

Diocese of Honolulu
St. Elizabeth of Hungary Parish
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Parish Pastoral Council
By-Laws

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The Mission of the Church

The Church is the living body of Christ in which all share in various and diverse ways the responsibility of the mission given to the Church by the Lord in order to:

- worship God in joyous celebration of the Mass and Sacraments;
- proclaim the Word of God to all peoples;
- witness to the love and redemptive healing of Christ;
- and serve those in need in both the Church and local community.

The Parish

“A parish is a definite community of the Christian faithful established on a stable basis within a particular Church (Diocese); the pastoral care of the parish is entrusted to a Pastor as its own shepherd under the authority of the diocesan Bishop” (Canon #515).

Clergy, religious and laity together form a parish, a portion of God’s people whose pastoral care is entrusted to a Pastor so that all can continue the mission of Jesus here on earth. The people of God have different gifts, roles and responsibilities, yet all are under one head, Christ Jesus – sisters and brothers in Him.

Duties of a Pastor

A Pastor has responsibilities uniquely his, arising from his ordination and appointment to the pastorate by the Bishop (Canon #519). When a priest accepts a pastorate, he becomes the appointed leader of the parish, he is the bond of communion, the designated head, the father in the faith to this particular community of believers. He is also called to be a servant of the people. He is to be the animator, motivating the faith community to work together and, at the same time, to be the healer, bringing peace and unity to avert division. Consultation with parishioners, individually and as a community, is required for a Pastor to responsibly carry out his duties.

Consultation

The *Code of Canon Law* insists on consultation at every level of decision-making among all God’s people. The *Code* also makes it clear that a Pastor has certain responsibilities which are his alone, including the final decision on all parish matters, and makes it clear that the Church is not a democracy.

Role and Function of Parish Pastoral Councils

1. *Canon Law* (#536, #1) provides for the formation of Parish Councils: “In every parish of the Diocese, a Pastoral Council shall be established if the diocesan Bishop so decides after consultation with the Priests’ Council. The Pastor presides over the Pastoral Council comprised of members of the congregation, together with those of the parish staff who have pastoral care by reason of their office. The Pastoral Council assists in promoting pastoral action in the parish.

2. The Parish Pastoral Council is a consultative or advisory body, pastoral in nature as it strives to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit among God’s people in the parish. The Council gives its help to the Pastor in fostering pastoral activity. It investigates all that pertains to pastoral ministries, to ponder them, and to propose practical conclusions to them. It is essential that Council meetings occur in the context of prayer and openness to the Holy Spirit so that at all times the common good should prevail.

3. Specifically, the Council’s purpose is to enhance the process of pastoral planning, developing pastoral programs, improving pastoral services, and evaluating the pastoral effectiveness of various ministries, programs and services.

4. Even though the Council does not make binding decisions, the recommendations of the Pastoral Council are to be taken seriously when grounded in prayer, discernment and communal wisdom.

5. The Pastor presides over the Parish Council and is responsible for the final approval of Council recommendations related to pastoral planning, programs and services for the parish, as well as for their implementation. While the Pastor is not obliged to follow the recommendations of the Council, it is understood that he ought to do so unless there is a compelling reason to do otherwise. If there is such a reason, the Pastor should communicate this to the Council.

Parish Pastoral Council Membership / Duties

1. “Ex Officio” members of the Council are the Parochial Vicar(s) and Deacon(s).

2. Council members serve a three-year term. Two councilors are elected annually by the parishioners and one is appointed by the Pastor to insure a proper representation from the diverse membership of the parish. The Council acts as the nominating committee, providing a slate of nominees in excess of the elected positions to be filled. Nominees shall be adults (18+ years), practicing Catholics and registered parishioners who have manifested a genuine concern for the interests of St. Elizabeth Parish by their involvement in parish ministries and activities.

3. Nominees who truly reflect the wisdom of the parish community are to be selected for nomination on the ballot. When parishioners understand the Council ministry and have an opportunity to discern which nominees are suited for service on the Council, they can make an enormous contribution to the selection of Councilors. Serving on the Council is a ministry to the entire parish. When considering nominees, the following criteria should be kept in mind: they should be of proven faith, sound morals, demonstrate the gifts of wisdom and prudence and be willing to commit their time, talent and wisdom in a consultative manner. Councilors should have the ability to study and reflect prayerfully while recognizing and respecting the viewpoints of others.

4. A period of prayer and discernment will take place in the parish to help all parishioners understand the role of the Council and to prepare for the election. This time of preparation will include homilies, intercessions at Mass, and bulletin and parish website articles. During this period, parishioners may be invited to identify potential nominees, including themselves.

5. Notice of those nominated will be displayed at all Masses two weekends prior to the election which normally takes place the second Sunday of December. Ballots listing the names of nominees shall be provided for all adults attending Mass on the designated weekend. The newly-elected members begin their service at the next regular meeting of the Council on the second Thursday of January with the commissioning of all the members to take place on the Sunday prior.

6. At the first meeting in January, officers are elected from members who have served at least one year on the Council. A simple majority vote by a quorum of Councilors present shall choose for terms of one year the Council Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary.

7. The Chair shall conduct meetings of the Council, be an 'ex officio' member of any committee formed by the Council, prepare the meeting agenda in consultation with the Pastor, and supply the agenda to the Secretary in a timely manner.

8. The Vice Chair shall perform all responsibilities in the absence of the Chair and assist the Chair in any manner requested.

9. The Secretary shall keep records of the Council meetings, be responsible for Council correspondence, maintain attendance records and all other records of the Council, and forward the agenda to the members at least one week prior to the next meeting.

10. Elected members on the Council are required to attend all regular meetings on the second Thursday of January, March, May, August, October and December. Members absent from two regular meetings in a one-year period will be contacted by the Chair to ask if they wish to continue their service on the Council. Whenever there is a vacancy of an elected member, the Council shall appoint by majority vote another eligible parishioner to serve the remaining term.

11. The Council is a representative body rather than a body of representatives. A Pastoral Council does not represent a particular neighborhood, age bracket, special interest group, ministry or organization. However, due regard is given to the cultural, ethnic and gender diversity of the community, social conditions, professions, and gifts present in our community.

Agenda and Meetings

1. The Pastor is the primary selector of the Council's agenda inasmuch as he is the presider. However, any Councilor may propose items for the agenda. Only those items on the approved agenda are discussed at meetings.

2. The Council does not deal with acts of administration which are distinct from pastoral duties and planning. Acts of administration concern the daily operation of the parish, including implementation of policy, parish programming, budgeting and personnel matters. The Pastor has the sole responsibility for these matters. The Council does not serve as a "grievance committee."

3. The following is a sample of activities which may constitute items for the agenda:

- faith formation, sacrament preparation
- ministries promoting Gospel values, social justice
- addressing parishioners with special needs
- outreach to alienated Catholics
- multi-cultural and multi-ethnic issues
- ecumenism and evangelization
- promotion of Eucharistic devotion
- parish prayer life, especially within families
- effective participation in the liturgy
- communication among parishioners / building community
- welcoming new parishioners
- motivation of spiritual and corporal works of mercy
- promotion of the lay apostolate
- stewardship
- promotion of diocesan events

Vacancy of the Office of Pastor

1. When the office of Pastor becomes vacant, the Parish Pastoral Council ceases. In the interest of continuity in the parish's mission, the new Pastor or Administrator may request the current Council to remain in place to assist with the transition and the option for Council members to resign may be presented. The new Pastor will commission a new Parish Council within two months of the date of his appointment.

2. The current Chair and members of the Council will present to the new Pastor a written report of the Council's recent activities and can be a valuable resource in a time of leadership transition.

Let the work of the Parish Pastoral Council redound to the glory of the Lord!

Father Arnold Ortiz

Pastor

December 26, 2017

