

# The Parish Council (Finance/Pastoral) Church of St. Hildegard

## CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

### **ARTICLE I: NAME**

The name of this body shall be the Parish Council of the Church of St. Hildegard, hereinafter referred to as the "Council." The Council will be an amalgamation of the two councils recognized in Canon Law: Parish Finance Council (c. 537) and Parish Pastoral Council (c. 536, §§1-2).

### **ARTICLE II: PURPOSE**

Section 1. The general purpose of the Council shall be two-fold: to advise and assist the pastor in his duties as canonical administrator of the parish, and to assist in fostering pastoral care within the parish.

### **ARTICLE III: AUTHORITY**

Section 1. The existence of the Council is derived from the universal law of the Church and the particular law of the Diocese of Bismarck.

Section 2. The authority of the Council is advisory (consultative) to the office of pastor. Within the law, the pastor may freely delegate decisions or tasks to the Council as a whole or to particular members.

Section 3. The Council shall operate in accordance with the laws of the Catholic Church (universal law of the Church and the particular laws of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Diocese of Bismarck) and the State of North Dakota.

### **ARTICLE IV: MEMBERSHIP**

Section 1. Members of the Council are to be in full, visible communion with the Catholic Church. Each is to be dedicated to the welfare of the entire parish and universal Church.

Section 2. Based upon parish custom, the Council is to be comprised of five (5) couples or singles. Each couple has one vote, and each single has one vote.

Section 3. Lay Trustees (2) of the Corporate Board of the parish are to be *ex officio* members of the Council. A spouse is able to represent the Lay Trustee at Council meetings, with the exception of the Annual Meeting in August. Each Lay Trustee is to have one vote.

Section 4. The pastor is not a member of the Council per se.

#### **ARTICLE V: NOMINATIONS, SELECTIONS, TERMS**

Section 1. Council members, at the regular meeting held before December, provide recommendations of potential new members to the pastor to fill positions expected to be vacant at the end of the year. The pastor reviews all of the recommendations along with his own potential candidates.

Section 2. The pastor prioritizes his selections for new council members for 3-year terms and an alternate for 1-year term. He contacts them in their order of priority for their commitment to serving on the council. Once he has enough candidates to fill the vacant positions and alternate those positions are considered filled and he communicates the new Council members to the parishioners (pulpit and/or bulletin).

Section 3. The Pastor or Business Manager shall notify the candidates of the results of the selection. After all candidates have been notified, a suitable announcement is to be made to the parish at large.

Section 4 All selected members shall take their positions at the first regular meeting of the Council in the new year and shall serve terms of three (3) years. No parishioner shall be eligible to serve more than two (2) consecutive full terms. Each out-going member is to turn over to their successor all books, papers, and other records pertaining to their work on the Council in advance of this meeting. A Council member should maintain a 5-year ongoing history of the material in their respective book. Copies of the parish council meeting minutes and reports are kept in the parish archives. Election of officers and the designation of standing committees shall also occur at the first meeting of the new year.

Section 5. If a vacancy occurs among the selected members during the Council year, this vacancy is filled with the alternate Council member selected by the pastor until the end of that year. In the event that other vacancies occur the vacancies will be filled from the remaining prioritized names from the pastor's review in December. The pastor will contact them for their commitment to serve for the remainder of that year.

Section 6. The Council may recommend formally ending a member's term for grave misbehavior or obvious lack of concern. Consultation and permission of the pastor is to occur in this situation.

## **ARTICLE VI: OFFICERS**

Section 1. The officers of the Council shall be the chairperson, vice-chairperson, and secretary. All elected officers shall serve for terms of one year each or until their successors have been elected. No officer shall serve more than two (2) consecutive terms in the same office.

Section 2. The officers shall be elected by majority vote at the first regular meeting in the calendar year. Unless the candidate is unopposed, elections shall be by secret ballot. The nonvoting pastor and/or business manager present at the meeting shall tabulate the votes.

Section 3. Prior to the election of any officer, the chairperson shall call for nominations from the floor and close nominations for each office before proceeding to the next office to be filled.

## **ARTICLE VII: DUTIES OF OFFICERS**

Section 1. The chairperson is to reflect upon all business conducted at the meeting and coordinate its duties. He or she is to communicate to the business manager 2 weeks in advance of scheduled meetings, any Council agenda items to be included for the meeting. The chairperson is to conduct all meetings of the Council, which are to occur at least quarterly or as needed for the circumstances of the parish. He or she shall have the authority to call special meetings according to his/her best judgment. However, all special meetings must have the pastor's approval. In consultation with the pastor and other members of the Council, the chair is to appoint the membership of all standing and special committees. When necessary the chair is to render periodic reports to the pastor on the on-going deliberations or business of the Council. He or she is to perform such other duties as may be delegated.

Section 2. The vice-chairperson is to assume the office of chairperson in the event that this office becomes vacant for any reason. He or she is to lead meetings in the absence of the chairperson and perform such other duties as may be delegated.

Section 3. The secretary is responsible for the minutes of all regular and special meetings of the Council. He or she, with the assistance of the business manager, is to provide copies in a timely fashion to Council members and for the parish archive. The secretary, with the assistance of the business manager, is also to notify the Diocesan Chancery of the names, mailing addresses, and phone numbers of all officers of the Council. He or she is also to perform such other duties as may be delegated.

Section 4. Each officer, at the expiration of their term of office, is to turn over to their successor all books, papers, and other records pertaining to their office in a timely fashion.

#### **ARTICLE VIII: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Section 1. For this Council, the Executive Committee is to be composed of the Chairperson of the Council and the two (2) Lay Trustees.

Section 2. The primary purpose of the Executive Committee is to conduct all urgent business of the Council between regular meetings, if needed. Such meetings are often known as “executive session.” Any meetings without the presence of the pastor are to be approved by the pastor.

#### **ARTICLE IX: COMMITTEES (STANDING AND SPECIAL)**

Section 1. The Council has the option to establish standing committees such as a Stewardship committee.

Section 2. In consultation with the chairperson of the Council and the pastor, the chair of each Committee is to freely name parishioners (who may or may not be Council members) to the standing committee.

Section 3. Special or ad hoc committees may be appointed by the chairperson in consultation with Council and approval of the pastor. All parishioners shall be eligible to serve on special committees.

#### **ARTICLE X: MEETINGS**

Section 1. As a norm, the Council is to conduct regular meetings quarterly (or at such times as the pastor and chairperson may decide). Meetings without the presence of the pastor are to have the pastor’s approval.

Section 2. The Pastor, with the assistance of the business manager is to submit a proposed budget to the Council during March prior to the next fiscal year. The Council is to discuss and review the proposed budget information provide input and eventually approve the parish budget prior to the beginning of the next fiscal year (July 1<sup>st</sup>). Trustees are encouraged to attend meetings near the end of the fiscal year to also provide input into the budget. Copies of the approved budget are sent to the Corporate Board (composed of the parish trustees and the pastor) for their review and as part of the annual Corporate Board meeting, usually scheduled in August of each year.

Section 3. At the first meeting after the close of a fiscal year, the Council must review the financial statements (balance sheet and expense/income report to reflect the parish business conducted for the last full year. The council is to

approve the financial statements and those will be retained in the parish archives, along with all Council meeting minutes from the last year as the record for the parish activities for the last fiscal year.

Section 4. Special meetings may be called by the chairperson, by the pastor, or at the request of any three members of the Council. The purpose of the special meeting is to be clear in the request. Except in cases of emergency, at least one (1) day's notice is to be given.

Section 5. Regular meetings of the Council are to be open to all parishioners as observers. It shall be left to the discretion of the Council as to whether any special meetings shall be open. Executive sessions of the Executive Committee are generally closed.

Section 6. A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum. In the absence of a quorum no official recommendations or counsel can be offered to the pastor in the Council's name.

Section 7. The membership of the Council is either to represent or have access to legal and financial expertise. In addition, members are also to have access to information deemed necessary for their role of advising and assisting the pastor. This is especially true in regards to the financial and pastoral picture of the parish as well as applicable civil and Church law. Due attention is to be given, however, to the often confidential nature of pastoral care in the parish.

Section 7. Continuing education of members of the Council is to be encouraged or even formally subsidized by the parish in order to expand the expertise of Council members. This is commended especially for the focused topics of administration, church finances, civil law, Church law, pastoral care, and theology.

## **ARTICLE XI: AMENDMENTS**

Section 1. This constitution and by-laws may be amended at any regular meeting of the Council by two-thirds vote of the members present, provided the proposed amendment has been read at the previous regular meeting and has the approval of the pastor, universal and particular laws of the Church withstanding.

Section 2. Adopted amendments will be dated, properly noted in the article amended, and attached to the original constitution and by-laws.

*This Constitution and By Laws approved by the Parish Council  
March 8, 2011.*