

TRI-PARISH VISIONARY COUNCIL CONSTITUTION - November, 2003

PREAMBLE:

We, the members of Holy Family Parish, Our Lady Queen of Apostles Parish Council Bluffs and Our Lady of Carter Lake Parish, hereafter referred to as "the Parishes" affirm our commitment to form a unified community sharing pastoral and material resources while respecting the unique history and tradition of each parish. Our collaborative efforts will build our faith community, rooted in Jesus, invited by the Holy Spirit by:

- Enhancing the vibrancy of prayer, worship and faith formation;
- Providing increased opportunities for using the gifts of leadership among laity, religious, and clergy in services of the community;
- Serving people through effective mission and outreach;
- Providing collaborative, creative and effective use of parish staff and material resources.

ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this body shall be the Tri-Parish Visionary Council, hereafter referred to as "the Council".

ARTICLE II: PURPOSE

Section A: To discern, plan, bring to life, and guide the active response of the Parishes to the mission of Jesus Christ.

Section B: To create, inspire, and demonstrate leadership and enthusiasm in and for all matters relating to the spiritual and temporal affairs of the Parishes.

Section C: To study the life and mission of the Church, research the needs, ideas, hopes and activities of the people of God, evaluate parish life regarding its conformity with the Gospel, and recommend policies, programs, and activities with a vision for the future.

Section D: To identify and assess the genuine pastoral needs of people, especially the alienated and marginalized in their local, regional, and world communities.

Section E: To listen to people regarding their talent and needs.

Section F: To empower others in the faith community.

Section G: To assess the ministry of the mission statement and goals through an annual review.

Section H: To elect and/or appoint appropriate representatives to the Council and regional or Diocesan Councils as needed.

ARTICLE III: POWERS

Section A: Canon Law 536.2 states that the Council possesses a consultative vote only and is governed by norms determined by the diocesan bishop. Care must be taken to ensure that no action is taken or contemplated that conflicts with the teachings of Sacred Scripture, Church Law, faith or morals, or diocesan policy. The Pastor is responsible for interpreting if actions of the Council are contrary to faith or diocesan policy. If he feels that they are, then he should point out this interpretation to the Chairperson of the Council and ask for reconsideration of the action. In any case where action to reconsider has failed to resolve the problem or result in harmony necessary to the good of community life, the Pastor and the Chairperson are to seek resolution through the appropriate regional council, diocesan council, or the Bishop as per the policies and structures currently in effect within the diocese.

Section B: The Council, by a two-thirds vote of its total membership, may appeal a matter to the Bishop for a final decision if it disagrees with the Pastor.

Section C: The Council shall have access to the financial records of the Parishes relative to the business of the Council. This access excludes personal information.

ARTICLE IV: MEMBERSHIP

Section A: Membership:

- The Council shall have the following members: the pastor, associate pastor, deacon(s), three representatives from Holy Family, two representatives from Our Lady of Carter Lake, and three representatives from Our Lady Queen of the Apostles. Membership should include a wide variety of people reflecting a cross-section of the faith community, without being representative of specific groups, causes, or agendas. The members' objective is to always strive to seek the best interest of the entire faith community.
- The Council shall not have paid staff members of the parishes as Council Members.

Section B: Term: Representatives shall serve a three-year term. A member shall not serve more than two consecutive terms. Said member shall be eligible for future membership after a one-year hiatus. The membership terms shall be staggered.

Section C: Nominations: At the beginning of each membership discernment process, the Council shall identify the gifts and any special skills desired in new members. This information should be publicized in the bulletins at each of the three parishes. Nominations may come from within the faith community and from within the Council itself.

Section D Appointments (rather than Elections): The Council shall appoint new members on the basis of a discernment of gifts that are necessary for the members to possess. Specific gifts needed are to be identified by the Council based upon the current needs of the faith community. In addition, the potential members should possess the following:

- Qualities of faithfulness - actively deepening their personal relationship with Jesus Christ shared in Christian community, integrity, self-giving, generosity, compassion, hope and joy;
- Skills for effective communication and listening, creative discernment and verbalization of a vision, working collaboratively with others, and supporting and challenging others to answer their baptismal call;
- Values of ministry, generosity of self, compassion, justice, reflection/prayer, self-knowledge, self-evaluation, humility, integrity, simplicity, peacefulness, and balance.

Section E: to the chairperson stating that he or she is resigning from the Council.
Resignations: Membership on the Council shall be automatically vacated when said member ceases to be a member of the Parish they represented or by written notice from the member

Section F: Termination of Membership: The chairperson shall address prolonged, unexcused absences. If a member misses one-third of the meetings per year, the Council shall consider termination of said member. The Council shall use the discernment process to appoint a new member to complete the vacated term.

ARTICLE V: OFFICERS

Section A: The officers of the Council shall be a Chairperson and ViceChairperson.

Section B: Chairperson: The Council selects the Chairperson through a process of discernment. The Chairperson shall:

- Coordinate the preparation of the agendas for meetings;
- Call and facilitate any gathering of the Council;
- Assure participation of all members in Council deliberations and decisions.

Section C: Vice-Chairperson: The Council selects the Vice-Chairperson through a process of discernment. The Vice-Chairperson shall:

- Assume all duties of the Chairperson in his or her absence;
- Perform duties of the Chairperson of the Council if so delegated by the Chairperson.

Section D: Executive Committee: The Executive Committee shall consist of the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson, and one other Council member selected by the Council. The Pastor shall be an ex-officio member of this committee. This committee shall:

- Develop and prepare the agendas for the meeting;

- Consult with the Pastor or Bishop in the name of the entire Council in extraordinary situations.

Section E: Recording Secretary: The Pastor, in consultation with the Council, shall appoint a Recording Secretary to the Council. Though not a member of the Council, this person shall follow guidelines of group process and confidentiality established by the Council. The Recording Secretary shall be responsible for:

- Distributing the agenda;
- Taking and distributing minutes of any official gathering of the Council.

ARTICLE VI: DECISION-MAKING

Section A: Issues and recommendations are to be identified and decided through a discernment process. On those occasions when a discernment process fails to meet a majority consensus, a vote shall be taken. Each member of the Council, with the exception of the Pastor, the Associate Pastor, and the Deacon(s) shall have one vote.

Section B: A quorum of voting members is needed for the Council to make decisions.

Section C: The Council shall be well-informed regarding the desires and needs of the parishioners before deciding on any matter of general interest and concern to the parish community.

ARTICLE VII: MEETINGS

Section A: Regular meeting of the Council shall be held the first Monday of each month. The location will alternate between the three parishes.

Section B: The agenda shall be decided in advance and distributed to members prior to the meeting.

Section C: The Chairperson may call special meetings at any time.

Section D: Two-thirds of the voting members of the Council shall constitute a quorum. Robert Rules of Order shall be used when appropriate. However, to foster the spirit of complete involvement by all members, the consensus method of decision making should be used as much as possible.

Section E: Prayer shall be an integral part of all meetings.

Section F: Visitors may attend the Council meeting only with the pre-approval of the Executive Committee. This will ensure that the Council can allow sufficient and appropriate time and energy to the agenda items and to the guest(s).

ARTICLE VIII: COMMITTEES

Section A: Each individual parish is to determine the standing committees needed within the parish. These may include, but should not be limited to, the following:

- Faith Formation;
- Parish and Family Life;
- Social Concerns;
- Worship and Spirituality.

Section B: The Council may establish and discontinue ad hoc committees as need requires.

Section C: The committee shall elect the Chairperson of each committee.

Section D: It is preferred that Council members not routinely serve on a committee.

Section E: All committees are accountable to the Council. Committees shall carry out activities and programs as authorized, directed, or approved by the Council. They shall hold meetings and schedule activities as necessary to handle their responsibilities. Each committee shall have a written description of the committee which is to include:

- Purpose;
- Composition;
- Meeting information.

During the first quarter of each year, committees shall provide the Council with a list of their goals for the year. Likewise, by February of each year the committees shall provide the Council with a report regarding the success or failure experienced with their goals for the previous year.

ARTICLE IX: PARISH SPECIFIC GROUPS

Section A: It is recognized that each individual parish will have service groups functioning within that parish. These may include, but should not be limited to, the following:

- Council of Catholic Women;
- Altar and Rosary Society;
- Knights of Columbus.

Section B: These groups shall function cooperatively with the Council to fulfill the Mission Statement.

Section C: There shall be open communication between the Council and each group to provide for continuity between needs and areas of growth identified by the Council, and identification and resolution of those needs and areas of growth by each of the groups.

Section D: During the first quarter of each year, groups shall provide the Council with a list of their goals for the year. Likewise, by February of each year the groups shall provide the Council with a report regarding the success or failure experienced with their goals for the previous year.

ARTICLE X: AMENDMENT

Amendment to the constitution must be approved by a quorum at a meeting of the Council called for that purpose.