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CHURCH PRINCIPLES AND BYLAWS

Draft for discussion and formal adoption | Version 1 | 01 October 2026
Mercy of God Christian Church in Zion

These proposed rules support worship, accountable leadership, fair membership processes and careful handling of church resources and personal information. They do not certify the church's legal status or replace an existing constitution. Reconcile them with any existing founding document before adoption. All voting thresholds, terms and procedures below are proposed rules.

1 Name identity and purpose

The church is known as Mercy of God Christian Church in Zion, founded in 1998. Its head office is at 1291 Ekulindeni Township, Ekulindeni, 1301. Branches are Ekulindeni, Phumula, Klerksdorp, Kriel and Kinross. Additional branches require a recorded General Assembly decision.

The church exists to worship God, proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, encourage prayer and Bible teaching, strengthen fellowship and provide compassionate community service. Scripture guides its faith and ministry. Detailed doctrine and worship practice must be recorded in a statement of faith approved by the congregation.

2 Principles

Members and leaders shall practise love, dignity, honesty, humility, peace and responsible stewardship. Church activities must respect lawful religious freedom, privacy, equality and the best interests of children. No person may use spiritual authority to coerce money, sexual conduct, secrecy about abuse or surrender of legal rights.

3 Status and hierarchy

The adopted constitution takes precedence over these bylaws; South African law takes precedence over both. These rules assume a voluntary association structure for discussion only. Confirm the actual structure, registration and tax position before adoption. NPO registration or tax exemption must not be represented as granted unless verified.

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4 Membership and participation

A person may apply through the joining form. A branch secretary records the application and the branch leadership considers it within 30 days. Applicants receive an acceptance or a reasoned response. A rejected applicant may request review by the Governing Council within 30 days. Transfers require only necessary verification and the applicant's permission for external contact.

Adult members admitted to the register may attend and vote at General Assemblies. Children may participate in appropriate ministry, with guardian arrangements; voting begins at 18. Members may obtain the adopted rules, raise concerns and receive a fair hearing. Financial hardship or refusal of optional media permissions must not remove membership rights.

Members should respect others, care for church property and follow lawful adopted rules. Donations are voluntary. No fixed tithe, joining fee or penalty is created by this draft. Any later contribution scheme requires an Assembly decision and hardship arrangements.

A member may resign in writing or through a recorded verbal request. The register records resignation, death or a final disciplinary removal. Resignation does not create an entitlement to church assets. Record retention follows the privacy policy.

5 General Assembly

The General Assembly comprises adult registered members across branches. It is the final authority for elections, annual accounts, amendments and dissolution, subject to the constitution and law. Hold an annual meeting within six months after the financial year ends. Give 21 days' notice, an agenda and access to relevant papers through accessible channels.

Quorum is one-third of eligible adult members. If absent, reconvene with at least 14 days' notice; the same quorum applies to constitutional amendments and dissolution. Ordinary decisions require a simple majority of votes cast. Abstentions are excluded; a tie defeats the motion. Record attendance, votes and minutes. Remote attendance may be used where identity and participation can be verified.

A special meeting may be requested by the Council or 20% of adult members. The secretary issues notice within 14 days. Only notified business may be decided.

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6 Leadership and accountability

The spiritual leader oversees worship, pastoral care and teaching. Reverend VS Zulu is identified as the current leader for this draft; adoption does not create a permanent tenure or a hereditary right. Any appointment, succession or removal follows the adopted constitution and the Assembly's recorded procedure.

The Governing Council shall include the spiritual leader, secretary, treasurer and one representative elected by each branch. The secretary, treasurer and branch representatives serve three-year terms and may be re-elected once consecutively. Nominations require the candidate's agreement. Elections use a secret ballot where contested. Council appoints an interim officer for a vacancy until the next Assembly.

The Council implements Assembly decisions, supervises safeguarding and records, approves expenditure within the budget and reports annually. Meet at least quarterly; quorum is a majority of serving members. Ordinary decisions use a simple majority. No single leader may override a recorded lawful collective decision.

The secretary keeps minutes, membership records and notices. The treasurer keeps accounts and reports. Branch leaders supervise local worship and records under the same controls. Choir and ministry coordinators operate within agreed mandates. Delegations must state authority, limits and reporting obligations in writing.

7 Conflicts and removal

Declare personal or family interests before decisions. The interested person leaves deliberation and voting; record the declaration and remaining quorum. Church property must not be used for private gain. Gifts that influence a decision are prohibited.

An officer may be removed for serious misconduct or persistent failure after written allegations, reasonable time to respond and an impartial hearing. The Assembly decides by a two-thirds majority of votes cast, subject to the constitution. An interim restriction on duties may protect people or records but is not a finding of guilt. A spiritual leader's case must be heard by persons independent of that leader.

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8 Financial and asset controls

Adopt an annual budget and financial year by Assembly resolution. Use an account in the church's name; do not use personal accounts for church receipts. Appoint at least three authorised bank signatories and require two approvals per payment. No person may approve their own reimbursement.

Two people count collections together, record the amount and sign a count sheet. Issue receipts where practicable and bank funds promptly. Keep invoices, approvals, cash records and a register of assets. Reconcile the bank account monthly, with review by someone other than the preparer. Report income, expenditure and balances to the Council quarterly and members annually.

Procurement must be proportionate and documented. Obtain comparable quotations for material purchases unless a justified exception is recorded. The Council proposes financial approval limits for Assembly adoption; until set, unbudgeted or material commitments require a Council resolution. Borrowing and disposal of land or buildings require prior Assembly approval by two-thirds of votes cast.

Church income and property serve church purposes and are not distributed to members. Reasonable authorised remuneration or reimbursement for actual services may be paid with conflict controls. Keep restricted donations for their agreed purpose; obtain the donor's agreement or lawful advice before changing it. Arrange annual independent financial scrutiny appropriate to legal status and donor obligations.

9 Conduct complaints and discipline

Receive complaints privately through the secretary or an independent Council member where the secretary is implicated. Acknowledge within seven days and aim to resolve within 30 days, updating the parties if delayed. Mediation is voluntary and must not replace safeguarding action or reporting to authorities.

Provide written allegations, an impartial panel, an opportunity to respond and be accompanied, a reasoned outcome and proportionate action. Available actions include advice, warning, restrictions on duties or removal. No public humiliation, violence or monetary punishment is permitted. An appeal may be lodged within 30 days to an independent panel appointed by the Assembly. Confidentiality cannot prevent lawful reporting.

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10 Safeguarding and pastoral care

Appoint a safeguarding contact and an alternative outside that person's reporting line. Use proportionate screening for people working with children or vulnerable persons. Obtain guardian permission for child activities and separate transport or overnight arrangements. Avoid isolated one-to-one situations; use visible spaces and appropriate adult supervision.

Record and promptly escalate suspected abuse. Immediate danger requires emergency services or police. Comply with applicable reporting duties, including those under the Children's Act 38 of 2005 and sexual-offences legislation; internal procedures must never delay a required report. Do not promise absolute secrecy, investigate criminal allegations in place of authorities or retaliate against a good-faith reporter.

Pastoral care is voluntary and confidential within lawful limits. Keep counselling details separate from the membership register, only where necessary and lawfully authorised. Do not require disclosure of diagnoses, HIV status, sexual history or political affiliation for membership. Religious care does not replace professional medical or legal services.

11 Information handling policy

The church is responsible for its records under POPIA. Designate and register the applicable Information Officer and delegate duties in writing. Complete a personal-information impact assessment, document lawful grounds and issue a section 18 privacy notice. Apply special-information and child safeguards in addition to general processing conditions.

Collect the minimum necessary information. Limit access by role; use locked storage, strong passwords, device protection and secure backups. Do not place membership lists or completed forms on the public website or open messaging groups. Providers must have written operator arrangements. Any international transfer needs a documented section 72 basis. Members may request access, correction or other applicable rights through the published contact.

Optional photographs, public group participation and promotional messaging require distinct choices. No preselected consent is allowed. Review retention annually; securely destroy records when their purpose and lawful retention end. Preserve required legal records separately. Investigate suspected compromises and notify the Regulator and affected persons as required by section 22. Maintain incident and rights-request logs.

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12 Adoption amendments and dissolution

Give members the complete proposed text at least 21 days before adoption or amendment. Adoption and amendments require two-thirds of votes cast at a quorate Assembly, subject to any stricter existing constitution. Record the resolution, attendance, effective date and authorised signatures. Review these rules at least every three years.

Dissolution requires notice specifying the proposal and a three-quarters majority of votes cast at a quorate Assembly, subject to the constitution and law. Pay lawful debts and transfer remaining assets to an organisation with similar nonprofit purposes selected by the Assembly. Assets must not be distributed to members. Apply any registration, tax and donor restrictions.

13 Adoption record

Assembly venue and date _____

Eligible members / present / votes for / against _____

Effective date _____

Chairperson name and signature _____

Secretary name and signature _____

14 Implementation before use

Leadership must reconcile the existing constitution; approve membership criteria and the statement of faith; record the financial year and approval limits; appoint safeguarding contacts; verify the Information Officer position; implement secure record storage and retention arrangements; and supply the adopted rules and privacy notice to members. These controls must be implemented, not merely printed on a form.

15 Legal reference framework

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (privacy, equality, religious freedom and children's interests); POPIA 4 of 2013; PAIA 2 of 2000, where applicable; Children's Act 38 of 2005; Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007; Nonprofit Organisations Act 71 of 1997 where applicable to registration; and relevant tax and financial-record obligations. This draft does not establish NPO or public-benefit tax status.

Official sources checked 01 October 2026:
https://www.gov.za/documents/protection-personal-information-act
https://www.gov.za/services/register-nonprofit-organisation
https://inforegulator.org.za/
Obtain a South African legal review of the founding document and adoption resolution before treating this draft as a constitution.