



Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles

1021 So. 10th Street - St. Louis, MO 63104 - 314-231-1021

Statutes, Programs & Guidelines

PASTORAL COUNCILS AND CONSTITUTIONS

Parish/Mission Pastoral Council

Preamble

The Vatican II *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People* states: The parish offers an outstanding example of community apostolate, for it gathers into a unity of all the human diversities that are found there and inserts them into the universality of the Church. The laity should develop the habit of working in the parish in close union with their priests, of bringing before the ecclesial community their own problems, world problems, and questions regarding man's salvation, to examine them together and solve them by general discussion. According to their abilities the laity ought to cooperate in all the apostolic and missionary enterprises of their ecclesial family.

The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO) states: "In the parish there are to be appropriate councils dealing with pastoral and economic matters, according to the norms of the particular law of its own autonomous Church." (c. 295)

The **Maronite Synod** adds: "The aim is to revive pastoral life and to provide opportunities for the sons and daughters of the parish to undertake their mission in a spirit of cooperation in order to activate pastoral work." (Text 13, #42)

Therefore, this document is created to set forth the essence and elements of a Parish Pastoral Council (Council), its mission, relationships with the pastor/administrator, other pastoral and parish organizations and its member qualifications and formation.

Authority

1. The Council exists to advise and support the pastor/administrator in carrying out his mission. The pastor/administrator is the final arbiter of all matters that come before the council.
2. These guidelines are meant to give specific, yet general direction to the pastor/administrator in the formation of the Council. If, for pastoral considerations, he deems it necessary to substantially deviate from these guidelines, he is to submit those variances to the Eparchial Bishop for his approval.
3. The Council should always work to develop consensus among its membership and the parish in general. To this end, it is advisable that they arrive at a consensus on issues

presented for their consideration rather than “voting” on those issues. This will help to engage Council members in a constructive dialogue and usually presents the pastor/administrator with a more complete and well thought out course of action.

Mission

4. The Council exists to examine, consider, and draw conclusions concerning matters under discussion in order to recommend a course of action to the pastor/administrator; to advise and cooperate with the pastor/administrator in the pastoral care of the parish. As such, the Council serves as a permanent structure for constructive dialogue among the clergy, religious and laity
5. The Council serves as a coordinating body for Parish organizations and activities. It may, after consultation with the pastor/administrator, suggest standing and *ad hoc* committees.
6. The mission of the Council is to collaborate with the pastor/administrator to foster and create a spiritual and cultural environment that:
 - A. Provides recommendations for parish priorities, directions and policies;
 - B. Promotes communication and understanding among parish organizations and between the parish, the Eparchy, and the Universal Maronite Church;
 - C. Coordinates parish pastoral activities to ensure they are consistent with the parish mission;
 - D. Encourages and initiates dialogue among parish leadership and organizations and brings to the Council the concerns of the entire parish community;
 - E. Instills a sense of love of Christ and apostolic mission in the hearts of parish members through the uniqueness of the Maronite Church;
 - F. Connects our Maronite faith to living our lives and to the environment that surrounds us;
 - G. Exists as a sign and witness of unity for the larger parish community;
 - H. Provides leadership, counsel, encouragement and assistance to the apostolic and spiritual development of all parishioners;
 - I. Creates a parish family that prays and works together in a community of faith;
 - J. Creates a loving community of Christian disciples whose focus is the Liturgy, prayer, and charity;
 - K. Creates a life-encompassing harmonious environment that is both complementary and fruitful as it brings the gospel to the community;
 - L. Creates a means whereby parish members of every age find relevance in their parish and can grow well-balanced on the level of their peers and other age groups

- M. Offers well-rounded education for all ages with an aim to establish understanding of Christ according to the Maronite Church;
- N. Creates a budget to support the activities and functions recommended by the Council and coordinates its submission to the Parish Finance Council for analysis and input.

Membership and Elections

- 7. Membership of the Council should be a true reflection of the parish community. Members should be inclusive of the demographic realities of the parish community. Members do not represent a particular constituency, but should reflect the diversity of the parish in terms such as age, origin, and size of the parish community.
- 8. In forming community, members of the Council are challenged to undertake renewal through prayer, study, listening, and dialogue. In developing priorities and directions for the parish, the Council is to become the means of achieving full participation by the whole parish in its mission by giving all a voice in guiding and directing parish life.
- 9. Members of the Council must be:
 - A. Fully initiated into the Catholic Church and in good standing in the parish community;
 - B. Registered and supporting member of the parish;
 - C. Grounded in and committed to an understanding of the Church in accord with the principles of the Catholic Church;
 - D. Committed to prayer, study, listening, and dialogue;
 - E. Committed to stewardship of time, talent and treasure;
 - F. Not simultaneously a member of the Parish Finance Council.
 - G. Not currently employed by the parish or a close relative of someone who is actively serving a term on the Council or the Parish Finance Council.
- 10. All members of the Council must maintain confidentiality of deliberations of the Council, especially with respect to privacy and personal reputation.

Council Structure

- 11. Membership of the Council shall not exceed nine (9) persons but not be less than five (5) persons.

12. The majority of the members (two thirds) of the Council are to be elected, the other members (one third) are appointed by the pastor/administrator. The membership is for three years. Members can serve no more than two consecutive terms.
13. Priests, deacons, sub-deacons and religious appointed to the parish should attend the meetings only when the pastor/administrator deems it necessary.
14. The pastor/administrator may adopt a variety and/or combination of methods for selecting candidate members for the parish Council including, but not limited to:
 - A. A communal discernment process coordinated by a facilitator;
 - B. Appointments from recommendations made by the existing parish Pastoral Council;
 - C. Parish-wide nominations and elections.

Elections

15. Elections should be conducted in November. For pastoral reasons the date for the election of the Council may be moved to a time other than November.
16. At any time and for good reasons, the Eparchial Bishop may waive the election process and appoint all the members of the Council.
17. Ninety (90) days prior to the elections, the pastor/administrator is to appoint an Election Committee, whose responsibilities shall include, but not limited to:
 - A. Arrange for the nomination process by preparing the necessary form;
 - B. Prepare media announcements to inform and encourage all eligible parishioners to consider nominating others or themselves for Council;
 - C. Place nomination forms in the Church. The Election Committee shall have a collection box at all entrances to the church; completed nomination forms are collected at the conclusion of Liturgy and placed in the collection boxes.
 - D. Four (4) weeks prior to the date of elections, the Election Committee will review the parishioners who have been nominated and discuss the nominees with the pastor/administrator;
 - E. Prior to publication, the list of possible candidates is to be kept confidential and is to be submitted to the pastor/administrator for approval. The pastor/administrator is asked to provide, at least general reasons for the removal of any potential candidates from the list;
 - F. Invite those nominated and vetted by the pastor/administrator and Election Committee to a discernment session on church premises to make sure they are willing to run for Council;
 - G. The weekend of the elections, the Election Committee shall draw up a ballot and the Election Committee will place the blank ballots in the Church in the same manner as for the nomination process. After the last Liturgy on Sunday, the Election Committee will collect all ballots and securely place in the approved election boxes. All Election Committee members shall transfer the boxes and place them in a secure place in the parish office;

- H. The Election Committee tallies the ballots in the presence of the pastor/administrator, and notifies the elected and the candidates who did not win. It is forbidden to tell anyone how many votes anyone received;
 - I. It is the responsibility of the pastor/administrator to communicate the results to the parish.
18. A person enjoys the power to vote in elections if he/she is a member of the parish in good standing and is at least eighteen (18) years of age.
 19. The members of the Council are to be installed during an *appropriate* liturgical or para-liturgical ceremony.
 20. All members of the Council, except for the pastor/administrator, have a right to vote.

Officers

21. The Officers of the Council are the chairperson vice-chairperson and secretary.
22. The members of the Council shall elect from among their membership a chairperson, vice-chairperson and secretary. The chairperson, vice-chairperson and secretary are elected for a three-year term, and may not serve more than two consecutive terms in the same post.
23. The chairperson, elected by the Council membership, is central to the effectiveness of the Council and should be a servant leader. He/She should be the facilitator of the Council, encourage inclusion and participation, keep the meeting on track, be sensitive to conflict, and help resolve conflicts positively. The chairperson is responsible for:
 - A. Working closely with the pastor/administrator on all matters of importance to the parish;
 - B. Convening, conducting, and closing all meetings of the Council;
 - C. Coordinating the activities of the Council and all committees affiliated with it;
 - A. With the prior approval of the pastor/administrator, reporting to the parish regarding the activities of the Council;
 - B. Organizing and coordinating the agenda and processes of the Council;
 - C. Chairing and facilitating the meetings of the Council (the chairperson may delegate facilitation of portions of the meeting to other members);
 - D. Encouraging members and committees of the Council to fulfill their specific responsibilities and delegations;
 - E. Establishing an ongoing process of evaluation of the Council's effectiveness;
 - F. It is the responsibility of the vice-chairperson to assume all responsibilities of the Council in his/her absence;
 - G. It is the responsibility of the secretary to take minutes of the meetings, to maintain the record of the Council and to expedite any correspondence on behalf of the Council.

Vacancy

24. A vacancy in the Council may arise through removal, resignation, incapacity or death.
25. It is the exclusive competence of the pastor/administrator to accept a resignation (resignation must be submitted in writing) from the Council. In order to be valid, a written notification of the acceptance of the resignation must be given by the pastor/administrator.
26. If a member of the Council fails to attend one-third of the meetings in the course of one (1) year with no reason given in advance to the pastor/administrator or chairperson of the Council, or if a member does not cooperate with the pastor/administrator and/or Council, the pastor/administrator after due consideration and consultation with the Council, may ask the member to resign and/or remove him/her from the position.
27. It is the exclusive authority of the pastor/administrator to remove a member from the Council. When filling a vacancy, the pastor/administrator will appoint the new member to serve the remaining time of the term.

Meetings

28. Meetings of the Council are always held in parish facilities. For good reason with the approval of the pastor/administrator, another convenient place may be determined by the chairperson after prior consultation with the Council and the pastor/administrator.
29. The Council meeting schedule is determined in consultation between the Council chairperson and the pastor/administrator, but must meet at least quarterly.
30. In order for a meeting to be conducted, a quorum must be present. A quorum is defined as a simple majority of the members of the Council.
31. In accord with Statute §3, consensus requires that members of the Council reach a decision which has been agreed on by a collective. In order for the decision to be fully supported going forward, it is necessary that all Council members participate in the decision-making process, including those with minority opinions.
32. Consensus requires that all Council members engage in a dialogue and share information for the purpose of increasing others' understanding of the issues and to provide a rationale for choosing a particular recommendation or course of action. By including the whole of Council membership in the discussion and decision-making process, all members become vested.
33. Unless determined otherwise by the pastor/administrator in consultation with the chairperson, meetings of the Council are public and all parishioners are free to attend. Meetings to discuss personnel issues are to be closed to the public.

34. With the prior approval of the pastor/administrator, the chairperson can convene a special meeting of the Council. Members are to be given one week notice and a quorum of a simple majority is required for the meeting to be conducted.
35. With due regard for the *CCEO*, meetings are to be conducted in conformity with Robert's *Rules of Order*.
36. A summary of the meetings of the Council are to be reported to the Parish in a timely manner. Minutes shall be reported upon their approval by the Council.

Committees

37. With prior approval of the pastor/administrator, the chairperson may establish committees responsible for specific projects or programs.
38. With the prior approval of the pastor/administrator, the chairperson is to appoint all committee chairpersons.
39. The members of committees are to be chosen by the committee chairperson in consultation with the Council chairperson and the pastor/administrator.

Relationship to Parish Finance Council

40. In accordance with the *Eparchial Church Fiscal Policies and Procedures Manual*
 - A. The Parish Finance Council is distinct from the Council;
 - B. The Parish Finance Council does not deal with areas of parish policy and mission, which are the sole competence of the Council;
 - C. All parish organizations must adhere to the financial policies and procedures of the Eparchy as outlined in the above referenced manual;
 - D. The Finance Council has responsibility for the stewardship of parish financial resources. It is not the role of the Finance Council to recommend directions, priorities, or programs other than those related to its delegation: namely, availability of funding for its activities. The Parish Pastoral Council is tasked with the responsibility of deciding/making these recommendations: vision, priorities, programs, policies, etc. considering the financial resources of the parish.

Relationship to Parish Staff

41. The Council does not have jurisdiction over parish staff. Moreover, the Council must not be involved in hiring/firing parish staff; that responsibility is the pastor's/administrator's.
42. Parish staff may attend Council meetings when invited or when necessary to the performance of their jobs (as determined by the pastor/administrator).

Relationship to Other Organizations

43. The Council does not have within its jurisdiction the control of all parish organizations; that ministry is the pastor's/administrator's. The Council members are called upon to coordinate those organizations and activities as designated by the pastor/administrator, and should be aware of the role and purpose of each organization in order to advise the pastor/administrator on issues as required.

Vacancy of the Office of the Pastor

44. In the interest of continuity in the parish's work and mission, when a parish becomes vacant due to death, resignation, removal, or transfer of the pastor/administrator, the new pastor/administrator shall keep in place the existing Council for at least nine months after the date of his official installation. Under certain circumstances and for good reasons, the new pastor/administrator may ask the Bishop of the Eparchy for an exception from this rule.
45. In accord with Canon Law and the Particular Norms of the Eparchy, it is not permissible for the Council's chairperson or the Council collectively to assume any leadership or administrative role while the parish is in a transition or vacant.

Conflict Resolution

46. The Council may request the intervention of the Eparchial Bishop in the event that major disagreements over significant policy issues occur between the Pastor and the Council. The request must be voted on by all the members of the Council. If the motion receives a 2/3 majority vote, they shall be obligated to send a written communication to the Eparchial Bishop, requesting Eparchial intervention.