

The following sample Pastoral Council Statutes is provided to serve as a model that can be used as a template to guide parishes in the development of their own Pastoral Council. In light of the principles described in these guidelines it should be modified to respond to the situation that is particular to the needs of each parish community. Every parish must have a formal, written document that pastors and Council members can refer to and follow to ensure the Council will function in a properly ordered manner.

# PASTORAL COUNCIL STATUTES

## MISSION STATEMENT

**[Place text of the Parish Mission Statement here.]**

### Preamble

As members of the Pastoral Council we, the members of the XXX Parish, consistent with the provisions of Canon 536 of the Code of Canon Law, under the leadership of the Diocesan Bishop and Parish Pastor, commit ourselves to use our diverse talents and gifts to further the mission of Jesus Christ in our Parish Community.

### Article I. PURPOSE:

The Pastoral Council is an advisory body to the Pastor with consultative vote only and functions in accordance with any norms that are established by the diocesan Bishop. The primary mission of the Council is to advise the Pastor on matters of parish policy, planning and other items at the request of the Pastor. The administration of the parish and the execution of parish policies are the responsibility of the Pastor and the parish staff.

### Article II. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

The principal responsibilities of the Council are:

1. To assist in the process of ongoing pastoral planning and the development and updating of the parish pastoral plan by developing goals and objectives and the assignment of priorities for the future of the parish.

2. To engage in an annual review and evaluation of the progress that is being made to implement the parish pastoral plan.
3. To provide guidance to the pastor in developing parish policies that will be executed by the parish staff.
4. To serve as an instrument of communications, bringing issues of concern to the attention of the pastor.
5. To be actively involved in the life of the parish community and to be available to parishioners to receive comments and suggestions about parish ministries, policies and programs.
6. To make prayer for the parish an integral part of their personal and communal lives.
7. To work to demonstrate and inspire enthusiasm within the parish community by their example of leadership.
8. To promote positive communications and understanding among parish organizations, consistent with the guidance of the Pastor.
9. To work toward consensus as a model in decision-making, to promote the unity and mutual good of the Council and parish.
10. To review the annual budget prepared by the Parish Finance Committee and make any recommendations to the Pastor.
11. To propose programs and ministries that respond to needs within the parish community.

### Article III. RELATIONSHIP OF THE COUNCIL WITH THE PASTOR

As noted in Canon 536.2, the “pastoral council possesses a consultative vote only and is governed by the norms established by the diocesan bishop.” While ultimately responsible for the spiritual and temporal affairs of the parish, the Pastor:

1. Assists in the formation of and gives approval to the Council agenda.
2. May call special meetings of the Council.

3. Seeks the guidance of the Council in matters of parish planning and other matters affecting the life of the parish.
4. Does not vote when seeking advice from the Council on issues brought before it.
5. Provides formational opportunities to assist Council members to understand and exercise the responsibility that is entrusted to them.

#### Article IV. MEMBERSHIP

The Pastoral Council is made up of the following categories of membership.

1. Ex-officio members:
  - a. Ordained clergy, (priests and deacons), assigned to the parish.
  - b. A non-voting representative of any religious who serve the parish. This representative has voice at Council meetings.
2. Selected Members:

There will be a minimum of six and a maximum of nine selected members. Each year applications to serve on the Council will be announced in the parish. Those who meet the membership criteria will be eligible to submit their names for consideration. If the number of applicants who are accepted to serve exceeds the number of vacancies, selection by lot will take place at a parish Mass prior to the end of June. Terms for those selected will be for three years and may be renewed once. Divided as equally as possible, initial terms on the Council will be from one to three years, selected by lot.
3. Parish Staff:

While not official members of the Council, members of the parish staff may be requested to attend Council meetings to report on the status of parish programs and ministries for which they are responsible. They may also be invited to give informational reports, as requested by the Council. It will be the discretion of the Pastor to require staff members to participate in Council meetings.

#### Article V. MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA

Pastoral Council members must be at least eighteen years of age and:

1. Be registered and active members of the parish.
2. Have expressed special interest in the pastoral activity of the parish.

3. Have demonstrated qualities of leadership within the parish community by their past involvement in parish ministries and/or functions.
4. Have a willingness to invest themselves in the process of studying areas that relate to the parish pastoral plan.
5. Are available to attend Council meetings regularly. (Three unexcused absences during one fiscal year will result in the loss of membership on the Council. To be excused, a member must first inform the parish office prior to the meeting that he/she will not be able to attend and provide the reason for their absence. The Pastor alone will determine whether an absence will be judged to be excused or unexcused.)

#### Article VI. OFFICERS

The officers of the Pastoral Council shall be: the Pastor, the President, and the Vice President. Together, along with one member selected by the members of the Council at large, they form the Executive Committee. The members of the Council shall elect the President, the Vice President and the at large member of the Executive Committee at the first meeting of the new fiscal year. The term of office for these three positions shall be one year. No one may serve more than two consecutive terms in one of the three elected positions.

1. The Pastor:
  - a. Sets the agenda for each Council meeting in consultation with the President of the Council.
  - b. Must approve any action affirmatively voted upon by the members of the Council before it becomes effective.
  - c. Will provide Council members with the reason(s) why he has chosen not to accept any action item recommended to him by a majority of the Council members no later than the next schedule meeting.
  - d. May call special meetings of the Council or Executive Committee, as needed.
  - e. Is responsible for oversight of policies that have received an affirmative vote of the Council membership and have been approved by him. Implementation of approved policies may be delegated by the Pastor to an appropriate member of the parish staff.

2. The President:
  - a. Presides at all Council and Executive Council meetings.
  - b. Prepares the agenda for Council meetings in conjunction with the Pastor.
  - c. Appoints chairpersons for any committees that are established by the Council.
  
3. The Vice President:
  - a. Presides at Council and Executive Council meetings in the absence of the President.
  - b. Succeeds to the Office of President should that Office become vacant during a fiscal year. The Council will then elect from among its members a person to complete the term of the Vice President.

#### Article VII. THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee of the Council shall act in the place of the Council in cases of extreme necessity, as determined by the Pastor, when a matter must be addressed and the entire Council cannot be reasonably called into special session in time to resolve the issue, or when there is not a quorum at a regularly scheduled Council meeting and a matter needs to be resolved immediately, rather than being tabled until the next meeting or a special meeting can be held. All actions taken by the Executive Committee must be reported to the Council, at its next regular meeting.

#### Article VIII. MEETINGS OF THE PASTORAL COUNCIL

1. The Pastoral Council is prohibited from meeting in the absence of the Pastor. However, the Pastor may allow a Council meeting to be held if he designates another member of the parish clergy to represent him.
2. Regularly scheduled meetings of the Council will be held in September, November, January, March and May.
3. Special meetings of the Council may be called by the Pastor or by the President with the approval of the Pastor.
4. A quorum consists of a simple majority of the selected members of the Council.

5. Regular Council meetings will be open to all registered parishioners, however, the Council may elect to go into executive session, with the approval of the Pastor, at which time guests will be required to leave.
6. Meetings shall follow the agenda approved by the Pastor and the President. Non-agenda items may be discussed at a meeting with the agreement of a majority of those members present and consent of the Pastor.
7. Suggested agenda items are to be submitted by Council members in writing to the Pastor or President no later than ten days prior to a scheduled Council meeting. Items submitted later will only be considered under the provisions of Article VIII, 6.
8. Non-members of the Council may make a request to address the Council. Any such request must be made in writing to the Pastor or the President at least ten days prior to the scheduled meeting and be approved by the Pastor.
9. Notice of Council meetings will be announced in the Parish Bulletin in a timely manner.
10. Either a secretary, selected from among the voting members of the Council, or a non-voting recording secretary appointed by the President with the approval of the Pastor, shall record the Minutes of each meeting and be responsible for maintaining accurate records of Council actions and correspondence. A copy of all Council Minutes will be provided to the Parish secretary for permanent retention in the files of the parish.

#### Article IX. SELECTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

1. A nominating committee, chaired by the Vice President and including two other members of the Council selected at the January meeting shall oversee the process of announcing vacancies on the Council and collecting applications. This should take place no later than March of each year.
2. The nominating committee will present recommendations to the Pastor and Council President. The Pastor will make the final determination on the suitability of all candidates for the Council.
3. If the number of suitable candidates exceeds the number of vacancies on the Council, selection of those who will serve will take place by lot at a parish Mass prior to the end of June.

Article X. VACANCIES ON THE COUNCIL

1. Any member of the Council who has three unexcused absences from scheduled Council meetings during any fiscal year shall have his/her membership on the Council declared vacant by the President.
2. A vacancy in the membership of the Council caused by death, resignation, a member leaving XXX Parish, or under the provision of Article X, 1, may be filled by the Pastor from those who were identified as suitable candidates prior to the last selection process to complete unexpired term.

Article XI. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

1. Proposed amendments to this Constitution must be submitted in writing.
2. A vote on any proposed amendment will take place at the meeting following the one at which the amendment was presented.
3. A two-thirds majority of the selected members of the Council is required for the passage of an amendment.
4. All amendments to this Constitution must be approved by the Pastor.

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_