

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE ORDER OF THE ASCENSION

The Constitution is to be in conformity to the Rule in all aspects.

I. OVERSIGHT STRUCTURES

A. Chapter

1. Chapter shall consist of all Professed Members. Professed Members are the legal members of the corporation and shall be required to vote on all issues at Chapter. Each has voice and vote and is expected to take a full share in the business of the Order. There will be no proxy voting. The Chapter is to strive for the formation of a common mind through submission to the mind of Christ and in mutual submission to one another in Christ.
2. Chapter is responsible for the following:
 - a. General oversight of the Order and its corporate ministries. Chapter is the governing authority.
 - b. To express the common mind of the Order.
 - c. To make changes in the Rule or Constitution.
 - d. To provide general financial oversight and to make major financial decisions.
 - e. To undertake or relinquish corporate ministries of the Order.
 - f. To elect the Presiding Officer (for four year terms).
3. Chapter is to conform to the canons of the Church, the Rule and Constitution of the Order, and to be guided by the traditions of the Order as they emerge over time.
4. Chapter shall be conducted according to such rules of order as may be agreed on by the Chapter. Meetings shall always:
 - a. Be presided over by the Presiding Officer, or by the person designated by the Presiding Officer should it be impossible for the Presiding Officer to preside.
 - b. Be conducted within a process of communal discernment. The process will encourage open discussion, respect for individual conscience, and courtesy.
 - c. A person shall be appointed to record topics of conversation and decisions.

B. Presiding Officer

1. The Presiding Officer is to provide general oversight and to take initiative for the development and maintenance of the Order's life and ministry; is first among equals in a ministry of service and authority; is to exercise the duties of the office as provided in the Rule and Constitution. The Presiding Officer's normal administrative costs are reimbursed by the Order and a \$500 Discretionary Fund is available for the purposes related to the Order.
2. The Presiding Officer is elected by Chapter for a four year term. The process of the election is as follows: Each member lists three persons in secret for the office. For each additional four

members over twelve an additional name is added. The three members who are listed most frequently become the nominees for election. The election is by a simple majority. If a simple majority cannot be attained, the Presiding Officer offers a method for further discernment. The Presiding Officer's term begins upon election. The Presiding Officer is instituted during the Chapter that has elected him or her. There is no limit on the number of terms. The Visitor is authorized to remove the Presiding Officer if the Visitor deems the Presiding Officer incapable of functioning in office. In such an event the Visitor may appoint an acting Presiding Officer who is to call for an election at the next scheduled event of the common life.

3. The Presiding Officer is to maintain the records of the Order. This task may be delegated.
4. The Presiding Officer is responsible for the design of the annual gathering.

C. Episcopal Visitor/Companion

1. The Episcopal Visitor (or Episcopal Companion; the terms are used by the Order interchangeably) is the guardian of the Order; a "guarantor" to the Church of the Order's sound administration, stability, and conformity to the Rule and Constitution. The Visitor watches over the development of the community and holds before us our ideals and traditions, calling us to loyalty in the task of making them more appropriate to the needs of this age. The Visitor represents the needs of the Church to the Order, reminding us of our place among other forms of discipleship and communities of faith. The Visitor shall be the normal court of appeal for the maintenance of discipline and an arbiter in matters the Order cannot resolve through its normal processes.
2. The Episcopal Visitor is in Episcopal orders and is not a Professed Member.
3. The Episcopal Visitor is chosen by Chapter for a six-year term which may be renewed. The Visitor is invited once every five years to participate in the annual gathering in consultation with the Presiding Officer. With cause around a serious problem in our community life the Episcopal Visit may choose to visit retreat and Chapter in-between the normal five-year schedule.
4. The Visitor shall be kept informed of all important decisions of the community and will receive yearly financial reports, the minutes of Chapter, and any other documents the Visitor requests.
5. The Visitor shall have unrestricted review of accounts and records of the Order and may initiate access with any Professed Members in private consultation either in person, at an event of the common life, or by letter, email or phone call.
6. The reasonable expenses of the Visitor in carrying out duties related to official responsibilities will be covered by the Order.
7. Aside from the functions specifically noted in the Rule and Constitution, the Visitor shall have no right of intervention or initiative in the affairs of the Order.
8. The Chapter may request the Visitor to resign at any time.

D. Official Address

The official address of the Order shall be the current office or residence of the Presiding Officer. This shall not affect the corporate address which may be established elsewhere to meet the needs of legal incorporation.

E. Officials of the Order

The Presiding Officer, in consultation with Chapter, appoints as needed a Treasurer, Editor of Ascension Press, and other positions as necessary. All positions are accountable to the Presiding Officer. The Presiding Officer shall maintain position descriptions of all the above, which are to be approved by Chapter.

II. ENTERING OR LEAVING THE ORDER AS A PROFESSED MEMBER

A. Description of Professed Membership

Professed Members are Laity, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons who have made a promise of stability, obedience, and conversion of life.

B. Admission

Inquirers may begin the process for admission with the approval of the Presiding Officer and the Presiding Officer's assignment of a sponsor to him or her. Applicants are admitted to the Order by a majority vote of all Professed Members. Applicants engage in a discernment period of at least five months during which they:

1. Reflect on the Rule;
2. Develop an understanding of the relation between the Promise and their life;
3. Have at least one long conversation with a sponsor from the Members in which they explore the Rule and the Promise; and
4. Engage in a process of reflection on the effect of joining the Order.

Among the matters the applicant and the Order will want to consider for discernment are:

- Is there obvious common ground between the person's life and ministry and the spiritual life?
- Does the person have an adequately disciplined spiritual life, and sufficient self-esteem and support from colleagues, family and friends, so as to be able to benefit from what the Order does offer in vocational support, without holding to unreasonable expectations of the support such a life will provide?
- Does the person work well with others, openly receive and use information on the effect of his or her behavior on others, follow through on commitments, receive guidance from others, take initiative in relationships and work?
- Is membership in the Order likely to have beneficial effects on the person's work, family, friendships?
- What effect does relationship with the Order appear to be having on the person's spiritual life and sense of vocation?
- What does the person bring to the Order?

- To what extent is the person making an act of free commitment, choosing to devote energy in the way and pattern? To what extent is the commitment “clouded” and divided?

Applicants are admitted and take the Promise at the end of the first common life gathering following the five month discernment period. Members are dropped from membership if they miss two common life gatherings in a three year period and may be removed by a vote of two-thirds of all Professed Members.

III. DISSOLUTION

If for two years in a row there fails to be an annual gathering, the Visitor may determine dissolution. No assets shall be distributed to any members of the corporation. A decision to dissolve requires at least a two-thirds majority vote of Professed Members at a meeting held for that purpose with at least fourteen days written notice. The Visitor decides, upon consultation with Chapter, where the Order’s assets, if any, are to be distributed.

IV. ECCLESIASTICAL AFFILIATION

The Order of the Ascension in the United States shall be affiliated with the Episcopal Church and shall be committed to follow and obey the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Episcopal Church as set forth in the determinations and formularies of the General Convention and in the Constitution and Canons of said Church.

V. AMENDMENTS

Amendments to the Constitution may be made by a majority vote of all Professed Members. Waivers of a portion of the Rule or Constitution may be made by a majority of Professed Members. Waivers are directed toward the need of the community for temporary flexibility in its life. A waiver must be put in writing in Chapter’s minutes. A waiver may not have the effect of creating a long-term suspension of any part of the Rule and Constitution for the community or an individual.

VII. COMMON LIFE STRUCTURES AND NORMS

- A. An overview and the essential elements of the common life are presented in the Rule. The creation of additional structures, processes and norms to further the purpose and appropriate environment of the common life is the responsibility of Chapter. Events of the common life are opportunities for the corporate living of the Rule.
- B. The onsite cost of the common life is the responsibility of each participant (e.g., meals, lodging, resource and materials fees, etc.). A travel pool provides for an equalized travel cost for each member. Under extraordinary circumstances, the Presiding Officer, in consultation with the Treasurer, may supplement the travel costs of members.
- C. Miscellaneous elements of the Rule to be incorporated from time to time in Chapter or Continuing Education include:
 - Occasional reflection on living a rule of life;
 - Consultation and discernment regarding changes of cure, use of time, exercise of vocation and use of gifts;

- Review of our individual and family economics and way of life;
- Mutual assessment and reflection on our life and ministry including one's general life and ministry; the life and ministry of the parish; adherence to the Rule and Constitution.

VII. PURPOSES AND LIMITATIONS

The Order of the Ascension is a Christian community. The Order seeks to give expression to the mission of the Church ("to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ") by serving parishes in effective and faithful ministry. The Order of the Ascension in the United States is organized exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes, including, for such purposes the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provision of any further Internal Revenue Service Law.).

No part of the net earnings of the Order of the Ascension in the United States shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to, its members, trustees, officers or other private persons, except that the Order 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 the preceding paragraphs. No substantial part of the activities of the Order shall be in the carrying on of propaganda otherwise attempting to influence legislation and the Order shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

Notwithstanding any other provision of these articles, the Order of the Ascension shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by a corporation/organization exempt from Federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provision of any further Internal Revenue Service Law.), or (b) by a corporation to which are deductible under Section 170(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provision of any further Internal Revenue Service Law.).

[Reflects typographical corrections made in December of 2016 and amendments passed by Chapter April 21, 2016]