

**GUIDELINES
PARISH FINANCE COUNCILS
for the
DIOCESE OF DALLAS**

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Article I

THEOLOGICAL AND CANONICAL CONTEXT

1.1 **Parish**

The parish is a community of believers sharing in the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ. The 1983 revised Code of Canon Law emphasizes two principles for guiding a parish:

- the authority entrusted to the hierarchy
- the call for shared responsibility

Canon 519 states: “The pastor... exercises pastoral care over the community entrusted to him under the authority of the diocesan bishop, in whose ministry of Christ he has been called to share. In accord with the norm of law, he therefore carries out for his community the duties of teaching, sanctifying and governing with the cooperation of other priests or deacons and the assistance of lay members of the Christian faithful.”

Canon 204 states: “the Christian faithful are those who, inasmuch as they have been incorporated in Christ through baptism, have been constituted as the people of God... and have become sharers in Christ’s priestly, prophetic, and royal office...”

The documents of Vatican II emphasize further: “According to their particular gifts, their state of life, and their office in the Church, Christ’s faithful worship God in Spirit and truth, proclaim the gospel and care for the needs of their brothers in charity. Within this context, the laity is called to assist the pastor in the pastoral care of God’s people and in the administration of the temporal goods of the Church.” (Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity).

These principles, then, call for both clergy and laity to work with the church community so that the mission of Jesus Christ will continue in the world today.

1.2 CONSULTATION

A theological implication of shared responsibility is that the laity shares with the pastor responsibility for guiding the mission of which God calls the Church. In order for the Church to have the fullness of vision, the laity should be involved in decision making through the process of consultation.

Consultation – in the context of Church – establishes a structure whereby the Church – clergy and lay – attempt to listen to the Spirit who is leading the Church and speaking to it through gifts and experience, as well as through office and ordination.

1.3 PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL

The Parish Finance council is a consultative body authorized by Canon 537 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law, which states:

“Each Parish is to have a Finance Council which is regulated by universal law as well as by norm issued by the diocesan bishops; in this council the Christian faithful, selected according to the same norms, aid the pastor in the administration of parish goods with due regard for the prescription of Canon 532.”

Canon 532 states:

“The pastor represents the parish in all juridic affairs in accord with the norm of law; he is to see to it that the goods of the parish are administered in accord with the norms of Canons 1281-1288.”

There may be other consultative bodies within a parish such as Pastoral Councils, School Boards, Commissions, Special Committees, etc., therefore, it is important that effective coordination and operating procedures be developed in a collegial and supportive manner to ensure that all stewardship gifts are fully utilized.

Article II

PURPOSE OF THE PARISH FINANCIAL COUNCIL

2.1 PURPOSE

The Good News of the Gospel cannot be preached to God's people without consideration of the material needs, such as, finances, membership, physical plant, and present and future expansions.

The Finance Council of the parish is the consultative group which assists the pastor in carrying out the material administration of the parish. It has the obligation of planning, and supervising the financial affairs and physical properties of the parish. The Finance council is concerned with parish resources, the budget, church support, and the effective utilization and maintenance of the parish plant. In addition to its consultative role, the Bishop requires the approval of a Parish Financial Council for construction, major expenditures, etc.

2.2 SPIRITUAL GROWTH

The collaboration of the Finance council with the pastor and parish staff is intended to assist the pastor in his responsibility for the parish. The Finance Council serves the spiritual growth of the parish community and its work must be guided by the overall mission of the parish community. Time should be spent by the Finance Council to foster the spiritual growth of its members and to develop a deeper understanding of the Church.

Article III

STRUCTURE AND OPERATION OF PARISH FINANCIAL COUNCIL

3.1 MEMBERSHIP AND SIZE

The Pastor should appoint no less than three, but not more than nine members to the Finance Council, taking into consideration the following Diocesan guidelines regarding qualifications for membership:

- Pastor as administrative head of the parish (non-voting).
- Business Manager or Parish accountant (s) (non-voting).
- Parishioners-at-large who are skilled in planning, budgeting, maintenance, etc. in order to serve according to the mission of the parish.
- Where possible, parishioners who are professionals knowledgeable about financial management, accounting, general management or administration, banking, investment counseling, insurance, public relations, etc., and who are committed to the work of the Church.

3.2 TERMS OF OFFICE

Members are named by the pastor after due consultation for a one, two or three-year renewal terms taking into consideration the needs of the Council and the expertise of the members. Ideally, terms of office should be staggered to ensure continuity of expertise.

3.3 ORGANIZATION: CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

The Finance Council should prepare a Constitution and By-Laws to outline how it will be organized and operate. A sample Constitution and By-Laws is attached.

3.4 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICY & ACCOUNTING PROCEDURES

The Parish Financial Council should develop the Parish Financial Management policies and Parish Accounting Procedures.

3.5 MAJOR FUNCTIONS

The major functions of the Finance Council listed below relate to the effective administration of the parish goods. There will probably be numerous other ones depending upon the needs of the parish, the capabilities of the individuals serving on the Financial Council and the agreements with other parish bodies.

- A. To prepare annual parish budget.
- B. To review periodically the income and expenditures of the parish to determine that the budget is operative.
- C. To review all parish building programs and renovations.
- D. To provide parishioners with periodic and annual reports of the financial state of the parish.
- E. To inspect carefully all parish properties to that they remain in proper repair.
- F. To recommend the purchase or transfer of property in accordance with diocesan policy.
- G. To conduct the annual Diocesan Catholic Community Appeal, either directly or through a special committee.
- H. To conduct or assist in establishing effective means of raising the funds needed to attain the goals of the parish in carrying out the mission of the Church, (Annual Parish Drive, Special Appeals, etc.)
- I. To review all fundraising or other income-producing proposals, including parish run or supported business operations to ensure that these are consistent with the parish and diocesan mission and policies and to ensure that all appropriate diocesan approvals are obtained.
- J. To conform to the diocesan parish accounting systems and the various policies involving investment, insurance, and related items.
- K. To observe the diocesan regulation which allows only the pastor or parochial vicar to sign parish checks unless the bishop has provided otherwise in a particular case.
- L. To conduct or arrange for periodic audits of parish financial and accounting procedures and to assist with operational audits.

3.6 COORDINATION/COOPERATION WITH OTHER PARISH BODIES

The organizational structures will vary by parish, but it is vital that all consultative and advisory bodies and paid or voluntary staffs work together to assist the pastor to effectively distribute the parish goods. The Finance Council, for example, must provide support to the Pastoral Council to assist that body in reviewing parish priorities. If there is a School Board, it may be assigned a role in budgeting by the Pastor which will require coordination with the overall parish budget.

APPENDIX III 3.3

**MODEL CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS
FOR
PARISH FINANCIAL COUNCIL**

**CONSTITUTION
FOR
(Name of the Parish) PARISH FINANCIAL COUNCIL**

**ARTICLE I
NAME**

The name of the body shall be the Finance Council of *(name of parish)*, hereinafter referred to as the Finance Council.

**ARTICLE II
AUTHORITY**

The Finance Council is authorized by Canon 537 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law which states:

“Each Parish is to have a Finance Council which is regulated by universal law as well as by norm issued by the diocesan bishops; in this council the Christian faithful, selected according to the same norms, aid the pastor in the administration of parish goods with due regard for the prescription of Canon 532.”

Canon 532 states:

“The pastor represents the parish in all juridic affairs in accord with the norm of law; he is to see to it that the goods of the parish are administered in accord with the norms of Canons 1281-1288.”

ARTICLE III
MEMBERSHIP

In accordance with Diocesan policy, the Pastor will appoint no less than three, but not more than nine members to the Finance Council, taking into consideration the following Diocesan guidelines regarding qualifications for membership:

- Pastor as administrative head of the parish (non-voting).
- Business Manager or Parish accountant (s) (non-voting).
- Parishioners-at-large who are skilled in planning, budgeting, maintenance, etc in order to serve according to the mission of the parish.
- Where possible, parishioners who are professionals knowledgeable about financial management, accounting, general management or administration, banking, investment counseling, insurance, public relations, etc., and who are committed to the work of the Church.
- Members are to be named by the pastor after due consultation, for a one, two or three-year term; but having completed this term, they may be named to other terms.

ARTICLE IV
ORGANIZATION

One member of the Finance Council appointed by the Pastor or chosen by the members will serve as Chairperson. The length of the term, as well as the establishment of other officers, organizational structure, and operational policies are provided in the By-Laws.

ARTICLE V
PURPOSE

The Good News of the Gospel cannot be preached to God's people without consideration of the material needs such as finances, membership, physical plant, and present and future expansion of the parish.

The Finance Council of the parish is the consultative group which assists the pastor in carrying out the common burden of the material administration of the parish. It has the obligation of planning, and supervising the financial affairs and physical properties of the parish. The Finance Council is concerned with parish resources, the budget, church support, and the effective utilization and maintenance of the parish plant.

The collaboration of the Finance Council with the pastor and parish staff is intended to assist the pastor in his responsibility for the parish. The Finance Council serves the spiritual growth of the parish community and its work must be guided by the overall mission of the parish community. Time should be spent by the Finance Council to foster the spiritual growth of its members and to develop a deeper understanding of the Church.

ARTICLE VI
FUNCTIONS

The major functions of the Finance Council are listed below.

- A. To help in the preparation of the annual parish budget.
- B. To review periodically the income and expenditures of the parish to determine that the budget is operative.
- C. To review all parish building programs and renovations.
- D. To provide parishioners with periodic and annual reports of the financial state of the parish.
- E. To inspect carefully all parish properties to that they remain in proper repair.
- F. To recommend the purchase or transfer of property in accordance with diocesan policy.
- G. To encourage conducting the annual Diocesan Catholic Community Appeal.
- H. To assist in establishing effective means of raising the funds needed to attain the goals of the parish in carrying out the mission of the Church,
- I. To review all fundraising or other income-producing proposals, including parish run or supported business operations to ensure that these are consistent with the parish and diocesan mission and policies and to ensure that all appropriate diocesan approvals are obtained.
- J. To conform to the diocesan parish accounting systems and the various policies involving investment, insurance, and related items.
- K. To observe the diocesan regulation which allows only the pastor or parochial vicar to sign parish checks unless the bishop has provided otherwise in a particular case.
- L. To conduct or arrange for periodic audits of parish financial and accounting procedures and to assist with operational audits.

ARTICLE VII
REVISION

This Constitution and By-Laws may be revised by the existing or future members of the Finance Council in accordance with the procedures provided in the By-Laws. It will be automatically revised if any provision is found to be inconsistent with existing Canon Laws or Diocesan Policies or with future Canon Laws or Diocesan Policies. The automatic revision (s) will be made by direction of the Chairperson at the first meeting following formal notification by the pastor of the inconsistency with Canon Laws or Diocesan Policies.

CERTIFICATION OF ADOPTION AND APPROVAL

This is to certify that the foregoing Constitution for the Finance Council of (*name of parish*) was duly adopted and approved by the Finance Council of (*name of parish*) at a regular meeting of the Finance Council on (*date*).

Chairperson

Date

This is to certify that the foregoing Constitution for the Finance Council of (*name of parish*) is approved by the Pastor of (*name of parish*).

Pastor

Date

**BY-LAWS OF CONSTITUTION
OF
(name of parish) PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL**

ARTICLE I: ORGANIZATION

- A. The Finance Council will determine its organizational structure and make revisions as needed. All appropriate parish staff and organizations will be informed of the organizational structure.
- B. The Finance Committee may appoint members to serve as lead in assigned areas or as liaison to assigned parish organizations according to the expertise and interests of the members and the needs of the parish or Finance Council. Special assignments may be made as needed by the Chairperson.
- C. The Finance Council may establish Standing committees as need to fulfill the functions of the Finance Council.
- D. The Finance Council may establish Special Committees as needed to meet special or non-recurring needs or assignments. Special Committees will be given a specific life and assignment, but the life may be extended by the Finance Council, if needed, to fulfill the assignment. Both the Chairperson and members of Special Committees may be non-Finance Council members.
- E. The Finance Council may be both voluntary and paid consultants to accomplish any of its assigned functions or tasks. The use of paid consultants must be approved by the pastor.

ARTICLE II: OFFICERS/TERMS OF OFFICE

- A. The Finance Council will have a Chairperson and other officers, as determined necessary for its proper functioning.
- B. The Chairperson and other officers will be elected by a majority of the voting quorum for one or tow-year terms and may serve subsequent terms without limit, if sufficient time remains in the original, or subsequent appointment by the pastor and if approved by a majority vote of the voting quorum.
- C. The Chairperson or other officer may be removed from office following due process by the pastor or by a three-fourths vote of the voting quorum. Due process will be provided by providing written notice of proposed removal at least 21 days prior to a scheduled meeting of the Finance Council with the opportunity for providing both, written and oral responses at the scheduled meeting.

ARTICLE III: NOMINATING COMMITTEE/SELECTION OF OFFICERS

- A. A Nominating Committee will be appointed by the Chairperson by the scheduled August meeting for both, new Finance Council members to be recommended to the pastor and for officers of the Finance Council.
- B. Nominations will be solicited and reviewed and recommendations made by the scheduled November meeting at which time the Finance Council will vote by secret ballot. Recommended new members will be forwarded to the pastor and the term for new officers elected will begin with the scheduled meeting in January.

ARTICLE IV: VOTING

- A. All decisions of the Finance Council will be decided by a majority vote of the voting quorum unless a different voting rule is specially required by an Article.

ARTICLE V: DUTIES AND TASKS AND OPERATIONAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- A. The Finance Council will determine the duties and tasks and operational policies and procedures needed to fulfill its Purpose and Functions as listed in the Constitution.
- B. In establishing its operational policies and procedures, the Finance Council will consult in accordance with established parish guidelines will all appropriate parish staff and organizations.
- C. The duties and tasks and operational policies and procedures will either be incorporated in the By-Laws or in a separate Policy and Procedures Guide.
- D. The Finance Council will establish appropriate communications vehicles to communicate its policies and procedures to all appropriate parish staff and organizations.

ARTICLE VI: COOPERATION WITH PARISH STAFF AND ORGANIZATIONS

- A. In fulfilling its consultative responsibilities, the Finance Council will consult and cooperate with all appropriate parish staff and organizations.

ARTICLE VII: SUPPORT FOR ANNUAL PARISH APPEAL, DIOCESAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY APPEAL & OTHER PARISH ANNUAL APPEALS

- A. The Finance Council will either conduct or direct the annual parish appeal conducted each spring and the annual Diocesan Catholic Community Appeal conducted each Fall. It will support the (name of other parish annual appeal, e.g. an annual school appeal) conducted each (give period of time).

ARTICLE VII: REPORTS TO THE PASTOR AND PARISHIONERS

- A. The Finance Council will establish procedures to ensure timely reporting to the pastor, appropriate parish organizations and parishioners on all matters as required by parish or diocesan policies.

ARTICLE IX: REVISION OF THE CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

- A. The Constitution may be revised by a three-fourths vote of the voting quorum at the next scheduled meeting following discussion of the issues at a special or scheduled meeting provided that at least fourteen days have elapsed between any special meeting and the next scheduled meeting.
- B. The By-Laws may be revised by a two-thirds vote of the voting quorum at the next scheduled meeting following discussion of the issues at a special or scheduled meeting provided that at least fourteen days have elapsed between any special meeting and the next scheduled meeting.
- C. Automatic changes required by inconsistency between By-Laws and Canon Laws or Diocesan Policies will be made as provided in Article VII of the Constitution.

CERTIFICATION OF ADOPTION AND APPROVAL

This is to certify that the foregoing By-Laws(By-Laws Revision) for the Finance Council of (*name the parish*) was duly adopted and approved by the Finance Council of (*name of parish*) at a regular meeting of the Finance Council on (*date*).

Chairperson

Date

This is to certify that the foregoing By-Laws (By-Laws Revision) for the Finance Council of (*name of parish*) are approved by the pastor of (*name of parish*).

Pastor

Date