

**XYZ PARISH**  
**ABC, MARYLAND**  
*Archdiocese of Baltimore*

**PASTORAL COUNCIL**

***CONSTITUTION***  
***AND BY-LAWS***

# **XYZ PARISH**

## **Vision Statement**

*God calls  
the Catholics of XYZ Parish  
to be a  
welcoming, worshipping community  
of faith, hope, and love.*

*Through his Spirit,  
the Lord Jesus lives  
in those who believe  
and reaches into our world  
with his saving message  
and his healing love.*

## ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of the body shall be the XYZ Parish Pastoral Council, hereinafter referred to as “the Council.”

## ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

**Section 1.** As the collegial, consultative body representing the whole parish community, the purpose of this council shall be:

- a. To maintain, as individuals and as a body, an active life of prayer and discipleship in response to God’s call to ongoing conversion;
- b. To share responsibility with the pastor for the life, mission, and ministries of the parish;
- c. To assist the pastor in the assuring the mission effectiveness of the parish through recommendations and active cooperation in the setting of broad policy directions for the parish;
- d. To act as an authentic representative voice of the People of God, which includes all individuals and groups of the parish community;
- e. To provide an open, honest and respectful forum of communication and dialogue regarding parish affairs;
- f. To actively encourage by all available means the engagement of all parish members in the life and ministries of the parish;
- g. To participate, through active cooperation in regional and archdiocesan collegial bodies and events, in the total life and mission of the Church of the Archdiocese of Baltimore;
- h. To collaborate with other religious and civic groups in working for the common good of the broader community of ABC and surrounding neighborhoods;
- i. To take whatever action it may deem appropriate to fulfill the purpose set forth in Section 1 of this Article.

**Section 2.** Pursuant to the purpose set forth in Section 1 of this Article, the council shall perform the following functions as consultative recommendations to the Pastor:

- a. It shall annually review and reflect on the parish vision statement and mission priorities.
- b. It shall collaborate with the pastor and staff annually to review and update the parish pastoral plan, including a statement of the needs and goals of the parish, priorities among such needs and goals, and allocation of personal, material, and financial resources for implementation.

- c. It shall review and recommend, with emendations at its discretion, the proposed annual parish budget prepared by the Finance Committee including proposed budgets from all ministries offices, and operations subsidized by parish funds.
- d. It shall review and recommend, with emendations at its discretion, the proposed annual development goals and strategies prepared by the Development Committee, identifying ways and means of increasing parish income and containing expenditures as well as necessary steps to provide for their practical implementation.
- e. It shall annually review the maintenance and upkeep of parish property and recommend any improvements or expansions to the property which may be deemed necessary, except where the decision in such matters is reserved to the Archbishop.
- f. It shall make recommendations to the Pastor regarding membership of the parish in any civic or professional organization.
- g. It shall render to all parishioners, from time to time, but at least annually, a full report on the parish's spiritual, material, and financial condition.
- h. It shall render annually to the parish corporation a full report on the parish's spiritual, material and financial condition.
- i. It shall, in collaboration with the Pastor and the Liturgy Committee, provide for the dignified and reverent celebration of the Sacred Liturgy in such a manner and at such times as to enhance the spiritual welfare of all the faithful of the parish.
- j. It shall, in collaboration with the Pastor and the advisory boards of the elementary school and the high school, encourage a common vision for parish education ministries and integrate within that vision the diverse programs of the schools and the parish in the vital ministry of formation in the Catholic faith.

### **ARTICLE III. OPERATION**

- Section 1.** The Council shall submit its recommendations to the Pastor in the form of conclusions resulting from the considered reflection and discussion by the council. Ordinarily, the Pastor's determination regarding any recommendations by the council is final.
- Section 2.** The Pastor shall communicate to the Council by the next regularly scheduled meeting, a response to its recommendation(s). If the Pastor, for grave reasons of fidelity to the Gospel, obedience to Church or civil law, other serious financial or administrative considerations, or religious / spiritual reasons, feels that he cannot in good conscience accept or carry out the recommendation(s) of the Council, he shall fully and frankly communicate such reservations to the assembled Council.
- Section 3.** If, notwithstanding the reservations expressed by the Pastor, the Council determines, by two-thirds vote, to sustain its original recommendation(s), and all other means available at the parish level are exhausted and inadequate to resolve the situation, either the

Pastor or the council through its chair may petition the matter at issue to the Vicar Bishop for such action as he may deem fitting. In such instances then, the decision of the Vicar Bishop shall be final.

#### ARTICLE IV. MEMBERSHIP

- Section 1.** The Council shall consist of no more than fifteen voting members and no fewer than ten. Membership shall be in four types: *ex officio*, selective, elective, and appointive.
- Section 2.** *Ex officio* members of the Council shall include the Pastor, priest(s) and religious regularly assigned to the parish, permanent deacons, director of religious education, principal of the schools, youth minister, and any other staff person(s) involved in the direct pastoral care of parishioners. *Ex officio* members shall have full voice in council discussions but shall have no vote.
- Section 3.** Selective members of the Council shall include one representative from each of the six standing Ministry Boards. These members shall be selected by the Pastor with consent of the Council, considering suggestions from each committee / group / organization, to serve on the Council for a two year term of office. Selective members shall have full voice and vote in council sessions.
- Section 4.** Elective members of the Council are elected by the parish. Members of the parish at large shall be elected to serve on the Council according to the regulations specified in Article V, "ELECTIONS", Section 3. Elective members shall have full voice and vote in council sessions.
- Section 5.** Appointive members of the Council are appointed by the Pastor. The Pastor shall name no more than three lay persons to the Council for a two year term of office. Such appointments shall endeavor to maintain a proper balance among sexes, ethnic groups, age groups, and areas of knowledge and competence desired on the Council. Appointive members shall have full voice and vote in council sessions.
- Section 6.** All members shall serve until their successors are duly appointed, selected or elected and qualified. No member shall be eligible to serve more than two consecutive full terms. However, they can be elected, selected or appointed again after at least one year off the council.
- Section 7.** Parish lay corporators may serve on the Council as *ex-officio* members with full voice but shall have no vote.
- Section 8.** Council members with unexcused absences from three consecutive regular meetings shall forfeit membership on the Council. A member will be allowed three excused absences per council year. The delinquent member will be notified in writing by the council chair prior to forfeiture of membership. A replacement may be procured according to the procedure specified in Article V, "ELECTIONS:", Section 5, 6, and 7.

## ARTICLE V. ELECTIONS

**Section 1.** Parishioners who:

- a. Have attained the age of sixteen years by the date of elections;
- b. Are baptized, confirmed, and registered members of the parish in good standing;
- c. Maintain a public posture not inconsistent with church teaching;
- d. Are contributing members of the parish;

Shall be eligible to serve on the Council as elected or selected members. All persons meeting these same qualifications shall likewise be eligible to vote in elections.

**Section 2.** The Nominating Committee shall be selected in March of each year and shall consist of the Pastor, the Council Chair, and two members selected together by them. Committee members need not be members of the Council. The committee shall actively seek and identify qualified parishioners and obtain their consent to stand as candidates for the Council. Every effort should be made to assure that the number of candidates exceeds the number of open positions. *An exception to this timeline will be made for the first election following the adoption of this Constitution.*

**Section 3.** Three new members shall be elected annually to the Council for a two year term of office. Elections shall be held annually on the third weekend in May following a public announcement. Voting shall be conducted by secret ballot distributed to all registered parishioners. In the event of a tie, the candidate shall be chosen by coin toss. *For the first election following adoption of this Constitution, terms of office will be determined as follows: The three persons receiving the highest number of votes on the returned qualified ballots shall be declared elected to a two year term; the next three persons receiving the highest number of votes shall be declared elected to a one year term.*

**Section 4.** The Council shall be commissioned annually at a Eucharistic Liturgy following the election and shall take office at the September council meeting. *An exception to this timeline will be made for the first election following the ratification of this Constitution.*

**Section 5.** In the event that a vacancy occurs among the elective council membership during the council year, the person who received the next highest number of votes in the most recent council election shall be asked to fill out the remaining term of the vacating member; and in the event that he / she declines, the remaining candidates shall be similarly asked in the order of the number of votes which each received. If no candidate is available, the Pastor may appoint someone to complete the term.

**Section 6.** In the case of an appointed member who resigns or is removed, the Pastor shall appoint another person to fill out the remainder of the vacated term.

**Section 7.** In the case of a selected person who resigns or is removed, the Council and the Pastor shall select another person to fill out the remainder of the vacated term.

## **ARTICLE VI. OFFICERS**

- Section 1.** Whereas the Pastor presides over the work of the Pastoral Council, the chairing and facilitation of the council meeting is delegated to duly selected council officers. The officers of the Council shall be Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary.
- Section 2.** The members of the Council shall have an annual Retreat Day to reflect on the upcoming election of officers. Voting will take place at that Retreat to determine among themselves the three officers specified in Section 1. The current officers shall remain in office until the new officers have been selected. Following nominations, voting shall be by secret ballot, and in the event of a tie, balloting shall continue until a candidate receives a majority. Each office shall be taken individually, thus permitting candidates not elected to be nominated for the next subsequent office. If only one person accepts the nomination then the election can be made by voice vote.
- Section 3.** The Chair shall facilitate meetings of the Council and, in consultation with the pastor, shall call such special meetings as may be necessary. The Chair shall appoint the chairs of all special committees. The Chair shall be an *ex officio* member of all ministry boards and parish committees except the Nominating Committee. The Chair of the Council shall render periodic reports to the Pastor and the parishioners on the completed and projected work of the Council and shall perform all other duties that customarily devolve upon the office of Chair, not specifically mentioned herein.
- Section 4.** The Vice-Chair, in the absence of the Chair or in the event of the latter's inability for any reason to carry out the functions of the office, shall assume, during such absence or disability, the duties of the Chair. The Vice-Chair shall perform such other duties as may be delegated to it by the Chair.
- Section 5.** The Secretary shall be responsible for maintaining minutes of all regular and special meetings of the Council, preserving them in a permanent record and distributing copies of such minutes, along with the agenda for that meeting, to all members of the Council at least one week prior to the next regularly scheduled meeting,. The Secretary shall ensure that copies of the minutes are made available for all parishioners. The Secretary shall forward in writing to the Pastor all council resolutions and recommendations. The Secretary shall prepare and send out all correspondence necessitated by the work of the Council and shall maintain permanent files of such correspondence. The Secretary shall also prepare notes to appear in the parish bulletin pertaining to the work of the Council, as well as any other publicity material that is desired for use in various media. The Secretary shall be assured of support and assistance from the parish staff in carrying out these duties.
- Section 6.** In addition to the officers named above, two members of the council shall be designated by the Chair and Pastor as liaisons from the parish to the Regional Council. These representatives shall maintain regular communication between the parish and Regional Council. Should a council member hold office on the Regional Council when the parish pastoral council term expires, that member shall continue representing the Council on the Regional Council until the next regional council election. At that time, that member shall be replaced by a newly designated representative.

**Section 7.** In the event of a vacancy in any office except that of the Chair, the Council shall elect someone from among its own membership to fill the office until the next regularly scheduled election. In the event of a vacancy in the office of the Chair, the Vice-Chair shall automatically succeed and fill out the unexpired portion of the term.

**Section 8.** Each officer shall, at the expiration of his / her term of office, turn over to his / her successor all books, papers, and other records and property pertaining to the office not later than ten days after said expiration.

## **ARTICLE VII. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**Section 1.** The executive committee shall be composed of the officers of the Council and the Pastor.

**Section 2.** It shall be the responsibility of the Executive Committee to coordinate and prepare the agenda for all the regular meetings of the Council and to make such agenda available to the Secretary for mailing prior to the meeting.

## **ARTICLE VIII. MINISTRY BOARDS AND PARISH COMMITTEES**

**Section 1.** The standing Ministry Boards of the Council and their corresponding parish organizations / groups / committees shall have such powers as may be delegated to them by the full Council and Pastor. Because of its canonical importance, the Finance Committee shall be named in consultation with the Pastor or may be appointed in full by the Pastor.

Standing Ministry Boards of the Parish Pastoral Council shall be:

Liturgy	Service
Evangelization	Education
Stewardship	Parish Life

(The Ministry Boards and the committees, groups, organizations within their purview are listed in Appendix A. These arrangements may be redesignated at any time by the Pastor in consultation with the Council.)

**Section 2.** The Chairs of the Ministry Boards, in consultation with the Pastor and Chair of the Pastoral Council, shall be free to name to their respective Boards parishioners who are not members of the Council in order to provide for breadth and depth in the work required. Such members shall have the right to attend all regular and special meetings of the Council and to have full voice therein but shall have no vote.

**Section 3.** The Ministry Board chairs shall convene meetings of their Boards and shall be prepared to render a report to the Council of concerns, issues, activities, and actions taken at



board meetings. The Ministry Board Chairs shall be prepared as well to address any questions or issues arising from the Council regarding all parish entities reporting to them. The Ministry Board chairs shall assure that their Boards are represented at all council meetings. In the event of absence, the Ministry Board Chair shall appoint a *pro tem* representative from the Ministry Board to attend the council meeting and speak on behalf of the Ministry Board; this representative shall not be empowered to vote.

**Section 4.** The Council Chair, in consultation with the Executive Committee, may create any special or ad hoc committees, which may from time to time be deemed necessary, and to designate the members thereof.

**Section 5.** The standing Ministry Board Chairs shall act as liaison and coordinator for all subordinate committees / groups / organizations of their respective Boards.

### **ARTICLE IX. MINISTRY BOARD AND COMMITTEE DUTIES**

**Section 1.** Each Ministry Board shall have one member, selected by the Pastor with the consent of the Council from one of its committees / organizations / groups, to serve on the Pastoral Council for representation. If this person is not the chair of the Ministry Board, s/he shall actively collaborate with the Ministry Board Chair to facilitate timely and appropriate communication between the Ministry Board and the Council.

**Section 2.** A representative of each committee shall present written reports to the Ministry Board Chair no less frequently than once each quarter. The Ministry Board Chair, in turn, will present a copy to the Council at the next scheduled council meeting. Each committee shall meet regularly to implement its work and shall report the progress or limitations of such work to the Ministry Board Chair as required during the course of the year.

**Section 3.** Each committee shall be responsible for submitting to the Chair of its designated Ministry Board a budget estimating its overall annual expenses as well as estimates of any annual income derived from fundraising activities, fees, or other means. The Ministry Board Chairs shall present the annual budgets of their respective Boards and committees to the Finance Committee in February.

**Section 4.** The chair or head of each committee / organization / group shall submit the names of all members to the Chair of the designated Ministry Board, who will then present this to the Council for review and publication, if deemed appropriate. This shall be done no later than the scheduled meeting following their appointment.

**Section 5.** The chair or head of each committee / organization / group shall see that said committee is given a written vision statement outlining its function in cooperation with any staff persons associated with them.

**Section 6.** The chair or head of each committee / organization / group shall initiate an annual evaluation of its work in conjunction with the Council's annual pastoral planning effort and shall present through the designated Ministry Board Chair any proposals or initiatives for the Council to consider in its planning.

## ARTICLE X. MEETINGS

- Section 1.** The regular meetings of the Council shall be held on the fourth Tuesday of September, November, January, March, May, and June, unless another day is selected with advance notice and agreement from a majority of the members.
- Section 2.** The meeting held in the month of January shall be known as the Annual Meeting, conducted for the purpose of receiving reports, and for any other business that may arise. Any such matters left unfinished at the adjournment of the Annual Meeting shall constitute the first order of business at the next regular meeting.
- Section 3.** Special meetings may be called by the Pastor, the Chair, the Executive Committee, or at the written request of a simple majority of the members of the Council, the purpose of which shall be stated in the call. Except in cases of emergency, at least five days notice shall be given.
- Section 4.** Regular meetings of the Council shall be open to all parishioners as observers. It shall be left to the discretion of the Executive Committee as to whether any special meetings shall be open. Parishioners who wish to speak at an open meeting need to make arrangements with the Executive Committee, prior to the meeting, so they may be placed on the Agenda for that meeting.
- Section 5.** A simple majority of the voting members of the Council shall constitute a quorum.

## ARTICLE XI. AUTHORITY AND DECISION MAKING

- Section 1.** In matters of serious consequence to the parish community, the Council shall make every effort, in union with the Pastor, to arrive at a decision through consensus. Every member of the Council must be involved in the consensus building process and is urged to speak to the assembled Council his or her consent or reservations regarding the matter under discussion. The discussion must continue, addressing any reservations, until every member is either in favor of the decision or is willing to support the decision even though it may not be the preference of the individual. However, if a consensus cannot be reached and a decision cannot be deferred, a two-thirds vote of the members present shall be required for a decision.
- Section 2.** In all other matters not requiring a consensus decision, the rules contained in the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order shall govern the Council in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with this Constitution and any special rules of order the Council may adopt.
- Section 3.** The Chair of the Council may appoint a parliamentarian, who need not be a member of the Council, to assist and advise in presiding at all meetings.

## **ARTICLE XII. RATIFICATION AND AMENDMENTS**

- Section 1.** The draft of this Constitution shall be made available to all parishioners. Its approval shall be by Pastor and ratified by the Council upon taking office.
- Section 2.** This constitution may be amended with the consent of the Pastor at any regular meeting of the Council by a two-thirds vote of the membership of the Council.
- d. Proposed amendments to this Constitution shall be submitted in writing to the Council at any regular meeting and voted on at the next regular meeting.
  - e. The Chair shall appoint a committee to review the amendment. The committee shall mail a written report on its recommendations to all council members two weeks prior to the next regular meeting.
  - f. The Council shall review the amendment and committee recommendations and shall approve or disapprove said amendment.
  - g. A copy of the final document shall be placed in a permanent file with the Pastor and all members of the Council shall be given an updated copy of the final version as well.
  - h. Notification of changes should be published in the bulletin for two consecutive weeks.

**APPENDIX A:  
Ministry Boards**

**LITURGY MINISTRY**

Altar Servers

Divorced Group

Cantor

Choir

Environmental Committee

Eucharistic Ministers

Funeral

Greeters

Hispanic Community

Liturgy Committee

Lectors

Music

Ushers

**SERVICE MINISTRY**

Grieving

Our Daily Bread

St. Vincent de Paul

Share

Social Action

St. Vincent de Paul Society

Share

Sick

Social Action

**PARISH LIFE MINISTRY**

Boy Scouts

Girl Scouts

Knights of Columbus

**EVANGELIZATION MINISTRY**

Marriage Encounter

Outreach

Renew

Senior Citizens

Singles Group

Welcoming Committee

Youth

**STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY**

Bingo

Church Cleaning

Development Committee

Finance Committee

Fundraising Committee

Heritage of Hope

Maintenance Committee

**EDUCATION MINISTRY**

Baptism Class

Brownies

Cub Scouts

Education

Marriage Preparation

(\* ) Denotes Standing Committee

## **APPENDIX B:**

### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF COUNCIL OFFICERS**

#### **THE CHAIR**

The Council Chair works closely with the Pastor to ensure that the Council works to fulfill the vision statement of the parish through active collaboration with staff, parishioners, other church and civic groups, and archdiocesan officials. The Chair is responsible for the organizational aspects of the Council and chairs all meetings of the Council. In light of these responsibilities, it is important that the Chair possesses a good understanding of group process and has the necessary facilitation skills to fulfill this role effectively. Duties of the Chair include:

- Chair executive committee meetings;
- Chair all regular and special meetings of the Council;
- Adhere to the agenda in terms of time and focus;
- Encourage the full participation of all council members;
- Ensure that all members have an opportunity to speak and that no one member exerts control over the agenda or its time frame;
- Maintain an atmosphere of respect at all times;
- Begin and end meetings on time;
- Clarify council procedures;
- Ensure the opportunity for periodic evaluation of council effectiveness;
- Ensure good communication procedures;
- Organize and conduct, in cooperation with the Executive Committee, any parish assemblies called by the Council;
- Oversee the physical setting of the meeting room to facilitate interaction and collaboration among members; and
- Keep open the channels of communication between the Pastoral Council and parishioners.

## **VICE-CHAIR**

The Vice-Chair performs the duties of the Chair in the latter's absence and assists the Chair in conducting the Council's work.

## **SECRETARY**

The secretary ensures that the following duties are performed, either by him/herself or by other members of the Council or pastoral staff who may be solicited to assist:

- Provide an accurate record of the minutes of all meetings;
- Maintain a roster of membership and attendance;
- Monitor terms of members;
- Continually update council documents;
- Forward to the Pastor, in writing, all council resolutions and recommendations;
- Distribute information and correspondence to council members as directed;
- Maintain a file of council correspondence;
- Prepare parish bulletin announcements and other information pertaining to the work of the Council;
- Prepare publicity material for use in various media.

## **APPENDIX C:**

### **PROCEDURES FOR THE ELECTION OF COUNCIL OFFICERS**

- To “elect” is to choose or call forth. In electing persons to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of the offices of the Pastoral Council is important to cultivate a spirit of prayer conducive for discerning the persons who are best able to respond to God’s call as spoken through the membership of the Council.
- The election process should take place during the October council meeting. All persons should be informed of the election and encouraged to attend and participate.
- The Chair reads a Scripture passage which focuses on the call to leadership (e.g., Jeremiah 1:1-8).
- The duties of the offices are then read by the Pastor and the election of each office is conducted separately, beginning with the office of Chair.
- The members of the Council then name the persons they wish to nominate for each office with a brief explanation of their qualifications for this office.
- At this point there is a call for silence (1-3 minutes) while the nominees reflect on their call. (No nominee may accept or reject at this point.)
- At the end of the silent time the nominees inform the Chair in writing if they will accept or reject the nomination.
- The nominees are then asked to explain how they will serve if elected to the office. The explanation should be brief and include the qualities they will bring to the office as well as the time per month they can devote to these duties.
- After all nominees have spoken there may be questions from other council members. After the discussion is finished someone may call for a vote. A moment of silence should precede the vote. The vote is conducted by secret ballot in writing.
- When voting for all offices is completed the names of the elected officers are announced by the Pastor, the individuals are called forth, and a prayer of blessing is offered for them and for the entire Council.