

SOCIETY OF MARY
American Region



GUIDELINES FOR WARDS AND CELLS

Adopted by the SoM American Region Council, March 13, 2021

(Guidelines begin on Next Page)

I. FORMING A CELL

1. The SoM American Region Council recognizes as a Cell any group of five or more SoM members who gather regularly for activities consistent with the Society's Objects.
2. Cells are encouraged to seek sponsorship by a parish, mission, or other church community (hereinafter "Congregation"). Participants in the Cell need not all be members of the sponsoring Congregation.
3. A Cell must have permission from its host Congregation's Rector, Vicar, Pastor, Priest-in-Charge, or other person responsible for the host Congregation's pastoral care and administration (hereinafter "Incumbent") for any activities it undertakes in the host Congregation; similarly, it must have permission from the Incumbents of any other Congregations where it undertakes activities.
4. A Cell by its nature is an informal grouping. However, Cells are encouraged to do the following—especially if they anticipate eventually petitioning the SoM American Region Council for recognition as a Ward:
 - a. Appoint a Secretary to communicate with the SoM American Region Council Secretary
 - b. Ask a priest to be Chaplain, Mentor, or Advisor. A priest who is not the host Congregation's Incumbent must have the Incumbent's approval to perform this role
 - c. Choose a provisional dedication or title of patronage from those not already in use by active Wards or Cells as listed on the SoM American Region website
 - d. Report annually in the month of April to the SoM American Region Council Secretary (prior to the Regional Annual Meeting, usually held in May), including:
 - The Cell's provisional dedication (if any)
 - The name, address, and jurisdiction of the Cell's host Congregation
 - How many SoM members the Cell comprises
 - How often the Cell has met in the preceding year
 - What activities the Cell has undertaken
 - The names and current contact details of the Cell's:
 - Secretary
 - Priest Advisor
 - Host Congregation's Incumbent (if different from the Priest Advisor)

II. FORMING A WARD

1. A group of ten or more SoM members who have been meeting for activities consistent with the Society of Mary's objects may petition the SoM American Region Council for recognition as a Ward, subject to the following conditions:
 - a. A proposed Ward must be based in a Congregation (of a recognized Church or ecclesial community) which will host and support the Ward's activities (Members of the Ward need not all be members of the host Congregation)
 - b. The Ward's formation must have the approval of the host Congregation's Incumbent
 - c. The Ward-in-Formation elects a Secretary, whose duties include communicating with the SoM American Region Council Secretary
 - d. The Ward-in-Formation nominates a Priest as Ward Superior for approval by the SoM American Region Council
 - e. A nominated Ward Superior who is not the host Congregation's Incumbent must also have the Incumbent's approval to perform this role
 - f. The Ward-in-Formation proposes a dedication or title of patronage (from those not already in use by active Wards or Cells as listed on the SoM American Region website) for approval by the SoM American Region Council
 - g. The Ward-in-Formation's petition must include the following information:
 - The proposed Ward's requested Dedication
 - The name, address, and jurisdiction of the Ward's host Congregation
 - How many SoM members the proposed Ward comprises
 - The names and current contact details of the Proposed Ward's:
 - Elected Secretary
 - Nominated Priest Superior
 - Host Congregation Incumbent (if different from the Priest Superior)
2. The SoM American Region Council has entire discretion whether to approve or withhold approval of the proposed Ward's petition and / or the proposed Ward Superior's nomination.
3. The SoM American Region Council will consider such petitions and nominations at its regularly-scheduled semi-annual meetings.

III. ACTIVE WARDS

1. The Ward Secretary reports annually in the month of April to the American Region Council Secretary (prior to the Region's Annual Meeting, generally held in May). The report includes:
 - a. How many SoM members the Ward comprises
 - b. The name, address, and jurisdiction of the Ward's host Congregation
 - c. How often the Ward has met during the preceding year
 - d. What activities the Ward has undertaken during the preceding year
 - e. The names and current contact details of the Ward's:
 - Secretary
 - Priest Superior
 - Host Congregation Incumbent (if different from the Priest Superior)
2. A Ward that fails to report for three consecutive years may be deemed "inactive" by the American Region Council. To re-establish "active" status it must go through the procedure defined in Part II above.
3. If the Ward elects a new Secretary, or if the existing Ward Secretary's contact details change, this information is to be reported immediately to the American Region Council Secretary.
4. If the Ward Superior's contact details change, this information is to be reported immediately to the American Region Council Secretary.
5. If the Ward Superior resigns or is unable to continue in office for any reason, the Ward Secretary is to notify the American Region Secretary immediately, and is to convey as soon as possible the Ward's nomination of a new Ward Superior for approval by the American Region Superior and (if applicable) by the host Congregation's Incumbent.
6. If the Ward's host Congregation's Incumbent changes, the Ward must obtain approval from the new Incumbent to continue activities in the Congregation. (This requirement need not apply to Interim Clergy.)
7. A Ward relocating from one host Congregation to another must have approval from the new host Congregation's Incumbent, and it must immediately notify the American Region Council Secretary of the change in venue.
8. Wards are to count as their members only persons who are full members in good standing of the Society of Mary.

9. Ward Officers (i.e. the Superior or Secretary) may submit matters for discussion by the Council provided that they are received by the American Region Secretary no later than 21 days prior to a scheduled Council meeting. (Constitution: III.C.3)

IV. FINANCIAL GUIDELINES

1. Wards and Cells are not permitted to collect annual or life dues from their members to forward to the SoM American Region. Each individual member pays his or her own dues directly, following the prescribed procedures. Adherence to this requirement avoids confusion and enormously simplifies our record-keeping.
2. Since Wards and Cells are not legally recognized financial entities, they are not permitted to elect Treasurers or maintain their own funds in private individuals' bank accounts or in cash "kitties." This requirement is intended to protect Ward and Cell members, as well as the SoM, from potentially serious legal, financial, and tax liabilities.
3. Congregations hosting SoM Wards or Cells are encouraged to support the Ward or Cell financially by establishing a designated line item in their bookkeeping accounts, such as "Society of Mary" or "Devotional Societies," into which designated gifts for the Ward or Cell can be received, and from which properly documented legitimate expenses arising from the Ward or Cell's activities can be reimbursed.
 - a. A Cell or Ward whose host Congregation has not established such a designated line item may not accept financial contributions or handle funds of any kind
 - b. When the host Congregation has established such a designated line item, financial contributions to a Ward or Cell must be deposited immediately with the host Congregation's Treasurer (or equivalent financial officer), and credited to the appropriate line item in the Congregation's accounts
 - c. All such deposited funds are understood to belong to the Congregation, with the restriction that they are for the Ward or Cell's use
 - d. If the Ward or Cell ceases to exist, such designated funds become the Congregation's unrestricted assets; the Congregation is invited to consider donating them to the SoM American Region
 - e. All such financial arrangements between Congregations and SoM Wards or Cells must be approved in advance by the Congregation's duly constituted governing body having appropriate jurisdiction over the Congregation's financial affairs