

# THE CONSTITUTION

## *of The Greek Orthodox Community of the Annunciation of the Mother of God*

### *Middlesbrough*

#### **Article 1 – The Community**

- (1) The name of the Community is *The Greek Orthodox Community of the Annunciation of the Mother of God, Middlesbrough*. It is within the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain (Ecumenical Patriarchate).
- (2) The Community keeps its annual patronal feast on 25<sup>th</sup> March or on the nearest Sunday as deemed appropriate by the Committee and the Priest-in-Charge.
- (3) The Community professes the Orthodox Faith, as expressed in the continuing living Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church and more especially in the Holy Scriptures and the dogmatic decrees of the Seven Ecumenical councils, with nothing added and nothing taken away.
- (4) **Liturgical practice** – The Community celebrates the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom and other services of the Byzantine Rite mainly in English, but Greek, Slavonic etc. may also be used. It endeavours to preserve in its services the most suitable and most venerable aspects of the various appropriate Orthodox traditions as permitted by the Archdiocese. The Priest-in-Charge of the Community shall determine all liturgical questions in accordance with Orthodox tradition.
- (5) **Aims of the Community** – To give right worship to the One God in Three Persons and to establish churches for such worship; to preserve and teach the Holy Orthodox Faith as defined at **Article 1 (3)** above; to receive according to the rites of the Holy Orthodox Church all those who freely decide and sincerely desire to adopt that Faith and to live according to its spiritual and moral teachings;

to undertake charitable work for the benefit of those who need financial assistance, including those suffering persecution; to provide for the welfare of the poor; to visit the sick and imprisoned; to provide Christian burial for those Orthodox who die in the area of Teesside without financial means and who are not in the pastoral care of any other Orthodox community; to pray for the living and the dead; and to advance education.

## **Article 2 – Ecclesiastical Authority**

- (1) The Community is canonically subject to the authority of the Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain, or such other local Bishop as shall be canonically appointed by the Archbishop. It shall be represented appropriately on the Clergy-Laity Conference of the Archdiocese and shall respond appropriately to its requirements. It shall support the Archdiocese financially in accordance with the directions of the Archbishop. An annual report of the work of the Community, together with financial statements as required, shall be submitted to the Archdiocese.
- (2) While none but faithful Christians, from England or elsewhere of jurisdictions in communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate, may receive the Sacraments, all Christian believers may participate in the worship of the Community in so far as this shall be judged appropriate by the Priest-in-Charge acting under the guidance of the Archdiocese.

## **Article 3 – Members**

- (1) The members of the Orthodox Church in England are all those of whatever age, sex or nationality, who have been duly accepted into Communion with the Holy Orthodox Patriarchs and are resident in England.
- (2) The members of the *Greek Orthodox Community of the Annunciation of the Mother of God Middlesbrough* are those of the above as defined at **Article 3 (1)**, who worship in the Middlesbrough church, who accept the spiritual jurisdiction and authority of the Clergy of the Community, the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, and the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and who abide by this Constitution. Members entitled to vote at meetings of the Community shall be those who have reached their eighteenth birthday and who are

baptized and chrismated Orthodox Christians for at least the last six months and who intend to worship - at least monthly – in this Community, and who have paid an annual subscription of an amount to be determined from time to time by a General Meeting.

#### **Article 4 – Clergy**

- (1) For the purpose of this Constitution, the Clergy of the Community shall comprise all those in Sacerdotal or Diaconal Orders who serve the Community, including those who have retired.
- (2) The appointment of the Priest-in-Charge rests with the Archdiocese in consultation with the Committee of the Community, always provided that, if he is not a member of the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, he must submit a canonical letter of dismissal from his Bishop. The Priest-in-Charge shall be entitled to resign, but his appointment shall not otherwise be terminated save by the Archdiocese, to whom, in case of difficulty, the Committee may appeal. If the Community is in a position to pay a stipend, this shall be discussed and agreed with the Archbishop before the appointment is made. Whether or not a stipend is paid, the Clergy shall be entitled to recover from the Community their out-of-pocket expenses, including telephone, postage and travel expenses.
- (3) Assistant Priests, and also Deacons, may be appointed. Their appointment and jurisdiction shall be as at **Article 4 (2)** above. The Assistant Priests, at the request of the Priest-in-Charge, shall concelebrate with him, perform services or administer sacraments by themselves with his prior consent; and in emergencies they may do so without his consent. In the absence of the Priest-in-Charge, the senior Assistant Priest shall act in his stead.
- (4) The duties of the Priest-in-Charge, assisted by the other Priests, and by the Deacons in all that is appropriate to their Order, are:
  - (a) To offer the Divine Liturgy and to administer the Sacraments of the Holy Orthodox Church;
  - (b) To preach the Word of God;
  - (c) To teach the young;

- (d) To maintain registers of baptisms, chrismations, weddings and funerals, and to issue the necessary certificates;
  - (e) To commemorate in the sacred services the Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain and likewise to commemorate the land of England and her temporal authorities;
  - (f) To appoint cantors and altar servers, who must abide by the instructions of the Priest-in-Charge and, where appropriate, of other Clergy acting as chief celebrants of particular services;
  - (g) To lead the Community in prayer and practical help for those who suffer persecution for Christ's sake;
  - (h) To supervise all educational activities of the Community in order to ensure that the principles of the Orthodox Church and the Constitution of the Community are adhered to (see Appendix on Education).
- (5) The Priest-in-Charge is by virtue of his office the representative of the Archdiocese in the Community and in the Committee as hereinafter defined. As such, it is his solemn duty to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in assisting the Community and Committee towards wise and godly decisions. The members of the Clergy – as defined in **Article 4 (1)** above – shall have no vote.
- (6) For the solution of serious difficulties between Community or Committee and the Priest-in-Charge, appeal shall be made to the Archdiocese.

## **Article 5 – Property**

- (1) All heritable and moveable property belonging to the Community shall be administered according to the law of England.

- (2) Heritable property belonging to the Community shall be vested in the Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain, the Priest-in-Charge, the President, the Secretary and the Treasurer as Trustees for the Community all ex officii, together with up to three additional members as may be appointed by the Committee. The term of office of the appointed members shall be three years, but they may be re-appointed. The aforementioned Trustees may act either as 'holding' trustees or under the terms of a separate Trust, as determined by the Community in consultation with the Archbishop. 'Holding' trustees shall be under no obligation to take active part in the management of the property vested in them, and shall have no personal responsibility in regard thereto, but may rely upon proper management thereof by the Committee. In either case, the Trustees shall be indemnified out of the funds of the Community against all and every liability undertaken or incurred by them.
- (3) The Committee, on behalf of the Community, shall be responsible for the insurance, maintenance, and repair of the property, and for finding the necessary funds. Investments in stocks and shares and/or other forms of moveable property shall be taken in the name of the Priest-in-Charge, Treasurer and Secretary, or in the name of a Bank or other Nominee Company, or otherwise as the Committee, on appropriate advice, may decide.
- (4) In the case of heresy or schism, or of any movement aiming at the detachment of the Community from the body of the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, or from any other future diocese as envisaged in **Article 2 (1)** legal right to all the property, whether heritable or moveable, shall be retained by that section of the Community which remains faithful to Orthodoxy and continues under the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, which is subject to the jurisdiction of the same Patriarchate, or in said such future diocese. This condition shall be written in any Disposition or other Deed that is drawn up in favour of or for behoof of the Community.
- (5) In the event of the dissolution of the Community, its property, both heritable and moveable, shall devolve to the Archdiocese, with the proviso that this property, after a thorough examination of conditions in England, shall be used for the benefit, including especially the spiritual benefit through the ministry of a priest, of the remaining Orthodox in England.

## Article 6 – The Committee

- (1) The administrative and financial affairs of the Community shall be administered by the Committee, which shall meet at least three times per year and whenever there is urgent business. A meeting of the Committee shall be called monthly at the discretion of the President or Priest-in-Charge or at the request of any three (3) Committee members. The Committee shall be composed of a President (elected for two years by the members of a new Committee from among their number) together with four (4) further lay members of the Community who are entitled to vote; but only those who worship in the Middlesbrough Church of the Community may vote in elections for the Committee or be members thereof (see **Article 3** above). All the five (5) lay members shall be elected every two years by the members of the Community. Should there be an insufficient number of persons nominated and willing to serve, the Priest-in-Charge, acting on behalf of the Archdiocese and after consultation with the Archbishop, shall appoint further members to fill the vacant places. The attendance of at least three (3) lay members shall be required to make up a quorum. The clergy, as defined in **Article 4 (1)** above, shall be non-voting members of the Committee.
- (2) In co-operation with the Priest-in-Charge, the Committee shall acquire whatever is necessary for the Divine services and shall be responsible for insuring all property belonging to the Community. The Committee shall be entitled, if it thinks fit, to make payments of income or capital or both for general purposes connected with the functioning of the Community as a centre of worship and otherwise, for the furtherance of Orthodoxy in England or elsewhere, and for the decoration, furnishing and repair and maintenance of any Chapel or other premises used or partly used by the Community, whether owned or merely occupied by it, and to make, from income or capital or both, either outright grants or loans free of interest or subject to such rate or rates of interest as may be agreed and repayable on agreed terms and in agreed circumstances to any or all of the Clergy in respect of similar works on any premises owned and occupied or merely occupied by them, or in connection with their purchase of property; shall approve or amend an annual budget prepared by the Treasurer for submission to the AGM. The members of the Committee shall supervise the good order of the congregation, attend services frequently and in fulfilment of their duties as Christians set a good example to others.
- (3) The prior approval of the Committee or of its executive subcommittee as

hereinafter defined in **section (4) below** shall be required for the expenditure of more than £100 on any single item, the Priest-in-Charge, the President, the Secretary and the Treasurer each being entitled to expend up to that amount on his or her own authority, subject to the Treasurer's reporting the expenditure at the next meeting of the Committee. The Committee shall be entitled to authorise in advance, for a specified or indefinite period, annual or other continuing payments within a specified limit or without limit.

- (4) The Committee may delegate particular matters, including authority where appropriate to incur expenditure in excess of £100, to the Priest-in-Charge, the President, the Secretary and the Treasurer as an Executive Subcommittee, and in an emergency any three of these may act for the Committee without specific delegation.
- (5) Items for inclusion in agendas may be sent to the President before any meeting.
- (6) If the Committee cannot come to an agreement, an appeal shall be made to a General Meeting, and, as a last resort, to the Archdiocese, whose decision shall be final.

#### **Article 7 – Election of Lay Committee Members**

- (1) When notice is given of the Annual General Meeting, members of the Community entitled to vote shall be requested to send to the Secretary, in writing, by 11:59 pm on the Thursday preceding the AGM (assuming the AGM takes place on a Sunday afternoon) or else at least 60 hours before the scheduled time of the meeting, nominations for not more than five candidates, having first ascertained the willingness of each to serve. The Secretary shall send to each candidate a copy of **Article 6** of the Constitution and obtain from them a written confirmation of willingness to serve on the Committee and attend its meetings in Middlesbrough. The Secretary shall then prepare a list of qualified nominees for submission to the Electoral Meeting, and this shall serve as a voting paper.
- (2) Following the announcement of the elections, the Priest-in-Charge shall nominate three (3) persons, chosen from respected members of the Community who will not be candidates in the elections, to form an Electoral Committee, with the Priest-in-Charge as Chair, to oversee the election process. If there is no Priest-in-Charge, the above function shall be carried out by the President of the Committee.

- (3) If the manner in which the elections are held is by secret ballot, the Electoral Committee shall arrange the details of the voting and at the end of the election count the votes, announce the winners and runners-up and compile the minutes of the elections, which shall be signed by the President and the three members of the Electoral Committee. These minutes shall be recorded in the Minutes Book of the Community Committee. A certified copy shall be given to the Archbishop, who will then send a letter of appointment to the newly-elected members by which they are proclaimed members of the Committee. In the event of a tie for the last place on the Committee, lots shall be drawn to decide who is to take this position.
- (4) Should there be an insufficient number of persons nominated and willing to serve, the Priest-in-Charge, acting on behalf of the Archdiocese, shall appoint further members to fill the vacant places.
- (5) The Election shall be valid if at least five (5) members cast their votes.
- (6) If for any reason any lay members of the Committee resign, then those who received the next largest number of votes in the election shall be invited to take their place. If there are no such persons, the President or in his absence the Secretary, after consultation with the Priest-in-Charge and the remaining members of the Committee, shall appoint new members. If all the lay Committee members resign before the end of their appointed period, then the Priest-in-Charge, in consultation with the Archdiocese, shall appoint a small Interim Committee until new elections can be held.
- (7) The elected members of the Committee, together with those appointed by the Priest-in-Charge in collaboration with the Archbishop, shall meet as soon as possible to elect from among themselves a President, a Secretary and a Treasurer of the Community. At this meeting of the new Committee of elected and appointed members (if any), the Priest-in-Charge shall act as Chair and inform the Archdiocese in writing of the formation of the new Committee.



- (8) The Committee shall have power to co-opt up to two extra members who will serve until the next Annual General Meeting, in addition to any co-options under **Article 5 (2)** above.

## **Article 8 – Duties of the Officers**

### **1. Duties of the President:**

- (a) The President shall be deemed the ‘Senior Person’ of the Community and, together with the Priest-in-Charge and (where appropriate) assistant clergy, shall represent the Community on formal occasions.
- (b) Shall take the Chair at meetings of the Community and of the Committee and shall call upon the Priest-in-Charge to open and close all meetings with prayer.
- (c) Shall undertake all such duties as are indicated in **Articles 6, 7 and 9**.
- (d) Shall discuss with the Priest-in-Charge, as appropriate, any matters raised with him by members of the Community.
- (e) Shall at all times act, as far as possible, to ensure the goodwill, peace and stability of the Community.

### **2. Duties of the Secretary:**

- (f) To call and attend all meetings of the Committee and of the Community, and to keep the Minutes of both;
- (g) To assist the Priest-in-Charge and the President in conducting the official correspondence of the Community and keeping its records;
- (h) To correspond under the direction of the Priest-in-Charge with the members of the Community, advising them of the dates and times of the services etc.;
- (i) To assist the Priest-in-Charge and the President by undertaking clerical, typing and administrative duties as requested.

### 3. Duties of the Treasurer:

- (j) To oversee all the financial affairs of the Community;
  - (k) To receive and bank money paid to the Community: its bank account or accounts shall be operable on the signatures of any two of the Priest-in-charge, the President, the Treasurer and the Secretary;
  - (l) To keep the financial records and advise the Priest-in-Charge and the Committee of the financial position when requested;
  - (m) To settle accounts as appropriately authorized;
  - (n) To reimburse the Clergy for their out-of-pocket expenses in the carrying out of their duties, and to reimburse the Secretary for out-of-pocket expenses;
  - (o) To present to the Annual General Meeting a budget for the coming year, approved by the Committee, together with a statement of all accounts. The accounts shall be subject to external scrutiny in line with the relevant requirements of legislation.
- 4) The duties of all others appointed to assistant president's, secretarial or financial responsibilities shall be such as the Committee shall from time to time determine.

### **Article 9 – General Meeting of the Community**

- (1) The Annual General Meeting of the Community shall be held on a date decided by the Committee. At least three weeks' notice via email and announcements on the notice board and the website of the Church shall be given to all who are entitled to vote.
- (2) Ordinary General Meetings may be convened by the Priest-in-Charge and the President from time to time as required, or as requested by the Committee. At least two weeks' notice, as defined at **Article 9 (1)** shall be given to all who are entitled to vote.
- (3) An Extraordinary General Meeting shall be held at the request of the Priest-in-charge and the President or of any five members of the Community entitled

to vote, or of the Archdiocese. At least two weeks' written notice shall be given to all who are entitled to vote, with details of the business to be discussed; with the proviso that such an Extraordinary General Meeting cannot be convened in the absence of the Priest-in-Charge without either his agreement or the prior written consent of the Archdiocese.

- (4) The President shall take the Chair where possible at all meetings as defined at **Article Nine (1), (2) or (3)**. If he or she is unable to do so, or to nominate a substitute, a Chair for the occasion, whether a cleric, or a layman or woman entitled to vote, shall be elected from those present at the meeting. In the case of an Extraordinary General Meeting, the Archdiocese may appoint a Chair from either within or outside of the Community.
- (5) Every motion or amendment submitted to the meeting, except from the President, must be proposed and seconded by members entitled to vote. If there is no seconder the motion shall fall. The President shall have the right to order a secret ballot on any motion. Proxy voting shall not be permitted under any circumstances.
- (6) No discussion can be held, and no decision taken at any Annual, Ordinary or Extraordinary General Meeting if less than five (5) members entitled to vote are present. If this quorum is not achieved, the meeting shall be postponed for at least 15 days, written notice being given of the re-convened meeting; and this shall be deemed to have a quorum regardless of the numbers present.
- (7) Each Annual, Ordinary or Extraordinary General Meeting shall:
  - (a) Open with a prayer offered by the Priest-in-Charge;
  - (b) Have a record kept of those present, their identity and membership status having been checked by means of a Sederunt, in order to establish that there is a quorum;
  - (c) Hear the Secretary read the Minutes of the previous Meeting, the adoption of which, together with any necessary alterations and corrections, shall be duly proposed and seconded, and signed by the President or acting Chair.

## Article 10 – Procedure

The Articles of this Constitution, with the exception of **Article 1 (3)**, **Article 2 (1)** and **Article 5 (3)**, can be amended, if this is required by the needs of the Community; similarly, a General Meeting may introduce new articles into the Constitution. Notice of any amendments or additions must first be given to the members entitled to vote at the time when written notice of a General Meeting is given; and they must be voted on in substantially their original form; all alterations to the Constitution shall require a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting and confirmation by the Archbishop. While every endeavour should be made to reach a common mind in this and other matters arising in a General Meeting, Committee or Executive Sub-Committee, decisions in matters other than constitutional amendments may be taken by simple majorities.

## Article 11 – Interpretation

This Constitution shall be interpreted under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in accordance with the Canons of the Holy Orthodox Church and the Law of England, and with Christian charity; such interpretation is to be in accordance with the directions of the Archbishop and the rules of the Archdiocese.

## Appendix: Education

- (1) All educational activities of the Community (Sunday School, adult catechetical seminar, etc) must abide by the teaching of the Orthodox Church and the Constitution of the Community.
- (2) The Priest-in-Charge, assisted by the Church Committee, shall supervise all educational activities of the Community to ensure that the principles of the Orthodox Church and the Constitution of the Community are adhered to, and shall be an *ex-officio* member of their Committees, if such exist.
- (3) Representatives of the educational activities of the Community may be invited by the Church Committee to attend its meetings if matters pertaining to these activities are discussed.
- (4) The Priest-in-Charge may teach in the educational classes of the Community if he has the relevant qualifications and time.

*\* This Constitution was approved and adopted by the General Meeting of the Community, held on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2024, at the Church of St Columba in Middlesbrough.*