

The Pastoral Council of the Church of _____

Date proposed (by Pastor and Pastoral Council): _____

Date approved (by Local Ordinary): _____

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

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

ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this body shall be the Pastoral Council of the Church of _____, hereinafter referred to as the “Pastoral Council.”

ARTICLE II: PURPOSE

Section 1. The general purpose of the Pastoral Council shall be to advise and assist the pastor in his duties as shepherd and canonical administrator of the parish. The Pastoral Council is required by universal and diocesan law for parish churches (*CIC* c. 536; Parish Administration Decree, March 21, 2012).

ARTICLE III: AUTHORITY

Section 1. The existence of the Pastoral 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 Pastoral Council is advisory to the office of pastor. Within the law, the pastor may freely delegate decisions or tasks to the Pastoral Council as a whole or to particular members.

Section 3. The Pastoral 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 Pastoral 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 Pastoral Council is to be comprised of _____ (*at least three and an odd number*) members, each having one vote.

Section 3. Two of these members are to be freely appointed by the pastor, with the remaining number selected by one of the suggested methods in Article V.

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

ARTICLE V: NOMINATIONS, ELECTIONS, TERMS

(Note: For the selection of any members beyond the two freely appointed by the pastor, two suggested methods are provided below.)

Method #1-- Election

Section 1. The Pastoral 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 Pastoral 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 appointed and elected members shall take office at the first regular meeting of the Pastoral Council following the 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 Pastoral 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 Pastoral Council shall appoint a member to fill the vacancy. In the event that an appointed member's position becomes vacant, the pastor freely appoints a substitute.

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

Method #2: Sortition

Section 1. The Pastoral 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 Pastoral 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 Pastoral 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 appointed and selected members shall take office at the first regular meeting of the Pastoral Council following the 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 Pastoral 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 Pastoral Council shall appoint a member to fill the vacancy. In the event that an appointed member's position becomes vacant, the pastor freely appoints a substitute.

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

ARTICLE VI: OFFICERS

Section 1. The officers of the Pastoral 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 assist the pastor, who is to preside at meetings and set the agenda. Meetings are to occur at least quarterly or as needed for the circumstances of the parish. All meetings occurring without the pastor's attendance are to at least have his presumed permission to do so and will be presided over by the chairperson. 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 Pastoral Council. He or she is to provide copies in a timely fashion to Pastoral 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 Pastoral 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: COMMITTEES (STANDING AND SPECIAL)

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

Section 2. The pastor is to appoint both the chairperson and members of each standing committee. While the chair is to be a member of the Pastoral Council, remaining members can be appointed from parish membership at large. Such

standing committee members are to have the right to attend all regular meetings of the Pastoral Council, yet they shall have no vote.

Section 3. Special committees may be appointed by the pastor. While chairpersons are to be members of the Pastoral Council, remaining members can be appointed from parish membership at large.

ARTICLE IX: MEETINGS

Section 1. The Pastoral Council is to conduct regular meetings on the _____ of each _____ or at such times as the pastor 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 pastor.

Section 4. Regular meetings of the Pastoral Council are to be open to all parishioners. It shall be left to the discretion of the pastor 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 Pastoral Council's name.

Section 6. The membership of the Pastoral 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 in pastoral matters.

Section 7. Continuing education of members of the Pastoral Council is to be encouraged or even formally subsidized by the parish in order to expand the expertise of Pastoral Council members. This is commended especially for the focused topics of pastoral care, such as family life, marriage preparation, marriage enrichment, sacraments and sacramental preparation, youth, bereavement, catechesis and formation, etc.

ARTICLE X: AMENDMENTS

Section 1. This constitution and by-laws may be amended at any regular meeting of the Parish 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.