

DIOCESE OF FALL RIVER DIOCESAN STATUTES FOR PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS

Introduction

One of the goals of the Second Vatican Council was to promote new means of communication and mutual collaboration among the clergy and laity in their cooperative pastoral mission of evangelizing and sanctifying the world, and in their continued efforts to build up the Kingdom of God on earth. The Council called for the establishment of diocesan and parish structures to facilitate this mutual collaboration.

Among these structures is the Parish Pastoral Council which provides a setting in every parish for communication between the laity and the pastor/administrator concerning the pastoral needs, plans, and activity of the parish. The call of the Second Vatican Council for the establishment of the Parish Pastoral Council is one of the ways the Church seeks to involve the laity in its pastoral and salvific mission.

The Second Vatican Council, in its Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, expresses the good which it expects to result from this type of collaboration between laity and clergy. *“A great many benefits are to be hoped for from this familiar dialogue between the laity and their pastors: in the laity, a strengthened sense of personal responsibility, a renewed enthusiasm, a more ready application of their talents to the projects of their pastors. The latter, for their part, aided by the experience of the laity, can more clearly and more suitably come to decisions regarding spiritual and temporal matters. In this way, the whole Church, strengthened by each one of its members, can more effectively fulfill its mission for the life of the world.”* (LG, 37)

Further, the Code of Canon Law also calls for the establishment of a Parish Pastoral Council.

Can. 536 §1. If the diocesan bishop judges it opportune after he has heard the presbyteral council, a pastoral council is to be established in each parish, over which the pastor presides and in which the Christian faithful, together with those who share in pastoral care by virtue of their office in the parish, assist in fostering pastoral activity.

§2. A pastoral council possesses a consultative vote only and is governed by the norms established by the diocesan bishop.

The Parish Pastoral Council is intended to be a source of open and responsible dialogue between parishioners and pastors/administrators in their respective parishes concerning the discernment and assessment of the pastoral needs of the parish. In addition, the Parish Pastoral Council is intended to foster the mutual cooperation of both parishioners and their pastor/administrator in determining the proper pastoral planning necessary for them to fulfill together those pastoral needs.

The following are the statutes for the governance of Pastoral Councils in the parishes of the Diocese of Fall River.

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL STATUTES

Article 1: Establishment and Nature of the Parish Pastoral Council

- a. A Parish Pastoral Council, over which the pastor/administrator presides, is to be established in each parish. Through this council the Christian faithful, along with those who share in the pastoral care of the parish by virtue of their office, give their help in fostering pastoral activity.

- b. The Parish Pastoral Council is a consultative body that serves to advise the pastor/administrator about pastoral issues affecting the parish.
- c. The Parish Pastoral Council is governed by the statutes determined by the Diocesan Bishop.
- d. In a collaborative, linked, twinned, or paired parish, a single Pastoral Council should be established with representation from each participating parish.

Article 2: Purpose and Activities

- a. Purposes:
 - 1. To assist the pastor/administrator in the pastoral ministry of the parish(es)
 - 2. To enable the parish to share in the general pastoral thrust of the Diocese of Fall River and to promote programs and activities recommended or presented by the Diocesan Bishop.
- b. Activities:
 - 1. Evaluate the apostolic needs of the parish and propose means whereby these needs can be met; specifically, the Parish Pastoral Council will do this by helping the pastor/administrator develop and implement a pastoral plan which will promote the common good of the parish.
 - 2. Suggested topics of concern for the Parish Pastoral Council: spirituality of the parish, evangelization, worship, faith formation, youth ministry, community service, stewardship, fellowship, and leadership. Pastors/Administrators may also contact the Diocesan Office of Pastoral Planning for assistance.
 - 3. Assist the pastor/administrator in his endeavors to fulfill those pastoral needs and plans.

Article 3: Membership

- a. In addition to parochial vicars and representation of the deacons assigned to the parish, all full-time pastoral workers in the parish are ex-officio members of the Parish Pastoral Council (e.g. pastoral associates, directors of faith formation, school principals).
- b. In addition to the ex-officio members, membership in the Parish Pastoral Council is open to all persons who are registered in the parish, are in full communion with the Catholic Church, regularly participate in the Eucharistic celebration, actively participate in the life and work of the parish, and who have been duly elected or have been appointed by the pastor/administrator according to the norms of these statutes.
- c. The number of members depends on the size of the parish. Including ex-officio members, ordinarily councils usually have between 10-15 members.
- d. Some members of the Parish Pastoral Council may be appointed by the pastor/administrator. The total membership of the Parish Pastoral Council should consist approximately of one-third ex-officio members, one-third appointed, and one-third elected.
- e. Elected and appointed members serve a three-year term. These members may be re-elected, but may serve only two terms consecutively.
- f. In a newly formed council, the pastor/administrator will select one-half of the elected and appointed members to serve a two-year term, and one-half to serve a three-year term in order that only one-half of the membership will be up for appointment or election each year.
- g. Service on the Parish Pastoral Council is a public appointment and names should be shared publicly with the parish.
- h. Members of the Parish Pastoral Council may be dismissed for just cause by the pastor/administrator as well as when their term is completed.



Article 4: Elections

- a. If the Parish Pastoral Council is a new entity, parishioners should nominate and elect members.
- b. Elections to the Parish Pastoral Council shall take place when membership terms expire.
- c. Parishioners will be invited by written vote to nominate new members to the Parish Pastoral Council.
- d. When established, the Parish Pastoral Council, in session, will elect the new members from among the names of those nominated by the parishioners and approved by the pastor/administrator.
- e. Care should be taken for council membership to reflect the diversity of the parish (age, gender, ethnicity, etc.).
- f. For all elections, a simple majority of votes cast suffices for election.
- g. Vacancies that occur during the year shall be filled at the next election.
- h. Failure to attend 50% of general meetings may merit dismissal of elected and appointed members.
- i. Members of the Parish Pastoral Council should be publicly commissioned at a weekend Mass of the parish. The *Book of Blessings* should be consulted for the appropriate prayers.

Article 5: Officers

- a. The pastor/administrator is the president of the Parish Pastoral Council.
- b. The members of the Parish Pastoral Council elect a chairperson for each year. The chairperson is responsible for developing meeting agendas in partnership with the pastor.
- c. At the pastor's/administrator's discretion, the chairperson or another member of the Council may moderate the meeting of the Parish Pastoral Council.
- d. The members of the Parish Pastoral Council elect a secretary who is responsible for general correspondence and for internal communications within the Parish Pastoral Council.
- e. The pastor/administrator is responsible for the overall supervision and administration of the Parish Pastoral Council, and ensures that all policies and actions considered by the Parish Pastoral Council and approved by him are properly implemented according to the general norms of universal Church law and diocesan policy.

Article 6: Meetings

- a. The Parish Pastoral Council shall exercise its duties as a consultative body in meetings.
- b. There shall be a minimum of three meetings of the Parish Pastoral Council each year. A typical Council should meet between four and six times each year.
- c. The pastor/administrator may call a meeting of the Parish Pastoral Council at any time by giving suitable notice to the members.
- d. A quorum for all meetings of the Parish Pastoral Council shall be a simple majority of its total membership.
- e. In the event of the pastor's/administrator's absence, the council may not undertake new business, or business which is not included on the agenda.
- f. Under the supervision of the pastor/administrator, the secretary issues notices and agendas, and captures, prepares, maintains and distributes minutes for meetings of the Parish Pastoral Council. The minutes and proceedings of every meeting of the Parish Pastoral Council will be kept on file at the parish office.



Article 7: Relationship to the Parish Finance Council

The Parish Pastoral Council advises the pastor/administrator on pastoral matters, while the Finance Council has the duty of advising the pastor/administrator on financial matters. Each council will restrict itself to its area of competency in giving advice to the pastor/administrator. Both councils are to be coordinated by the pastor/administrator in their service rendered for the benefit of the parish. The pastor/administrator is responsible for making provision for good communication between the Finance Council and the Parish Pastoral Council.

It is recommended that a joint meeting of the Parish Pastoral and Parish Finance Councils occur annually, preferably to discuss issues such as the parish annual report.

Article 8: Amendments

These statutes may be amended only by the Diocesan Bishop.

Article 9: Dissolution

- a. The Parish Pastoral Council may be dissolved by decision of the Diocesan Bishop or by decision of the pastor/administrator. In the latter case, however, the pastor/administrator cannot dissolve the Parish Pastoral Council without consent of the Diocesan Bishop.
- b. The new pastor/administrator will meet with the existing council members within 90 days of his appointment to receive the state of the parish.
- c. The new pastor/administrator may replace appointed council members with members of his own choosing within six months of his appointment to the parish.

Article 10: Effective Date

These statutes become effective for every parish in the Diocese of Fall River on January 1, 2022. On that date the statutes of already existing Pastoral Councils in the parishes of the Diocese of Fall River are abrogated. By June 30, 2022, every parish must have a Pastoral Council governed by these statutes.

Promulgated on this 13th day of December in the year 2021.



Most Reverend Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V.
Bishop of Fall River

