

# **ST. JAMES CATHOLIC CHURCH PASTORAL COUNCIL BY-LAWS**

## **ARTICLE I STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The Pastoral Council of St. James Catholic Church strives to further the mission of our parish and unite its people in a community of prayer, service, and faithfulness. As a representative group of the congregation, the Pastoral Council assists the Pastor in the responsibility of carrying out the mission of the Church and supporting the faith growth of the community. By responding to the needs of the parishioners, the Council encourages the congregation to open their hearts and minds to the possibilities of living this mission and integrating their faith into all aspects of their lives.

## **ARTICLE II FUNCTIONS OF THE PASTORAL COUNCIL**

### **SECTION 1 Life of Parishioners**

The Pastoral Council shall:

- A. work to help parishioners integrate their faith into the fabric of home, work, and community life.
- B. engage in a process of planning, formation and support of activities that respond to the needs of parishioners.
- C. provide opportunities for parishioners to grow in holiness and in their relationship with God and the entire faith community.

### **SECTION 2 Development of a Vital Christian Community**

The Pastoral Council in conjunction with the pastor shall:

- A. recognize the pastor as the chief administrator of the parish and assist the Pastor in the development of a vital Christian community.
- B. assist in developing the parish as a community of faith and service.
- C. help to build a sense of community through belonging and participation in the parish.
- D. support and assist the work of existing groups and ministries within the parish.
- E. plan for the ongoing life and development of the parish faith community by assessing the needs of the parish.
- F. set long-term and short-term pastoral goals and objectives for the future of the parish and bring projects to fruition.
- G. make decisions consistent with faith and morals, church and civil laws, diocesan policy, and gospel values.

- H. communicate consistently in an easily available manner to all parish members.

## **ARTICLE III MEMBERSHIP**

Members of the Pastoral Council are chosen to “reflect the wisdom of the entire people of God” (Canon Law 512, 2).

### **SECTION 1 Size of the Pastoral Council**

- A. The St. James Pastoral Council shall consist of:
  - 1. The Pastor
    - a. The Pastor ratifies all Pastoral Councils decisions and does not vote with the Council.
  - 2. Associate Pastor(s)
    - a. The Associate Pastor(s) is a member of the pastoral staff and serves as a non-voting member of the council.
  - 3. Deacon(s)
    - a. Any Deacons who serve the parish as part of the pastoral staff are non-voting members of the council.
  - 4. Ten (10) adult members nominated by the congregation and selected through a discernment process.
  - 5. Two (2) Youth non-voting representatives appointed by the Director of Religious Education in cooperation with the High School Youth Director or the equivalent position.
- B. Parish staff members are not members of the Pastoral Council but may be asked from time to time to attend council meetings to provide information and assistance and serve as a valuable resource.

### **SECTION 2 Membership Eligibility**

- A. Pastoral Council members must meet the following criteria:
  - 1. Be a baptized, confirmed and practicing Catholic.
  - 2. Be a registered and active member of St. James Parish (ideally for at least 5 years).
  - 3. Be at least 18 years of age (selected adult members) or at least 16 years of age (appointed youth members).
- B. In addition, members should have, but are not limited to, some of the following qualities:
  - 1. Prayerful with an awareness of God being active in one's life.
  - 2. Have the desire for spiritual growth.
  - 3. Be open to and able to discern the work of the Holy Spirit.
  - 4. Possess a servant's heart as a representative of the whole parish community.
  - 5. Take a community view of issues rather than an individual or small group perspective.

6. Is committed to and enthusiastic towards the present and future of the parish and its pastoral priorities.
7. Is cooperative, flexible, and open to people and ideas.
8. Have a reputation for integrity.
9. Possess good communication and listening skills, as well as critical thinking skills.
10. Recognize the unique gifts of and collaborate with others.
11. Inspire and empower others to take part in the ongoing parish and Church mission of bringing Christ to all people and all people to Christ.

### **SECTION 3 Term of Office**

- A. Nominated and discerned adult members:
  1. will serve a four (4) year term of office with the possibility of renewal or re-appointment by the council and/or the Pastor for another 4-year term. The terms of office for Council members are staggered to assure stability and continuity within the Council.
  2. may serve only two consecutive terms for a total of eight (8) years.
  3. must wait a period of three (3) years from the end of the member's final term of office to be nominated again by the congregation and participate in discernment for another term of office.
- B. Youth members will:
  1. serve a one (1) year term of office.
  2. act as a resource to communicate the pastoral needs of the youth of the parish.
  3. be involved in the functions and responsibilities of the Council.
  4. participate in the activities of the council as deemed necessary by the Council members.

### **SECTION 4 Nomination and Discernment Process**

Any member of the parish who meets the required qualifications listed in the Pastoral Council By-Laws (See Article III, Sec. 2.) is eligible for nomination to the council.

- A. Nomination Process
  1. No later than the end of January, members of the Council will speak briefly before each Mass on a designated weekend to the congregation about the role, function, member eligibility and nomination process, inviting people to discern a call for service to become a Pastoral Council member.
  2. Information about the need for new Pastoral Council members and an invitation for serving on the council will be made available on the parish website and publicized in the bulletin and on approved St. James social media sites.
  3. Parishioners may nominate themselves or any individuals that meet eligibility requirements by contacting one of the current Council members or the Pastor.

4. Nominations will end on a date in February designated by the current Council and said date will be communicated to the parish congregation.

**B. Discernment Process**

1. The nominees will be contacted by a Council member who will share what is involved in council membership, the qualities needed to be a member of this leadership body, and an introduction to the discernment process.
2. The Director of Discernment, appointed by the Pastor, will contact those nominees who agree to continue.
3. Candidates wishing to continue meet as a group with the Discernment Director several times to discuss and share with each other what they feel are the pastoral needs of the parish, as well as their gifts and talents, hopes and dreams, fears, and concerns.
4. The discernment process must be completed by the end of May with the selection of new members. Two (2) alternate members will be selected in case a vacancy on the Council occurs.
5. All members will be introduced to the parish congregation and commissioned into service during a Sunday Mass before the first meeting in August.

**SECTION 5 Attendance and Vacancies**

**A. Attendance**

1. Members are expected to attend all scheduled meetings in a prompt manner.
2. Members are expected to attend parish functions where the Pastoral Council presence is required, as determined by the Pastor and/or Executive Committee.
3. A Council member will be considered for termination after three (3) unexcused meeting absences in a calendar year. The Pastor, in consultation with the Pastoral Council Executive Committee, will be the final deciding authority.

**B. Vacancies**

1. Any Council member may resign by submitting a resignation to the Pastor and/or Chairperson.
2. The remaining term of the vacancy shall be filled by an individual who has been discerned and had agreed to serve as an alternate during the last discernment process.
3. If there are no alternates who are available to serve, the Pastor may appoint a parish member to fill the remaining term of the vacancy, or the vacancy may be left open until the next nomination and discernment is held.
4. The Pastor, in consultation with the Executive Committee, may release an individual from the Council if he deems it in the best interest of the Council due to activities or behavior inconsistent with our faith and the goals of the Council. The member involved in such an action shall have an opportunity to meet with the Pastor and the Chairperson to see if reconciliation can be achieved.

## **SECTION 6 Executive Committee**

- A. The Executive Committee of the Pastoral Council will be comprised of:
  - 1. Pastor
  - 2. Chairperson
  - 3. Vice-Chairperson
  - 4. Secretary
- B. Election of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Secretary
  - 1. The choice of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Secretary is to be done in a spirit of prayer to discern those Council members with the gifts needed to carry out the responsibilities of each role.
  - 2. Election of the Chairperson will occur by secret ballot without nomination. Should the voting result in a no candidate receiving a majority of votes, a second round of voting by secret ballot of the two candidates receiving the most votes will occur. The Council member with the most votes will be elected Chairperson and the remaining candidate will be elected Vice-Chairperson.
  - 3. The Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson should possess the following additional qualities needed for office:
    - a. Prayerful, leading through faith.
    - b. open-minded to all ideas and possibilities.
    - c. organized, yet flexible.
    - d. compassionate and empathetic to all.
    - e. have the time and dedication to fulfill what is needed to accomplish Council objectives and goals.
    - f. has the vision, but more importantly, the grace to recognize the needs of all involved.
  - 4. Election of officers will occur at the last regular meeting of the year in May.
  - 5. The term of office for elected members of the Executive Committee will be for one (1) year.
  - 6. Elected members of the Executive Committee may be re-elected to their position for an additional year of service by the Council.
  - 7. No officer shall serve more than two (2) consecutive years in the same position.
  - 8. In the event of the resignation or incapacitation of the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson shall succeed the office of the Chairperson and the open position of the Vice-Chairperson will be filled by a member selected by a simple majority secret ballot vote of the Council.
  - 9. The Secretary will be elected by secret ballot in the same manner as the Chairperson. If no candidate receives a majority of votes, a second round of secret ballot voting will occur of the two candidates receiving the most votes. The candidate with the most votes will be elected Secretary.
  - 10. Council members have the right to decline the position on the Executive Committee for which they were elected. In the case of a member declining the

elected position, the next member receiving a majority of votes will receive the position.

C. Duties of Executive Committee members

1. Pastor:

- a. Leads the process of discernment, expression, and fulfillment of the parish's mission in his role as Presider of the Pastoral Council.
- b. Attends all meetings of the Council and participates in the discussion and decision-making process.
- c. Prior to the group's coming to consensus, the Pastor is obligated to raise questions or objections relating to issues that could affect the outcome of the decision.
- d. Ratifies the decision when consensus occurs.
- e. Does not facilitate the meetings but rather oversees and participates in all council deliberations shedding light on church teachings and parish or diocesan background and/or guidelines, and actively listens to council's deliberations.
- f. Sets the agenda for each meeting in collaboration with the Chairperson.
- g. Calls any special meetings of the council as needed.
- h. Sees that the council performs its duties and gives the council direction and assistance when necessary.
- i. Oversees the election of Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Secretary.

2. Chairperson:

- a. Communicates with the Pastor prior to each Council meeting to develop the meeting agenda.
- b. Notifies members of the prepared agenda one week prior to the meeting for any additions or changes.
- c. Sends the finalized copy of the agenda to all members several days prior to the meeting.
- d. Facilitates the meetings of the Council by stating the agenda issue or question, inviting discussion without indicating what solution is to be reached and providing time for prayer and reflection if needed.
- e. Monitors the time frame for each agenda item, respectfully allowing adequate time for comments and discussion.
- f. Encourages all Pastoral Council members to participate actively and express ideas freely.
- g. Ensures that the Council functions according to its By-laws.
- h. Coordinates the activities and processes of the Council.
- i. Appoints members to implement and coordinate specific activities of the Council.
- j. Motivates the members and/or sub-committees of the Council to fulfill their specific responsibilities.
- k. Establishes processes for evaluation of Pastoral Council's effectiveness in meeting goals and objectives formulated from parish assessment.

3. Vice-Chairperson:
  - a. Serves as Parliamentarian for the Council.
  - b. Schedules and oversees periodic parish surveys or assessments to update the parish plan and vision, minimally every five to six years and after a new pastor is assigned.
  - c. Arrange for the necessary physical requirements such as reserving halls or rooms and securing needed tables, chairs, etc. for the regular and special meetings, and activities of the Pastoral Council.
  - d. Serves to assist the Chairperson in conducting the Council's work.
  - e. Assumes all the duties and responsibilities of the chairperson when he/she is unable to serve.
4. Secretary:
  - a. Sends notification of upcoming regular and special meetings to the church bulletin editor for publication in the bulletin two weeks prior to the meeting.
  - b. Keeps complete and accurate minutes of all council meetings including attendance. (A preferred option would be to have the minutes of each meeting scribed by a non-member of the Council and then given to the Secretary for dissemination.)
  - c. Sends minutes of the meeting promptly after the meeting to Council members for approval.
  - d. Sends an approved copy of minutes electronically to the St. James webmaster for publication on the church website and any other dissemination to the parish.
  - e. Handles any Pastoral Council correspondence.
  - f. Encourages and supports communications between the Pastoral Council and the parishioners, such as publishing short notes in the bulletin on the activities of the Pastoral Council.

## **ARTICLE IV MEETINGS**

### **SECTION 1 Regular meetings**

1. The Pastoral Council shall meet once a month and at other times when called by the Pastor and Executive Committee.
2. Regular Council meetings will be held monthly from August through May of each calendar year. There will be no regular meeting in June or July.
3. Meetings will be held on the second Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m.
4. A prepared agenda for each meeting should include time for prayer, study/reflection, sharing, old, new, and miscellaneous business, and evaluation.
5. Regular meetings should never exceed two hours in length. The ideal time length should be sixty to ninety minutes.
6. Meetings cancelled due to weather or unforeseen circumstances shall be rescheduled within that month. No more than one meeting per calendar year can be cancelled and not rescheduled.

7. All meetings scheduled shall be published in the parish bulletin and parish website.
8. The minutes of all meetings shall be published on the parish website and in the weekly parish bulletin following the meeting in a timely matter.
9. All meetings of the Parish Council shall be open to any registered member or staff of the Parish, with prior notification to the Chairperson so that adequate space can be provided.
10. Parish members or staff may be recognized by the Chairperson to address the Pastoral Council by placing an item for discussion on the agenda. Agenda items must be submitted in writing to the Chairperson a minimum of 3 days prior to the meeting and approved by the Pastor.

## **SECTION 2 Special meetings**

1. There may be a time when a special meeting of the Pastoral Council needs to be scheduled.
2. Special meetings may only be scheduled by the Pastor with assistance from the Chairperson.
3. Pastoral Council members will be given a minimum of three (3) days' notice of a special meeting via email, text or phone call stating the time, place, and purpose for the meeting.
4. Because of the urgency of this type of meeting, Council members are expected to be in attendance in person or virtually.
5. Any special meeting is limited in scope to the topic for which the special meeting was called.

## **SECTION 3 Decision-Making**

1. The goal of the St. James Pastoral Council in making any decision shall be by consensus.
2. The consensus decision-making process involves:
  - a. identifying issues
  - b. clarifying questions
  - c. establishing decision-making criteria
  - d. addressing all concerns
  - e. listening to all perspectives
  - f. resolving any issues
  - g. making choices
  - h. developing strategies
3. Consensus can be defined as a decision that satisfies all participants and honors the wisdom of the committee.
4. Consensus in decision-making does not mean that all Council members agree on all the details or that some members have changed their ideas or opinions.



5. A consensus decision:
  - a. reflects a mutual understanding.
  - b. is an agreement by all to support a decision in the best interest of the whole community.
  - c. is a commitment by all to act for the benefit of the entire committee.
6. If the Council cannot reach a consensus, the agenda item will be tabled until the next meeting, giving members time to do research to resolve any concerns. Priority will be given to the item at the next meeting.
7. All decisions and actions will be ratified by the Pastor. Ratification will automatically be presumed unless otherwise indicated.
8. If ratification does not occur, the Pastor will explain his reasons and recommend that the decision be reconsidered. The decision will be tabled and added to next month's meeting agenda.

## **ARTICLE V AMENDMENTS**

The St. James Pastoral Council By-Laws serve as a guideline for the operation of the Council and should be reviewed by the Council yearly. These By-Laws may be amended when deemed necessary.

### **SECTION 1 Proposed Amendments**

1. Amendments may be proposed at the annual review of this document.
2. At other times other than the annual review, changes may be proposed by any member of the Pastoral Council.
3. A proposed amendment(s) shall be submitted in writing to the other members of the Council and placed on the agenda for discussion and approval at the next regular meeting.

### **SECTION 2 Amendment Approval**

1. A two-thirds vote of Council members in attendance at the meeting will be necessary to approve the proposed amendment.
2. These By-Laws and any future amendments shall become effective immediately following their adoption by the Council.

*Ratified on May 8, 2023*