



The Constitution

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Article I. Of the Name

(1) The legal name of this organization is “Community of the Good Shepherd of the West Indies”

(2) It is herein referred to as the “Community,” or the “Community of the Good Shepherd”

Article II. Organization

(1) The purpose of the Community of the Good Shepherd is to provide to our members a guided experience and support network in monastic-style living while remaining in their current home, family, and job situations. The Community provides structure and support for members as they strive to live by their Vows wherever they happen to be in the service of the Lord our God.

(2) This Community is a Ministry of the Diocese of The Bahamas and The Turks and Caicos Islands (The Diocese), and conforms to the Rules and Regulations of the Diocese, and the Constitution and Canons of the Church in the Province of The West Indies (CPWI)

(3) It is our intent as a Community to be in Communion with the See of Canterbury.

(4) The Community is organized exclusively for spiritual development purposes.

(5) No substantial part of the activities of the Community shall be the carrying on of political propaganda, and shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.

Article III. Of Management

Section 1. Ongoing Management

(1) The ongoing management of this Community, as a monastic community is vested in the Guardian, Council, Chapter, and Bishop-Visitor, as described herein.

(2) The management of this Community, a ministry of the Diocese, as a corporate entity, is in the purview of the Bishop of the Diocese or some other legal representative of the Diocese as appointed by the Bishop.

(3) The Guardian appoints the Secretary and Treasurer for an indeterminate term.

(4) The Guardian is responsible for the effective and efficient operations of the Community to fulfil its mission and vision, to protect the intent and integrity of the Vision, Charism, and Common Rule, and is the chief interpreter of the Constitution to this end where and when clarity is needed. When the term "Guardian" is used in this document, it may be construed to include a duly appointed representative of the Guardian.

(5) The character, duties, rights and functions of the Guardian are further described in the Customary and this Constitution.

Section 2. Assistants to the Guardian

(1) The Guardian may appoint representatives and delegate to them authority for the efficient functioning of various aspects of the community. The Guardian is free to appoint these persons as needed but should avoid the difficulties caused by frequent and unreasonable changes in these offices. Appointments and dismissals will be done in consultation with the Council.

(2) The specific operational functions may vary from time to time and the same Brother or Sister may hold various offices. The

offices are described in the Customary of the Community. The Guardian, after consulting with the Council, shall decide the question of which offices need to be filled at any time.

Article IV. Of Membership

This Community reserves the right to approve and admit members to Community life, to receive commitments of those prepared for full membership, to adjudicate internal problems not already stipulated by the Canons of the Church, to practice without hindrance those traditions and customs approved by tradition and time which are particular and unique to Spiritual and Community life.

The administration of these particulars will reside with the Guardian, with the advice and guidance of the Council as needed. Fuller descriptions of the details of Membership are in the Customary.

Section 1. Postulants

(1) A Postulant is a person who is exploring a vocation with the Community and has successfully completed the Discernment Process. The Postulancy is to be a period of further discernment and evaluation to determine mutual interest and benefit between the Postulant and the Community.

(2) A Discerner is admitted to the Postulancy with the permission of the Guardian and in consultation with the Council.

(3) Postulants have no voice or vote within Community matters, are not legal members of the Community, and are not to be considered representatives or agents of the Community in any way.

(4) A Postulant may leave the Postulancy at any time for any reason.

(5) A Postulant may be dismissed from the Postulancy by the Guardian, or the Council in the absence of a Guardian, at any time for any reason.

(6) Further details about the nature and scope of Discerners and Postulants are to be found in the Customary.

(7) Postulants who are invited to become Novices of this Community will complete an application as prescribed by the Guardian. The application will be reviewed by the Community and must be approved by the Guardian prior to admittance of the candidate.

Section 2. Oblates

(1) Oblates are persons, who because of life circumstances, do not profess monastic vows, but fully live Monastic Spirituality – embracing the traditions and practices, and living them in daily life

(2) The formation of Oblates is the same as Postulants.

(3) Oblates may be considered as Lay Monastics.

Section 3. Novices

(1) The Novitiate is a probationary period before Profession - Full Membership. The length of the Novitiate shall be one to three years. The Guardian may shorten or lengthen this period as appropriate. Postulants may be appointed as Novices after the Guardian consults with the Community.

(2) Before entering the Novitiate, the Novice acknowledges in writing that his or her entry into the Community is not to be taken as a work contract of any kind, recognizing that he or she can claim no compensation or other monetary judgments in the event of his or her departure from the Community.

(3) The Novice must be at least 18 years of age.

(4) Novices in good standing with the Community have voice in matters related to the Community when asked, but no vote.

(5) Further details about the nature and scope of the Novitiate are to be found in the Customary.

Section 4. Full Membership - Profession

(1) Upon successfully completing the requirements of the Novitiate and petitioning the Guardian, the Novice may move to Full Membership - Profession status, as herein provided, on the approval of the Guardian and the Community.

(2) Any Professed Member in good standing with the Community gains a right to vote at Chapter meetings and other gatherings where votes are requested.

(3) Professed members are those people who:

- have successfully completed their Novitiate requirements, and
- been approved by the Guardian after consultation with the Community, and
- have offered their vows to the Community in a Rite of Profession, and
- are in good standing within the Anglican Church unless they are in transition or are seeking a place within the Church.

(4) A Formation Guide, appointed by the Guardian, assumes the task with that of the Guardian of assisting the Professed Member in developing and working his or her formation plan. There are no implied benefits of this formation procedure since much of the growth of the Professed Member rests with the efforts and desire of that person. The Formation Guide will report to the Guardian on the progress of the Professed Member.

(5) The Professed Member must proclaim and reaffirm his or her commitment to the Community and to his or her Vows annually in a manner described in the Customary of the Community.

(6) Further details about the nature and scope of Professed Membership are to be found in the Customary.

Section 5. Separation from the Community

(1) Any Member is free to depart the Community at any time after consultation with the Guardian.

The Guardian has the right to dismiss any Member at any time after consultation with the Member's Formation Guide and Community. Proceedings for separation may be initiated by the Guardian, or by the Member. The Bishop Visitor shall be notified of dismissals.

(2) Any Professed Member of the Community may be granted a leave of absence or placed in inactive status by the Guardian, after notifying the Community. The Bishop Visitor shall be notified of the change in status.

(3) Any attempt made to enter the Community by fraudulent means will be grounds for immediate dismissal.

(4) Any Member having exhausted the normal process of the Community may seek redress in accordance the Canons of the Diocese.

Section 6. Companions of the Community

(1) People may express a desire to participate in and support the life of the Community to a limited extent. They will be welcomed by the Guardian and known as "Companions of the Community" and may attend local, regional, and national gatherings of the members at the invitation of the Guardian but may not attend Chapter meetings except by the express invitation of the Guardian.

(2) Friends of the Community, while associated with the Community, are not legal members of the Community; they have no vested interest, are not part of the Chapter, and have no vote or authority in or for the Community. They represent the Community only to the degree outlined in the Customary.

Article V. Of Electing the Guardian

(1) The Guardian of this Community must be a Professed Member of the Community in good standing with this Community and with his or her local parish or church body. Additional desired characteristics and experience to be a Guardian are to be found in the Community's Customary.

(2) The term of the Guardian shall be three years, except for the founding Guardian whose term as Guardian begins upon formation of the Community (Day Month, 2023) and extends four three after the point of accepting the sixth Professed Member to the Community.

(3) There is no limit to the number of terms a Guardian may serve.

(4) Near the end of an incumbent Guardian's term, or planned retirement, (allowing time for a transition), a meeting of the Council is scheduled for the purpose of planning an election. This planning meeting may take place using technology if they so choose. There should be no undue delay in this process.

(5) If the Guardian should resign, become incapacitated, or die in office, the governance of the Community shall devolve upon the Council who shall inform the Bishop Visitor of the vacancy and meet as soon as is practical as described in (4) above.

(6) The Council will discern and establish a list of Professed Members who are eligible to serve as Guardian. Council will then ask each of these people whether or not they wish to serve as Guardian if elected by Chapter. A reasonable amount of time

should be allowed for discernment, but not more than two weeks. Those Members indicating a desire to serve as Guardian will then be put on the candidate's list and the list is then shared with the Community.

(7) A period of no less than two weeks, but no more than four weeks, should be allowed for the Chapter members to discern their choice for Guardian. During this time, candidates should submit responses to discernment questions established by the Council. A deadline should be established after which no further responses are allowed. Responses should then be distributed to the Community as soon as practical. Candidates may be asked to appear at video- or teleconference meetings to discuss their candidacy.

(8) A Chapter Meeting for the actual Election should be scheduled shortly thereafter. It is best to occur at a Convocation, but may be held using technology if there is no upcoming Convocation.

Eligible Members of the Chapter shall be summoned to this meeting. Eligible members unable to attend may vote by email, phone call, text, or some other use of technology.

(9) On the day appointed for the election, the Community and Chapter shall assemble, either in person, or through technology, all eligible members having been duly notified. The most senior member of the Council shall preside at the election, or his or her appointee if the Chair is also running for Guardianship. The Bishop Visitor or his or her appointee shall function as chief teller. If the Bishop Visitor is unavailable or unwilling to participate in the election, then a senior of the Council (who is not running for Guardian) shall serve as Chief Teller. Another non-candidate senior member from Council (preferably the Secretary of the Community) shall serve as Co-Teller.

Both Tellers shall be bound by the strictest secrecy.

BALLOT CYCLES

(10) Each eligible Professed member may cast 1 vote in each ballot cycle needed.

If Multiple Candidates (3 or more):

Ballot Cycle 1:

For an election of a Guardian on the first ballot, it is required that a person receive two-thirds (2/3) of the valid votes cast. If successful, only the name of the new Guardian is to be announced. If unsuccessful, proceed to Ballot Cycle 2.

Ballot Cycle 2:

The senior Teller will announce the names of those receiving votes in Ballot Cycle 1 together with the number of votes each received. Another vote is then taken, and it is required that a person receive two-thirds (2/3) of the valid votes cast. If successful, only the name of the new Guardian is to be announced. If unsuccessful, proceed to Ballot Cycle 3.

Ballot Cycle 3:

The names of the top two candidates who received the most votes are announced. Another vote is taken, but this time the person with a majority of the valid votes being cast (51%) is to be the Guardian. In the event of ties, the senior most candidate (total tenure time) is to be preferred.

If Two Candidates:

Use the format for Ballot Cycle 3. The person with a majority of the valid votes being cast (51%) is to be the Guardian. In the case of a tie, the senior most member is to be preferred.

If One Candidate:

In the event that there is only one candidate, there needs to be an affirmation vote. A single candidate is not automatically the Guardian. The affirmation vote is successful if a majority of the

valid votes cast approves (51%). The monastic tradition is that the candidate does not vote for himself or herself.

Votes are sent to the Tellers in like manner as above with either a Yes-Affirm, or No-do not affirm, vote. In the event that an affirmation does not happen, the Community must enter another period of reflection and discernment to determine next steps as guided by the Council as a whole.

(11) None but the tellers may examine the votes, and they are responsible for the confidential destruction of these votes after the election. The tellers shall count the votes and announce the results.

(12) The newly elected Brother or Sister immediately becomes Guardian of the Community and receives a blessing from the Bishop Visitor. If the Bishop Visitor is unable to attend the election, or the election is held in a dispersed manner using technology, the new Guardian will be blessed by the Bishop Visitor at the first opportunity.

(13) An election of a Guardian may also be initiated:

(a) at the request of the incumbent Guardian;

(b) upon the order of the Bishop Visitor for just cause and approved by the majority of the Community;

(c) upon 75% of Professed Members signing a petition for election; said petition being

delivered to the Bishop Visitor and a copy to all members of the Council.

(14) If a new Guardian is elected under Article V, the new Guardian will begin a new 4-year term. But if an incumbent Guardian is re-elected under (13) (b) or (c), the Guardian will resume his or her 4-year term and not start a new 4-year term.

Article VI. Of Chapter

(1) The “Chapter” consists of all fully Professed Members, Novices, Postulants, and Oblates of the Community in good standing, and all have the right to be summoned to every meeting of the Chapter and to speak and to vote as outlined below and elsewhere in this Constitution.

(2) Each fully Professed Member shall have one equal vote. Novices and Oblates may be seated and have voice, but no vote; Postulants may be seated but have neither voice nor vote. Any member under disciplinary action may not vote, and may be refused seating at Chapter by the Guardian.

(3) Visitors may attend Chapter only by specific invitation of the Guardian.

(4) The Guardian shall be bound to summon Chapter at least annually and may summon it more frequently if desired. Where Chapter is not able to convene physically in one location, meetings and votes may be obtained via technology or standard mail. The Guardian is bound to summon the Chapter and ask for their input and/or vote, where appropriate, on the following matters:

- a. Admission of people to the Community.
- b. Approving Novices to Profession.
- c. Election of a Guardian.
- d. Election of a Bishop Visitor.
- e. Matters of general concern to the Community.
- f. Changes to the Constitution or Customary as outlined in those documents.

(5) The Guardian shall normally preside at Chapter meetings. In the absence of the Guardian, the most senior Member from the Council available shall preside.

(6) Minutes of all meetings shall be carefully recorded and stored. The most recent Minutes shall be read at the next meeting by the Secretary of the Community, or other person appointed by the Guardian.

(7) Meetings of the Chapter shall be opened with the invocation of the Holy Spirit and will be regulated by the latest edition of Roberts Rules of Order where doing so lends efficiency and effectiveness to Community proceedings as determined by the presiding official.

Article VII. Of Council

The Council serves to provide guidance to the Guardian in Community matters, and governance to the Community in the absence of a Guardian. The Council monitors various key functions of the Community to determine strengths and needs.

(1) The Council consists of:

(a) The Guardian who presides at Council, and those who hold specific offices or duties within the Community as appointed by the Guardian, such as Secretary and Treasurer, must be Professed members of the Community;

(b) The Shepherd of Vocations.

(c) The Shepherd of the Companions of the Community.

(e) Other Ad Hoc or permanent positions as determined by the Guardian after consultation with the Council.

(f) The Bishop Visitor and Chaplain, while not regular members of the Community, should have a seat at Council meetings if they desire to be present.

(g) The immediate past-Guardian in good standing with the Community may also have a seat on Council if desired.

(2) All Council Members in good standing have the right to be summoned to every meeting of the Council and to speak and to vote. All shall have one equal vote, except for the Chaplain and Bishop Visitor. Votes of the Council are advisory to the Guardian in nature. It is preferred that decisions are reached through consensus, and the Council should strive to do so.

(3) The Guardian is bound to summon the Council at least annually and may summon it more frequently if desired. Meetings may be held using technology at the discretion of the Guardian. The purpose of the Council is to:

(a) provide advice and counsel to the Guardian as needed

(b) prepare budgets for the coming year and monitor them

(c) prepare issues, as needed, before presenting them to the Community for resolution

(d) decide minor issues that do not impact the entire Community

(e) serve as the Guardian election team for any upcoming Guardian election

(f) serve as the temporary governance body for the Community in the event of the demise, disability, or resignation of the Guardian

(4) The Quorum needed for the Council to conduct business is 50% of the Council members.

(5) There must be no unauthorized disclosure of the proceedings of the Council. The Guardian may wish to inform members of the

Community who are not members of the Council of certain discussions and decisions of the Council. He or she may delegate this responsibility to another member of the Council.

Article VIII. Of Relationship to the Larger Church

The Community of the Good Shepherd is a Christian Community as determined by the Bishop, according to the Canon of the Church.

Section 1. The Bishop of the Diocese

If the Bishop of the Diocese is not the Bishop Visitor of the Community, he or she shall, on a vacancy in the office of Bishop Visitor, be informed by the Guardian of the vacancy within one month of its occurrence. The Chapter shall proceed to elect a new Bishop Visitor. The sanction of the Bishop of the Diocese shall be necessary for the formal tendering of the Visitor-ship to any Bishop other than him or herself. During the vacancy, the Community may request the Bishop of the Diocese to fulfill any duties that would normally fall to the Bishop Visitor.

Section 2. The Bishop Visitor

(1) The Bishop Visitor of the Community shall be the Bishop of the Diocese, or his/her designee.

(3) The Bishop Visitor may visit the Community at any time.

(4) The Bishop Visitor is the guardian of the Constitution of the Community. To be lawful, any change in the Constitution shall be reviewed by the Bishop Visitor to determine if said change was given due diligence and fair consideration and does not violate or conflict with Canon law. If said changes are not satisfactory, the Bishop Visitor will consult with the Guardian as to appropriate action.

(5) Responsibilities of the Bishop Visitor include assisting at the election of a new Guardian and the Public Blessing of the newly elected Guardian, when possible, but the Bishop Visitor has the right to nominate another appointee to act in his or her stead.

(6) The Bishop Visitor shall have power to receive appeals from any member of the Community without hindrance from the Guardian or Council. On receipt of such an appeal the Bishop Visitor shall appoint a time and place for the hearing of the appeal convenient to all parties. The Bishop Visitor shall make no decision without consultation with the Guardian and Council.

(7) The Bishop Visitor shall be informed of all new Memberships, and any dismissals or resignations from the Community.

(8) Notice must be given to the Community of the Bishop Visitor's intention to hold a Visitation in sufficient time for all necessary arrangements to be made.

(9) The Bishop Visitor shall be provided with:

- A current copy of the Common Rule, Customary and Constitution.
- A list of all members of the Community.
- Financial records of the Community for the most recent fiscal year.

(10) During the course of a Visitation, the Bishop Visitor and his or her assistants may interview privately each member of the Community. Arrangements shall be made so that the Bishop Visitor may interview any member of the Community not in residence at the Visitation. All such interviews shall be privileged and confidential and the Guardian does not have the right to intervene.

(11) After the Visitation, the Bishop Visitor may prepare his or her Charge. This may be delivered as an address to the Community or be sent by post. Copies of the Charge shall be distributed to each member of the Community.

Article IX. Of Property

(1) Unless and until the Community is incorporated, the property acquired with Community funds is to be held in trust by the Incorporated Trustees of the Church of England in The Bahamas (the Trustees).

(2) Interest in, and distribution of property held by an incorporated Community will be determined by Regulations of the Diocese.

Article X. Of Financial Operations

Section 1. Income and Gifts

(1) The primary source of income for the community will be the suggested dues and gifts of members and friends who desire to support the work of the Community.

(2) Individual pledges and gifts are received only by the Guardian, Treasurer, or appointed Officer.

Income information that is shared with Community is in the form of totals only, which in no way reveals the amount of giving by individuals.

(3) Gifts of any kind, for any reason, at any time, made by outside sources or by a member of the Community, become at its giving, the property of the Community and therefore not refundable or returnable.

(4) No part of the net earnings of the Community shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to its members, trustees, officers, or

other private persons, except that the Community shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in Article II Organization (1) thereof.

Section 2. Expenses

(1) Members of the Community may seek reimbursement for their reasonable and necessary expenses related to the management and administration of the Community provided these are itemized in writing and have been pre-approved by the Guardian or Council.

(2) If the time and effort contributed by a member to maintain and sustain the operations of the Community, or a significant part thereof, creates a discernible adverse impact on the finances of said member, the Council may agree to an appropriate stipend for that position. This stipend would not be permanent to the position, and would need to be renewed annually at budget preparation time.

(3) Any request or payment of funds to any Member may not be in violation of local or Church laws. Violation of these laws could jeopardize the Not-for-Profit (NPO) status of the Community.

Section 3. Reporting

(1) At every Convocational meeting of Chapter, financial statements will be given to the Members.

These will include a Statement of Financial Position (balance sheet), and a Statement of Income and Expenses. The Guardian will report on other funds, such as any Discretionary Fund, being careful to protect anonymity, but sharing with the Community the uses to which the monies have been put. These financial reports will be sent to the Members unable to attend Chapter.

(2) Reporting will adhere to the standards of best practices.

(3) The Community has an “open book” policy by which the accounting documents (except for individual donation records) are open to review by any Professed Member during normal hours of operation.

(4) The Bishop may direct that the Community's financial records be audited in a manner acceptable.

Section 4. Insurance

(1) Because of the diverse nature of the Community, each member is responsible for his or her own insurance protection of liability, property, casualty, life, and health insurance. The Community cannot assume expenses associated with illness or subsequent billing made by health care providers on behalf of its Members.

(2) The Community shall obtain liability protection for its members, Officers, and Directors, as it is available.

Article XI. Of Alterations to the Constitution

(1) It is the Guardian's responsibility to present to the Chapter revisions to the Constitution that s/he has determined merit consideration by the Chapter following consultation with the Council.

(2) Any proposed alteration to the Constitution [other than those falling under (7) and (8) below] shall be presented to the Chapter at a properly called meeting, at a central location or virtually, using technology, absent members having been informed, and after due consideration and discussion, it shall be voted upon, absent members voting by proxy or technology such as email.

(3) Amendments and alterations shall be approved if said amendment or alteration receives at least two-thirds majority of the eligible votes received. If approved by a two-thirds majority, it shall be sent to the Bishop Visitor for his or her review. If no

adjustments are needed, the Chapter shall be informed of it as soon as practical, and the amendment or alteration shall then become an integral part of the Constitution, displacing or annulling any previous relevant part thereof.

(4) If said amendment or alteration is not approved by Chapter, the matter may not be presented to Chapter again within one year unless there have been changes made to present a significantly different proposition.

(5) Changes to the Constitution shall be reflected by a dated copy of the Constitution, previous versions being archived for reference.

(6) No changes may be made to this Constitution which are in conflict with the laws of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas or the canons of the Church, which in any way may endanger the NPO status obtained by this organization.

(7) Certain sections, subsections, sentences, or words within the Constitution must reflect compliance with the Church canon, local law and are therefore not matters for a vote. When these types of changes come to the attention of the Guardian, s/he will determine how these changes will be properly and accurately reflected in the Constitution, and inform the Community of the changes needed along with the rationale. The Guardian will then effect the changes to the Constitution and distribute it to the Community and may post the revised Constitution on the Community's Social Media platforms.

(8) The Guardian may freely correct typographical errors found in the Constitution or make minor adjustments to wording to clarify intent. When these types of changes are implemented by the Guardian, s/he will inform the Community of same and redistribute corrected copies to Community Members and the Bishop Visitor and may post the corrected version on the Community's Social Media platforms.