

THE CONSTITUTION (BY-LAWS) OF

AFRICA UNION 55

(THE AFRICAN GROUP OF MOTHER SETON PARISH)

THE AFRICAN GROUP OF MOTHER SETON PARISH

ARTICLE 1

NAME OF ORGANIZATION

The Name of the group shall be known as: **AFRICA UNION 55.**

The name is derived from the number of African countries in the continent.

ARTICLE 2

PRINCIPAL CONTACT LOCATION

The principal contact location of the group will be at Mother Seton Catholic Church located at 19951 Father Hurley Boulevard, Germantown, Maryland 20874.

ARTICLE 3

THE GOALS AND PURPOSE OF THE GROUP

The goal of this group is to create a trusting environment for the Mother Seton African community where members pray and support one another.

The specific purpose of this organization is to provide a platform for self-development, advocacy and education, skills acquisition, and cultural revival.

The group will establish a support group that is dedicated to our individual and collective welfare, our progress and peaceful co-existence in our new home in the United States of America. In addition, we aspire to uphold the common spirit of togetherness, unity, cooperation, and a strong family unit among our members.

ARTICLE 4

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

- Create a point of contact where African members can reach out for questions related to their faith or personal matters.
- Hold monthly prayer sessions followed by discussions on a topic that could benefit members.
- Conduct awareness sessions in person or via zoom to educate members on training and career opportunities.
- Support members through referral of organizations that can assist with food, shelter, jobs, accommodation, legal and fiscal matters, etc.
- Assist with funeral arrangements for members in need.
- Organize yearly Africa Day events to promote our culture and network with other members of the community.
- Invite guest speakers who will share their insights on hot topics such as scholarships, government programs and benefits, vaccines, voting, etc.
- To promote a spirit of oneness and unity among its members and their families.

ARTICLE 5

MEMBERSHIP

Membership shall be voluntary and will be limited to Mother Seton Catholic Parishioners or any Catholic of African origin who would like to join.

Enrollment:

Enrollment is free.

Annual Dues:

All members will pay Annual Dues of \$120 payable on or before the month of July, or alternatively, monthly payments of \$10 due at every meeting from September to August.

A bank account will be opened for the group under the umbrella of Mother Seton Parish, just like other groups.

ARTICLE 6

MEETINGS

General Meetings:

The general meeting of the group is scheduled on the third Sunday of the month. It is advisable for each member to attend meetings regularly. It is members' responsibility to notify the group/Secretary either by text, phone call, or WhatsApp forum if they will be absent for the monthly meeting or for an extended period of time.

Emergency/Special Meetings:

Emergency or special meetings of the group shall be convened to deal with special/emergency matters as the need arises. The Chair can call for a meeting before the scheduled General Meeting.

Notification Of Meeting:

Notice or cancellation of meeting will be sent to members via WhatsApp before the scheduled meeting date.

Time:

Meeting time is scheduled from 1:45pm – 2:45pm on the third (3rd) Sunday of each month EXCEPT when time extension is required by the Chair in advance.

Quorum: A quorum is formed when 5 members are available including the Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, or their designee. Meeting starts after prayer.

Attendance:

ATTENDANCE IS EXPECTED FROM ALL MEMBERS TO THE AFRICA GROUP ACTIVITIES SUCH AS AFRICA DAY, WAKE OR VIGIL FOR DEATH OF A MEMBER, CHILD, OR SPOUSE.

Absence:

A member could be absent from a meeting or Africa group events for the following reasons: Bereavement, Family sickness, Emergency, Work, Travel out of Town, and

Weekend Classes. Members must inform any member of the executive if they are going to be absent.

Lateness:

All members are encouraged to come to meetings on time since we only have one (1) hour meeting time.

ARTICLE 7

COMMITTEES AND CODE OF CONDUCT

Committee:

The group shall have such Standing and Ad-Hoc committees as may be decided by the general meeting or the executive committee.

All members who are interested can participate in any Committee.

Executive Committee:

The executive committee of Africa Union 55 shall include all the selected/elected officers of the group.

CODE OF CONDUCT:

The Africa Union 55 group will abide by the following standards:

- Members will act with integrity and honesty.
- Relationship will be based on mutual respect.
- Differences of opinion will be discussed openly and civilly. These discussions will focus on issues at hand and will be presented in a courteous manner.
- Members will be sensitive to the impact of both their words and actions on others.
- All members will exchange ideas freely within the bounds of reasonable behavior.
- Under no circumstance, no matter the provocation, should a member engage in hurtful exchange of words or altercation, physical fights, or drunkenness.
- Our group is stronger when we work as a team. We will foster attitudes that encourage members to give and receive constructive criticism and develop creative solutions to challenges.

ARTICLE 8

OFFICERS/EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The minimum number of officers for Africa Union 55 group shall be five (5) and Officers of this group shall be only members of Mother Seton Parish.

The executive committee will be responsible for organizing and running all meetings. The executive committee shall also be responsible for all actions of the group.

1. The Chair
2. Vice Chair/Welfare
3. Secretary
4. Treasurer
5. Social Secretary

6. Ex-Officio members – Former Chairs are encouraged to serve as Advisors. More officers may be added as needed over time.

DUTIES OF OFFICERS:

All Officers are to run the affairs of the group and also be responsible for membership drive.

THE CHAIR:

The Chair shall serve as the official representative of the group and responsibilities include:

1. Chair monthly general meetings, emergency meetings, and other meetings of the group and of the executive committee.
2. Cause the summoning of the general meeting either on his/her own initiative or in accordance with the decision of the executive committee.
3. Direct all other officers of the group on the performance of their duties.
4. Coordinate club activities through the executive committee.
5. Establish short- and long-range objectives and goals in conjunction with the executive committee.
6. Structure the group to ensure continuity of leadership by providing opportunities for new leaders to develop and to be mentored.
7. Approve all club communications.

VICE CHAIR/WELFARE OFFICER:

1. In the absence of the Chair, the Vice Chair shall assume the duties of the Chair as listed above.
2. The Vice Chair shall assist the Chair and also serve as the Welfare Officer for the group by gathering information from members who need assistance and have other issues that need attention.
3. Plan, coordinate, and recruit committees to manage a series of meetings and programs.
4. Coordinate programs with the president and the executive committee.
5. Provide data on previous group events to allow the event Chair to benefit from experience, and suggestions for improvement.
6. Provide timely and interesting advance information for the WhatsApp forum, bulletin, and mailings.
7. Provide information on forthcoming events to the Secretary for inclusion in meeting notices or Minutes.
8. Ensure strong leadership succession by identifying and recruiting new members and volunteers.
9. Provide mentorship to new officers.

SECRETARY:

The Secretary shall perform the following duties:

1. Record and keep minutes of all meetings, including a short summary of all decisions taken.

2. Post Minutes of Meetings on Mother Seton Africa Group WhatsApp forum.
3. Furnish annual or special reports of the activities of the group.
4. Handle the correspondence of the club and inform officers of deadlines for reports, mailings, future commitments.
5. Maintain a roster of officers -their current address, email, and telephone numbers.
6. Coordinate the production of a Directory of Members by name, industry, and function.
7. Produce a list of government and church programs that will benefit members of the group.
8. Encourage members to update their personal information on the online directory.
9. Maintain complete and up-to-date copies of the group's By-Laws and other documents.

TREASURER:

The duties of the treasurer shall include the following:

1. Oversee the group's finances.
2. Collects dues and receives other monies, e.g. proceeds from tickets, etc.
3. Deposit all funds collected into the group's bank account.
4. Design, promote and lead fund-raising campaigns.
5. Assist the Chair and other officers in preparing program budgets and financial controls.
6. Maintain and supervise group bank accounts.
7. Ensure that there are at least 3 signatories on all bank accounts.
8. Pay all bills on time.
9. Provide financial update at the end of association monthly meetings
10. Prepare quarterly and annual financial reports.
11. Hold the group's check book.
12. Be a signatory to the group's bank account

SOCIAL SECRETARY:

The duties of the Social Secretary are as follows:

1. To disseminate information and publicize the group's events through the WhatsApp group forum, church bulletin, emails, and other medium approved by the Chair.
2. Work closely with the Secretary to maintain records of correspondence.
3. Act as Chairperson of the Social Committee
4. Organize the annual Africa Day event and other activities for the organization.
5. Work with the Chair to assign members to Ad-Hoc committees created to implement a particular event.
6. Arrange for activity requirements, such as setting up equipment, purchasing required items for events, decorating, and arranging event venues, refreshments, and entertainment.
7. Work with the Chair to provide overall supervision of the event committees, and give account of an event to the group as needed.

ARTICLE 9

GUIDELINES FOR NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

Elections will be held at the general meeting every one (1) year at a date, time and venue as agreed by members at a general meeting. The elections will be conducted through the "SecretBallot" system, unless the members adopt rules that are to the contrary.

Election Committee:

1. Will comprise of five (5) members selected by the general membership.
2. Will be an Ad-Hoc committee elected by members at least 2 months before the election, and dissolved immediately after the newly elected officers have been sworn in.
3. Will preside over the election and will tabulate the results.
4. Members of the election committee are not eligible to run for office during the year that they are serving in the election committee.

Election Rules:

- Each Officer of the group shall be elected by the membership and each officer shall hold office until a successor is duly elected.
- Nominations for officers should be made at the meeting prior to the elections.
- Elections should be held during the first monthly meeting of the year every January.
- Every member of the group has a right to cast a vote in every election. No member can cast more than one vote for a particular candidate at a given time.
A member has the right to give up their vote but cannot transfer their right of vote to another member.

Rules for Nomination:

- All nominees for positions must be registered members for at least one (1) year and in good financial standing for at least six (6) months prior to election date.
- A maximum of three (3) nominees are required for each position.
- All nominees MUST be present on the day of election.

Term:

- Officers of the group shall serve a One (1) year term of office and may succeed themselves in office for additional terms if re-elected by the general membership.

Removal:

- The group may remove an Officer whenever in its judgment, the best interests of the group would be served but such removal shall be without prejudice to the right, if any, of the Officer so removed.
- All removals shall only be upon a majority vote of the membership in attendance at the General Meeting.
- At least thirty (30) days prior written notice via WhatsApp of the intended removal shall be given to all members. An officer removed from his/her position shall not constitute removal from the group.

Vacancy:

- A vacancy in any office because of death, resignation, disqualification, removal, or otherwise, may be filled by an individual temporarily appointed by the Chair pending elections at the next monthly meeting.
- Should a vacancy occur in any office, except the Chair, a special election shall be held at the next monthly meeting to fill the office unless such vacancy occurs within eight weeks prior to election day. Then there will be no need for a special election since election day will be just 8 weeks or less away.
- If the Chair is not able to continue his/her duties, then the Vice Chair will take over the role pending election day.

AMENDMENT:

- Any provision of this constitution may be amended at the general meeting of the group provided notice of such amendment is given to members within a minimum of 21 days before the date of the meeting, and the proposed amendment is approved by a majority vote of the members present and voting at such general meeting.

ADOPTION

THE UNDERSIGNED DO HEREBY CERTIFY:

THAT THE WITHIN DOCUMENT, DESIGNATED AS THE BY-LAWS OF **AFRICA UNION 55**, THE AFRICAN GROUP OF MOTHER SETON CATHOLIC CHURCH, IS APPROVED AND DULY ADOPTED WITHOUT RESERVATION BY THE MEMBERS OF THE SAID GROUP, AT A GENERAL MEETING OF MEMBERS HELD ON _____

Signed,

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| Name of Chair | Signature | Date |
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| Name of Secretary | Signature | Date |
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| Name of Chairperson By-Laws Committee | Signature | Date |
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