

**CONSTITUTION OF THE**  
**SOUTHERN AFRICAN COUNCIL OF PRIESTS**

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PREAMBLE

All priests, together with bishops, so share in one and the same priesthood and ministry of Christ, that the very unity of their consecration and mission requires their hierarchical communion with the order of bishops...by reason of the gift of the Holy Spirit which is given to priests in sacred ordination, bishops should regard them as necessary helpers and counsellors in the ministry and in the task of teaching, sanctifying and nourishing the people of God.

(Decree, Presbyterorum Ordinis, Art 7)

In virtue of their common sacred ordination and mission, all priests are bound together in an intimate brotherhood, which naturally and freely manifest itself in mutual aid, spiritual as well as material, pastoral as well as personal, in meeting and in community of life, of labour , of charity.

(Const. Lumen Gentium, Art 28)

Bishops, pastors of parishes, and other priests of both branches of the clergy should keep in mind that the right and duty to exercise the apostolate in common to all the faithful, both clergy and laity alike, and that the laity also have their own proper roles in building up the Church. For this reason they should work fraternally with the laity in and for the Church, and take special care of lay persons engaged in apostolic works.

(Decree, Apostolicam Actuositatem, Art 25)

### 1. NAME

The Association shall be known as THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN COUNCIL OF PRIESTS (SACOP or 'Council', hereafter).

### 2. NATURE

The SACOP shall be a representative body of the priests of SOUTHERN AFRICA, comprising the various ecclesiastical territories served by the SOUTHERN AFRICAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE (SACBC hereafter)

### 3. AIMS

The purpose of the Council shall be to promote, in hierarchical communion, an efficacious sharing of responsibility in the mission of the Church.

To this end the Council shall serve as:

1. An instrument for closer co-operation with the SACBC in matters of general concern;
2. A forum for the exchange and co-ordination of the views of priests as to the mission of the Church, in a true spirit of brotherly unity;
3. An agency dealing with problems affecting the personal life and ministry of priests;
4. A medium of helpful collaboration with other legitimately constituted apostolic groups, especially those engaged at a national level;
5. A means of co-operating with Christian and non-Christian bodies in the development of ecumenical activities.

### 6. MEMBERSHIP

1. For every fifty (50) priests or part thereof, a diocese/vicariate/prefecture shall be entitled to a representation of one (1) member on the Council, who shall be a delegate for a three (3) year period. Delegates (and alternatives) shall be elected by the presbyterium of each diocese/vicariate/prefecture in a manner determined by the bishop in consultation with the presbyterium.

2. Other groupings of priests, e.g. Seminary Old Boy's Associations, may apply for representation or be invited by SACOP to send representatives. The Executive Committee shall deal with such applications and invitations subject to the later approval of the General Assembly.

### 3. POWERS

1. The SACOP shall be seen as an advisory body, sharing responsibility with the bishops for the mission of the Church.

2. The SACOP may take decisions and make recommendations in the pursuance of its special aims, but it shall not be endowed with any legal authority in the conduct of diocesan affairs. This shall not preclude the acceptance by the Council of the delegated authority to operate in any matter delegated duly by the SACBC (cf 3a)

3. Initially, final authority shall be vested in the full assembly of the SACOP members.

### 4. GOVERNMENT

1. From the body of the delegate the Council shall elect an executive Committee of five (5) members (Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and one other member) for a period of three (3) years. A member of the Executive may be in the same office for two terms but no longer than three terms on the executive. In addition two (2) Alternatives shall be elected by the Council for the same period.

2. Officers of the Executive shall also be officers of the SACOP.

3. In the event of any Executive Office falling vacant outside of the General Meeting the Executive shall be empowered to fill the vacancy, choosing one of the standing officers or alternatives, who shall enjoy a right of vote until the next meeting of the SACOP.

4. The Executive shall be empowered to co-opt persons for specific tasks, but without the rights to vote. This shall not preclude the forming of commissions, all the members of which may be empowered to vote in the meeting of the commissions.

### 5. PROCEDURE FOR THE ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

1. It shall be competent for any delegate to nominate a member for office. The nominee shall be seconded.

2. Every vote given at such ballot for a person who has not been nominated shall be void and ineffectual.

3. Should only two persons be nominated, the voting at the first ballot shall be final, except in the case of an equality of votes.

4. If more than two persons are nominated, an absolute majority for one candidate will suffice. Otherwise, the candidate obtaining the lowest number of votes at the first ballot shall be eliminated and thereafter successive ballots shall be taken and one candidate eliminated until such absolute majority shall be obtained

5. In case of an equality of votes affecting the elimination of any candidate or the result of the final ballot, a further ballot shall be taken and if that be indecisive, the result of the ballot shall be decided by the drawing of lots.

### 6. MEETINGS

1. To ensure an effective co-operation with the Bishops Conference, the SACOP shall hold the Ordinary General Meeting at a convenient time prior to the Plenary Session of the SACBC.

2. The Executive shall draw up the Agenda for the Meeting of the SACOP having first sought the views of the delegates on discussion themes, and given timely notice to all concerned of the subjects listed.

3. The Chairperson, in constitution with the other members of the Executive, shall convene the meeting of the SACOP and of the Executive Committee.

4. A quorum for a General Assembly will be an absolute majority of the delegates entitled to be present, i.e. fifty (50) percent plus one (1).

5. An absolute majority of members shall constitute a quorum for a properly constituted meeting of the Executive body.

6. All members shall be conducted in accordance with the procedural rules of a formal

meeting.

7. Any resolution will need for its adoption an absolute majority (i.e. more than half the votes) of all the delegates present.

### 8. ORGANS

The organs of the Council shall be:

- The General Assembly
- The Executive Committee
- The Secretariat
- Commissions, appointed by the General Assembly or the Executive Committee.
- Committees, appointed by the General Assembly or the Executive Committee.

#### - FINANCE

1. The SACOP will be financially independent.

2. After each General Assembly, the Executive in constitution with the SACBC shall agree upon a fixed sum per priest based on the anticipated expenditure for the coming year; and this sum shall be paid into a Central Fund by each diocese/vicariate/prefecture in respect to each of its member's priests.

3. From the Central Fund, travel and accommodation expenses of all delegates to the General Meetings, including those invited by the Executive, and all Secretariat and Committee expenses shall be met.

### 4. ALTERATIONS TO THE CONSTITUTION

To take effect, every proposed alteration to the Constitution must receive a two-thirds majority of the full assembly of the SACOP.

Approved and amended 2003