

Saint Thomas Aquinas Parish Pastoral Council By-Laws

ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this organization is the Saint Thomas Aquinas Parish Pastoral Council.

ARTICLE II: PURPOSE

The Pastoral Council is a consultative group that is led by the Pastor and charged with prayerfully discerning parish needs, setting pastoral priorities, and empowering people to participate in the mission of Christ.

The Pastoral Council:

1. Provides consultative input to the Pastor (guidance, counseling, and advice). The Pastor has the final decision in all matters that come before the Pastoral Council.
2. Supports the Pastor in setting direction, developing the vision and mission, and determining parish goals.
3. Seeks input from the parish community; identifies community concerns and needs; and serves as a bridge between the Pastor and the community.
4. Encourages the use of the talents and gifts that exist within the parish.
5. Collaborates with the Pastor in formulating policies concerning parish matters consistent with faith and morals, civil and church law, and diocesan policy.

ARTICLE III: Size, Membership, Selection, Terms of Service, Vacancies and Forfeitures

1. Size

The council will have fourteen (14) members and the pastor to make fifteen (15):

*Eleven (11) members will come from the parish community (it would be ideal for there to be one from each mass although this is not a requirement).

*Three (3) members will be appointed by the Pastor. These 3 members may be a

deacon, staff, or non-staff appointments.

2. Membership

- * Membership of the Pastoral Council shall be open to all members of Saint Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church who are Catholics in good standing, according to the Seven Precepts of the Church, and who are 18 years of age or older.
- * Willing to serve a three-year term
- * Active in parish ministry and parish organizations
- * Possess talents, skills, strengths, gifts, and/or expertise from the job, hobbies, or vocation that can help the Pastoral Council better serve our parish community
- * Possess the time and energy to fulfill the role
- * Has the ability to listen to people with diverse views and the desire to work collaboratively with others
- * Membership is limited to those parishioners eighteen (18) years of age or older.

3. Selection

- * The Pastoral Council needs members who are familiar with the people and needs of the parish and who can serve in an advisory and consultative role to the pastor by investigating, reflecting, and recommending their conclusions for the Pastor's consideration
 - *Interested parishioners will submit applications for membership to the Council.
 - *Interested parishioners will attend a discernment session to learn more about Council roles and responsibilities and to determine if the Holy Spirit is guiding them to seek membership.
 - *An elections' subcommittee of the Pastoral Council will review the applications, interview qualified candidates, and consult with the Pastor.

Council selections will then be made.

- *The Pastor will also be able to appoint members to the Council.

- *The selection process will try to ensure that the composition of the Pastoral Council reflects the cultural diversity of the parish.

- * The Council Secretary will draft an announcement on the newly selected pastoral council each year and review this announcement with the Pastoral Council Executive Committee. Once agreed upon, the secretary will share the announcement via the various parish media.

4. Term of Service

- *The eleven (11) Council members selected from the parish and the three (3) Council members appointed by the Pastor, will have staggered terms:

Five (5) will be elected or appointed to a two-year term.

Six (6) will be elected or appointed to a three-year term.

Thereafter, new Council members shall be elected or appointed and shall serve for a term of three (3) years.

The staff and deacon will serve at the pastor's discretion.

5. Vacancies and Forfeitures

- *The seat of any vacancy, of any type (appointed/ selected) shall be filled for the remainder of a term by the Pastor's and Chair's appointment.

- *Forfeiture of any selected or appointed seats will occur after three absences in any Council year. Notification will be provided in writing by the Council Chair after two absences.

- *In exceptional circumstances, the Executive Committee (Pastor, Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary) may excuse an absent member from a third absence if such a request is made to the Executive Committee by the councilor in question.

ARTICLE IV: Officers, Duties, Selection Process, Terms of Office, Council Executive Committee

The Pastor presides over the Pastoral Council. Council officers will facilitate the operations of the Council.

1. Officers

- *Officers of the Pastoral Council shall include a Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary.

(The Secretary may be a paid staff member chosen by the Pastor and then not an officer of the Council).

2. Duties

*Duties of each officer include:

Chair

- * Sets meeting agendas in consultation with the Pastor.
- * Presides at meetings.
- * Assists the Pastor in conducting the Council's work.
- * Reports to the parish the actions of the Council and/or solicits parish action as the occasion requires.
- * Carries out other duties as determined by the Pastor.

Vice Chair

- * Assists the Chair in conducting the Council's work
- * Presides at meeting in the absence of the Chair
- * Carries out other duties as determined by the Chair

Secretary

- * Records the minutes of the Pastoral Parish Council meetings and ensures minutes are made available to all parish members.
- * Maintains attendance and other records.
- * Carries out other duties as determined by the Chair.

3. Officer Selection Process

*Officers will be selected from among the members of the Council based on a majority vote of the Council members.

4. Terms of Office

*Each officer is elected for a term of one year and is eligible for a single re-selection.

5. Council Executive Committee

*The Council Executive Committee shall include the Pastor, Chair, Vice-

Chairperson and Secretary.

*The executive committee is empowered to act in lieu of the full Council on any matter when either time or circumstances, as determined by the council Chair and the Pastor, dictate that the issue at hand cannot await a regularly scheduled or special meeting of the Council

ARTICLE V. Council Operations

*To achieve its stated purpose, matters involving all aspects of parish life may be brought before the Council by the Pastor.

*Council members are charged with the review, study, and development of conclusions and recommendations on issues relating to the parish which are brought to the Pastor for a decision.

*Each member of the Council is responsible for participating in the review, study, discussion, and recommendation process.

1. Meetings

*The Council will meet monthly on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, however the council has the right to choose to meet on another day as long as it is agreed to by all council members.

*Meetings are to be open to all members of Saint Thomas Aquinas Parish.

*If anyone wishes to speak at a meeting he shall request same and make the topic known to the Chairperson at least forty-eight (48) hours prior to said meeting. Since the Council is an advisory and consultative body to the Pastor, the granting of permission to speak at a Council meeting is at the discretion of the Chair in consultation with the Pastor.

*An agenda for each regular meeting is to be compiled by the Chair and Pastor and provided to each Council member in advance of the meeting.

*A Pastoral Council meeting will normally be limited to two (2) hours in length.

2. Recommendations and Decisions

* Most issues that are placed before a Pastoral Council do not have a technical solution. Technical questions are best addressed by specialists. Pastoral Council members are generalists not specialists who tend to deal with issues that do not

have an easy answer but that do have broad impact.

- * A consensus decision- making style will be used by the Council. When some level of consensus is not possible, a matter can be tabled, allowing for further study and the opportunity to discern the best recommendation.

- **Ad hoc* committees can be proposed and established at a general meeting to study issues or for a specific purpose or event. *Ad hoc* committees are automatically dissolved at the completion of the assigned task.

ARTICLE VI: Amendments and By-Laws

- * The Council shall have the power and authority to alter, amend or appeal these by-laws via consensus decision making.

- * All amendments of the By-laws require approval by the Pastor.

ARTICLE VII: Relationship with the parish, effective communications, and staff relationships

1. Relationship with the parish

- *The Pastoral mission belongs to the Pastor and parish.

- *The Pastor administers the parish and presides over both the Pastoral Council and the Finance Council.

- *It is the responsibility of the Pastoral Council to enable the participation of the entire parish in identifying parish needs, setting priorities and implementing a pastoral plan of action.

2. Relationship with the Finance Council

- *Once the Pastoral Council has developed a Pastoral plan, the Pastor consults with the Finance Council regarding feasibility and funding questions.

- *Pastoral Council collaborates with the parish Finance Council both for effective planning and in the evaluation of parish programs.

3. Effective communications

- *Effective communication is essential to maintain healthy relationships within a parish community.

Communication Recommendations:

- * Provide parishioners with access to the contact information of Pastoral Council

members

- * Share pastoral goals with the parish for input and comment
- * Host an open house or annual parish meeting at which time parish priorities are discussed and recommendations and proposals can receive input
- * Provide feedback to the parish on Pastoral Council activities
- * Make meeting summaries available to parishioners via the parish website, or in the parish newsletter

4. Relationship with the staff

- *The Pastoral Council is charged with supporting the Pastor and working alongside his staff in service to the parish.
- *A staff member is appointed to the Pastoral Council by the Pastor and shares his/her expertise and experience which is invaluable for council planning.
- *Pastoral Council members acknowledge the technical expertise of professional staff members and collaborate with them.
- *The Pastoral Council and staff cooperate in setting parish priorities and in planning for the future with the Pastor.
- *The Pastoral Council and staff collaborate in facilitating communication and encouraging the participation of all parishioners in various parish events, ministries and organizations.

A **Ministry** is a group of people voluntarily gathered together to act in response to the call to be disciples of Jesus Christ within a specific area of activity. Their activities might be worship, prayer, service, support, hospitality, education, or other forms of evangelization.