

The Parish Council of the Church of _____

Date proposed (by Pastor and Council): _____

Date approved (by Local Ordinary): _____

PARISH COUNCIL CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

MISSION STATEMENT: *(at the discretion of the Council)*

ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this body shall be the Parish Council of the Church of _____, hereinafter referred to as the "Council."

ARTICLE II: PURPOSE

Section 1. The general purpose of the Council shall be to advise and assist the Pastor in his duties as shepherd and canonical administrator of the parish. Since the Council is a legitimate combination of the pastoral council and finance council required by universal and diocesan law for parish churches, the scope of this council includes both pastoral and financial issues.

ARTICLE III: AUTHORITY

Section 1. The existence of the Council is derived from the universal law of the Church and the particular law of the Diocese of Bismarck.

Section 2. The authority of the Council is advisory to the office of pastor. Within the law, the pastor may freely delegate decisions or tasks to the Council as a whole or to particular members.

Section 3. The Council shall operate in accordance with the laws of the Catholic Church (universal law of the Church and the particular laws of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Diocese of Bismarck) and the State of North Dakota.

ARTICLE IV: MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Members of the Council are to be in full, visible communion with the Catholic Church. Each is to be dedicated to the welfare of the entire parish and universal Church.

Section 2. The Council is to be comprised of _____ (*at least three and an odd number*) members, each having one vote.

Section 3. Lay Trustees (2) of the Corporate Board of the parish are to be *ex officio* members of the Council.

Section 4. The pastor is not a member of the Council per se.

ARTICLE V: NOMINATIONS, ELECTIONS, TERMS

(Note: Universal and particular law does not mandate how selections of members is to occur. Two suggested methods are provided below.)

Method #1-- Election

Section 1. The Council, at the regular meeting held in the month of _____, shall appoint a Nominations and Elections Committee and designate the chairperson thereof. It shall be the duty of this committee to consider qualified parishioners and to obtain their consent to run as candidates for the Council, provided such names are approved by the pastor.

Section 2. The Nominations and Elections Committee shall conduct the elections during the month of _____. The elections shall be by secret ballot (such ballots shall be distributed to all members of the parish attending the Masses on the _____ Sunday of _____). The person receiving the highest number of votes on the returned qualified ballots shall be declared elected. In the event of a tie, the members of the incumbent Council shall vote among themselves for one or other of the tied candidates.

Section 3. The Nominations and Elections Committee shall notify the candidates of the results of the election. After all candidates have been notified, a suitable announcement is to be made to the parish at large.

Section 4. All elected members shall take office at the first regular meeting of the Council following their election and shall serve terms of _____ years. No parishioner shall be eligible to serve more than _____ consecutive full terms.

Section 5. If a vacancy occurs among the elected members during the Council year, the person who had the next highest number of votes shall be asked to fill out the remaining term of the vacating member. In the event that he or she declines, the remaining candidates shall be similarly asked to fill out the term in the order of the number of votes each received. In the event that none can serve, the Council shall appoint a member to fill the vacancy.

Section 6. A Council member shall be allowed not more than _____ consecutive unexcused absences. These are not to exceed _____ per year. The Council may end a member's term for obvious lack of concern, interest, or misbehavior.

Method #2: Sortition

Section 1. The Council, at the regular meeting held in the month of _____, shall appoint a Nominations Committee and designate the chairperson thereof. It shall be the duty of this committee to consider qualified parishioners and to obtain their consent to run as candidates for the Council, provided such names are approved by the pastor. A suitable number of candidates are to be recruited beyond the number of vacancies.

Section 2. The Nominations and Elections Committee shall conduct the sortition (selection by draw) during the month of _____. During the principal Mass the pastor is to randomly draw a name for each opening from the pool of candidates. Additional names beyond the number needed should be drawn for future unforeseen vacancies on the Council, with the order of selection noted.

Section 3. The Nominations and Elections Committee shall notify the candidates of the results of the selection. After all candidates have been notified, a suitable announcement is to be made to the parish at large.

Section 4. All selected members shall take office at the first regular meeting of the Council following their selection and shall serve terms of _____ years. No parishioner shall be eligible to serve more than _____ consecutive full terms.

Section 5. If a vacancy occurs among the selected members during the Council year, this vacancy is filled from those surplus names selected in order. In the event that the first declines, the remaining candidates shall be similarly asked to fill out the term in the order of selection. In the event that none can serve, the Council shall appoint a member to fill the vacancy.

Section 6. A Council member shall be allowed not more than _____ consecutive unexcused absences. These are not to exceed _____ per year. The Council may end a member's term for obvious lack of concern, interest, or misbehavior.

ARTICLE VI: OFFICERS

Section 1. The officers of the Council shall be the 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 _____ consecutive terms in the same office.

Section 2. The officers shall be elected by majority vote at the first regular meeting following the parish election (*or sortition*). Unless the 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 to be filled.

ARTICLE VII: DUTIES OF OFFICERS

Section 1. The chairperson is to reflect upon all business conducted at the meeting and coordinate its duties. He or she is to conduct all meetings of the Council, which are to occur at least quarterly or as needed for the circumstances of the parish. He or she shall have the authority to call special meetings according to his/her best judgment. However, all meetings occurring without the pastor's attendance are to at least have his presumed permission to do so. In consultation with the pastor and other members of the Council, the chair is to appoint the membership of all standing and special committees. When necessary the chair is to render periodic reports to the pastor on the on-going deliberations or business of the Council. He or she is to perform such other duties as may be delegated.

Section 2. The vice-chairperson is to assume the office of chairperson in the event that this office becomes vacant for any reason. He or she is to perform such other duties as may be delegated.

Section 3. The secretary is to take minutes of all regular and special meetings of the Council. He or she is to provide copies in a timely fashion to Council members and for the parish archive. The secretary is also to notify the Diocesan Chancery of the names, mailing addresses, and phone numbers of all officers of the Council. He or she is also to perform such other duties as may be delegated.

Section 4. Each officer, at the expiration of their term of office, is to turn over to their successor all books, papers, and other records pertaining to their office in a timely fashion.

ARTICLE VIII: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Section 1. The Executive Committee is to be composed of the officers of the Council and the Lay Trustees.

Section 2. The Executive Committee is to coordinate and prepare the agenda for all meetings of the Council. It is also to conduct all urgent business of the Council between regular meetings.

ARTICLE IX: COMMITTEES (STANDING AND SPECIAL)

Section 1. The standing committees of the Council are to be at least the following: _____ (*at the discretion of the Council*)

Section 2. The chairperson of each standing committee is to be a member of the Council. In consultation with the chairperson of the Council, he/she is to freely name parishioners (who may or may not be Council members) to the standing committee. Such standing committee members are to have the right to attend all regular and special meetings of the Council and to have full voice therein, yet 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 Council is to conduct regular meetings on the _____ of each _____ or at such times as the pastor and chairperson may decide. Meetings without the presence of the pastor are to at least have his presumed permission to do so.

Section 2. The meeting held in the month of _____ shall be known as the Annual Meeting and shall be for the purpose of electing officers, designating the membership of the standing committees, receiving annual reports, and for any other business that may arise.

Section 3. Special meetings may be called by the chairperson, by the pastor, or at the written request of any _____ members of the Council. The purpose of the special meeting is to be stated in the request. Except in cases of emergency, at least _____ days notice are to be given.

Section 4. Regular meetings of the Council are to 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 of the membership shall constitute a quorum. In the absence of a quorum no official recommendations or counsel can be offered to the pastor in the Council's name.

Section 6. The membership of the Council is either to represent or have access to legal, financial, and pastoral expertise. In addition, members are also to have access to information deemed necessary for their role of advising and assisting the

pastor. This is especially true in regards to the financial picture of the parish as well as applicable civil and Church law.

Section 7. Continuing education of members of the Council is to be encouraged or even formally subsidized by the parish in order to expand the expertise of Council members. This is commended especially for the focused topics of pastoral care, administration, church finances, civil law, and Church law.

ARTICLE XI: AMENDMENTS

Section 1. This constitution and by-laws may be amended at any regular meeting of the Council by 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, universal and particular laws of the Church withstanding.

Section 2. Adopted amendments will be dated, properly noted in the article amended, and attached to the original constitution and by-laws.