

Constitution

of the German speaking Lutheran Congregation Newcastle upon Tyne

Registered Charity Nr. 241652

Version of 28th April 2024

Article 1: Name and Purpose

The name of the congregation is German speaking Lutheran Congregation Newcastle upon Tyne. The purpose of the charity is the promotion of the Christian religion. The congregation offers religious services in German language and commits to the proclamation of the Gospel in pastoral care, congregational activities and social services to all German speaking people residing permanently or temporarily within its area

Article 2: Confession

The proclamation in services and pastoral care within the German speaking Lutheran Congregation Newcastle upon Tyne is according to the gospel of Jesus Christ as laid down in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible and in the documents of the German Reformation, especially the "Confessio Augustana" and Luther's "Kleiner Katechismus".

Article 3: Worship

3.1 The Congregation meets regularly for worship, circumstances permitting. Holy Communion shall be celebrated regularly.

3.2 Services are usually conducted in German language. Cooperation with other churches in the country in joint services is desirable.

3.3 Worship is conducted in accordance with the order of service agreed at the AGM. On occasion (themed services, family services etc.) the order of service may be varied.

Article 4: Pastoral acts

4.1 For Baptism the wording „Ich taufe Dich im Namen des Vaters, des Sohnes und des Heiligen Geistes“ is used while the head of the candidate for baptism is doused with water three times.

Baptism of children requires that at least one parent be a member of the Congregation. Exceptions to this rule may be made by the minister in consultation with the Church Council. The baptism usually takes place during a regular service.

4.2 Confirmation is preceded by an intensive course of instruction given by the minister or a person commissioned by the Congregation. Admission to the confirmation is the minister's decision. Confirmation takes place within a congregational service. Course and confirmation can be organised together with the other congregations of the parochial region (PAB), see article 6.

4.3 The **Marriage** ceremony may be performed in the church provided that one of the parties concerned is a member of a christian denomination.

4.4 **Funeral Services and burials** may be conducted for persons who were not members of the Congregation.

Article 5: 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 6: Area and Organisation of the Congregation

6.1 The parochial area of the German speaking Lutheran Congregation Newcastle upon Tyne is the Northeast of England.

6.2 The Congregation is a member of the Synod of German-Speaking Lutheran, Reformed and United Congregations in Great Britain and that fact governs its relationship with the Protestant Church in Germany (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, 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.

6.3 Within the Synod of German-Speaking Lutheran, Reformed and United Congregations in Great Britain the Newcastle Congregation belongs to the Parochial Region (PAB) of Scotland/North East England, together with the Congregation in Scotland.

6.4 The Parochial Region (PAB) 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.

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

Article 7: Membership

7.1 All baptised Christians who speak or understand German and reside permanently or temporarily within the area of the Congregation may become members of the German speaking Lutheran Congregation Newcastle upon Tyne. The minimum age is 14.

7.2 Membership is obtained by written declaration of intent and requires approval by the Church Council. Membership entails recognition of the constitution of the Congregation.

7.3 All Members have active voting rights in the Congregational Assembly. Members who have attained the age of 18 have additionally passive voting rights, ie can be elected.

7.4 Members are committed to financially contribute to the costs of the upkeep of the congregation. The church council can recommend an amount for the contribution. Under exceptional circumstances an exemption can be granted.

7.5 It is possible to be at the same time a member of a German-speaking Congregation and of another church of a similar denomination.

7.6 Membership of the congregation is terminated by written declaration of intent or by moving out of the area. Thereby the member surrenders all offices and rights in the congregation.

Article 8: The Congregational Assembly

8.1 The Congregational Assembly (hereafter "Assembly") is the assembly of the voting members of the congregation. Its purpose is:

- a. election of the church council;
- b. election of a representative and a deputy representative to the synod;
- c. alteration of the constitution;
- d. approval of the budget as presented by the church council;
- e. acceptance of the financial report as prepared by the treasurer;
- f. approval of projects costing more than £5.000;

8.2 The Assembly takes place at least once a year presided over by the chairperson of the church council or the minister. The meetings are recorded in writing.

8.3 The Assembly is proposed by the church council or if requested by at least 10 members of the congregation with voting rights.

8.4 The invitation to the Assembly including the agenda has to be announced in writing at least two weeks before the meeting.

8.5 A quorum is constituted if at least 20 % of the members entitled to vote attend the Assembly in response to an invitation issued in due order.

8.6 The Assembly can take place in digital or hybrid form (video meeting). It needs to be ensured that participants can exercise their rights (to speak, to vote, to elect) independent of the mode of participation.

Article 9: The Church Council

The Church Council is responsible for the management of the congregation's affairs and acts as charity trustees under the English charity law.

The conduct of the church council is subject to the Trustees Code of Conduct and the Conflict of Interest Policy. These policies are decided annually by the parish council and are made accessible on the website.

9.1 The Church Council consists of the minister and at least four voting members elected by the Assembly (see 8.1).

9.2 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 voting members of the congregation to the chair-person of the Church Council no later than at the Congregational Assembly.

9.3 The Church Council elects a chair-person and a deputy chair-person from its members by simple majority. It appoints a secretary and a treasurer.

9.4 The Church Council meets at least twice a year. A meeting must be held when at least one third of its members request it.

9.5 A written invitation incorporating the proposed agenda is issued by the chair-person at least one week before each meeting.

9.6 A quorum is reached when more than half of the members according to article 9.1 are present and at least 4 members according to article 9.1 are present.

9.7 Participation of some or all participants of a meeting via video conference is allowed after approval of the Church Council.

9.8 While striving for consensual decisions a simple majority is sufficient.

9.10 Decisions are recorded in the minutes.

Article 10: Property and Finance

10.1 Members of the church council act as trustees.

10.2 The Trustees act as owners of capital and 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.

10.3 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

10.4 The Church Council is entitled to hold bank accounts and to invest money. The treasurer administers the accounts. The church council appoints those who are empowered to authorise bank account transfers and sign cheques. (See Financial Control Policy)

10.5 Accounts must be kept for all income and expenditure. The treasurer administers the Congregation's finances as the Church Council directs and reports regularly to the church council.

10.6 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 approved by the Church Council.

10.7 Every voting member of the congregation is entitled to inspect the administration and usage of the funds.

Article 11: Minister

11.1 The appointment of a minister shall be carried out according to the procedures for filling vacant pastorates laid down by the Synod of German-Speaking Lutheran, Reformed and United Congregations in Great Britain.

11.2 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. 2 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 their duties faithfully and conscientiously.

11.3 Other matters are regulated by the contract of service between the pastor and the congregations of the PAB and the Synod (see article 3).

Article 12: Dissolution

12.1 The German speaking Lutheran Congregation in Newcastle upon Tyne is disbanded when more than two-thirds of members present decide so at two separate Congregational Assemblies.

12.2 Upon dissolution the remaining assets come to the German-Speaking Evangelical Synod in Great Britain. Is the dissolution part of the process to merge with another congregation of the synod, which continues the purpose of the German speaking Lutheran congregation Newcastle upon Tyne, then the remaining assets come to this congregation.

Article 13: Amendments of the Constitution

13.1 Amendments of this constitution are drafted by the Church Council and put to the vote at the Congregational Assembly and require a two-third majority of all votes cast. Any amendments of the constitution require the approval of the synod.

13.2 Article 2 cannot be altered.

Article 14: Concluding regulation

This constitution has been approved at the Annual General Meeting of the German Speaking Lutheran congregation in Newcastle upon Tyne on 12th March 2023 and comes into effect upon signature of the chairperson and two further members of the church council.

Previous constitutions expire at the same time.

Newcastle, 28th April 2024