



# Holy Synod of Saint Athanasius Congregation

## CONSTITUTION

### CHAPTER ONE: ON THE NATURE AND CONSTITUTIVE PRINCIPLES OF THE HSSAC

#### PART ONE: ON THE NATURE OF THE HSSAC

##### Article 1: IDENTITY

1. The Holy Synod of St. Athanasius Congregation for Egyptian and Middle Eastern Christians Orthodox ( HSSAC) is a community of Christians comprising an autonomous reformed Orthodox Church, founded in the United State of America.
2. The church holds itself to be fully Christian and fully Orthodox, maintaining the seven sacraments and apostolic succession.
3. It has established spiritual, educational and social programs designed to feed those who are in need. Its dedication courage and love of service to Christ is through serving His people.
4. His Grace, Archbishop Maximus I is the Presiding Hierarchy of the HSSAC, who was consecrated by the Metropolitans of the Holy Synod of the American Diaspora in America of True Orthodox Christians canonically established through the Old Calendar Greek Tradition.

#### PART TWO: ON THE CONSTITUTIVE PRINCIPLES OF HSSAC

##### Article 2: BELIEFS AND ORGANIZATIONS

1. The Holy Synod of St . Athanasius Congregation for Egyptians and Middle Eastern Christians Orthodox HSSAC beliefs that the church is One because it is one with its founder, Jesus Christ and in His mystical body is one with all believers.
2. It is Holy because Christ is Holy and sanctifies the church by his continuing presence in the congregation, sacraments and his work.
3. It is universal and open to all races, all sexes and all nationalities.

4. It is apostolic because it is linked to the faith, teachings and authority of the Apostles and the Early Fathers of the church both sacramentally and historically through the apostolic succession of the bishops and clergy.
5. HSSAC accepts the Nicene, Apostles and Athanasian creeds and observes seven sacraments (Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation, Penance, Unction, Ordination, Matrimony).
6. HSSAC Practices open communion for all Christians who acknowledge the real presence of Christ in Eucharist.

### Article 3: ON THE CHURCH

1. We recognize that the Local Church is the visible and sacramental reality in which is made present the totality of the One, Holy, and Apostolic Church, established by Jesus Christ.
2. By “Local Church” we understand the people of God organized as a communion of communities that:
  - A. Professes the faith in accordance with the witness of the Holy Scriptures and the Ecumenical Creeds and Confessions.
  - B. Observes the liturgy through prayer and the sacramental life, reaching its culmination in the celebration of the Eucharist.
  - C. Gives evidence of the reality of the Gospel such as fruit of the experience of the gifts of the Spirit that give new life and the capacity to love.
  - D. Recognizes, as the visible sign of its unity, the bishop who in synodical form presides over it, with the participation of the presbytery and of all the people of God.
  - E. Through the bishop is in communion with other local churches.

### Article 4: ON THE SACRAMENTALITY OF THE CHURCH IN GENERAL AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS

1. We accept and administer the sacraments of Baptism, of Confirmation, of the Eucharist, of Reconciliation, of the Anointing of the Sick, of Holy Orders, and of Marriage.
2. We believe, consonant with the tradition of the undivided Church, that the validity and efficacy of each of the sacraments participates in and expresses the sacramentality of the whole Church.
3. Given that the Local Church is where this sacramentality is expressed, the sacraments find their true significance and efficacy solely when they are administered within and for the edification of the Local Church.

### Article 5: ON THE SACRAMENTALITY OF BAPTISM

Holy Baptism is the first of seven Sacraments in the Orthodox Christian Church. The Orthodox Church does not belittle personal faith in an adult who seeks baptism, but instead insists that the whole emphasis of baptism is not on what the baby does or the

parents or the godparents, but on what God does. The fact that we are Christians is not due to any act on our part; it is due to the act of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Of course Baptism demands a personal response on the part of the baptized child when it reaches the age of reason. The child must accept what God did for him or her in Baptism. Baptism is not a divine pass that will get us into Heaven automatically. It must be followed by a personal awareness or awakening to the many gifts of God's love bestowed upon us through this great sacrament.

## Article 6: ON THE SACRAMENTALITY OF CONFIRMATION (Chrismation)

The sacrament of chrismation, also called **confirmation**, is always done in the Orthodox Church together with baptism. In the sacrament of **Chrismation** we receive “the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit” (See Rom 8, 1 Cor 6, 2 Cor 1:21-22). In chrismation a person is given the “power from on high” (Acts 1-2), the gift of the Spirit of God, in order to live the new life received in baptism. He is anointed, just as Christ the Messiah is the Anointed One of God. Chrismation, the gift of the Holy Spirit, is performed in the Orthodox Church by anointing all parts of the person's body with the special oil called **holy chrism**. This oil, also called **myrrh** [miron] is prepared by the bishops of the Church on Holy Thursday. It is used in chrismation to show that the gift of the Spirit was originally given to men through the apostles of Christ, whose formal successors in the world are the bishops of the Church (see Acts 8:14; 19:1-7).

## Article 7: ON THE SACRAMENTALITY OF EUCHARIST (HOLY COMMUNION)

It is the partaking of the body and the blood of Jesus Christ. We believe that the bread and wine is the real body and blood of Christ in a mystical and spiritual way through the operation of the Holy Spirit.

When the believers partake the Holy Communion with repentance and forgiveness they become united with Christ and with each other,  
“Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Corinth 10:17)

## Article 8: ON THE SACRAMENTALITY OF RECONCILIATION (Penance)

The sacrament of penance exists in the Church to allow for the repentance and reconversion of Christians who have fallen away from the life of faith. The fulfillment of penance consists in the reception of Holy Communion and the genuine reconciliation of the repentant sinner with God and all men according to the commandments of Christ. From this there obviously follows the necessity of a sincere attempt by the penitent to refrain from sin and to remain in faithful obedience to God and in uprightness of life before Him and all people.

## Article 9: ON THE SACRAMENTALITY OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, or Holy Unction as it is also known, remind us that when we are in pain, either physical, emotional, or spiritual, Christ is present with us through the ministry of his Church. He is among us to offer strength to meet the challenges of life, and even the approach of death. As with Chrismation, oil is also used in this Sacrament as a sign of God's presence, strength, and forgiveness. Orthodoxy does not view this Sacrament as available only to those who are near death. It is offered to all who are sick in body, mind, or spirit. The Church celebrates the Sacrament for all its members during Holy week on Holy Wednesday.

## Article 10: ON THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS

1. The sacrament of Holy Orders has three levels: as deacon, as priest, and as bishop.
2. It is indispensable that one be ordained on the lower level in order to be able validly to receive a higher level of the sacrament of Holy Orders.

## Article 11: ON THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

- A. HSSAC acknowledges that the sacrament of marriage is the public and solemn covenant that is brought about between a man and a woman.  
“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”
- B. The matrimonial covenant has the purpose of establishing the exclusive and permanent communion of life for the spouses, with the view of forming a family.
- C. CLERICAL MARRIAGE  
is admitted before and after ordination. There is generally no requirement that a priest be already married nor prohibition against marrying after “answering the call” (1 Timothy 3:2). Being married is commonly welcomed, in which case the priest’s marriage is expected to serve as a model of a functioning Christian marriage.  
Clergymen marriage follows the same discipline of the laymen marriage.
- D. DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE  
According to Orthodox Canon law we accept divorce and second marriage. In theory divorce is only recognized in the case of adultery, but in practice is also recognized in light of other reasons. There is a list of causes of divorce acceptable to the Orthodox church. Accepting the divorce and not rejecting the sinful humanly weak believers or depriving them from God’s mercy and further grace.

## Article 12: ON THE REGULATIONS OF HSSAC

1. We acknowledge that in order to be able to hold to, live by and implement the Constitutive Principles of HSSAC, it is necessary for there exist a set of rules and regulatory operating procedures.

2. It is on this basis that the regulations of HSSAC are developed, which must therefore be considered to be the Constitutive Principles in a concrete form, and as such are binding on all the member churches.

## CHAPTER TWO: REGULATIONS OF HSSAC

### PART ONE: BASIC CRITERIA

#### Article 13: ON THE FUNDAMENTAL EQUALITY OF ALL THE MEMBER CHURCHES

HSSAC is a communion of Orthodox Apostolic Churches, in which all the member churches are recognized as equals.

#### Article 14: ON THE CONCEPT OF A MEMBER CHURCH

1. The reference to the Church is to be understood as referring to the Local Church, presided over and represented by a bishop or by one who on a temporary basis exercises his functions, in accord with what is laid out in the present Constitution (cf. Articles 3 and 4).
2. Each member Local Church is in communion with other Local Churches, being joined together in an Ecclesiastical Province, and, in certain cases, also in a Higher Body, constituted in a legitimate, public, binding and permanent form.
3. All the bishops that preside over Local Churches have to belong to the College of Bishops of the Ecclesiastical Province and also of the Higher Body, if there is one, to which the Local Church would be linked.

#### Article 15: ON THE THEOLOGY OF THE CHURCH

##### I. TRINITY

1. Orthodox Christians all over the world believe in a God who is both three and one (triune). The Father is the cause or origin of the Godhead, from whom the Son is begotten eternally and also from whom the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally.
2. The Holy Trinity is three, distinct, divine persons (hypostases), without overlap or modality among them, who share one divine essence (ousia)—uncreated, immaterial and eternal. Orthodox doctrine regarding the Holy Trinity is summarized in the Symbol of faith.
3. In discussing God's relationship to his creation, Orthodoxy used the concept of a distinction between God's eternal essence which is totally transcendent and his uncreated energies which is how he reaches us. It is also necessary to understand that this is an artificial distinction, not a real one. The God who is transcendent and the God who touches us are one and the same.

4. The Resurrection of Christ is the central event in the liturgical year of the Orthodox Church and is understood in literal terms as a real historical event. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was crucified and died, descended into Hell (Hades in Greek), rescued all the souls held there through sin; and then, because Hell could not restrain the infinite God, rose from the dead, thus saving all mankind.
5. Through these events, he released mankind from the bonds of Hell and then came back to the living as man and God. That each individual human may partake of this immortality, which would have been impossible without the Resurrection, is the main promise held out by God in his New Testament with mankind, according to Orthodox Christian tradition.

## 2. BIBLE, HOLY TRADITION, AND THE PATRISTIC CONSENSUS

1. The Orthodox Church considers itself to be the historical and organic continuation of the original Church founded by Christ and His apostles.
2. The faith taught by Jesus to the apostles, given life by the Holy Spirit at Pentacost, and passed down to future generations uncorrupted, is known as Holy Tradition.
3. The primary and authoritative witness to Holy Tradition is the Bible, texts written or approved by the apostles to record revealed truth and the early history of the Church.
4. Because of the Bible's inspired origin, it is regarded as central to the life of the Church.
5. Other witnesses to Holy Tradition include the liturgy of the Church, is iconography, the rulings of the Ecumenical Councils, and the writings of the Church Fathers.
6. From the consensus of the Fathers (consensus patrum) one may enter more deeply and understand more fully the Church's life.
7. Individual Fathers are not looked upon as infallible, but rather the whole consensus of them together will give one a proper understanding of the Bible and Christian doctrine.

## Article 16: HSSAC'S MINISTRY

1. Our ministry is to reveal the Light of eternity in a dark world void of it. We are light to the world and are here to transfigure and transform it.
2. Our mission is to make the life-changing wisdom of the Bible understandable and accessible to all. Now we can see why He identified Himself as the "Lord of the Harvest" (Matthew 9:38 and Luke 10:2). There was His crowning achievement, the joy set before Him and why He had suffered and died. It was the reason He was crucified to restore lost mankind to Himself. He was the Lord of that Harvest and had received an anointing and was now giving to His Church the anointing to reap it. In Luke 10:2, He Said "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." A "reaping or crop" is not "going" to be ready. It "was already" ripe, and the only hindrance to that reaping were the workers or laborers. This world needs someone to teach it the Word of God.
3. As far as we appear to be climbing this current mountain of revelation and gifts, we can never disqualify the necessity of teaching and preaching His Word. It's the very reason the glory was given and that divine power was granted--to "be His witnesses."
4. You become that laborer and you become that harvester and the prophecy of Jesus of a great glorious white harvest continues to be fulfilled and unfolded. His glory will

carry you into the white light of His presence, because you "are a city set upon a hill that cannot be hid" and you are the "light of the world."

## PART TWO: OBJECTIVES AND GOALS OF THE HSSAC

### Article 17: ON THE GOALS OF HSSAC

1. HSSAC goal is to see people of all nations experiencing a personal relationship with Christ, growing to be more like Him, and serving in a local body of His family.
2. The true church of God is not any particular church building or denomination. The church is the Body of Christ. Ephesians 1:22-23 says, "And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."
3. The Body of Christ is made up of all believers from the time of Pentecost until the Rapture. Christ established the church during His personal ministry and is its Head (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18). He promised that He would be with it through the ages and that the gates of hell should not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18; Matt. 28:20).
4. The fundamental objective of HSSAC is to promote the communion among all Christ Churches on a global level.
5. To take responsibility, in the case of conflict among the Churches in the communion, for serving as mediator in order to find appropriate solutions.
6. To take responsibility for establishing ecumenical dialogues with other Communion of Churches similar to HSSAC, with the intent of promoting unity among all Christians.
7. To initiate regional and worldwide meetings of various kinds and levels, among the various member Churches.

## PART THREE: ON THE DIFFERENT MINISTRIES OF THE HSSAC

### Article 18: GOOD SHEPHERD TV NETWORK

1. Good Shepherd TV (GSTV) is a Christian television network headquartered in Pennsylvania USA.
2. It televises an extensive blend of interdenominational and multi-cultural programs.
3. It broadcasts spiritual and intellectual programs and provides a continuous 24 hours per day, seven days a week stream of Christian broadcasting.
4. IT presents and exhibits the epistle by love as Jesus commanded us and in an applied Christian way.
5. It is an interdenominational channel, welcomes with open arms all churches of God and all believers.
6. A charismatic movement that strongly believes on the presence of the Holy Spirits and its Gifts. It features spiritual, life-enriching, cultural, historical programs and also programs on marriage and family.
7. Committed to produce and air programs that are wholesome, uplifting and inspiring.

8. Reaches Arabs every where in the world in America, Canada, Mexico and in the Middle East through the Nile Satellite.

## **PART FOUR: ON THE ORGANIZATION OF HSSAC**

### **SECTION ONE: BODIES OF COORDINATION**

#### **Article 19: ON THE ORGANIZATION OF HSSAC**

1. HSSAC is comprised of TWO bodies: The Board of Directors and the Executive Secretariat.
2. The Board of Directors performs the role of a steering or managerial committee.
3. The Executive Secretariat is the body charged to execute the measures of the Board of Directors, and serves as the organ of communication.

### **SECTION TWO: THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

#### **Article 20: ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

1. Formation: It is formed of the President, Officer, Secretary, Treasurer and one member.
2. Meetings: It meets ordinarily 4 times a year. It meets extraordinarily when it is considered appropriate, prior consultation having been made by the President with its members. The functions of the Board of Directors:
  - A. To fulfill and ensure the fulfillment of the stipulations of the Constitution.
  - B. To approve any matter that may be submitted for its consideration in relation to administrative or pastoral questions or questions of faith.
  - C. To revise, contribute to, modify and approve the General Plan of work both of the Board of Directors and of the Executive Secretariat.
  - D. To initiate activities to expand the programs of HSSAC.
  - E. To revise and approve the annual budget of the Executive Secretariat.
  - F. To carry out those other activities that are related to its responsibility.

#### **Article 21: ON THE DUTIES AND POWERS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

1. The specific duties and powers of the President of the Board of Directors are:
  - B. To represent HSSAC in matters in which it has an interest.
  - C. To preside over the sessions of the Board of Directors.
  - D. To prepare the agenda of the meetings in coordination with the Secretary.

- E. To watch over the smooth functioning of HSSAC, of the Board of Directors and other bodies on which it relies.
  - F. To cast a deciding vote in cases of a tie during sessions of the Board of Directors.
  - G. To do whatever else the Board of Directors and the Constitution may determine.
2. The duties and powers of the Officer of the Board of Directors are:
- A. To assist the President in carrying out the duties of his office, making to him suggestions that he deems appropriate for HSSAC to run smoothly.
  - B. To substitute for the President when the latter is indisposed or temporarily absent.
  - C. To do those other things that the Board of Directors and the Constitution may assign to him.
3. The duties and powers of the Secretary of the Board of Directors are:
- A. To make and maintain a record of the acts of the Board of Directors.
  - B. To write up and, with the President, authorize the acts of the Board of Directors.
  - C. To publish the agreements of the Board of Directors.
  - D. To prepare and submit for the approval of the Board of Directors the draft of the biannual report of activities, to be presented to the board.
  - E. To prepare the background documentation for matters that the meetings of the Board of Directors are to deal with.
  - F. To prepare and send the announcement for the various meetings sufficiently in advance.
4. The duties and powers of the Treasurer of the Board of Directors are:
- A. To collect and maintain the security of HSSAC funds in the form stipulated by the Board of Directors.
  - B. To authorize with the President the expenditures, approved by the Board of Directors, incurred in the performance of their duties, as well as to authorize payments that are to be made.
  - C. To prepare the draft of the annual budget and to present it to the Board of Directors at their Ordinary meeting for its final approval.
  - D. To keep the Board of Directors informed on all matters that fall within the area of his authority.
5. The duties and powers of the other member of the Board of Directors are:
- A. To collaborate with the other members of the Board of Directors in carrying out HSSAC affairs.
  - B. To substitute for officers on the Board of Directors in case of their indisposition, temporary or definitive absence except for the President.
  - C. Other duties that the present Constitution, the Board of Directors may assign to him.

## SECTION TREE: ON THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

### Article 22: ON THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

1. The Executive Secretariat is the standing body charged with carrying out the measures of the Board of Directors and is the permanent organ of communication between all the Local Churches and other HSSAC bodies.
2. The Executive Secretariat is directed by the Executive Secretary.
3. The functions of the Executive Secretariat are the following:
  - A. To carry out the measures decided and ordered by the Board of Directors.
  - B. To be the permanent office of communication among all the member Churches of HSSAC through means that may be considered appropriate.
  - C. To make contacts, provide information and monitoring and offer presentations designed to incorporate new members into HSSAC; the incorporation to be carried out according to the procedures stipulated in the present Constitution.
  - D. To carry on, in the name of HSSAC, relationships and conduct dialogues with Churches, Bodies and Institutions with which HSSAC has a connection or linkage of any sort.
  - E. To face and resolve the difficulties and questions which emerge in the life of HSSAC or of its members when these are within its powers or, when they are not, to refer them to the competent authority, ensuring that responses and solutions are found quickly and effectively.
  - F. To organize, subject to the approval of the Board of Directors, meetings, courses, seminars, discussions and other activities that may sharpen the identity and strengthen the mission of HSSAC.
  - G. When possible and necessary, to make publications of a theological, historical, pastoral or other nature in which the identity and mission of HSSAC are expressed.