

By-laws of a Local Spiritual Assembly

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INTRODUCTION

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The following is the standard format for By-Laws used in the United States by Local Spiritual Assemblies. These are normally submitted to the proper state authority with the Articles of Incorporation to establish an Assembly of nine elected Bahá'ís as a legal entity.

ARTICLE I

The trustees, i. e., the members of The Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of . . . , recognize that this action has been taken in full unanimity and agreement. They acknowledge for themselves and on behalf of their successors the sacred meaning and universal purpose of the Bahá'í Faith, the teaching

and principles of which fulfill the divine promise of all former revealed religions.

ARTICLE II

In administering the affairs of the Bahá'í religion under the Corporation for the benefit of the Bahá'ís of . . . , in accordance with the religious teachings and administrative principles of the Faith, the Spiritual Assembly shall act in conformity with the functions of a Local Spiritual Assembly as defined in the by-laws adopted by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, an Illinois not-for-profit corporation, and published by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States for the information and guidance of Bahá'ís throughout the United States.

ARTICLE III

The Spiritual Assembly, in the fulfillment of its obligations and responsibilities under this Corporation, shall have exclusive jurisdiction and authority over all the local activities and affairs of the Bahá'ís of . . . , including paramount authority in the administration of this Corporation. It shall be responsible for maintaining the integrity and accuracy of all Bahá'í teaching, whether written or oral, undertaken throughout the local community. It shall make available the published literature of the Faith. It shall represent the community in its relations to the National Spiritual Assembly, to the Universal House of Justice, to other local Bahá'í communities and to the general public in It shall be charged with the recognition of all applicants requesting membership in the local Bahá'í Community. It shall report to the National Spiritual Assembly any facts concerning a member or members of the community which indicate either abandonment of membership in the community or inability to qualify as a believer for decision by the National Spiritual Assembly, in which body is vested sole authority to pass upon the qualifications of an enrolled Bahá'í and if necessary to deprive him or her of membership rights. It shall call the meetings of the community, including the Bahá'í anniversaries and Feasts, the meetings of consultation and the Annual Meeting at which members of the Spiritual Assembly are elected. It shall appoint and supervise all committees of the Bahá'í community. It shall collect and disburse all funds intended for the maintenance of this Corporation. It shall have full and complete custody of the headquarters and meeting place of the Bahá'í community. It shall have exclusive authority to conduct Bahá'í marriage ceremonies and issue Bahá'í marriage certificates within the area of its jurisdiction. It shall report to the National Spiritual Assembly annually, or when requested, the membership roll of the Bahá'í community for the information and approval of the National Spiritual Assembly. The Spiritual Assembly, however, shall recognize the authority and right of the National Spiritual Assembly to declare at any time what activities and affairs of the Bahá'ís of . . . are national in scope and hence subject to the jurisdiction of the National Spiritual Assembly. It shall likewise recognize the right of any member of the community to appeal to the National Spiritual

Assembly for review and decision of any matter in which the previous decision of the Local Spiritual Assembly is felt by the member to be contrary to the explicit teachings of the Bahá'í Faith or opposed to its best interest. It shall, on the other hand, have the authority and right to appeal from the decision of the National Spiritual Assembly to the Universal House of Justice for review and final decision of any matter related to the Faith in

ARTICLE IV

The Spiritual Assembly, in administering this Corporation, shall ever bear in mind the ideals upheld in the Sacred Writings of the Bahá'í Faith respecting the relationships of a Spiritual Assembly to its Bahá'í community, the relations of Bahá'ís to one another in the community and the relationship of Bahá'ís to all non-Bahá'ís, without prejudice of race, creed, or nationality. The Assembly shall therefore above all recognize its sacred duty to maintain full and complete unity throughout the Bahá'í community, to relieve and comfort the sick and distressed, to assist the poor and destitute, to protect the orphans, the crippled and the aged, to educate the children of Bahá'ís according to the highest religious and intellectual standards, to compose differences and disagreements among members of the community, to promulgate the principles of divine civilization revealed by Bahá'u'lláh and to promote in every way possible the Bahá'í aim of the oneness of mankind. It shall faithfully and devotedly uphold the general Bahá'í activities and affairs initiated by the National Spiritual Assembly. It shall cooperate wholeheartedly with other Local Spiritual Assemblies throughout the United States in all matters declared by the National Spiritual Assembly to be of general Bahá'í importance and concern. It shall rigorously abstain from any action or influence, direct or indirect, that savors of intervention on the part of a Bahá'í body in matters of public and civil jurisdiction, It shall encourage intercourse between the Bahá'í community . . . , and other recognized Bahá'í communities, issuing letters of introduction to Bahá'ís traveling from . . . , and passing upon letters of introduction issued by other Bahá'í Spiritual Assemblies. It shall regard its authority as a means of rendering service to Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís and not as a source of arbitrary power. While retaining the sacred right of final decision in all matters pertaining to the Bahá'í community, the Spiritual Assembly shall ever seek the advise and consultation of all members of the community, keep the community informed of all its affairs and invite full and free discussion on the part of the community of all matters affecting the Faith.

ARTICLE V

The Bahá'ís of . . . , for whose benefit this Corporation has been established, shall consist of all persons of the age of fifteen years or older resident in . . . , who are accepted by the National Spiritual Assembly as possessing qualifications of Bahá'í faith and practice required under the following standard set forth by the Guardian of the Faith: Full recognition of the station of the Báb, the Forerunner, of Bahá'u'lláh, the Author, and of Abdul'Bahá, the True Exemplar of the Bahá'í religion; unreserved acceptance

of and submission to whatsoever has been revealed by Their Pen; loyal and steadfast adherence to every clause of Abdul'Bahá's sacred Will; and close association with the spirit as well as the form of Bahá'í administration throughout the world. Upon attaining the age of twenty-one years, a Bahá'í is eligible to vote and hold elective office.

ARTICLE VI

The Spiritual Assembly shall consist of nine Trustees chosen from among the Bahá'ís of . . . , who shall be elected by these Bahá'ís in a manner hereinafter provided and who shall continue in office for a period of one year, or until their successors shall be elected.

ARTICLE VII

The officers of the Spiritual Assembly shall consist of a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and such other officers as may be found necessary for the proper conduct of its affairs. The officers shall be elected by a majority vote of the entire membership of the Assembly taken by secret ballot.

ARTICLE VIII

The first meeting of a newly-elected Spiritual Assembly shall be called by the member elected to membership by the highest number of votes, or, in case of two or more members have received the same said highest number of votes, then the member selected by lot from among those members; and this member shall preside until the permanent Chairman shall be chosen. All subsequent meetings shall be called by the Secretary of the Assembly at the request of the Chairman or, in his absence or incapacity, of the vice-Chairman or of any three members of the Assembly, provided, however, that the Annual Meeting of the Assembly shall be held on the First Day of Ridván, being that period between sunset on April 20 and sunset on April 21, in accordance with the administrative principles recognized by all Bahá'í" Spiritual Assemblies.

Section 1.

Five members of the Spiritual Assembly present at a meeting shall constitute a quorum, and a majority vote of those present and constituting a quorum shall be sufficient for the conduct of business except as otherwise provided in these By-Laws and with due regard to the principle of unity and cordial fellowship involved in the institution of a Spiritual Assembly. The transactions and decisions of the Assembly shall be recorded at each meeting by the Secretary, who shall have the minutes adopted and approved by the Assembly, and preserve them in the official records of the Assembly.

Section 2.

Vacancies in the membership of the Spiritual Assembly shall be filled by election at a special meeting of the local Bahá'í community duly called for that purpose by the Assembly. In the event that the number of vacancies exceeds four, making a quorum of the Spiritual Assembly impossible, the election shall

be under the supervision of the National Spiritual Assembly.

ARTICLE IX.

The sphere of jurisdiction of the Spiritual Assembly with respect to residential qualifications of membership and voting rights of a believer in the Bahá'í community shall be the locality included within the limits of

ARTICLE X

Section 1.

In the event that any decision of the Spiritual Assembly is unacceptable to any member or members of the community, the Assembly shall after endeavoring to compose the difference of opinion invite the said member or members to make appeal to the National Spiritual Assembly and notify that body the readiness of the Spiritual Assembly to become party to the appeal.

Section 2.

In the same matter, if any difference arises between the Spiritual Assembly and another Assembly, or Assemblies, in the United States, the Assembly shall report the matter to the National Spiritual Assembly and inform that body of its readiness to make joint appeal together with other Assembly or Assemblies.

Section 3.

If, however, the result of such an appeal is unsatisfactory to the Spiritual Assembly, or the Assembly at any time has reason to believe that actions of the National Spiritual Assembly are affecting adversely the welfare and unity of the Bahá'ís of . . . , it shall, after seeking to compose its difference of opinion with the National Spiritual Assembly in direct consultation, have the right to make appeal to the Universal House of Justice.

Section 4.

The Spiritual Assembly shall likewise have the right to make complaint to the National Spiritual Assembly in the event that matters of local Bahá'í concern and influence are referred to the national body by a member or members of the local community without previous opportunity for action by the Spiritual Assembly.

ARTICLE XI.

The Annual Meeting of the Corporation at which its Trustees shall be elected shall be on the First Day of Ridván, being that period between sunset on April 20 and sunset on April 21, at an hour and place to be fixed by the Spiritual Assembly, which shall give not less than fifteen days' notice of the meeting to all members of the local Bahá'í community.

Section 1.

The Spiritual Assembly shall accept those votes transmitted to the Assembly before the election by members who by reason of sickness or other unavoidable reason are unable to be present at the election in person.

Section 2.

The election of the members to the Spiritual Assembly shall be by plurality vote.

Section 3.

All voting members of the local Bahá'í community are eligible for election as members of the Spiritual Assembly.

Section 4.

The Spiritual Assembly shall prepare an agenda for the Annual Meeting in which shall be included reports of the activities of the Assembly since its election, a financial statement showing all income and expenditure of its fund, reports of its committees and presentation of any other matters pertaining to the affairs of the Bahá'í community. The assembly, both preceding and following the Annual Election, shall invite discussion and welcome suggestions from the community in order that its plans may reflect the community mind and heart.

Section 5.

The result of the election shall be reported by the Spiritual Assembly to the National Spiritual Assembly.

ARTICLE XII.

In addition to the Annual Meeting the Spiritual Assembly shall arrange for regular meetings of the Bahá'í community throughout the year at intervals of nineteen days in accordance with the calendar incorporated in the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith.

ARTICLE XIII.

The seal of the Corporation shall be circular in form, bearing the following description: The Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of

ARTICLE XIV.

Alternative 'A'

"These By-Laws may be amended by majority vote of the Spiritual Assembly at any of its regular or special meetings, provided that at least fourteen days prior to the date fixed for the said meeting a copy of the proposed amendment or amendments is mailed to each member of the Assembly by the Secretary."

Alternative 'B'

These By-Laws may be amended only by majority vote of the National Spiritual Assembly, which, in making amendments, does so for the By-Laws of all Local Spiritual Assemblies throughout . . . [name of country or region]