

Constitution of the German-speaking Congregation Edinburgh/Aberdeen

Charity No. SC 009066

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ARTICLE 1: Confession of Faith

The German-speaking Congregation Edinburgh/Aberdeen proclaims its allegiance to Jesus Christ; Lord of the World, who is the one and only Head of the one holy universal Christian Church. The Congregation finds evidence for this belief in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments which it studies; guided by the Holy Spirit according to God's promises. It acknowledges that it is called to believe in salvation through this Our Lord alone, to whom the Holy Scriptures bear witness; to Service in the spirit of love that springs from His atonement for our sins; and to the hope of His coming at the end of time.

In common with the Church throughout the centuries it recognises the creeds of the early Christian church as its historical basis; and; in common with the German-speaking Reformed Churches; it also recognises the profession of faith expressed in the writings of the 16th century. The Congregation accepts the doctrine outlined in the Theological Declaration of Barmen as a Statement of its beliefs.

ARTICLE 2: Position with regard to, and relations with, other churches

The Congregation has been a member of the German-speaking Evangelical Synod in Great Britain¹ since 14.2.1970; and that fact governs its relationship with the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) in accordance with the agreement in force at any given time between the EKD and the Synod of German-Speaking Lutheran, Reformed and United Congregations in Great Britain.

Fraternal co-operation with the churches of the ecumenical movement; aiming at the unity of all Christians; finds its particular expression in solidarity with all German-speaking churches and with the churches of this country.

ARTICLE 3: Area and Organisation of the Congregation

(1) Within the Synod of German-Speaking Lutheran, Reformed and United Congregations in Great Britain the Edinburgh/Aberdeen Congregation belongs to the Parochial Region (PAB)

¹ since 2003: Synod of German-Speaking Lutheran, Reformed and United Congregations in Great Britain.

of Scotland/North East England, together with the Congregations in Glasgow, Middlesbrough and Newcastle upon Tyne.

(2) The Parochial Region is a co-operative association of congregations. Within the PAB the individual congregations are legally autonomous. In accordance with a decision by the Synod the minister's official residence is in Edinburgh.

(3) At least once a year a meeting of representatives of all the above mentioned congregations and the minister shall take place to make arrangements for the upkeep of the parish and to discuss other questions of common interest.

(4) The area of the Edinburgh/Aberdeen Congregation comprises the Border region, the Lothians, Dumfries & Galloway; Fife, Tayside, Grampian and Highland.

ARTICLE 4: Aims and Objects of the Congregation

(1) The task of the Congregation is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ as the Word of God in the strength of the Holy Spirit and on the basis of the Old and New Testaments.

(2) The Congregation urges its members to realise that they are called to hear and proclaim God's Word in the priesthood of all believers.

(3) In its proclamation of the Gospel pastoral care and social work the Congregation recognises its responsibility towards all German-speaking persons residing permanently or temporarily within its area.

ARTICLE 5: Congregational Property

(1) The members of the Church Council act as trustees.

(2) The Trustees act as owners of real estate and buildings. They are responsible for administering finances and capital; real estate and buildings. Contracts and documents which relate to these possessions are signed and executed by the Trustees.

(3) The Church Council is entitled to hold bank accounts and to invest money. The treasurer administers the accounts.

(4) With the general approval by the Congregational Assembly the Trustees have the right

- a) to acquire; dispose of or raise a loan on immovable property (houses; plots of land);
- b) to build; alter or demolish buildings;
- c) to enter into contracts or agreements regarding these procedures.

ARTICLE 6: Membership

(1) All baptised Christians who speak or understand German and reside permanently or temporarily within the area of the Congregation may become members.

- (2) Membership is obtained by a written declaration of intent and recognition of the constitution of the Congregation and must be approved by the Church Council.
- (3) Members who have attained the age of 18 have full voting rights in the Congregational Assembly.
- (4) It is possible to be at one and the same time a member of a German-speaking Congregation and of another church of a similar denomination-
- (5) Termination of membership of the congregation is effected by means of a written declaration of intent: thereby the member surrenders all offices and rights in the congregation; the same rule holds good when a member ceases to reside within the area of the Congregation«
- (6) Membership is embodied in the maintenance of an active personal relationship with the congregation and in regular contribution to its upkeep.
- (7) If the annual contribution has not been paid for two years an attempt should be made to discuss the matter with the member concerned. In extreme cases the Church Council may deprive the member of his/her voting rights.

ARTICLE 7: Divine Worship

- (1) The congregation assembles for regular services as circumstances dictate. The sacrament of Holy Communion shall be celebrated regularly.
- (2) The language used in the service is normally German. Co-operation with local churches should find its expression in regular joint services.
- (3) Worship is conducted in accordance with an order of service approved by the Church Council.
- (4) On occasion it may be decided, in consultation with the pastor and the Church Council to vary the usual order; e.g. for services with a special theme; family services etc. The use of specific translations of the Bible and hymns is determined by the Church Council.
- (5) The Congregation strives to teach God's Word to the children entrusted to its care. They are invited to attend children's services and the Eucharist.

ARTICLE 8: Official Procedures

- (1) *Baptism* is administered with the words "I baptise you in the name of the Father; the Son and the Holy Spirit"; at the same time water is sprinkled three times on the head of the person to be baptised.

The baptism of children is dependent on at least one parent's being a member of the Congregation. In special cases an exception to this rule may be made by the pastor; in consultation with the Church Council. When individuals wish to become members because

their child is to be baptised, they should be given the opportunity in advance to become part of the Congregation by participating in its activities.

(2) *Confirmation*, which is not a condition for membership of the Congregation, is preceded by an intensive course of instruction given by a person commissioned by the Congregation to do so. The act of Confirmation takes place within the framework of a congregational service.

(3) The *Marriage* ceremony may be performed in the church provided that one of the parties concerned is a member of the Congregation.

d) *Funeral Services and burials* may be conducted for persons who were not members of the Congregation as long as they belonged to a Christian church

ARTICLE 9: Congregational Activities/Social Work

As the good news of the Gospel is for the whole person, the Congregation will endeavour to alleviate distress by financial contributions and active help- Its attention is directed both towards its own members and the German-speaking residents of this country and also to other religious denominations, charitable and social organisations and individuals.

ARTICLE 10: The Congregational Assembly

(1) As the supreme governing body of the Congregation the Congregational Assembly is the meeting within the framework of a church service of the members of the congregation entitled to vote. As a rule it meets at least once a year.

Its task are

- a) to establish the agenda;
- b) to elect the Church Council;
- c) to elect the pastor;
- d) to elect a representative and a deputy representative to the Synod;
- e) to pass resolutions concerning the budget;
- f) to receive the annual financial report and to discharge the treasurer;
- g) to receive the annual Congregational report;
- h) to take decisions on subjects raised by the Church Council or a member of the congregation;
- i) to deal with general questions relating to the life of the congregation;
- j) to amend the constitution of the congregation (Art. 16).

(2) The chair-person of the Church Council or, if desired by the Church Council, the pastor presides over the Assembly.

(3) A quorum is constituted if at least 25 % of the members entitled to vote attend the Assembly in response to an invitation issued in due order.

(4) The invitation to the Congregational Assembly is issued in writing at least two weeks in advance; stating the agenda proposed by the Church Council.

(5) If there is no quorum at a Congregational Assembly, a second Congregational Assembly, to be convened afresh, is competent to pass resolutions, irrespective of the number of members present. In such cases due attention must be paid to Art. 10 (4).

(6) Resolutions are decided by secret ballot unless other arrangements have been made. All resolutions concerning individuals should be decided by secret ballot

ARTICLE 11: The Church Council

(1) The Church Council is elected by the Congregational Assembly and commissioned with the management of the congregation's affairs. It is responsible to the Congregational

(2) The Church Council comprises four to ten members with voting rights. These members must be members of the Congregation entitled to vote and resident within the area of the Congregation. The pastor in office is ex officio regular member of the Church Council. Persons specially commissioned for service in the Congregation and delegates to the Synod are members of the Church Council; but have no voting rights unless they have been directly elected to the Church Council.

(3) The members of the Church Council are elected for a period of four years. At intervals of two years a new election is held for half the seats on the Church Council. Re-election is possible. The names of proposed candidates are submitted by full members of the congregation to the chair-person of the Church Council no later than at the Congregational Assembly.

If a member of the Church Council demits office before the expiry of the period for which he/she was elected the remaining members may elect a new member to serve until the next election. Each additional election of this kind must be announced at a church service. It is valid if no objection has been raised within the following two weeks.

(4) Any person who is the spouse; brother; sister or other direct relative or brother-in-law or sister-in-law of a member of the Church Council is excluded from membership of the Council.

(5) The members of the Church Council are inducted at a congregational service of worship and engaged to observe the constitution of the Congregation.

(6) The Church Council appoints a chair-person; a deputy chair-person; a secretary and a treasurer from among its own members.

(7) The Church Council meets as a rule every month or, at the request of 3 members, for extraordinary sessions. A quorum is constituted if more than half of the members are present. A written invitation incorporating the proposed agenda is issued by the chair-person; his/her deputy or the pastor a few days before each meeting. Meetings begin and end with a Scripture reading or a prayer. The chair-person or his/her deputy ensures that the agenda is followed and minutes are kept.

(8) The Church Council may invite guests to its meetings. They are entitled to speak but not to vote.

(9) The special duties of the Church Council are:

- a) to take care that the Word of God is duly preached and the Sacraments duly administered in the congregation;
- b) to take decisions concerning the time and place of the church Services and the order of service and also regulations relating to the life of the congregation; and to ensure that these regulations are observed;
- c) to represent the Congregation in legal transactions with persons or bodies outwith the Congregation;
- d) to support the pastor in preaching the Word and pastoral care; in intercession for the Congregation and in visiting; admonishing and inviting those who do not participate in the church Services and the Lord's Supper
- e) to supervise the administration of the congregational finances and look after the regular collection of members' contributions;
- f) to take care that the needy are supported by the Congregation;
- g) to issue an annual report giving an account of the activities of the Congregation during the preceding year (see Art 10 (1) g);
- h) to prepare the resolutions for the Congregational Assembly, to draw up a provisional agenda and to issue the invitation to the Assembly;
- i) to supervise the work of the pastor; with due consideration of the contracts regarding his/her service. Should any conflict arise; the members of the Council may call upon the Synod's Ecclesiastical Arbitration Board.

ARTICLE 12: The Pastor

(1) The election of a pastor is arranged in accordance with the "Regulations governing the procedure for filling vacant pastorates within the German-speaking Evangelical Synod in Great Britain" in the form valid at the time.

(2) The pastor is under obligation at all times to teach and preach the pure and unadulterated Gospel of Jesus Christ on the sole basis of Holy Scripture; in accordance with Art. 1 of this Constitution; to administer the Sacraments according to Holy Scripture; to bear witness to the joyful message of the Gospel by living in obedience to God's commandments and to carry out his/her duties faithfully and conscientiously.

b) Other matters are regulated by the contract of service between the pastor and the congregations of the PAB which must be endorsed by the EKD.

c) The pastor is under the care and supervision of the Church Councils. Should any conflict arise between the pastor and the congregations; he/she may call upon the Ecclesiastical Arbitration Board of the German-Speaking Evangelical Synod in Great Britain after informing the representatives of the PAB.

ARTICLE 13: Income

The Congregation derives the financial resources necessary for its upkeep and the fulfilment of its tasks from:

- a) regular contributions of its members;
- b) offerings taken up at church Services; special collections and activities within the Congregation;
- c) income from congregational assets;
- d) voluntary donations and legacies.

Accounts must be kept of all contributions from members and collections. Entries of these items of income must be signed by two members of the congregation.

ARTICLE 14: Administration of Finances

(1) The treasurer administers the Congregation's finances as the Church Council directs and submits a monthly report to the latter. The Church Council appoints those who are empowered so sign cheques.

(2) The treasurer appends a statement concerning the financial position of the Congregation to the Annual Report. The resources of the Congregation are administered within the framework of a budget drawn up by the Church Council and adopted by the Congregational Assembly. Any deviation from this budget in the current financial year must be decided by the Church Council.

(3) The Church Council decides who shall be in charge of the cash account.

(4) Every voting member of the congregation is entitled to inspect the administration of the funds and the use to which they are put.

ARTICLE 15: Stipulations for the final Dissolution of the Congregation

The congregation is disbanded when more than two-thirds of its members so decide at two separate Congregational Assemblies,

Its property then goes to the German-Speaking Evangelical Synod in Great Britain unless there are no legal regulations to the contrary.

ARTICLE 16: Amendment of the Constitution of the Congregation

(1) Amendments of this constitution are drafted by the Church Council and put to the vote at the Congregational Assembly. The motion is carried if a two-thirds majority of all votes cast are in favour. Proposals for amendments must be submitted to the members of the Congregation two weeks before the relevant Congregational Assembly.

(2) Article 1 of this constitution cannot be altered.

(3) All amendments of this constitution must be endorsed by the Synodal Council.