

# *Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy*

## **Revised Constitutions Draft 3 (March 2018- White Booklet)**

### ***Following:***

***Congregational Chapter 2018 .... 'an excellent model'***

***Plenary Conference 2019 ... 'geographical branches'***

*(and some further minor editing)*

## **CHAPTER 4 .... Adjusted **In Red****

**Constitutions Draft 4.2a July 2020**

# **United for Mercy**

## **Identity and Structure**

(Articles 76 – 88)

**Article 76 ..... One over-all Entity**

**Article 83 and 87 ..... Branch Structure**

Key changes from Draft 3 are **in red**

Temporary side headings for clarity are **in blue**

Further details given in Statutes are noted **in green**

76. Called, formed, consecrated and sent in Mercy we are sustained in unity of heart and mind by the service of governance and leadership. **Mercy Congregation**
- The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy is an international **Religious Congregation, having one congregational chapter and one** congregational leader and team elected in accordance with universal law and these Constitutions. **One International**
- The intermediate framework of the Congregation is a **network of diverse geographical Branches, each accountable to the Congregational Leadership.** **Branches**
- Each Branch has an elected or appointed leader and team with responsibility for a **group** of local communities. **Local**
77. As a Congregation of Pontifical Right we observe the norms of the Holy See and recognise the ultimate authority of the Holy Father. **In Union with Church**
- Working in collaboration with people of good will we serve and promote the life and mission of the Church, with due regard to the special character and charism of our Congregation.
78. Membership in the Congregation involves vowed commitment to the evangelical counsels, faithfulness to Catherine's legacy of *union and charity*, the service of mercy among people in poverty or distress, and active concern for the well-being of our common home. **Members**
- Members seek to embody the Congregation's life and mission, **with openness, flexibility and mobility, reverencing** the community-of-all-life locally and globally, in humble awareness of our evolving universe. **Universal Communion**
- Members **live in** local communities as circumstances indicate, and belong to designated branches established in **various** international settings.

79. The gentle, merciful spirit of Venerable Catherine McAuley pervades the ministry of leadership within the Congregation. This service is exercised in the spirit of the Gospel, through dialogue, consultation and subsidiarity in accordance with universal and proper law. *Leaders*
- Approved by the Church, and according to our charism, designated authority is held by **those lawfully elected/appointed**. Delegated authority is exercised as described in the **congregational statutes**. *Ministry Shared*
- Leadership is a pastoral ministry of love, uniting, guiding and animating the Congregation. It calls forth a style of governance where the principles of collegiality, delegation, respect, and co-responsibility are valued and fostered. Members and leaders together are called to engage in deep personal and communal discernment. *Pastoral*
- Leaders call members to respond in mercy to the social, ecological and climate change concerns of our time, in faith and creative fidelity to our heritage. *Collegial*
- Leaders seek to develop a life-giving environment of prayer, human development, inner freedom and communion among the sisters and in the branches. *Respectful*
- Honouring our differing capacities and locations, the mission of compassionate presence and prayer **is a graced and cherished ministry** among us. Respecting the dignity and diversity of each member, equality, kindness, inclusivity and mutual support are the hallmarks of our Mercy relationships in Christ Jesus. *For Mission*
- The **pastoral and prophetic ministry of leadership in nurturing and deepening** our communal life for mission, **is enabled by the provision of centralised or external** administrative services and assistance, with due regard to necessary accountability and final responsibility. *Community Wellbeing*
- The **pastoral and prophetic ministry of leadership in nurturing and deepening** our communal life for mission, **is enabled by the provision of centralised or external** administrative services and assistance, with due regard to necessary accountability and final responsibility. *Administrative Assistance*

Our governance structures are rooted in integrity and respect, in justice and transparency, and in unswerving trust in divine providence.

*Integrity and Trust*

80. The charism of the Congregation, animating all members, moves and enables us to live-out the call of mercy by committing our lives and resources to the service of *the poor, sick and ignorant* of our time, respecting and cherishing the Earth, our common home.

*Charism*

## Local Governance

81. The vitality of the Congregation is reflected in the quality of our communal life and mission. Imbued by the Word, and immersed in the life of the Trinity, the charism of Mercy moves us, individually and collectively, to be available for and committed to communal life and ministry. Each member commits to personal and communal prayer, to right relationships with God, self, and the community, within the Church, the human family, and all Creation. She engages in the spiritual and corporal works of mercy seeking to be a compassionate sister in her circumstances.

*Vitality*

*Member Responsibility*

*Prayer and Mercy*

Her activities reflect **the call of** congregational chapter in response to the movement of the Spirit in our times. Each sister participates, as far as possible, in the congregational discernment processes and actively supports their outcomes, in accordance with **Congregational Statutes**.

*Common Mind*

*Discernment*

All members, in a spirit of generosity and love, contribute to the up-building of our communal life in both local and branch settings. Every member is supported by, and accountable to the Congregation, through a designated sister in either the local or branch setting as determined in the **branch statutes**.

*Participation*

*Support Accountability*

All professed sisters have active and passive voice except where limited by universal or proper law and described in the **Congregational Statutes**.

82. **Local Communities are groups of vowed members, committed** in faith to the following of Christ, and to one another as Sisters of Mercy. They are established as required according to intent, need, or circumstance as prescribed in the **branch statutes**.

**Local  
Communities**

The life of the local community is shaped by its members and by our Mercy charism. Through contemplation, discernment and mutual support, it seeks to be a prophetic voice of compassion and justice, and to be a witness to God's steadfast, loving kindness in our evolving world.

**Self-  
discerning**

In a spirit of discernment and shared responsibility the local community chooses local leaders, and distributes other roles as required according to **approved statutes**.

**Local  
Leadership**

Local leaders attend to the well-being of members, remind us of our shared values and commitments, and ensure the community's close connection **to other groups within its branch, and to** other parts of the Congregation.

**Unit of a Branch**

Observing the provisions of Church law the local community is a constituent part of a branch. It is established, confirmed, modified or dissolved by the branch leader as circumstances require, following consultation with membership and according to the **branch statutes**.

## Intermediate Governance

83. **Diverse geographical Branches** constitute the intermediate framework of the Congregation. **Branches**
- A branch comprises a designated network of local communities, and is formed with due regard for present and emerging circumstances. **Nature**
- It provides for the organisational needs of local community and ministry, and maintains a high level of flexibility and subsidiarity as appropriate. **Function**
- Each branch fosters a sense of communal heart and mission. It seeks to shape and review the quality of community life, to be **responsive** to the signs of the times, and to influence the policies and direction of the Congregation through assemblies and other means. **Heart and Mission**
- With an open and generous spirit, and in the service of mercy mission, branches interrelate and share with each other through arrangements confirmed by the relevant branch leaders. **Inter-relate**
- The number and parameters of branches are confirmed by the Congregational Leader and Team after due consultation and discernment, as determined in the **congregational statutes**, respecting the requirements of civil law where relevant. **Establishment**
- The Branch Leader may be elected by the branch membership and confirmed by the Congregational Leadership Team; or she may be appointed by the Congregational Leadership in consultation and discernment with the members. **Branch Leader**  
**Elected/appointed**
- Her term of office is determined in **the branch statutes** and she is assisted by a team, as determined in those statutes. **Term**

The leader of a branch is accountable to the Congregational Leader and Team according to the Constitutions and Statutes. She receives **delegated** authority for certain tasks and may represent the Congregational Leader in religious and civil domains, as determined in the **congregational statutes**.

*Authority*

Within the branch, the leader and team hold **designated** responsibility for the promotion of mission, the overall care of members and protection of patrimony, as outlined in the **congregational statutes**.

*Responsibility*

The Congregational Leadership Team, together with the leaders and teams of the branches, promote and enable co-operation and unity among the branches and within the Congregation.

*Union*



## Congregational Governance

### Chapter

84. The Congregational Chapter, when in session, is the central unifying authority in the Congregation. It determines the direction and policies for life and mission in accordance with the constitutions and statutes. It elects the Congregational Leader and Team, it evaluates the quality of our religious life together and promotes the charism of the Congregation.

Chapter is a special instrument of unity and renewal with which all members are invited to engage. Through it we reflect on our fidelity to the Gospel, on the spirit and legacy of our Foundress and on the call to mercy within the context of current reality and the changing profile of membership.

The Chapter is convoked every six years unless otherwise determined by the previous Chapter. The Congregational Leader, with the consent of the Team determines the date and place, and presides at its sessions.

**Term**

Should the office of Congregational Leader become vacant, chapter is convoked immediately by the Assistant Leader and, if possible, held within six months, unless a congregational chapter is due within one year.

Representative of all members, chapter is composed of ex-officio members and elected delegates, as prescribed in the [congregational statutes](#).

**Composition**

The Congregational Leader and Team, the Congregational Secretary and Treasurer, **are** ex-officio members of chapter.

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The number of elected delegates constitute at least two-thirds of the chapter membership.

The Chapter approves congregational statutes prescribing norms for election, representation and other governance matters for the whole Congregation. It approves the overall manner of financing and administering congregational funds.

**Approvals**

***Election of  
Leader***

85. In a spirit of prayerful discernment, the Congregational Leader is elected by the Chapter for a term of six years, and may be re-elected for one consecutive term only. She must be at least six years perpetually professed in the Congregation, **reflect faithfulness** to the Gospel and to the Congregation, and bear witness to the Mercy way of life.

For the election of the Congregational Leader a two-thirds majority is required on the first and second ballots, and an absolute majority on the third and fourth ballots.

Only the two candidates with the highest number of votes in the fourth ballot are eligible for the fifth and final ballot.

In the event of a tie the election is decided by drawing lots.

86. **The Congregational Team consists of at least four members,** as prescribed in the **congregational statutes**. Team members are elected one by one with an absolute majority on first and second ballots, and a relative majority on any further ballot. Members must be at least four years perpetually professed in the Congregation. Each member is eligible to be re-elected for a second consecutive term.

***Team***

The Assistant leader is elected by the Chapter or appointed by the Congregational Leader, from among the already elected members as determined in the **congregational statutes**.

For election, an absolute majority is required on the first two ballots and a relative majority on any further ballot.

***Assistant***

The Assistant governs the Congregation should the office of Congregational Leader become vacant or impeded.

***Vacancy***

Should a vacancy arise on the Team the Congregational Leader and Team, acting collegially, elect a successor to complete the Team.

Team members may be given specific responsibilities with appropriate delegated authority.  
Another person(s) may be co-opted as a team member according to the **congregational Statutes**.

*Delegation  
Co-option*

87. The Congregational Leader exercises personal authority in leading all members, branches, and works of the Congregation, in consultation with the Team, in accordance with universal and proper law and the directives of congregational chapters.

***Congregational  
Leader***

Together with the Team she constitutes the primary focus of unity and leadership within the Congregation. She maintains a high level of participative leadership and delegates responsibility within the Team.

She confirms the shape and nature of branches after due consultation and with the consent of the Team, as prescribed in the **congregational statutes**.

*Authority  
Re branches*

The Congregational Leader with the consent of the Team, and in consultation with the members of the branch, may establish, modify, or dissolve a branch.

She appoints or confirms sisters to positions of congregational responsibility, and to leadership roles in the branches.

She, or her delegate, makes a formal visitation of the branches as prescribed in the **congregational statutes**.

The Congregational Leader acts with the consent or advice of the Team for all matters specified in universal or proper law.

88. Conscious of Christ's boundless love and mercy, rooted in the interconnectedness of all life, and moved by the wide-spread suffering of our earth community, the Congregational Leader and Team seek to enliven the spirit of 'union and charity' left us by Catherine McAuley, and to be a compassionate presence to our differing realities.

***Leader and Team***

***Union and  
Charity***

Listening to the voice of membership, and the call of our charism, they facilitate the engagement of all members in works of mercy, in congregational, inter-congregational and societal contexts.

The Congregational Leader and Team regularly gather the leaders of branches in consultative fora to promote unity and discernment throughout the Congregation.

***Mission***

The Congregational Leader and Team give practical interpretation of the Constitutions. They have final responsibility for congregational assets and **the approval of internal budgets.**

The Congregational Leader, with the consent of the Team, appoints the congregational Secretary and Treasurer according to the **congregational statutes.**

***Financial  
responsibilities***