

*CONSTITUTION & BYELAWS OF*  
**SYRO-MALABAR CATHOLIC CONGRESS**  
**UNITED KINGDOM**

INTRODUCTION

The Syro-Malabar Catholic faithful in the United Kingdom are urged to found and direct an association to promote the Christian vocation in the world by serving charitable and pious purposes, in accordance with the laws of the church and its directives, as stated in:

*Canon 18:* The Christian faithful are free to found and direct associations which serve charitable and pious purposes or which promote the Christian vocation in the world and therefore to hold meetings to pursue together these purposes.

*Canon 576:* Every association is to have its own statutes, in which are defined its name, purpose, headquarters, government and the conditions required for membership. Besides these things, the statutes are to determine its policies in accordance with the rite of their own Church sui juris and the needs or usefulness of the place and time. 2. The statutes and their modification require the approval of the ecclesiastical authority which erected or approved the association.

Refer: *Guidelines* (for Recognising Lay Associations) pages. 140-142.

*PART ONE*  
**CONSTITUTION**

**1. Name of the Organisation:**

The organisation shall be called : SYRO-MALABAR CATHOLIC CONGRESS - UNITED KINGDOM; and hereinafter stated as SMCC-UK.

**2. Aims and Objectives:**

As a Catholic laity organisation, SMCC-UK works in tandem, albeit independently, under the jurisdiction of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal church. The SMCC-UK is an affiliate of the Global Syro-Malabar Catholic Congress. This organisation is the officially approved lay organisation of the Syro-Malabar church in the UK recognised by the Commission for Evangelization and Pastoral care of Migrants (hereafter called CEPCM) of the Syro-Malabar church and the Bishop

Promoter for the migrants in the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales. It should refrain from doing anything detrimental to the interest of the Catholic Church and the country.

Refer: *Canon 574: '.....the competent ecclesiastical authority alone can erect associations of the Christian faithful.'*

*Canon 577: Every association is subject to the vigilance of the ecclesiastical authority which erected or approved it; this authorities to see that the integrity of faith and morals is preserved in them, and to watch lest abuse creep into ecclesiastical discipline. 2. It is the duty of the eparchial bishop to be vigilant of all associations exercising activity in his territory, and as the case may be, to notify the authority which has erected or approved them, and further, if the action of the association causes serious harm to ecclesiastical doctrine or discipline, or is a scandal to the Christian faithful, to apply appropriate remedies in the meantime.*

The objectives of the organisation are:

1. To organise and to coordinate Syro-malabar Catholic lay activities in the United Kingdom.
2. To nourish and develop Syro-Malabar catholic heritage and to pass it on to future generations.
3. To promote catholic unity and relations with other Christian and faith communities in the United Kingdom.
4. To promote charities and social justice for the needy within and outside the church and the country.
5. To hold meetings, debates and lectures promoting the heritage and traditions of the church.
6. To mould and motivate human values in families, at work and in business.
7. To defend the mission of the Church and support its activities.
8. To support the celebrations and programmes of the chaplaincy if requested and never stand against its plans and programmes.

### **3. Members :**

Any Syro-Malabar catholic adult registered in the Syro-Malabar mass centre / parish, of the age 18 years and above, can become a full member by registration in this lay organisation. Practising members of other Catholic Churches can also be associate members of the organisation. The Associate member has no right to vote or hold office in SMCC-UK.

#### **4. Structure :**

The management of the organisation is entrusted with the Board of Trustees at the national level. The affairs of the unit, zonal and national committees shall be carried out by elected members. The elections to the particular level will be undertaken by the Annual General Body meetings. All the eligible members will form the general body of the mass centre / parish unit. The President, Vice-president, Secretary, Joint-secretary and Treasurer of all mass centre / parish units in a diocese will form the general body of the Zonal Unit and the President, Vice-president, Secretary, Joint-secretary and Treasurer of the Zonal Units form the general body at the National level.

#### **5. Units:**

A minimum of 25 registered full members is required to form a Unit. Mass centre / parish with fewer members shall join with the unit in the neighbouring mass centre / parish with the approval of the Chaplain. A mass centre / parish shall have only one unit.

#### **6. Spiritual Directors:**

The National Coordinator shall appoint the National Spiritual Director in consultation with the hierarchy. Spiritual directors will act as ex-officio members of this organisation in the capacity of patron at the unit, zonal and national levels. The Syro-Malabar chaplain at the diocesan level shall be the spiritual director of the respective zonal and mass centre / parish units. Whenever the activities of the organisation coincide or are in conflict with the activities and the decision of the Qurbana centre / parish council, the decision of the spiritual director will be final.

#### **7. Meetings of the Organisation at Unit, Zonal and National level:**

The following are the official meetings of the organisations of SMCC-UK:

1. Committee meetings
2. Annual General Body meetings
3. Special General Body meetings
4. Sub-committee meetings

Committee meetings should be convoked at least once in every 4 months.

a) The first Annual General meeting (AGM) shall be convened by the nominee of the spiritual director within 3 months of the formation of the organisation for the election of the board of trustees at the unit level. Subsequent Annual General Meetings shall be convened by the Secretary in consultation with the President,

within 12 months of the preceding AGM. Sixty days' notice shall be given to all eligible members together with the agenda by post or email or text message.

b) Special General Meetings

The secretary of the organisation, in consultation with the President, shall convene Special General Meetings as and when necessary. Special General Body meetings are also convened at the written request of the members; within 14 days of receiving a written request from not less than 33% members having the power to vote, the President need to call a special meeting of the organisation for the purpose of considering any matter which may be referred to him or her. The notice period for such special general meetings shall be 7 days. Resolutions passed at this special meeting, shall be made available to all eligible members within 14 days to the date of the special meeting.

**8. Finance :**

a) The financial year followed shall be from 1st April to 31st March, each year.

b) Life membership fee will be £500 for the lifetime of the member from the date of payment and is open only to the Syro-Malabar Catholics in the United Kingdom.

c) The units are to support financially the Zonal and National administration.

d) Finance shall be raised by the National Board through fund-raising events, subscriptions, donations, legacies or grants. Unit and Zonal committees need to get written consent from the National Board for raising any fund other than the entrance fees and subscriptions and can use it for the purpose for which it is raised.

e) The Treasurer shall keep proper accounts of the finances of the organisation. At the end of the financial year, the Treasurer will prepare an Annual Statement of Accounts.

*Refer: Canon - 582:* A lawfully established and approved association administers temporal goods according to the norms of the canon. 1007-1054 and according to the norm of its own statutes, under the vigilance of the authority which erected or approved it, to whom the association must render an account of its administration each year.

f) The accounts shall be independently examined at least twice a year by the internal auditor and once by the external auditor, if any, appointed by the Annual General Meeting.

g) An independently examined statement of accounts shall be submitted by the Honorary Officers to the Annual General Meeting.

### **9. Bank Accounts:**

The accounts of SMCC-UK shall be operated as directed by the Bishop Promoter of England and Wales. The signatories of the account shall be the Treasurer, President / Secretary and the Patron. This arrangement can be changed later with the consent of the National Spiritual Director. When the Bishop Promoter of Migrants in England and Wales permits SMCC-UK to be registered as a charitable society, a bank account shall be opened in the name of the organisation with a bank or building society as the board shall decide from time to time. Sub-accounts shall be opened at Zonal and Unit level. The President, the secretary, the treasurer and the patron are authorized to sign cheques on behalf of the organisation. All cheques must be signed by not less than two of the authorized signatories, one of them being the patron.

### **10. Alterations to the Constitution:**

Alterations to the constitution may be proposed at the Annual General meeting or at a Special General Meeting called for the purpose, at the National Board. the proposed alteration must be distributed in writing, along with the official notification of the meeting, to all the eligible members at least seven days before the meeting.

Any proposal to change the Constitution needs two-third majority of the General Body Members and the approval of the Chairman of the Commission for the Evangelisation and Pastoral Care of Migrants of the Syro-Malabar Church

*(Refer:CCEO.576, Guidelines for Recognising Lay Associations of Syro-Malabar Faithful Outside the Syro-Malabar Eparchies in India and Abroad, No.6)*

### **11. Dissolution:**

If the National Board by absolute majority, decide at any time, on any ground of expense or otherwise, that it is necessary or advisable to dissolve the organisation, it shall call a Special General Body Meeting of the organisation. If the General Body, with two-thirds majority of the total members, decides to

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dissolve the organisation, a request for permission to dissolve shall be made to the CEPCM and the Bishop Promoter for Migrants in England and Wales and abide by their decision. Any assets remaining after the satisfaction of any proper debts and liabilities shall be given or transferred equally to any Syro-Malabar Catholic charitable organisation with similar aims and objectives.

(Ref: CCEO - 1034 - 1042)

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### *Part Two*

## **BYE-LAW OF SMCC-UK**

### **1. NAME**

At the Unit level the organisation will be named as SMCC-UK, .....(name of the parish / qurbana centre) and at Zonal level will be known as SMCC-UK, .....(name of the diocese).

### **2. REGISTERED OFFICE AND JURISDICTION OF ACTIVITIES**

The registered office of the organisation shall presently be Our Lady of Lourdes Church, 373 Bowes Road, London, N11 1AA.

The jurisdiction for the activities of the organisation shall be within the entire area of authority of Syro-Malabar Archiepiscopal church in England and Wales.

### **3. UNIT FORMATION AT THE PARISH LEVEL**

For establishing a Unit, there need be at least 25 registered full members from that particular Qurbana centre / parish.

### **4. PATRONAGE**

The organisation shall be under the patronage and spiritual guidance of Syro-Malabar Archiepiscopal Church, U.K. The spiritual directors will act as the patrons at all levels , namely, Unit, Zonal and National.

## **5. MEMBERSHIP**

The membership is ordinarily open to all Syro-Malabar Catholics of age 18 years and above, presently residing in UK, provided they are prepared to abide by the rules and regulations of the Catholic church. The right to admit a member is solely reserved to the discretion of the Board of Trustees.

The duly filled in and signed official membership application form need to be submitted to the General Secretary or to ad-hoc committee in the initial stage. The person authorised by the patron will head the ad-hoc committee. On approval of the application by the secretary / ad-hoc committee, the membership fees of £ 10 for each member and the first year's subscription £ 20 shall be collected. The ad-hoc committee shall be eligible to serve till the first Annual General Meeting which need be convened within three months of the formation of ad-hoc committee. All subsequent applications for membership shall be submitted to the General Secretary for approval.

### **The Organisation shall have:**

#### **a) Full Member**

Syro-Malabar Catholics of age 18 years and above shall become the full member of the organisation. Full member has the right to vote and hold office of the organisation.

#### **b) Associate Member**

Any catholic other than the Syro-Malabar, of age 18 years and above, can become the Associate Member. The associate member has no right to vote and cannot hold any office.

#### **c) Life-time Member**

Any Syro-Malabar Catholic, residing in UK of age 18 and above, can become a life-time member by paying a non-refundable fee of £ 500. They have the rights of a full member.

### **General Restrictions for Membership**

#### **a) Anyone who stands publicly against the teaching of Catholic Church.**

(Refer: CCEO-580 & 581)

- b) Persons who are wilful defaulters of church laws.
- c) Persons who are not capable of entering into a legal contract.
- d) Any person who is a member of an organisation in the UK with same objectives and activities and may deter the achievement of the goals of this organisation, otherwise decided by the Board from time to time.
- e) A person who is not a legal resident of the United Kingdom.
- f) A person who is convicted for any offence including moral turpitude and sentenced for imprisonment for a period of more than six months needs special permission for the Board to apply for membership.

### **Termination of Membership**

The membership of a person shall be terminated:

- (1) On the death of the person.
- (2) On non-payment of the annual subscription with in the first six months of the due date.
- (3) On the resignation and the acceptance of it by the Board of Trustees.
- (4) On dismissal from the organisation.

If any member is found acting against the constitution or in a manner contrary to general interest of SMCC-UK or whose conduct has been found improper, shall be liable for a disciplinary action by the Board of Trustees. The action may be a written warning, suspension or expulsion. For actions against the constitution and improper conducts, the Board of Trustees need to institute a three member committee, out of which one shall be a life member and in the absence of such a life member, a full member nominated by the patron and not forming part of the present Board of Trustees. On receipt of its report, necessary actions shall be taken by the Board of Trustees and the Zonal spiritual director has to be informed in writing about the action taken, if the disciplinary action is an expulsion from membership of the organisation. The suspended or expelled



member can appeal in writing against the action within a period of one month from the date of such action.

(5) If a member ceases to be a Catholic.

## **6. ELECTION PROCEDURE TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

a) At the Annual General Meeting of each term the organisation shall elect a President, Vice President, General Secretary, Joint Secretary and Treasurer and four committee members; and all of them are collectively known as National Board of Trustees.

b) Democratic method of decision making is followed by the organisation and each member casts a single vote. For electing the Board of Trustees and for any other resolutions the organisation may follow open method or secret ballot. The chair person shall exercise the casting vote in addition to his or her normal vote, in case of a tie.

c) The term of service for the Unit, Zonal and National committees is two years. The members of the committee can be re-elected for one more term consecutively.

d) The outgoing President and General Secretary will continue as ex-officio members of the committee for a period of one year.

## **7. RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF THE OFFICE-BEARERS OF SMCC-UK**

### **a) Patron**

The Patron of the organisation is an ex-officio member holding the post by virtue of being the spiritual director and has the power to vote, act as signatory of account and advise the organisation at unit, zonal and national levels for achieving the objectives.

### **b) President**

1. To preside at board meetings and general body meetings.

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2. To guide and control the office, functions and business of the organisation as per the constitution and byelaws in force from time to time.
3. To represent the organisation in its appropriate level before the public, government authorities or agencies, press or other media, in consultation with the patron and the general secretary.
4. To do all such acts incidental thereto or as being felt necessary for the progress and smooth functioning of the organisation.

**c) Vice President**

1. To do all the works of the president in his or her absence.
2. To assist the president as and when needed in all matters concerning the activities of the organisation.
3. To do such other works assigned by the Board from time to time.

**d) General Secretary**

1. To work as the chief executive officer of the organisation under the guidance and control of the president.
2. To convene meetings of the Board or members in consultation with the President.
3. To prepare notice and agenda and to communicate it in writing to all eligible members, in consultation with the president.
4. To keep in safe custody the seal of the organisation and affix the same on all legal documents executed.
5. To prepare and keep in safe custody the register of the members and to update it.
6. To prepare, read, get approval and keep safe the minutes book of board meetings and general body meetings.

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7. To present the minutes before the auditors or other authorities as and when required.
8. To inform such persons and authorities as may be considered necessary or are required under any law any matter related to the organisation including any changes in composition of the Board of Trustees.
9. To prepare and submit the annual report of the organisation at the board meetings prior to the annual general body meetings and to obtain approval before its presentation in the Annual General Body Meeting.
10. To do all such acts as may be necessary and beneficial for the proper management of the affairs of the organisation.

**e) The Joint Secretary**

1. The Joint secretary shall undertake all activities which normally shall be undertaken by the Secretary in his or her absence.
2. The Joint secretary shall undertake any other specific activity authorized by the Board of Trustees, from time to time.

**f) The Treasurer**

1. The Treasurer shall be in charge of the day-to-day financial activities of the organisation.
2. The treasurer shall keep adequate records of all financial transactions and make available for auditing and presentation to Board members during the board meetings and to members in the Annual General Body meeting.
3. The Treasurer of the unit shall make available to the Zonal committee and the Treasurer of the zonal committee to the National Board of Trustees, a copy of the audited and approved annual accounts along with the auditor's report.
4. The Treasurer shall make available the audited annual accounts to any other legal authority as required for compliance.

**g) Committee Members**

They form part of the administrative body and can be entrusted with such powers and responsibilities as the board deems fit and needed from time to time.

**h) Internal Auditors**

Any member of the organisation can be appointed as the internal auditor for a period of one year for the National Board of Trustees and the Zonal Committee. The internal auditor shall carry out the half-yearly audits of all accounts and minutes and provide reports to the board to ensure accuracy and authenticity of transactions. Internal auditor shall not attend any board meetings other than the meetings in which the internal audit report is presented and discussed.

**8. SUB-COMMITTEES**

The National Board of Trustees, Zonal Committees and Unit Committees may appoint Special Committees as may be considered necessary, and shall determine their terms of reference, powers, duration and composition. All acts and proceedings of such special or Standing committees shall be reported back to the committee as soon as possible. They are dissolved after the fulfilment of their duties.

**9. NOTICE AND AGENDA FOR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Sixty days clear notice with agenda shall be served by the secretary to all eligible members for conducting the annual general meeting.

Special general meeting requires 7 days clear notice with agenda to all eligible members. Board meetings and committee meetings can be convened as per the requirements and as decided by the president of the committee.

**Agenda for AGM:**

The Annual General Meeting will transact the following business:

- a) Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting
- b) Consideration of the Annual Report
- c) Consideration of the annual Statement of Accounts and auditor's report
- d) Election to the Board of Trustees in every two yearly AGM
- e) Appointment of Internal / External Auditor of accounts and fixing their remuneration if any.

- f) Planning the activities of the year
- g) Any other competent business

## 10. ESSENTIALS OF CONDUCTING THE MEETINGS

- a) **Chairperson:** The president of the board shall be the chair of the meetings. In the absence of the president, the Vice-president shall be the chairperson of the meeting. In the course of the meeting, if the President appears, then the temporary chair needs to vacate the place for the president of the Board.
- b) **Quorum:** The Quorum for a meeting of the committees shall be one third of the full members entitled to vote, rounded up to full digit.

The meeting need be adjourned after half an hour for lack of quorum. The adjourned meeting shall be convoked within 7 days and the quorum is not necessary when meeting is re-convened.

- c) **Voting:** Unless otherwise specified, all questions arising at any meeting shall be decided by a simple majority of those present and entitled to vote. In the event of a tie, the President has the casting vote.
- d) **Minutes :** The minutes of the committee meetings shall contain a record of all proceedings, resolutions and decisions. The minutes of the previous meeting need be read by the secretary and got approved in the subsequent similar meeting. The minutes should be available to the members for inspection at a due notice of two working days.

## 11. AMENDMENT TO THE RULES

It shall be lawful for the organisation SMCC-UK from time to time to amend, vary, alter, modify or repeal any provision of these rules, subject to a majority of two third of the total registered full members at a National General Body meeting properly convened for this purpose in accordance with the provisions of these rules. Any such amendment shall also be approved by the Chairman of the CEPCM.

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