

St. Paul Parish Pastoral Council Constitution

(Revised 12/13/2012)

Article I: Name and Purpose

Section 1: Name:

The name of this consultative body shall be the *St. Paul Parish Pastoral Council*, hereinafter referred to as *the Council*.¹

Section 2: Purpose:

(1) Advance the St. Paul Parish mission, build a strong faith community and work for the good of the parish under the Magisterium, jurisdiction and teachings of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee and the holy Catholic Church.

(2) To share in the parish pastoral responsibility as a consultative body to the pastor²:

- a) Provide an open and honest forum of communication and dialogue regarding parish affairs among the pastor, parochial vicars, religious, parish staff and laity.
- b) Serve as a beacon to all members of the parish.³
- c) Deepen its commitment to the apostolic work of the Church⁴.
- d) Exemplify the life of Christ⁵.

Article II: Membership

The Council shall be composed of a diverse⁶, competent⁷ and spiritual group⁸ capable and committed to fulfill the purpose as defined in Article 1, Section 2. An effective pastoral council should reflect the diversity of the larger community.

The Council shall consist of the pastor, twelve voting member seats and Ex-officio non-voting member seats.

The twelve voting member seats shall consists of six members (preferably three men and three women) appointed by the pastor in consultation with the Chair and the Co-Chair and six members (preferably three men and three women) elected by the registered parishioners.

Ex-officio, non-voting members include associate priests, deacons, the parish administrator and the Principal of St. Paul School.

Article III: Officers

Section 1: The officers of the Council shall be a Chair, a Co-Chair and a Secretary. Together they form the Executive Committee. As a committee, their responsibilities are to coordinate and prepare the agenda for all meetings and to make such agenda available to members prior to the meeting.

Section 2: The Pastor shall appoint the Chair, Co-Chair and Secretary at the Annual Meeting in May.

Section 3: The Chair shall: (a) preside at all Council meetings; (b) have authority to call special meetings deemed necessary; (c) render periodic reports on completed or projected work to the parish community; and (d) perform all other duties that are customary for the office.

Section 4: The Co-Chair shall: (a) assume the duties of the Chair in his or her absence or inability to carry out the functions of the office; (b) coordinate work and reporting of all committees and liaisons; and (c) perform such other duties assigned by the Chair.

Section 5: The Secretary shall: (a) take minutes at all meetings, reduce such minutes to writing, and preserve them in a permanent record; (b) send copies of preceding meeting minutes to all Council members prior to the next upcoming meeting; (c) prepare and send out all correspondence necessitated by the work of the Council and maintain permanent files of such correspondence; and (d) perform other such duties assigned by the Chair.

Article IV: Tenure and Vacancies

Section 1: Tenure for an elected Council member is three years or less in the case of filling a vacated member seat pursuant to Sections (2) and (3) below, in which instance the tenure will be the remaining period of membership associated with the term of the seat being vacated. Tenure for an appointed Council member shall be at the discretion and as defined by the Pastor.

Section 2: Any Council member may resign by submitting a written resignation to the Council. The resignation becomes effective upon acceptance by the Council.

Section 3: A member may be removed for just cause by vote of two-thirds of all voting members. Examples of just cause include, but are not limited to: missing three consecutive meetings without excuse or moving from the parish without submitting a resignation. Any member whose removal has been proposed shall be notified of such and be offered an opportunity to be present at the next meeting prior to the vote.

Section 4: Member seat vacancies shall be filled in the following manner:

By selection of the first person on the Alternate List of nominees from the previous election that is willing to serve, or, if the Alternate List has been exhausted-

By Council majority vote: A nominating committee appointed by the Chair shall provide a minimum of three names for each vacancy for consideration at the next meeting. Candidates must be eligible in accordance with Article V, Sect 1.

By appointment of the pastor in consultation with the Chair & Co-Chair for vacant appointed member seats.

Article V: Nominations and Appointments

Section 1: To be eligible for appointment or election to the Council, a candidate must be at least 18 years old by the date of the appointment/election, be an individual or a member of a family which has been registered in the parish for at least three years, be a practicing Catholic, and be willing to accept a nomination for Council membership.

Section 2: Approximately one-third of the six elected members and any number of appointed members, if applicable will be replaced each year. Replacements shall be of equal proportion of both male and female members in as far as is practicable.

Section 3: At the January regular meeting, each Council member is asked to begin formulating a list of competent, eligible candidates for nomination to the next Council. At the February regular meeting the lists of possible candidates are reviewed by the Council and prioritized according to the qualifications of the candidates. A Council member, appointed by the Chair, will solicit the potential candidates as prioritized until an election ballot is complete with the appropriate number of candidates for election. The number of candidates shall not be less than two times or more than three times the number of new members to be elected. An incumbent member completing a full term of tenure is not eligible for consecutive reelection to the Council. A member filling a vacancy (member seat) about to expire and whose tenure has been less than half a full three-year term may be selected as a nominee. Parishioners who have served a full three-year term or more than half a full three-year term as Council members are eligible for election after a full three years off the Council. The provisions of this Section shall not preclude eligibility for appointment to the Council. The complete ballot will be presented to the Council at the March meeting for approval by the Council prior to the election.

Section 4: Voting for new Council members will be conducted in March or April of each year at a place and on the dates determined by the Council. Eligible voters are registered parishioners having attained the minimum age of 18-years. The ballot will include the list of candidates and a brief biography, along with directions for eligible voters to select a number of candidates that is no greater than the number of positions to be filled. The candidates (preferably 1 male and 1 female) receiving the largest number of votes will replace the applicable incumbents at the May annual meeting. A tie vote precluding selection of required new members will be resolved by Council consensus. Remaining candidates listed in order of number of votes received will be retained by the Secretary as an Alternate List for filling vacancies occurring prior to the next election as a provision to Article IV, Section 4.

Section 5: Appointment of new Council members will be conducted in March or April after conclusion of the elections. Nominees for appointment may come from those candidates who made the ballot but were not elected. Nominees may also come from the list of possible candidates prepared for the election process who did not make the ballot. Appointment of new members will be by the Pastor in consultation with the Chair and the Co-Chair. Newly appointed Council members will replace the applicable incumbents at the May annual meeting.

Article VI: Ministry Groups

Section 1: The numerous ministries and organizations of St. Paul Parish will be divided into groups of related purpose or activities that encompass the following seven elements of parish life⁹: Worship, Community, Leadership, Word, Service, Evangelization, and Stewardship. The Chair, with the advice and consent of the Council, shall designate ministries or organizations that will be assigned to each group based on the following guidelines:

Leadership – Ministries, organizations and individuals’ assigned responsibilities within the parish that involve visioning, planning and evaluating the fulfillment of the parish mission.

Worship – Ministries and organizations that are liturgical, devotional, or spiritual in purpose.

Community – Ministries and organizations that support a sense of belonging in the parish and reach out to involve parishioners in parish life.

Word – Ministries and organizations involved in spiritual formation and religious education of parishioners.

Service – Ministries and organizations directed at serving those in need and working for justice and peace.

Evangelization – Ministries and organizations, whose efforts encourage an enthusiastic faith in all Catholics, invite others to join in the fullness of the Catholic faith and foster Gospel values in our society.

Stewardship – Ministries and organizations involved in challenging parishioners to share their time, talent, and treasures with the parish.

Section 2: By reason of their special vocations it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will.¹⁰ The laity can also feel called, or be in fact called, to cooperate with their pastors in the service of the ecclesial community, for the sake of its growth and life. This can be done through the exercise of different kinds of ministries.¹¹ A parishioner or parish group may request of the Council to have an organization recognized as a ministry of St. Paul Parish. The contact person or head of the proposed ministry should appear before the Council to

present their request. A written mission statement for the proposed ministry must be provided and should explain its purpose. In order to be considered a ministry, the organization's purpose shall encompass one of the seven elements of parish life as a Ministry Group as outlined in Section 1 above, must be in harmony with the St. Paul Parish Mission Statement, and be an organization or group whose spiritual works or service nurture, support and enhance parish life. The Council shall consider each request prayerfully and prudently examine such request for conformity with the prescribed elements of parish life as described above, then notify the source of the request of its decision in a timely fashion.

Section 3: The Pastoral Council shall provide designated liaisons to each Ministry.

Article VII: Liaisons

Section 1: The Chair, with the advice and consent of the Council and the Pastor, shall appoint liaisons to facilitate communication with the committees and ministries of each group. Liaisons shall be appointed prior to the first meeting of the year.

Section 2: Each Council member, except for officers, will act as liaison for ministries to which they are appointed.

Section 3: The appointee shall serve in this capacity until the next annual meeting. In the event that a position is vacated, the Council Chair shall appoint another liaison to fill the vacancy.

Section 4: It shall be the function of the liaison to communicate with each ministry at least once a year and report back to the Council information about the leadership, membership and function of the ministry, including any needs, difficulties or issues it has encountered. The liaison shall maintain periodic contact so as to be of assistance to the Ministry.

Section 5: When any concern is reported to a member of the Council, he/she will refer the matter to the appropriate liaison for the involved ministry. The liaison will then attempt to address and resolve the concern appropriately by communication with and/or between the concerned parishioner and the head of the involved ministry. The liaison will report his/her findings to the Council. The advice and counsel of the Chair and Pastor shall be sought if a problem is beyond the liaison's ability to resolve it.

Section 6: From time to time it may be necessary to form an ad hoc committee to resolve issues or serious problems. This will include the liaison, members of the ministry and whomever the Council Chair and Pastor shall appoint.

Article VIII: Council-Parishioner Relationships

Section 1: Communication between the Council and parish organizations will be via the applicable Liaison.

Section 2: Communication with the Council by parishioners will be via a Council member.

Section 3: Any person registered in the parish may request permission from an Executive Committee member to appear before the Council, providing sufficient time permits inclusion of the topic in the agenda for the meeting. The Executive Committee may also invite parishioners or other persons to make presentations to the Council.

Section 4: It is incumbent upon the Council to advise originators of requests or recommendations as to the decision reached by the Council. Action taken is considered to be of parish-wide interest.

Article IX: Amendments

Section 1: Any Council member may propose amendments to this Constitution. Parishioners may submit requests for an amendment to the Council.

Section 2: This Constitution may be amended at any regular meeting, providing the amendment has been submitted in writing at the previous regular meeting and discussed. Approval by two-thirds (2/3) of the total voting members of the Council shall be necessary for recommendation of adoption to the pastor.

Article X: Meetings

Section 1: Regular meetings of the Council shall be held the 2nd Thursday of each month except June and July.

Section 2: The May meeting shall be known as the Annual Meeting and shall have as its purpose: (a) welcoming newly elected and appointed members; (b) appointment of Executive Officers; (c) receiving reports; and (d) discussing business. Matters not completed at adjournment shall become the first order of business at the next meeting.

Section 3: Special meetings may be called by the Chair and Pastor or at the written request of three members. Purpose of such meeting shall be stated in the call. Except in cases of emergency, three days notice shall be given.

Section 4: A Council member may invite parishioners to attend any meetings as observers. Any parishioner may request to attend a meeting as an observer by contacting a Council member. The Chair must be notified of any parishioners or guest speakers attending a meeting prior to said meeting. Guests or parishioners may be asked to leave the meeting at any point deemed appropriate, for the discussion of sensitive matters.

Section 5: Presence of two-thirds of Council voting members shall constitute a quorum. However, no new parish policy shall be adopted or current policy changed in the event that the Pastor is absent.¹²

Section 6: With the exception of the filling of elected member vacancies, amending the Constitution, and removing a Council member, decision-making at Council meetings shall be by consensus (general agreement) of its members. To achieve true consensus, each member must recognize and demonstrate an obligation to express and explain his/her opinion on the basis of logic and understanding. Whenever possible, the agenda mailed to the members will identify those items that will require decision-making at the next meeting.

End Notes:

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church [911]*, In the Church, “lay members of the Christian faithful can cooperate in the exercise of this power [governance] in accord with the norm of law.”⁴⁴⁹ And so the Church provides for their presence at particular councils, diocesan synods, pastoral councils; the exercise of pastoral care of a parish, collaboration in finance committees, and participation in ecclesial tribunals, etc.⁴⁵⁰

² Formation, existence and nature of Council is prescribed under Code of Canon Law, Book II, Part II, Section II, Title III, Chapter VI, Canon 536: Can. 536 §1 If, after consulting the council of priests, the diocesan Bishop considers it opportune, a pastoral council is to be established in each parish. 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. §2 The pastoral council has only a consultative vote, and it is regulated by the norms laid down by the diocesan Bishop.

³USCCB, “*Infusing the Pastoral Council with the Spirit of Christ*” by Sr. Kathleen Turley, RSM 2004: (1) Individual Spiritual Development...To be fully attentive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, individual council members must cultivate their own spiritual growth. A person cannot go to a council meeting, push a button, and expect to be a spiritual giant. If the way one lives everyday life is not consistent with what one believes, then a person cannot expect suddenly to be filled with the Holy Spirit simply because he or she is engaged in a spiritual task.

⁴USCCB, “*Infusing the Pastoral Council with the Spirit of Christ*” by Sr. Kathleen Turley, RSM 2004: (2) Communal Spiritual Development...One of the purposes of the pastoral council is to form community as a sign and witness of unity for the larger diocesan, eparchial, or parish community. In order to grow as a community, council members need to develop a network of supportive relationships. Council members should model a living, caring community that witnesses the compassion of Jesus. This requires time beyond council meetings. Council retreats and days of reflection can help in cementing relationships and in allowing extended time for prayer and dialogue.

⁵USCCB, “*Infusing the Pastoral Council with the Spirit of Christ*” by Sr. Kathleen Turley, RSM 2004: (3) Development of a Spiritual Environment...”the business and spirituality of pastoral councils are not separate items but one and the same thing. The business of the council is the business of Jesus, himself. The council is busy about carrying out his mission. Reference to the Lord, appeals for guidance should be integral parts of council meetings...If a pastoral council is to carry out the mission of Jesus, then it must be aware of the concerns of the people within its communities, especially in matters of justice, just as Jesus was concerned for the poor and outcasts of his day. Council members should listen to the hopes, dreams, fears, and needs of the people in its communities and work to design ways to address them. Each pastoral council is a planning body that searches for a response to the question “Where is God calling us in these situations?”

⁶USCCB, “*Selecting effective Pastoral Council Members*” by Mark F. Fischer & Sr. Rosalie Murphy, SND deN 2004: (1) Qualities of Effective Council Members, **Diversity**: Canon law stipulates that pastoral council members should be Christians in full communion with the Catholic Church, and that they be outstanding in faith, moral and prudence. The members should be drawn from all regions and social groups of the Parish (*diocese or eparchy*). An effective pastoral council thus reflects the diversity of the larger community, deliberating and advising on behalf of the

whole community rather than on behalf of any constituency groups within it. A good mix of members will bring a range of personal and professional competencies that expand and enrich the knowledge and wisdom base of the council.

⁷USCCB, *“Selecting effective Pastoral Council Members”* by Mark F. Fischer & Sr. Rosalie Murphy, *SND deN 2004*: (1) Qualities of Effective Council Members, **Competence**: The talents of advising, advocating and accomplishing are vital for those serving on the Pastoral Council. Effective advisors have knowledge, gather information and are open to ideas that both fit or challenge their own thinking, setting aside prejudice and personal agendas to listen, absorb and then offer the truth from their perspective. Advocates have insights about specific issues and the skill to articulate clearly the needs and resources involved in a situation and proceed constructively, build coalitions and collaborate to advance a cause. To accomplish requires doers, individuals willing to take responsibility and bring research, discussion and pondering to a conclusion.

⁸ USCCB, *“Selecting effective Pastoral Council Members”* by Mark F. Fischer & Sr. Rosalie Murphy, *SND deN 2004*: (1) Qualities of Effective Council Members, **Spirituality**: A fundamental quality underlying the competencies of each council member is the nourishing of a deep personal commitment to an active prayer and faith life. The living spirituality of the individual members enhances the corporate spirituality of the council bringing about openness, trust, mutuality and respect that is demonstrative of the communion of the universal Church as the Body of Christ. Council members should view their service as a significant ministry of the local Church.

⁹*Revisioning the Parish Pastoral Council*, by Mary Ann Gubish and Susan Jenny, S.C., with Arlene McGannon, ISBN: 0-08091-3957-X: The Essence of Parish Life, page 64, “The foundations for the seven elements are discovered by reviewing the Code of Canon Law (cannons 528-530) and what is prescribed in terms of normative pastoral activity in every parish.

¹⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [898], “By reason of their special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will...It pertains to them in a special way so to illuminate and order all temporal things with which they are closely associated that these may always be effected and grow according to Christ and may be to the glory of the Creator and Redeemer.”⁴³¹

¹¹*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [910], “The laity can also feel called, or be in fact called, to cooperate with their pastors in the service of the ecclesial community, for the sake of its growth and life. This can be done through the exercise of different kinds of ministries according to the grace and chrisms which the Lord has been pleased to bestow on them.”⁴⁴⁸

¹² Wikipedia, *Parish council (U.S. Catholic Church)*, *Confusion with “Pastoral” Councils*, 13 May 2008: The council does not make decisions independently of the pastor and has a consultative vote only. Pastors may establish parish pastoral councils and consult them to achieve a threefold purpose -- namely, to investigate some aspect of the pastoral situation, reflect about it, and recommend conclusions.

Because the pastor is the proper shepherd of the parish, it follows that his pastoral council possesses a consultative vote only. The 1997 *Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priest* states that, “It is for the Parish Priest to preside at parochial councils. They are to be considered invalid, and hence null and void, any deliberations entered into, (or decisions taken), by a parochial council which has not been presided over by the Parish Priest or which has assembled contrary to his wishes” (Article, 5, § 3).