

CONSTITUTION SUMMARY

COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH – DIOCESE OF SYDNEY & ITS AFFILIATED REGIONS

RULE 1: INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES

This rule defines the Coptic Orthodox Church as a hierarchical Church. The Diocese of Sydney & its Affiliated Regions is part of the Mother Church of Alexandria and is headed by the Pope of Alexandria and the Patriarch of the See of St Mark. The authority of the Pope and the Holy Synod extends to the Diocese. The rule also defines the structure that administers the temporal affairs of the Diocese.

RULE 2: THE BISHOP

This rule defines the role of the Diocese Bishop and how the Bishop is selected by the Pope. It states that the Bishop is bound by the laws of the Holy Synod and is accountable to it.

The rule details the religious responsibilities of the Bishop including the ordination of priests and deacons, consecrating Churches, alters, baptisteries, icons and all the vessels of the alter. The Bishop is responsible for the religious services in the Diocese. The Bishop may appoint a vicar to assist him with his obligations.

RUE 3: THE PARISH COUNCIL

This rule defines the structure of the Parish Council and how the Parish Council is elected by the congregation. The Parish Council is responsible for the financial and administrative aspects of the Parish. The most senior priest of the Parish shall be the Chairperson of the Parish Council. Each Parish Council shall at their first meeting elect the Parish Secretary & Treasurer. The Parish Sunday school Superintendent and Youth Meeting Coordinator shall be ex-officio members. All Parish priests are members of the Parish Council. The Parish Council is accountable to the Board of Trustees. The term of the Parish Council shall be four (4) years.

RULE 4: THE DIOCESAN ADVISORY BOARD AND GENERAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Diocesan Advisory Board:

The Diocesan Advisory Board is concerned with matters affecting the good governance and effectiveness of the Diocese. The Diocesan Advisory Board reports to the Board of Trustees.

The Diocesan Advisory Board is chaired by the Bishop or the Papal Representative and includes the General-Secretary of the Board of Trustees, The General-Treasurer (being the Chair of the Finance Advisory Board), The General Superintendent of the Sunday School, three (3) priests from the Parish elected by a secret ballot at the Annual General Meeting of the Priests of the Diocese and twelve (12) lay members elected at the Annual General Meeting of the General Advisory Council. The term of the Advisory Board shall be 4 years.

The Diocesan General Advisory Council:

The Board of Trustees shall convene a meeting of the General Advisory Council at least once per year. The Advisory Council at each four (4) year term shall elect twelve (12) members to serve on the Diocese Advisory Board. The Treasurers of the General Advisory Council shall at each four (4) year term elect the seven (7) Treasurers to the Finance Advisory Board.

The members of the General Advisory Council shall consist of the Diocese Bishop or Papal Representative (Chair), the President, Secretary and Treasurer of each Parish Council, the General Superintendent of Sunday school and one (1) member of each Church Entity.

RULE 5: THE DIOCESAN FINANCIAL ADVISORY BOARD

The Diocesan Financial Advisory Board is concerned with the financial transparency, accountability, good governance, and effectiveness of the Diocese. The Diocesan Financial Advisory Board reports to the Board of Trustees.

The Diocesan Financial Advisory Board shall consist of seven (7) Treasurers elected at the Annual General Meeting of the General Advisory Council. The Board shall elect a Chairperson and Secretary at their first meeting by secret ballot. The Chair of the Financial Advisory Board shall be the General-Treasurer of the Diocese and shall be a Member of the Board of Trustees. The term of the Board shall be four (4) years.

RULE 6: THE TRUSTEES OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH (NSW) PROPERTY TRUST

The Board of Trustees is the decision-making authority of the Diocese. The Board of Trustees shall consist of seven (7) Members as follows:

- One (1) Clergy being either the Diocese Bishop or the Papal Representative.
- The General-Treasurer
- Five (5) laypersons elected by the Parishes and recommended by a Review Committee and approved by the Pope.

The General-Secretary of the Board of Trustees shall be elected by the seven (7) members by secret ballot.

The process of selecting the five (5) laypersons shall be as follows:

- Parishes shall call for nominations from interested persons to be a member of the Board of Trustees. Nominations together with the Candidate's CV are received by the Parish Secretary.
- If there is more than one nomination at the Parish, an election by the congregation is to be held. Only one candidate from each Parish is to be elected.
- The Parish Secretary will then forward the nomination and CV to the Review Committee
- The Review Committee will consist of the seven (7) most Senior Hegomen in the Diocese
- The Review Committee will assess all nominations received and select the most suitable five (5) candidates for recommendation to the Pope.
- The Pope will either approve or reject the nominations. In the event a nomination is rejected, the Review Committee will forward further name(s) to Pope.

The term of the Board of Trustees shall be four (4) years.

RULE 7: THE CLERICAL COUNCIL

The Clerical Council is the tribunal authorised to adjudicate applications for remarriage, grant or refuse permissions to remarry and all related family affairs as well as cases involving alleged moral and disciplinary offenses of the clergy and members of the Church.

The Clerical Council of the Diocese receives its authority and its constitution from the Holy Synod of the Church.

The Clerical Council is presided by the Bishop or Papal Representative and is composed of four (4) Priests who are elected at the Annual General Meeting of the Priests.

RULE 8: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PARISHES OF THE DIOCESE OF SYDNEY AND AFFILIATED REGIONS, AND THE MOTHER CHURCH OF ALEXANDRIA

This rule stipulates that each Church Parish is an indivisible part of the Mother Church of Alexandria (Egypt) which has as its supreme head the Pope, and derives its authority to function in every respect from the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

The rule also states that the Pope has the right to transfer outside the Diocese any priests who has been assigned by him from Egypt to serve in the Diocese.

RULE 9: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PARISHES IN THE DIOCESE OF SYDNEY AND AFFILIATED AND THE DIOCESE TO WHICH THEY BELONG

This rule defines the role of the Bishop or Papal Representative as the responsible head of the Diocese in accordance with the traditions and canons of the Coptic Orthodox Church. Priests and deacons of the Diocese are accountable to the Bishop of the Diocese where they are serving. The Bishop cannot render any judgement on any priest or deacon except through the Clerical Council of the Diocese.

The Board of Trustees and Advisory Boards of the Diocese are responsible to define the relationship between the Parishes in the Diocese and to set up boundaries of the services of each parish.

RULE 10: AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

This rule defines that any amendments to the constitution requires approval of 75% of the General Advisory Council and will further require the approval of both the Board of Trustees and the Pope.