



# the Company of Servers

## CONSTITUTION

### 1. TITLE

- 1.1. The society shall be called “The Company of Servers” (the Company).

### 2. OBJECTS

- 2.1. The objects of the Company are:

- 2.1.1. to provide a sense of belonging and fellowship for all who serve at the altar.
- 2.1.2. to promote good practice in our churches.
- 2.1.3. to deepen understanding of the role of lay ministers and to encourage growth in commitment to the Lord.
- 2.1.4. the Company is associated with the Society of Catholic Priests and supports the belief that as a witness to the universal nature of the priesthood of Christ, the church should ordain to serve as deacons, priests and bishops all discerned as being called by God to such offices regardless of race, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

### 3. MEMBERSHIP

- 3.1. Membership is open to all lay persons who:

- 3.1.1. have been baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity.
- 3.1.2. are in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury.
- 3.1.3. undertake duties in the church which include serving at the altar.
- 3.1.4. are in agreement with the objects of the Company (see para 2).
- 3.1.5. believe in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.
- 3.1.6. recognise the seven sacraments of the church and make use of them as appropriate, according to conscience.
- 3.1.7. keep the rule of life of the Company (see para 4).
- 3.1.8. members of the Company shall be referred to as “Companions.”
- 3.1.9. contribute the agreed annual subscriptions.

- 3.2. Individual members may disagree personally with elements of **para 2 and 3.1** but should be respectful of the Company’s stated position. Chapter Chairpersons and Chaplains should be consulted at the earliest opportunity with any issues which may arise.

- 3.3. Persons in Holy Orders may be appointed as associate members of the Company.

- 3.3.1. associate members shall have the right to speak at the annual general meeting and at extraordinary general meetings but shall not have the right to vote.
- 3.3.2. associate members of the Company shall be referred to as “Associate Companions.”

- 3.4. The Central Committee may appoint persons to honorary life membership of the Company.

- 3.4.1. appointments shall be made in recognition of service or merit.
- 3.4.2. honorary life members shall have the right to speak at the annual general meeting and at extraordinary general meetings but shall not have the right to vote.

- 3.4.3. honorary life members shall be referred to as “Honorary Life Companions.”
- 3.4.4. appointments to honorary life membership shall usually be announced at the national festival.

3.5. Persons who are in agreement with the objectives and rule of life of the Company, but do not qualify for membership or associate membership may become affiliate members.

- 3.5.1. affiliate members shall be affiliated to their local Chapter (where one exists) and to the Company as a whole and shall be invited to Chapter and national meetings and events.
- 3.5.2. affiliate members must be sponsored for membership by an existing member of the Company.
- 3.5.3. affiliate members shall have the right to speak at Chapter meetings, at the annual general meeting and at extraordinary general meetings but shall not have the right to vote.
- 3.5.4. subscriptions collected from affiliate members shall be divided equally between the local Chapter and the Central Committee. If no Chapter exists locally, subscriptions are paid to the Central Committee.
- 3.5.5. affiliate members shall be given the badge of the Company.
- 3.5.6. affiliate members of the Company shall be known as ‘Affiliate Companions.’

#### **4. RULE OF LIFE**

4.1. Members of the Company will aspire, to the best of their ability:

- 4.1.1. to centre their spiritual life on the Eucharist, by sharing in the celebration of this sacrament on Sundays and Principal Feasts and Principal Holy Days.
- 4.1.2. devote a period of time each day to private prayer.
- 4.1.3. make use, as appropriate and according to conscience, of a spiritual director and the sacrament of reconciliation.
- 4.1.4. befriend other members of the Company and attend all meetings of their Chapter and festivals, unless prevented by good reason.

#### **5. ELECTION OF MEMBERS**

5.1. An aspirant for membership must:

- 5.1.1. be sponsored for membership by an existing member of the Company.
- 5.1.2. attend two Chapter meetings.
- 5.1.3. be interviewed by the Chapter Chairperson.

5.2. The Chapter Chairperson must be satisfied that the aspirant fulfils the conditions for membership and is resolved to keep the rule of life of the Company.

5.3. The aspirant will be admitted to membership at a meeting of the Chapter using the format circulated.

5.4. Each newly-admitted member shall be given the badge of the Company and handbook.

5.5. After appropriate consultation, which must include consultation with the Chapter Chaplain and the Chairperson General, Chapter Chairpersons may apply to the Central Committee for permission to exclude from membership any member, associate member or affiliate member who fails to continue to satisfy the conditions of membership.

5.6. Associate and affiliate members shall be appointed by the Central Committee and Chapter Committees.

5.7. Any dispute shall be referred to the Central Committee, whose decision shall be final.

## **6. GOVERNANCE**

- 6.1.** The affairs of the Company shall be conducted by a Central Committee and shall find local expression in Chapters, each covering a defined area, organised in such a way as to enable the Company's common life to flourish.
- 6.2.** All members shall only possess voting rights for one Chapter, but shall be eligible to attend meetings and events held by other Chapters. Members may only hold a committee position on one Chapter. Membership of the Central Committee in addition to another position is permitted.

## **7. FESTIVALS**

- 7.1.** The Central Committee shall arrange, or cause to be arranged, at least one national festival each year.
- 7.2.** Local festivals may be arranged by Chapters or group of Chapters. Local festivals shall be advertised throughout the Company and all Chapters shall be invited to them. Local festivals shall not be arranged at a time or place which could conflict with the national festival.

## **8. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

- 8.1.** There shall be an annual general meeting of the Company, normally to be held in conjunction with a national festival, and never later than fifteen months after the previous annual general meeting.
- 8.2.** The annual general meeting shall be responsible for:
- 8.2.1.** receiving a report from the Chairperson General.
  - 8.2.2.** receiving a report from the Treasurer General, to include a presentation of the accounts for approval.
  - 8.2.3.** approving a budget and setting the central subscription.
  - 8.2.4.** such other business as may be brought forward by the Central Committee or requested by Chapters.
  - 8.2.5.** electing Central Committee members.
  - 8.2.6.** making amendments to the constitution.
  - 8.2.7.** making arrangements for the next annual general meeting.
- 8.3.** A notice of the annual general meeting shall be sent by the Secretary General to all Chapters no later than six months before the date of the meeting.
- 8.4.** Motions and other items for inclusion on the agenda shall be sent by Chapters to the Secretary General no later than two months before the annual general meeting.
- 8.5.** Nominations for election to vacant positions on the Central Committee shall be invited by the Secretary General no later than two months before the annual general meeting. Nominees shall notify the Secretary General of their standing for election in advance of the annual general meeting, with the names of the member nominated, and two other members who support the nomination.
- 8.6.** The Secretary General shall send the agenda for the annual general meeting to Chapters no later than one month before the meeting.
- 8.7.** Elections to the Central Committee shall be held following the receipt of the relevant nominations (see para 8.5) and election shall be secured by a simple majority of the voting members present.

## **9. CENTRAL COMMITTEE**

- 9.1.** The Central Committee shall comprise:
- 9.1.1.** Chairperson General.
  - 9.1.2.** Secretary General.
  - 9.1.3.** Treasurer General.
  - 9.1.4.** at least three committee members.
  - 9.1.5.** Chaplain General (ex-officio).
- 9.2.** All members of the Company shall be eligible for election to the Central Committee and elections shall be held at the annual general meeting.
- 9.3.** A simple majority of members present and voting at the annual general meeting shall secure election.
- 9.4.** Central Committee members shall hold office for three years and may stand for re-election.
- 9.5.** The Central Committee shall be responsible for the day-to-day management of the affairs of the Company and any matters not specifically remitted to the annual general meeting under **para 8.2.**
- 9.6.** The Central Committee shall have power to co-opt up to two additional members to undertake specific tasks. To become permanent appointments, these must be ratified by a vote at the next annual general meeting and election shall be secured by a simple majority of the voting members present.
- 9.7.** The Central Committee shall oversee the Company's policy for the care of children, young people and vulnerable adults (**see para 13**).
- 9.8.** The Central Committee shall have power to exclude from membership any member, associate member or affiliate member who fails to continue to satisfy the conditions of membership. This exclusion shall only be used following discussion with the Chapter Chairperson and Chaplain concerned (**see para 5.5**) and an application from the said Chapter Chairperson to the Central Committee.

## **10. BISHOP VISITOR AND CHAPLAIN GENERAL**

- 10.1.** The Central Committee shall appoint a bishop to hold the office of Bishop Visitor.
- 10.1.1.** the Bishop Visitor shall be in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury and should be a member of the Society of Catholic Priests.
  - 10.1.2.** the Bishop Visitor may be invited to attend Central Committee meetings, and shall have the right to speak, but shall not have the right to vote.
- 10.2.** The Central Committee shall appoint a person in priest's orders to hold the office of Chaplain General.
- 10.2.1.** the Chaplain General shall be in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury and should be a member of the Society of Catholic Priests.
  - 10.2.2.** the Chaplain General shall be a member of the Central Committee and shall have the right to speak, but shall not have the right to vote.
- 10.3.** The Bishop Visitor and Chaplain General shall hold office at the Central Committee's pleasure and fulfil such duties as shall be mutually agreed.

## **11. FINANCIAL AFFAIRS**

- 11.1.** The Company shall establish a bank account, to be administered by the Treasurer General, for the handling of the Company's funds. Financial business on behalf of the Company shall be transacted through this bank account alone.
- 11.2.** The Company shall have a financial operating period of 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December each year.
- 11.3.** The Treasurer General shall keep records of the financial business of the Company.
- 11.4.** A statement of accounts, which may be in the format of a receipts and payment account, must be prepared annually. This must account for all monies received or paid on behalf of the Company and be independently reviewed.
- 11.5.** An independent examiner must be appointed at each annual general meeting.

## **12. CHAPTERS**

- 12.1.** A minimum of five persons eligible for membership of the Company (see para 3.1) may apply to the Central Committee for permission to form a Chapter.
- 12.2.** The Chapter Committee shall comprise:
  - 12.2.1.** Chairperson.
  - 12.2.2.** Secretary.
  - 12.2.3.** Treasurer.
  - 12.2.4.** a further two committee members.
  - 12.2.5.** Chaplain (ex-officio).
- 12.3.** Each Chapter shall be guided by the principles and shall ensure the following:
  - 12.3.1.** Chapters should hold an annual general meeting, which will be responsible for the appointment of officers and a Chaplain, and the management of all Chapter affairs.
  - 12.3.2.** Chapters shall hold a bank account through which all financial business shall be transacted and shall ensure that their accounts are independently examined on an annual basis and that the Central Committee is notified.
  - 12.3.3.** Chapters shall ensure they are aware of and apply the Company policy for the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults and that the Central Committee is notified.
  - 12.3.4.** subscriptions collected from members and affiliate members shall be divided equally between the Chapter and the Central Committee.
- 12.4.** Chapter committee members shall hold office for three years and may stand for re-election.
- 12.5.** Nominations for election to vacant positions on the Chapter Committee shall be invited by the Secretary no later than two months before the Chapter annual general meeting. Nominees shall notify the Secretary of their standing for election in advance of the annual general meeting, with the names of the member nominated, and two other members who support the nomination.
- 12.6.** Elections to the Chapter Committee shall be held following the receipt of the relevant nominations (see para 12.5) and election shall be secured by a simple majority of the voting members present at the Chapter annual general meeting.
- 12.7.** Chapters should endeavour to meet at least four times a year for an act of worship and the consideration of a topic related to the objects of the Company.

**12.8.** Each Chapter shall appoint a Chaplain who shall be in priests' orders.

- 12.8.1.** the Chaplain shall be in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury and should be a member of the Society of Catholic Priests.
- 12.8.2.** if not already an associate member at the time of their appointment, the Chaplain shall be appointed to associate membership of the Company.
- 12.8.3.** the Chaplain shall be a member of the Chapter Committee and shall have the right to speak at Chapter Committee meetings but shall not have the right to vote.

**13. CARE OF CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS**

- 13.1.** The Company shall be committed to the nurture, protection and safekeeping of all children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- 13.2.** It shall be the responsibility of all members to do their best to prevent the physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children, young people and vulnerable adults and to report any abuse alleged or suspected.
- 13.3.** The Company shall maintain a policy for the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults which accords with current legislation and is applied by all members.

**14. EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETINGS**

- 14.1.** An extraordinary general meeting of the Company may be called at any time by the request of a majority of members of the Central Committee, one third of the Chairpersons of Chapters or five percent and not less than 12 members of the Company.
- 14.2.** The date and venue for such a meeting shall be arranged by those requesting the meeting.
- 14.3.** The business of such a meeting shall be indicated to the Secretary General who shall take immediate steps to inform all members of the Company. At least six weeks' notice shall be given.
- 14.4.** Only previously notified business may be conducted at an extraordinary general meeting.
- 14.5.** The meeting shall be chaired by the Chairperson General or another member of the Central Committee.
- 14.6.** Resolutions, other than those to which **para 16** applies, may be passed by a simple majority of those present and voting.
- 14.7.** The Chairperson General, or other member of the Central Committee chairing an extraordinary meeting, shall, in the event of an equal number of votes being cast for and against a motion (or a motion under **para 16** attaining exactly 66.7% of the votes cast), have an additional casting vote.

**15. INTERPRETATION AND DISPUTES**

- 15.1** The interpretation of this constitution rests with the Central Committee. The decision of the Central Committee shall be final.
- 15.2** Any dispute within a Chapter or between Chapters shall be referred to the Central Committee whose decision shall be final.

**16. CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES**

- 16.1** This constitution shall not be altered or added to except by the consent of two thirds of the members voting at the annual general meeting or at an extraordinary general meeting.