 from serving the congregation by permission of the Consistory only.

13 § 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 pertinent proceedings.

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

Chapter 19: Arbitration

1 § Disputes between the Diocese and its congregation related to the work, termination, membership or membership application, 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. The term of the arbitrator candidates is five (5) years.

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

Chapter 20: 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 the church ceremonies officiated in the Diocese.

3 § The church ceremonies officiated in the Diocese shall be entered in a record. The congregations and pastors shall without undue delay give the Office details of the ceremonies officiated.

The following details are entered in the ceremonies record:

- 1) Baptism: The full name, date of birth and date of baptism, the godparents, 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 use.

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 the Dean of the Diocese, or persons authorized by them;
 - b) the current members of each body;
 - c) the members of a body at the time of a meeting, irrespective of whether they were present in the meeting concerned;
 - d) the auditor, subject to limitations related to processing personal data and confessional secret.
- 3) The data in the Church ceremonies Record are accessible to the person concerned, to the pastor of his or her congregation, to the Dean of the Diocese and to the Bishop.

Chapter 21: Termination of the Diocese or Changing its Organization

1 § The Diocese can be dissolved or its organization can be changed 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 or the changing of its organization.

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 terminated, its assets shall be used similarly.