

CONSTITUTION

of the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden

Foundation and Tenets of Faith, Preamble, Order of the Church, and Statutes
adopted by the General Conference/Church Conference 1999-2000

The Foundation and Tenets of Faith

The Foundation and Tenets of Faith is a biblical and theological introduction to the Constitution of the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden (MCCS). It describes the main tenets of common faith which form the basis for the concepts of Church and congregation outlined in the Preamble and for the life of the Church as reflected in Order and Statutes of the Mission Covenant Church.

God – Creator, Redeemer, Giver of Life

God, the Creator - Cosmos and Mankind

God is the creator of heaven and earth, of the entire cosmos. God is one, and at the same time the triune communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God desires harmony and wholeness for this good creation. /1 Women and men are created in God's image but are also part of creation. They share a unique responsibility as God's co-workers and stewards. /2

Creation is threatened by evil, division and death. The power of evil distorts our stewardship and destroys the harmony. /3 Sin separates humankind from God. All people are born into a divided world and are responsible for the good and bad of human existence. When human beings harm each other and nature, creation and life itself are devastated. /4

Jesus Christ, the Redeemer – the New Creation and Commission

God became man in the person of Jesus of Nazareth in order to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, to conquer the powers of sin and death and to redeem humankind and creation.

Through the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross, God brought reconciliation to the whole world. Thus the love of God for the world is revealed, so that those who believe in God will not perish but have eternal life. /5 Through the risen Christ - the firstborn of the new creation and the true image of God - the path to a new life is opened. Those who believe are set free to become new creatures in Christ. They are called to proclaim the Gospel of the kingdom of God, of conversion and reconciliation and to renewed stewardship. /6

Jesus Christ was sent to the world by the Father through the Holy Spirit. Throughout the ages, Christ sends his disciples with the Gospel of the kingdom of God. Through this commission and mission, the Church is created and renewed as the body of Christ in the world:

- through evangelism it bears witness to Christ
- through diaconal work it ministers to fellow human beings and to the entire creation,
- through Christian fellowship people are empowered and encouraged to use their many gifts.

This mission is modelled on Christ as the humble servant and is carried out in the power of love. /7

The Holy Spirit, Giver of Life – Conversion, the Church and the Future

God, the Holy Spirit, calls us to conversion and faith in Jesus Christ, adoption as children of God and fellowship in the Christian church. /8 The Holy Spirit empowers us to live a life nourished by the Word of God, prayer and the Lord's Supper. To live in Christ is to walk, grow and develop in discipleship and sanctification. There the fruits of the Spirit can develop. Through the gifts of the Spirit people are equipped for different tasks. /9

The Holy Spirit, which brought forth life at creation and carries it in her arms, has established the Church. The Church is a creation of God, a part of God's will that all people shall be saved.

Jesus proclaimed the Gospel of the kingdom of God. The risen and living Christ is the Lord of the Church and the Saviour of the whole world. /10 The church is modelled on the Covenant of the Old Testament. The foundation of the people of the New Covenant is a living relationship with Christ. /11

The future that God has in store for the entire creation begins in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit calls on the Church to carry the hope of eternal life. When the Church worships in the power of the Holy Spirit, the barriers of time and space are shattered and we get a vision of the coming of the kingdom of God and of the communion among all God's people. /12

One Holy, Universal and Apostolic Church

A Living Relationship

The Church consists of all people who belong to the Lord, united through Christ with other Christians. When the Word is proclaimed and the sacraments are shared, Christ invites us to a living relationship with himself and with all who accept this new life in faith. /13

The Mission Covenant Church of Sweden is a part of the Church of Christ which is one, holy, universal and apostolic. /14 Since the Church is made up of imperfect people, it needs to be reminded of its divine calling. /15

- The Church is one, because it confesses one Lord, one faith, one baptism and is called to the one and only hope /16
- The Church is holy because it is the work of God.
- The Church is universal, because salvation is for all people. The mission of the Church is to proclaim the Gospel to all people and to the entire creation until the end of time. /18
- The Church is apostolic, because it is built on Christ according to the testimony of the apostles, and sent into the world /19.

The Mission Covenant Church shares in the legacy of the early church and the church fathers, of the missionary work of the Roman Catholic Church in Sweden, and of the Reformation. It also shares the emphasis of the Swedish revival movements on personal

commitment to Christ and individual responsibility to the church community. The Mission Covenant Church is called to evangelism, together with other denominations in Sweden and in other countries. It is commissioned by God to work in society among people of different faiths and convictions, where many feel alienated from the Church and the Christian faith.

Unity

Ecumenism is closely related to mission, to being sent into the world. Christian unity is founded on the unity of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Ecumenism means moving towards greater unity between different denominations and local congregations. Through Christian unity, the world shall believe and understand that God, through love, sent Jesus Christ to all people. /20

Jesus' prayer that his followers might be one implies that all Christians in one place should be united in one fellowship. In a world of division and schism, the Church lives in anticipation of visible unity, with this goal in sight. Both the MCCS and its local churches are provisional in anticipation of the visible unity of Christ's Church.

Sources of Inspiration of the Church

The Word of God and the Creed of the Church

All things were created through the Word that became flesh and came to dwell among us. In Christ Jesus, the complete fullness of the Godhead was revealed and in him all is summed up. /21

The Word of God

- is revealed in Jesus Christ
- is given in Holy Scripture
- is affirmed by the common creeds of the Church
- is interpreted by the Church through history
- is proclaimed in the preaching of the Church and in daily witness.

The Bible is Holy Scriptures because

- it is inspired by the Holy Spirit
- it bears witness to Jesus Christ
- it describes what is necessary and sufficient for salvation
- it came into being through persons telling what God had done, proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and writing it down, guided by the Holy Spirit
- guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church gathered the writings that together form the Old and the New Testaments.

The Bible is the Word of God, written down by men. It is to be interpreted and explained in relation to its centre, Jesus Christ, and his work of redemption. The message of justification through faith, God's gift of grace and a personal confession of faith in Jesus Christ are fundamental principles in Reformed Christianity and in Swedish revival tradition.

The Word creates faith, conveys God's grace and is a guideline for faith and life in Jesus Christ. When the Word is read and proclaimed, the Holy Spirit gives it life and power. It

provides instruction, guidance, comfort, hope, and joy for the individual and the fellowship. It challenges and empowers for witness and service. /23

The creeds of the early Church, the Nicene and the Apostolic creeds, are condensed summaries of Christian faith as presented in Holy Scripture. Based on these, the Mission Covenant Church as a communion wants to confess its faith in worship, declare its solidarity with the universal Church of God and teach the main articles of Christian faith.

Worship

The worship service is the centre of congregational life. Since the early Church, the people of God have met on the day of Christ's resurrection. The worship service is an encounter with holy God. When God's people give God honour and praise, their praise becomes part of the heavenly celebration. The diversity is a reflection of the unlimited communion of God's kingdom. /24 The Holy Spirit brings release from isolation and fear into openness and courage. The Spirit sends the Church out into the world, on God's mission. /25

The worship service is a meeting of people who are gathered around Jesus Christ. They share the Word of God, receive baptism, the Lord's Supper and the forgiveness of sins. They affirm and renew their faith, express their solidarity with the fellowship through offering and intercession, and are sent out into the world. Joint worship and everyday life are expressions of the church as a source of rest and its mission to the entire creation. /26

Prayer

Prayer is an expression of men's and women's communion and dialogue with triune God. It has a given place in worship, in small groups and in personal devotion. Common prayer – of praise, thanksgiving and intercession – provides inspiration for personal devotion. /27

Confession and the Forgiveness of Sin

Every Christian can turn to God privately to confess and ask for forgiveness of sin. Forgiveness of sin is a gift that is linked to the Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. It is given through different means of grace: the Word, baptism, the Lord's Supper, prayer and confession. Pastoral confession involves confessing one's sin in order to receive absolution and God's forgiveness. An equivalent to private confession is found in the joint confession and absolution of the worship liturgy.

Sacraments

The sacraments are sacred acts through the Word of God, established and commanded by Jesus Christ himself to be practiced by the church. Baptism and the Lord's Supper represent the centre of the Christian faith, bestowing the grace of God and the presence of Christ, opening up for communion among people across all barriers.

Baptism

Baptism is a sign of new life in Jesus Christ and fellowship with him. /29 It is modelled on the Old Testament stories of liberation from slavery, salvation from death through water, and

God's covenant with his people. The foundation of baptism in the New Testament is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ./30

Baptism and faith unite a person with Christ. Baptism is one part of the path into the Church and is related to life-long Christian development and growth. It is a gift of God towards the forgiveness of sin. Baptism takes place by water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, during invocation of the Holy Spirit. God's gift is met by the believer's response in faith. /31

There is only one baptism. It can take place in different ways and at different points in life. Different traditions of baptism are manifestations of one and the same baptism throughout the history of the church. Since baptism by nature knows no limits and unites all who have been baptised in Christ, the Mission Covenant Church seeks to express a reconciled diversity by being open to God's work in different traditions of baptism. /32

The relationship between baptism, faith and church membership is discussed during confirmation classes, for example. The local church offers various opportunities to reconfirm one's baptism.

Communion

At the Lord's table, Christ is present in bread and wine. He gives himself to his disciples, he leads his church into a deeper fellowship and equips it to witness and serve in everyday life. /33 The Lord's Supper is modelled on the Passover feast of the Old Covenant, commemorating through unleavened bread and Passover lamb the release from slavery, and on the meal of the Covenant on Mount Sinai. The Lord's Supper is the feast of the New Covenant. /34

The Lord's Supper is a joyful thanksgiving to the Creator for our God-given life. Holy Communion is an invocation of the Holy Spirit. It is celebrated in memory of Christ and his redemptive death for the forgiveness of sin.

The Lord's Supper is a fellowship meal, open to all who seek this communion. The boundaries of time and space are transcended, as well as the divisions between people. At the Lord's table, the communion with Christ and with other people is perfectly expressed. The Church is challenged to share the bread with the world and to spread the message of reconciliation. The Lord's Supper is a sign of hope for the future – the unlimited fellowship of the body of Christ, a kingdom of righteousness, love and peace in the Holy Spirit. It is celebrated in anticipation of the day when the kingdom of God will come in power.

Mission Unlimited

The missionary task of proclaiming the Gospel in word and deed knows no limits. It is connected to the promise of Christ's presence until the end of time. It is the nature of the Church to live in mission and always to be on its way, beyond itself, to the entire creation. Its goal is to make all nations into disciples. In this mission, our own understanding of the manifold riches of the Gospel is enriched as well.

Ministry in God's church

Common Ministry

The universal priesthood implies that every Christian has access to God the Father through Jesus Christ. /36 The Holy Spirit enriches the Church with manifold and diverse gifts so that the Gospel will be manifested in all its glory. All Christians are called to minister in love, to bear witness to the salvation in Christ and to seek, discover and use the gifts of the Spirit, assisted by the congregation. /37

Everyone in the Church is responsible for the common ministry according to his/her qualifications and potentials and in faithfulness to the Word of God. The gifts and the ministries differ but God works through all of them. Every ministry begins in the church but is directed towards all of mankind and the entire creation. Through the people of God the Church is made visible to the world.

Special Ministries

God calls and equips women and men for special ministries in the Church, based on the joint commission and the faith of the entire Church.

For the purpose of strengthening the ministry of all and safeguard the diversity and unity of the fellowship, women and men, called by God and the local churches to be the servants of Christ, are ordained as pastors and deacons. /38 Ordination is an act of God and of the Mission Covenant Church, where those ordained are empowered by the Holy Spirit for their ministry and are upheld by the recognition and prayers of the local churches. Ordination is a worship service before God. It is a commission to serve the local churches. /39

Through the laying on of hands and prayer, the Mission Covenant Church also ordains missionaries and other servants for various tasks according to the needs at hand. The President of the Church and the District Superintendents are commissioned to lead the work, and are responsible for the coordination, supervision and unity within the fellowship of the Mission Covenant Church. These ministries are pastoral and should be performed loyally and in close cooperation with the local churches. The missionary task is to make visible the unlimited mission of the Church. This commission is shared jointly with churches in other countries. /40

Footnotes

- 1 Gen. 1:1-3, Ps. 104:30, John 1:1-3, Col. 1:15-16
- 2 Gen. 1:26-31, Ps 8:4-8
- 3 Gen. 3, Rom. 5:12
- 4 Rom. 3:23-24; 8:20-21
- 5 2 Cor. 5:17-21, John 3:16
- 6 Col. 1:15, Mark 1:14-15
- 7 John 20:21, Luke 9:6, Acts 1:8. Matt. 25:35-39, 1 Peter 4:8-10, Philemon 2:5-11, 1 Cor.13:13
- 8 Rom. 10:9, 1 Cor. 12:3
- 9 Ef. 3:14-21, Gal. 5:22, Rom. 12:6-8
- 10 Job 33:4, 1 Tim. 2:4, Ef. 1:22-23
- 11 Neh. 9:5-38, Gen. 9:9-17, Luke 22:20, Heb. 8:6-13
- 12 Rom. 8:22-27, Rev. 7:9-17

13 John 15:1-15, 1 John 1:3,7
14 Quote from the Nicean Creed of AD 381
15 1 Cor. 15:1-2, 2 Cor. 4:7
16 Ef. 4:3-6, Gal 3:27-28
17 Rom 1.7, John 15:16, 1 Peter 2:9-10
18 Matt. 28:18-20, Mark 16:15
19 Ef. 2:17-20
20 John 17:20-23
21 John 1:14-15. Ef. 1:9-10, Rev. 22:13
22 I Peter 1:23, Rom. 3:21, 2 Cor. 1:20, John 20:30-31, 1 Cor. 3:11, 2 Cor. 9:8b9,
1Thess. 2:13
23 Rom. 10:17, 2 Tim. 3:14-17, Heb. 4:12
24 Ps. 63:2-4, Jes. 6:1-8, Rev. 7:9-12
25 John 20:19-22, Acts 2:1-8
26 1 Cor. 14:26, Col. 3:16, Ef. 1:17-23
27 Matt. 6:5-13, John 16:23-24, Acts 2:42, Rom. 12:12, Jude v. 20
28 John 20:23, 1 John 1:9
29 Rom. 6:3-5
30 Exodus 14:10-16, 1 Cor. 10:1-2, Col. 2:11-14, 1 Peter 3:20-21
31 Acts 2:38, John 3:5, Titus 3:4-5
32 Ef. 4:3-6, Gal. 3:26-28
33 Matt. 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:14-20, John 6:8-13, 28-35, 1 Cor.
11:23-25
34 Exodus 16:11-15, 24:8, Luke 22:20
35 Mark 16:15, Ef. 3:6-7, Rom. 1:11-12
36 1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10
37 1 Cor. 12:4-7, 14:1, 12
38 Acts 6:1-6, 20:28, 2 Tim. 1:6-7, 13-14
39 Ef. 4:11-13, 1 Cor. 4:1
40 Acts 13:2-3, 1 Cor. 12:27-13:3

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of the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden

adopted by the General Conference/Church Conference 1999-2000

The Mission Covenant Church of Sweden is a church fellowship of local congregations confessing the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to Holy Scripture and therefore together seeking to fulfil their joint calling to the glory of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

PREAMBLE

Understanding of Congregation and Church

Throughout history, the Church of God has appeared in various ways but always distinct and visible to the world. It worships, proclaims the Word of God, baptises and celebrates the Lord's Supper. It bears witness to its faith and is active in society and among its neighbours.

The universal Church of Christ becomes visible in each local congregation. The local churches of the MCCS share the following understanding of what the congregation is:

Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Church and the Saviour of the world. The Church of God is for all people. /1

The congregation is built on an apostolic, biblical foundation. Holy Scripture is a means of grace and a guide for our faith and its application. /2

The local congregation is united with the entire Church of God in confessing God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Every Christian is free to seek enlightenment in interpreting the Word of God. When Christians share the Word together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, their openness leads to diversity and strengthens the fellowship. /3

The Church is held together by its centre, Jesus Christ, not by its limits. God alone knows who is a Christian. Through the Word of God, baptism and the Lord's Supper, each and every one who wants to follow Christ and grow in faith is invited to share in the life and fellowship of the Church.

The path into the Church/congregation is God's invitation to fellowship and to each person's response by faith in Jesus Christ. /4

Children are a gift to the congregation. The congregation, open to all ages, wants to include the children and take them seriously. They belong to the fellowship and are cared for by the congregation. /5

The purpose of the congregation is to honour God and to spread the Gospel of the kingdom of God through proclamation, witness and ministry to people. Through its life and fellowship it demonstrates Christ's loving care for all.

The local churches and the Mission Covenant Church

Each congregation is independent, living in solidarity with the other local congregations of the Mission Covenant Church and sharing joint responsibilities. /6

The Mission Covenant Church of Sweden is a fellowship of local congregations through faith in Jesus Christ in the same way as the local congregation is a fellowship of persons in Christ.

The relationship between the Mission Covenant Church and its local churches is outlined in the Constitution adopted by the congregations in assembly: Preamble, Order of the Church and recommended Local Church Order Guidelines. Based on this, Statutes of the Mission Covenant Church and recommended Guidelines for Local Church Statutes are adopted. The Foundation and Tenets of Faith constitute an introduction to the Constitution, outlining the main points of common faith of the Church. The Preamble defines the common understanding of congregation and Church.

The Order of the Church and the Local Church Orders express the life of the fellowship. The Statutes define the formal structures and organisation.

The Constitution is based on the images and teachings of the New Testament concerning the Christian Church, the common experiences of the Church as well as the needs and the call faced by the congregation in every time and place. It stresses the visible unity of the Church. Orders and Statutes are assessed and revised continually based on Holy Scriptures and Christian experience. /7

Order of the Church

Based on its Foundation and Tenets of Faith and Preamble, the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden has adopted the following Order of the Church as a basis for membership, fellowship, ministry, working methods and special ministries.

The Mission Covenant Church is a fellowship of independent local congregations, in covenant with each other through their faith in Jesus Christ.

Membership

Local Congregations

A local MCCS congregation shares the understanding of Church and congregation of the Preamble and the main principles expressed in the Foundation and Tenets of Faith. The local congregation assumes responsibility for Church Conference decisions according to its own limitations and means.

The Mission Covenant Church also welcomes local congregations affiliated with two or more denominations /8 as well as local churches of other traditions. In consultation with the President and the District Superintendent, these churches seek ecumenical solutions to local Church Order and Statutes, based on the M CCS Constitution.

Districts

The Mission Covenant Church of Sweden is organised into geographical districts with District Superintendents as decided by the Church Conference. The local congregations of each district decide on their forms and structures of cooperation.

Ecumenical and Denominational Affiliation

The Mission Covenant Church of Sweden is a member of the World Council of Churches, the Christian Council of Sweden, and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. The Church Board decides on membership in other partner organisations.

Fellowship

Freedom and Openness

The fellowship is based on freedom and openness with Christ as the centre and Lord of each congregation. The practices and teachings of the Church are the joint responsibility of the local congregations. It is the duty of the Church to safeguard the freedom of each person to seek enlightenment in interpreting the Word of God and to support the openness of each congregation towards different Christian traditions, for instance concerning baptism. The Mission Covenant Church actively supports individual members and local congregations in their efforts to preserve and develop openness and freedom. /9

Empowerment

The local congregations are jointly responsible for the training of pastors, deacons and missionaries. Thus, the Gospel interpretation of the entire fellowship is enriched by women and men with special knowledge of Scripture and the collective experience of the universal church. This builds up the Church of God and provides new experiences and inspiration for all areas of life. The Church also shares the responsibility of providing training for various tasks in the congregations.

Unity

The Mission Covenant Church wants to promote ecumenism in Sweden and internationally. The ecumenical task becomes most visible in the fellowship of local congregations. Unity allows for diversity but must find concrete and continuous expression in the life of the Church. Different church structures as well as the need for joint inter-denominational solutions thus challenge the Mission Covenant Church to facilitate visible unity in every location.

The Mission Covenant Church wants to promote a deeper communion at the Lord's table as well as in evangelism and diaconal work. The M CCS wants to achieve mutual recognition of other churches and their ministries and orders. It wants to explore roads towards church

fellowship or mergers with other churches and denominations in Sweden and encourage ecumenical work internationally.

Mission

In Sweden

The Mission Covenant Church, its districts and congregations, are jointly responsible for the presence of the Gospel, for evangelism and future planning, and for pioneer work in various locations in the country. The Mission Covenant Church wants to be a church for all of life. In co-operation with the congregations in each district, it offers preaching, counselling and private confession as well as dedication of infants, baptism, confirmation, weddings and funerals.

The Christian witness is expressed in every context where the church listens to the needs and questions of people. It is enriched by diversity and by the common experiences of the congregations.

Social ministry means active participation in a democratic society. The Church of God has a prophetic role for each time period. It is called to manifest a reconciled community where each person may find help to discover life as indivisible and a gift of God. This applies especially to those who are extra vulnerable: the poor, the invisible, the victims of oppression and violence, and the marginalized. /10

Together, the congregations may discover areas where Christian love forces them into action. They therefore seek ways of joint diaconal ministry and they encourage congregations and individual members to become politically involved. /11

The Swedish Mission Covenant Church wants to promote justice, peace and a better environment. Concerned about nature and all creation, the Church wants to promote a just distribution of the earth's resources. At the same time, it wants to be a meeting-place for people of different cultural and social backgrounds. The fellowship is based on the equal value of all people. Differences and diversity thus become assets. /12

International Mission

The Mission Covenant Church shares in the common mission of the Church to other countries. In response to God's never-ceasing call to mission, the Church keeps searching for new areas for the commission that lasts until the end of time: to proclaim the Gospel of God's kingdom and to minister to people throughout the world.

Its historic commitment to missions compels the Mission Covenant Church to retain its relations with the churches that have developed out of this work. The fellowship with independent churches in different parts of the world challenges us to mutual intercessory prayer and sharing of experiences and resources. /13

Working Methods and Structures

The Church Conference is the highest decision-making body of the Mission Covenant Church. There, elected representatives of the local churches meet to express their fellowship in Christ and with each other, to elect the Church Board and other bodies, to call persons to different ministries, to decide on the joint work and to issue recommendations to the churches.

Together with the President, the Church Board plans and leads the work of the Mission Covenant Church. The Board adopts the hymnal and the church manual. It appoints committees and staff needed by the fellowship for its common mission.

The MCCA work among children and young people is entrusted to the Mission Covenant Youth of Sweden (SMU – Svenska Missionskyrkans Ungdom), whose work is based on the confession “Jesus Christ is Lord”.

Special Ministries and Commissions

Ordination to Special Ministry

By ordaining women and men as pastors and deacons following a resolution by the Church Conference, the Mission Covenant Church confirms the call these persons have received from God and the Church of God to be servants of Christ in the church. The local congregation receives the pastor and the deacon through an installation act. Their responsibilities are described in detail in the Order of the Congregation.

At the ordination, the pastors and deacons confirm their faith in Jesus Christ and their willingness to follow the common rules and regulations of the Mission Covenant Church in their ministry and to work for the visible unity of the Church of Christ, thus fulfilling their calling with Christ as their model.

The pastor confirms his/her willingness, as a minister of the Word of God in church and society, to assemble and build the body of Christ, to preach the Word of God by the grace of God, to teach, to administer the sacraments, to give spiritual counselling and to lead the congregation in worship and mission. The pastor vows not to disclose confidences received in confession and individual counselling.

The deacon confirms his/her willingness as a servant of Christ in church and society to share the Word of God, to provide fellowship and care, thus expressing the calling of the church to minister to the world, to help those in need and to stand by those who are oppressed in society. The deacon vows not to disclose confidences received in individual counselling and private information.

Having declared their willingness to follow the common orders of the Mission Covenant Church, pastors and deacons ordained by another denomination can be received to serve in the Mission Covenant Church. The decision shall be confirmed by the laying on of hands and prayer. Pastors and deacons, related to another denomination but serving in ecumenical congregations, share in the fellowship and responsibilities of the Mission Covenant Church according to its Constitution.

Consecration for Special Ministry or Missions

The President of the Church and the District Superintendents are elected according to the Constitution by resolution of the Church Conference. They, and others appointed by the Church Board, are dedicated for service through the laying on of hands and prayer.

The President, being the spiritual leader and highest representative of the Mission Covenant Church, shall

- be responsible for the co-ordination and supervision of the life and fellowship of the Mission Covenant Church, its pastors, deacons and missionaries,
- promote the proclamation of the Word of God, the administration of the sacraments, spiritual counselling, missions, and the development of liturgy and worship,
- work for the visible unity of the Church of Christ,
- ensure that diversity and openness contribute to the growth of the fellowship and that evangelism is kept alive in the congregations,
- supervise and follow developments in the Mission Covenant Church, other denominations and society at large,
- together with the Church Board, plan and lead the work of the Mission Covenant Church,
- promote MCCS involvement in society, in word and deed.

The District Superintendent, being the representative of the Mission Covenant Church in his/her district, shall, in consultation with the President

- be responsible for the co-ordination and supervision of the life and fellowship of the local congregations, their pastors, deacons and missionaries,
- promote the proclamation of the Word of God, the administration of the sacraments, spiritual counselling, missions, and the development of liturgy and worship,
- work for the visible unity of the Church of Christ in accordance with the Preamble and the Church Order,
- ensure that diversity and openness contribute to the growth of the fellowship and that evangelism is kept alive in the congregations,
- supervise and follow developments in the local churches and in society at large,
- promote MCCS involvement in society, in word and deed,
- plan and lead the joint work of the district in co-operation with representatives of the congregations.

Missionaries are commissioned through the laying on of hands and prayer. Before each new work period, the mission workers, i.e. missionaries and short-time workers, are commissioned for their task. They are received by the church that has called them as co-workers, according to existing church agreements, or they fulfil their commission in the country to which they have been sent. In the same manner, the Mission Covenant Church receives missionaries from other churches.

Church Statutes

The Statutes, based on the Preamble of the Mission Covenant Church, were adopted by the 1999 General Conference with amendments of the 2000 Church Conference.

§ 1 The Mission Covenant Church of Sweden

- A. The Mission Covenant Church is a Christian denomination, a fellowship of local churches sharing the concepts of congregation and church set down in the Preamble of the Church.

- B. The Church Conference has adopted the Foundation and Contents of Faith, outlining the principles of common faith of the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden, and the Preamble, defining the concepts of church and congregation. It has also adopted the Order of the Church, defining the principles of membership, fellowship, commission, working methods, and special ministries.
- C. A local church, wishing to belong to the Mission Covenant Church, makes a written application to the Church Board. Local Church Order and Statutes, number of members, the names of the senior pastor and the local church president, as well as main activities are to be included in the application. Membership decisions are made by the Church Conference on the recommendation of the Church Board.
- D. A local church may withdraw its membership from the Mission Covenant Church of its own accord.
- E. If a congregation amends its local Church Order and/or Statutes, thereby altering the conditions of membership, it may be disassociated from the Mission Covenant Church by Church Conference resolution on the recommendation of the Church Board. Any such recommendation must be preceded by consultation between the local church, the District Superintendent and the President of the Mission Covenant Church.
- F. The following bodies shall be included in the Mission Covenant Church:
 - Church Conference
 - Church Board
 - President
 - Commission on Ministerial Relations
 - Ministerial Board
 - Auditors
 - Nominations Committee

§ 2 The Church Conference

- A. The Church Conference is the highest decision-making body of the Mission Covenant Church. It decides on the joint work of the Mission Covenant Church and makes recommendations to the local churches.
- B. The Church Conference holds regular meetings annually at a time and place decided by the Church Board. Notice must be issued no later than six months before the meeting. An annual report, containing the report of the Church Board and the President and the financial report of the Church Board, must be sent to the local churches and their chosen delegates no later than four weeks before the start of the Church Conference, together with proposed resolutions.
- C. The Church Board may convene an extraordinary Church Conference between regular meetings. Notice must be issued no later than six months before the Conference. Only issues included in the notice may be discussed at the extraordinary Church Conference.
- D. The Church Conference consists of delegates of the local MCCS churches. A congregation of up to 99 members is entitled to one delegate. One additional delegate may be selected for each additional 1-100 members.

E. The Church Board members, the President, the District Superintendents, the General Secretary of the Mission Covenant Youth/SMU, the SMU Board members, the Auditors and one representative of each district may participate in the deliberations of the Church Conference. They have the right to speak and make recommendations. The same rights apply to persons named in advance as rapporteurs by the Church Board.

F. Church Conference decisions are by open ballots if not otherwise moved. Election of Church Board Members is by secret ballot. Every delegate present has one vote. Church Conference decisions are made by simple majority, except where the Statutes state differently. Where the voting is even, the Chairperson of the Church Conference has the deciding vote, except at elections, where the issue is decided by lot.

G. Proposals for the regular Church Conference may be submitted by

- a congregation within the Mission Covenant Church
- the Church Board
- the Auditors
- the Annual Meeting of the SMU.

H. Proposals for the Church Conference must be submitted to the Church Board no later than four months before the regular meeting. The Board shall state its view on each proposal.

I. Through its delegate, a local congregation within the Mission Covenant Church may address a simple question to the President no later than two weeks before the Church Conference, to be answered in plenum.

J. At the regular Church Conference, the following issues must be included:

1. Election of CC officers
 - a. a chairperson and one or two vice chairs
 - b. one or more minute takers
 - c. two adjusters to check the minutes together with the chairperson
 - d. two tellers
2. Presentation of the Annual Report and the Financial Report for the previous financial year.
3. Presentation of the Auditors' Report
4. Presentation of the Preparatory Committee report.
5. Approval of the income and expenditure account and the balance sheet.
6. Discharging the Church Board and the President of their liabilities for the previous year.
7. Adoption of a plan of action and a budget for the next financial year.
8. Election of members of the Church Board.
9. Election of a Church Board chairperson from among the Church Board members.
10. Election of auditors and deputy auditors.
11. Election of a chairperson and a vice chair of the Preparatory Committee.
12. Election of members, chairperson and vice chair of the Nominations Committee.
13. Motions received.
14. Proposals from the Church Board.
15. Statements on current issues that the Church Conference decides to discuss.

K. At regular Church Conferences, a Preparatory Committee shall prepare the discussions of the Annual Report and the Financial Report, the Auditors' Report as well as the budget and the plan of action. The Committee shall focus on the main aspects of the work and consider, in particular, lessons to be learned for the future.

L. The members of the Preparatory Committee are appointed from among the delegates of the local congregations, each district appointing two members, districts of more than 10 000 members three. In addition, the Church Conference appoints a chairperson and a vice chair of the Preparatory Committee for the next two regular Church Conferences.

M. The Church Conference is free to appoint one or more ad hoc committees to prepare issues during the Conference.

§ 3 The Church Board

A. Between Church Conferences, the Church Board is the highest decision-making body of the Mission Covenant Church. It is headquartered in Stockholm and consists of 16 members elected by the Church Conference for a period of two years. Eight members are elected each year.

B. The Church Board plans and leads the work of the Mission Covenant Church, together with the President, in accordance with Church Conference decisions.

C. The Church Board organises its own work and may appoint committees and delegations to prepare and/or make decisions on certain matters on behalf of the Church Board.

D. Among the duties of the Church Board are:

- to decide on goals and guidelines for the work of the Mission Covenant Church, in accordance with the Constitution and the framework provided by Church Conference decisions,
- to administer the assets of the Mission Covenant Church, with the right to buy and sell property,
- to prepare the business of the Church Conference,
- to carry out the decisions of the Church Conference,
- to decide on the central organisation of the Mission Covenant Church and employ the necessary staff,
- to prepare the elections of President and District Superintendents,
- to propose a General Secretary of the SMU to the Church Conference and to the Annual Meeting of SMU, in co-operation with the SMU Board,
- to decide on affiliation to organisations not mentioned in the Order of the Church,
- to appoint MCCS representatives to organisations where the Church should be represented,
- to appoint members of the Commission on Ministry Relations,
- to be responsible for the recruitment of staff for special ministries and to support the local congregations in their responsibility as employers, to assist congregations recruiting new staff, and to monitor the situation of staff and congregations,
- to appoint a Ministerial Board and define its mandate.

- E. The Church Board, or its appointee/s, is authorised to sign for the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden.
- F. The Church Board shall keep a register of the local churches of the Mission Covenant Church as well as statistics of congregational life and economic development.
- G. The Church Board may delegate part of the M CCS work to companies, foundations or other organisations owned by the M CCS alone or jointly. Decisions on matters of principle or activities of great financial importance should be referred to the Church Conference.
- H. The Church Board is convened by the chairperson or at the request of at least five Church Board members. The M CCS President has the right to participate in deliberations and to have his/her opinion noted in the minutes. The chairperson and the General Secretary of the SMU are called to regular Church Board meetings.
- I. The Church Board requires a quorum of at least eleven members. Decisions are made by open vote. If a members moves for a secret vote, it is so ordered. When the vote is tied, the chairperson casts the deciding vote, except in elections, which are decided by the drawing of lots.

§ 4 The President of the Mission Covenant Church

- A. The President is the spiritual leader and main representative of the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden. The President is appointed by the Church Conference on recommendation by the Church Board.
- B. The President plans and leads the work of the Mission Covenant Church , together with the Church Board, in accordance with Church Conference decisions. The special duties of the President are listed in the Order of the Church. /5
- C. The President is elected for a term of eight years and may be re-elected for four years at a time. To be eligible, a person must be a duly nominated member of a local M CCS congregation. In presidential elections, a two-thirds majority is required.
- D. In M CCS presidential elections, local congregations may submit nominations to the Church Board no later than four months before the Church Conference where the election will take place. The Church Board shall submit its recommendation to the Church Conference and report what other candidates are available. If the Church Conference rejects the candidate recommended by the Church Board, the Church Board may propose one of the other candidates or start a new nominating process.
- E. The Church Board appoints deputies to the President and may, if necessary, appoint an interim President to serve until the next Church Conference.

§ 5 Districts and Districts Superintendents

- A. The local churches of the Mission Covenant Church are organised into districts defined and approved by the Church Conference on recommendation by the Church Board. District changes must be discussed in advance by the districts in question, and affected congregations must be given an opportunity to express their opinions.

- B. Each district shall have a District Superintendent who represents the Mission Covenant Church within the district and is responsible for the duties listed in the Order of the Church. /6
- C. District Superintendents of the Mission Covenant Church are elected by the Church Conference on the recommendation of the Church Board after consultation with the affected local congregations. They are elected for terms of eight years and may be re-elected for four years at a time. Nominations may be submitted to the Church Board by a local congregation within the district no later than four months before the Church Conference where the election will take place. If the Church Conference rejects the candidate recommended by the Church Board, the Church Board may propose another of the candidates available or start a new nominating process. The Church Board may appoint an interim Superintendent, if necessary.

§ 6 The Commission on Ministerial Relations

- A. The Commission on Ministerial Relations consists of the President and members appointed by the Church Board, including at least one representative each of the MCCS pastors, deacons, District Superintendents, and, if need be, of the mission workers. Legal or other expertise can be co-opted to the Commission for specific issues.
- B. The Commission on Ministerial Relations handles disciplinary matters involving persons ordained or appointed for special ministries by the Mission Covenant Church, in case of:
 - breach of the vow to secrecy,
 - doctrinal issues, where the teaching of the co-worker is contrary to the Preamble of the Mission Covenant Church,
 - actions that threaten to compromise the trust in the worker or constitute dereliction of duty.
- C. When necessary, the Commission may recommend the Church Board to delete a staff member from the roster of those ordained or appointed to special ministries within the Mission Covenant Church.
- D. The Church Board sets the guidelines for the work of the Commission.

§ 7 The Nominations Committee

- A. The Nominations Committee shall prepare the elections of Church Conference officers, the elections of the Church Board and the Auditors as well as the elections of the chairperson and vice chair of the Preparatory Committee. The Nominations Committee may also prepare other elections not otherwise regulated.
- B. Local congregations of the Mission Covenant Church and district boards have the right to nominate members of the Church Board. Written nominations must be submitted to the chairperson of the Nominations Committee no later than four months before the Church Conference. Submitters must ascertain in advance that the nominee is available.

- C. The Nominations Committee shall prepare the ballot for the Church Conference, listing the candidates to the Church Board recommended by the Committee. The ballot should include more names than the number to be elected.
- D. The Church Conference appoints the Nominations Committee for the next Church Conference by selecting one member from each district, on recommendation by the district. The chairperson and vice chair of the Committee are appointed on the recommendation of the presiding Church Conference officers.

§ 8 Financial Report and Audit

- A. The financial year of the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden is September 1 – August 31.
- B. For each financial year, the Church Board shall present a statement of accounts, including a financial report, income and expenditure account and balance sheet.
- C. The annual report, the accounts and the management shall be examined by three auditors appointed by the Church Conference. At least one of the auditors shall be a chartered accountant. Two deputy auditors shall be appointed, one of whom shall be a chartered accountant.
- D. The auditors shall monitor the work and the financial management. Upon completion of their examination, they shall submit a report to the Church Conference and make recommendations concerning the income and expenditure account and the balance sheet as well as the discharging of the Church Board of its liabilities.

§ 9 The Mission Covenant Church Youth (SMU)

The work among children and young people in the Mission Covenant Church is entrusted to the Mission Covenant Youth/SMU. SMU is bound by statutes adopted by its Annual Meeting on recommendation by the SMU Board after consultation with the Church Board. The work is carried out in accordance with the Preamble of the Mission Covenant Church.

§ 10 Other Bodies

- A. The Mission Covenant Church of Sweden is a member of the Stockholm School of Theology Co-operative Society which is in charge of ministerial training, other higher theological training and research on behalf of the Mission Covenant Church and other partners.
- B. The Mission Covenant Church provides adult education at so-called folk high schools (Protestant Academies), owned by co-operative societies where the Mission Covenant Church is the main shareholder. Through these folk high schools the Mission Covenant Church wants to provide general and specialised education opportunities for young and old students. The folk high schools play an important role by providing complementary and vocational training and leadership development within the Mission Covenant Church and its youth organisation.
- C. The Mission Covenant Church participates in the public debate and in Christian opinion-building through the bi-weekly newspaper “Sändaren”, published by Verbum AB, where MCCS is a shareholder.

- D. The Mission Covenant Church publishes books and other media products for the benefit of church and society by being a shareholder in Verbum AB, for instance.

§ 11 Dissolution of the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden

- A. The dissolution of the Mission Covenant Church requires identical/similar(?) decisions by two consecutive regular Church Conferences. Decisions must be reached by a two-thirds majority of the delegates present.
- B. The resolution to dissolve must include the questions of liquidation of Church property and disposition of staff.

§12 Changes to the Mission Covenant Church Constitution

- A. Changes to the MCCA Constitution can be made by decision of the Church Conference. Proposed changes and amendments must be sent to the local churches at least two months before the Conference, together with Church Board recommendations on proposals originating outside the Board.
- B. Changes to the Statutes and the Order of the Church must be carried by a two-thirds majority of the delegates present.
- C. The changing of § 11 requires identical/similar(?) decisions by two consecutive regular Church Conferences.
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Footnotes

1. Col. 1:15-20, John 12:32, Ef. 2:17-19, I Tim. 2:1-3
2. Ef. 2:20, Ps. 119:105, Rom. 15:4
3. Rom. 1:11-12
4. Rom. 10:9-13
5. Matt. 18:1-5, Mark 10:13-16
6. Acts 9:31. Gal. 1:1-5, Ef. 1:15-16
7. Philemon 3:12. I Cor. 13:9-13
8. "Joint congregations"
9. Rom. 16:17-18, Gal. 2:4-5
10. Matt. 5:13-16, Luke 6:20-21, 28-32
11. Rom. 13:7-8, Jacob 2:1-8
12. Mika 4:3-4, Luke 4:18-21, Rom. 8:19-21; 10:12
13. 2 Cor. 8:8-14

Translation: RAGNI LANTZ