

# Bylaws of the Academy of Reflection

## ARTICLE 1

### Establishment

#### §1.1. Scope

This document is intended to serve as the codification of the official rules, guidelines, and procedures for the officers, members, and associates of the Academy of Reflection (AOR). No provision herein contained is in any way intended to conflict with the constitution, laws, or edicts of the Grand Lodge in whose jurisdiction any constituent body of the AOR operates; the Supreme Council (Mother Council of the World), Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, Southern Jurisdiction, U.S.A. (AASR-SJ); or the governing bodies of the Orient or the Valley in which a constituent body of the AOR is authorized to operate. Any provision contained herein is only valid and lawful insofar as it does not conflict with any of the aforementioned governing bodies.

#### §1.2. Procedure for Amendments to the Bylaws of the AOR

Amendments to the Bylaws of the AOR must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of inducted in the Mother Academy who are physically present. The officers of the Mother Academy shall take reasonable measures to ensure that its membership has prior notice of the purpose, date, time, location and means of voting.

#### §1.3. Constituent Bodies

- a. The AOR Mother Academy: Whereas the Guthrie AOR is the original body of the AOR, constituted in the See of the Valley of Guthrie, in the Orient of Oklahoma, AASR-SJ, by charter issued on September 28, 2012, the Guthrie Academy is therefore the *Mother Academy* of the AOR. The Mother Academy maintains authority and control over the name, emblem, bylaws, curriculum, and induction ceremony of the AOR, as well as the issuing, suspension, or revocation of recognition for other bodies, members, and associates of the AOR.
- b. Local Academies: Local Academies are bodies of the AOR that the Mother Academy has duly recognized or chartered to operate within a Valley of the Scottish Rite other than Guthrie.
  - i. Reporting: Local Academies must keep the Mother Academy thoroughly informed about their membership and activities.
  - ii. Dues and Fees: Local academies, including the Mother Academy, shall not establish dues or fees for membership, but may charge fees for events that have necessary expenses.
  - iii. There are three classes of Local Academies:
    - a) Academy in Formation: Its representatives having signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Mother Academy, an *Academy in Formation* is a body of AOR associates, or members of other

Academies, who are duly recognized by the Mother Academy as working toward establishment of the conditions for chartering specified in the MOA.

1. An Academy in Formation is authorized to:

- a. conduct group meditation sessions approved by the Mother Academy during reunions and other functions of their Valley;
- b. conduct business meetings;
- c. host short-term social events for the purposes of attracting potential members and building group cohesion.

2. Chartering requirements:

- a. A one-year minimum formation period must be completed, beginning at the date upon which the MOA has been signed by all parties.
- b. The Sovereign Grand Inspector General for the Orient of the host Valley must issue a written statement of approval for the Academy in Formation to exist and operate within that Orient.
- c. The host Valley's General Secretary, or an equivalent or higher authority, must assure in writing that the Academy in Formation is officially welcome to provide group meditations onsite during reunions and other Valley events, and that they will be open to all Scottish Rite Masons.
- d. During formation and after chartering, the host Valley and Local Academy shall ethically and lawfully observe that the Mother Academy retains ultimate control of the name, emblem, bylaws, curriculum, and induction ceremony of the AOR, as well as the issuing, suspension, or revocation of recognition for other bodies, members, and associates of the AOR.
- e. During the formation period, the Academy in Formation shall begin providing group meditation sessions during the host Valley's reunions or other events. These sessions must use meditations approved by the Mother Academy, and they must be facilitated under supervision of an Instructor, which may be provided at a distance.
- f. There must be a minimum of nine prospective charter members recruited by the end of the formation period, which includes the three prospective charter officers. Note that a Local Academy cannot perform the induction

ceremony for any of its members until it has received a charter.

- g. Before completion of the formation period, the prospective Superintendent must visit the Mother Academy, participate in at least three of its group meditation sessions, and be authorized to hold the office of Superintendent by a modified version of the AOR induction ceremony.
  - h. Upon complete fulfillment of all requirements, the Academy in Formation shall be presented with a charter from the Mother Academy, which shall be in effect once it has been signed by the Sovereign Grand Inspector General presiding over the host Valley, and by that Valley's General Secretary, or the equivalent or higher authority, and a copy thereof provided to the Mother Academy.
- b) Chartered Academy: Having satisfactorily established the requirements for chartering specified by the Mother Academy, a *Chartered Academy* has been duly issued a charter by the Mother Academy. A Chartered Academy is further authorized to:
- 1. induct new members into the AOR;
  - 2. conduct contemplative retreats for AOR members, provided the schedule and content of retreats have received prior approval by the Mother Academy.
- c) Academy of Instruction: An *Academy of Instruction* is a Chartered Academy with a Superintendent recognized as an AOR Instructor by the Mother Academy. An Academy of Instruction is further authorized to:
- 1. conduct group meditations and retreats without prior approval by the Mother Academy;
  - 2. develop and utilize instructional materials in addition to those provided by the Mother Academy;
  - 3. provide its members with instruction in the curriculum by its own Instructors;
  - 4. recognize new Instructors from among its qualified members.

## **ARTICLE 2**

### **Officers and Instructors**

#### **§2.1. Superintendent**

- a. Duties: The Superintendent ensures conformity with the bylaws and presides over all aspects and functions of the Local Academy. Under oversight of the Mother Academy,

the Superintendent directly controls the curricula, instruction, and ceremonies of the Local Academy.

- b. Authority: The Superintendent's decisions are binding for all members of the Local Academy, and can only be overruled by a unanimous decision of the Clerk and Custodian of the Local Academy, or by the Superintendent of the Mother Academy, or by an officer or body within the Rite with lawful authority over the AOR.
- c. Term of Office: The Superintendent serves a term of not more than seven (7) years.

## **§2.2. Clerk**

- a. Duties: The Clerk is the secretary-treasurer for the Local Academy. The Clerk manages all finances and maintains the minutes, account books, membership applications and rolls, organizational communications, and other records. The Clerk must provide comprehensive and complete reports on such matters as required by the Superintendent of the Local Academy, or by the Mother Academy, or by an officer or body within the Rite with lawful authority over the AOR.
- b. Term of Office: The Clerk serves a term of not more than five (5) years.

## **§2.3. Custodian**

- a. Duties: The Custodian manages the logistics of meetings and other events for the Local Academy, including acquisition of space, scheduling, transportation, materials, equipment, refreshments, and assignment and coordination of personnel with specific duties. The Custodian must routinely provide comprehensive and complete reports on such matters as required by the Superintendent of the Local Academy, or by the Mother Academy, or by an officer or body within the Rite with lawful authority over the AOR.
- b. Term of Office: The Custodian serves a term of not more than three (3) years.

## **§2.4. Officer Candidacy**

In any Chartered Academy, a candidate must submit the personal statement to that Chartered Academy's officers. An inducted member of any Chartered Academy may likewise apply as a candidate for office in any Local Academy.

- a. The statement must be of between 1000 and 2000 words addressing these points:
  - i. the candidate's strengths, weaknesses, and next steps for development as a contemplative practitioner;
  - ii. the candidate's strengths, weaknesses, and next steps for development as a contemplative leader;
  - iii. the candidate's vision for the future of the Local Academy.
- b. Once the statement is received, it shall be reviewed by the officers, who may require elaboration by the candidate.
- c. After an appropriate period of consideration, the officers shall approve or deny the candidate's eligibility by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote.

## **§2.5. Election Requirements**

- a. In conjunction with a reunion or other function of the host Valley, a meeting shall be called for the election of new officers as necessary to replace officers who have reached the end of their terms, who have been removed, or who wish to resign. The current officers shall take reasonable measures to ensure that the entire membership has prior notice of the purpose, date, time, location, and means of voting.
- b. Current and past officers may be nominated for re-election to their offices or election to any other office.
- c. Election to office shall be decided by a simple majority vote of members who are physically present.

## **§2.6. Removal of Officers**

Officers may be removed for a breach of any duties or requirements, as well as for being dilatory in the execution of duties. The removal of officers shall follow the same procedures as provided for the removal of members (§3.6.).

## **§2.7. Instructors**

- a. Qualifications: To be eligible for appointment as an Instructor, the candidate must be an inducted member who has:
  - i. satisfactorily completed the Instructor coursework in the AOR curriculum;
  - ii. accumulated a significant history of contemplative practice, whether within or outside the AOR; and
  - iii. demonstrated a satisfactory ability to review individual progress and perform group facilitation. Appointment: Within an Academy of Instruction, the appointment of Instructors may be performed by its own Superintendent. The Mother Academy must appoint Instructors for all other Local Academies.
- b. Authority: Instructors are authorized to:
  - i. provide unsupervised facilitation of groups for the purpose of instruction and practice in contemplative methods;
  - ii. oversee and recognize the progress of members engaged in the AOR curriculum.
  - iii. Provide instruction and resources in addition to those in the AOR curriculum.

## **ARTICLE 3**

### **Membership and Associateship**

#### **§3.1. Membership Qualifications**

- a. A member of the AOR must be at least a Thirty-Second Degree Scottish Rite Mason in good standing.
- b. Prior to seeking membership in the AOR, the brother must have previously participated in at least three (3) group sessions of contemplative practice provided by a Chartered Academy.

- c. Members of the AOR must maintain upright character, and refrain from any activity that would reflect poorly on the AOR, the Scottish Rite, or Freemasonry in general.

### **§3.2. Membership Application Requirements**

Each applicant must submit to a Chartered Academy a personal statement of between 1000 and 2000 words addressing the applicant's views on the significance of contemplative practice to his:

- a. understanding of self;
- b. relationships with others;
- c. experience and appreciation of Freemasonry; and
- d. relationship with the Divine.

### **§3.3. Approval of Membership**

- a. Once an application is received, it shall be reviewed by the officers of the Chartered Academy. The officers may require elaboration by the applicant on any part of the application.
- b. After an appropriate period of consideration, the officers shall approve or deny the application by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote.

### **§3.4. Induction Requirements**

After an application is approved, the applicant must receive the AOR Ceremony of Induction before being recognized and entered into the records as a member of the Chartered Academy.

### **§3.5. Membership Benefits**

- a. access to the curriculum of the AOR;
- b. voting in the business of the Chartered Academy;
- c. wearing the AOR badge at Masonic functions; and
- d. participating in AOR contemplative retreats.

### **§3.6. Procedures for Removing Members**

Members of the AOR may be removed if one of the provisions stated in §3.1 has been violated. An officer within the Chartered Academy or with lawful authority over the AOR, may recommend the removal of an AOR member for behavior unbecoming of a member of the AOR, the Scottish Rite, or Freemasonry in general.

- a. In order for any AOR member to be removed, a written recommendation for removal must be submitted to all officers and Instructors of the Chartered Academy, no later than thirty (30) days prior to a special meeting scheduled for their consideration and action upon that recommendation. The recommendation for removal must contain:
  - i. The name of the AOR member to be removed;

- ii. details about the violation that has allegedly occurred; and
  - iii. an argument for why removal from the rolls of the AOR would be the most appropriate action.
- b. Any brother subject to removal has a right to read and hear the recommendation for his removal, and to make a statement and present facts and evidence on his behalf, but he must leave the room prior to the vote.
- c. A vote shall then be taken amongst the officers and Instructors present, and a two-thirds (2/3) majority is required for removal of the member.
- d. Any brother removed from the AOR solely for non-payment of dues may be automatically reinstated by the Chartered Academy upon returning to good standing.

### **§3.7. Withdrawal from Membership**

A member or associate may withdraw from the AOR at any time, for any reason, by submitting a written statement to the Chartered Academy in which he is a member, or to the Mother Academy if he is an associate. If the former member wishes to be reinstated or join another Local Academy, he must submit a request and have it approved by the officers of the Chartered Academy from which he withdrew. Reinstatement for anyone who withdrew as associate must be approved by the officers of the Mother Academy.

### **§3.8. Associateship**

- a. Definition: Associateship is an option for Scottish Rite Masons who are either unable or do not wish to establish AOR membership through a Chartered Academy.
- b. Qualifications:
  - i. An associate of the AOR must be at least a Thirty-Second Degree Scottish Rite Mason in good standing.
  - ii. Associates of the AOR must maintain upright character, and refrain from any activity that would reflect poorly on the AOR, the Scottish Rite, or Freemasonry in general.
- c. Recognition: In order to be recognized as an associate of the AOR, a qualified brother must submit a written request to, and receive recognition by, the Mother Academy. The Superintendent of the Mother Academy may extend or revoke such recognition at his discretion.
- d. Benefits:
  - i. participation in AOR electronic social media;
  - ii. access to basic courses in the curriculum;
  - iii. correspondence with AOR Instructors for guidance in contemplative matters;
  - iv. participation in AOR contemplative retreats.

## **ARTICLE FOUR**

### **General Provisions**

#### **§4.1. Motto**

The motto for the AOR is “*Aur!*”

#### **§4.1. Mission**

The AOR offers interested Scottish Rite Masons encouragement and instruction in the pursuit of inner work such as meditation and silent prayer.

#### **§4.3. Rationale**

Scottish Rite Freemasonry is inherently holistic in its approach to the moral, social and spiritual development of its members. It offers beautiful and inspiring ritual, profound and stimulating literature, and inner organizations for men with a great variety of callings and interests. However, despite consistent reference in our ritual and literature to the importance of meditation and prayer in Masonic life, prior to the AOR, there was no body within the Rite specifically dedicated to these pursuits. Men with interest in inner work have been forced to seek such light elsewhere and typically in non-Masonic organizations. The AOR therefore provides such men the opportunity to pursue contemplative interests within the rich context of the Rite’s symbolism, ritual, and literature, and to associate with brothers of like mind. The Rite in turn benefits from their increased sense of loyalty and attachment. Perhaps more importantly, the deeper insights that naturally come from inner work flow out into the Rite as a whole, enriching the experience of all Scottish Rite Masons and enhancing the Rite’s potential to assist with the transformation of their lives, their families, and their communities.