

Latvian United Methodist Church Law of 17 May 2007

Latvijas Vestnesis 07.06.2007, n. 91

Section 1. Definitions

- (1) The terms and definitions used for the purpose of this Law correspond to those used in the [Religious Organisations](#) Law unless otherwise provided by this Law.
- (2) For the purpose of this Law, the following terms and definitions are used:
- 1) Church – Latvian United Methodist Church with all its parishes;
 - 2) Head of the Church – a superintendent who has assumed the position and heads the Church in compliance with regulations stipulated in the statutes.
 - 3) Church priests – an ecclesiastical staff contained in the list of the Church priests;
 - 4) church - a building constructed or adjusted for conducting a service;
 - 5) pastoral conversation – a conversation initiated by the lay person between him/her and a priest in a worship space or any other place where the ordinary ecclesiastical care of the Church priest is not made available.
 - 6) Statutes – Church statutes registered in the register of religious organisations and its establishments in compliance with the procedure set forth in the Law.

Section 2. Scope and purpose of the Law

- (1) The purpose of the Law is to promote development of open, legal and harmonious society, as well as of cultural environment.
- (2) The objective of the Law is to regulate the legal relations between the State and the Church and set the common objectives of the State and the Church in the social, legal, educational and cultural area, in line with the constitutional traditions and the provision of the Section 99 of the [Satversme](#) (Constitution) of the Republic of Latvia, considering the long-standing existence and spread of the Church as a traditional religious organisation in the territory of Latvia, as well as recognising its contribution to and rich experience in the areas of society's physical and mental health, education, culture, social support and other areas.

Section 3. Status of the Church

- (1) The Church has the status of legal entity and the rights stipulated in the laws and regulations.
- (2) In performing its activities, the Church shall comply with the [Satversme](#) of the Republic of Latvia, this Law, and [Religious Organisations](#) Law and other laws and regulations regulating the activities of the religious organisations, as well as the Church statutes.
- (3) The State shall recognise the rights of the Church to construe the Holy Scripture of the Bible, to define its doctrine and preach it, to develop its internal affairs, including its organisational structure and mission.
- (4) The Church decisions with regard to canonical issues may not be appealed in public institutions.
- (5) The full name of the Church is “Latvian United Methodist Church”. The rights to use the name of the Church are exclusive to the Church and its parishes and the authorities and institutions established by the Church. The names of the other religious organisations, associations, foundations and legal subjects shall clearly differ from the Church's name.
- (6) The Church may claim termination of illegal use of its name and compensation for damages caused to the Church.

Section 4. Head of the Church

- (1) The Head of the Church represents the Church in its relations with the State.
- (2) The Head of the Church, in cases and procedure as set forth in the Church statutes, may issue written authorisations to other persons to act on behalf of the Church in relations with the State.

Section 5. Possessions of the Church

- (1) The Church may possess both movable and immovable property.
- (2) The acquisition, alienation, mortgage and any other encumbrance by property rights shall be made possible only upon a written consent by the Head of the Church. It shall not be required if the immovable property is alienated in compliance to the Law "On Compulsory Alienation of Immovable Property for State or Public Needs". Churches and cemeteries possessed by the Church may not be subject to compulsory alienation. In case of decision by the parish of the Church to acquire, alienate or mortgage or encumber by property rights the immovable property, it shall in advance present a written notice about its decision to the Head of the Church.
- (3) The mortgage of churches and ritual objects, and recovery upon creditor's claim is prohibited.
- (4) In case of liquidation of any parishes of the Church, its possessions shall be transferred to the possession or administration of the Church in compliance with the procedure set forth in the Church Statutes.

Section 6. The rights of the Church priests to conduct the marriage service

Pursuant to the procedure set forth in the Civil Law and other laws and regulations only priests granted authorisations by the Church and included in the list of priests with the right to conduct the marriage service submitted to the Ministry of Justice are authorised to conduct the marriage service.

Section 7. Religious funeral ceremonies

The Church may as well conduct religious funeral ceremonies in the cemeteries and crematoria established by the local governments in accordance with the procedure as set forth by the local governments.

Section 8. Pastoral conversation secret

- (1) Priests of the Church shall not be cross-examined concerning information obtained during pastoral conversations and they shall not be requested to disclose such information even when they are witnesses or a party in some court proceedings.
- (2) It shall be prohibited to obtain information necessary for operative measures by means of pastoral conversations.
- (3) No institution or official shall be permitted to recruit a priest of the Church.

Section 9. The Church and military service

(1) Every person in the National Armed Forces shall possess the right to receive services of a priest of the Church and to participate in public worships of the Church if such activities do not influence person's capacity to fulfil his/her duties in the military service.

Section 10. Spiritual activities of chaplains of the Church

(1) Chaplains of the Church shall act in the National Armed Forces, airports, harbours, land transport stations, health care and social care institutions, and prisons and in other places where usual services of priests of the Church are not available under the Law on Religious Organisations.
(2) Spiritual activities of chaplains of the Church shall be supervised by the Church.

Section 11. Relations of the Church and its employees

When forming labour relations, maintaining them or terminating employment, the Church shall possess the right to take into account person's religious affiliation, commitment and capacity to act loyally with the teachings and beliefs (doctrines) of the Church, as well as moral and behavioural norms, principles and ideals of the person in relation to the religious beliefs of the United Methodist Church.

Section 12. The Church and education

The Church shall possess the right to provide religion lessons in state or municipal educational establishments under the procedure stipulated in the relevant laws and regulations.

Section 13. List of Church priests

(1) The Church shall submit to the Ministry of Justice a list of persons who comply with the status of Church priests stipulated in Sub-section 1(3) of this Law and who are authorised to perform the activities stipulated in Sections 6 and 10, as well as information about these persons. The amount of such information, procedure and terms for their submission and updating shall be prescribed by the Cabinet of Ministers.
(2) The Church shall within two weeks provide a written notice to the Ministry of Justice on any changes in the information provided under Paragraph (1) of this Section.
(3) The information submitted to the Ministry shall be publicly available.

Transitional provisions

1. By 1 May 2008 the Church shall align its Statutes with this Law by incorporating the necessary amendments, approving their new wording and submitting them to the Ministry of Justice for registration under the procedure stipulated in the Law on

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Religious organisations.
2. The Church shall submit to the Ministry of Justice the information specified in Paragraph (1) of Section 13 by 1 June 2008.

The Law shall come into force on 1 May 2008.

The Law was adopted by the *Saeima* on 17 May 2007.
(*Translation : Latvian Republic State Chancellery*)