

III. PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL

1. Definition

The Parish Finance Council is a consultative body of lay persons mandated by Canon law to advise the Pastor in matters pertaining to the financial affairs of the Parish.

Canon 537: "Each parish is to have a Finance Council which is regulated by universal law as well as by the norms established by the Diocesan Bishop; in the Council, the Christian faithful, selected according to the same norms, aid the Pastor in the administration of the parish goods with due regard for the prescription of Canon 532."

The Pastor has authority from the Bishop and the universal law of the Church to decide and act on behalf of the Parish (Canon 532). **The Parish Finance Council is advisory to the Pastor and its decisions/recommendations are valid only when accepted and ratified by the Pastor.** It is important, therefore, that the Pastor be central to the deliberations and the functioning of the Parish Finance Council. The relationship between the Council and the Pastor is one of support and mutual cooperation.



2. Relationship to the Parish Pastoral Council

The *Code of Canon Law*, which requires the creation of a Parish Finance Council, clearly places in it the competence to assist the Pastor in the administration of Parish temporalities. The *Code* also provides for the establishment of a Parish Pastoral Council to assist the Pastor in planning, coordinating, guiding, and directing all aspects of Parish life (Canon 536).

It has been, and remains, the consistent policy of the Diocese of Bridgeport that a Parish Pastoral Council be established in each Parish. While the two councils are separate, and each has a different and specific role in the life and operation of the Parish, they must work together for the good of the Parish.

The person chosen to be the Chairperson of the Parish Finance Council may not be the Lay Member of the Parish Corporation. He/she shall act as liaison and shall provide the Parish Pastoral Council regular and timely updates (at least four times a year) on the financial status of the Parish and the work activity of the Parish Finance Council.

In fulfilling its responsibilities, the Parish Finance Council must be directed by the values of the Gospel and must follow good business practices with integrity.



3. Membership

- The Parish Finance Council shall be composed of the Pastor (*ex officio*), the two Lay Members of the Parish Corporation (*ex officio*), and **no fewer than three** reputable and practicing members of the Parish who are knowledgeable and skilled in financial matters and known for their prudent judgment.
- Membership shall be by appointment of the Pastor.
- The Parish Business Manager/Accountant/Bookkeeper shall **not** be a member of the Parish Finance Council. However, his/her attendance at Council meetings may be helpful and at times required.
- Members of the Parish Finance Council may not be related to each other (e.g. husband and wife), nor to the Pastor, nor to any associate Priests or Deacons assigned to the Parish, nor to any employee of the Parish.

4. Terms of Office

- Members of the Parish Finance Council shall serve a three-year term and may be appointed to a second, three-year term.
- Any member of the Parish Finance Council may be removed for cause by the Pastor at any time.



5. Officers

- The Pastor of the Parish presides over meetings of the Parish Finance Council and receives the Council's proposals.
- There shall be a Chairperson appointed by the Pastor. The Chairperson assists the Pastor in coordinating the work of the Council, in preparing for meetings, and in implementing Council proposals which have been accepted by the Pastor. The Chairperson performs other such tasks as may be delegated to him/her including, if the Pastor so desires, chairing and conducting the regular meetings of the Council. The Chairperson is appointed for a term of one year, and he or she may be re-appointed.
- The Chairperson's name and contact telephone number must be published on the front of the Parish Sunday bulletin. He/she is an active participant in the "Parish Finance Program," whereby parishioners can express their concerns about Parish finances (see *Chapter 2, Appendix*).
- The Parish Finance Council will appoint a member to serve as Secretary and keep the minutes of the meetings.



6. Meetings

The Parish Finance Council shall meet at least four times a year. Meetings and agendas shall be arranged by the Chairperson in consultation with the approval of the Pastor. The Pastor and members are expected to attend all meetings, but the Pastor can defer the running of a meeting to the Chairperson.

Priests and Deacons of the parish should be invited to all meetings of the Parish Finance Council and encouraged to attend.

Minutes of the Parish Finance Council meetings must be recorded and retained by the Secretary. These minutes are an important record of Council activities and should be made available to parishioners, upon request, who are interested in Council activities.

For the Parish Finance Council to fulfill its mission of review and deliberation, fiscal information such as Parish financial reports and records must be accessible. Such information must be exchanged in a spirit of confidentiality and prudence.

The Pastor and Chairperson may call for the creation of committees of the Parish Finance Council to deliberate and advise on specific areas – for example, a Budget Committee, an Audit Committee, a Strategic Planning Committee, or an Investment Committee.



7. Mission

The mission of the Parish Finance Council is to assist the Pastor in the following ways:

- Oversee, with the Pastor, the preparation of the annual budget for review by **June 1st** for the following fiscal year, which begins on **July 1st**.
- Oversee, with the Pastor, the preparation of quarterly financial reports. These reports are to be published in the Parish bulletin and submitted to the Diocese no later than **45 days** after the end of the quarter.
- Oversee, with the Pastor, that the Annual Financial Report is prepared and submitted to the Diocese in a timely manner, but no later than **September 30th**.
- Prepare and publish, with the Pastor, no later than **September 30th**, Annual Financial Statements and a Report for the Parish Pastoral Council and all parishioners at large.
- Evaluate and make recommendations to the Pastor regarding the needs and effectiveness of the Parish's support through the offertory, as well as the various fundraising activities that the Parish initiates.
- Help to develop a long-range plan, with the Pastor, for the financing of necessary repairs, renovations, and purchase of equipment as needed.
- Help to develop a plan, with the Pastor, for the systematic repayment of any Parish debt.
- Help the Pastor to monitor all Parish fundraising programs and investments (*see Chapter IX*).
- Help the Pastor to see that appropriate measures are taken to safeguard the assets of the Parish from loss or damage.
- Help the Pastor to monitor the implementation of all Diocesan policies relative to financial matters, as detailed in this *Parish Administration & Finance Manual*.
- Review, with the Pastor, the outside auditors, or Diocese Parish Finance Services personnel, the report on the annual procedures review of the Parish (or audit of Parish financial statements, if applicable).



- To propose to the Pastor specific Parish spending guidelines for outside dining, receptions, parties, travel, entertainment, and gifts to others.

