

By-Laws of

Parish Advisory Councils For the Diocese of Newton

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There are two documents that make up the By-Laws of the Parish Advisory Councils

Document One – By-Laws of the Parish Advisory Councils

Document Two - Financial Regulations and Directives of the Eparchy of Newton

This document is meant to be a guideline for Parishes and Missions of the Diocese of Newton. While it can be adapted to what would be appropriate for an individual parish it is expected to be followed as an outline for operation for each Parish and Mission of the Diocese.

By-Laws of Parish Advisory Councils

PREAMBLE:

Realizing that Apostolic succession is assured in the person of the Eparch and the churches of his diocese are united to him in order to achieve unity in Christ, and

Realizing that the Eparch designates priests to act as pastors or administrators of his parishes and missions as well as to represent the Eparch among the faithful, and

Realizing that it is through the priests that the Eparch governs the community of the faithful which is the foundation of our entire Christian life, and the Church itself being a community of faith and love in the Risen Christ and privileged dwelling place for the presence and action of the Holy Spirit, and

Realizing that together, the Eparch, priests and faithful form the same unique community in which they work with one another for the maintenance and sustenance of the Body of Christ, each according to their office and abilities:

Therefore, in light of these principles, the apostolic work of the Parish Advisory Councils should take initiative, and from these principles, derive their effectiveness. In all its deliberations, the Parish Advisory Councils have their ideal in the example of Christ, who gave us a new vision of true service. They shall be an instrument for deepening and nourishing Christian life in ourselves and others. In placing all their gifts and talents at the service of a common spiritual cause, the members of the Parish Advisory Councils and the community of the faithful seek to promote Christian life. A parish or mission shall consist of all its registered clergy and lay members in good standing.

ARTICLE: 1 Organization:

There shall be three Parish Advisory Councils: the Parish Pastoral Council, the Parish Finance Council, and the Parish Property Council which are advisory in nature and derive their authority from the Eparchial Bishop through the Pastor. In each case having a Parish Pastoral Council, Parish Finance Council and Parish Property Council is a Diocesan requirement, not optional.

Section 1

The Parish Pastoral Council shall act as a representative body of the whole community of God in the Parish. It shall meet, deliberate and act in common agreement on those matters for which it is responsible and which concern the good of the Parish, except those matters reserved by Universal Church Law, Patriarchal Synod, or Eparchial Authority. It shall confer with and advise the Pastor on matters, which are brought to its attention and promote the Christian life and actions of the people of the Parish to the fulfillment of our Eastern Christian traditions and requirements. Parish Pastoral Council meetings shall be open to all parishioners.

Section 2

The Parish Finance Council shall act in the best interests of the whole community of God in the Parish. It shall meet, deliberate and act in common agreement on those matters for which it is responsible and which concern the good of the Parish, except those matters reserved by Universal Church Law, Patriarchal Synod, or Eparchial Authority. It shall confer with and advise the Pastor on financial and legal matters which are brought to its attention. Parish Finance Council Meetings are not open to all parishioners unless deemed necessary by the Parish Finance Council and or the Pastor.

Section 3

The Parish Property Council shall act in the best interests of the whole community of God in the Parish. It shall meet, deliberate and act in common agreement on those matters for which it is responsible and which concern the good of the Parish, except those matters reserved by Universal Church Law, Patriarchal Synod, or Eparchial Authority. It shall confer with and advise the Pastor on matters pertaining to Parish physical property which are brought to its attention. Parish Property Council meetings are not open to all parishioners unless deemed necessary by the Parish Property Council and or the Pastor.

Section 4

Proposed Council members to be recognized as being a member in good standing must be a parishioner for a period of not less than two years, at least 18 years of age and must have fulfilled the canonical requirements of faith.

Section 5

While most of their activities will be advisory and implemental, actions of a Council will also be considered binding when, together with the Pastor, the members of the Council deliberate and act upon those matters within their sphere of competency. Any matter may be considered for discussion, and due action may be taken, except in those cases where the Pastor, in his judgment, must exercise his veto power.

Section 6

In the event the Pastor exercises his veto power, the members shall have the right to restudy the issue. If there is consensus and the Pastor again exercises his veto power, the members may appeal to the Eparchial Bishop for redress, provided that there is consensus to do so.

Section 7

Formation of Council members is essential to having effective Parish Advisory Councils. See Article 6, Section 4 for recommendations about Council formation.

ARTICLE 2: Parish Pastoral Council

Section 1: Composition

A – Large Parish: 200 + families. The Parish Pastoral Council shall consist of a maximum of 20 and a minimum of 10 ex-officio, elected, and appointed members.

B – Medium Parish: 100 – 200 families. The Parish Pastoral Council shall consist of a maximum of 14 and a minimum of 7 ex-officio, elected, and appointed members.

C – Small Parish: less than 100 families. The Parish Pastoral Council shall consist of a maximum of 7 and a minimum of 5 ex-officio, elected, and appointed members.

D – Mission: The Parish Pastoral Council shall consist of 5 consulters who assist the pastor in running the Mission and are recommended by the elders of the Mission.

Section 2: Ex-Officio Members

- The parish pastor, who presides at all meetings of the Council, shall be a non-voting member.
- The immediate past chairperson of the Council is a member for a period of one (1) year.
- Chairpersons of organized societies (having by-laws, officers, and treasury); Men, Women, and Young Adults (or equivalent), religious education coordinator, and youth advisor (NAMY/MAYA).
- Members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council
- The chairperson of the annual convention (when applicable).

Section 3: Elected Members

- The Parish Pastoral Council should have 2/3rds of its members elected by the parish at large. Up to 14 elected members for large parishes, up to 10 for medium parishes, and up to 4 for small parishes.
- The term of office shall be staggered two (2) year term. One half of those members are to be elected each year.
- Elected members can serve two full consecutive terms only. They are ineligible for re-election for a period of one term.

Section 4: Appointed Members

- The Pastor shall appoint parishioners to the Council to complement the numbers of ex-officio and elected members to the maximum limit of the Council as indicated in Section 2 above.
- Members shall be appointed for one (1) year term.

Section 5: Vacancies

- Vacancies of appointed members shall be filled by the pastor.
- Vacancies of elected members shall be filled by the person with the next highest vote obtained at the last election.
- Any member absent without due reason for three consecutive meetings shall forfeit his membership and be so notified. This notification shall be in writing by a letter signed by both the pastor and parish council chairperson.
- A vacancy shall also exist upon the death of a member or upon resignation of a member.

Section 6: Elections

- The Council shall appoint a nominating committee of parishioners, who are members and non members of the Council, to recommend suitable candidates for membership on the Council. The appointment procedure shall be as set forth in the by-laws of the Council.
- Candidates may be included on the ballot by filing a nomination petition with the chairperson of the nominating committee at least three weeks prior to the election. This petition must contain signatures of at least 10 parishioners.
- The election of those nominated shall be held on the first Sunday in May, and such elections shall be by secret ballot of all parishioners 18 years of age and over. The election procedures shall be as set forth in the by-laws of the Council.

Section 7: Officers

- The Parish Pastoral Council shall elect from among its members the following officers, who with the Pastor shall constitute, the Executive Committee, to serve for a period of at least one year:

Chairperson
Vice-Chairperson
Secretary

- An officer of the Council must have served on the Council for one to two years
- The officers can only be elected from the elected and appointed members
- Chairperson can serve no more than two consecutive terms
- Ex-officio members are not eligible to be elected as officers

The decision-making process of the Parish Pastoral Council will be by consensus as explained in Article 6 Section 3.

Section 8: Annual Report

An annual report of the activities of the Parish Pastoral Council shall be prepared and forwarded by the pastor and the chairperson to the Eparch as well as the parishioners at the General Assembly meeting. Any individual of the General Assembly may bring any matter of concern directly to the attention of the General Assembly for consideration at the annual meeting.

ARTICLE 3: The Parish Finance Council

Section 1

The Parish Finance Council shall be appointed by the Pastor to advise on financial and legal matters as necessary. There shall be a minimum of three members with at least five members for a large parish. As a reference they will be required to follow the Financial Regulations and Directives of the Eparchy of Newton as Revised December 15, 2006

Section 2

The Parish Finance Council shall consist of members proficient in financial and legal matters. The Parish Financial Council shall:

- a. Supply expertise in financial matters
- b. Manage parish and organizational budgets
- c. Handle parish legal matters and insurance needs
- d. Supervise and audit all bookkeeping and accounting procedures
- e. Coordinate fund raising
- f. Manage parish stewardship
- g. Create and manage committees that apply to Parish financial needs

Section 3

The Parish Finance Council will comply with the Diocesan Financial Reporting requirements as outlined in the Diocesan Regulations which are part of this document.

Section 4

The Parish Finance Council will submit an annual report at the Annual General Assembly. The reports will consist of:

- a. Income and Expense Report
- b. Balance Sheet
- c. Statement of Cash Flow

See article 6 Section 2 for recommended committees of the Parish Finance Council.

ARTICLE 4: The Parish Property Council

Section 1

The Parish Property Council shall be appointed by the Pastor to advise on matters pertaining to Parish property and goods. There shall be a minimum of three members.

Section 2

The Parish Property Council shall consist of members proficient in the areas of real estate, property maintenance, equipment maintenance, and property management. The Parish Property Council shall:

- a. Supply expertise in property matters
- b. Handle parish real estate matters
- c. Manage maintenance of parish property and equipment
- d. Plan future property enhancement or development projects

Section 3

The Parish Property Council responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- a. Guidelines outlined in the Diocesan Pastoral Handbook as it relates to property management.
- b. Where appropriate obtain a minimum of three bids prior to submitting to the Finance Council for review and then the Pastor for approve for repairs, maintenance and renovation budgets.
- c. Oversee all repairs, maintenance and renovation of church properties.

ARTICLE 5: Relationship between Councils

Section 1

Since activities of each Council impact each other, it is imperative that each Parish Advisory Council act only in cooperation with each other. Cooperation between Parish Advisory Councils will contribute highly to the welfare of the entire Parish

Section 2

In general, activities of each of the councils are interactive:

- The Pastoral and Property Council require funds as managed by the Finance Council.
- The Finance Council may take actions that affect the plans of the Pastoral or Property Council.
- All organizations within the Parish: committees, Council, clubs, etc. submit an annual budget to the Finance Council.

ARTICLE 6: Recommendations

Section 1 Size of Council

Keeping in mind that the Diocese of Newton consists of Parishes and Missions of varying sizes, these recommendations apply to roles within the Parish or Missions, not to individuals. Therefore, in smaller communities a person may have multiple roles as may be needed within each and any Parish Council or committee. However, in larger communities, larger Councils and committees may be required. The Pastor may use appointments of individuals to best meet Parish needs.

Section 2 Council responsibilities and suggested Committees

RESPONSIBILITIES		
Parish Pastoral Council	Parish Finance Council	Parish Property(or Maintenance) Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointed, Elected, Ex-officio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and manage committees that apply to the parish pastoral needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and manage committees that apply to the parish financial needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and manage committees that apply to the parish property needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Annual Reports to the parish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Annual Reports to the parish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Annual Reports to the parish
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply expertise in financial matters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply expertise in property matters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set Vision, Goals and Objectives of the parish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage parish and organizational budgets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handle parish real estate matters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage selection and Formation of members of all councils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handle parish legal matters and insurance needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage maintenance of parish property and equipment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold annual parish meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervise and audit all bookkeeping and accounting procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan future property enhancement or development projects
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate fund raising 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage parish stewardship 	
	SUGGESTED COMMITTEES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property Maintenance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment Maintenance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evangelization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund Raising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parish Life(Social) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insurance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real Estate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stewardship 	

The size of a Parish should determine the availability of individuals to serve in the capacities recommended. Recommendations of committees made here are optional and are not limited to those listed.

Section 3 Explanation of Consensus

The decision-making process of the Parish Advisory Councils will be by consensus as follows:

- Each Parish Advisory Council member is asked to prepare his or her own position as well as possible before the meeting but to realize that the task is incomplete and that the missing pieces are to be supplied by the other members of the council.
- Each Parish Advisory Council member is asked to recognize an obligation to express his/her own opinion and explain it fully so that the rest of the council will have the benefit of all the members' thinking.
- Each Parish Advisory Council member is asked to recognize an obligation to express his/her own opinion and explain it fully so that the rest of the council will have the benefit of all the members' thinking.
- Parish Advisory Council members are asked to recognize an obligation to listen to the opinions and feelings of all the other members and be ready to modify their own positions on the basis of logic and understanding.
- Parish Advisory Council members should realize that differences of opinion are helpful. In exploring differences, the best course of action will gradually make itself apparent; compromise begins only when members are ready to modify their positions.
- Conflict over ideas, methods, solutions, and so forth, should be seen as helping rather than hindering the process of reaching consensus.
- Problems are solved best when individual members accept responsibility for both hearing and being heard, so that all council members are included in what is decided
- Tension reducing behaviors can be useful so long as meaningful conflict is not "smoothed over" prematurely in an effort to keep the peace
- The best results flow from a fusion of information, logic, and emotion.
- Consensus decision reaching should be an aspect of shared ministry. It should be carried out in a context of Christian collaboration of co laborers in the same vineyard.

Section 4 Formation

Council Members, whether elected, appointed, or ex-officio participate in a sacred ministry for the parish. Each member of each Council is obligated to serve within the Council structure and be aware of how the Council operates. Therefore, each member must be committed to learn as much about Council service as possible. The Pastor, together with the Pastoral Council chairperson, must provide opportunities of formation to perspective and new members. Formation can take place individually or as a group. The diocesan Office of Education can provide materials to assist with such formation.

The recommendation is to have a series of formation meetings for new members prior to the start of their terms of service. This would be an annual event for those about to serve and those contemplating serving. The annual formation program should be designed to increase awareness, commitment and participation of council members.

It is further recommended that newly elected or appointed members attend council meetings prior to their term as observers. They should be provided copies of these guidelines, local parish by-laws, and any other diocesan materials pertinent to their particular area of service. Additional materials such as books, pamphlets, audio and video presentations, lectures and workshops can be used to educate past, present and potential council members. Training in leadership, organization, and communication is also helpful.