

**OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP CATHOLIC CHURCH**

**PARISH COUNCIL BYLAWS**

November 2019

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic  
Church

Parish Council Bylaws

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# **Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church**

## **Parish Council Bylaws**

### **Article I. Preamble**

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish was established and shall be maintained as an organizational unit of the Roman Catholic Church, Diocese of Richmond, Virginia. The parish shall carry out the Word of God and give meaning to the lives of the members of the Roman Catholic Church who reside in Salem and Roanoke County, Virginia.

### **Article II. Purposes**

The purposes of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish are expressed in the Parish's Mission Statement.

**Section A. Origin of the Mission Statement** The Pastoral Council of the Parish shall draft the Parish's Mission Statement and shall be responsible for devising a process for revising it if/when the Pastor believes such to be necessary.

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#### **Section B. Mission Statement**

The Catholic community of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, guided by the Holy Spirit, commits itself to work steadfastly in love and humility to discern the will of God as we seek to proclaim the mission of Jesus Christ. Gifted and called by our Baptism, we dedicate ourselves to minister to the needs of all God's people through every dimension of our worship, formation, fellowship and service. May all that we do in His name glorify Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **Article III. Parish Council Organizational Structure**

**Section A. The Parish Council** The Parish Council shall exist through the mandate and encouragement of the Bishop of Richmond. The Council shall seek to fulfill the mission of the Roman Catholic Church in Salem, Virginia in ministerial partnership with the Pastor and Parish Staff. The Council, composed of elected members of the Parish, shall provide vision, direction and active support for the Parish and its Pastor, establishing such priorities, programs and activities that shall promote and reflect the living word of God.

**Section B. Size and Composition** The Parish Council shall be composed of ten (10) individuals to include: the Pastor (1) and nine (9) elected members. In addition, one alternate shall be selected at elections each year to serve in the event of a Council vacancy.

**Section C. Appointment Term, Removal and Vacancies** The Pastor shall serve as an ex-officio member of the Parish Council throughout his term(s) in office. The elected members shall serve for a three (3) year term with one-third (1/3) of the elected members to be selected annually. (See Appendix 1: Selection Process for Parish Council). Elected members may serve two full terms or a maximum of six years, before being required to go off Council for one (1) year before being eligible to serve again. Failure of any member of the Council to honor his or her obligations as a member shall constitute grounds, with the consensus of the Council, for the Chairperson to request his or her resignation. Vacancies on the Council prior to the expiration of a member's

term will be filled by the Alternate, according to the record of the most recent election. This individual shall fill the previous incumbent's position for the duration of their unexpired term until the next election at which time the Alternate may stand for election for a term of his or her own. In any case, at the next Parish election the congregation shall, as usual, select three new members of Council and a new alternate.

**Section D. Authority** The Parish Council provides consultation to the Pastor concerning the ordinary affairs of the Parish with the aim of helping to fulfill the Parish's mission, goals and objectives. The Council shall perform its functions in collaboration with the Pastor and, when appropriate, with the Finance Council. In the event the Bishop elects to assign a different Pastor to the Parish, Canon Law requires that the Council automatically be disbanded at the start of that individuals' service until such time as the new Pastor formally reconstitutes the body.

**Section D. Responsibilities** The Parish Council shall address the following responsibilities:

1. Encourage the Parish membership to fulfill the Word of God;
2. Provide consultation to the Bishop, Pastor, Deacons and Pastoral Staff concerning the affairs of the Parish;
3. Represent the Parish membership in the management of the Parish's resources;
4. Annually select officers for the Parish Council;
5. Revise the Parish Council Bylaws as necessary and appropriate;
6. Encourage community/shared responsibility for parish vitality within its membership and the Parish more generally;
7. Articulate specific goals and objectives for the Parish annually, linked to its mission for consideration by the Finance Council;
8. Work with the Pastor and Finance Council to plan for future development of the Parish and its assets;
9. Develop and maintain a mission statement for the Parish.

**Section E. Meetings** The Council may convene two (2) types of meetings: (1) regular and (2) special. For either, a simple majority of Council members shall constitute a quorum. Written records shall be kept of all meetings and made available on line via the Church's website on a timely basis. Council shall convene monthly unless otherwise determined by that group.

*Regular meetings* An agenda for all regular meetings shall be distributed to Members three to four days before each meeting date.

*Special Meetings* of the Parish Council may be called by the Pastor, the Chairperson or on request of at least four (4) members of the Council to attend to unforeseen, pressing or emergency items needing attention prior to the next scheduled regular meeting.

**Section F. Officers** Annually, the Parish Council shall select from among its membership the following officers: Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Secretary. The Chairperson shall preside at all meetings of the Council and the Executive Committee and is expected to lead the Council in its efforts to fulfill the mission of the Parish. In collaboration with the Pastor and other members, he/she shall ensure that meeting agendas are appropriate and meaningful. The Chair is also expected to manage Council meetings deliberatively and equitably, employing a consensus decision-making process.

The Vice Chairperson shall serve in the Chair's stead when he/she is unable to preside at a Council regular or special meeting or otherwise represent the Council when the Chair cannot.

The Secretary shall maintain all records of the Council, including meeting minutes and the Council Roster. The Secretary shall ensure that all approved Council meeting minutes are posted on the Church's website in a timely fashion and archived appropriately there for parishioner use and review. The Secretary shall also ensure that these Bylaws, with any changes as may occur over time reflected in them, are routinely archived on the church's website.

**Section G. The Executive Committee of the Council** The Executive Committee shall serve the Council as a working arm and assist its members in fulfilling its functions. The Executive Committee shall consist of the Council's officers. This group shall:

1. Liaise with the Pastor to prepare agendas for Parish Council Meetings;
2. Perform such tasks as assigned to it by the Council;
3. Facilitate orientation of all new members of the Council;

To offer advice when requested by the Pastor, Pastoral Staff and/or Finance Council, at times when it is not possible for the full Council to do so. All such matters are subject to review by the full Council at its next session.

#### **Article IV. Other Provisions**

**Section A. Open Meetings** Parish activities shall be conducted in an environment of open communication. Parishioners shall be encouraged to participate in any Parish Council, Regular or Special Committee meetings, except when in executive session. Parishioners may provide input and advice either in writing or orally, as they may elect, at such gatherings. Parishioners who choose to attend Regular Council meeting will be invited to provide their comments and reflections during a time provided on the Council's agenda for such activity.

The Parish Council Alternate may attend regular monthly Council meetings as a parishioner and offer comments as any congregant might at the designated time.

**Section B. Auxiliary Organizations** Any group or organization representing itself as an extension of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish shall seek approval from the Parish Council of its commission, charter and bylaws prior to beginning any activity. Subsequent to such endorsement at a Regular meeting, all such groups or organizations shall ensure the Council is routinely kept apprised of its principal activities affecting the Parish.

### **APPENDIX A**

#### **SELECTION PROCESS for PARISH COUNCIL**

**Overview** Each year beginning in October and culminating in November, Parish Council shall conduct an election process for the purpose of identifying and choosing new members. Three (3) members and one (1) alternate will be selected annually.

**Goals and Objectives** The goal of the election process shall be to ensure that qualified and representative members of the Parish are chosen for the Council in order to provide a solid lay leadership for Our Lady of

Perpetual Help. The primary emphases of the election process shall be: a. To provide an opportunity for all members of the Parish to participate; b. To identify and select practicing adult Catholics of the Parish for the Council; c. To establish and perpetuate vigorous parishioner participation and decision-making in the affairs of the Parish.

Authority and Responsibility Authority and responsibility for the selection process shall reside with the Council. The Chairperson of the Council shall be responsible for the conduct and supervision of the election process with the help of the three most recently elected members of the Council, unless all or a share of those members are standing for reelection. In that event, the Council Chair will call for whatever number of volunteers may be necessary to serve on this committee so as to ensure three members are serving. These three individuals, together with the Chairperson, shall constitute the "Nominating Committee." That group will prepare a call for nominations that outlines the schedule for the process and ensure that the congregation is made aware of it. That call will stipulate that any member may nominate an individual and that self-nominations are encouraged. It will also ask that nominators ensure that those they nominate are, in fact, willing to serve. Once the committee has received nominees from congregants on one designated weekend, it will contact each nominee to request that they provide photos and statements of interest for public display and review by members of the congregation during the following weekend. The weekend thereafter the committee will provide the congregation ballots and request that they vote for their preferred three candidates. Once the ballots are gathered at the weekly liturgies on the assigned voting weekend in November, the committee will tabulate the congregation's votes and the top three vote getters will be asked to join Council. The individual receiving the fourth highest number of votes will be asked to serve as an Alternate.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING PROCESS**

In this process, the Council, in a prayerful atmosphere, identifies the issue at hand. Information gathering follows. Next, taking into account the facts and views expressed, the concern is reformulated by the discussion leader for greater clarity. Members propose possible solutions for Council discussion. Differences of perspective may be manifested. Council members should respond in a spirit of love and trust and endeavor to proceed without polarization. In moving to an eventual decision, the Council should seek to examine the likely consequences of each proposed solution. The Council also should be self-consciously aware of the criteria it is employing in making its decisions. Such criteria will include, among other possibilities, Gospel imperatives, Canon Law, the Parish Mission Statement and relevant Diocesan policies.

If Council cannot reach consensus, the Chairperson should carefully define the exact area of disagreement, asking for a listing of all reasons supporting the different articulated positions in play. When all considerations are before the group, the Council may elect to delay final consideration of the proposal to allow more time to study the issues it raises or to consult with the Parish more broadly.

A consensus decision making process is outlined below as an example of possible Council practice:

At the Parish Council meeting, copies of the specific proposal/concern are distributed. (The total picture, the what, why, when, how, by whom and cost of it should be included in that information.) The presenter then describes the proposal fully. No questions are allowed during that presentation, but Parish Council members are encouraged to note points which they perceive as needing clarification or discussion. After the presentation, the chairperson:

Invites "clarifying" questions. The presenter then responds to each.

The Chairperson next invites "challenging" questions. Examples: "How do you plan to---? Help me understand how---? Where have you seen this---? How do you feel this will---? Each of these questions is responded to by the presenter.

Chairperson asks, "does anyone want to speak FOR the idea?"

Chairperson asks, "Does anyone want to speak AGAINST the proposal?" (Each counter-idea is dealt with in the same manner as the original proposal---steps 1,2,3. When this process is completed, write the idea on newsprint.) The presenter is then asked to respond to the concerns/questions raised in a way that convinces the total group that he/she understands the ideas and viewpoints of advocates who disagree with him/her.

TAKE TIME FOR DISCERNMENT. "Reflect on all that you have heard." Chairperson then gives a synopsis of the original proposal with the suggested modifications or changes.

Chair tests for direction. (Use profile vote, show of hands, other.) Depending on results, Chairperson asks:

- Committee/ministry to resubmit at a later date,
- Committee/ministry to incorporate changes and implement,
- Committee/ministry to discontinue effort,
- Persons presenting counter-ideas to support proposal, knowing that they have been heard and understood,
- Council members to recognize and appreciate effort and concern of all.

There is no one way or one way to come to consensus. The important factors are:

- a) Ensuring that a proposal is understood, and
- b) Ensuring that all points of view are expressed and understood.

Consensus does not require a unanimous yes vote. Instead, it depends on a sense of community-caring for everyone involved in the decision-making process and for those affected by the decision. It is achieved when all the participants in the process agree that they have been heard, are cherished for their convictions and are, consequently, able to affirm and support the prevailing position.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **ALLIED CATHOLIC ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATION LIAISON**

The Parish Council will maintain active ongoing relationships with the leaders of the Salem, VA Knights of Columbus chapter, Roanoke Catholic School and the Diocese of Richmond's Our Lady of the Valley Retirement Community. To do so, Council will arrange to meet with representatives of each entity twice annually to obtain updates on the issues confronting them and to gain a sense of their strategic priorities and their implications for our Lady of Perpetual Help parishioners.