

**BY-LAW OF  
THE ETHIOPIAN  
ORTHODOX  
TEWAHEDO DEBRE  
MIHRET ST. MICHAEL  
CHURCH  
Washington D.C.  
May 22, 2005**

This By-Law is divided  
into seventeen Articles,  
thirty two sub-articles and  
one hundred seventy six items

## Article 1

### 1. Title

- a. This By-law may be referred to as the By-law of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Debre Mehret St. Michael Church issued in May 2005 after modifying the November 1994 version.

### 2. Definition

- a. The term *Ethiopian* signifies the church's standing in bringing together Ethiopians in the Diaspora and it also signifies the church's identity.
- b. *Orthodox Tewahedo* is the name of our religion.
- c. The term *Debre Mehret* signifies that St. Michael is known as the angel of mercy.

### 3. Debre Mehret St. Michael Church

- a. The Debre Mehret St. Michael Church is a non-profit legal entity established in accordance to 501 C (3) of the District of Columbia Law.
- b. The church owns a building and land free of debt located at 3010 Earl Place NE, Washington, DC 20018.
- c. The seal of Debre Mehret St. Michael Church is round in shape, enclosed with a cross emblem at the center and engraved with church's name "*The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Debre Mihret St. Michael Church*" both in Amharic and English.
- d. The corporate seal of the church is round in shape, made of iron with engraving at the center that reads "Debre Mehret St. Michael Church", "Corporate Seal 1994 District of Columbia".

## Article 2

### 4. Relationship with the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church

- a. The church has unity of faith, code of worship and religious doctrine with the mother church in Ethiopia.

- b. The church accepts the Holy Synod of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church whose principal seat is in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and keeping the spirit of Article 2 sub-Article 5, item c, has spiritual administrative relationship.

5. Concerning the Dioceses

- a. The Debre-Mehret St. Michael Church accepts the blessing of the Archbishop of the Dioceses for he is a member of the Holy Synod.
- b. The Archbishop of the Dioceses issues spiritual directives to the priest who is elected by the administrative Board of the Debre-Mihret St. Michael Church to administer the church.
- c. Neither the Dioceses nor the Archbishop of the Dioceses shall interfere in the day-to-day activities such as personnel, financial property management and administrative issues, of the administrative Board of the Debre-Mehret St. Michael Church.

**Article 3**

6. Principles of the Church

- a. The Debre Mehret St. Michael Church is a non-profit organization established to provide spiritual services.
- b. The church shall not be affiliated with any political organization.
- c. The administrator of the church shall be an ordained priest.
- d. The church shall have an administrative Board composed of priests and church members.

**Article 4**

7. Objectives and Functions

- a. Guard the holy church and fulfill her services.
- b. Strengthen the church's servers in their apostolic deeds.
- c. Preserve the church's dogma and canon.

- d. Strengthen and protect the legacy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church both at home and abroad as well as preserve her treasures.
- e. Educate the younger generation so that it will not forget its religion, culture and language.
- f. Support monasteries, parishes and doctrine schools in Ethiopia.
- g. Practice in action the religious decisions that come from the Holy Synod of the mother church.
- h. Establish various non-profit organizations.
- i. Organize the youth in the Sunday school.
- j. Establish unity with Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Churches in the area.
- k. Expand religious services.
- l. Encourage worshippers to carefully understand their religion and live in Christian etiquette.

#### **Article 5**

#### **8. Concerning Land Tenure and Building of the Church**

- a. The land tenure and building of St. Michael church are properties of the Debre Mehret St. Michael Church.
- b. Selling, or demolishing in its entirety and rebuilding of the land and building of St. Michael's church must be approved by two third vote of the church members and shall be communicated to the seat of the patriarch, the Holy Synod and the Archbishop of the Dioceses.

#### **Article 6**

#### **9. Duties and Responsibility of Church Members**

- a. Vote and/or be voted for membership of the administrative board.
- b. Pay tithes and monthly contribution.
- c. Receive spiritual services free of charge.

- d. Conduct an annual meeting once a year.
- e. Adopt the agenda of the general assembly with the presence of fifty five percent (55 %) of the membership.
- f. Call general assembly for the second time if the annual meeting is not convened due to lack of sufficient attendance.
- g. In case a quorum is not full at the second meeting, convene the assembly with the members attending and pass resolution.

### **Article 7**

#### 10. Qualification of Members of the Administrative Board

- a. Priests and church members over thirty years of age and Sunday school students over twenty-five years of age irrespective of gender.
- b. Registered church members for over two years.
- c. Hard working and loyal with good code of conduct.
- d. Not serving in leadership capacity of any political organization.
- e. Paid their monthly contribution.
- f. Preferably, rendered services in sub-committees.

### **Article 8**

#### 11. Duties and Responsibilities of the Administrative Board.

- a. Preserve and follow the church's code of belief and order in accordance with codes of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church.
- b. Secure the church's property.
- c. Enter agreements.
- d. Deposit the church's fund in banks in the name of the church.
- e. Hire and fire according to the law.
- f. Form various sub-committees.

- g. To sue and be sued according to the law.
- h. Assign the church administrator and secretary.
- i. Select honorary members of the board as necessary.
- j. Call general assembly, at anytime, as needed within a given year.
- k. Elect chairman of the Board and assign duties to other members of the board.
- l. Transfer or fire the church administrator or secretary or any other church servants for failing to meet their assigned responsibilities.
- m. Initiate additional policies that are helpful to execute this By-law.

### **Article 9**

#### 12. Size of the Administrative Board

- a. The administrative Board shall have thirteen members.
- b. Four members including the administrator of the Board shall be priests.
- c. Eight of the members of the administrative Board shall be from church members.
- d. One member of the administrative Board shall be among Sunday school students.
- e. The assembly of the church priests shall select priest members of the administrative Board.
- f. Church members of the administrative Board shall be selected by the general assembly of church members.
- g. Members of the Sunday school shall select member of the administrative Board from Sunday school.

### **Article 10**

#### 13. Terms of the Administrative Board

- a. The term of the Administrative Board shall be four years.

- b. The administrative Board may serve for the second term if endorsed by the general assembly.
- c. The administrative Board members cannot hold office for more than two consecutive terms. However he/she may be re-elected after a four year interval.
- d. Board members who have completed their term may serve in sub-committees.
- e. The three Board members mentioned on article nine sub-article 12 item “e” will serve as permanent honorary members of the Board.
- f. Board members representing priesthood may be elected repeatedly if no one is available to replace them.
- g. Upon completing their terms current Board members of the administrative Board shall coach the new Board members in their respective fields for the first three months.

#### **Article 11**

#### 14. Termination of the Administrative Board

- a. A Board member must present a letter of resignation to the assembly when leaving the country.
- b. A Board member shall be terminated if unable to serve due to ill-health.
- c. If a Board member is found to have engaged in action disgraceful to his/her faith, or is frequently being absent from Board meetings without sufficient reasons, first he/she shall be given proper advise from the Board members. If he/she does not show improvement, he/she shall be dismissed from the Board provided that the twelve members unanimously agree on the decision. The Board shall disclose the decision at the annual general assembly of the church members.
- d. Any Board vacancy shall be filled by the candidate with the second highest-ranking count during the preceding election.
- e. The Board may fill vacancy with a candidate of its choice among the church members and communicate the same to the general assembly if no such candidates are available from preceding elections.

#### **Article 12**

#### 15. The Nominating Committee

- a. The administrative Board shall select a five-member Nominating Committee from the church members three months prior to completion of administrative Board's term.
- b. The Nominating Committee shall prepare election procedures for the general assembly.
- c. The Nominating Committee shall be present after the election to execute transfer of office to the newly elected board.
- d. If the Nominating Committee believed that the current Board is beneficial to the church after completing its four-year term, it may recommend the current administrative Board for re-election by the general assembly for another term in accordance with article ten sub-article 13 item "b".

### **Article 13**

#### 16. Revenue of the church

- a. Tithe collected from church members
- b. Charity
- c. Monthly contribution
- d. Church wedding ceremony
- e. Offerings and gifts
- f. Miscellaneous income

#### 17. Expense of the Church

- a. Salary of priests
- b. Utility bills such as light, gas, water, house keeping, etc.
- c. Telephone bills and office equipment
- d. Hospitality of guests and meals for priests
- e. Robes and church bequests
- f. Insurance premium

- g. Humanitarian activities

#### **Article 14**

#### **18. Finance**

- a. All funds of the church shall be deposited in a bank account opened in the church's name.
- b. Persons authorized to administer the funds and to co-sign on the church's checks shall be the:
  - Church administrator
  - Chairperson of the Board
  - Accountant
- c. The money can be withdrawn if any two of the three co-sign the check.
- d. The church's fiscal year shall be from January 1 to December 31.

#### **Article 15**

#### **19. Board Members and Division of Tasks**

- a. Administrator of the church from the priesthood
- b. Chairman of the Board from church members
- c. Secretary of the church from priesthood
- d. Secretary of the Board from church members
- e. Accountant from church members
- f. Treasurer from priests and church members
- g. Auditor from church members
- h. Religious property manager from the priesthood
- i. Sunday school from members of Sunday school
- j. Hosting and entertainment from the church members

- k. Public Relations from church members
- l. Humanitarian Affairs from church members
- m. Children's Education Division from church members

### **Article 16**

#### **20. Duties and Responsibilities of the Church Administrator**

- a. Reviews and makes decisions regarding all matters of Church doctrine in cooperation with the priests and Board members.
- b. Shall have only one vote on Board meetings.
- c. Co-signs with Chairman of the Board on all contracts.
- d. Co-signs with Chairman of the Board on all expense checks.
- e. Chairs Board meetings in the absence of the Board chairman.
- f. Supervises gospel ministry and services offered by priests.
- g. Executes the church's day-to-day activities in cooperation with concerned Board members.
- h. Signs on outgoing letters.

#### **21. Duties and Responsibilities of the Board Chairman**

- a. Chairs Board meetings
- b. Has no authority on matters of Church doctrine.
- c. Co-signs contracts with the church administrator representing the church.
- d. Co-signs checks with church administrator.
- e. Supervises and executes the day-to-day activities of the church.
- f. Designs development plans for the church and presents to the Board for execution.

- g. Represents the church in the matters relating to any government or public agencies
- h. Signs on out going letters.

22. Secretary of the Church

- a. Keeps the church seal.
- b. Responsible for office equipment.
- c. Keeps church documents.
- d. Be available and perform day-to-day activities at the church office.
- e. Records minutes of Board meetings in the absence of the Secretary of the Board.
- f. Executes the affairs of the church with guidelines given by the church Administrator. Acts on behalf of the Administrator in his absence.

23. Secretary of the Administrative Board

- a. Records minutes at Board meetings
- b. Keeps records of minutes of Board meetings and other documents.
- c. Inspects availability and proper filing of important documents in cooperation with the church secretary.
- d. Implements resolutions of the administrative Board in cooperation with concerned parties.

24. Duties and Responsibilities of the Treasurer

- a. Collects the church's revenue using legal receipts.
- b. Assigns persons to count the Sunday weekly offerings for proper collection and issues official receipts and deposits the same in the church's bank account
- c. Keeps income and expense records
- d. Presents financial reports at Board meetings

- e. Keeps the church's expense checks.
- f. Prepares expense checks for signature.
- g. Presents documents for audit when requested by the church auditor.
- h. Presents annual financial report in cooperation with the Accounting Division and the auditor.

25. Duties and Responsibilities of Chief of the Accounting Division

- a. Keeps a record of revenue and expense using standard accounting practice.
- b. Audits bank statements and related financial records and keeps accounting files.
- c. Prepares schedule of accounts and reports to the Board, as necessary.
- d. Co-signs on expense checks in the absence of the church administrator or the Board Chairman.
- e. Assures availability of sufficient fund during budget allocation.

26. Duties and Responsibilities of Audit Division

- a. Audits income and expenses and verifies money is deposited in the bank.
- b. Controls the legality of income and expense receipts.
- c. Prepares annual financial reports.
- d. Controls the timely payment of monthly expenses.

27. Property Division

- a. Keeps inventory of all durable and non-durable properties of the church
- b. If he is a priest, he shall protect all sacred belongings including the Arc of the Covenant.

28. Public Relations Division

- a. Identifies the reasons and come up with solution when church members do not show for a period of time.

- b. Assumes responsibility and control over materials posted on the notice board.
- c. Distributes necessary fliers to church members.
- d. Coordinates filling of membership forms by church members.
- e. Communicates questions and concerns from church members to the church administration.

29. Hospitality Division

- a. Welcomes local and out of town guests.
- b. Prepare food and hosts guests and the public during major holidays.
- c. Coordinates refreshments for church members after Sunday church service.

30. Sunday School

- a. The Sunday school shall have one representative in the administrative Board.
- b. Provide religious education for the youth as they are the future leaders of the church.
- c. Present church songs to worshippers every Sunday.
- d. Execute directives from the church administration.
- e. Present spiritual dramas to the worshippers.
- f. Establish union with other Sunday schools in the area.

31. Youth Division

- a. Educate children so that they know their religion, culture and language.
- b. Gather the young children and teach them during service and organize them to participate orderly for Holy Communion.
- c. Make effort to raise young children in the church environment so that they can become future church leaders.

## **Article 17**

### 32. Concerning the By-law

- a. This By-law is divided into seventeen articles, thirty two sub-articles and one hundred seventy six items.
- b. This By-law has been revised for the second time by the administrative Board and it will be in effect from the time Board members have affixed their signatures.
- c. This by-law may be amended after being revised by the administrative Board and if the changes are approved by two third vote of the general assembly.