



**THE CONSTITUTION OF  
ST. MARYS INDIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH  
ENGLAND UNITED KINGDOM  
St. Marys Indian Orthodox Congregation, Oxford**

**PREAMBLE**

**In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, one true God, for ever and ever, Amen.**

We, members of the Indian Orthodox Church, also known as the Orthodox Syrian Church of the East or as Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (hereinafter referred as “Indian Orthodox Church” or “Church”), living in the United Kingdom, have been constituted as a Parish by the authorities of the said Church and acknowledging St Mary as our Patron Saint and intercessor, do hereby adopt this Constitution and solemnly pledge ourselves to be governed by its Provisions.

**ARTICLE – I- THE PARISH**

**A. NAME OF THE PARISH**

The name of the Parish shall be St Mary’s Indian Orthodox Church or St Mary’s Indian Orthodox (Malankara) Church (hereinafter, the “Parish”). Its seat shall be in Oxford, United Kingdom.

**B. OBJECTIVES OF THE PARISH**

The following shall be the objectives of the Parish:

- (a) The primary objective of the Parish shall be to promote the doctrines and beliefs of the Indian Orthodox religion and to propagate Christianity in accordance with the objectives and tenets of the Indian Orthodox Church.
- (b) To maintain places of regular common worship and prayer, and for instruction in the faith of the Church, in its tradition, history, in accordance with the Apostolic and ancient traditions of the Indian Orthodox Church and subject to the authority of the Holy Episcopal Synod of the Indian Orthodox Church.
- (c) To provide for religious, educational, social and cultural activities of special groups like women, youth, children and senior citizens.
- (d) To promote and carry out service activities and deaconia for the benefit of the wider community and society.

- (e) To enter into such other activities as are proper to the life of a Parish Church with the approval of the appropriate authorities of the Indian Orthodox Church.

### **C. POWERS OF THE PARISH**

In furtherance of its objectives, the Parish shall have the following powers:

- (a) to raise funds by all legally appropriate means in furtherance of these objects;
- (b) to open bank accounts;
- (c) to invest such funds in accordance with this Constitution;
- (d) to purchase, rent or otherwise acquire, hold and dispose of property; and
- (e) to engage in non-commercial activities for raising of funds.

All the powers shall be exercised only in accordance with the rules of the Church and in conformity with the provisions of the laws under which the Parish is registered.

### **D. APPLICATION OF INCOME AND PROPERTY**

- (a) The funds and property of the Parish must be applied solely towards the promotion of the objects.
- (b) None of the funds or property of the Parish may be paid or transferred directly or indirectly by way of dividend, bonus or otherwise by way of profit to any member of the Parish. This does not prevent a member from receiving reasonable, proper remuneration for any goods or services supplied to the Parish.

## **ARTICLE – II AFFILIATIONS**

(a) The Parish is affiliated to and constituted by the Indian Orthodox Church founded in India by the Holy Apostle St. Thomas, one of the Twelve Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, headed by the Catholicos of the East, and Malankara Metropolitan (the “Catholicos”), Successor to the Apostolic Throne of St Thomas.

(b) The Parish is under the direct ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Diocesan Metropolitan/ Bishop of the Diocese of UK, Europe & Africa subject to the authority of the Holy Episcopal Synod of the Indian Orthodox Church.

(c) The Parish is in the jurisdiction of the Holy Episcopal Synod of the Indian Orthodox Church and that Synod has power to transfer this Parish to another diocese of its choice, in accordance with Constitution of the Malankara Orthodox Church.

## **ARTICLE-III MEMBERSHIP**

### **A. ELIGIBILITY & APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP**

- (a) Any *bonafide* baptised member of the Indian Orthodox Church, and who on confessing the Oriental Orthodox faith and pledging loyalty to the Faith, Order and Discipline of

the Indian Orthodox Church, is baptised in accordance with the baptismal rite of the Indian Orthodox Church or a Church in communion with it, and who also agrees to abide by this Constitution, and is currently residing in the United Kingdom, shall be eligible for membership in the Parish.

- (b) The voting rights in the Parish and election to office shall be confined to adult members who are 21 years of age as required by the Constitution of the Indian Orthodox Church.
- (c) Any person eligible under Article III(a) or the parent or guardian of such person, if a minor, who desires to become a member of the Parish shall apply in writing in the prescribed form to the Vicar, who may admit that person to membership and his/her name will be entered in the Parish register by the Secretary.
- (d) Application from any person previously member of the Parish wish to re-apply for membership will be brought into Parish managing committee prior to approval.

## **B. OBLIGATIONS OF MEMBERS**

Every member of the Parish is under obligation to:

- (a) participate regularly in the worship services of the Parish;
- (b) confess one's sins regularly in order to receive absolution;
- (c) receive Holy Communion;
- (d) to maintain the discipline of the Parish;
- (e) to pay all prescribed dues and subscriptions to the Parish; and
- (f) to contribute liberally to the work of the Parish.

## **ARTICLE – IV GENERAL BODY**

### **A. GENERAL BODY**

The general day-to-day administration of the Parish is to be conducted under the general supervision of the Vicar/President, by the General Body, the Managing Committee, the Secretary and the Treasurer / Trustee.

- (a) The General Body shall consist of all regular members of the Parish, both men and women who are 18 years or older, provided however that voting rights are reserved to adult members who have attained 21 years of age and are regular confessing and communing members of the Church and are not in arrears for a year or more in regard to payment of subscription. Others shall have the right to floor, but not to vote, as required by the provisions of the Constitution of the Indian Orthodox Church.
- (b) The Vicar of the Parish shall be normally the President of the General Body. When the Diocesan Metropolitan/Bishop is present, His Grace shall have the right to preside. In the event of His Holiness the Catholicos is present, H.H. the Catholicos shall have the right to preside.
- (c) The General Body shall meet at least twice a year. The first General Body shall deal with the election of office-bearers; receive the annual report and accounts of the previous year. At a further General Body the budget for the current year shall be approved. Subsequent meetings shall be held as deemed necessary from time to time.

- (d) The Vicar, or the Secretary of the General Body as directed by the Vicar, shall submit two copies of the Budget, the Annual Statement of Accounts, the Annual report, and the minutes of the General Body meeting to the Diocesan Metropolitan/Bishop for approval within four weeks of the meeting.
- (e) The General Body shall elect every financial year from among its voting members, a Secretary, a Treasurer/Trustee and members of the Managing Committee, and submit in duplicate a list of their names to the Diocesan Metropolitan/Bishop for his approval. The term of office of the Secretary, the Treasurer and other members of the Managing Committee shall be one year. They may be re-elected or re-appointed but not more than two terms consecutively. The term shall be April – March.
- (f) The agenda, the time and the venue of the General Body Meeting shall be announced by the Vicar/President to the Parish immediately after Holy Qurbana on three consecutive Sundays, including the Sunday on which the General Body meeting is to be held. When this is for any reason not possible 14 (fourteen) days clear written or email notice is to be given to all members of the General Body eligible to vote.
- (g) Quorum for General Body meeting shall be 30% (thirty percent) of the total membership or ten voting members whichever is greater. If for any reason the required quorum is not present, the meeting is to be postponed to the next Sunday at the same time and the same place. A postponed meeting needs no quorum.
- (h) Whenever possible, decisions of the General Body and Managing Committee should be unanimous. When voting is required, a simple majority of those present and voting is sufficient for a decision except where specifically provided otherwise in this Constitution. In matters relating to policy of the Parish, a two-third majority of those present and voting is required.
- (i) The Secretary shall send a report of the General Body meeting and the decisions taken therein signed by the Vicar to the Diocesan Metropolitan/Bishop. The Diocesan Metropolitan/ Bishop, when convinced that the General Body has exceeded its powers or taken a wrong decision, should ask the General Body to reconsider their decision.

## **B. SPECIAL MEETINGS OF THE GENERAL BODY**

- (a) Special meetings of the General Body can be convened when deemed necessary by the President/Vicar, or by the Treasurer and Secretary with the consent of the Vicar, or by the Diocesan Metropolitan or by the Catholicos. In the event 30%(thirty percent) of the eligible members request in writing to the Vicar or to the Secretary thorough the Vicar to hold a special meeting of the general body, the Vicar shall forward the request to the Diocesan Metropolitan/Bishop and with his due permission, a special meeting of the general body shall be convened.
- (b) The agenda, time and place of the special meeting of the General Body shall be announced in the Church after Holy Qurbana normally on three consecutive Sundays including the Sunday of the meeting.
- (c) 30% (thirty percent) of the total voting membership of the General Body or 20 (twenty) voting members whichever is greater shall constitute the quorum for the meeting. In the event of quorum not being available, the meeting shall be held the next Sunday at the same time, for which postponed meeting no quorum shall be necessary.

- (d) The decisions of such a meeting shall be announced to the Parish the following Sunday after Holy Qurbana. The Secretary shall send a report of the General Body meeting and the decisions taken therein signed by the Vicar to the Diocesan Metropolitan/Bishop. The Diocesan Metropolitan/Bishop, when convinced that the General Body has exceeded its powers or taken a wrong decision should ask the General Body to reconsider their decision.

### **C. APPEALS FROM DECISIONS OF THE GENERAL BODY**

Appeals against any decision of the General Body can be made within two weeks of the decision to the Diocesan Bishop, through the Vicar or through the Secretary provided that, the Vicar is given a copy of the appeal. The Vicar may thereafter stay the implementation of the decision until the Diocesan Bishop decides on the appeal.

### **ARTICLE – V PARISH MANAGING COMMITTEE**

- (a) There shall be a Parish Managing Committee (hereinafter referred to as “Committee”) to manage the day-to-day affairs of the Parish. The Committee shall be composed of the Vicar, the Secretary, the Treasurer/Trustee and other members elected by the General Body from among its voting members the number being fixed by the General Body from time to time in accordance with the requirements of the Parish. The Secretary and the Treasurer of the previous year shall be ex-officio members of the Committee. The term of office of the Committee shall be one year. Only voting members who have been members for at least twelve months are eligible to become a member of the Managing Committee.
- (b) The Vicar shall be President of the Committee. The Secretary shall be responsible for keeping the records and minutes of the General Body and the Managing Committee, and for sending out notices of meetings. The Treasurer /Trustee is responsible for maintaining accounts with adequate vouchers for each item of expense, for preparing and presenting annual budget and statement of accounts to the Managing Committee and to the General Body, and with the assistance of other members of the Managing Committee for collecting subscriptions and dues and for raising funds in general, as well as to be a co-signatory for Bank Accounts, and to serve as Bursar.
- (c) The Vicar, as President of the Committee, and shall normally preside over all meetings. If he is to be absent, he can delegate the Secretary of the Managing Committee to preside over a specific meeting. When the Diocesan Bishop is present His Grace shall have the right to preside over the meeting of the Committee.
- (d) The Vicar, or on his behalf and with his consent, the Secretary shall convene the Committee, where possible by giving written or email notice at least five days in advance. In case of emergency the Vicar or Secretary can give notice by telephone or in person at least two days in advance.
- (e) The Committee shall meet at least four times a year, and as and when deemed necessary by the Vicar or Diocesan Metropolitan/Bishop.
- (f) Half the members of the Committee shall constitute the quorum.
- (g) The Committee shall review the Statement of Accounts and the budget to be prepared by the Treasurer before their being presented to the General body for approval.

- (h) The Committee shall implement the decisions of the General body and also make recommendations to the General Body on any matter pertaining to the affairs of the Parish, for its decision.
- (i) The Committee shall make decisions on all routine matters concerning the parish, record the decisions in the minutes book, and implement such decisions and report to the General Body when it meets next.
- (j) Any elected member of the Committee failing to attend three consecutive meetings of the Committee without giving proper reason may be removed from membership in the committee.
- (k) In the event of any vacancy arising in the Committee, the remaining members of the Committee shall co-opt a member to the vacancy from among the voting members of the General Body. Such a Co-opted member shall serve only for the remaining part of the term of office of the Committee.
- (l) A member of the Committee may resign his membership by writing to the Vicar, and the Vicar shall place the matter before the Committee and on deciding to accept such resignation, shall immediately report the matter to the Diocesan Metropolitan/Bishop, and If necessary proceed to co-opt a substitute. Such actions shall be reported to the General Body at its next meeting.
- (m) The Managing Committee may appoint Sub-Committees for any special purpose in connection with the work of the Parish, and decide on their terms of reference and term of office. The Vicar shall normally be the President of all Sub-Committees and the Treasurer for the time being shall serve also as Treasurer of all Sub-Committees, except where the General Body makes a special decision to appoint a special Treasurer with a longer term of office for a particular long term project. The Secretary and the Treasurer of the Parish shall be ex officio members of all Sub-Committees. All acts and proceedings of any such special Sub-Committee shall be reported back to the Managing Committee as soon as possible.

#### **ARTICLE – VI THE VICAR**

- (a) The Vicar / President of the Parish shall be an ordained priest of the Indian (Malankara) Orthodox Church of India.
- (b) The Vicar of the Parish shall be appointed by the Diocesan Metropolitan/Bishop and shall serve as Vicar subject to the terms and conditions as may be imposed by the Diocesan Metropolitan/Bishop.
- (c) The Vicar shall be President of the General Body, the Managing Committee, and all other sub-committees appointed by the General Body and of all the spiritual organisations of the Parish, provided however that when the Catholicos or the Diocesan Bishop is present, the senior prelate shall preside over any meetings as he may choose.
- (d) The Vicar, along with the Treasurer/Trustee, shall be the joint custodian of the properties of the Parish; provided however that the Vicar shall be the custodian of the sacred utensils and vestments and other articles for the services of the church.
- (e) The Vicar shall conduct or arrange to conduct the liturgical and sacramental services of the Parish, and shall be responsible for supervising the affairs of the Parish subject to the authority of the Diocesan Metropolitan/Bishop. He shall exercise pastoral care for the

people, and settle amicably disputes in the parish, with the assistance of others as and when required.

- (f) The Vicar shall be responsible for the maintenance and custody of the Baptismal Register, the Marriage Register, the Funeral Register, and the membership Register of the Parish, as well as of files containing Kalpanas (Episcopal Order/Communication) or official letters from the Catholicos, the Diocesan Bishop and other bishops, of all important records of the parish, including its Seal and Emblem.
- (g) The Vicar shall not receive any remuneration for his services to the Parish, but shall be reimbursed for all out of pocket expenses incurred on behalf of, or in connection with services rendered to the Parish, subject to the approval of the Managing Committee.
- (h) The Vicar shall be responsible for inviting visiting bishops and prelates other than the Catholicos and the Diocesan Metropolitan/ Bishop, to conduct service in the church. The Catholicos and the Diocesan Metropolitan/ Bishop can conduct services in the Parish by virtue of their office
- (i) The Vicar shall be one of the joint signatories of the bank accounts of the parish.

#### **ARTICLE VII- SECRETARY**

- (a) The Secretary shall be elected by the General Body of the Parish from among its voting members who have been on the membership rolls for at least one year; his term of office shall be for one year. He shall serve as the Secretary of the General Body and of the Managing Committee and shall, with the consent of the President, issue notices, propose agendas, and maintain minutes of the General Body and Managing Committee.
- (b) The Secretary shall also be responsible, with the consent of the Vicar, to do all necessary correspondence and maintain files and records for the Parish.
- (c) The Secretary, in consultation with the Vicar and the Treasurer, shall maintain also an up to date register of the movable and immoveable properties of the Parish.
- (d) The Secretary shall not receive any remuneration for his services to the Parish, but shall be reimbursed for all out of pocket expenses incurred on behalf of, or in connection with services rendered to the Parish, subject to the approval of the Managing Committee.
- (e) The Secretary shall hand over all the records in his custody to the newly elected Secretary at the expiration of his term of office in the appropriate Committee meeting or General Body meeting. In the event of the Secretary leaving office before expiration of his term, and in case of a new Secretary's election is delayed, he should hand over the documents to the Vicar forthwith.

#### **ARTICLE –VIII TREASURER**

- (a) The Treasurer shall be elected each year by the General Body from among its voting members of good standing for at least twelve months. His term of office shall be for one year. He shall, along with the Vicar, be the joint custodian of the assets and properties of the Parish.
- (b) The Treasurer is responsible for recording and maintaining correct accounts for the parish, to receive all incomes and make all payments for the Parish in accordance with the Budget

passed by the General Body and with the decisions of the managing Committee. He shall also maintain vouchers countersigned by the Vicar for all expenditure items.

- (c) The funds of the Parish shall be deposited in a recognised bank approved by the Managing Committee in the name of the St Marys IOC, jointly operated by the Vicar, the Secretary and the Treasurer (joint signature of at least two of them).
- (d) Items of expenditure outside the budget of more than £250.00 (Two Hundred and fifty only) should have the prior approval of the Managing Committee up to £1000 (One thousand Pounds). Beyond that limit, prior approval of the General Body will have to be obtained. But the General Body has the discretion to amend the upper limit time to time.
- (e) At the end of the financial year, the Treasurer shall prepare the annual statement of accounts for audit by a person duly elected as the auditor of the Parish by the General Body and present to the Managing Committee and the General Body for approval. Audited Statement of Accounts approved by the General Body should be sent to the Diocesan Bishop along with the Annual Report of the Parish and Budget for the coming year.
- (f) The Treasurer shall at the expiration of his term of office hand over all records; properties and cash balance to the newly elected Treasurer of the Parish in the Managing Committee or the General Body. In case of leaving office before the expiry of his term, if a new Treasurer has not been elected by the General Body, he shall hand over all records, Properties and cash balance to the Vicar.
- (g) The Treasurer shall not be entitled to receive any remuneration for his services to the Parish, but shall be reimbursed all reasonable out-of- pocket expenses incurred on behalf of the Parish, subject to the approval of the Managing Committee.

#### **ARTICLE – IX ACCOUNTS AND AUDITING**

- (a) All year ending accounts of the Parish shall be audited by the duly elected internal auditor only, provided that the total income/expenditure of the Parish does not exceed the limit as per the Charity Commission's regulations requiring an external auditor.
- (b) The accounts of all the spiritual organisations and projects within the Parish shall be submitted to the Treasurer in time for the annual audit.

#### **ARTICLE X- GENERAL**

- (a) Matters relating to the Faith, Order and Discipline of the Church are the domain of the Holy Episcopal Synod of the Indian Orthodox Church in India, and such matters cannot be dealt with by the Parish General Body or Managing Committee but should be referred to the Diocesan Bishop.
- (b) All elected office-bearers will continue in office until their elected substitutes can take over charge, notwithstanding what has been said above about their term of office.
- (c) In the event of an application for membership in the Parish being rejected by the Vicar, the applicant may appeal to the Diocesan Metropolitan/Bishop whose decision shall be final and binding.
- (d) The acquisition and disposal of any immovable property, raising funds for such a property or creation of any Charge on such property on behalf of the Parish can be only in pursuance of decisions in Parish General Body on recommendation of the Managing Committee, and with prior approval of the Diocesan Metropolitan/Bishop.



- (e) Dissolution of the Parish can be only by a two-third majority of those present and voting at a Special General Body Meeting convened for that purpose after 21 days written notice has been given to the members and to the Diocesan Metropolitan/Bishop, and also with prior consent of the Diocesan Metropolitan/Bishop. Any assets of the Parish remaining after satisfaction of all debts and liabilities, shall not be distributed among members of the Parish, but be transferred for the use of a Church or Churches having similar objectives and in accordance with directions from the Diocesan Metropolitan/Bishop.

#### **ARTICLE – XI AMENDMENTS AND BY-LAWS**

- (a) Amendments to the Constitution can be recommended to the General Body only by the Managing Committee of the Parish and can be considered only at a General Body meeting specially convened for the purpose after 21 days clear written notice has been given to the members and the draft amendment has been sent to members along with the notice, as also to the Diocesan Metropolitan/Bishop.
- (b) Upon receiving the consent from the Diocesan Metropolitan /Bishop to present the proposal of amendment to the General Body and any amendment shall receive the assent of a two-third majority of those present and voting at the specially convened meeting provided no amendment shall be made to Articles I, IX and XI without the written approval of the Charity Commissioners and no amendment shall be made which would cause the Parish to cease to be a charity in law.
- (c) Any five voting members of the Parish may jointly propose to the Managing Committee a draft amendment. This should be considered by the Managing Committee at a special meeting within one month and presented to the General Body for discussion with prior approval of the Diocesan Metropolitan/Bishop within 90 day of the proposed draft amendment with the Committee's own comments or additions.
- (d) By-laws not inconsistent with this Constitution may be drafted by the Managing Committee and adopted by the General Body by two-thirds majority in a meeting specially convened for that purpose with a clear 21 days notice, the draft being sent to the General Body along with the notice for the meeting.