

**CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS**  
**OF**



**ST. GEORGE JACOBITE SYRIAC ORTHODOX  
CHURCH, SEATTLE**

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## CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

### OF

## ST. GEORGE JACOBITE SYRIAC ORTHODOX CHURCH, SEATTLE

### ARTICLE I

#### NAME OF THE CHURCH

The name and style of the organization shall be “St. George Jacobite Syriac Orthodox Church” based in Seattle and it shall be a Washington ecclesiastical corporation having a seal.

### ARTICLE II

#### ALLEGIANCE OF CHURCH

St. George Jacobite Syriac Orthodox Church, (hereinafter referred as “church” or “parish”) is an affiliated member church of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church under the Holy See of Patriarchate of Antioch And All The East, Supreme Head of Universal Syrian Orthodox Church, of the Holy Apostolic Throne of Saint Peter (hereinafter referred as “The Patriarch”).

St. George church shall be under the spiritual jurisdiction and control of the Archbishop of the Malankara Archdiocese of the Syrian Church in the North America (hereinafter referred as “Archbishop”), appointed by the Patriarch.

It shall be governed spiritually in accordance with the rules and canons of the Hudoyo, the official law book of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church and by the canonical regulations established by the successive meetings of the Holy Synod. Such spiritual jurisdiction and authority cannot be changed, altered, modified, or revoked.

### ARTICLE III

#### MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH

Only those who are baptized and have been anointed by the Holy Mooroon in a Universal Syrian Orthodox Church and pledges their spiritual allegiance to the Patriarch can be registered-member of the church (hereinafter referred as general-body). The members must be following and professing the Universal Syrian Orthodox faith and its venerable traditions and must submit to the spiritual jurisdiction of Malankara Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church in North America.

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Members of St George Jacobite Syriac Orthodox Church must adhere to the Universal Syrian Orthodox faith and Apostolic orders and guidance beyond doubt through the Holy Sacrament of baptism and other Holy Orders and confess the faith and confirmed in the Nicene Creed.

**ARTICLE IV**

**AMALGAMATION**

This church shall not be amalgamated without the unanimous decision of the members, the formal support of the Archbishop of the Malankara Archdiocese and the final approval of His Holiness the Patriarch of Antioch.

**ARTICLE V**

**DISSOLUTION**

Section 1:

This church and its members shall not have the power to dissolve it so long as the Holy See of Antioch exists.

Section 2:

In the event that no person or persons of the Syrian Orthodox faith that pledges their allegiance to The Patriarch are left in the United States and Canada, a bonafide representative of The Patriarch shall have full power to administer the Church and all its properties.

**ARTICLE VI**

**PROPERTIES**

The legal owner of all moveable or immoveable properties (hereinafter referred as church-property) of the church will be the general-body of the church. Acquiring or disposing any immoveable properties should only be carried out by the permission of the Archbishop.

Decision to acquire or dispose off church-property worth less than ten thousand US dollars may be taken by the board of directors (hereinafter referred as managing-committee), with a simple majority.

Any decision to acquire or dispose off church-property worth ten thousand US dollars or more will have to be made by the managing-committee only with the majority decision of the General Body meeting.

**ARTICLE VII**

**GOVERNING BODY OF THE CHURCH**

A voting-member of the church will be a registered-member paying subscription and having no monetary or spiritual dues to the church including subscription and yearly Holy Confession and Holy Communion, and pledges their spiritual allegiance to the Patriarch, (hereinafter referred as general-body). Any voting-member involved in anti-church activities or fails to participate in the sacramental life of the Universal Syrian Orthodox faith or leads an immoral life style, will be disqualified from general-body of the Church until the dues drawbacks are rectified and the same is confirmed by the governing body of the church.

The Vicar shall be the President of the Church General Body. He shall preside over all General Body meetings. In the absence of the Vicar, an assistant vicar or the Vice-President shall preside over such meetings. The Archbishop may convene a meeting of the General Body of the church under special circumstances.

The General Body is the decision making body of the Church on temporal matters. It shall meet at least twice a year, once in December for yearly elections and another halfway through the year. After yearly elections, names of the elected officers shall be communicated to the Archbishop in writing by the Vicar before 31<sup>st</sup> December of every year for the written approval of the Archbishop.

A quorum shall consist of a simple majority of voting-members. If a quorum is not present in any meeting, the meeting shall be adjourned. An adjourned meeting due to lack of quorum need not to have a quorum when re-convened. Majority of the members present and voting shall constitute a decision.

It shall approve the annual budget and appropriate funds for parish activities. It shall take necessary actions to remove, reinstate or discipline a member or an office bearer except the priests. Such action shall be taken with simple majority of the full membership of the parish.

It shall elect the lay representatives to the Diocesan General Body in which the Vicar shall be a permanent delegate. It shall elect the Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary and other office bearers. The Vicar shall be appointed by the Diocesan Archbishop. The General Body shall have no authority to take any disciplinary action on the Vicar or any other priest the Church may have.

The General Body shall unquestionably accept and implement any bulls from the Patriarch or the Pastoral Letters of the Archbishop. If the Patriarchal Bulls/Pastoral letters are not promptly and properly read and implemented in the Church, disciplinary action may be taken by the Archbishop.

Discussion or decision on ecclesiastical discipline or faith shall not be under the purview of the General Body. The date and place of the General Body meeting shall be announced in the

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Church for three consecutive Sundays before general body is convened. In such situations that there is no service on consecutive Sundays, the date and place of general body meeting shall also be conveyed to members by phone / through emails. The General Body shall make decisions to purchase, lease or rent property or financing mortgage. Any sale of immovable property shall be made only with the approval of two thirds majority of the general body and the final approval of the Archbishop.

**ARTICLE VIII**

**CONDUCT OF THE GENERAL BODY MEETING**

All present shall sign the attendance register. The Vicar shall be the last signatory. Any names or signature appearing after the Vicar shall be considered invalid.

The order of the meeting shall be as follows:

- Prayer
- Reading of the minutes of previous meeting
- Other items of the agenda
- Other matters permitted by the Chairperson
- Adjournment
- Benediction

All decisions taken in the meeting shall be read at the end of the meeting and the same in rough copy shall be attested by the Vicar.

**ARTICLE IX**

**SPECIAL/EMERGENCY GENERAL BODY MEETING**

In case of Emergency, the Vicar shall convene a meeting giving one week's notice, in consultation with Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Only the emergency agenda shall be discussed and decided upon in that meeting.

The requirement of announcing the date of the meeting on three consecutive Sundays shall be waived in case of special or Emergency General Body meetings. Information conveyed on phone/through email concerning the date and place of meeting five days prior to the meeting may be considered as sufficient notice.

If the General Body decisions are contested, protests may be lodged in writing to the Vicar within ten days of such contested decisions.

Initials by Vicar:

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If the Vicar is unable to settle the disputes, the matter shall be referred to the Archbishop who will stay the implementation of those decisions, set up a commission to study and report the findings to the Archbishop. The Archbishop shall dispose of the complaints, taking into account the recommendation of the commission.

If the Vicar refuses to refer to the Archbishop any matters which could not be settled by the Vicar, a simple majority of the membership of the Church may bring the matter to the attention of the Archbishop who will take necessary steps to alleviate the situation. Anonymous complaints shall not be entertained.

**ARTICLE X**

**THE VICAR**

Though there is priesthood of all believers, there are those who called, ordained, set apart and commissioned for special priestly ministry to cater to the spiritual and sacramental needs of the spiritual community. The Vicar must be a priest ordained and recognized by Universal Syrian Orthodox Church, his priesthood should be current, must pledge his allegiance to the Patriarch and to the Archbishop, who is his direct superior.

The Vicar shall have the primary responsibility of overseeing all sacramental needs and spiritual activities of the church and shall directly report to the Archbishop.

The Vicar shall be a priest not below the rank of Kassisa. He shall also be the President of the Parish. If there is more than one priest in a church, the others will be assistant Vicars. The appointment and transfer of Vicar is completely under the control and by the order of the Archbishop.

**ARTICLE XI**

**DUTIES AND RESPOSIBILITIES OF VICAR**

- a) Shall be responsible for fulfilling all priestly obligations in a parish.
- b) Visit all the houses in the parish at lease once a year.
- c) Provide counseling to youngsters preparing for marriage, the bereaved, minister to the sick, and help those who face problems.
- d) Shall be the custodian of the Baptismal, Marital and Burial Register, the Holy Mooron and other Holy Oils
- e) Shall submit to the Archbishop a copy of the membership list and the names of all elected office bearers before December 31<sup>st</sup> of every year for approval.
- f) Shall have the right to convene the meetings of the General Body, Board of Trustees, sub-committees and spiritual organizations such as Sunday School, Youth League & St. Mary's Women's League.
- g) Preside over General Body and Managing Committee meetings.

- h) Shall make sure that all directives of the Archbishop are implemented in the parish.
- i) Shall submit personally in writing to the Archbishop all substantive matters affecting the general policy of the parish or the Archdiocese

**ARTICLE XII**

**DISPOSAL OF COMPLAINTS**

Complaints about the vicar shall be submitted to the Archbishop in writing with a non refundable fee of \$ 50.00 (fifty US dollars). Such complaints, if it refers to a particular incident, must be submitted within thirty days of the incident. Anonymous complaints shall not be entertained.

Within thirty days upon receiving the complaint, the Archbishop, if he feels that there is any reasonable ground to proceed, will set up a commission to conduct an enquiry. The commission will submit a written report of its findings within ninety days of its appointment, to the Archbishop, who will take necessary action based on the report of the commission. If a complaint is rejected, the complainant has the right to lodge the same again within three months of the dismissal of the complaint if there are reliable new evidences to submit.

**ARTICLE XIII**

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

The total minimum number of Board of Trustees shall be 5 (Five) including the Vicar. The Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, and other board of trustees shall be elected by the General Body in December every year. The terms of office of the Board of Trustees shall be one year. The fiscal year of the Church shall be Jan 01<sup>st</sup> to Dec 31<sup>st</sup> every year.

If, for any reason, yearly elections do not take place in December, the existing Board of trustees will continue until the President shall convene a General Body Meeting on or before the first Sunday of March in which the elections shall be conducted.

The Board shall not interfere with matters of spiritual and ecclesiastical discipline which are under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Archbishop and the Vicar appointed by him.

On the first day of Holy Mass in January following the election and getting the written approval of the Archbishop, the elected members shall take the following oath to be administered by the Vicar soon after the Holy Eucharist.

“I,....., do hereby swear before God Almighty that I will not deviate from the Apostolic and Orthodox beliefs and doctrines handed down to me from the first three Ecumenical Councils, and that I will serve the Church and the people with whole heart, sincerity,

**Initials by Vicar:**



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and unswerving fidelity, and that further, I will obey unquestionably orders of our Supreme Ecclesiastical Head His Holiness the Patriarch and his representative, the Archbishop. I will perform the functions of my office, according to the constitution and Bylaws and with undivided devotion, motivated solely by the highest consideration of that service that will rebound to the welfare of my parish and its adherents.”

The Vicar shall be the President of the Board of Trustees and shall preside over the meetings. In his absence, the Assistant Vicar or Vice President shall preside over the meetings. The Titles, Deeds, and other important documents of the parish shall be under the joint custody of the Vicar, Assistant Vicars, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary.

Any dues paying member, above the age of 21 (twenty one) years of age, regardless of sex, is eligible to be elected as the member of the Board.

The Board of Trustees shall meet at least twice a year. The quorum shall be constituted by a simple majority of members. Notices to the meetings shall be sent at least a week in advance by mail/email indicating the place and agenda of the meeting. An emergency meeting may be called by the Secretary at the request of the President or one third members of the Board in which case notice given by email/telephone at least three days in advance shall be sufficient.

The Board of Trustees shall:

1. Discuss and approve Annual Statement of Accounts before sending the same to the General Body for final approval.
2. Recommend appropriation of funds for different parish activities to the General Bodies approval.
3. Implement the decisions of the General Body.
4. Employ, as and when necessary, individuals, consultants, legal counsel, and management personnel for conducting the work of the parish.

Any member of the Board absenting himself/herself from two consecutive meetings of the Board shall automatically revoke his/her membership except for a valid reason convincing to the members of the Board and it shall so be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. The member shall be informed in writing by the Secretary of the Board within 15 days of the third meeting. Such vacancies shall be filled by persons nominated by Vicar and approved by the majority of the members present in the Board meeting.

**ARTICLE XIV**

**PRESIDENT**

- 1 The Vicar shall be the President of the Board of Trustees.
- 2 He shall sign the minutes of the meetings.
- 3 He shall see that all resolutions and decisions of the Board are carried out.
- 4 He shall convene the meeting of the Board of Trustees when necessary.

**ARTICLE XV**

**VICE-PRESIDENT**

The Vice-President is a lay person elected by the General Body every year. He shall be the authorized spoke person of the church in the community and will work towards building up church and its institutions. He shall be eligible for reelection but shall not be elected for more than three consecutive terms. He shall be general-body member, not below 26 years of age, of sound mind and with good moral statute.

Duties and Responsibilities:

- 1 Shall be performing all the duties of President in his absence, except the priestly obligations, in the church.
- 2 Shall be the spoke person of the church in the community.
- 3 Shall lead the efforts of building up church and its institutions.
- 4 Preside over Board of Trustees meetings in the absence of President.

**ARTICLE XVI**

**TREASURER /TRUSTEE**

The Treasurer/Trustee is the steward of the property and finances of the parish. The church shall have a lay person as treasurer elected by the General Body every year. He/She shall be eligible for reelection but shall not be elected for more than three consecutive terms. He/She shall be a general-body member, not below 26 years of age, of sound mind and with good moral statute.

Duties and Responsibilities:

1. Shall be responsible for properly receipted account keeping of income and expenditure of the parish.
2. Shall keep an accurate record of the assets and liabilities of the parish.
3. Shall present the annual budget.

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4. Shall be a co-signatory of the parish bank accounts along with President / Vice President.
5. Shall collect all income received on Sundays and have the Vice President co-sign for verification
6. Shall deposit in the bank all moneys received within the next 3 (three) working days.
7. Shall be the custodian of the receipt books and other financial documents pertaining to the parish.
8. Shall keep and inventory of the movable and immovable properties of the parish.
9.
  - a. Payments more than \$250.00 (two hundred and fifty dollars) must be approved by the Board of Trustees.
  - b. For any disbursements over \$250.00 (two hundred and fifty dollars), the check shall be duly signed by both the treasurer and the President / Vice President of the church.
  - c. All the disbursements over 10 dollars on behalf of the church will be executed in the form of checks or verifiable electronic formats.
10. Shall prepare a financial statement documenting the financial activities of the church, within one month at the end of every quarter.
11. Shall ensure that the accounts of the church are balanced at all times.
12. Shall maintain copies of all the checks received in the name of the church.
13. Shall provide a signed receipt for all the funds received.
14. Shall keep all original receipts or contracts for a minimum of three years for any disbursement of funds. All reimbursements shall accompany with a voucher detailing all the details of the expenditure item and duly signed by the person claiming the item and the treasurer.
15. Shall present the audited financial report to the General body.
16. Shall handover all the books and records to the incoming Trustee within 15 days after his or her term ends.

**ARTICLE XVII**

**SECRETARY**

The Secretary shall be the custodian of the minutes of the meetings of General Body and Board of Trustees of the church, responsible for properly recording the minutes of the meeting and maintaining the records of the parish. The Church shall have a lay person as secretary elected by the General Body every year. He/She shall be eligible for reelection but shall not be elected for more than three consecutive terms. He/She shall be a general-body member, not below 26 years of age, of sound mind and with good moral statute.

**Duties and Responsibilities:**

1. Shall be the custodian of the minutes of meetings of General Body and Board of Trustees of the parish.
2. Responsible for properly recording the minutes of meeting and maintaining the records of the parish.

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- 3 Sends notices to convene meetings upon request from the Vicar.
- 4 Shall be responsible for presenting the annual report to the General Body.
- 5 Shall handover all the books and records to the incoming secretary within 15 days after his or her term ends.

**ARTICLE XVIII**

**RESIGNATION OR REMOVAL**

The Vice President, Trustee/Treasurer, or Secretary may be removed from office by a simple majority of the General Body which was convened for the purpose upon the recommendation of the Board of Trustees.

The Board of Trustees shall recommend that the Vice President, Trustee/Treasurer, or Secretary may be removed only after conducting proper enquiries to substantiate the complaint which could tarnish the image of the church.

Appeal for the decision should be made to the Archbishop within one month of the contested decision. The Archbishop will make his own enquiries and make decision which shall be final.

If the Vice President, Trustee/Treasurer or Secretary relinquishes his or her post for any reason he or she should submit all records and documents to the President.

If the Vice President, Trustee/Treasurer, or Secretary resigns or is removed from his/her post within six months of his/her election, the General Body should be convened and new office bearer should be elected. If the post becomes vacant after six months for whatever reason, then a member of the Board of Trustee may be appointed from within the Board with simple majority to act as the replacement office bearer for the remaining period of the financial year.

Any changes to the approved governing body shall be notified to the Archbishop for his formal approval.

**ARTICLE XIX**

**SPIRITUAL ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE CHURCH**

The Church will have a Sunday school, St. Paul's's Men's Fellowship, St. Mary's's Women's League, and Youth Movement. The General Body, shall approve the office-bearers of the Spiritual Organizations who are formally elected at their own separate meetings presided by the Vicar who is the president of all Spiritual Organizations in the parish. All the officials of the Spiritual Organizations are accountable to the parish General Body meeting. All secretaries of the Spiritual Organizations and the Head Master of the Sunday School are required to present their annual report of activities in the General Body meeting after the elections.

**ARTICLE XX**  
**ADDRESS FOR COMMUNICATION**

Given below is the current address for communication.

St. George Jacobite Syriac Orthodox Church,  
University Christian Church, 4731 15th Avenue Northeast Seattle, WA 98105.  
Ph No 253-293-5510

**ARTICLE XXI**  
**AMENDMENTS**

Article I, II & III shall not be amended under any circumstances. Amendments may be proposed on other articles by any general-body member of the church, and such proposed amendments shall be submitted in writing to the board of trustees. The board of trustees shall at its first regular meeting, consider the same and shall take action thereon within three months. If by a vote of two-thirds of the members of trustees present approve the amendment, it shall be then be submitted to the general-body meeting. If it be then accepted by three-fourths of the general-body member, it shall be in effect, subject to the approval of the head of the archdiocese.

This constitution was regularly adopted by the members of the church on the 26<sup>th</sup> Day of January 2012.

For the Board of Trustees,

Fr. Thomas Kora	Paul varkey	Thomas	Biju
(Vicar/ President)	(Vice President)	Mudayankavil	Skariah
		(Treasurer)	(Secretary)

This constitution was approved and accepted by His Eminence Mor Titus Yeldho Pathickal, Archbishop of the Malankara Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox in North America.

On the -----Day of -----,

(SEAL)

+Archbishop Titus Yeldho Pathickal

Initials by Vicar: