

THE FINANCE COUNCIL:

A *FINANCE COUNCIL* is to be established and is to be operative in every parish and mission in the Austin Diocese(3c).

NATURE AND PURPOSE:

The preceding document on *PASTORAL COUNCIL* relates essentially to consultation in the parish. Consultation is at the heart of the decision-making process. Consultation does not pertain to the issue of who holds authority in the Church; it does pertain to the way that authority is exercised. Consultation recognizes that all the baptized, by that fact, are called to share in the governance of the Church, each in a way proper to that person.

The 1983 Code of Canon Law has introduced a new and separate consultative body to parish life. "Each parish is to have a *FINANCE COUNCIL* which is regulated by universal law as well as by norms issued by the diocesan bishop" (3c).

The purpose of the parish *FINANCE COUNCIL* is to provide that pastor with a group of Christian faithful who will aid him in the administration of parish goods according to these norms. While distinct from the *PASTORAL COUNCIL* of the parish, this *FINANCE COUNCIL* is to serve the goals and objectives set forth by the *PASTORAL COUNCIL*, both being guided by the mission statement of the parish.

CONSULTATION:

The consultation of the *FINANCE COUNCIL* shall parallel the consultation of the *PASTORAL COUNCIL*.

THE DIOCESE:

Training will be conducted at the diocesan level for pastors and laity in regards to the duties and responsibilities of *FINANCE COUNCILS*. These training sessions will include budgeting, accounting, financial management and financial reporting. When *PASTORAL COUNCIL* workshops are held, the *FINANCE COUNCIL* will also be included in those workshops. One of the workshop agenda items could be to reflect the interrelationship of the two councils.

THE PASTOR:

The pastor, as the chief governing person and accountable to the Bishop, must preside (8) at the *FINANCE COUNCIL* meetings and participate in its activities. The pastor is called to consultation by the Church. In this call, he must:

1. In turn, call the *FINANCE COUNCIL* and seek advice on financial
2. Matters affecting the life of the parish;
3. experience and participate in the interaction that follows
4. be open, respectful and receptive to the voice or voices of the parishioners;
5. weigh seriously and respond appropriately to the collective wisdom or consensus of the *FINANCE COUNCIL* ;
6. assist in the proper formation, training and orientation of all council members;
7. insure that the council's concerns reflect the whole Church (diocesan and universal) and its mission; and
8. facilitate council members building their own community of faith, trust and respect.

The pastor should consider carefully the decisions of the council and provide proper explanation to the council when acting contrary to its recommendations. However, in matters that violate

church teachings or discipline, or in matters contrary to diocesan policy, the pastor, after appropriate explanation to the council, must withhold acceptance. In cases of nonacceptance of counsel, for whatever reason, the pastor's position and reasons for it shall be presented to the council in writing. Appeals may be made to the diocesan bishop or his designee for clarification, consideration or arbitration. The bishop or his designee will provide a written response to the appeal.

In the absence of the pastor, the *FINANCE COUNCIL* can discuss matters, but cannot make final decisions. When a pastor leaves a parish through transfer, retirement or death, all formal activity of the *FINANCE COUNCIL* ceases until the new pastor or assigned administrator reconvenes the council. A new pastor would be wise to seek council from existing council to become more informed about the nature of the community. He should be very reluctant to dissolve the council, even though it is his prerogative to do so.

Each council is to develop in writing its own organizational and functional norms as prescribed within the limits of diocesan norms. These parish norms make clear the purpose, scope and role of the council as well as address the size of the council, membership criteria, selection process and leadership. Unnecessary complexity is to be avoided, and the procedure for amending the parish norms should be defined within them. These norms and any subsequent amendments will be reviewed by the Dean or bishop's designee.

Each council member must make a special effort to understand and to implement the consultative process. In this process, each member is to share his/her wisdom regarding the issue being considered. Although a common conclusion among the members is not required when functioning as a consultative body, the process of seeking consensus is very helpful in providing quality consultation.

Each council must take time to develop spiritually so as to be more keenly aware of the Spirit's presence and functioning within the council and within the whole parish community.

Each council needs to interact closely with the parish *PASTORAL COUNCIL* to assure the pastor and the parish membership that finances are available to support the council's goals and objectives.

Each council is to insure that social justice starts at home, whereas the parish strives for openness and ethical accountability in its business practices.

Each individual member of the council must attend the necessary training that provides a full understanding of the functions of the council, its interrelationships with other parish organizations, and its responsibility to the Church as a whole.

Membership:

The *FINANCE COUNCIL* is to consist of not less than three parishioners who are Catholic (in rare circumstances an exception can be made with approval of the pastor) and are known contributors of their time, talent and treasure. If possible, they should possess experience or expertise in business, finance or law and be committed to the work of the Church. They should also represent the whole parish community to the extent feasible.

Members are freely appointed by the pastor for a minimum of three years, renewable term or until there is a change in the pastorate. Excluded from membership are persons who could have a conflict of interest.

Meetings:

The council shall have a minimum of four meetings per year. Additional meetings are held as needed.

Responsibilities:

The council shall:

1. Assist the pastor in the administration of parish goods in accordance with the norms of Canons 1281 through 1288 (19).
2. Assist the pastor in the preparation of a yearly budget of income and expenditures. The proposed budget is to be shared with the parish *PASTORAL COUNCIL*.
3. Assist the pastor in the preparation of an annual financial report of revenues and expenditures for dissemination to the parishioners. A parish may choose to provide more frequent reports.
4. Review the parish income and expense report quarterly and make recommendations as necessary to see that the expenses are in within the limits of income received and on hand.
5. Assist parish commissions, boards and organizations in preparing and submitting annual budgets.
6. Study parish revenues and make recommendations for increasing revenue to meet both parish and diocesan goals and objectives.
7. Study parish expenses and make recommendations to minimize expenditures within the parish.
8. Familiarize themselves with all diocesan fiscal policies and assist the pastor in meeting these obligations.
9. Encourage support of parish and diocesan stewardship programs.
10. Be consulted on all expenditures other than normal operating expenditures.

The *FINANCE COUNCIL*, like the *PASTORAL COUNCIL*, is a unit of service, not authority.