

# CHURCH BYLAWS

## OF THE FREE EVANGELICAL CHURCH ...

### 1. NAME

The congregation is named "Freie evangelische Gemeinde ....." It is a member of the Federation, Bund Freier evangelischer Gemeinden in Deutschland KdöR, based in Witten/Ruhr. It manages its own affairs independently in accordance with the Constitution of the Bund Freier evangelischer Gemeinden (Bund FeG).

### 2. FOUNDATION AND MISSION

2.1 The authoritative foundation for faith, teaching, and life in the congregation is the Bible, the Word of God. In its structure and ministry, the congregation is shaped by the characteristics of Christian congregations as described in the New Testament. Its members believe, teach, and act in accordance with the Preamble of the Constitution of the Bund Freier evangelischer Gemeinden. | [verfassung.feg.de](http://verfassung.feg.de)

2.2 The congregation has the mission to worship God, proclaim the Word of God, foster fellowship among believers, and serve its neighbors faithfully, in recognition of its missionary and charitable responsibility.

2.3 It fulfills its tasks through the witness and service of its members in word and deed. It is devoted solely and directly to ecclesiastical purposes. It acts selflessly and does not primarily seek its own economic benefit.

### 3. MEMBERSHIP

3.1 Anyone who believes in the triune God and affirms that they have received forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus Christ and seeks to live under his guidance may become a member (Mitglied) of the congregation. It is expected that the effects of this faith will be visible in the life of the congregation member through the Holy Spirit.

3.2 An application for membership (Mitgliedschaft) must be addressed to the Board of Elders (Gemeindeleitung); it will be announced to the congregation members with sufficient time for them to respond to the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders will then decide on admission. In accordance with the legal provisions on religious self-determination, membership is generally possible from the age of 14. Membership generally excludes membership in another christian church or congregation and always excludes membership in a non-Christian religious community.

3.3 The members of the congregation respect, support, serve, encourage, and, when necessary, admonish one another. In accordance with the New Testament, attempts are made to help and guide members whose behavior contradicts biblical teachings.

3.4 Membership ends upon the death of the member, upon transfer to another congregation, upon written notification of resignation addressed to the Congregational Leadership, upon removal if the member has not participated in congregational life for a long time, or upon expulsion if a member clearly no longer shares the basic beliefs of the congregation (2.1 + 3.1) or no longer lives in accordance with the principles of faith and teachings of the congregation.

3.5 The Board of Elders shall inform the congregational members in a timely manner of any necessary expulsion or removal of a member so that questions and objections may be addressed. The Board of Elders shall then decide on the expulsion or removal and subsequently inform the congregation.

3.6 The congregation keeps a register of its members. Each member may request a copy of this register. The data protection provisions of the Federation of Free Evangelical Churches apply. | [datenschutz.feg.de](http://datenschutz.feg.de)

## 4. BAPTISM AND COMMUNION

4.1 The congregation teaches and practices believers baptism (Taufe der Glaubenden); however, this is not a prerequisite for admission to the congregation.

4.2 The congregation regularly celebrates Lord's Supper (Abendmahl) with its members. Other Christians are welcome to participate as guests; the congregation announces the conditions under which participation is possible. Participants are expected to live in a relationship with God and their fellow human beings that is characterized by repentance, forgiveness, and a willingness to reconcile.

## 5. BODIES OF THE CONGREGATION

5.1 The governing bodies of the congregation are the Congregational Assembly (Gemeindeversammlung) and the Board of Elders (Gemeindeleitung).

## 6. THE CONGREGATIONAL ASSEMBLY

6.1 The Congregational Assembly (Gemeindeversammlung) consists of all members of the congregation. It shall be convened by the Board of Elders at least twice a year with the agenda announced, and whenever at least ten percent of the members request this in writing, stating their reasons. The Board of Elders may admit guests without voting rights to the Congregational Assembly.

6.2 The Congregational Assembly decides on all matters essential to the life of the congregation. It decides on the fundamental direction of the congregation's work. It elects and, if necessary, dismisses members of the Board of Elders. It appoints the pastor on the recommendation of the Board of Elders, with the involvement of the responsible Region Superintendent. It adopts the annual

budget, approves the previous year's financial statements, and grants discharge to the treasurer. It decides on important individual expenditures and receives work and accountability reports; it decides on the purchase and sale of real estate.

6.3 A Congregational Assembly may also be held without the physical presence of some or all of the congregation members at a specific meeting location, and members' rights may be exercised by means of electronic communication if, due to significant factual or legal obstacles, the physical presence of the congregation members is not possible or only possible to a limited extent. The decision rests with the Board of Elders. The format of the Congregational Assembly shall be specified in the invitation.

## 7. THE CONGREGATIONAL LEADERSHIP

7.1 The Board of Elders (Gemeindeleitung) consists of several adult church members who are elected by the Congregational Assembly in a secret ballot for a term of four years and are eligible for re-election. The election of the Board of Elders is regulated by separate rules of procedure. Pastors are members of the Board of Elders for the duration of their ministry in the congregation.

7.2 Those elected in the Board of Elders must meet the personal qualifications set out in the New Testament and have the trust of the congregation. These qualities must be maintained for the entire duration of their service.

7.3 The Board of Elders provides spiritual, pastoral, and organizational leadership for the congregation; in particular, it manages day-to-day business and oversees the employment of pastors and other full-time staff. It is responsible for the congregation's expenditures within the framework of the financial budget. The congregation is jointly represented by two members of the Board of Elders.

7.4 The Board of Elders shall, in consultation with the Congregational Assembly, ensure that the congregation has an appropriate organizational structure. The Board of Elders may delegate tasks for its support. Details may be regulated in rules of procedure.

## 8. DECISION-MAKING

8.1 All decisions of the congregation and its bodies should, if possible, be made unanimously. If no absolute consensus can be reached, a majority vote shall be determined. If fewer than two-thirds of the valid votes are cast in favor, the decision shall be postponed until, after further consideration and earnest prayer, a clear majority can be expected.

8.2 The decisions made in the Congregational Assembly are binding for the Board of Elders and the Committees (Arbeitsgruppen).

8.3 Resolutions and important discussions shall be recorded in protocols, which shall be signed by the secretary and another member of the congregation. The protocols shall be made available to the members within a reasonable period of time.

## 9. ASSET MANAGEMENT

9.1 The congregational finances (Gemeindekasse) are managed by the Treasurer (Kassierer bzw. Kassiererin). Details are regulated by the Guidelines for the Treasurer (Kassierrichtlinien) of the Bund FeG. The Board of Elders may appoint a member from among its ranks to inspect the finances; this may also be done in order to engage in dialogue with members who are not making appropriate contributions. Otherwise, donations and contributions from individual members of the congregation shall be treated confidentially.

9.2 The congregational finances shall be audited once a year by two qualified members, appointed in due time by the Congregational Assembly. The Auditors (Kassenprüferinnen bzw. Kassenprüfer) shall report the results of the audit to the parish assembly and state whether they recommend approval of the accounts.

9.3 The real estate owned by the congregation is managed by the “Bund Freier evangelischer Gemeinden in Deutschland KdöR” and is registered in its name in the land register; however, the congregation remains the beneficial owner. Further details are governed by a trust agreement with the Bund FeG.

## 10. USE OF CONGREGATIONAL FUNDS

10.1 The congregation covers its budget through voluntary contributions from its members, donations, offerings, and other income. The congregation uses its income exclusively and directly for the tasks specified in these regulations and thus for the ecclesiastical purposes of the religious community as described in the constitution of the Bund Freier evangelischer Gemeinden.

10.2 The congregation may issue donation certificates if the tax requirements are met.

10.3 Members of the congregation do not receive financial benefits; this does not preclude any temporary support for persons in financial distress. Members and persons who work for the congregation on a voluntary or professional basis may be reimbursed for proven expenses. It is also permissible to grant appropriate remuneration on the basis of a contractual agreement, in particular under a service or employment contract.

10.4 Members are not entitled to any share of the congregation's assets; they have no entitlement to the reimbursement of contributions or donations.

10.5 Public subsidies from municipalities, states, or the Federal Republic of Germany (Bundesrepublik Deutschland) may be used only in specific cases and only to co-finance investments or other purposes for which non-religious institutions are likewise eligible for state subsidies. The use of such funds must be documented in accordance with the applicable legal provisions.

## 11. COOPERATION WITHIN THE FEDERATION

11.1 Through its membership in the Bund FeG, the congregation is committed to cooperating with other Free Evangelical congregations at the district, regional, and federal levels.

11.2 The congregation supports the joint tasks of the federal community (Bundesgemeinschaft) spiritually, financially, and practically.

## 12. FINAL PROVISIONS

12.1 Amendments to these congregational regulations and the dissolution of the congregation can only be decided by the Congregational Assembly provided that the agenda has been announced with due notice and only with at least a three-quarters majority of the valid votes cast by the members present. If fewer than half of all congregational members are present, a second Congregational Assembly shall be convened for this purpose with one month's notice; this Congregational Assembly shall in any case constitute a quorum.

12.2 Any intended dissolution of the congregation must be communicated to the Federal Leadership (Bundesleitung) at an early stage, providing the relevant facts, in order to obtain their opinion.

12.3 Upon dissolution of the congregation, all assets shall pass to the Bund FeG, which shall use them for its purposes as a religious community, primarily for the benefit of the location of the local congregation.

**Adopted by the Standing Committee of the Federal Assembly on September 24, 2021, in the FeG Wetzlar.**