

**Constitution**  
of the  
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia

Ratified by the 23<sup>rd</sup> Synod of the ELCL  
On June 5, 2007  
Amendments adopted by  
the 27<sup>th</sup> Synod of the ELCL on June 3, 2016,  
the 28<sup>h</sup> Synod of the ELCL on August 6, 2021

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## PREAMBLE OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF LATVIA

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, whose cornerstone is Christ Jesus. The books of the Old and New Testament serve as the foundation and norm for the church, because they are the true and faithful word of the Triune God, in which He speaks to us and through which He works in us through law and gospel, judgment and grace.

The Apostolic, Nicean-Constantinopolitan and Athanasian Creeds, inherited from the Ancient Church, as well as the Reformation Creeds as summarized in the Book of Concord, *Liber Concordiae*, are a binding expression of communion for the teaching and life of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia in which her unity and her separation from the schisms and heresies is performed.

Standing upon this irrevocable foundation and trusting in the grace of God, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia desires to obey the command of Christ to be His witnesses and to preach the gospel to the whole creation, to serve the Body of Christ through the proclamation of God's Word and the administration of the Sacraments for its edification and unification, and to assemble a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that in love and mutual fellowship the church can express His works, who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. In order to fulfill this God-given task, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia adopts this Constitution.

*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*

### Chapter 1

#### GENERAL PROVISIONS

##### *1.1. Terms used in the Constitution*

1. *The following terms are used in the Constitution:*

1) *The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, henceforth in the text – the ELCL;*

*Clergy:*

2) *Bishop – consecrated leader and overseer of the diocese;*

3) *Archbishop – bishop of the archdiocese of Riga, leader and overseer of the ELCL;*

4) *Dean – pastor, leader of the deanery and immediate superior and counselor to ministers and congregations;*

5) *Pastor – ordained clergyman serving in the office of pastor or assistant pastor, who is enrolled in the ELCL pastors' roster;*

6) *Congregation pastor – pastor, who has been called in the approved manor for service in a congregation;*

7) *Senior pastor – leading pastor in a congregation, where more than one pastor is serving;*

7<sup>1</sup>) *Diocesan Chapter - the diocesan governing body, including the diocesan bishop, bishops, cathedral deans and deans;*

8) *Cathedral dean – pastor of the diocese cathedral (senior pastor);*

**Members:**

- 9) *ELCL member – ELCL baptized or ELCL received person, who has not withdrawn membership or has been expelled/excommunicated;*
- 10) *Congregation member – baptized and registered member of the ELCL; Congregation members non- ordained are called laypersons.*
- 10<sup>1</sup>) *Confirmed congregation member – confirmed and registered member of the ELCL;*
- 10<sup>2</sup>) *Congregation member with the right to vote – an adult and confirmed congregation member who has been registered in congregation for at least 1 (one) year, has received Holy Communion for at least 1 (one) time a year in his congregation and paid yearly donation.*

**Structures:**

- 11) *Congregation – local institution of the ELCL registered in accordance to established procedure, implementing the ELCL presence in its territory and realizing her mission locally;*
- 11<sup>1</sup>) *German congregation – congregation that belongs to the German branch;*
- 12) *Deanery – territorial division of the ELCL, which is directed and overseen by the Dean;*
- 13) *Diocese – region supervised by the bishop;*
- 13<sup>1</sup>) *German branch - a structural unit of the ELCL, which unites the German congregations, institutions and organizations within the ELCL, and is established and operates in accordance with Chapter 6 of the Constitution;*

**Institutions:**

- 14) *Synod of Latvia – convention of the ELCL officials, which is comprised of bishops, congregation pastors, members of the Consistory and all congregational representatives;*
- 15) *College of Bishops – collegial guiding and supervising institution of the ELCL bishops;*
- 16) *Consistory – executive body of Synod elected by the Chapter and deanery convention;*
- 17) *Chapter – governing body within the Consistory consisting of the ELCL bishops, deans and cathedral deans;*
- 17<sup>1</sup>) *Diocesan Chapter – diocese management body consisting of diocesan bishop, bishops, cathedral deans and deans;*
- 18) *Congregation council – elected governing body of the congregation;*
- 19) *Congregation board – elected executive body of the congregation;*

**Officials:**

- 20) *ELCL ministers – bishops, deans, pastors, assistant pastors and non-ordained clerical workers;*
- 21) *ELCL officials – the archbishop, bishops, deans, pastors, assistant pastors, pastoral duty executors, participants of the Synod of Latvia, members of the Consistory, church auditors;*
- 21<sup>1</sup>) *Secretary of the Consistory - an official who has the right to represent the ELCL and has been elected to the Consistory as Secretary of the Consistory;*
- 22) *Congregation officials – congregation council and board members, auditors and congregation administration commission members;*
- 23) *Auditors – elected officials, who in compliance with their jurisdiction verify the financial operations of the congregation or the Consistory and dioceses;*

**Terms and provisions of ELCL:**

- 24) *Church Bylaws – terms and provisions adopted by the Synod of Latvia;*
- 25) *Consistory Bylaws – terms and provisions adopted by the Consistory;*

**Other:**

- 26) *Monastery - community of men or women, where order of life is determined by regulation of monastery.*
- 27) *Brotherhood or sister community – union of clergy and/or lay persons, who gather together for the purpose of reaching different tasks of church and gather in order to perform various ministries in church (charitable ministry, education etc.). According to regulation, brotherhood or sister community has an elected or appointed leader, who is exposed to diocesan bishop or archbishop.*  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016; decision No.1., 5.2. of ELCL 28<sup>th</sup> Synod on August 6, 2021)*

**1.2. General regulations**

2. *Unless specifically stated otherwise in this Constitution, all meetings called in compliance with this Constitution are lawful regardless of how many members are in attendance. All members must be summonsed. If all members of a meeting are present, then it is lawful regardless of how it was called.*
3. *Unless specifically stated otherwise in this Constitution, meeting resolutions are adopted and elections valid with a simple majority of votes. The participants of the meeting who have abstained from voting or have not taken part in the voting may not influence the result of voting - the result of voting shall be determined only by “for” and “against” votes. In results of a tie, the question in regard must be debated a second time followed by a new vote. If the results of the second vote again end in a tie, then the deciding vote falls to the chairman of the meeting. Elections of persons is always to be done by secret ballot, but resolutions to be voted by open ballot, excepting resolutions with regard to personal affairs, as well as other questions where 1/3 of those present ask for secret ballot.*  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016; decision No.1., 5.2. of ELCL 28<sup>th</sup> Synod on August 6, 2021)*
4. *Members of meetings do not have the right to vote if the resolution in regard is in his own personal interest, excepting voting mentioned in paragraph 68 of this Constitution.*
5. *Parties concerned can appeal the resolutions of church institutions to the next higher authority within 14 days of the resolution’s adoption or proclamation, if not specifically stated otherwise in said resolution.*
6. *ELCL ordained ministers, as well as all preachers and teachers of God’s Word, upon taking office will give a solemn oath, confirming it with signature, that they will not teach or preach anything that is against the Holy Scriptures and the ELCL teachings and resolutions, that together with all other ELCL ministers observe Church bylaws and discipline, and that they would live a lifestyle that will provide a good Christian example to congregational members.*
7. *ELCL and congregational officers in addition to the rights of regular congregational members have supplementary rights allocated by their office according to the Constitution and Church bylaws.*

8. *If necessary, ELCL institutions can invite for an indefinite time period, non-voting third-persons to help in the completion of their task.*
9. *The archbishop has the right to call and chair all ELCL conventions and meetings as well as participate in those; the diocesan bishops have the same right in their respective dioceses; the deans in their deanery; and congregation pastors in their congregations.*
10. *All the institutions of the ELCL in the limits of their own competence for the deliberation of issues and performance of different tasks have the right to form committees, to which the institution may invite persons whom it chooses. The sectoral commissions of ELCL operate in accordance with the bylaws of the Consistory.*  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*

## **Chapter 2**

### **THE ELCL IN GENERAL**

11. The mission of the ELCL is to proclaim the Word of God, Law and Gospel, correctly administer the Sacraments pursuant to Christ's setting, and to take care of the spiritual needs of members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and defend and encourage Christian values in the whole of society. The mission of the ELCL is to serve the growth and unity of the Church of Christ, especially in Latvia.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*
12. The ELCL is comprised of one or more dioceses, which unites the congregational members within its territory. Dioceses are divided into deaneries. Deaneries are divided into congregations.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*
13. ELCL congregations are in mutual communion in the ministering of God's Word and Sacraments.
14. The ELCL functions in conformity to this Constitution, observing the laws and Constitution of the Republic of Latvia.
15. The ELCL is independent in its operation and administration.
16. The ELCL and its congregations, as well as institutions founded by them can have legal status.
17. In the ELCL may exist monasteries and brotherhoods or sister communities, who operate according to their regulation/bylaws confirmed by College of Bishops.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*

## Chapter 3

### THE MINISTERS OF THE ELCL

#### 3.1. Ordained ministers

##### 3.1.1. The Diocesan Bishop

18. The diocesan bishop is the spiritual leader of the diocese, who in apostolic succession through the laying on of hands in accordance with the ELCL order has received the commission and authority to symbolize, safeguard and sustain the succession of the apostolic faith and ELCL unity, as well as to serve the Great Commission's continuation and the handing on of the office of reconciliation.
19. The diocesan bishop is the spiritual leader, counselor and shepherd to the pastors of the diocese.
20. The consecration of the diocesan bishop must take place in the archbishop's cathedral within 6 (six) months of his election to the office.
21. The enthronement of the diocesan bishop must take place in the diocesan cathedral within 2 (two) months of his consecration. When changing diocese, the bishop's enthronement must take place within 2 (two) months of his election.
22. The diocesan bishop receives the authority to fulfill his office from the archbishop in accordance with paragraphs 25 and 26 of the Constitution, and is independent in fulfilling his office within this given authority. The diocesan bishop functions under the supervision of the archbishop. The diocesan bishop represents the ELCL in his diocese and his diocese in the ELCL.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*
23. The diocesan bishop is the most senior clergyman of the diocesan cathedral, who has the right to appoint the cathedral dean. If the cathedral has more than one pastor, the cathedral dean is the senior pastor.
24. The irrevocable rights and responsibilities of the diocesan bishop are to care for the ELCL unity, growth in faith and love, so that diocese congregations, in accordance with the ELCL teachings, clearly proclaim the Gospel and rightly administer the Sacraments; maintain a living apostolicity in his diocese and rebut false teachings.
25. Other rights and responsibilities of the diocesan bishop in regard to his diocese are delegated to him in whole or part by the archbishop, and they are:
  - 1) to ordain pastors in his diocese;
  - 2) to appoint deans in his diocese from the deanery convention nominated candidates and put them in office;
  - 3) to make visitations to diocese congregations for the edification of their spiritual life;

- 4) to participate in the planning of the ELCL development strategy and implement it in his diocese;
- 5) to plan, direct, oversee and analyze the service of pastors in congregations, deaneries and in the diocese;
- 6) to give instructions and assignments to ministers and congregation officials in the diocese;
- 7) to reprimand diocese pastors and deans for inconformity to the office of pastor, demote or dismiss from discharging of pastoral office duties;
- 8) to made decisions concerning diocese publications;
- 9) to prepare and present proposals to the Synod of Latvia;
- 10) to in accordance with Church bylaws designate congregational pastors;
- 11) to change the area of service of assistant pastors and pastoral duty executors;
- 12) to expel/excommunicate from the ELCL.

*(As amended by decision No.1. of ELCL 28<sup>th</sup> Synod on August 6, 2021)*

26. The archbishop has the right to determine other rights and responsibilities of the diocesan bishop.
27. The bishop must care for all Christians, who are entrusted to his care, regardless of their age, sex or nationality/ethnic background, and in his pastoring and prayers be mindful of those who have ceased to be practicing Christians.
28. People who deny God, blasphemers and despisers of God's Word and Sacraments and His Church, and after a written warning from the diocesan bishop do not repent, can be expelled from the ELCL and congregation until time they repent. Expulsion from the ELCL and its congregations cannot be appealed. If a person wishes to renew his membership in the ELCL and congregation, he must address the diocesan bishop.
29. The diocese bishop establishes and maintains ecumenical relations within his diocese.
30. The assistants and advisors to the diocesan bishop are his deans.
31. The place of residence of the diocesan bishop is the city in which the diocesan cathedral is located in accordance with the Consistory bylaws.
32. The diocesan bishop fulfills the duties of his office until the age of 70 years. The Synod can invite him to continue to fulfill the duties of bishop in his diocese. The bishop can retire at the age of 65 years. A retired bishop can fulfill his duties at the behest of a bishop or the archbishop.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*
33. A diocesan bishop can resign from his duties and retire prematurely in cases, where the College of Bishops sees as legitimate and such resignation is ratified by the Synod.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*
34. The Synod of Latvia can dismiss the diocesan bishop from office in cases, where, with the resolution of the Chapter, it is confirmed that the bishop denies the ELCL teachings, as is stated in the preamble as the foundation of the ELCL or does not comply with the requirements set by the ELCL Constitution and ELCL rules on "Service of Pastors". The

Chapter initiates the dismissal of a bishop. Such Chapter meeting may also be convened on initiative of 1/3 of deans. Chapter must listen to opinion of the bishop, but he is not involved in conducting and deciding of matter. After expressing his opinion, the bishop must leave the meeting.

*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*

35. The archbishop is the bishop of the archdiocese of Riga.
36. The specific responsibilities of the archbishop are:
  - 1) to represent the ELCL and its unity;
  - 2) to open the Synod of Latvia and chair the College of Bishops;
  - 3) to consecrate bishops;
  - 4) to represent the ELCL in relations with the State, ecumenical, and international relations;
  - 5) to speak in the name of the ELCL.
37. The archbishop can visit congregations of all diocese with the goal of showing ELCL unity.
38. The bishop in his diocese may appoint an auxiliary bishop, who fulfills his office at the direction of the bishop. If the bishop should retire, step-down, or in the event of his death, the auxiliary bishop also steps-down.  
*(As amended by decision No.1. of ELCL 28<sup>th</sup> Synod on August 6, 2021)*

### **3.1.2. The Pastor**

39. The pastor is an ELCL minister, who is called and ordained according to the ELCL order.
40. The commission of the pastor is to proclaim the Word of God, administer the Sacraments in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and Christ's command, and promote the ELCL teachings, as well as give spiritual leadership to the congregation and oversee the congregation's life. He leads, organizes, coordinates, plans and motivates the spiritual life of the congregation.
41. The pastor is responsible for his actions before the archbishop, diocesan bishop and dean.
42. In accordance with teaching of the ELCL, which is determined in preamble of this Constitution, the man who is called by God and Church, and in order of the ELCL appropriately prepared for the office of pastor, may ask to be ordained. The application procedure, examination and ordination are determined by the ELCL regulations. The College of Bishops makes the resolution to ordain.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*
43. The congregation pastor is a member of the congregation council and board; he participates in those meetings and the congregation convention.
44. If a congregation has more than one pastor, one of them is designated as senior pastor, who directs the entire spiritual life of the congregation, and leads the other pastors and ministers. The senior pastor is elected by the church council and is ratified by the diocesan

bishop. In proclaiming the Gospel and administering the Sacraments all pastors are equal. Congregation pastors fulfill their office in brotherly fellowship and must take care that their activities strengthen and edify the congregation. The division of pastoral duties is determined by the senior pastor.

45. Pastors must cultivate mutual fellowship. They are called to give one another advice and assistance regarding issues about teaching, serving and life.
46. The pastor is forbidden to reveal the content of confessions and counseling.
47. Other responsibilities of the congregation pastor and his relationship to the congregation and institutions of the ELCL are defined in the Church bylaws.
48. The Church bylaws denote the retirement procedure for pastors. A congregation pastor can resign from his duties in cases that the bishop sees as important.
49. The pastor can be removed from office in cases described in paragraph **Kļūda! Nav atrasts atsauces avots.** of this Constitution.
50. After ordination a pastor serves in the degree of assistant pastor at the disposal of the diocesan bishop under the supervision of the dean. The decision to promote to full pastor is made by the diocesan bishop. The decision to promote to full pastor at the moment of ordination is made by the College of Bishops. After promotion to full pastor, he gains all pastoral rights mentioned in this Constitution.  
In order for congregations not to remain for a longer period without spiritual care, when they are otherwise unable to find a pastor, the College of Bishops may allow candidates with lower general and theological education to be ordained in this congregation. They must be sufficiently prepared for the spiritual work in congregation and able to preach the Word of God. Such clergy are called assistant pastors. The diocesan bishop can promote assistant pastors to full pastors if they have demonstrated irreproachable service for a period no less than five years and have constantly supplemented their education.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*
51. An assistant pastor does not have the right to be installed as the congregation pastor or be elected to ELCL offices as a pastor, with the exception of holding a position in congregation council and board.

### **3.2. Non-ordained ministers**

52. Non-ordained ministers of the ELCL are called pastoral duty executors, and other workers in accordance with the Consistory bylaws. Their subordination, rights and responsibilities are denoted in the Consistory bylaws.

## **Chapter 4**

### **STRUCTURE OF THE ELCL**

## **4.1. The Congregation**

53. The primary mission of the congregation is to proclaim the Word of God and celebrate the Sacraments. It carries out its mission by providing worship services on a regular basis, by providing confirmation instruction for the youth, by providing spiritual care and offering Christian instruction for the growth of faith and sanctification, and by reaching out to the community through mission and human care ministries. The congregation is to participate in joint activities of the ELCL, facilitate Christian fellowship and set a good Christian example in society.
54. Congregations function in accordance to the bylaws, which are drafted by the Consistory and confirmed and amended by the Synod.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*
55. The Chapter ratifies new congregations and divides existing congregations in accordance with the resolution of the congregation convention, taking regard to the direction of the dean.
56. Congregation has the duty and responsibility to support its pastor or pastors and provide the necessary means for congregational spiritual work, where minimum amount is determined by the Consistory. If a congregation is not able to meet these demands by itself, it may, with the approval of the dean, work together with another congregation or the Consistory. In that case the agreement between the respected congregations or the Consistory must be ratified by the dean and the Consistory.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*
57. The congregation participates in the life and ministry of the ELCL and provides the necessary assets in accordance to the resolutions of the Synod of Latvia.

### **4.1.1. ELCL and a congregation member, their rights and responsibilities**

58. ELCL member is baptized or received person in existing order of the ELCL. Baptized child belongs to the congregation in which at least one of the parents or guardians is registered.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*
59. *(Deleted by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016.)*
60. To transfer one's membership to another congregation the adult congregation member needs to receive notification from the former congregation affirming membership and the payment of the yearly donation, which is to be given to the new congregation.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*
61. An adult member is to be registered in only one ELCL congregation.
62. It is desirable that an adult member belongs to a congregation near to one's place of residence.

63. ELCL members, who were baptized as children and have reached the age of majority have the responsibility, in accordance to existing ELCL procedure, to be confirmed and become adult congregational members.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*
64. An adult Church (ELCL) member has the following responsibilities: to form its awareness of faith according to the ELCL teaching, to live a Christ-confessing life, attend congregational worship services and receive the Holy Sacraments, make donations for the work of the congregation, observe the order of the congregation, comply with ELCL bylaws and instructions, and not to decline an office to which elected without an important reason and then to faithfully discharge the duties of this office. The special responsibly of parents is to baptize and raise their children in a Christian manor, to promote their confirmation.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*
65. An adult congregation member has the following rights: to receive pastoral care, in illness, poverty and weakness to receive material support, as far as the resources of the congregation permit; to participate in the congregation convention, vote for and be elected to ELCL official positions; to have a Christian wedding; to become a godparent; and to have a Christian burial.
66. Adult congregation members who incite activities that undermine peace and accord within the congregation, and who after written admonition does not amend one's ways; can be expelled from the congregation with the joint decision of the pastor and the dean. The expelled person can appeal the decision within a month's time to the diocesan bishop.
67. Adult congregation members who have not received Holy Communion at least once a year and who have not made the defined donations for the general needs of the congregation and ELCL for 2 (two) years in a row, are to be regarded as having withdrawn from adult membership. A member of the ELCL may withdraw from the ELCL congregation individually by submitting a personal written notice to the church governing body or the pastor. If the person wishes to renew the membership in the congregation, one must speak to the pastor of the congregation to be reinstated as an adult member. Change of congregation can be made in accordance with paragraph 59 and 60 of this Constitution.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016; by decision No.1. of ELCL 28<sup>th</sup> Synod on August 6, 2021)*

#### **4.1.2. The Congregation Convention and the Congregation Council**

68. The congregation convention is the highest decision-making body of the congregation. The congregation convention may be convened by the congregation council, the congregation board, the congregation pastor, the dean, the diocesan bishop, and the archbishop. The congregation convention is convened at least once a year. The congregation convention has the following rights, responsibilities and tasks:
- 1) according to the decision of the Chapter, to make a decision on founding of the congregation;
  - 2) to approve the bylaws of the congregation in accordance with the wording adopted by the Synod of the ELCL;
  - 3) to elect the congregation council and auditors;

4) to listen to the reports of the officials of the congregation regarding the spiritual and economic situation in the congregation;

5) in accordance with its competence to decide on other issues on the agenda that do not contradict the regulations of the ELCL and which have been initiated by the congregation council, the board or ELCL officials who are entitled to convene the congregation convention;

6) in accordance with the direction of the dean, to decide on the reorganization of the congregation (uniting with another congregation of the ELCL, joining of the congregation with another congregation of the ELCL or division), on which the final decision is made by the Chapter. In case of reorganization, the congregation convention makes a decision on the transfer of property to the reorganized congregation or the ELCL;

7) decide on the termination, renewal and liquidation of the activity.

Note. The congregation convention does not have the right to decide on the withdrawal of the congregation from the ELCL. A member of the ELCL may withdraw from the ELCL individually by submitting a personal written notice to the governing body of the congregation or the pastor, or shall lose the membership in the case specified in paragraph 67 of the Constitution.

*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016; by decision No.1. of ELCL 28<sup>th</sup> Synod on August 6, 2021)*

68<sup>1)</sup> The congregation convention elects 10-30 members to the congregation council and, if necessary, up to 10 congregation council reserve candidates. In special cases the dean can allow the congregation convention to elect a council of 5-9 members, or to elect joint council consisting of representatives from all of these congregations, retaining a legal personality for each congregation. In congregations where the congregation pastor is also the dean, this approval is granted by the diocesan bishop.

*(As amended by decision No.1. of ELCL 28<sup>th</sup> Synod on August 6, 2021)*

69. Adult congregation members who are of age, who have been registered members of the congregation at least 1 (one) year, and who have paid the defined yearly donation, have the right to vote.

70. Only adult congregational members who have the right to vote in the congregation, who have a good reputation, who love the Church, regularly attend worship services and receive Holy Communion, as well as fulfill the requirements of paragraph 64 of the ELCL Constitution may be put on the roster of elected members and candidates to the congregation council. These requirements are also set for the members of the congregation administration commission in accordance with the regulations of the ELCL. Cases in which a congregation member meeting the conditions of paragraph 69 is denied the right to stand as a candidate shall be examined by the dean before the election of the congregation council.

*(As amended by decision No.1. of ELCL 28<sup>th</sup> Synod on August 6, 2021)*

71. In cases where a member of the congregation council or auditor has died or resigned or been expelled from the congregation council, one of the candidates for the members of the congregation council elected in the election of the congregation council shall take the place. If the number of members of the congregation council or auditors becomes less than the number set by the congregation convention and there are no candidates to be admitted to the congregation council or auditors, extraordinary elections of the congregation council or auditor must take place within 2 (two) months. In cases mentioned in this paragraph as well other cases provided in the Constitution and regulatory enactments, in order not to leave the

congregation without leadership, the Chapter, the Diocesan Chapter may appoint a congregation administration commission with a term of up to 1 (one) year. The composition of the commission is recommended by the dean in consultation with the congregation pastor. Until the end of the term of the commission, the congregation must elect a new congregation council.

*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016; by decision No.1. of ELCL 28<sup>th</sup> Synod on August 6, 2021)*

72. The congregation pastor or pastors are voting members of both the congregation council and board.
73. Upon its first meeting the congregation council will elect from its midst the congregation president and the congregation board for the duration of the term set out by the congregation convention. The congregation council may elect to the board vote-eligible members of the congregation, who are not on the congregation council.  
Note. The congregation councils of congregations, which have shared properties or share the same pastor, can elect a shared board and multiply the number of members of the shared board with representation from both congregations or, electing separate boards, designate a special committee to work with shared problems.
74. The congregation council in addition to those already mentioned have the following rights and responsibilities:
  - 1) to provide that worship services with Holy Communion take place;
  - 2) to discuss and make decisions concerning the life of the congregation;
  - 3) to initiate and discuss issues concerning the life of the ELCL, the final decision of which belongs to other institutions of the ELCL;
  - 4) to elect a congregation pastor in accordance with the Church bylaws, if the Chapter has promulgated congregation pastor elections;
  - 5) to determine the salary of the congregation pastor and organize his installation;
  - 6) to care for the diaconal and mission work, musical life, children and youth work and other ministry areas of the congregation;
  - 7) to see that the activities of the congregation comply with the aims and tasks of the ELCL and that the requirements of the Constitution of the ELCL and ELCL regulations are observed therein;
  - 8) to oversee and manage the real estate of the congregation in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 3 of this Constitution; determine the procedure for the use and management of the property of the congregation;
  - 9) to ratify the congregation budget and annual report;
  - 10) to determine the sum of the annually required donations as well as other donations for the congregation;
  - 11) to appoint and dismiss the congregation's diaconal leader, children and youth leaders, church elders/ushers, as well as other congregational staff, if necessary, also determine their salary;
  - 12) to appoint and dismiss church musicians and determine their salary;
  - 13) to evaluate the activity of the congregation board and, if necessary, submit a complaint to the dean; report to the dean on matters within his competence in the congregation;
  - 14) to elect the congregation representative (s) to the deanery convention, diocese convention and Synod of Latvia.

- 15) to decide on the convening of a congregation convention;
- 16) to nominate a candidate for the lay representative election in the Consistory.  
*(As amended by decision No.1. of ELCL 28<sup>th</sup> Synod on August 6, 2021)*

- 75. When voting on questions concerning paragraph 74.8. of this Constitution, 3/4 of the members of the congregation council must be present, but no less than 5 (five) members. These rules also apply to the congregation administration commission if appointed in accordance with paragraph 80 of this Constitution.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*
- 76. The congregation council meeting must be convened at least 2 (two) times a year and it is chaired by the congregation pastor or in his stead, the congregation president, or some other congregation council member. When issues to be discussed involve complaints against the congregation president or the pastor, or the activity of the congregation board is to be evaluated, the congregation council elects another person to chair the meeting.
- 77. An extraordinary congregation council meeting must be convened within 2 (two) weeks of the decision of church officers mentioned in paragraph 9, as well as at the request of the Consistory or of at least half of the congregation council members, or at the request of at least one of the auditors.
- 78. The congregation council has the right to expel council members, who without a justified reason fail to attend 3 (three) meetings in a row or because of inactivity or negligence hinder the performance of the congregation council.
- 79. The congregation pastor has the right to suspend any resolution of the congregation council and put it back to a second review. If the congregation pastor suspends the reviewed resolution a second time, the dean then hands the resolution for the Chapter to decide.
- 80. The dean or bishop has the right to propose to the Chapter, the Diocesan Chapter the dismissal of a congregation council, or its specific members in his jurisdiction, if the congregation council or its members impede to realize the tasks of the ELCL and the congregation. If the Chapter, the Diocesan Chapter decides to dismiss the entire congregation council or because of member dismissal it has become less than 5 (five) members, the Chapter, the Diocesan Chapter appoints a congregation administration commission with maturity up to 1 (one) year. The commission's composition is determined by the dean in consultation with the congregation pastor. The congregation must elect a new congregation council before the end of the commission's term.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*

#### **4.1.3. The Congregation Board**

- 81. The congregation board must consist of the following: the congregation pastor or pastors, the congregation board chairman, and the financial administrator. The offices of congregation president and congregation board chairman are compatible. The congregation council may, if necessary, elect in the board members of the parish who are not members of the congregation council, if they comply with the requirements set for congregation officials specified in paragraphs 69 and 70 of the Constitution. In the case of death, membership

withdrawal or expulsion of a board member, the congregation council appoints a new board member for the remainder of the term.

*(As amended by decision No.1. of ELCL 28<sup>th</sup> Synod on August 6, 2021)*

82. Church board meetings are convened as necessary and are chaired by the congregation pastor or the board chairman, or in the pastor's stead some other board member. Board meetings are lawful if the congregation pastor or board chairman and two other board members are present.
83. Extraordinary congregation board meetings must be convened within 2 (two) weeks of the decision of officers mentioned in paragraph 9, as well as at the request of the Consistory or of at least 3 (three) congregation board members, or at the request of at least 1 (one) of the auditors.
84. The congregation board has the following responsibilities:
  - 1) to promote the spiritual care of the congregation;
  - 2) to effectuate the resolutions of the congregation council, as well as the resolutions and instructions of all higher institutions of the ELCL, and initiate motions to be discussed by the congregation council;
  - 3) in accordance with the congregation council resolutions and this Constitution in the name of the congregation enter all types of contracts and transactions, represent the congregation to society, represent the congregation in administrative and judicial institutions, and give proxy;
  - 4) to ensure that the congregation pastor receives a salary;
  - 5) to develop and maintain rosters and records for the ELCL and congregation members;
  - 6) to employ or ask to volunteer congregational staff, except for persons mentioned in paragraph 74.11. of this Constitution;
  - 7) to dismiss congregational staff, except for persons mentioned in paragraph 74.11. of this Constitution, or initiate their dismissal if the final decision must be made by another ELCL or congregational institution, authority or organization;
  - 8) to draft the congregation budget, annual report, and projects that need to be given to the congregation council or other higher institutions of the ELCL for approval;
  - 9) to manage the congregation finances;
  - 10) to grant permission to third-person organized events to use the church building or other property belonging to the congregation, as long as these events are in line with the objectives of the congregation and the ELCL. Such permission can only be given with the approval of the congregation pastor;
  - 11) to correspond in the name of the congregation;
  - 12) to maintain the congregation's archive in good order, administer all congregational documents, provide that these are unrestrictedly available to the pastor, congregation council and board members, as well as higher institutions of the ELCL;
  - 13) at least once a year on behalf of the congregation council to convene a congregation convention and ensure the course of the meeting.

*(As amended by decision No.1. of ELCL 28<sup>th</sup> Synod on August 6, 2021)*

85. The congregation president is the chairman of the congregation council. The congregation president works in accordance with this Constitution, the congregational bylaws and congregation council and board resolutions and is also accountable for his actions to the

congregation pastor and council. The rights and responsibilities of the congregation president are:

- 1) to promote the spiritual life of the congregation;
- 2) to ratify congregational documents, contracts and transactions with his signature and congregational seal, in accordance with congregation council, board, the ELCL and Consistory resolutions. If the positions of the congregation president and the congregation board president are not united, the congregation board president also has such rights and tasks.
- 3) together with the congregation pastor lead, organize, coordinate, motivate and analyze the activities of the congregation council.

*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*

86. The congregation president or congregation board president leads, organizes, coordinates and motivates the activity of the congregation board. The congregation president works in accordance with this Constitution, the congregational bylaws, regulations of the ELCL, congregation council and board resolutions, and is accountable for his actions to the congregation pastor, council and board.

*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*

#### **4.2. The Deanery**

87. The responsibility of the deanery is to support its dean, as well as provide the dean with the necessary material provisions.
88. The deanery convention is to be called at least once a year, and it is chaired by the dean or in his stead by one of the pastors of that deanery.
89. The participants of the deanery convention are: the dean and congregations' pastors or the pastoral duty executors, and congregational representatives – congregational presidents or in their stead another congregation council member by proxy. If more than one pastor serves in a congregation, then this congregation elects as many delegates as there are pastors.
90. Congregational representatives, whose congregations have made the required payments to the deanery at least 1 (one) month before the convention have the right to vote. Congregational representatives, who do not have the right to vote, as well as invited guests, may participate in the convention without the right to address the convention or vote. The right to address the convention may be granted them by the dean.
91. The rights and responsibilities of the deanery convention are:
- 1) to listen to, discuss and ratify the report of the dean on the state of the congregations;
  - 2) to listen to and discuss the presentations and the congregations' resolutions about the agenda of the Synod of Latvia;
  - 3) to make resolutions about issues, which the Consistory or the Synod of Latvia have given over to the deanery convention to address;
  - 4) by its choice, initiate and discuss issues, which will finally be decided by the Consistory, the Synod of Latvia or other institutions of the ELCL;
  - 5) decide how to improve the spiritual care in congregations and material condition of congregations;

- 6) to ratify the deanery's budget and determine the congregational payment for deanery needs;
- 7) to listen to and discuss presentations on theological issues and practical issues concerning the life of the ELCL;
- 8) if the office of dean is vacant, nominate 2 (two) candidates for the office of dean. The final decision is made by the bishop;
- 9) to express opinion to the Consistory about another deanery's initiative to change its boundaries;
- 10) to elect a representative of the district – layperson for a 4 (four) year term into the Consistory. The procedure for the selection and election of tenderers are determined by the Consistory bylaws.

*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*

#### **4.2.1. The Dean**

92. The dean is the immediate superior and counselor for the pastors, assistant pastors, non-ordained ministers, and congregations.
93. The dean is the representative of the diocesan bishop in the deanery, and the representative of the deanery in the Chapter.
94. The diocesan bishop chooses the dean from candidates nominated by the deanery convention and appoints the dean to a term of seven years.
95. The responsibilities of the dean are:
  - 1) to participate in the management of the ELCL and implement its decisions in the deanery;
  - 2) to oversee the deanery's congregations and the activity of their councils, boards and auditors;
  - 3) to ensure the operation of the office of dean.
96. In order to carry out these responsibilities the dean has the following rights:
  - 1) to resolve disputes among congregations, their staff and ministers;
  - 2) to initiate to the Consistory the dismissal of congregational officials;
  - 3) in consultation with the diocesan bishop, change the place of service of assistant pastors and pastoral duty executors;
  - 4) to give tasks and instructions to ministers and congregational officers in the deanery.
97. The dean of deanery is removed from the dean's office by the College of Bishops if he fails to fulfill its obligations imposed by this Constitution and other regulations of the ELCL. The bishop of the respective diocese proposes to remove the dean from his office. The bishop must warn the dean beforehand about the misconduct of the position and the removal from the office and bishop shall hear the opinion of deanery pastors on this issue. The dean has the right to express his opinion at the meeting of the College of Bishops before the vote on the dismissal. After expressing his opinion, the dean must leave the meeting.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*
98. Other responsibilities of the dean are determined by the Church bylaws.

### **4.3. The Diocese**

99. The ELCL may have one or more dioceses. The Synod of Latvia determines the number of dioceses and their borders.
100. The diocese is headed by the diocesan bishop.
101. The participants of the diocesan convention are: the bishop, deans, cathedral dean, congregation pastors and assistant pastors, pastoral duty executors, and congregation representatives – congregation presidents or in their stead another congregation council members by proxy.
102. Congregation representatives, whose congregations have made the required payments for the ELCL common needs at least 1 (one) month before the diocesan convention have the right to vote. Congregational representatives, who do not have the right to vote, as well as invited guests, may participate in the diocesan convention without the right to address the convention or vote. The right to address the convention may be granted by the diocesan bishop.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*
103. The diocesan convention is convened and prepared by the bishop at least 1 (one) time in 3 (three) years. It is opened and chaired by the bishop or in his stead by one of the deans.
104. The rights and responsibilities of the diocesan convention are:
  - 1) to make resolutions concerning the life of the diocese that are not within the competence of other institutions of the ELCL;
  - 2) to strengthen the unity of the ELCL through its activities;
  - 3) to make resolutions regarding the establishment of educational, diaconal, missions and other institutions in the diocese and dissolution of the same.
  - 4) to listen to and discuss the bishop's report on the spiritual life and condition of the diocese and an overview of the condition of the financial life of the diocese;
  - 5) to listen to the reports of the auditors.
105. The chapter promulgates bishop elections in the diocese if there is a vacancy in the office of bishop. The diocesan convention nominates at least 2 (two) candidates from the midst of ELCL pastors to the office of bishop.
106. The diocesan convention nominates bishop candidates, who through their service have shown good understanding of teaching determined in the preamble of the Constitution of the ELCL, strong faith, piety, wisdom and virtue, as well as good judgment and other characteristics, which make them suitable to hold the office of bishop.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*

### **4.4. ELCL management and administrative institutions**

#### **4.4.1. The Chapter**

107. The members of the Chapter are: the archbishop, bishops, deans and cathedral dean.

108. Meetings of the Chapter are convened by the archbishop at least 2 (two) times a year. They are opened and chaired by the archbishop or in his stead by another member of the Chapter.

109. The rights and responsibilities of the Chapter are:

- 1) to ratify heads of the ELCL sectoral committees;
- 2) to ratify members of the Consistory;
- 3) to promulgate in congregations where necessary pastor elections in accordance with the Church bylaws;
- 4) to dismiss ineligible congregational officials and other elected institutions. In certain cases, specified by the Constitution, appoint a congregation administration commission and instruct to hold new elections;
- 4<sup>1</sup>) In order for the congregation not to be left without management, to appoint a congregation administration commission with a term of up to 1 (one) year. The composition of the congregation administrative commission, taking into account the requirements for officials set forth in paragraph 33, is recommended by the dean in consultation with the congregation pastor. Until the end of the term of the congregation administration commission, the congregation must elect a new congregation council;
- 5) to ratify new congregations;
- 6) to establish new ELCL deaneries, change their borders, combining or dissolving the existing ones;
- 7) in accordance with the resolutions of congregation conventions combine or divide the existing congregations taking into account the recommendation of the dean;
- 8) after receiving the annual report of the deaneries, prepare the annual report of the state of the ELCL, its life and activities;
- 9) in the case of a vacancy in the office of archbishop or bishop appoint an episcopal duty executor, and promulgate elections for the office of archbishop or bishop. The Synod of Latvia must be convened within a year to elect a new archbishop or bishop. The diocesan convention must be convened within six months to nominate candidates to the office of bishop;
- 10) to establish examination commissions to examine candidates to the office of pastor, as well as other ministers. The chairman of the commissions by his office is the archbishop or in his stead another person by his proxy;
- 11) to define the theological education standard for ELCL pastoral candidates and other ELCL workers;
- 12) to adopt Christian education programs, submit such programs for discussion in pastor conferences and then ratify same;
- 13) to initiate audits of congregations;
- 14) to decide on other issues related to service.

Note. In sub-paragraphs 4, 4<sup>1</sup>, 5, 7, 8, 13 relating to the diocese in question, the ELCL Chapter may delegate decisions to the diocesan bishop together with the cathedral dean and the deans. These decisions have the status of a decision of the ELCL Chapter. These decisions must be notified to the ELCL Chapter.

*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016; by decision No.1. of ELCL 28<sup>th</sup> Synod on August 6, 2021)*

#### 4.4.2. The Consistory

110. The Consistory is comprised of the Chapter and its ratified members, as well as one elected layperson for 4 (four) years from each deanery of the ELCL. The ELCL sectoral committees are represented in the Consistory.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*
111. The Consistory elects the Secretary of the Consistory and the executive council of the Consistory. The number of members in the executive council and its responsibility is determined by the Consistory. The duties of the Secretary of the Consistory are to manage the work of chancellery in accordance to the Constitution, regulations of the ELCL and the tasks given by the Synod, the Chapter and the Consistory.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*
112. Meetings of the Consistory are convened at least 2 (two) times a year by the Secretary of the Consistory or in his stead by another member of the Consistory.
113. Meetings of the executive council of the Consistory are convened at least once a month by the Secretary of the Consistory or in his stead by another member of the executive council of the Consistory. Meetings must be attended by at least 3 (three) members. Meetings of the executive council of the Consistory and meetings of the Consistory are equivalent.
114. The rights and responsibilities of the Consistory are:
- 1) to implement the resolutions of the Synod of Latvia;
  - 2) to make final decisions concerning issues and complaints given it by the Synod of Latvia;
  - 3) to manage all the property of the ELCL, oversee the diaconal, missions and other institutions, as well as the archive of the ELCL and cashier's box;
  - 4) to make decisions regarding the establishment of the ELCL educational, diaconal, missions and other institutions and dissolutions of the same;
  - 5) to promulgate the Consistory's bylaws, give instructions to the ELCL congregations, the ELCL and congregation-founded establishments, foundations, institutions, etc. organizations;
  - 6) to make decisions regarding the publications of the ELCL;
  - 7) to give explanations, reproofs and instructions;
  - 8) to initiate audits of the ELCL congregations, institutions and organizations;
  - 9) in the name of the ELCL make all manor of contracts and transactions, appear in administrative and judicial institutions, give proxy, represent the ELCL;
  - 10) to ratify the managers of the ELCL companies, foundations, funds and institutions and to supervise their activities;
  - 11) in consultation with the diocesan bishop make decisions concerning church-building construction;
  - 12) to promulgate sample record books, notifications, budgets, annual reports, rosters and certificates;
  - 13) to determine the dates by which required notifications, annual reports and payments must be made;
  - 14) to ratify once a year the ELCL general needs budget and budgets of foundations;
  - 15) to prepare the agenda for the Synod of Latvia;

- 16) to correspond in the name of the ELCL with the state institutions and other organizations in Latvia and abroad;
- 17) to draft and ratify the duties of the Secretary of the Consistory;
- 18) to employ and dismiss the staff of the Consistory;
- 19) to decide issues regarding the real estate of congregations and the ELCL in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 3 of this Constitution;
- 20) to ratify elected congregation councils, boards and auditors;
- 21) to initiate that the Synod of Latvia establish or dissolve the ELCL sectoral committees.

Note. Issues mentioned in subparagraphs 2, 4, 5, 14, 15 and 21 must be decided in the meetings of the Consistory, but other issues in the meetings of the executive council of the Consistory.

*(As amended by decision No.1. of ELCL 28<sup>th</sup> Synod on August 6, 2021)*

#### **4.4.3. The College of Bishops**

115. The College of Bishops consists of all bishops. Meetings of the College of Bishops are convened as necessary and chaired by the archbishop or in his stead one of the diocesan bishops.

116. The College of Bishops represents the final authority in the overseeing of issues concerning the ELCL teaching, the administration of the Sacraments and liturgical issues. The College of Bishops has the right to annul any resolution in the Church if it goes against the ELCL teaching or the ELCL unity.

The College of Bishops has the right to suspend any decision of the Consistory, the Chapter or any other institution of the ELCL by handing it over to the Synod. The diocesan bishops have this right regarding to their diocesan institutions.

*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*

117. The rights and responsibilities of the College of Bishops are:

- 1) to ensure the unity of the ELCL and apostolic succession;
- 2) to maintain that the ELCL teachings are in conformity with the Holy Scriptures and Creeds, which are the foundation of the ELCL as stated in the preamble of the Constitution;
- 3) to oppose false teachings;
- 4) to provide for a unified practice of worship in all dioceses, as well as in the ELCL in its entirety;
- 5) to make decisions regarding pastor ordinations;
- 6) to provide supervision for pastors and other ELCL ministers so that they do not propagate doctrines that are in contradiction to teachings of the ELCL;
- 7) to make decisions in cases that surpass the competence of the diocesan bishops, and in cases that are in the competence of the diocesan bishop, but extend beyond borders of one diocese;
- 8) to oversee the ministry and tasks of the bishops in accordance with the Constitution;
- 9) to oversee the mission and evangelization work;
- 10) to oversee the spiritual care between dioceses;
- 11) to oversee the work of the examination commission;

- 12) to make decisions concerning shifting pastors from one diocese to another;
  - 13) to establish and promote relations between the ELCL and the State, ecumenical relations with other churches, their institutions, and with non-governmental organizations;
  - 14) to establish the strategy of the ELCL development and its areas of activity;
  - 15) to nominate auditors for the review of financial transactions of the Consistory and each diocese in accordance with paragraph 127.14.
118. The diocesan bishops have the right to vote in the College of Bishops, but other bishops participate without the right to vote. In the case of tie votes, the conclusive vote falls to the archbishop.
119. The College of Bishops shall consider matters if they are raised by at least one bishop.
120. The College of Bishops has the right to divest a pastor of his office and rights if it is detected that the pastor's tie with the ELCL is broken or the pastor preaches false teachings which contradict the teaching in the preamble of ELCL Constitution or wrongly administers the Sacraments, or by his activities brings shame upon the office of pastor.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*
121. The College of Bishops can convene the Synod of Latvia.
122. The operation of the College of Bishops is determined by the Rules of Procedure of the College of Bishops, which are drafted and ratified by the College of Bishops.

#### **4.5. The Synod of Latvia**

123. The participants of the Synod of Latvia are: the archbishop, bishops, members of the Consistory, deans, congregation pastors and assistant pastors, pastoral duty executors, and congregational representatives – the congregation presidents or in their stead another congregational council member by proxy. If more than one pastor serves in a congregation, then this congregation elects as many delegates as there are pastors.
124. Congregational representatives, whose congregations have made the required payments for the ELCL common needs at least 1 (one) month before the Synod have the right to vote. Congregational representatives, who do not have the right to vote, as well as invited guests, may participate in the Synod of Latvia without the right to address the Synod or vote. The right to address the Synod may be granted by the presidium of the Synod.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*
125. The Synod of Latvia is convened and prepared by the Consistory at least once every 4 (four) years. It is opened by the archbishop and led by the Synod-elected presidium. The archbishop by right of office is a member of the presidium.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*
126. An extraordinary Synod of Latvia must be convened within 2 (two) months of the decision of the archbishop or decision of at least two diocesan bishops or at the request at least of half of the deans, or at least half of the pastors.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*

127. The rights, duties and tasks of the Synod of Latvia are:

- 1) to strengthen the ministry and unity of the ELCL;
- 2) to ratify and amend the Constitution of the ELCL;
- 3) to promulgate the Church bylaws, annul and amend existing bylaws;
- 4) to amend the established orders of worship and other liturgical orders in the agenda, correct and ratify a new agenda;
- 5) to make resolution to correct and create new ELCL hymn books;
- 6) to introduce new and annul existing ELCL feast days;
- 7) to ratify Bible translations to be used in Divine Services;
- 8) to decide on the accession of the ELCL to cross-confessional agreements, on joining and withdrawing from international religious organizations and church associations;
- 9) to establish dioceses, alter, combine or dissolve existing ones, determining the diocesan center.
- 10) to determine the necessary payment by the dioceses, deaneries, and congregations to meet the common financial needs of the ELCL.
- 11) to listen to and discuss the report on the condition of the finances of the ELCL and the report on the spiritual life and condition of the ELCL;
- 12) to listen to the report of the auditors; and, if proposed by the auditors, decide on the further activity of the Consistory officials and institutions;
- 13) to make the final decision on issues given to the Synod of Latvia by congregations, deaneries, dioceses, the Consistory, Pastors' conferences, other ELCL officers, and congregational members;
- 14) to elect auditors to a term of 4 (four) years, for reviewing financial transactions of the Consistory and each diocese. Consistory members cannot be elected as auditors;
- 15) to ratify new and annul existing ELCL sectoral committees;
- 16) to ratify the strategy of the ELCL development and its areas of activity; and provide the ELCL sectoral committees, the Consistory and other institutions and organizations of the ELCL with the necessary support to fulfill their plans;
- 17) to elect diocesan bishops;
- 18) to promulgate regulations concerning the rights and responsibilities of clergy;
- 19) to determine the liturgical vestments of the bishops, deans, pastors and other ministers;
- 20) to confirm and amend the Rules of order of the Synod of Latvia;
- 21) to make resolutions concerning the relations of the ELCL with the State and other confessions.

Note. Subparagraphs 4, 5, 6, 7, 18, 19 and 21, as well as other issues that relate to the teaching and practice of the ELCL, can only be decided upon after the resolution of the Pastors' conference.

*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*

128. Issues that have been discussed in deanery conventions are decided upon by the Synod of Latvia by a simple majority. Other issues, which have not been discussed in deanery conventions and do not receive a 2/3 majority in the Synod, are to be discussed in deanery conventions before they are again brought before the Synod.

129. A new ELCL Constitution can be ratified and the existing one amended only by a 3/4 majority and only if the decision to ratify a new constitution or amend a paragraph of the existing one has been discussed in deanery conventions and the conditions mentioned in the note of paragraph 127 are accepted by the Pastors' conference. The Synod may amend the previous resolutions of the Synod of Latvia if the proposal has been previously discussed in the deanery conventions by a 2/3 majority vote.

Note. Ratification of a new Constitution or making of amendments to the existing Constitution is possible only by maintaining the institutional and financial independence and autonomy of the German branch, its congregations, institutions and organizations in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 6 of the Constitution. The Preamble of the existing Constitution, Chapter 6 and the procedure for amending the Constitution provided for in this note may be amended only after the relevant amendments have been approved by the Synod of the German branch. When a new Constitution is adopted, its provisions concerning the operation of the German branch must be coordinated with the Synod of the German branch. If the new Constitution is adopted in these parts without the approval of the Synod of the German branch, the existing Constitution in the version in force before the adoption of the new Constitution or making the respective amendments shall remain in force in respect of the German branch, its congregations, institutions and organizations. This shall not apply in the case referred to in paragraph 170.

*(As amended by decision No.5.2. of ELCL 28<sup>th</sup> Synod on August 6, 2021)*

## **Chapter 5**

### **THE ELCL – MISCELLANEOUS**

#### **5.1. Conferences and convents**

130. Participants of the Pastors' conference are: the bishops, deans, pastors, assistant pastors, who are on the ELCL clergy roster. Pastoral duty executors participate in the conference without the right to vote.
131. Pastors' conference is convened as necessary by the archbishop and chaired by him or in his stead a member of the Chapter.
132. Participants of the diocese convent are: the diocesan bishop, diocese deans, pastors, and assistant pastors, who are on the ELCL clergy roster. Pastoral duty executors of the diocese participate in the convent without the right to vote.
133. Diocese convent is convened as necessary by the diocesan bishop and chaired by him or in his stead by one of the diocese deans.
134. Participants of the deanery convent are: the deanery's dean, pastors, and assistant pastors, who are on the ELCL clergy roster. Pastoral duty executors of the deanery participate in the convent without the right to vote.
135. Deanery convent is convened as necessary by the dean and chaired by him or in his stead by one of the pastors.

136. *(Deleted by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*

137. The rights and responsibilities of Pastors' conferences, diocese and deanery convents are:

- 1) promote the ELCL unity, strengthen the fellowship between clergymen and carry out educational activities;
- 2) discuss issues that affect the ELCL, or respective diocese or deanery;
- 3) express its opinion about events taking place in society;
- 4) discuss issues that affect teaching, liturgy and practice of the ELCL.

138. The Pastors' conference gives its statement concerning issues, which are to be decided by ELCL governing bodies in accordance with the note in paragraph 127 in this Constitution.

## **5.2. Visitations**

139. A visitation is the diocesan bishop or dean visit of a congregation following the example of the apostles, and it is done for the growth of the Church, its formation and overseeing. A visitation attests to ELCL unity.

140. Bishops and deans have the right to ask for and receive all information on the activity of the congregation.

141. The rights and tasks of a bishop's visitation are:

- 1) inspire and edify the congregation;
- 2) become acquainted with the congregation's activity, simulate growth of the congregations;
- 3) oversee the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments in the congregation;
- 4) meet with the congregation, its council, board and sectoral committee members.

142. The rights and tasks of a dean's visitation are:

- 1) examine the congregation's activities and see if they are in line with the Constitution and Church bylaws;
- 2) ascertain the status of church-buildings and other property and whether the congregation is adequately caring for its upkeep;
- 3) verify how the congregation pays its pastor;
- 4) verify how the congregation cares for employed and volunteer staff;
- 5) ascertain disturbances and obstacles that hinder the development of the congregation and suggest problem solutions;
- 6) give advice and assistance for the development of the work of the congregation.

143. The responsibility of the parties making the visitation is to show the congregation's commission in the entirety of the ELCL and listen to the congregation's suggestions as to the service of the ELCL and make recommendations in the service of the Church.

144. The bishop visits each of his diocese congregations as required. The protocol of the bishop's visitation must be delivered to the Consistory 1 (one) month after the visitation.

145. The dean visits each of his congregations as required, as well as 2 (two) months before a bishop's visitation.
146. The preparation of visitations, their conduct, evaluation and form and content of the visitation protocol are determined by the Consistory bylaws.

### **5.3. The auditors**

147. The congregation convention in accordance with this Constitution elect auditors for the auditing of the congregation's property, finances and financial transactions. The Synod of Latvia in accordance with this Constitution elect auditors for the auditing in the Consistory, dioceses, deaneries and congregations.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*
148. Persons who are competent in fulfilling their duties may be elected as auditors. Congregation council members cannot be elected as congregation auditors. Members of the Consistory cannot be elected as Consistory or diocese auditors.
149. Consistory and diocese auditors have the right to invite independent auditors, whose work is paid for by the Consistory.
150. The responsibilities, rights and procedure of election of the auditors are determined by the Church bylaws.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*

### **5.4. ELCL property**

151. All movable and immovable property, regardless of how acquired (donated, inherited, bought, etc.) of the ELCL or its congregations or established institutions, are at the same time the common property of the whole ELCL. This common property of the ELCL has been developed over the centuries through the activities of the ELCL, its congregations, and members, from donations, as well as through various civil transactions, or by inheritance.
152. The ELCL, its congregations and established institutions, which have full power over the property, have the right to acquire movable and immovable property, as stated in the Law of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, excepting those instances mentioned in paragraph 154 of this Constitution.  
*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*
153. The ELCL, its congregations and established institutions, as the primary owners of its property, may manage, receive revenues from same, as well as use it to increase value and income.
154. The ELCL, its congregations and established institutions do not have the right without resolution approved by the Consistory to establish cemeteries, build new church-buildings, mortgage, pledge or otherwise encumber its properties, donate, purchase, sell, exchange properties in its entirety, or otherwise dispossess, pawn, rent or lease for periods greater than 10 years (with regard to the lease of agricultural land, a decision of the Consistory is required in all cases, regardless of the term of the lease, in accordance with the Consistory

bylaws), carry out forestry or logging on its properties or establish a property-management business or give over its properties to a third-person property-management business or other third-person legal entity For the above mentioned transactions regarding the ELCL property, the congregation must present an approved resolution made by their congregation council to be presented to the Consistory for approval. For the established institutions of the ELCL a resolution must be made by the ELCL and the established institution. Property resolutions from congregations and ELCL established institutions are to receive approval from the Consistory.

*(As amended by decision No.1. of ELCL 28<sup>th</sup> Synod on August 6, 2021)*

155. In the case of the dissolution of a congregation or in the case that a congregation no longer operates as a congregation of the ELCL, the congregation and its established institution's property return to the ELCL. In the case of the dissolution of an ELCL or congregation's established institution, its property returns to the established institution. The revenues from these properties in the meantime are to be used for the common needs of the ELCL.

*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL 27<sup>th</sup> Synod on June 3, 2016)*

156. In case of reorganization of congregations, the property rights are transferred to the reorganized congregation or the ELCL in accordance with the decisions of the congregation conventions and the reorganization agreement.

*(As amended by decision No.1. of ELCL 28<sup>th</sup> Synod on August 6, 2021)*

157. The responsibility of the ELCL, its congregations and established institutions is to manage its property with adequate care, utilizing all legal means to ensure its complete protection against deterioration, diminishment, deprivation or damage and from the revenues of property management give the determined portion for the common needs of the ELCL.

*(As amended by decision No.2.1. of ELCL Synod on June 3, 2016)*

158. The property of the ELCL, its congregations and established organizations, as well as the revenues acquired from them must serve the achievement of the purpose and mission of the ELCL.

159. Arguments over property rights between parties mentioned in paragraph 152 of this Constitution are settled by the Consistory in writing.

## **Chapter 6**

### **THE GERMAN BRANCH**

160. Within the ELCL there exists a German branch, which brings together German congregations, institutions and organizations. The German branch was established in accordance with the agreement concluded on September 21, 2018 between the ELCL, the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Latvia and the German St. Peter's congregation "ON COOPERATION IN RENEWING THE CHURCH UNITY", approved by the ELCL Synod and the Synod of the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Latvia. The German branch has legal personality.

161. The German branch, its congregations, institutions and organizations are granted autonomy, which includes the historical right to preserve their identity, their language, their cultural autonomy, their relations with other churches and their affiliated organizations, and their freedom of religion in accordance with the teaching as stated the preamble of the Constitution of the ELCL. The German branch, its congregations, institutions and organizations follow the traditions of the German Evangelical Lutheran congregations of Latvia, which operated in Latvia until 1939.
162. The basis of the activities of the German branch is the Constitution of the German branch and the preamble of the Constitution of the ELCL. It is also bound by the provisions of the note to paragraph 129 of the ELCL Constitution, Chapter 6 of the ELCL Constitution and transitional provisions regarding the approval of the Constitution of the German branch and the first election of administrative institutions. Other provisions of the ELCL Constitution are binding on the German branch, its congregations, institutions and organizations only to the extent expressly provided for in the Constitution of the German branch.
163. The name of the German branch, its congregation, institution and organization shall include an indication of its membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, if provided for in the Constitution of the ELCL.
164. The German branch, its congregations, institutions and organizations recognize the archbishop of the ELCL as a position of unity (German: *Amt der Einheit*). The archbishop has the right, with the prior agreement of the congregation pastor, to preach in the German congregations, to make recommendations to the German branch, its congregations, institutions and organizations, and to take part in the installation services of the pastors of the German congregations.
165. The institutional and financial autonomy and independence in the activities of the German branch is respected. The German branch organizes its activities in accordance with its Constitution, which, among other things, determines the procedure for the admission and expulsion of the administration of the German branch as well as congregations. The internal regulations and decisions issued by the management and administrative bodies of the ELCL are not binding on the German branch, its congregations, institutions and organizations, unless otherwise provided in this Chapter. The German branch, its congregations, institutions and organizations independently provide the necessary resources for their activities; they are not obliged, but they may voluntarily contribute to the financing of the general needs of the ELCL or other ELCL congregations, institutions or organizations. The ELCL has no obligation, but may voluntarily contribute to the financing of the needs of the German branch, its congregations, institutions or organizations.
166. The Synod of the German Branch shall, by its own decision, appoint and dismiss an ordained person who serves as a pastor in the congregations of the German branch or in the German congregation. The German branch also has the right to invite ordained persons from Germany to serve for a limited period of time. In order for such ordained persons to be included in the list of ELCL clergy who have the right to conduct weddings, a referral from the archbishop of ELCL is required and the archbishop of ELCL supervises them. As persons already ordained as pastors are assigned to the service in the German branch, incl. also from abroad, the German branch does not conduct ordinations itself.

167. The congregations of the German branch may participate in the life and ministry of the ELCL and the congregations of the ELCL may participate in the life and ministry of the German branch. Authorized representatives of the German branch have the right to participate in the Synod of the ELCL with the right to speak, but without the right to vote, and authorized representatives of the ELCL have the right to participate in the Synod of the German branch with the right to speak, but without the right to vote.
168. Movable and immovable property may be the property of the German branch, its congregations, institutions and organizations. The German branch, its congregations, institutions and organizations have full power over the property, except for the restrictions set forth in the Constitution of the German branch, as well as the prohibition to pledge and recover churches and ritual objects at the request of creditors. (165.)
169. In the event of the liquidation of a German branch or congregation institution or organization, its movable and immovable property shall pass to the German branch or congregation which established it. In the event of the dissolution of the German congregation, its movable and immovable property shall be transferred to another German congregation. If such congregations no longer exist, the property in question passes to the German branch. In the event of the liquidation of the German branch, the movable and immovable property of the German branch shall pass to the ELCL. If the German St. Peter's congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia liquidates or is being liquidated or ceases to be a member of the ELCL, the Riga St. Peter's church shall become the property of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia.
170. If the archbishop of the ELCL finds that a German branch, one of its congregations, institutions or organizations, or pastors is acting in violation of the preamble to the Constitution of the ELCL in the field of preaching or administering the Sacraments, he may propose that the German branch Synod Board take appropriate measures to prevent such violations.
171. The preamble of the Constitution of the ELCL and Chapter 6 "The German Branch" of the Constitution of the ELCL are included in the introduction of the Constitution of the German branch. The statutes of the German congregation state that the German congregation belongs to the German branch of the ELCL, recognizes and operates in accordance with the Constitution of the German branch and the statutes of the German congregation. The introduction to the Constitution of the German branch - the preamble to the Constitution of the ELCL and Chapter 6 "The German Branch" of the Constitution of the ELCL - and the indication in the statutes of the German congregation that it belongs to the German branch of the ELCL, may be amended only by a decision of the Synod of the German branch and the Synod of ELCL. (168.)
172. The ELCL congregations and other Latvian Lutheran congregations are not admitted to the German branch without the approval of the Chapter of the ELCL and the congregations of the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Latvia as well as the German branch congregations without the approval of the German branch are not admitted to the ELCL.

173. The activity of the German branch within the ELCL may be terminated only in the cases and according to the procedures provided for in the agreement referred to in paragraph 160.  
*(As amended by decision No.1, 5.2. of ELCL 28<sup>th</sup> Synod on August 6, 2021)*

### **TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS**

1. With the entry into force of these Transitional Provisions, the Transitional Provisions previously adopted by the 23rd Synod of the ELCL and amended by the 25th Synod of the ELCL on June 3-4, 2010 and by the 27th Synod of the ELCL on June 3, 2016 shall cease to have effect.
2. All internal normative acts (regulations, instructions, orders, decisions, etc.) issued by the Church so far shall retain their legal force to the extent that they are not in conflict with this Constitution.
3. The Consistory shall until the ELCL 29<sup>th</sup> Synod submit to the Register of Enterprises the statutes of all the ELCL congregations (as amended by the 27<sup>th</sup> Synod of the ELCL and the 28<sup>th</sup> Synod of the ELCL) for registration in the Register of Religious Organizations and their Institutions of the Register of Enterprises. After receiving the decision of the Register of Enterprises, the Consistory sends the statutes signed by the archbishop to each ELCL congregation.
4. The German branch originally includes the German St. Peter's congregation. The convention of the German St. Peter's congregation within 10 (ten) days after the accession of the German St. Peter's congregation to the German branch of the ELCL (or, if the German St. Peter's congregation joined the ELCL before the establishment of the German branch, within 10 (ten) days after the establishment of the German branch) ratifies the Constitution of the German branch and elects the governing bodies of the German branch - the Synod and the Synod Board. Further amendments to the Constitution of the German branch and changes in the composition of administrative institutions shall be made in accordance with the procedures specified in the Constitution of the German branch.  
*(As amended by decision No.1, 5.2. of ELCL 28<sup>th</sup> Synod on August 6, 2021)*

Jānis Vanags

Archbishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia