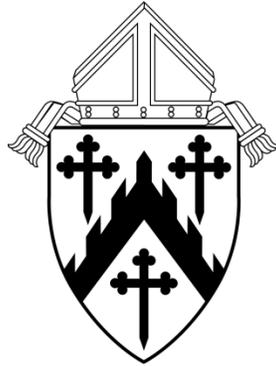


# DIOCESE OF DAVENPORT



## POLICIES RELATING TO PARISH COUNCILS AND PARISH FINANCE COUNCILS

November 7, 2011

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Most Reverend Martin Amos  
Bishop of Davenport

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# **§I-1800 POLICIES RELATING TO PARISH COUNCILS AND PARISH FINANCE COUNCILS**

## **Introduction**

*Following the 1986 Synod V of the Diocese of Davenport and in keeping with the requirements of the revised Code of Canon Law, each parish is required to have established a parish (pastoral) council and a parish finance council. “Parish council” is synonymous with “parish pastoral council”.*

*On December 30, 1986, Most Rev. Gerald O’Keefe, Bishop of Davenport, issued guidelines for parish council constitutions. Over time the policies have been revised by Most Rev. William E. Franklin according to the needs and experiences of the local Church. This manual for Parish Councils and Parish Finance Councils in the Diocese of Davenport includes the particular law, which must be followed according to Canon Law, and suggestions for best practices.*

*This manual is intended to assist each parish of the Diocese of Davenport in the functioning of an effective parish.*

*In those parishes with a parish life administrator, it is the parish life administrator who normally convenes the parish council and the parish finance council. For details, please see policy §II-5000.*

## **§I-1801 Parish Structures and Relationships**

### **I-1801 Policy**

Four distinct entities shall exist in the parish: parish corporate board, parish finance council, parish council and parish board of education. The same person may hold positions on more than one of the above. In fact, interlocking membership is encouraged to ensure communication and planning for the parish community. Whenever the parish community plans, all of these groups should participate.

## **§I-1801.1 Corporate Board**

### **I-1801.1 Policy**

- a) The corporate board of each parish consists of the diocesan bishop, the vicar general, the pastor and two lay directors appointed by two of the following persons: the diocesan bishop, pastor and vicar general. The corporation is formed under civil law and is responsible for the legal requirements and diocesan requirements of the parish corporation.
- b) The corporate board will meet annually in the third quarter.
- c) Any action required to be taken at a meeting of directors of the corporation, or any action which may be taken at a meeting of the directors, or a committee may be taken by means of conference telephone or similar communications equipment through which all persons participating in the meeting can communicate with each other, and the participation in a meeting pursuant to this provision shall constitute presence of person at such meeting.
- d) A lay director is appointed for a two-year term. This appointment may be renewed up to three times for up to a total of eight consecutive years of service.
- e) Each parish or diocesan institution is to have formal approval of its board of directors for the entering of contracts, borrowing of money, purchase or sale of property, encumbrance of property by lease or mortgage, or the expenditure of parish funds in excess of \$5,000 (cc. 1290, 1291 and Synod V #32)
- f) d) Each parish is to make arrangements for the regular maintenance and operation of the parish for those times when the pastor is absent or the parish is vacant. This shall generally be the task of the lay directors. (Synod V, #31)

### §I-1801.2 Finance Council

#### **I-1801.2 Policy**

- a) Each parish of the Diocese shall have a finance council according to the norms of Canon 537 of the Revised Code of Canon Law and the following norms<sup>1</sup>:
  1. Its membership shall be the pastor and at least two lay persons appointed by him.
  2. Shall be independent of any other parish group, though membership may be co-existent with other groups.
  3. Shall be stable, that is, its membership shall be for at least four years and may be re-appointed once.
- b) The parish finance council members are appointed by the pastor on the basis of their expertise and advise the pastor in the administration and accountability of parish finances, budget, parish facilities and long-range financial development.

### §I-1801.3 Parish Council

#### **I-1801.3 Policy**

- a) Each parish of the Diocese shall have a parish council, the organization of which shall be in accordance with the norms established by the diocesan bishop. (Synod V, #25)
- b) The parish council is selected or elected to advise the pastor in fostering the pastoral work of the Church as it is carried out in the parish in all its aspects.

### §I-1801.4 Board of Education

#### **I-1801.4 Policy**

A board of education is recommended for advising the pastor in formulating policy and offering contracts in the area of faith formation or total Catholic education. In the absence of a Catholic school, this area of ministry may be assumed by a faith formation committee instead of a board of education.

### §I-1801.5

#### **I-1801.5 Policy**

#### **§I-1801.6 Diocese**

#### **I-1801.6 Policy**

The Diocese is the local Church entrusted to a bishop, who serves as a successor of the apostles. The Diocese is in communion with other local churches and with the Holy Father, the successor of Peter. Diocesan councils, boards, commissions and committees have been formed to advise and assist the bishop. These include: the Presbyteral Council, the Diocesan Finance Council, the Diocesan Pastoral Council, the Sisters' Consortium, the SS Stephen and Phoebe Deacon Council, the Diocesan Corporate Board, the Priests' Personnel Board, the Diocesan Board of Education, the Diocesan Social Action Commission, the Diocesan Liturgical Commission, the Diocesan Stewardship Commission, and the Diocesan Building Commission.

## §I-1802 Six Areas of Ministry

### **I-1802 Policy**

Each viable parish addresses six ministry areas as it lives out the fullness of our faith. These ministry areas include:

- a) Church Life
- b) Faith Formation
- c) Family Life
- d) Finance and Administration
- e) Liturgy
- f) Social Action

### **Procedures**

These areas overlap. Concerns such as vocations, stewardship, evangelization, communication, budgeting, strategic planning and issues relating to buildings and grounds do not fit neatly in one ministry area. These six ministry areas exist at the parish, deanery and diocesan levels. Some of the structures at these levels are established by universal law, or by particular law promulgated by the Bishop, the Pastor of our local Diocesan Church. The principle of subsidiarity requires that decisions be made at the most appropriate level. For example, a parish consideration of a building project requires adherence to Diocesan Building Commission and Diocesan Liturgical Commission procedures.

In order to maintain viability, the parish must be active in six areas of ministry. However, the committee structure of the parish does not need to parallel the six areas of ministry. Committees may be structured according to local need. Committees may appoint parish members as needed.

Recommendations for each ministry area:

#### **a) Church Life**

1. Welcome all into the faith community with warm hospitality.
2. Reach out to and welcome the unchurched and those alienated from the Church.
3. Develop, plan and evaluate parish programs that will enable the entire parish to grow into a true spiritual home for its parishioners.
4. Analyze the communal needs of the parish community and to identify areas in need of development.
5. Incorporate (to embody) and then to celebrate the diversity of peoples in the communal life of the parish (e.g., ethnic groups, age groups, the homebound, people with disabilities)
6. Create opportunities to expand all ministries to more freely involve the diversity of the parish, reaching out in a particular way to any marginalized groups.
7. Initiate and support the growth of mutual understanding and common action among different faiths.
8. Prepare a budget for the community-building needs of the parish.
9. Encourage ever-increasing levels of participation in the life of the parish, deanery and diocese.
10. Promote an active commitment to Christian stewardship.
11. Promote and provide opportunities for developing an awareness of one's vocation.

**b) Faith Formation**

1. Analyze the needs of the parish community and to identify areas in need of development in this ministry area.
2. Set goals and objectives for the development of a strategic plan congruent with total parish planning.
3. Develop, plan and evaluate parish programs, staff and administrators that will enable the entire parish to grow in its faith life.
4. Develop, formulate and promulgate appropriate policies.
5. Incorporate the diversity of peoples into the faith life of the parish (e.g. ethnic groups, age groups, the homebound, people with disabilities, the marginalized)
6. Ensure adult education as the axis of faith formation.
7. Ensure good communications between and among all groups in the parish, deanery and diocese and provide effective publicity for events.
8. Prepare a budget for total Catholic formation and education to meet the needs of the parish in conjunction with the Ministry of Finance and Administration.
9. Encourage ever increasing level of participation in the life of the parish, deanery and diocese.
10. Recommend appropriate changes to the educational space and grounds in order to facilitate the safety, upkeep, and enhance the learning environment.
11. Provide the safe environment program and background checks for all employees and volunteers. (According to Diocesan policies and curriculum.)
12. Actively educate and encourage all youth and adults about vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, religious life or lay ecclesial ministry.

**c) Family Life**

1. Raise awareness of a family perspective and evaluate the needs within the faith community.
2. Educate and enrich individuals and families through programs, workshops, retreats, newsletters, resource centers, etc.
3. Advocate for "family-friendly" programs, policies, and services in parish planning.
4. Create opportunities to respond to all stages in the family life cycle.
5. Communicate with other groups, agencies, and institutions in the community that work with families.
6. Prepare a budget for family life activities and programs within the parish.
7. Encourage participation in deanery/diocesan family life programs.
8. Research the trends in society that impact families.
9. Affirm and support the diversity in family structures and cultures.
10. Provide and encourage leadership training in family ministry.

11. Promote and provide opportunities for developing an awareness of one's vocation.

**d) Finance and Administration**

1. Assure the necessary material resources – land, buildings, finances – that will enable the parish to carry on the work of Christ.
2. Prepare the budget for the financial and administrative needs of the parish.
3. Establish that the parish is spending money in keeping with the priorities developed by the parish.
4. Increase the commitment of the parishioners to support financially the work of the parish.
5. Prepare and approve an annual operating budget after having consulted with the parish council and board of education.
6. Submit an annual financial report to the parish and the bishop at the end of the fiscal year.
7. Establish long range financial planning.
8. Be consulted when there is alienation (transfer) of property or major expenditures of parish funds in excess of \$5,000 (Cc. 1290, 1291)
9. Assist in reminding parishioners of their duty to return to God, as an expression of gratitude, part of the material benefits with which they have been blessed.
10. Maintain a safe environment for the parish community.
11. Be familiar with Diocesan policies regarding buildings and grounds and the openings or closings of parishes and schools.
12. Share all concerns and reports on the condition of buildings and grounds with the Diocesan offices.
13. Responsible for human resource issues such as evaluations, employee work agreements, and salary recommendations.
14. Maintain the parish calendar and directory.
15. Ensure good communications among all groups in the parish, deanery, and diocese, and to provide effective public relations.

**e) Liturgy**

1. Foster the “full, conscious, and active participation” of all in the liturgical life of the parish. In particular, to be attentive to incorporating the diversity of peoples found in the parish in the parish's liturgies and liturgical ministries (e.g., ethnic groups, age groups, the homebound, people with disabilities, the marginalized, etc.).
2. Analyze the liturgical needs and evaluate the liturgical life of the parish in order to identify areas in need of development. In particular, to help ensure that the full spectrum of the Church's liturgies are being celebrated in the parish (e.g., the sacraments, the RCIA in its entirety, the Liturgy of the Hours) in accord with Diocesan, national and universal norms.
3. Develop, plan and evaluate liturgical and spiritual development/formation programs that will enable the entire parish to grow into a deeper relationship with Christ and to learn more about the liturgical life of the Church.

To keep the parish informed concerning liturgical norms and practice, in cooperation with the Diocesan Office of Liturgy.

4. Recruit and appropriately train lay liturgical ministers, in keeping with universal, national, and diocesan norms. To provide ongoing oversight, formation, and feedback to these ministers. For example: musicians and cantors, readers, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, altar servers, greeters and ushers, sacristans, ministers of art and environment.
5. Furnish, decorate, maintain, and recommend appropriate changes to the liturgical environment in order to better support the liturgical life of the parish—and in so doing to follow the diocesan policies regulating consultation with the Diocesan Liturgical and Building Commissions.
6. Assist with and coordinate the liturgies celebrated by sub-groups within the parish.
7. Prepare a budget reflecting the liturgical needs of the parish.
8. Foster and encourage participation by members of the parish in deanery-wide and diocesan celebrations, including (but not limited to): the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion, the Chrism Mass and Ordinations.
9. Offer the gifts and talents of liturgical ministers from the parish to the deanery and Diocese.

**f) Social Action**

1. Reach out in charity to the poor, the homeless and the hungry.
2. Offer care to those who are homebound, hospitalized or in nursing homes.
3. Promote a respect for all human life through various pro-life activities.
4. Address the causes of poverty and injustice by supporting the Catholic Campaign for Human Development.
5. Minister to those in jails and prisons, and to their families.
6. Develop an understanding and appreciation for the global Church by promoting Catholic Relief Services and their Lenten program, Operation Rice Bowl.
7. Provide support for immigrants and refugees and create opportunities for the parish to celebrate cultural diversity and welcome the stranger.
8. Participate in projects that promote global solidarity, such as the Diocesan partnership with Madagascar or parish “twinning” programs.
9. Organize parish educational programs that explain Catholic social teaching.
10. Participate in the Diocesan legislative network that promotes issues of pro-life, social justice, rural life and world peace.
11. Send parish leaders to the annual statewide Iowa Institute for Social Action.
12. Prepare a budget for social action programs within the parish.

### §I-1803 Diocesan Policies, Procedures and Resources

#### **I-1803 Policy**

The parish council and finance council and their committees should become aware of relevant diocesan policies, procedures and resources. These resources are available on the Diocesan website [www.davenportdiocese.org](http://www.davenportdiocese.org) and include but are not limited to:

- a) Code of Canon Law
- b) Synod V - Diocese of Davenport 1986 and revisions
- c) Priests' Handbook of Policies and Procedures
- d) Parish Employee Handbook
- e) Accounting Policies for Parishes
- f) Parish Internal Control Questionnaire
- g) Handbook of Policies for Diocesan Faith Formation Programs
- h) USCCB website: [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)

### §I-1804 Purpose of the Parish Council

#### **I-1804 Policy**

The purpose of the parish council is to:

- a) Foster the pastoral work of the Church as it is carried out in the parish in all its aspects.
- b) Serve as a permanent forum for constructive dialogue among the priests, deacons, religious, and other laity in the parish, so they may work in close cooperation.
- c) Collaborate with the pastor in providing leadership, direction, resources, and encouragement to the apostolic and spiritual development of all parishioners, of whatever age or status.
- d) Continually survey the needs, both spiritual and temporal, of the parish, the community, and the diocese, and to develop and implement programs aimed at fulfilling those needs.
- e) Serve as a coordinating body for all organizations and group activities within the parish.

The parish council shall possess a consultative vote only, and be governed by norms determined by the Diocesan Bishop.<sup>1</sup>

### §I-1805 Duties of the Parish Council

#### **I-1805 Policy**

The duties of the parish council include strategic and adaptive planning, which involves identifying the vision and mission of the parish, conducting assessments and parish profile, recruiting others into active ministries, setting goals and objectives; and conducting annual reviews of the goals and objectives in light of its mission.

### §I-1806 Nomination and Election of Parish Council Members

**I-1806** Membership of the parish council shall be determined by the parish council constitution. In Spring of each year, members shall be elected or randomly selected for a period not to exceed three years beginning July 1. Terms of membership, selection and reelection should be addressed in the constitution. (see appendix)

#### *Procedures*

- a) A nominating committee shall be appointed by the parish council to nominate candidates from the parish for election or random selection to the parish council.
- b) All active members of the parish 18 years of age or older shall be eligible for nomination, with representation of youth left to local discretion. Any member of the parish 18 years of age or older as of the date of the election shall be entitled to one vote in this election.
- c) For better participation, distribution and collection of ballots, voting should be done within the structure of the Mass, after the closing prayer.
- d) The pastor, parochial vicars, deacons assigned to the parish and two lay directors shall be ex-officio, voting members of the parish council. In order to assure continuity or expertise, others may be appointed ex-officio voting or non-voting members of the parish council.

### §I-1807 Vacancy of Parish Council Members

#### **I-1807 Policy**

Vacancies and removal of parish council members should be addressed in the constitution.

#### *Procedures*

Any member of the parish council may be removed for cause by a two-thirds vote of the members. A successor may be appointed to fill the vacancy. Any member whose removal has been proposed shall be given opportunity to be heard at the meeting.

### §I-1808 Officers of the Parish Council

#### **I-1808 Policy**

Members of the parish council shall elect from among their lay members a president, vice president, and secretary. The president shall preside at all meetings of the council and the secretary shall record the minutes. Officers of the parish council are to be elected for terms of one or two years, and are eligible to succeed themselves once.

**§I-1809 Duties of the Parish Council President**

**I-1809 Policy**

The Parish council President is to:

- a) Insure an open channel of communication between the pastor, the parish and the Council members so that parish concerns are brought before the council.
- b) Disseminate meeting agendas, minutes and reports prepared in consultation with the pastor to Council members and parishioners at least a week in advance of the meeting.
- c) Inform parishioners of Council minutes and related policies.
- d) Provide a process for self-evaluation of Council effectiveness at the end of each term of office.
- e) Appoint the committee, if needed, to initiate the process for the selection of new members.
- f) Provide orientation of new members and committee chairs.

**§I-1810 Meetings of the Parish Council**

**I-1810 Policy**

Regular meetings of the parish council shall be held at least quarterly at a date and time designated by the parish council. All parish council meetings shall be open to all members of the parish, and notice of such meetings and agenda shall be published at least a week in advance. At least one lay trustee should attend parish council meetings. The president shall compile the agenda in consultation with the pastor. Portions of meetings involving personnel issues may be conducted in closed session. Minutes of the closed session are recorded and dated but are not available to the public.

**Procedures**

- a) Special meetings of the parish council may be called by the pastor on three days notice to each parish council member given personally or by mail or telephone, which notice shall state time, place, and purpose of the meetings. Special meetings shall be called by the pastor, the president, or secretary in like manner and on like notice on the written request of at least two-fifths of the parish council. If a special meeting of the parish council is called, parishioners shall be informed as soon and to the extent possible.
- b) At all meetings of the parish council, a majority of voting members shall constitute a quorum for transaction of business.
- c) Parish council meetings shall be held at the principal office of the parish, or at such other place convenient to the members as may be designated by the president.

**§I-1811 Procedures of the Parish Council**

**I-1811 Policy**

The Council is concerned with parish-wide issues and policies. The principle of subsidiarity allows the pastor, the council, the committees, and parish staff to operate effectively. Councils shall have the power to foster all the pastoral activity of the parish within the norms of Canon Law and ecclesiastical directions.

***Procedures***

- a) As the leader of the community, in compliance with Canon Law, particular law, and directives from the bishop, the pastor has the right to veto. If the pastor vetoes any parish council proposal, he should explain his reason for the veto. His explanation should include one or more of the following reasons based on: Canon or particular law, directives from the bishop, faith, morals, liturgical practice or the good of the community.
- b) Generally speaking, parishes should operate by consensus decision-making. If an honest effort to reach consensus has been unsuccessful, and the group has listened carefully to the minority viewpoint(s) and has tried to incorporate the minority concern(s) into the parish council decision, it may become necessary for a recommendation to be made by a majority vote.

## §V-2000 POLICIES RELATING TO PARISH FINANCE COUNCILS

### §V-2001 Nature and Purpose

#### **V-2001 Policy**

Canon 537 of the revised Code of Canon Law states, "Each parish is to have a finance council which is regulated by universal law as well as by norms issued by the diocesan bishop; in this council the Christian faithful, selected according to the same norms, aid the pastor in the administration of parish goods with due regard for the prescription of Canon 532." (cc. 532)

#### **Procedures**

- a) The finance council is advisory to the pastor since he retains the right and duty of parish administration (cc. 532). The finance council works closely with the pastor, the corporate board, the parish council and leaders from all areas of ministry.
- b) The purpose of the finance council is to design financial plans for the parish that are consistent with the mission, vision, goals and objectives of the parish and to advise the pastor in the administration and accountability of parish finances, budget, parish facilities and long-range financial development.

### §V-2002 Duties of the Finance Council

#### **V-2002 Policy**

- a) The parish finance council prepares the budget in consultation with the parish council. They approve the annual budget and review the Summary of Financial Data before submission to the Diocesan Finance Office. The finance council should provide assistance in the formulation and presentation of the annual parish financial reports to the parish community as required by Canon 1287.
- b) When a pastor leaves a parish, all formal activity of the finance council ceases until the new pastor or assigned administrator reconvenes the council.
- c) Each member of the Council must understand the functions of this council, its interrelationships with other parish organizations, and its responsibility to the Church as a whole.

#### **Procedures**

- a) Periodically (e.g. monthly or quarterly) review balance sheet and income statements. In addition, one person from the finance council should review detailed income and expenditures.
- b) Provide parishioners with periodic (semi-annual or annual) reports on the parish financial position.
- c) Work with the board of education regarding school subsidy approval.
- d) Study parish revenue and make projections regarding the revenues necessary to meet parish objectives and priorities.
- e) Advise how to address identified weaknesses and to insure openness of the parish finances to members of the parish and to diocesan officials.
- f) Coordinate fundraising efforts (in consultation with stewardship leaders).
- g) Propose cost-cutting measures to the pastor and parish council when necessary.
- h) Work closely with the other parish organizations to plan for the long range financial and physical needs of the

## §I-1800 POLICIES RELATING TO PARISH COUNCILS AND PARISH FINANCE COUNCILS

parish.

- i) Participate in the development of parish goals and objectives with the pastor and parish council.
- j) Advise the pastor regarding the quarterly inspection of all parish facilities.
- k) In collaboration with the buildings and grounds committee, develop an inventory of the needs of all parish properties.
- l) Recommend additions or repairs based on priorities established by these inspections and input from all areas of ministry.
- m) Develop guidelines concerning use of parish facilities.
- n) Develop energy conservation programs in conjunction with diocesan energy programs.
- o) Identify parishioners for maintenance tasks consistent with Diocesan liability and insurance requirements.
- p) Review the parish's risk management and loss prevention reports from insurance carriers and fire departments. Perform local inspections to insure corrective action is taken to insure the safety and security of the parish campus and consistency with codes and standards.

## §V-2003 Memberships

### **V-2003 Policy**

- a) Membership on the finance council shall be limited to members of that parish. They should be chosen based on expertise in accounting, finance, investment, fundraising, budgeting, business law and pastoral leadership. Legal and financial counsel from outside the finance council can be sought when necessary.
- b) Members shall be appointed by the pastor for a 4-year term and may be reappointed.
- c) Including the pastor, membership shall consist of at least three, but not more than seven members of the Christian faithful, truly skilled in financial affairs as well as in civil law, of outstanding integrity and freely appointed by the pastor. Any person who may have a conflict of interest may not be appointed to the parish finance council. Members of the finance council are encouraged to serve on other committees of the parish as long as, in the judgment of the pastor, such dual service will not create conflict of interest. (Synod V, #26). At least one lay director shall attend finance council meetings.

### **Procedures**

Terms of membership should not exceed two full consecutive terms. Members may be reappointed after a 2-year hiatus.

## §V-2004 Meetings of the Finance Council

### **V-2004 Policy**

The finance council shall meet at least quarterly. The finance council cannot meet without the pastor.

## **§V-2005 Obligations of the Pastor to the Finance Council**

### ***V-2005 Policy***

The pastor is obligated under Canon Law to consult with the finance council on the following matters, although the pastor remains the juridic authority for final decisions:

- a) Each parish or diocesan institution is to have formal approval of its Board of Directors for the entering of contracts, borrowing of money, purchase or sale of property, encumbrance of property by lease or mortgage, or the expenditure of parish funds in excess of \$5,000 (Cc. 1290, 1291). If this request is not part of the parish budget, it must be discussed by the finance council and will require a corporate board resolution signed by the pastor and the two lay trustees before being sent to the Bishop and Vicar General of the Diocese for approval.
- b) Management of all parish funds should be included in the parish budget that is prepared by the finance council with a resolution signed by the pastor and lay directors and forwarded to the Diocesan Finance Office.

When a pastor decides to act against the advice of the finance council, he should clearly explain his reasons to the finance council.

## **§V-2006 Spiritual Growth and Formation**

### ***V-2006 Policy***

As with the parish council, the finance council should foster the spiritual growth and formation of its members and develop a deeper understanding of parish life in relationship to the Church.

### ***Procedures***

- a) Stewardship leaders in the parish develop a parish-wide commitment to discipleship and stewardship that includes time, talent and treasure. The pastor, the parish council and finance council should consult stewardship leaders concerning all fundraising and development plans.
- b) The finance council should consult with the parish council and all other areas of ministry before advising the pastor about budgetary needs of the parish.

## APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

“Canonical Pastor”: The priest supervisor of the parish life administrator in the pastoral care of the parish.

“Commission”: Synonymous with “committee”

“Committee”: A group charged with the responsibility for a specific area within the goals and objectives of the parish.

“Consensus”: A decision made after all aspects of the issue and possible alternatives have been heard and dealt with. As a result, all members feel that the group choice made is acceptable under the circumstances. Group decisions made by consensus tend to have higher group commitment and longevity than other types.

“Diocese”: A geographic area of the Church, governed by a bishop and embracing a number of parishes.

“Evangelization”: The activity whereby the Church proclaims the Gospel in the world today so that the faith of all persons may be inspired.

“Goal”: The desired result to be obtained when planning is completed. Goal-setting flows from the statement of mission.

“Mission Statement”: A broad unifying statement, which is applicable in our time, of overall direction and purpose.

“Objective”: The intermediate result needed to obtain a goal. Besides describing a result, an objective should also measure what is to be done, specify who is to do it and when it is to be completed.

“Parish”: That unit of God’s family which fulfills the universal mission of the Church: proclaiming the Word, celebrating the faith through liturgy, living the faith through service and passing on the faith through life-long faith formation.

“Parish council”: A group of people representing the parish who foster the pastoral work of the Church as it is carried out in the parish in all its areas of ministry. The parish council works in cooperation with the pastor and the parish in setting policy and establishing goals, objectives and action plans.

“Policy”: A definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in the light of given circumstances. The purpose of the policy is to guide and determine present and future decisions. Policy making is primarily the responsibility of the administrative bodies.

“Ratification”: Final approval, given by the pastor, of action taken by the administrative bodies.

“Religious”: Term used to designate lay men and women who have committed themselves by vows to the service of the Church.

“Subsidiarity”: A principle of authority whereby decisions are entrusted to the appropriate body or person and not assumed by a higher authority. A corollary to this principle would be that before making the final decision, a policy-making body will generally consult those who will implement the policy. Thus, in practice, an administrative body will not make decisions that properly belong to a committee. Administrative bodies retain the right to review decisions made by committees. Decisions on all levels must follow diocesan policies and guidelines.

“Veto”: A veto is the expressed decision of the pastor to withhold ratification. The pastor has the right to veto.

**APPENDIX B: RECOMMENDATIONS – BEST PRACTICES**

**Pastoral Planning**

The basic leadership role of the parish council in conjunction with the pastor is to give direction to the parish. Practically speaking, this role means pastoral planning. This involves:

- a. Visioning
- b. Writing or reviewing a Parish Mission Statement
- c. Conducting a Needs Assessment
- d. Completing a Parish Profile
- e. Setting Goals and Objectives to support a Parish Mission Statement
- f. Evaluations

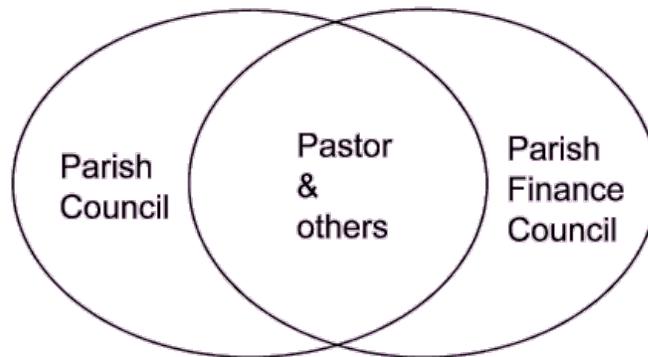
Parish input and working with the commissions and other parish organizations are major concerns of the parish council in pastoral planning. All must be involved in the planning, but it is the responsibility of the parish council to see that the planning is carried out and to approve all policy matters even when shaped by a committee or commission/area of ministry.

**Cooperation between the Parish Council and the Parish Finance Council**

It is the role of the parish finance council, not the parish council, to advise the pastor in matters pertaining to the financial affairs of the parish. According to The Diocese of Davenport Synod V, 1986, however, the parish council “must review all aspects of parish life including finance.”

The various committees, areas of ministry and other groups should submit their budgets to the parish council for approval and recommendation and then to the parish finance council for determination. The parish council would not change any commission budget but would review and recommend. The parish finance council would not be bound by the recommendation but would have to give it weight.

The representatives from Synod V expected the two councils would meet together for their final recommendation to the pastor.



**APPENDIX C: RESOURCES**

1. GUIDELINES FOR A MODEL PARISH COUNCIL CONSTITUTION
2. DESCRIPTIONS OF DIOCESAN COUNCILS, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS
3. RECOMMENDED BOOKS AND PERIODICALS

## CONSTITUTION

*[Note: remarks in italics should be removed in the final form]*

### ARTICLE I – NAME

This organization shall be known as the \_\_\_\_\_ Parish Council.

### ARTICLE II – PURPOSE

The purpose of the parish council is to:

- a) Foster the pastoral work of the Church as it is carried out in the parish in all its aspects.
- b) Serve as a permanent forum for constructive dialogue among the priests, deacons, religious, and other laity in the parish, so they may work in close cooperation.
- c) Collaborate with the pastor in providing leadership, direction, resources, and encouragement to the apostolic and spiritual development of all parishioners, of whatever age or status.
- d) Continually survey the needs, both spiritual and temporal, of the parish, the community, and the diocese, and to develop and implement programs aimed at fulfilling those needs.
- e) Serve as a coordinating body for all organizations and group activities within the parish.

The parish council shall possess a consultative vote only, and be governed by norms determined by the Diocesan Bishop.

### ARTICLE III - DUTIES

The duties of the parish council include strategic and adaptive planning, which involves identifying the vision and mission of the parish, conducting assessments and parish profiles, setting goals and objectives; and conducting annual reviews of the goals and objectives in light of its mission.

### ARTICLE IV - NOMINATION AND ELECTION

*[Note: Membership, terms of membership, selection and reelection of the parish council shall be determined by the parish council constitution.]*

*[Required by Diocesan Policy:]*

In May of each year, members shall be elected [or randomly selected] for a period not to exceed three years beginning July 1. A nominating committee shall be appointed by the parish council to nominate candidates from the parish for election [or random selection] to the parish council. All active members of the parish 18 years of age or older shall be eligible for nomination, *[with representation of youth left to local discretion.]* Any member of the parish 18 years of age or older as of the date of the election shall be entitled to one vote in this election. The Eucharist has a ritual integrity which ought to be respected while also recognizing that the Sunday liturgy is when most parishioners would be present to vote. During the usual time for announcements (after the Prayer After Communion), it is mentioned that voting/selection will take place after Mass. Alternatively, tables may be set up near the entrance to the church so parishioners can vote as they enter or leave.

The pastor, parochial vicars, deacons assigned to the parish and two lay directors shall be ex-officio, voting members of the parish council. In order to assure continuity or expertise, others may be appointed ex-officio voting or non-voting members of the parish council.

*[Determined by each parish:]*

The total membership of the parish council shall be \_\_\_\_\_. The number of parish council members may be altered by the action of the parish council by a two-thirds vote, at any regular or special parish council meeting. Terms of membership in any election may be staggered as necessary. The tenure of office of parish council members shall be from the date of their election to the expiration of the term for which they are elected, or until their successors are duly elected. A member may be reelected [\_\_\_\_\_ times] [or only once].

**ARTICLE V – VACANCY** [*Determined by each parish:*]

A vacancy on the parish council shall be filled by the person who in the previous election received the greatest number of votes after those elected. At any regular or special meeting of the parish council duly called, any one or more of the members of the parish council may be removed, for cause, such as absence from three consecutive meetings, by a two-thirds vote of the elected members and a successor may be then and there appointed, as provided in Section (a) of this article, to fill the vacancy. Any member whose removal has been proposed shall be given an opportunity to be heard at the meeting.

**ARTICLE VI - COMMITTEES**

Each viable parish addresses six ministry areas as it lives out the fullness of our faith. These ministry areas include: church life, faith formation, family life, finance and administration, liturgy and social action.

The parish council may designate whatever committees it deems advisable. However, the committee structure of the parish does not need to parallel the six areas of ministry. Committees may be structured according to local need. Committees may appoint parish members as needed.

**ARTICLE VII - MEETING**

Regular meetings of the parish council shall be held at least quarterly at a date and time designated by the parish council. All parish council meetings shall be open to all members of the parish, and notice of such meetings and agenda shall be published at least a week in advance. The president shall compile the agenda in consultation with the pastor. Portions of meetings involving personnel issues may be conducted in closed session. Minutes of the closed session are recorded and dated but are not available to the public.

Special meetings of the parish council may be called by the pastor on three days notice to each parish council member given personally or by mail or telephone, which notice shall state time, place, and purpose of the meetings. Special meetings shall be called by the pastor, the president, or secretary in like manner and on like notice on the written request of at least two-fifths of the parish council. If a special meeting of the parish council is called, parishioners shall be informed as soon and to the extent possible.

At all meetings of the parish council, a majority of voting members shall constitute a quorum for transaction of business, and the acts of the majority (as defined by the parish corporation by-laws or, in their absence, Roberts Rules of Order, Revised), at a meeting at which a quorum is present, shall be the acts of the parish council.

**ARTICLE VIII - OFFICERS**

Members of the parish council shall elect from among their lay members a president, vice president, and secretary. The president shall preside at all meetings of the council and the secretary shall record the minutes. Officers of the parish council are to be elected for terms of one year, and are eligible to succeed themselves once.

**ARTICLE IX – PROCEDURES**

The parish council is concerned with parish-wide issues and policies. The principle of subsidiarity allows the pastor, the parish council, the committees, and parish staff to operate effectively. Parish councils shall have the power to foster all the pastoral activity of the parish within the norms of Canon Law and ecclesiastical directions.

As the leader of the community, in compliance with Canon Law, particular law, and directives from the Bishop, the pastor has the right to veto. If the pastor vetoes any parish council proposal, he should explain his reason for the veto. His explanation should include one or more of the following reasons based on: Canon or particular law, directives from the bishop, faith, morals, liturgical practice or the good of the community.

**DESCRIPTIONS OF DIOCESAN COUNCILS, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS**

**College of Consultors** - assists the Diocesan Bishop in certain areas of administration of the Diocese according to the norms of Canon Law and particular law and provides for the governance of the Diocese, according to the norms of law when the see is vacant or impeded.

**Diocesan Board of Education** - establishes policy to govern the educational programs of the Diocese subject to provisions of Canon Law, regulations of the Department of Education of the State of Iowa and the laws of the State of Iowa.

**Diocesan Building Commission** - coordinates and assists all parishes in building projects.

**Diocesan Corporate Board** – governs through a board of directors comprised of the bishop, vicar(s) general, chancellor, and two or more lay persons. The Corporate Board ensures adequate human and financial resources and actively monitors and evaluates service and financial results.

**Diocesan Finance Council** – advises the Bishop in financial affairs as well as in civil law, prepares an annual budget of the income and expenditures foreseen for the governance of the Diocese in the coming year; and examines reports of receipts and expenditures.

**Diocesan Liturgical Commission** – responds to the liturgical and spiritual needs of the Diocesan Church through coordinating, assisting, teaching and modeling.

**Diocesan Pastoral Council** – under the authority of the diocesan bishop advises him on all those things which pertain to pastoral works, to ponder them and to propose practical conclusions about them” so as to promote conformity of the life and actions of the People of God with the Gospel.

**Priests’ Personnel Board** - makes recommendations of priest personnel to the Bishop for assignment for the good of the Diocese of Davenport; and assists in priest personnel development and pastoral planning as it relates to the priests in support of the Priestly Life and Ministry Committee of the Diocesan Presbyteral Council.

**Diocesan Social Action Commission** - promotes the ministry of social action and to develop training and educational opportunities for parish leaders in the Diocese of Davenport, consistent with Catholic social teaching. The Commission shall be advisory to the Bishop of Davenport on ways to infuse social action into all aspects of diocesan life.

**Diocesan Stewardship Commission** - promotes stewardship in the Diocese of Davenport as described in the Diocesan statement, *Fostering Stewardship as a Way of Life: A Guide for Comprehensive Parish Stewardship*, and as defined by the U.S. Bishops’ pastoral letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*. The Commission shall be advisory to the Bishop of Davenport on ways to infuse stewardship theology into all aspects of diocesan life.

**Presbyteral Council** - provides a forum for the full and free discussion of all issues of pastoral concern in the Diocese; aids the Diocesan Bishop in the governance of the Diocese, according to the norms of law; searches for and proposes ways and means for the effective pastoral ministry of priests; and represents the unity and diversity of the priests of the Diocese.

**SS Stephen and Phoebe Deacon Council** - provides a forum for the full and free discussion of all issues of diaconal concern in the diocese; aids the Diocesan Bishop according to the norms of law so that the pastoral welfare of the People of God committed to the Bishop with the effective cooperation of the presbyters and the assistance and service of the deacons may carry forward as efficiently as possible and search for and to propose ways and means for the effective ministry, continuing education and spiritual growth of deacons.

**Sisters' Consortium** - provides an effective channel of communication and facilitates closer relationships among the sisters of the Diocese, the Bishop, his administrators, the clergy and the laity while ensuring the active women religious in the Diocese are equitably represented on Diocesan commissions, committees, and task forces that decide on policies, particularly those that affect women religious.

**RECOMMENDED BOOKS AND PERIODICALS**

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- Papesh, Rev. Michael L. Decided by the Holy Spirit and Us-A Parish Council Handbook. Twenty-Third Publications, 2009, [www.twentythirdpublications.com](http://www.twentythirdpublications.com).
- Papesh, Rev. Michael L. Good News Parish Leadership: Trust-building Guidelines, Tools, and Ideas. Twenty-Third Publications, 2008, [www.twentythirdpublications.com](http://www.twentythirdpublications.com).
- Phelps, Owen. The Catholic Vision for Leading Like Jesus. Our Sunday Visitor, 2009, [www.osv.com](http://www.osv.com).

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Sweetser, Thomas P. and Mary Benet McKinney. Changing Pastors: A Resource for Pastoral Transitions. Sheed & Ward, 1998, [www.bookmasters.com/sheed](http://www.bookmasters.com/sheed).

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### **Periodical**

Today's Parish, published monthly September through May  
Twenty-Third Publications, [www.twentythirdpublications.com](http://www.twentythirdpublications.com).

Directed toward those involved in full-time and part-time ministries and direct-service roles in the parish. Provides practical ideas, information and motivation concerning all areas of parish life. A timeless, basic resource and learning tool for all members of parish councils.

## **PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS DIOCESE OF DAVENPORT**

### **Procedures for Handling Complaints and Concerns**

- A. Solutions to complaints should be left to the discretion of the dean with the right of appeal to the diocesan bishop or the Council for Conciliation. The respective dean should discourage petitions of any sort since they are counter-productive.
- B. No anonymous phone calls or letters will be accepted.
- C. Phone conversations and letters:
  - 1. Phone conversations expressing concern (health, etc.) for a priest will be investigated by the dean.
  - 2. If a phone call is expressing a complaint the caller will be asked to put the complaint in writing.
  - 3. Letters that express a complaint are always answered. Should the writer expect the dean to investigate the complaint, he/she must give permission to use his/her name or the letter will be returned.
  - 4. The respective dean can meet with the complainant under the following condition: Should the complainant expect the diocesan authorities to consider the complaint, he/she must be willing to have his/her name known to the priest involved.
  - 5. Should the complainant be looking for direction or help with a situation and not voicing a complaint, the name does not need to be revealed.
- D. The preceding guidelines deal with complaints of a more formal nature. Informal observations regarding a parish or priest will be handled at the discretion of the person calling.