



## **Guidelines for AGM's/ Congregational Meetings**

### **1. Introduction:**

As stated below, Congregational Meetings are a constitutional requirement. Apart from that, they are an important tool of inclusivity, to affirm the ownership of the church by all its members: „My church is my responsibility! Ibandla lami lingumthwalo wami!„ Also known as Annual General Meetings (AGM's), a term coming from the corporate world, the Congregational Meetings are a unique, but often underutilised platform, to assess church life on a congregational level and chart a way forward in line with the parish, circuit, diocesan and ELCSA-wide vision, mission and guidelines.

### **2. Constitutional requirements:**

Our ELCSA constitution states in Part II § 7.4: „In every congregation a Congregational Meeting shall be convened at least once a year. The Congregational Meeting consists of all members of the congregation who are entitled to vote. The pastor or his representative shall be the chairman of the Congregational Meeting.“ ... “The Congregational Meeting receives and discusses reports on the work of the pastor and the elders, and on the finances and property of the Church within the Congregational Council.“

### **3. Preparation:**

The date of the Congregational Meeting (from now on called AGM in these guidelines) will be made known through the Parish Activities Plan as well as by announcements in the preceding three Sundays. The reports will be compiled by the relevant portfolio holders and submitted to the chairperson of the AGM (parish pastor) in written form one week before the AGM (see below). The proposed Agenda for the AGM will be announced and made known in written form (church notice board) two weeks before the AGM. Proposal for changes in the Agenda may be submitted to the chairperson of the AGM.

### **4. Main Items on the Agenda**

i) **Reports:** As stated in the Constitution, various reports will be received and discussed. In order for the AGM to be a success, precise and brief written reports are vital. In order to streamline reports, these guidelines will suggest an outline. The reports are to be submitted in written form to the chairperson (parish pastor) one week before the AGM, if possible per e-mail. Reports are expected from:

- **the pastor:** on his involvement in the congregational work, his perceptions of congregational life (services, council meetings, leagues, administration, building maintenance, etc) as well as his recommendations for future work
- **the helper-in-charge** (chairperson of the congregational council): on the work of the congregational council in all its areas of responsibility as well as on all items mentioned above (see „the pastor“)
- **the secretary:** on congregation administration in general, current statistics of members (children male/female, confirmed m/f), baptisms, funerals, members joined (from other denominations or another Lutheran parish), members left (to other churches/without

known destination), wedding services, confirmands in 2007 and up to end of previous quarter.

- **the congregational treasurer:** income and expenditure on all congregational accounts (current accounts, building accounts, saving accounts, etc.) for past year up to end of previous quarter; report on trends in income and expenditure – successes and challenges; report on administration (registration of donations/envelope system + ticket system); recommendations for the future
- **the congregational Leagues and other organisations' chairpersons (Youth League, Prayer Women's League, Men's League, Young Adult League, Sunday School, Partnership, Imbokodo, Help Desk):** membership statistics, financial report (all income and expenditure on all accounts on congregational level, as well as contribution towards Leagues parish account), brief account of regular meetings, type of work done or services rendered by the League, challenges encountered, blessings received, recommendations.

Not all congregations will have Imbokodo (not yet an official League) or Partnership Work on a congregational level; then these reports are left out. Great care must be taken to keep the written reports quite short (1-2 pgs). The analysis (report on challenges and recommendations) is especially important. Only summaries or highlights of crucial points will be presented by the respective office holders in their reports during the AGM and an executive summary of the reports (submitted a week before the AGM) will be compiled by the Chairperson of the AGM, with copies made available to every member of the AGM.

Each report will then be discussed – either individually, or – in order to avoid duplication – after hearing a number of related reports. The AGM may then accept or reject the reports, endorse or reject recommendations and make other recommendations which will then have to be taken up by the congregational council for deliberation and implementation.

ii) General Discussion: The AGM is the chance of the congregation as a whole (all voting members) to discuss the church work in the area of its congregational boundaries and beyond in the past and future. New ideas can be brought forward, concerns about trends in the congregational life in the past year may be shared and recommendations given to solve existing (maybe longstanding) problems.

### **5. AGM:**

The AGM will be held on the announced date at the announced time. A service will be held by the parish pastor as laid out in the parish preaching plan. The service will be held in a shortened form and should preferably commence at 9am. The AGM commences immediately after the service and should not take longer than two hours. The parish pastor is chairperson of the AGM, the parish secretary and deputy will be secretary and deputy of the AGM. The parish council executive (chairperson and deputy, secretary and deputy, treasurer) are invited to all congregational AGM's.

### **6. Follow-up:**

A proper follow-up of the recommendations tabled by the Congregational Meeting is vital and the resulting action must be reported to the congregation members in an appropriate written way (eg. by means of congregational council minutes or extracts thereof regarding the discussion/implementation of recommendations being publicised at the notice board).