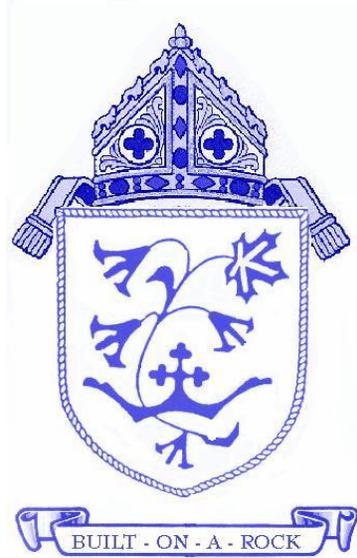


Archdiocese of Kingston



CHAPTER 3

PARISH CANONICAL DIRECTIVES

Chapter 3 PARISH CANONICAL DIRECTIVES

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INTRODUCTION

Canons 515 to 552, 1281 to 1288 of the Code of Canon Law (1983) deal with the parish and related matters.

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS

The role of the Parish Council is to consider those matters concerning the pastoral work in the parish and to propose measures to assist the parish priest in the coordination of the various projects/programs which clergy, religious or lay people of the parish may undertake and/or propose to undertake. Parish Councils are a consultative body and regulated by the norms laid down by the diocesan bishop (c. 536, §1 & 2.) (*GUIDELINES FOR PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS – Page 7 of this Chapter*).

Since the Parish Pastoral Council is called on to carry out the parish mission and establish the overall goals and priorities of the parish, it is essential that there be a close liaison between the Council and the Finance Committee.

It is recommended that a member of the Parish Pastoral Council act as liaison with the Parish Finance Committee.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Every parish must have a Finance Committee to help with the administration of the goods of the parish. The Committee's primary function is to provide the parish priest with insights and advice so that he may act more effectively in the interests of the parish.

Finance Committees are regulated by the norms outlined by the diocesan bishop (c. 537), (c. 532 and canons 1281-1288). The Finance Committee reports directly to the parish pastor.

It is recommended that the Chairperson of the Finance Committee attend meetings of the Parish Pastoral Council, when requested.

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THE PARISH

1. A parish is defined as a stably established community of the people of God within a diocese.
2. The diocesan Bishop alone, after consultation with the Council of Priests, can establish, suppress, or alter a parish.
3. Generally, a parish is to be territorial. However, parishes can be formed on the basis of ethnic background, language, or other category.
4. The pastoral care of a parish is committed to the parish priest. The priest is responsible for the pastoral care of the people under the authority of the diocesan Bishop.

Where circumstances require it, the pastoral care of a parish, or a number of parishes together, can be entrusted to several priests jointly, provided one of the priests is assigned as moderator.

If, because of a shortage of priests, the Diocesan Bishop has entrusted a deacon or some other person(s) who is not a priest with the pastoral care of the parish, the Bishop is to appoint a priest, with the powers and faculties of a parish priest, to direct the pastoral care of the parish.

5. In all juridical matters, the parish priest acts for the parish. He has to see to it that parish goods are administered in accordance with Canons 1281-1288, and diocesan policies and regulations.
6. In each parish there should be a Parish Council and must be a Finance Committee to help the parish priest administer the goods of the parish and foster the pastoral life and care.

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THE PARISH PRIEST

Obligations

The obligations of a parish priest, in cooperation with the Archbishop and the Priests of the Archdiocese, are as follows:

- a. to ensure that the Word of God is proclaimed in its entirety to those living in the parish;
- b. to see to it that the laity is instructed in the truths of the faith, especially by means of homilies and catechesis;
- c. to foster works which promote the spirit of the Gospel, including its relevance to social justice;
- d. to have a special care for the Catholic education of children and young people;
- e. to make every effort to bring the gospel message to those who have given up religious practice or who do not profess the Catholic faith;
- f. to take care that the Eucharist is the centre of the parish assembly;
- g. to ensure that the faithful are nourished by the devout celebration of the Sacraments, especially that they frequently approach the Sacrament of Eucharist and Penance;
- h. to strive to lead the faithful to prayer, including prayer in their families;
- i. to direct, under the authority of the diocesan Bishop, the liturgy in his own parish and to guard against abuses.

Fulfillment of Office

In order to fulfill his office diligently, the parish priest should:

- a. strive to know the faithful entrusted to his care through visitation, sharing in their cares and anxieties, and comforting them in their sorrows;
- b. correct them with prudence, if they are found wanting;

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- c. help and pray for the sick and the dying;
- d. seek out the poor, suffering, lonely, exiled, and those in special difficulty;
- e. foster the growth of Christian life in the family and strive to sustain parents in the fulfilment of their proper duties;
- f. recognize and promote the specific role which the lay members of the Christian faithful have in the mission of the Church;
- g. ensure that the faithful are concerned for the community of the parish, feel themselves to be members of the Archdiocese and the universal Church, and take part in works which promote this community;
- h. establish a Parish Pastoral Council and must establish a Finance Committee which will help the parish priest foster pastoral life and care, and administer the goods of the parish.

Functions

The functions especially entrusted to the parish priest are as follows:

- a. the administration of baptism;
- b. the administration of the sacrament of Confirmation to those in danger of death, in accordance with Canon 883, 3;
- c. the administration of Viaticum and of the anointing of the sick, without prejudice to Canon 1003, 2 and 3, and the imparting of the apostolic blessing;
- d. the assistance at marriages and the nuptial blessing;
- e. the conducting of funerals;
- f. the blessing of the baptismal font at paschal time, the conduct of processions outside the church, and the giving of solemn blessings outside the church;
- g. the more solemn celebration of the Eucharist on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.

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Parish Records

A. It is the duty of the parish priest to maintain the following records and to ensure the accuracy of entries:

1. Register of
 - a. Baptisms
 - b. Confirmations
 - c. Deaths
 - d. First Communion
 - e. Marriages
 - f. Mass stipends
 - g. Parishioners

NB: All certificates issued in the name of the Parish must bear the signature of the Pastor and the parish seal.

2. Financial and Related Information
 - a. cemeteries
 - b. deeds
 - c. history of parish
 - d. mortgages
 - e. plans and specifications re: new constructions/renovations
 - f. receipts and expenditures
 - g. trust documents

B. Registers are to be kept secure from fire and theft.

GUIDELINES

FOR PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS



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INTRODUCTION

Parish pastoral councils were first introduced in the Archdiocese of Kingston almost thirty years ago as a consequence of Vatican Council II, which terminated in 1965. These councils have experienced a very fine record and a most fruitful history over this period of time.

In its pastoral theology, Vatican II provided the broad teachings that rightly led to the formation of parish pastoral councils. In the early stages, many generous efforts were made and guidelines given for the purpose of their establishment and satisfactory operation in our parishes. As a result, much success was forthcoming in countless ways.

The publication of the new *Code of Canon Law* in 1983 had as its purpose the implementation of the “*authentic teaching of the Second Vatican Council.*” Although its directions were also of a general nature, the new regulations of the Code had serious implications for the structure and decision-making process of the parish pastoral council.

Whereas many parish councils had been dealing in detail with financial and temporal matters, the new law changed this. It made obligatory “*a finance committee to help the parish priest in the administration of the goods of the parish* (Canon 537). It indicated that the parish pastoral council, unlike the finance committee, is not obligatory unless the Bishop so decides after consulting with the Council of Priests. The code states, “*in this council, which is presided over by the parish priest, Christ’s faithful, together with those who, by virtue of their office, are engaged in pastoral care in the parish, give their help in fostering pastoral action. The pastoral council has only a consultative vote, and it is regulated by the norms laid down by the diocesan Bishop*” (Canon 536 §1, §2).

It is obvious that parish pastoral councils are highly recommended even though they have not been determined as obligatory in a diocese. Basic to the understanding of parish pastoral councils, as they have now developed, is the reality that they are pastoral and affect us as the Body of Christ through the basic church community of the parish. They are concerned with whatever affects those to be served by the parish.

Shortly after the new Code came into effect, the Diocesan Pastoral Council of the Archdiocese of Kingston held meetings to assist parishes in relation to parish pastoral councils and finance committees. From these meetings emerged new guidelines, which were published in a booklet entitled *Parish Guidelines on the Parish and Parish Structure*.

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A Synod of Bishops with the topic the “*Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World*” was held in Rome in 1987. As one would expect, the role of the parish was discussed in detail by the Synod. The Post-Synodal Exhortation strongly promoted parish pastoral councils. It said: “*the (Vatican) Council’s mention of examining and solving pastoral problems ‘by general discussion’ ought to find its adequate and structural development through a more convinced, extensive and decided appreciation for ‘Parish Pastoral Councils’ on which the Synod Fathers have rightly insisted.*”

After a decade of use, it seemed opportune to update our *Guidelines* in the light of the insights of the 1987 world Synod of Bishops and of our ongoing experience with councils. In conjunction with the Council of Priests, a committee was set up for this purpose in 1994. From their work has grown this second edition of our *Guidelines for Parish Pastoral Councils*. I sincerely appreciate their work, and I thank them for their efforts.

It is my hope that these revised guidelines will enable the people of God in the Archdiocese of Kingston to better fulfil our Diocesan Mission Statement; which is as follows:

“We, the community of God’s People in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Kingston, united by the Holy Spirit, with lives rooted in the Gospel, proclaim with joy the resurrection of Christ, and, as followers of the Risen Lord, under the patronage of Mary, the Mother of God, dedicate our lives in Christian service to all, especially those in most need.”

† Francis J. Spence
Archbishop of Kingston
January 1997

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PART 1: THE PARISH COMMUNITY AND ITS MISSION

The parish, as an integral part of the diocesan and universal Church, is where most Catholics experience Church. There they gather to share one faith; there they are nourished by the Sacraments and by the Word; there they can be supported by, or be supportive to, other members of the Christian community.

The parish is a community -- a community of people of faith, including men and women, young and old, clergy, religious, and laity, all of whom are called by God to share in the mission of Jesus Christ. The parish is called to express the communal ecclesial character of Catholic Christian life. It is a people called together by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit to respond to God through Jesus Christ.

The parish community is challenged to form and transform itself in this context of faith and prayer, while always remaining open to the Holy Spirit. Whatever its form and composition, the parish must seek to become ever more fully a people of God, sharing the mission of Jesus Christ and developing the structures necessary to support and nourish its community life and mission.

PART 2: THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

A: Description

The parish pastoral council brings together lay people and religious who, together with their pastor, work jointly to build the parish as a living Christian community of faith, worship and service. The parish pastoral council is called from and by the parish community to share with the pastor the responsibility of building up the body of Christ, with concern for the overall well-being of the parish family.

Whatever the variations in individual councils, the parish pastoral council is concerned with all aspects of parish life. The structure and organization of councils may have to be “custom-designed” to satisfy the changing needs of individual parishes. Rural parishes may require councils that are quite different in structure from councils in urban communities. Where parishes have mission churches or where parishes are “clustered,” the composition of the councils serving such parishes will be specific to their particular needs.

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B: Purpose

The council should establish objectives, goals and strategies. It should also encourage, coordinate and evaluate the work of the various ministries and committees in the parish.

Through reflection, planning, animation and action, the parish pastoral council encourages those ministries and services that are needed for the growth of a living parish community. Thus, the council must carefully consider the needs of the faithful and search for the means that will adequately respond to those needs.

The council does not, however, become involved in the day-to-day details of running the parish. The implementation of council recommendations is entrusted to parish staff, ministries, and committees.

The responsibility of the parish pastoral council does not take away from the continued mission and responsibility of the parish as a whole. Each baptized parish member remains responsible in his or her own way for the mission of the parish.

C: Objectives

The parish pastoral council is a vital means of fulfilling the mission of the whole parish. It gives witness to the unity of purpose and love of the people of God. This may be achieved by incorporating into the constitution objectives such as the following:

1. **close cooperation with the pastor**
 - a. assist the people of God to exercise their role in living out and witnessing to the Good News of Jesus Christ;
 - b. discern the spiritual and temporal needs of the parish community and develop the structures required to fulfil those needs;
 - c. assist in the development of the gifts and talents of individual members of the parish for the good of all;
 - d. show gentle care for families;
 - e. comfort the sick with special love and minister to those near death;
 - f. reach out to and console the poor, the afflicted and the lonely;
 - g. assist spouses and parents to fulfil their responsibilities;
 - h. promote and foster religious associations.

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2. **a knowing and active participation in the sacred liturgy**
 - a. proclaim the word of God;
 - b. provide for and promote the celebration of the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist;
 - c. work for the spiritual renewal of all members of the parish community.

3. **education and communication within the parish, Archdiocese, and universal Church**
 - a. provide religious education for children, youth and adults;
 - b. foster Christian family life and promote family prayer;
 - c. build up a caring, Christian community;
 - d. spread the Good News in co-operation with other churches and organizations in the neighbourhood and in the community at large.

4. **missionary activity**
 - a. bring the Gospel message to those who have ceased the practice of their faith and to those with no faith;
 - b. foster works by which the spirit of the Gospel, including social justice, will be promoted.

D: Authority

The role or authority of the council is outlined in canon law. Canon 536 §2 states: *“The pastoral council has only a consultative vote, and it is regulated by the norms laid down by the diocesan Bishop.”* Through this consultative role, the parish pastoral council makes known to the pastor the advice and suggestions of the laity.

The Archbishop may approve additional roles for specific parish pastoral councils because of the special nature of the parish community.

It is the pastor or the leader of the pastoral team who is responsible to the Archbishop for the pastoral care of the parish and for its integration into the life of the deanery or diocese. Thus, the authority of a parish pastoral council must be seen in the context of formulating recommendations to the pastor.

In this Archdiocese, it is expected that the pastor will consult with the council on all significant matters affecting the parish. Members of the parish pastoral council are encouraged to bring forward matters for discussion and deliberation, and are expected to express their views freely and clearly. Conclusions should be reached by consensus. The pastor will normally ratify recommendations of the council unless there is legitimate reason not to do so.

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When the pastor is unable to ratify a recommendation of the council, he will explain to council why he is unable to do so. If the council, after prayerful reflection, is unable to resolve the issue, it should, along with the pastor, appeal to the office of the Archbishop to arbitrate a decision. The Archbishop would normally begin the process by asking the Dean to assist.

Neither the council nor the pastor has the authority to make decisions that are contrary to the good of the parish or diocesan regulations. When, in the pastor's judgment, Church law, the teachings of the Church, or known regulations of the Archdiocese are not being followed, he cannot act on the advice of the council.

E: Relationship of the parish pastoral council to the pastor

The pastor is the spiritual leader of the parish. He is also the president of the council, in accordance with canon law. It follows that his role on the parish pastoral council is a very central one; his role of leadership on the council is similar to his role in the parish as a whole.

As preacher of the Word, he has responsibility to ensure that the council hears and applies the Word of God in its fullness. In so doing, he is obliged to call upon the council members to pause and reflect on the Christian implications of issues being considered. The pastor is also called to share responsibility generously with the council. He must be a model for consensus building in the spirit of Vatican Council II.

The pastor is called upon to foster unity between the worship of the parish and its other activities, between the spiritual and the organizational aspects of the parish, and between the specific mission of the parish and that of the larger Church.

His leadership is greatly enhanced when he continually develops in the parish the skills and structures that invite open dialogue, shared decision-making, and effective action. As a result, the goal of leadership is not simply to provide service for the people of the parish, but to enable them to minister to one another and to extend their Christian commitment to everything they do. People can better take advantage of such opportunities for ministry when they are offered the training necessary to be effective.

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F: Relationship to the parish finance committee

The parish finance committee is a small group of parishioners chosen for their expertise in financial and property matters to assist the pastor in the temporal administration of the parish, (e.g. finances, supplies, maintenance of properties, bookkeeping, budgeting). It does not report directly to the parish pastoral council. However, since the parish pastoral council is called on to carry out the parish mission and establish the overall goals and priorities of the parish, it is essential that there be a close liaison between the council and the finance committee.

The parish finance committee should advise the parish pastoral council when there are major concerns regarding parish finances or properties which might hinder the parish from carrying out its planned activities.

The parish pastoral council should always consult with the parish finance committee to ensure that the financial resources are adequate before goals and priorities are established for the coming year.

It is recommended that a member of the parish pastoral council act as a liaison with the parish finance committee and that the chairperson of the finance committee attend meetings of the parish pastoral council, when requested.

G: Relationship with other levels of the church

Just as a parish must be open to the concerns of the Archdiocese and the universal Church, so also must the parish pastoral council. Communication among parish pastoral councils should be facilitated on the local, deanery, and diocesan levels. Parish pastoral councils should collaborate with individuals, organizations, and other parish pastoral councils as appropriate. They may elect to send delegates to the different organizations of the deanery or the Archdiocese.

If there is a Diocesan Pastoral Council, each parish pastoral council should be represented on the regional commission. NB: a regional commission is composed of the parishes of a deanery.

Parish pastoral councils should be especially concerned about diocesan pastoral priorities, since parishes are usually the privileged place for their implementation.

Finally, the parish pastoral council should be open to ongoing growth and understanding. This could be achieved through the study of pastoral letters and other documents issued by the Archbishop, the Bishops' Conferences, or the Holy See. When possible, these communications should be made available to parish pastoral council members for study, reflection, and implementation.

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PART 3: IMPORTANT COMPONENTS OF A CONSTITUTION OF A PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

Each parish pastoral council will want to have a constitution which will govern the specific functioning of the council for that parish. Effective constitutions usually contain certain common elements. Those common elements are set out below, together with some explanatory notes. Each parish, in consultation with the pastor, is encouraged to draw upon these notes in developing an appropriate parish pastoral council constitution to fit its particular needs and aspirations. A copy of the final constitution or any amended constitution is to be submitted to the Archbishop for approval.

Common elements of a constitution for a parish pastoral council

Section 1	Name of parish pastoral council
Section 2	Mission statement
Section 3	Eligibility for membership
Section 4	Composition of the council
Section 5	Conditions of service for council members
Section 6	Selecting members for a parish pastoral council
Section 7	Specific roles within the parish pastoral council
Section 8	Committees of the council
Section 9	Meetings of the council
Section 10	Parish assembly

Section 1: Name of parish pastoral council

The constitution should state the name of the council.

Section 2: Mission statement

A mission statement can be the foundation of the council's constitution; it should be a statement of the council's purpose. The statement can reflect the operating philosophy of the council and the direction the organization intends to take. For example, a mission statement might begin:

[Name of] Parish is a community of Christian believers who seek, through the Holy Spirit, to know and implement God's will. The parish pastoral council is a group within the community that takes a leading role in heeding the call to follow Christ. The council, through prayer, reflection and dialogue, identifies the pastoral needs of the parish and endeavours to respond to those needs.

This opening declaration may be followed by some of the specific objectives suggested above in *Part 2: C: Objectives (page 12)*.

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Section 3: Eligibility for membership

It is generally necessary to set down the eligibility requirements for membership on the council. All baptized Roman Catholics who have received the Sacrament of Confirmation and are registered in the parish will normally be eligible for membership on the council. Persons in conflict with the basic precepts and teachings of the Church would normally be excluded from membership on the council.

Section 4: Composition of the council

The constitution should define the composition of the council, specifically the numbers of persons to be elected by the general membership of the parish or selected by another means which is both democratic and representative of all segments of the parish. All clergy and pastoral assistants officially assigned to the parish are ex-officio members of the council. The pastor is the president of the council. The council may also admit as an ex-officio member the representative of any group in the parish. Special representation might include:

- a) chairperson or vice-chairperson of the parish finance committee;
- b) representatives of major parish organizations – although the council is not meant to be a coordinating body of parish organizations;
- c) persons appointed by council to serve temporarily on council to replace an elected member unable to complete his or her term, whose temporary appointment would be nullified by the next election;
- d) one or two members appointed by council from among the parish membership in the event that certain segments of the parish, in the opinion of the council, are not represented through the regular election process. Youth or large ethnic groups could warrant such special representation.

The council should strive to ensure that ex-officio and appointed members do not exceed 50 per cent of the entire membership of the council at any one time. The council may wish to include in the constitution other membership limitations such as the provision that no two members of the same family or household sit on the council at the same time.

Section 5: Conditions of service for council members

The constitution usually defines the term of office for ordinary members of the council. The wording of such definitions could be as follows:

No ordinary member is to be elected for more than three two-year terms. After a break of not less than one year, such a person may again stand for re-election.

Or the clause might read: *The terms of all elected and appointed members of the parish pastoral council shall be for two years, renewable once. One half (1/2) of the membership shall be elected each year.*

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Other conditions of service on the council could be expressed as follows:

- a) *A person shall cease to be a member of the council when he or she resigns, or fails to attend three (3) consecutive meetings, without just cause;*
- b) *A member may be removed from council by a two-thirds majority vote of the council, if such a person is unable to fulfil his or her responsibilities as a member because of illness, non-attendance at council meetings, or for other reasons;*
- c) *Members of council are to serve without remuneration. Legitimate expenses incurred by members carrying out the business of council are paid by the parish.*

Terms of office for members of a council executive

It is customary to limit the terms of office of the chairperson, the vice-chairperson, and the secretary to one year, thereby giving the opportunity to both old and new members of council to participate in the selection of their executive officers. Under normal circumstances, it would be expected that officers would be re-affirmed for additional one-year terms, but never more than four consecutive one-year terms.

Vacancies ought to be filled by the council as quickly as possible unless elections are imminent.

Section 6: Selecting Members for a Parish Pastoral Council

The first step is to inform and educate parishioners about the role and function of a parish pastoral council. This can be done through announcements, bulletin inserts, and presentations. The pastoral council represents the faithful (men, women, youth, adults, and seniors). The council is responsible for seeing the pastoral picture and does not manage parish operations. Council members help with planning and also deal with pastoral matters that the pastor brings to them. They need to be concerned about pastoral and spiritual issues of the whole parish.

There are three methods that are used in choosing pastoral council members: election, selection, and appointment.

Election of the Council

It is important that the parish community have a say in who become leaders in the parish. One way to ensure that this happens is to give members of the parish the opportunity to elect persons who they feel are best suited to represent them on council. Other methods of choosing candidates are acceptable, provided that the parish community has a say in the membership of the council.

It is recommended that elections be held on an annual basis, so, that not more than 50 percent of the ordinary members of council are replaced at any one time.

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Nominations committee

The constitution should describe the processes by which parishioners become members of the parish pastoral council. A nominations committee actively seeks candidates known to be of strong faith and exhibiting the qualities of maturity and leadership necessary to lead the parish in its stated mission. The requirements of a nominations committee could be incorporated into the constitution with provisions such as the following:

- a) *A nominations committee to seek nominees and supervise the annual election is to be appointed by the council at least six weeks prior to the date of elections;*
- b) *The committee will be composed of the pastor and two other members of the parish who are neither current members nor candidates for the council.*

The nominations committee will:

- a) *establish procedures for the nomination of candidates;*
- b) *decide on electoral procedures;*
- c) *monitor the election process;*
- d) *ensure that notice of elections and names of the final slate of candidates are published well in advance of the elections;*
- e) *prepare ballots reflecting the nominations received;*
- f) *distribute ballots at the Sunday Masses one week prior to the election, count the ballots, and determine the successful candidates;*
- g) *see to it that the names of the successful candidates are published in the parish bulletin and announced at Mass.*

The nominations committee will ensure that parish members have ample opportunity to propose their own candidates, as well as to learn something about the slate of candidates standing for election.

Additional nominations are to be received in writing, provided that such nominations contain the name of the nominator and seconder and the consent of the nominee. Such nominations must be received no later than two Sundays prior to the date of the election.

The nominations committee will advise candidates who do not meet the qualifications stated in the constitution.

The nominations committee will be dissolved immediately after the installation of the new members.

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Selection

There is a nominating process, and a small group comprising the pastor and members of the steering committee or current council members can choose from the candidates.
OR

There may be a discernment workshop to which candidates are invited. They reflect on the gifts needed to be an effective council member and choose who is being called to serve.

Appointment

There is a nominating process, and people are invited to pray for the candidates. Then the pastor makes the appointments. This is often used when a specific group in the parish is not represented on the council. Installation services of each new parish pastoral council are encouraged and could take place during Mass or at a parish assembly.

Section 7: Specific roles within a parish pastoral council

President

This responsibility falls upon the pastor or upon that person mandated by the Archbishop to provide pastoral care for the parish. The parish pastoral council president is the person who calls the council together. He recalls the council's objectives and promotes the vitality and dynamism necessary for its proper functioning. The parish pastoral council cannot function properly without the full support, encouragement, and guidance of its president.

Chairperson

This role is normally filled by one of the elected members of the council. The chairperson, chosen by the members of the council, sees to the good working of the council and, together with the pastor, strives to ensure that the council is active and concerned about its duties. The chairperson should be able to fulfil all tasks in freedom and with impartiality. The role of the parish pastoral council is to give advice to the pastor. The chairperson should animate and chair the meetings. In this work, he or she will encourage all council members to participate actively and to express their view freely so that the council, and ultimately the parish, may benefit fully from their gifts. As this role is key to the successful functioning of council meetings, the selection of the chairperson should be made with careful deliberation and discernment.

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The chairperson is responsible for:

1. preparing meeting agendas in consultation with the pastor and other members of the council executive;
2. chairing all meetings [see *Section 9: Meetings of the council*];
3. assisting the pastor in providing leadership, support, and encouragement to other members of the council and to chairpersons of standing committees;
4. in collaboration with the pastor, ensuring that the council adheres to the spirit and intent of the Constitution and diocesan *Guidelines for Parish Pastoral Councils*;
5. participating in regional meetings of parish pastoral councils when they exist.

Vice-Chairperson

Assists the chairperson with council duties and temporarily assumes those duties in the chairperson's absence.

Secretary

Attends to the physical arrangement for meetings of council; keeps minutes of all meetings of council and the parish assembly [See *Section 10 Parish assembly*]; arranges for or conducts all necessary correspondence; assists in the preparation of meeting agendas; and assumes other duties that the council may assign.

Other Roles

The council may determine other roles for its members, such as the chairing of special or standing committees, or acting as the liaison person between council and committees.

Other positions may be designated for the parish pastoral council, based upon the unique needs and existing structures and organizations within the parish. It may be worthwhile not to designate these specifically in the parish pastoral council constitution because of changes that evolve over time. However, consideration must be given to allow liaison on the parish pastoral council with other organizations within the parish community.

Section 8: Committees of the council

Separate committees may need to be established to assist the parish pastoral council in fulfilling its responsibilities.

It is through the work of committees that the pastoral mission of the parish is carried out in an organized and efficient manner. The committee system also provides an opportunity for many members of the parish community to play an active role in fulfilling the mission of Christ and His Church. Members of committees working together for the good of the parish can experience a strong sense of Christian community.

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The council will, therefore, wish to incorporate into the constitution the establishment, coordination, and evaluation of committees in accordance with the needs of the parish.

The following standing committees are recommended:

1. Liturgy Committee
2. Christian Education Committee
3. Social Action Committee
4. Parish and Community Life Committee
5. Youth Committee
6. Family Life Committee

Other standing committees or *ad hoc* committees may be formed as needs arise.

Each committee will have a chairperson appointed by the council after consultation with members of the committee. A fixed term of office should be established for all committee chairpersons. The preferred term is two years. Council may reappoint for additional terms if it so chooses. In smaller parishes, an elected member of council may be selected to fill the role of committee chairperson. In larger parishes, the council would be well advised to select a person outside of the council with the necessary skills and a keen interest in that particular ministry. For each committee, the parish pastoral council should appoint one of its members to act as a liaison.

The president and chairperson of the parish pastoral council should be ex-officio members of all the committees. The council should also:

1. provide terms of reference for each committee;
2. ensure good communications between committee and council;
3. provide for any necessary orientation and training of committee members;
4. call for accountability from the committees;
5. establish priorities and determine how available funds can be best utilized.

A sample outline of responsibilities of standing committees is provided in Appendix A: *Example of a Constitution*.

Section 9: Meetings of the council

Meetings of the council should be held, if possible, on parish premises on a monthly basis. It might be decided that council meetings will not be held during certain months, such as July and August.

The constitution is the proper place in which to set down the following provisions:

1. A fixed night of the week and starting time (An agreed time for adjournment will make for more efficient use of time);
2. A meeting of the council may be held at any time at the call of the pastor or chairperson with the approval of the pastor;

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3. A simple majority of members constitutes a quorum;
4. A report by the chairperson should be made annually to the parish;
5. All meetings should be open to members of the parish.

Agenda

The constitution should also note that the president, chairperson, and/or one other person named by the council is responsible for drawing up the agenda for each meeting.

Procedure for meetings

It should not be necessary to state in the constitution that parliamentary procedure, as set down in *Robert's Rules of Order*, will govern all meetings. Such a level of formality should not be necessary for the productive functioning of an effective parish pastoral council.

Many parishes have adopted a consensus approach to reaching a decision rather than a voting procedure. This approach is strongly recommended, especially when the council is making major decisions concerning the overall goals and objectives of the parish. A consensus has been reached when everyone can live with the decision. No significant part of the parish, no one who is important to the implementation of the decision, should feel left out. In fact, no one may have achieved exactly what he or she wanted, but everyone had an opportunity for input and everyone's input was taken seriously. Consensus, as a community-way of decision-making, places emphasis on persons rather than on simply getting things done.

If a formal vote is required, no major recommendation should be made without a two-thirds affirmative vote. Simple administrative decisions can be decided by a simple majority.

Section 10: Parish assembly

Each year, parishioners should be invited to a general meeting. The pastor, as council president, should be present and address any such meeting, while the council chairperson may chair the meeting. The purpose of the meeting may include:

1. opportunity for parish members to meet members of the council;
2. opportunity for members to raise parish issues of concern to them;
3. opportunity for members to question council;
4. opportunity for council to report to the parish community and invite suggestions from the members;
5. installation of new council members (if not done during Mass);
6. report on the financial status of the parish by the parish finance committee;
7. parish approval of amendments to the constitution;
8. introduction of major policy changes or projects in the parish.

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APPENDIX A: EXAMPLE OF A CONSTITUTION

To further assist parish pastoral councils in the development of effective constitutions, the following example is reprinted. Parishes will wish to develop their own individual constitutions which satisfy the needs of their parishes.

Parish Pastoral Council Constitution of Holy Family Parish, Kingston, Ontario

Preamble

The Conciliar documents of Vatican Council II give both theological and practical support for the establishment of pastoral councils. A pastoral council is an institution which brings together lay people and religious, who, together with their pastor, work jointly to build the parish as a living Christian community.

The Archdiocese of Kingston recognizes each parish as a distinct community of the Christian faithful, and as the basic essential unit in which to realize the vision of the Church. In this vision, there are varied but complementary roles, allowing the Church to find its strength in the diversity of gifts exercised by its members. A pastoral council is a structure that serves the ministries which a living parish needs if it is to grow as a Christian community of faith, worship, and service, caring for all the people of God.

In its day-to-day operations, the pastoral council has a consultative voice. It shares with other parish organizations - and with the pastor, who is ultimately answerable to the Archbishop - the responsibility for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the parish. The authority of the pastoral council consists in contributing to the formulation of decisions that will be taken by the pastor himself, through the nature of his office.

Article 1: Name

The name of the association shall be "The Pastoral Council of Holy Family Parish, Kingston, Ontario" – hereafter referred to as the "pastoral council" or "council."

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Article 2: Purposes

The purpose or aims of the council derive from the rationale outlined in the preamble. They are:

1. assist the people of God, in union with their pastor, to exercise their role in living out and witnessing to the Gospel of Jesus Christ;
2. set an example of unity and cooperation to both the parish and the entire community;
3. bring all the elements of the parish together in order to foster the spiritual growth of all parish members and to build the parish as a living Christian community.

Article 3: Objectives

The objectives of the council derive from the Purposes, and centre around promoting pastoral activity for the overall good of the parish. They are:

1. assist the pastor in identifying the needs of the faithful, and in planning appropriate responses to those needs;
2. procure within the community the resources, human and otherwise, needed to implement those responses;
3. work in support of, and in cooperation with, all other legitimate parish organizations and structures, so as to encourage all and enhance the Christian life of the parish.

Article 4: Membership

1. Membership in the Council is open to all registered and practising Catholic parishioners.
2. The council will be comprised of:
 - a) The pastor, who is a permanent member; he may be represented at any meeting by his delegate;
 - b) The Chairperson;
 - c) The Vice-Chairperson;
 - d) Seven other councillors;
 - e) and any full-time associate pastor assigned to Holy Family Parish.
3. There shall also be a secretary, for recording and correspondence. The secretary, however, need not be a member of council.
4. No two members of the same household shall be appointed to, or sit on, the council during the same term or any portion of it.
5. Members of the council shall be chosen through a selection process.

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6. The terms of office shall be for three (e) years, renewable once. Various members' periods of service should be staggered, so that less than half the council will need replacement at the end of any one-year period. A member who has served two consecutive three-year terms may be re-elected after being off the council for at least three years.
7. A member of the council shall cease to be a member either by resigning or by failing to attend three consecutive regular meetings without just cause. If a decision is necessary with respect to just cause, it shall be made by council.
8. If a vacancy occurs during the year, the council shall choose a member of the parish to fill the rest of the unexpired term.
9. At the first regular meeting each year, the council shall elect from among its members the officers outlined in Point #2 above. The term of office for each officer shall be one year, renewable as long as that person sits on council. *[These provisions do not apply, of course, to the pastor; see point #2 (a)]*

Article 5: Selection Procedure

1. **A selection process** for parish council members shall be held annually. They shall be open to all registered parishioners.
2. Parish Council Members shall be selected in May or early June each year. The term of office may begin on July 1st and run until the following June 30th.
3. a) **The parish council is responsible for determining the selection process that will be used. The council will provide advance publicity, nomination procedures, and opportunities for candidates to make themselves and their views known to the parish.**
b) To carry out these tasks, the council shall appoint a selection committee. At least half of the committee members shall be present members of the parish council.

The names of new members who have been selected to serve on the council will be announced to the parish on the Sunday following the selection, if possible.

Article 6: Duties of officers

1. The pastor shall:
 - a) represent the teaching authority of the Church, in both its theological and canonical aspects;
 - b) have the final say in decision-making, exercising this authority at his professional discretion, and being answerable to the Archbishop;

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- c) as guardian of the council's *raison d'être*, inspire and animate the council members to give their best efforts to their parish ministry.
2. The chairperson shall:
 - a) preside at all regular and special meetings;
 - b) prepare the agenda for all meetings, in consultation with the pastor;
 - c) represent the council, as required, in necessary communications, consultations, and emergency situations between meetings;
 - d) exercise leadership in the assignments and coordination of council tasks, by mutual agreement with the councillors concerned;
 - e) prepare the year-end parish pastoral council report, in consultation with the council as a whole.
 3. The vice-chairperson shall:
 - a) preside at meetings in the absence of the chairperson;
 - b) carry out such other duties as the chairperson may assign.
 4. The councillors, including the executive, shall:
 - a) be responsible for liaison with various recognized parish organizations, in the manner developed and formally approved by themselves as a council, after consultation with the organizations concerned;
 - b) choose one of their number to be their representative on the Diocesan Pastoral Council, if one exists;
 - c) carry out such other duties as the chairperson may from time to time assign, after collective discussion and mutual agreement.
 5. Council committees. The council shall have the following committees:
 - a) Liturgy
 - b) Social
 - c) Community Life/Family
 - d) Youth Group
 - e) Education
 - f) Seniors
 6. The council may establish additional committees as required to meet the needs of the parish.
 7. Each committee shall report to the council on its own activities at every council meeting.
 8. As a general rule, each committee should meet at least once between council meetings.

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9. The committee chairperson shall be responsible for calling the meetings of that committee.

Article 7: Meetings

1. The council shall hold a regular meeting every month except July and August. Meetings in those two months are optional, at the discretion of the council.
2. A special meeting of the council may be called by the pastor or the chairperson, or at least one-third of the members.
3. At regular and special meetings, a simple majority of members, plus the pastor or his designate, shall constitute a quorum.
4. A written agenda shall be provided for all regular and special meetings.
5. For the end of each year and no later than June 15th of the succeeding year, the council shall make a full written report to the parish of its year's activities. During the year as well, the council shall keep the parishioners periodically informed as to its progress.
6. All meetings of the council are open to any member of the parish. Wherever possible, meeting dates and times should be announced to the parish in advance.
7. Standard parliamentary procedure shall govern all meetings.
8. Because of its nature, the council should strive for consensus whenever possible. However, if a vote is needed, a two-thirds majority is required to carry a resolution. The pastor will not participate in the voting.

Article 8: Amendments

1. Amendments to this constitution may be made twice a year, at the December or June regular meetings.
2. Any registered parishioner may propose and move an amendment, providing advance written notice has been circulated as stated in point #3, below.
3. Notice of the amendment shall be circulated to all council members at least one week prior to the meeting at which it will be voted upon.
4. To ratify an amendment, a two-thirds majority of all current council members is required. Non-council parishioners are not permitted to vote.

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1. *Pastoral Guidelines on the Parish and Parish Structure*. Archdiocese of Kingston, 1987
2. *The Parish Pastoral Council*. CCCB Laity Commission, 1984
3. *Constitution of St. Francis Xavier Parish, Brockville, Ontario*. June 30, 1985
4. General reference to a number of other publications (available on request).

GUIDELINES FOR COMMITTEES

Purpose

1. The purpose of these guidelines is to amplify the Parish Pastoral Council Constitution of Holy Family Parish, Kingston, Ontario, and to set out conditions and procedures of a continuing nature. (See Constitution: Article 6 for additional details).
2. The constitution identifies the following council committees:
 - a. Liturgy
 - b. Community Life/Family
 - c. Social
 - d. Youth
 - e. Education
 - f. Seniors

Liturgy Committee

The Liturgy Committee is responsible to council for the organization and conduct of liturgical practices within the parish. The duties may include co-ordination of:

- a. the preparation and celebration of the sacraments;
- b. the organization of lectors and Eucharistic ministers;
- c. the organization of altar servers;
- d. the organization of music ministries;
- e. the parish liturgy for children.

Community Life/Family

Community Life/Family Committee is responsible to council for parish life. The duties may include:

- a. conducting parish surveys to determine needs and to provide input for the parish's long-range objectives;
- b. welcoming newcomers to the parish;
- c. identifying and supporting those in need of pastoral assistance or other kind of support;
- d. visiting the sick and shut-ins;
- e. keeping the parish informed of the activities of the council.

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Social Committee

The Social committee is responsible to council for:

- a. developing, planning, and conducting social events within the spirit of the constitution;
- b. conducting fundraising activities to support parish projects and missions;
- c. co-ordinating outreach projects such as food banks, Christmas baskets, and Neighbourhood sharing;
- d. identifying ways of working with local agencies and churches in social (civic) projects.

Youth Committee

The Youth Committee is responsible to council for the development and conduct of activities suitable and stimulating to the youth of the parish. The duties may include:

- a. faith development activities;
- b. social and sports activities;
- c. liaison with Kingston area Catholic schools;
- d. youth fundraising activities;
- e. liaison with the Archdiocese of Kingston Youth Commission;
- f. communications to the youth of the parish.

Education Committee

The Education Committee is responsible to council for providing timely, accurate, and approved information and programs for the parish. The duties may include:

- a. to develop and maintain religious education programs;
- b. to develop information programs and discussion groups on faith developments;
- c. to provide information on Retreats;
- d. to liaise with the Diocesan Office of Religious Education.

Seniors' Committee

The Seniors' Committee is responsible to council for the development and conduct of programs and support for parish seniors. The duties may include:

- a. determining special needs of the seniors of the parish;
- b. maintaining a list of seniors' activities in the area;
- c. organizing activities for seniors.

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APPENDIX B: EXTRACTS FROM CHRISTIFIDELES LAICI

Christifideles Laici - The vocation and the mission of the lay faithful in the Church and in the world

*Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II
December 30, 1988*

The ecclesial community, while always having a universal dimension, finds its most immediate and visible expression in the *parish*. It is there that the Church is seen locally. In a certain sense, it is the *Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters*.

It is necessary that, in the light of the faith, all rediscover the true meaning of the parish - that is, the place where the very “mystery” of the Church is present and at work, even if at times it is lacking persons and means, even if at other times it might be scattered over vast territories or almost not to be found in crowded and chaotic modern sections of cities. The parish is not principally a structure, a territory, or a building, but, rather, “the family of God, a fellowship afire with a unifying spirit”, “a familial and welcoming home”, the “community of the faithful”. Plainly and simply, the parish is founded on a theological reality, because it is a *Eucharistic community*. This means that the parish is a community properly suited for celebrating the Eucharist, the living source for its upbuilding, and the sacramental bond of its being in full communion with the whole Church.

At the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Paul VI addressed the Roman clergy in these words: “We believe simply that this old and venerable structure of the parish has an indispensable mission of great contemporary importance: to create the basic community of the Christian people; to initiate and gather the people in the accustomed expression of liturgical life; to conserve and renew the faith in the people of today; to serve as the school for teaching the salvific message of Christ; to put solidarity in practice and work the humble charity of good and brotherly works.”

The activity of the lay faithful within Church communities is so necessary that, without it, the apostolate of the pastors is generally unable to achieve its full effectiveness.

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The parish offers an outstanding example of the apostolate on the community level, inasmuch as it brings together the many human differences found within its boundaries and draws them into the universality of the Church. The lay faithful should accustom themselves to working in close union with their priests, bringing to the Church community their own and the world's problems, as well as questions concerning human salvation, all of which need to be examined together and solved through general discussion. As far as possible, lay faithful ought to collaborate in every apostolic and missionary undertaking sponsored by their own ecclesial family.

The parish, with the lay faithful's participation, adheres to its fundamental vocation and mission - that is, to be a "place" in the world for the community of believers to gather together as a "sign" and "instrument" of the vocation of all to communion; in a word, to be a house of welcome to all and a place of service to all, or, as Pope John XXIII was fond of saying, to be the "village fountain" to which all would have recourse in their thirst.

The above extracts have been taken from sections 26-27 of the document.

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