

**(This is a model, variations to meet local needs are possible)**  
**Mutual Cooperation Agreement**  
**Between the Parish Corporations of (name the parishes and locations**  
**that are a party to agreement)**

**Mission Statement**

We accept a twofold mission, namely, to promote the religious formation and personal development of our own people, young and adult, and to reach out to the poor, the lonely, the needy, and the oppressed in our neighborhoods and in the world at large; and to assume responsibility to promote joyful participation in the Sacred Liturgy and fidelity in pursuing programs of religious education for all the members of our Churches.

**ARTICLE I: NAME**

The name of this body shall be the Multi Parish Council of the Churches of *(name the parishes and locations that are a party to agreement)*; hereinafter referred to as the “Multi Parish Council.”

**ARTICLE II: PURPOSE**

**Section 1:** The general purpose of the Multi Parish Council shall be to advise and assist the pastor in his duties, including that of canonical administrator of the parishes investigating, under the authority of the pastor, all those things which pertain to pastoral and temporal works of the Catholic people of our cluster, to consider them, and to propose practical conclusions about them.

**Section 2:** The specific purposes of the Multi Parish Council shall be the following:

- (a) To promote the spiritual and temporal good of all Catholics and fellow Christians.
- (b) To accept responsibility with the pastor for the life and mission of the Church in our region.
- (c) To create unity within the parishes.
- (d) To open a better means of dialogue between the clergy and the laity of the parishes.
- (e) To examine, review, and coordinate the efforts of existing organizations within the parishes, such as Catholic men’s and women’s groups and CCD/CYO programs.
- (f) To utilize the talent, knowledge, experience and vision of all parishioners.
- (g) To participate in the total life and mission of the Church within the Diocese of Bismarck.
- (h) To be a visible witness to the message and service of Our Lord, Jesus Christ.
- (i) To coordinate the financial needs and temporal goods of the parishes with due regard to the universal and particular law of the Church. While some expenses will be shared through a cost sharing agreement reviewed and

updated annually on June 30, each parish is to remain a distinct entity holding its own assets and liabilities (including separate books, accounts, and financial statements).

### **ARTICLE III: AUTHORITY**

**Section 1:** The authority of the Multi Parish Council derives from this document, which indicates a tentative arrangement allowed by the Bishop of Bismarck. The usefulness of this arrangement will be reviewed after two years by the Multi Parish Council, the pastor and the Bishop of Bismarck.

**Section 2:** The authority of the Multi Parish Council is advisory to the office of pastor. Members strive to reach a reasonable consensus on issues through open discussion, attentive listening to various points of view, and willingness to be influenced, moved and affected by the observations of the members. As baptized persons and members of the Body of Christ, we shall put aside conflict and pursue harmony and communion. Within the law, the pastor may freely delegate decisions or tasks to the Multi Parish Council as a whole or to particular members.

**Section 3:** The Multi Parish Council operates within the framework of the laws and teachings of the Church, the regulations of the Diocese, the policies of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the universal law of the Church.

### **ARTICLE IV: MEMBERSHIP**

**Section 1:** The Multi Parish Council members are to be faithful, active and respected parishioners who are in full communion with the Catholic Church and who are dedicated to the welfare of our communities.

**Section 2:** The Multi Parish Council shall be comprised of the following members: the pastor, the lay trustees and one lay member from each parish elected at large from each parish community. *(Note: The size of the Council may vary by each groups' requirements; however, smaller is more effective and more likely to be able to meet regularly).*

**Section 3:** Additional members may be added as the pastor sees fit or as the council would advises.

### **ARTICLE V: ELECTION AND TERMS**

**Section 1:** When the Multi Parish Council is first established each parish shall elect one lay member as described in Section 2. The first election will be for terms of one, two and three years as designated by the Pastor. After the first election, only the parishes needing to fill an expired term on the Council shall hold an election.

**Section 2:** On the first weekend of December of each year all adult members of the parish shall be invited to submit the names of nominees to the Pastor by way of a previously prepared secret ballot at each Mass. The parish lay trustees shall count the ballots, reporting directly to the pastor, who must approve or disapprove of the nominees. Those top approved nominees shall be contacted by the lay trustees who shall ask them if they accept the nomination and are willing to serve if elected. If they accept they are considered “candidates”.

**Section 3:** On the second weekend of December of each year all adult members of each parish holding an election shall cast their votes for one of the candidates. The candidate receiving the highest number of votes will be elected to serve a three-year term.

**Section 4:** New members take office at the regular January meeting.

**Section 5:** If a vacancy occurs among the elected members in the course of the council year, the next available person with the next highest number of votes in the last election shall be asked to serve the remaining term.

**Section 6:** A Multi Parish Council member shall be allowed no more than two consecutive unexcused absences. The Multi Parish Council may also end a member’s term for obvious lack of; concern, interest or misbehavior.

## **ARTICLE VI: OFFICERS**

**Section 1:** The officers of the Multi Parish Council shall be the president, chairperson, vice-chairperson and secretary. All elected officers shall serve for terms of one year each or until their successors have been elected. No officer shall serve more than 2 consecutive terms in the same office.

**Section 2:** The pastor of the parish(s) shall be an ex officio member of the Multi Parish Council and shall serve as its president; all other officers shall be elected by majority vote at the first regular meeting following their election. Unless a candidate is unopposed, elections shall be by secret ballot.

**Section 3:** Prior to the election of any officer, the chairperson shall call for nominations from the floor and close nominations for each office before proceeding to the next office.

## **ARTICLE VII: DUTIES OF OFFICERS**

**Section 1:** The president shall reflect upon all issues discussed at meetings. He shall listen to and be open to recommendations of the Multi Parish Council. He must ratify the recommendations of the Multi Parish Council before they can be implemented.

**Section 2:** The chairperson shall conduct all meetings for the Multi Parish Council and encourage discussion on issues until a reasonable consensus is reached. In consultation with the Multi Parish Council and president, he/she shall appoint standing and ad hoc committees. The chairperson shall consult and report periodically with the Pastor, and perform all customary duties of the office, not specifically mentioned herein.

**Section 3:** The vice-chairperson assumes the office of chairperson in his absence. He/she shall perform other duties delegated by the chairperson.

**Section 4:** The secretary shall take minutes of all regular and special meetings of the Council, preserve them in a permanent record, and perform such duties as delegated by the chairperson. With the consent of the president the parish secretary may serve as recording secretary, however without voice in the proceedings.

**Section 5:** Each officer shall, at the expiration of their term of office, turn over to their successors all books, papers, and other records and property pertaining to the office not later than ten days after said expiration.

#### **ARTICLE VIII: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**Section 1:** The Executive Committee shall be composed of the officers of the Council.

**Section 2:** The Executive Committee shall:

- (a) Coordinate and prepare the agenda for all meetings of the Council and
- (b) Conduct all urgent business of the Council between regular meetings.

#### **ARTICLE IX: COMMITTEES**

**Section 1:** The standing committees of the Multi Parish Council shall be at least the following: (1) Word, (2) Sacrament, (3) Service, (4) Stewardship (5) Social Activities, and (6) Safe Environment. Each will act in such areas and with such powers as may be delegated to it by the full Council. (The numbers and kinds of committees shall be determined by the individual Council.

**Section 2:** The chairperson of each standing committee shall be a member of the Council. In consultation with the chairperson of the Council, he/she shall be free to name to the committee, parishioners who are not members of the Council. Such committee members shall have the right to attend all regular and special meetings of the Council and to have full voice therein, but they shall have no vote.

**Section 3:** Special committees may be appointed by the chairperson in consultation with the Council. All parishioners shall be eligible to serve on special committees.

#### **ARTICLE X: MEETINGS**

**Section 1:** The Multi Parish Council shall conduct regular meetings on the third week of the months of January, April, July and October or at such other times as the pastor and chairperson may decide.

**Section 2:** As a rule, the day and time of the meetings will be set by the council, and limited to two hours.

**Section 3:** Special meetings may be called by the chairperson, by the pastor. The purpose of the special meeting shall be stated in the call.

**Section 4:** Regular meetings of the Multi Parish Council shall be open to all parishioners as **observers**. It shall be left to the discretion of the Council as to whether any special meetings shall be open.

**Section 5:** A majority, a minimum of two representatives from each parish, shall constitute a quorum. In the absence of a quorum no official business shall be transacted by the Council.

**Section 6:** The agenda for regular meetings will be proposed or approved by the Pastor and distributed to members at least three days before meetings. Members are encouraged to suggest topics for the agenda in opportune time.

**Section 7:** Time shall be allowed for the spiritual, theological, and pastoral growth of the membership at each meeting.

## **ARTICLE XI: RATIFICATION, TERMINATION AND AMENDMENTS**

**Section 1:** This agreement must be approved by the Bishop of Bismarck and ratified by the pastor and the lay trustees of the parishes participating in the agreement before the Multi Parish Council can receive authority to act under this agreement. Once ratified the agreement will continue until a new pastor is appointed at which time the agreement terminates. The new pastor may amend the agreement and/or call for a new ratification or he may establish individual parish and finance councils in accordance with canon law. If at a regularly scheduled meeting both lay trustees of a participating parish vote to terminate participation in the Multi Parish Council, the agreement will terminate with permission of the Bishop of Bismarck.

**Section 2:** This Mutual Cooperation Agreement may be amended at any regular meeting of the Multi Parish Council by a two-thirds vote of the members present provided the proposed amendment has been read at the previous regular meeting and has the approval of the pastor.

**Section 3:** Adopted amendments will be dated, properly noted in the article amended, and attached to the original agreement.