



MENS' CHRISTIAN GUILD CONSTITUTION

1. **NAME**

The name of the association is the "Men's Christian Guild "(MCG) and is referred to hereinafter as the Guild.

2. **AIMS**

The aims of the guild are inter alia:

- 2.1 To present Jesus Christ as Lord and saviour to men and to engage them in the promotion and extension of God's Kingdom.
- 2.2 To extend the Kingdom of God, in our Church, in the churches to which we are related and in the entire world.
- 2.3 To build up Christian character by encouraging attendance at public worship, the reading of scripture and witness to Christ.
- 2.4 To inculcate a sense of moral discipline, especially in the members of the Guild.
- 2.5 To promote programmes of intellectual, social and physical growth.
- 2.6 To inculcate a spirit of obedience and humility both in our church and the entire Church of God.
- 2.7 To bind members to resist all unchristian customs and to follow the life which is the fruit of the spirit.
- 2.8 To encourage a sense of responsibility for all men, especially those who need either practical help or spiritual assistance.

3. **MEMBERSHIP**

- 3.1 Membership shall be open to all ministers and male members in full communion of the Uniting Presbyterian church in Southern Africa.
- 3.2 Each branch together with its outstations shall take the name of a congregation to which it belongs.
- 3.3 A branch shall first affiliate to the Presbyterian structure within its bounds then to the Denominational Conference.
- 3.4 It is the Guild's desire to have branches in all congregations, however if anyone wishes to apply for membership but belongs to a congregation that does not

have a guild, he may apply for membership to any branch within his presbytery with a view to recruit in order to establish a Guild in his congregation. This will have to be rectified by the Presbyterian structure in which he belongs.

3.5 New members shall be on probation for six months under the supervision of the Branch Executive Committee.

4. **CONTRIBUTION**

4.1 Each member shall contribute an annual subscription fee to be determined from time to time by the outstation branch annual general meeting, Presbyterian conference and Denominational Conference. Contributions to start from the outstation.

4.2 Each structure of MCG in the denomination shall open its own bank account.

5. **ORGANISATION**

5.1 The guild, its branches and members, are subject to the care and discipline of the General Assembly, presbytery, and session in their respective sphere.

5.2 Each branch together with its outstation shall take the name of the congregation to which it belongs.

5.3 All meetings are open and closed with a prayer.

5.4 In all conferences, record of lower bodies shall be submitted for inspection.

6. **STRUCTURE**

The structure of the guild shall be as follows:

6.1.1 *The outstation*

A. the outstation shall consist of one or more members worshipping in that particular area who will meet at least once a week.

6.1.2 *The branch*

A. The branch consists of one or more members or outstations coming together as the case may be who will meet at least once a month.

b. At its annual general meeting, the branch shall elect the following office bearers: President (who will be the minister in charge), the Chairman, Secretary, Vice Secretary, Treasurer and two delegates. The above shall form a branch executive.

C. The branch executive shall facilitate the election of outstations office bearers, which shall be the Chairman, Vice Chairman Secretary, Vice Secretary and the Treasurer.

D. Presbyterian President to robe new members of the branch if the President is not a minister or if the Interim Moderator is not a member of the Guild

6.1.3 The Presbyterial Conference

- A. The presbyterial conference consists of all member branches within a particular presbytery who will meet at least twice annually.
- B. Each branch shall be represented by the President and two delegates.
- C. The business of the presbyterial conference shall be:
 - C.1 To review work done in the branches.
 - C.2 To suggest new areas of expansion.
 - C.3 To ensure spiritual revival of the members.
 - C.4 To ensure the participation of the branches / members in the project of the church.
- D. The executive committee of the presbyterial conference shall be the President who shall be the minister
 - The Vice President who shall be a minister.
 - The secretary
 - The vice secretary
 - The Treasurer
 - Two additional members

In the case where the number of ministers does not permit the above, the Presbyterial conference may petition the denominational conference for deviation.

6.1.4 The Council

- A. The council shall consist of:
 - The Denominational Executive committee
 - The President, Secretary, Treasurer of the Presbyterial conference and three other members from the Presbyterial conference.
 - Office bearers of Synod
- B. The council shall meet at least once a year to deal amongst other things with the following:
 1. To deal with unfinished business of the Denominational conference.
 2. To deal with urgent business of conference.
 3. To ensure good administration of Presbyterial structures.
 4. To develop a programme and recommendation for the next denominational conference.

6.1.5 The Denominational Conference

- A. The denominational conference shall be held annually. It shall consist of the full membership of the Presbyterial delegation.
- B. The business of the denominational conference shall be inter alia.

- B.1 To promote programs of the MCG that will enhance the life and work of the denomination and enhance the transformation of society.
- B.2 To deal with recommendations from the council.
- B.3 To take the resolutions and communicate them to the church/ to the world through the relevant committee/s and the community.

C. The denominational conference shall elect amongst its members the following: who shall serve a period of 3 years:

- The President who shall be a Minister.
- The Vice President who shall be a Minister
- The Secretary
- The Vice Secretary
- The Treasurer
- The two additional members

6.1.6 *Synod*

Where necessary a synod can be established by a cluster of presbyteries.

6.1.7 *The official opening and closing of conferences/s.*

The moderator or his/ her appointee declares all conferences officially opened/closed and induct the new executive. This happens in all levels of the Guild.

7. **DUTIES OF THE OFFICE BEARER**

See appendix A

8. **UNIFORM**

8.1 The uniform for members shall be

- A white jacket without a vent with two silver buttons in front of gabardined material.
- A white waistcoat with five silver buttons.
- A black pair of trouser
- A white shirt
- A plain black tie
- A black pair of shoes and a black pair of socks.
- A MCG badge.

8.2 The uniform for ministers will be exactly like **8.1** with the exception that Ministers will wear a white clerical shirt with a white collar.

9. **Discipline**

9.1 Reason for discipline

Any member/branch or Presbyterial structure of the guild shall be disciplined if;

- A. Fail to attend 4 consecutive meetings without proper apology.
- B. Fail to contribute to a fund for a period of a year.
- C. Causes chaos and disunity to the Guild.
- D. His moral behaviour contradicts the Christian principles.

9.2 Form of discipline

Any member found guilty may be:

- A. Rebuke
- B. Suspended for a period not exceeding six months.
- C. Struck of the roll.

If **B** is opted, a member / shall be subject to counselling for the duration of his/ their suspension.

If **C** is opted, the body that exercise discipline need to report this to the relevant church structure (session, Presbytery or General Assembly/ Executive commission) for ratification.

9.3 Procedure to follow

Any member/body to be disciplined shall;

- A. Be given 21 days to attend the hearing.
- B. Be given a clear charge sheet.
- C. Be allowed to bring witnesses at the cost of the parties involved
- D. Be given fair opportunity to present his/her case.
- E. The accused be allowed to cross examine witnesses

If a member / body fail to respond to the invitation a second invitation shall be issued , if he/they fail to appear on the second invitation, the hearing shall continue in his / their absence and a letter be written to advise him/ them about the outcome of the hearing.

A member / shall have a right to appeal to the relevant church structure.

10. **OCCASION TO WEAR UNIFORM**

1. Holy Communion Services
2. Funerals of members of the Guild and other associations
3. MCA Conference worship services
4. New building dedication services
5. Service of the unveiling of tombstones of the various associations
6. Service of a minister's welcome or farewell
7. All Assembly/ Presbytery services

11. **AMENDMENT OF CONSTITUTION**

The constitution may be amended by a resolution adopted by the National conference after sufficient consultation with lower structures.
Any amendment shall be submitted to the General Assembly/ Executive commission through the Church Association Committee for ratification.
The amendment takes effects once it has been ratified by the General Assembly/ Executive Commission.

12. **DISSOLUTION CLAUSE**

Should the Guild be dissolved, all assets shall be handed over to the General Assembly/Executive Commission

CHURCH ASSOCIATION APPENDIX D

MEN'S CHRISTIAN GUILD
NATIONAL CONFERENCE

THE REVIEW OF THE REVIEW OF THE MANUAL OF FAITH AND ORDER AS ADOPTED BY THE MCG MINI-CONFERENCE HELD IN PORT ELIZABETH ON THE 13-14 JUNE 2008.

INTRODUCTION

The basis of union adopted by the former Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa provided a blue print for the consummation of organic union between the former denominations to give birth to the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa. To most of us the memories of that moving moment when the members of the two former denominations converge in New Brighton almost like an avalanche which took all those present by surprise and almost crushed the then moderator of the former Reformed Presbyterian Church. That the Church Associations were at the center of this momentous occasion has sadly faded into the background as the denomination is still ironically struggling with issues affecting the amalgamation of the associations eight years after the same association provided the spirit that drove that defining moment. The problems that affect the life and work of Church Associations in the Uniting Presbyterian Church are not only compromising the quality of church life experienced in the new church but they also threaten to tear the denomination asunder. What could have been a model for other denominations in the country and the whole world is turning to be a sore thumb which many will find difficult to present to the world as the dream is threatening to deteriorate into a night-mare.

A close look at the issues plaguing the Uniting Presbyterian Church will reveal that there seems to be a loss of vision in the new church as the denomination is not able to define the why of the union. The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa needs to go back to the resolutions that inspired the two churches to move to union in order to rediscover the purpose of the union and ask whether the objectives of the union are realized. The vision and mission statement of the UPCSA envisages a denomination that is "One":

- In obedience to its Sovereign Lord
- In celebrating its living heritage as a Reformed Church in Southern Africa
- In celebrating its cultural diversity
- In addressing injustices and poverty in Church and Society
- In providing a model of racial reconciliation

The vision of this denomination is a powerful tool to unite us all irrespective of culture, colour, or status. It becomes the responsibility of every member of the denomination to do all in our power to make sure that the vision is translated into reality. It is the responsibility of all the organs of the denomination to dedicate their resources in translating this vision to be a living document for all the members of the denomination. In this regard the MCG with all other associations must take their place and identify a niche in translating the vision into action. There are at least two points in which the associations especially the MCG can zoom in and lift in the vision to become focus points going forward and these are:

- In celebrating its living heritage as a Reformed Church in Southern Africa
- In celebrating its cultural diversity

The MCG must lead the associations in defining what it means to celebrate the Reformed Heritage in Southern Africa. The heritage of the Reformed Church in Southern Africa surely cannot be defined without touching on the role of church associations in shaping the Reformed faith in the continent. Reformed churches in Southern Africa are different from their counter parts in the rest of the world and one of the defining differences is the role of the associations in the life and work of the members of the church. It is important that the contribution of the church associations is recognized in the major documents that define the polity of the denomination as a Reformed Church and the confessions of faith of the denomination.

The Church Association provides a platform for members of the denomination to express the Christian faith in terms of their culture. By their nature church associations are a celebration of cultural diversity in the denomination and the vision of the denomination. It becomes a serious indictment in the UPCSA that while the vision talks about celebrating cultural diversity the popular agencies that express the culture of the majority of Black members of the denomination are not recognized in the most important document in the life of the church i.e. the Manual of Faith and Order.

THE PROBLEM

There is no doubt the two uniting former denominations have operated in the African Continent since their inception, but had not really become fully African. The two former denominations, while operating in Africa, have by and large continued to exist as protégés of their former mother denominations both in terms of their laws and procedures and in terms of their practices. It is not surprising then that the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa continues to perpetuate the Euro-centric culture of the mother churches with the result that the recently adopted Manual of faith and order leaves out some of the most important issues affecting the life and faith of the majority of the members of the denomination.

In this context it is worth noting that the Manual of faith and order which has 18 chapters does not have a single chapter or section dedicated to the church associations which are an important component of the church and have contributed to the growth and development of the church both materially and spiritually with the result that:

1. The existence of church associations is not recognized in the manual with the risk that their existence can be viewed as illegal.
2. The manner in which church associations as bodies relate to the Church Councils at Multi-national, Synodical, Presbyterial and Congregational levels is not regulated in the Manual.
3. The manner in which church associations are represented in the church councils and how they report as well as the kinds of reports they are expected to submit and the frequency of reporting are not regulated.
4. The kind of Ministry that the personnel of the denominations especially the ministers are expected to give to the church associations is not regulated.

5. The status of the "Constitutions" of the church associations in relation to the Manual of faith and order is not spelt out. This must entail an expression of the superseding role of the Manual of faith and order to regulate those areas in which the constitutions of the associations may fall short.
6. The manner in which disputes arising within the church associations may be channeled to the church councils and the avenues available to the church councils in dealing with such disputes is not spelt out.
7. The existence of the Church Associations Committee is not given effect to in the Manual of faith and order.

SOLUTION

In the light of the above it was resolved that:

1. The MCG mini-conference urge the General Assembly through the Church Associations Committee to revise the Manual of faith and order so as to reflect the existence of church associations in a manner that reflect how the associations relate to the church councils at all levels.
2. That the MCG mini-conference requests the convener of the church associations committee to convene a summit of church associations that will among other things:
 - a. Jointly reflect on the state of church associations in the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa.
 - b. Develop proposals to the Manual Committee on issues that the church associations would like the Committee
 - c. To reflect in the revised manual.
 - d. Create a platform and develop a program to lead the transformation agenda of the denomination to reflect the values of the African century.
 - e. To appoint Rev B.Z Mkentane to convene a Task Team that will spearhead this memorandum, interact with other Associations and church bodies, with a view to ensure it implementation.