



**St. Mary Self-help Charity Association of Greater Toronto Area**

**Bylaws**

**(Established October 2, 2011)**

**(Last Amended as per November 25, 2017 General Assembly)**

**Toronto, Ontario, Canada**



**C O N T E N T S**

**Part I: Preamble \_\_\_\_\_ Page 3**

**Part II: Self-help Objectives \_\_\_\_\_ Page 4**

**PART III: Charity Objectives \_\_\_\_\_ Page 5**

**Part IV: Membership \_\_\_\_\_ Page 6**

**Part V: The General Assembly \_\_\_\_\_ Page 7**

**Part VI: The Council of Elders \_\_\_\_\_ Page 8**

**Part VII: Nominations/Elections Committee \_\_\_\_\_ Page 8**

**Part VIII: The Executive Committee \_\_\_\_\_ Page 8**

**Part IX: Duties and Responsibilities  
of the Officers of the Executive Committee \_\_\_\_\_ Page 9**

**Part X: Definitions \_\_\_\_\_ Page 10**

**Part XI: Establishment \_\_\_\_\_ Page 10**

**Part XII: Penalty Clause \_\_\_\_\_ Page 10**

**Part XIII: Financial Closing Date \_\_\_\_\_ Page 10**

**Part XIV: Amendments \_\_\_\_\_ Page 11**



**Part I: Preamble:**

Ethiopian Canadians residing in the Greater Toronto Area having common cherished and compassionate values recognized the need to form an Association that enables them to help each other both in life and in death including helping those unable to help themselves. These noble vision and mission are grounded both in Ethiopian traditional community life and timeless Biblical imperatives.



## **Part II: Self-help Objectives:**

A: In the event of death of a member in good standing:

**Article 2.1:** The Association, in accordance with Article 2.4, 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7 hereunder, will assist in contributing towards funeral/burial expense of a deceased member in good standing (hereafter referred to as member). This contribution shall be made within 48 hours to the designated legal beneficiary of the deceased supported by a legitimate death certificate issued by medical authorities.

**Article 2.2:** The Association will also comfort and extend its condolences to survivors of the deceased member in accordance with Articles 2.8, 2.10 and 2.11.

**Article 2.3:** The Association, through its elder members, will provide counselling and spiritual guidance to survivors of the deceased member.

**Article 2.4:** when a member (i.e. married, single parent, single member or children as per Article 2.5) in good standing is deceased, the Association shall cover the full funeral/burial service expenses up to a maximum of \$12,000.00 including floral and related expenses. If a member is willing to conduct their own funeral arrangement, the Association shall pay an amount equivalent to the cost of a regular funeral arrangement up to a maximum of \$12,000.00 as above to the member spouse or beneficiary designated in the will of the deceased member.

The Funeral/burial service coverage amount will be covered through the following two ways:

1. The Association shall pay \$4,500.00 directly from its own account
2. The remaining amount (maximum \$7,000.00) to conduct the full funeral service shall be divided equally between members of the Association each time a member is deceased. This will help relieve the financial burden of the Association and will keep the cost down. However, when the Association financial capacity reaches to a fairly stable level and upon mutual agreement among members of the Association, the Association will cover the full funeral expense without the requirement of member's contribution.
3. The Association shall make contribution of \$500 to the designated beneficiary to cover floral and related funeral expenses



## St. Mary Self-help Charity Association of Greater Toronto Area

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**Article 2.5:** When a legal and registered child of a member in good standing who is under 21 years old or a full time student under 25 years of age or disabled is deceased, the Association shall cover the full funeral/burial service expenses up to a maximum of \$12,000.00 including floral and related expenses (Article 2.4 applies).

**Article 2.6:** The Association shall appropriately co-ordinate, cover all related expenses and complete the funeral services provided in **Articles 2.4 & 2.5** only.

**Article 2.7:** Members of the Association are obliged to attend funeral/burial services for the deceased member and make visitations to the home of the deceased according to the instructions that will be provided by the Executive Committee depending on the particular circumstances. However, all members are obliged to attend the burial service of the deceased.

**Article 2.8:** Persons who have paid their initial registration fee and paid their membership fees for at least 6 months are eligible to receive full funeral/burial and related expenses through their designated beneficiary as provided above upon death.

### **PART III: Charity Objectives:**

**Article 3.1:** In keeping with its vision and mission, the Association will assist those who need a helping hand (the homeless, the hungry, the poor, run-away kids etc.) in the community when it is financially capable to do so. The nature of the assistance shall be determined depending on the need of the helpless and their circumstances.

**Article 3.2:** The Association shall make financial and moral support to survivors of the deceased in the community who are financially unable to be members of the Association.

**Article 3.3:** The Association shall welcome and assist Ethiopian newcomers to Canada as they settle in the new country.

**Article 3.4:** The Association, through its spiritual leaders and senior members, shall assist and counsel members of the community in marriage/family conflict resolution and provide sound moral guidance to the youth to reinforce family values.

**Article 3.5:** The Association shall raise its own funds; solicit private and public funding sources in order to carry out its charity objectives.



#### **Part IV: Membership:**

**Article 4.1:** A legal Canadian Permanent Resident, who abides by the vision and mission of the Association and these bylaws, is between 21 years and 70 years of age is eligible to become a member of the Association. A full time student under 25 years of age and a disabled child are considered as member of a family when registered under a Family or a Single Parent.

Disabled members of registered families are considered as such with no age limitation and the Association shall give the full beneficiaries upon the death of the disabled family members. Families are required to present credible medical certificate to the Association with respect to the disability of the person concerned.

Other criteria for eligibility of membership may be stipulated by the Executive Committee of the Association as deemed necessary to be approved by the General Assembly.

**Article 4.2:** A member in good standing is one who has paid his/her registration fee and made uninterrupted monthly membership fees for at least six months as described in Articles 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 hereunder. A member who fails to pay monthly fees for three consecutive months shall be notified in writing by the Secretary of the Association in order to pay the arrears fees. If the member fails to pay the arrears by the fourth month without notifying his/her difficulties in writing for not being able to make payments, the Association will deem such a member as having willingly decided to leave the Association and is therefore not entitled to the benefits provided in these bylaws in the event he or she becomes deceased.

**Article 4.3:** The initial registration fee for a Family member (i.e. married couples with children) includes the following two components:

- a) \$300.00 plus
- b) 50% of the monthly payment made by a Family member from the date the first Family membership payment started to the time of registration

The monthly membership fee for a married couple with children under 21 years of age or with a full time student (s) under 25 years of age or disabled children is \$25. The monthly membership fee for Family member excluding children is \$20.00. When the marital status of a Family member changes he/she shall pay the required membership fees as stipulated.



**St. Mary Self-help Charity Association of Greater Toronto Area**

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**Article 4.4:** The registration fee for a Single Parent with children includes the following:

- a) \$300.00 plus
- b) 50% of the monthly payment made by a Single Parent member from the date the first Single Parent membership payment started to the time of registration

The monthly membership fee for a Single Parent with children under 21 years of age or with a full time student (s) under 25 years of age or disabled children is \$15. When the marital status of a Single Parent member changes (i.e. becomes married), he/she shall pay the required Single Member registration fees and meet membership requirements as stipulated in Article 4.5 and Article 2.8 accordingly in order to be eligible to register as a Family member and to receive full funeral/burial service coverage.

**Article 4.5:** The initial registration fee for a Single member with no children includes the following two components:

- a) \$250.00
- b) 50% of the monthly payment made by a Single member from the date Single membership payment started to the time of registration

The monthly membership fee for a Single member with no children will be \$10. When the marital status of a Single member changes (i.e. becomes married), he/she shall pay the required Single Member registration fees and requirements as stipulated in Article 4.5 and 2.8 accordingly in order to be eligible to register as a Family member and to receive full funeral/burial service coverage.

**Article: 4.6:** All legal children listed by members who under 21 years of age is considered as members of the family. A full time student under 25 years of age and disabled children are considered as member of a family when registered under a family or single parent.

**Article 4.7:** Registration and monthly membership fees may be paid in cash, by check, On Line and by direct deposit to the account of the Association.

**Article 4.8:** In order to avoid late payment and penalty thereof membership fee payments may be made in advance for the whole year, six months or quarterly.



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**St. Mary Self-help Charity Association of Greater Toronto Area**

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**Article 4.9:** Upon meeting all requirements and criteria membership may be approved by the Executive Committee which in due time will communicate to the General Assembly.

**Part V: The General Assembly:**

**Article 5.1:** The General Assembly is the highest decision making body of the Association.

**Article 5.2:** A gathering of members of the Association may constitute a General Assembly. However, only a simple majority of members in good standing of the Association present can make binding decisions at any General Assembly meeting.

**Article 5.3:** There shall be a mid-year General Assembly and an Annual General Assembly to be announced in writing by the Secretary of the Association indicating the place and time at least 2 weeks in advance of the General Assembly. All members are required to attend the General Assemblies. Those unable to attend due to extenuating circumstances shall inform the Secretary of the Association in writing in advance.

**Article 5.4:** An extra-ordinary General Assembly may be called if 3 members of the Executive Committee make a written request to the President or the Vice President of the Association.

**Article 5.5:** The provisions of the by-laws of the Association can be amended by a General Assembly in which two third of members in good standing are present.

**Part VI: The Council of Elders:**

**Article 6.1:** The Council of Elders shall be headed by a spiritual advisor and have two other senior members of the Association all elected by the General Assembly every 3 years.

**Article 6.2:** The Council of Elders shall provide appropriate guidance and advice to the Executive Committee and Sub-Committees when necessary in matters related to the proper implementation of the bylaws of the Association consistent with its vision and mission. The Council is accountable to the General Assembly of the Association.

**Part VII: Nominations/Elections Committee:**

**Article 7.1:** When election of members of the Executive Committee is due, a Nominations Committee consisting 5 members shall be elected in a General Assembly from among the members present.





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**St. Mary Self-help Charity Association of Greater Toronto Area**

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**Article 7.2:** The Nominations Committee shall accept nominations from among the members present who meet the eligibility criteria established and provided by the General Assembly.

**Article 7.3:** There shall be a reasonable number of eligible nominees depending on the number of members to be elected. (E.g. five nominees for two to be elected).

**Article 7.4:** Members of the elected Nominations Committee are not eligible to be nominated for the Executive Committee being elected. However, such members are eligible to be nominated in the next election of the Executive Committee.

**Article 7.5:** In the event of a vote count tie during election of members of the Executive Committee, the Nominations Committee shall conduct a second round of voting to break the tie.

**Article 7.6:** The seven nominees with the greater number of votes shall be carefully selected by the Nominations/Elections Committee and the Chairperson of the Committee shall announce the result of the election of members of the Executive Committee to the General Assembly.

**Part VIII: The Executive Committee:**

**Article 8.1:** The Executive Committee is accountable to the General Assembly by whom it is elected. The Executive Committee shall have 7 members elected among the members in good standing in a General Assembly. The term of service of any member of the Executive Committee shall be 3 years and is eligible for re-election for an additional 3 years only. Two reserve members shall be elected for possible replacement during the term of election.

**Article 8.2:** The officers of the Executive Committee shall be the President, the Vice President, the Treasurer, the Secretary and the Public Relations Officer. The Public Relations Officer shall also be the Chairperson of the Charity Sub-Committee.

**Article 8.3:** The President shall chair all meetings of the Executive Committee. In the absence of the President the Vice President shall chair meetings of the Executive Committee. A quorum of the Executive Committee shall be a simple majority of the members of the Executive Committee.

**Part IX: Duties and Responsibilities of the Officers of the Executive Committee:**

**Article 9.1:** The President with the members of the Executive Committee shall plan, carry out and ensure the implementation of the objectives of the Association in accordance with the vision, mission, these bylaws and other directives given by the General Assembly. The President is



## St. Mary Self-help Charity Association of Greater Toronto Area

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responsible and accountable to the proper supervision and co-ordination of the activities of the Association. He/she shall provide an activity report of the Association to the General Assembly at least every six months. The President shall represent the Association in all correspondence and communication with the public and other organizations.

**Article 9.2:** The Vice President will carry out the duties and responsibilities of the President during his/her absence. The Vice President shall also chair the Fundraising sub-committee.

**Article 9.3:** The Treasurer is responsible for collecting all registration and monthly fees from members of the Association and provides proper receipts. He/she shall immediately deposit the fees and other revenues in the account of the Association. The treasurer keeps all financial records and bank statements and shall provide all necessary financial information to the appointed auditor of the Association. The Treasurer shall present a financial report at the mid-year and Annual General Assemblies.

**Article 9.4:** The Secretary is responsible to call all Executive Committee meetings and the General Assemblies in accordance with Article 5.3 above. He/she is responsible for recording and keeping the minutes of the General Assembly as well as meetings of the Executive Committee.

**Article 9.5:** The Public Relations Officer is responsible to publicise and advertise the objectives and activities of the Association to the community and the public at large in order to increase and maintain the required level of members in good standing of the Association. He/she shall chair the Charity Sub-Committee and in so doing shall identify and assess charity needs in the community and report to the Executive Committee.

**Article 9.6:** Any two of the following officers of the Association are authorized to operate the bank account of the Association - the President, the Vice President in the President's absence and the Treasurer, the Secretary and the Public Relations Officer.

**Article 9.7:** The various Sub-committees shall be chaired by a member of the Executive Committee. The duties and responsibilities of the various sub-committees shall be approved by the Executive Committee of the Association.



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**St. Mary Self-help Charity Association of Greater Toronto Area**

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**Part X: Definitions:**

- Greater Toronto Area includes City of Toronto, Regional Municipalities of Peel, Halton, York and Durham.
- A family consists of a legally bonded father and mother and their biological off springs including legally adopted children.
- A single parent means a father or a mother who brings up his/her children alone.
- Death of a member shall be determined as per legal death certificate issued by a medical doctor/coroner.
- Ethiopian Canadians include Ethiopians who are Permanent Residents of Canada, Canadian citizens of Ethiopian origin and off springs of Canadians of Ethiopian origin and Ethiopian Canadian Permanent Residents.

**Part XI : Establishment:** These Bylaws of St. Mary Self-help Charity Association of Greater Toronto Area are adopted and approved by the General Assembly held on October 2, 2011 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

**Part XII: Penalty Clause:**

1. Membership fee payments **MUST** be made for a whole year or six months in advance.
2. Members who do not pay their membership dues for a period of three months shall pay a late payment fee as follows:
  - a. Family (married couples with children) \$20
  - b. Single (single parent with children)\$15
  - c. Single member (without children) \$10
3. All members are strictly required to attend the Association General Meeting. Members who do not attend the General Meeting shall pay a fee of \$25.00 for each regular meeting missed.
4. Members who do not attend a funeral service of a deceased shall pay a fee of \$50.00 penalty.

**Part XIII: Financial Closing Date:**

1. Financial closing date for any fiscal year will be March 31.



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**St. Mary Self-help Charity Association of Greater Toronto Area**

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**Part XIV: Amendments:**

This Bylaw of St.Mary Self-help Charity Association of Greater Toronto Area has been amended as follows:

- 1) Bi-Annual General Meeting held on **November 14, 2015**
  - a) Full funeral coverage for children under 21 years of age or full time student under 25 years of age or disabled
  - b) Increasing monthly Family membership fee to \$25 for families who have children as per (a) above
- 2) Bi-Annual General Meeting held on **April 29, 2012 :**
  - a) Penalty Clause – **Part XII** (new)
  - b) Financial Closing Date - **Part XIII** (new), and
  - c) Registration Fee (revision made to **Part IV**)

The amendments have been made to Article 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 and 4.7 respectively and approved by the majority vote and shall be effective from April 29, 2012. These amendments shall not be applied for those who have submitted application prior to April 29, 2012.

- 3) Annual General Meeting held on **November 3, 2013** to cover the cost of **Full Funeral/Burial Service** – Part II Self-help Objectives amended
  - a) Amendments have been made to Article 2.4 & 2.7 respectively.

The above amendments have been passed by a majority vote.

- 4) Annual General Meeting held on **November 25, 2017**, the Association has passed an amendment to remove Article 2.9 and 2.10 which allowed the return of part of the membership contribution to members who did not receive any benefit and who voluntarily withdraw their membership from the Association.

The above amendments passed by a majority vote.