

HOLY CROSS CHURCH PASTORAL COUNCIL NORMS

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission Statement of Holy Cross Catholic Church is to serve as a diverse spiritual Catholic community, committed to glorifying God and serving the needs of others as Christ did.

The motto of Holy Cross Church is - ***“We Welcome All, We Embrace All”***.

The core values of Holy Cross Church are to exalt, evangelize, edify, equip, and encourage.

THE PURPOSE, SCOPE AND ROLE OF THE COUNCIL

The Council is a distinct group because of its representative nature, consultative role, and consensus-seeking process; therefore, its purpose, scope and roles are outlined in this article.

The Council's purpose is to be a representative voice of the faithful whose focus is on the whole parish community.

The Council's scope is to:

- prepare and periodically review a statement of the parish's mission;
- develop and maintain a long-range plan to implement the Holy Cross parish mission statement;
- advise the Pastor regarding the general policies that guide the Holy Cross parish programs and services;
- provide a means for uniting the Holy Cross parish community in expressing its collective wisdom concerning pastoral plans and activities;
- read and reflect the “signs of the times” to those planning or implementing Pastoral activities in Holy Cross parish; and,
- promote reverent worship of God, especially with regard to all activities and use of parish facilities.

The Council's role is to give counsel and seek consultation by reflecting carefully and prayerfully.

The Council is to encourage and support the Pastor and Council Chairperson, respond to their call and questions, and offer the best consultation possible.

The role of each Council member is to understand, reflect carefully and prayerfully and to seek consensus. Under certain circumstances, the Pastor and the Council may choose to attain a majority through voting to decide a course of action.

ROLE OF THE PASTOR

The Pastor, as the chief governing person and accountable to the Bishop, must preside at the Council meetings and participate in its activities. The Pastor is called to consultation by the Church. In this call, he must:

- in turn, call the Council and seek counsel on pastoral matters affecting the life of the parish;
- experience and participate in the interaction that follows;
- be open, respectful and receptive to the voice or voices of the parishioners;
- weigh seriously and respond appropriately to the collective wisdom or consensus of the Council;
- make every effort to insure that the membership of the Council is truly representative of the whole parish community;
- assist in the proper formation, training and orientation of all Council members;
- insure that the Council's concerns reflect the whole Church (diocesan and universal) and its mission;
- facilitate Council members building their own community of faith, trust, and respect;
- assist in the preparation of Council agenda; and,
- support, encourage, and work diligently toward implementation of Synod recommendations.

The Pastor should consider carefully the decisions of the Council and provide proper explanation to the Council when acting contrary to its recommendations; however, in matters that violate Church teachings or discipline, or in matters contrary to diocesan policy, the Pastor, after appropriate explanation to the Council, must withhold acceptance. In cases of non-acceptance of counsel, for whatever reason, the Pastor's position and reasons for it shall be presented to the Council in writing.

Appeals may be made to the diocesan Bishop or his designee for clarification, consideration, or arbitration. The Bishop or his designee will provide a written response to the appeal.

In the absence of the Pastor, the Council may conduct regular and special meetings, provided the Pastor approves. In this circumstance, the Council can discuss matters, but cannot make final decisions.

When a Pastor leaves a parish through transfer, retirement, or death, all formal activity of the Council ceases until the new Pastor or assigned administrator reconvenes the Council. A new Pastor would be wise to seek counsel from the existing Council to become more informed about the nature of the parish community. He should be very reluctant to dissolve the Council, even though it is his prerogative to do so.

THE PASTORAL COUNCIL

The Council shall consist of the Pastor, Deacon(s), and additional members to be determined by the Pastor. For adequate representation and effective operation, the Council should consist of at least five and no more than twelve lay representatives.

The Council may be formed through a process of appointment by the Pastor, discernment by the parish community, or by a combination of these processes.

If the Council is formed through discernment, the Pastor and parish community must follow the Discernment Process outlined in Appendix 1 of this document (see page 9).

The Council cannot be dissolved without consultation with the Bishop.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR COUNCIL MEMBERS

Council members should be people that are willing to commit themselves toward improvement in parish life.

Council members must:

- be a baptized Catholic;
- be registered in the parish;
- demonstrate a commitment to the parish community
- commit themselves to spiritual growth;
- commit themselves to skills development as part of the Christian leadership process;
- be willing to commit the necessary time and energy to offer effective consultation;
- be willing to support, encourage, and diligently work toward implementation of Synod recommendations;
- be familiar with programs of various diocesan commissions and/or standing committees; and,
- be willing to take the time and make the effort to open themselves to the training and group process of the formation of Council rationale.

In rare circumstances, an exception can be made to these qualifications with the approval of the Pastor.

In light of their administrative role, parish staff may not serve as members of the Council.

The Chairperson of the Finance Council is an ex-officio member of the Council, meaning that the Chairperson of the Finance Council may participate in Council meetings but not in Council decision-making.

Each individual member of the Council must attend the necessary training that provides a full understanding of the functions of the Council, its interrelationships with other parish organizations, and its responsibility to the Church as a whole.

TERMS OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

New Council members shall begin service from the day of their formal installation by the Pastor.

The term of each Council member shall be 2 or 3 years, or as may be determined by the Pastor and in consultation with the Council. Council members' terms will be staggered by year, for the sake of continuity.

Members who have served a full term shall not succeed themselves; however, they may be appointed by the Pastor to fill an unexpired term vacancy. Any person may serve again after one year has elapsed since the person's last term of office

An unexpired term vacancy occurring on the Council may be filled through appointment by the Pastor, in consultation with the Council. The person appointed shall serve the unexpired term until the next scheduled Council formation. The Pastor shall not be obligated to fill an unexpired vacancy at any time prior to the next scheduled Council formation.

PROCEDURE TO REMOVE COUNCIL MEMBERS FROM OFFICE

Council members who fail to uphold their responsibilities (e.g., failure to attend or participate in three (3) consecutive Council meetings, failure to respect the work and authority of the Council, etc.) may be asked to resign or be terminated from the Council by the joint action of the Pastor and the Council Chairperson.

Prior to being asked to resign or be terminated by the Council, the Council member in question must appear before the Pastor to discuss the circumstances affecting the member's inability to uphold his or her responsibilities.

PASTORAL COUNCIL LEADERSHIP

The Council's leadership shall consist of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary, and Assistant Secretary. The Council Chairperson is appointed by the Pastor. The appointment of other Council members to the remaining leadership positions will be made by consensus of the Council.

The duties of the Chairperson are to:

- coordinate and facilitate the work of the Council;
- coordinate, as directed by the Pastor, among the parish's standing ministries; and,
- other duties as determined by the Pastor.

The duties of the Vice-Chairperson are to:

- assist the Chairperson in carrying out the duties outlined in above;
- act as the Chairperson in that officer's absence; and,
- other duties as determined by the Pastor and the Chairperson.

The duties of the Secretary are to:

- prepare and distribute the minutes of Council meetings; and,
- other duties as determined by the Pastor and the Chairperson.

The duties of the Assistant Secretary are to:

- assist the Secretary in carrying out the duties outlined above;
- act as the Secretary in that officer's absence; and,
- other duties as determined by the Pastor, Chairperson, and Secretary.

MEETINGS

This Council shall conduct regular meetings and hold a minimum of six (6) regular meetings in a year.

Regular meetings will be held at a date and time to be determined by the Council. Meeting dates and times may be changed by the Pastor and/or Council Chairperson in consultation with Council members. Special consideration will be made in regard to Holy Days of Obligation and parish activities.

The Pastor or Council leadership may call special meetings of the Council, provided at least three (3) days notice has been given. If, in the judgment of the Pastor and/or Council Chairperson, urgent business must be transacted, the Pastor and/or Council Chairperson may call special meetings without having given three (3) days notice.

Two-thirds (2/3) of the Council members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business in any meeting of this Council.

Council members shall attend all regular and special meetings. If a Council member is unable to attend a meeting, that absence may be excused by the Pastor, provided the Council member notifies the Pastor, either in writing or via telephone, in advance of the meeting. In the event that the Council member is unable to notify the Pastor, the Council member should notify the Council Chairperson, either in writing or via telephone, in advance of the meeting.

The meetings of the Council should, to the extent possible, be open to parishioners who may wish to attend as observers unless their input is requested by the Council; however, active participation in the consensus building process during the meeting is reserved for the Council members.

While an atmosphere of openness is important, some situations and matters to be discussed by the Council need to be kept confidential. In those circumstances, the Council may choose to meet in “closed” session.

Meeting minutes should reflect the proceedings of all business transacted at the Council meeting.

The Council’s procedure for reporting the results of Council meetings to the parish community will consist of publishing/posting monthly Council updates on the parish website and bulletin board, in addition to at least one monthly insert/article in the parish bulletin.

PASTORAL COUNCIL AGENDA

An agenda should be prepared prior to each meeting to enhance conducting the meeting in a professional manner.

The Pastor and Council Chairperson should set out an agenda. Agenda items for consideration must be submitted prior to the setting of the agenda.

Council meeting agenda and any accompanying papers will be sent out one (1) week prior to the meetings so that the Pastor and Council members may have time to consider matters prior to the meeting. Special meetings would be exempt from posting the agenda one week in advance.

The topics for discussion at the Council meeting will be posted in the church one week prior to the meeting. Names and phone numbers of Council members may be listed on the posted agenda so parishioners can contact Council members and express their views on the agenda items to be discussed.

COUNCIL DECISION MAKING

The Council will, to the extent feasible, make decisions based on consensus.

Consensus decisions are mutually agreed upon decisions which Council members can accept as the will of the spirit for the Council at the time the decisions are made.

If the Council cannot make decisions by consensus, it will make decisions by voice or ballot vote, provided a quorum is present.

All Council decisions must be approved by the Pastor.

APPEALS PROCESS FOR PARISH COMMUNITY

If any parishioner feels strongly that the Pastor and/or Council are not following the intent of the diocesan norms for Pastoral Councils, they may appeal through the following procedure:

1. A formal letter signed by the parishioner(s) will be submitted to the Council describing their concerns and why they feel the intent of the diocesan norms were not followed.
2. The Pastor and the Council have an opportunity to correct or resolve the appeal.
3. If resolution of the appeal is not obtained to the satisfaction of the parishioner(s), the Council will vote either to reconsider the appeal or send it to the Dean for resolution. Simple majority vote of the Council will prevail.
4. The parishioner's letter, along with the minutes of the Council meeting discussing the appeal and a statement by the Pastor and/or the Council on their position in the matter will be forwarded to the Dean for his deliberation.
5. If not resolved by the Dean, all documentation, including the Dean's position, will be sent to the Bishop for deliberation and ultimate resolution. The Bishop will respond in writing within thirty (30) days.

AMENDMENTS TO THE PASTORAL COUNCIL GUIDELINES

The Council will develop its recommendations for amendments by consensus. Should consensus not be attained, a simple majority of the Council members present shall prevail.

Proposed amendments and changes to the Council Norms shall be posted and available for review by all parishioners at least one (1) month prior to consideration at the scheduled Council meeting.

These Norms may be amended at any meeting of the Council, provided a quorum is present, by 2/3 vote of the members present and voting.

Amendments to the Council Norms will be approved by the Pastor on recommendation of the Council.

Amended Norms shall be promulgated through the Holy Cross parish community and shall take effect after review by the Dean or Bishop's designee.

EFFECTIVE DATE

The Pastoral Council Norms for Holy Cross Catholic Church take effect immediately upon the signature of the Pastor and the members of the Council.

Fr. Michael Ajewole, MSP Date
Pastor

Gene Phillips Date
Chairperson

Lena Brown-Owens Date
Vice-Chairperson

Dr. Avis Wallace Date
Secretary

Emmanuel Opara Date
Assistant Secretary

Don Cooper Date
Member

Dr. Exalton Delco, Jr. Date
Member

Johnnie Dorsey, Sr. Date
Member

Tyra Duncan-Hall Date
Member

Peggy Fernandes Date
Member

Veronique Johnson Date
Member

Edward Mullen Date
Member

APPENDIX 1 – DISCERNMENT PROCESS

Overview

Discernment is one process by which a parish community can select Council members. Acknowledging that all are called to ministry through baptism and all are gifted for ministry by the Spirit, the discernment process provides for prayerful consideration of God's call and the gifts needed for the unique ministry of leadership through Pastoral Council service. The discernment process itself is based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Every person involved is asked to pray in preparation for this meeting and especially to pray to attain an "indifference" to all but God's will.

It is very important that candidates for Pastoral Council understand the role and function of the Council; the gifts needed to serve effectively; and, the time required on a regular basis. Only with this knowledge can a candidate make an intelligent, prayerful decision about his/her suitability.

When Council members are selected through discernment, the following norms apply:

1. The Council shall consist of the Pastor, Deacon(s), and additional members to be determined by the Pastor.
2. The Pastor shall determine how many Council members are selected through a discernment process and how many are selected by either appointment, election, or a combination of appointment and election.
3. The terms of members selected through the discernment process shall be determined by the Pastor in consultation with the Council.
4. The discernment appointee may be selected from candidates in subsequent selections or from among other eligible parishioners, as the Pastor may deem appropriate.
5. The discernment selection process will be conducted to fill any vacancy caused by an expired term with the new Council member(s) beginning at a time to be determined by the Council.
6. An unexpired term vacancy occurring on the Council may be filled by appointment by the Pastor in consultation with the Council; however, the person appointed shall serve the unexpired term until the next scheduled discernment process.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR CANDIDATES FOR DISCERNMENT

A candidate for discernment must meet the general qualifications for membership on the Council, as stipulated in these Norms.

Parishioners may be nominated for participation in the discernment process by the Pastor and other members of the Pastoral team, by a parishioner, or through self nomination by any registered member of the parish.

STEPS OF DISCERNMENT

1. **Parish-wide Education:** This begins prior to asking parishioners to submit nominees' names. It is vital that parishioners understand the role and function of the Pastoral Council in order that they might call forth only those persons who are well suited for this ministry.
2. **Nominations:** Parishioners are asked to submit their own names or the names of the parishioners who would serve well as Council members.
3. **Invitation:** All those whose names are submitted are contacted by letter or phone and invited to the meeting of discernment.
4. **Explanation:** An explanation of the process of discernment has been given as part of the parish wide education.
5. **Meeting:** The candidates, current Council members, the Pastor, and a facilitator meet. The meeting time will be determined by the number of participants and the number of Council members to be selected.

DISCERNMENT MEETING PROCEEDINGS

General Guidelines: The whole meeting is presented in an attitude of prayer. There will be questions asked of the candidates but this is not a debate. It is a dialogue where all are heard. The main advantage of the process over a strictly democratic election is that it depends on each person's seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit as the gifts and beliefs of each candidate are considered. The method respects individuals and minimizes feelings of competition, while providing a prayerful, peaceful and contemplative atmosphere for this important selection of Pastoral Council members.

1. The meeting will begin with prayer. Each person is given paper. Scripture is read. The facilitator then asks each participant to pray silently for guidance regarding two questions.
2. There is time allowed for personal prayer and writing.

3. The facilitator then asks each participant being called by God to write their name on the paper and they are picked up.
4. The facilitator opens the papers to determine those who have indicated a person willing to serve. Those who have indicated a willingness to serve and whose name also appears as being called forth become the candidates for discernment and their names are written on a chalkboard.
5. Candidates are asked forth for introduction to the people present, from this point on only the candidates whose names appear on the board respond to the questions posed by the facilitator. Everyone present, however, participates in the balloting.
6. The facilitator asks another question to the candidates.
7. Following their response scripture is read and personal prayer and reflection take place.
8. Everyone is asked to write the names of two candidates (on individual pieces of paper), who would serve well as Council members. Only the facilitator sees the ballots once they are collected. Discernment focuses on who is being called.
9. The facilitator declares if someone is called. Others remain as candidates for subsequent rounds.
10. The questions, scripture, prayers continue until the number required is discerned.