

The Archdiocese of Los Angeles

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

FOR

PARISH FINANCE COUNCILS

“The Cornerstone of Stewardship”

Prepared by the Standing Committee for
Synod Initiative II

For

The San Gabriel Pastoral Region

Fall, 2011

2/12/2012

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Stewardship Prayer

Generous God, I give thanks to you for the gifts you have given me -my life, my family, my friends - time, talents, and material possessions. All that I have comes from you. Help me to remember this and rejoice in your goodness.

Walk with me, my God. Help me on my spiritual journey, so that I may constantly renew my relationship with you and all the good people in our parish and throughout the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

Renew in me your Spirit. Give me the strength and courage to become a better follower of Jesus, to be a disciple. Help me hear the call to "Come, Follow Me."

I give glory to you, my God, as I make stewardship a way of life.

Amen.

2/12/2012

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Acknowledgements

Most, if not all, Roman Catholic Archdioceses and Dioceses in the United States have published guidelines for the establishment and operation of parish financial councils since by canon law (canon 537); each parish is mandated to have a parish finance council to assist the pastor in the governance of the temporal goods of the parish. The Good News of the Gospel cannot be preached to God's people without consideration of the material needs, such as finances, membership, physical plant, and present and future expansions.

The Standing Committee for Synod Initiative II of the Bishop's Pastoral Council of the San Gabriel Pastoral Region has reviewed more than fifty of these and wishes to thank specifically the Archdioceses of Boston and Philadelphia and the Dioceses of Albany, Bridgeport, Charleston, Gaylord, and Lansing for their contributions to this document.

The initial philosophic guidance for an independent finance council selected by a process of discernment to consult with the pastor came from an article in Today's Parish (March 1994): pp. 21-23,32 written by Mark F. Fischer, PhD. of St. John's Seminary of the Los Angeles Archdiocese. We give a special thanks to Dr. Fischer.

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Standing Committee for Synod Initiative II
San Gabriel Pastoral Region of the
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Introduction

“Pastoring God’s people is why the church is organized, why it holds property, collects money, and has various functions and offices. Such an overarching understanding integrates rather than separates the many entities of parish life. A common breach from the pastoral focus can happen when pastors, pastoral administrators, and finance councils become consumed with paying salaries and bills and just “getting by.” Without even realizing it, many parishes become overly concerned by finances. With a goal of transparency and inclusion, all members of the parish family should inform themselves of the parish’s financial situation. An active and highly visible Parish Finance Council encourages and supports parishioner’s involvement in and knowledge of their parish’s financial health.

“A parish pastoral council cannot in fact prepare a high-quality yet realistic pastoral plan without the full disclosure of parish finances. An appropriate relationship between pastoral and finance councils is important. Even though each has its particular role, they ought to work together toward guaranteeing quality pastoral life in the parish. Finance councils do not set the pastoral agenda and therefore should not arbitrarily determine where the money goes. On the other hand the parish pastoral council should be informed by the finance council about the realistic financial situation of the parish, especially in the area of operating costs and necessary capital improvements”. (from *The Parish, A People, A Mission, A Structure*. NCCB, 1980).

The Archdiocese of Los Angeles has in accordance with Canon Law, guidelines for the financial governance of parishes. This **Implementation Guide to Parish Finance Councils** is meant as a “**how to**” for priests, religious, and laity to carefully, as disciples, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, respond to their Baptismal Call in the development and use of the “Time, Talents, and Treasures” of their parish. This must be a collaborative and cooperative effort not only at the parish level, but also requires support and counsel from within the pastoral region and the archdiocese.

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Stewardship

What is Stewardship?

As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace. (1 Peter 4:10) The Lord's way is not a way of comfortable living or of what Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in *The Cost of Discipleship*, scornfully calls "cheap grace." This is not real grace but an illusion. It is what happens when people approach the following of Christ as a way to pleasant experiences and feeling good. Bonhoeffer contrasts this with "costly" grace. It is costly because it calls us to follow, and grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it requires a disciple for Jesus' sake to put aside the craving for domination, possession, and control, and grace because it confers true liberation and eternal life. It is costly, finally, because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner.

But all this is very general. To understand and practice this way of life, people need models to imitate. These exist in abundance in the holy women and men who have gone before us in the faith; while our supreme source of guidance is found in the person and teaching of Jesus.

Jesus sometimes describes a disciple's life in terms of stewardship (cf. Mt 25:14-30; Lk 12:42-48), not because being a steward is the whole of it but because this role sheds a certain light on it. An oikonomos or steward is one to whom the owner of a household turns over responsibility for caring for the property, managing affairs, making resources yield as much as possible, and sharing the resources with others. The position involves trust and accountability.

A parable near the end of Matthew's Gospel (cf. Mt 25:14-30) gives insight into Jesus' thinking about stewards and stewardship. It is the story of "a man who was going on a journey," and who left his wealth in silver pieces to be tended by three servants. Two of them respond wisely by investing the money and making a handsome profit. Upon returning, the master commends them warmly and rewards them richly. But the third behaves foolishly, with anxious pettiness, squirreling away the master's wealth and earning nothing; he is rebuked and punished.

The silver pieces of this story stand for a great deal besides money. All temporal and spiritual goods are created by and come from God. That is true of everything human beings have: spiritual gifts like faith, hope, and love; talents of body and brain; cherished relationships with family and friends; material goods; the achievements of human genius and skill; the world itself. One day God will require an accounting of the use each person has made of the particular portion of these goods entrusted to him or her.

Each will be measured by the standard of his or her individual vocation. Each has received a different "sum"—a unique mix of talents, opportunities, challenges, weaknesses and strengths, potential modes of service and response—on which the Master expects a return. He will judge individuals according to what they have done with what they were given.

Who is a Christian steward?

As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace. (1 Pt 4:10).

What identifies a steward? Safeguarding material and human resources and using them responsibly are one answer; so is generous giving of time, talent, and treasure.

But being a Christian steward means more. As Christian stewards, we receive God's gifts gratefully, cultivate them responsibly, share them lovingly in justice with others, and return them with increase to the Lord. The definition, rooted in biblical and church tradition, corresponds with Almighty God's decision to entrust to humanity the universe God had created (Gn 1:26-31) and with Jesus Christ's famous parable of the talents (Mt 25:14-36).

For Disciples of Christ—everyone who responds to Jesus' invitation, "Come, follow me"—Christian stewardship is an obligation, not an option. Correctly and fully understood, Christian stewardship holds every individual accountable to God for personal care of the universe. At the time of judgment, God will have the right to ask: "What did you do with my world?"

Christian stewardship, therefore, applies to everything—all personal talents, abilities, and wealth; the local, national, and worldwide environment; all human and natural resources wherever they are; the economic order; governmental affairs; and even outer space. This stewardship does not tolerate indifference to anything important in God's world.

—Excerpts from *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, Pastoral Letter on Stewardship of the Bishops of the United States, 1992

We are called to Participation and Service

All Christians are configured to Christ through baptism, for that is the sacrament by which the new People of God are incorporated into the Church, participate in Christ's death and resurrection, and assume the name "Christian." All Christians are called to a life of discipleship and have the obligation of extending his work and presence in the world today, advancing the Reign of God in our own time and place. All share in the one same vocation—to be and to build the Body of Christ, building up the Kingdom of God here and now.

It is in the Church, at this time and in this place, that the presence of Christ—the one who witnessed, worshiped, and above all, served—continues. And it is through witness, worship, and service that the Church continually expresses and receives its identity as the Body of Christ.

The baptized are called to share in the Church's mission through mutual service (*diakonia*), through a life of worship (*leitourgia/koinonia*), and through witness (*marturia*) to the Gospel by holiness of life. These are the hallmarks of Christian living. The manner and degree of engagement in this common call differ, depending on the gifts

and ministries given by the Spirit: "And the gifts are given so that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4: 11).

Most lay persons are called to transform the world by living out their baptismal vocation, being and becoming the Body of Christ in the world, advancing the Kingdom of God amidst the pressing demands of marriage, family, school and workplace.

The baptized also witness to the light and love of Christ through all forms of prophetic utterance, through teaching, through the ministry of catechesis, through theological reflection by which they seek to probe the riches of the Word and the Christian tradition, and through participation in the Church's evangelical mission, sometimes being sent from home and country as heralds and servants of the Good News in other lands.

The baptized worship God in Spirit and in Truth through full, conscious and active participation in the Sunday liturgy, through the proclamation of the Word in word and in deed, through the liturgical ministries of lector, musician or Eucharistic minister, through the many other ministries which serve to animate the community gathered for prayer.

The baptized serve God through administration, feeding the hungry, caring for the needs of the sick, working for justice, washing the feet of the homeless, safeguarding and protecting the rights of the last, the littlest, and the least, giving the Body and Blood of Christ to those gathered at the Table of the Lord, and bringing this Holy Communion to those who are sick at home or in hospital. In all these ways and more, the gifts of the Christian people for witness, worship, and service are being shared for the greater glory of God in a community of faith, hope, and love whose members together become a living doxology—alive for the praise and glory of God the Father, through Christ the Word, in the creative and bonding Spirit of Love through which the world is transformed.

—Cardinal Roger Mahony and the Priests of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles
As I Have Done for You, A Pastoral Letter on Ministry

Rationale

The work of the San Gabriel Pastoral Region Synod Initiative II Standing Committee is centered on guiding principles grounded in church teaching.

Each parish in the Region will provide an avenue for greater incorporation of the expertise of all the faithful, especially in the areas of church management, finance, and human resources. By virtue of baptism, lay people have not only the right but the duty to offer their gifts and talents in the service of the church.

“The freedom for lay people in the Church to form such groups is to be acknowledged. Such liberty is a true and proper right that is not derived from any kind of "concession" by authority, but flows from the Sacrament of Baptism, which calls the lay faithful to participate actively in the Church's communion and mission” (*Christifideles Laici - Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation on The Vocation and The Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World, 1988, 29.*)

“The Christian faithful are obliged to assist with the needs of the Church so that the Church has what is necessary for divine worship, for the works of the apostolate and of charity, and for the decent support of ministers”.(*Code of Canon Law, Canon 222.1, 1983.*)

“The Christian faithful are at liberty to found and direct associations for purposes of charity or piety or for the promotion of the Christian vocation in the world and to hold meetings for the common pursuit of these purposes.” (*Code of Canon Law, Canon 215, 1983.*)

“In the context of Church mission, then, the Lord entrusts a great part of the responsibility to the lay faithful, in communion with all other members of the People of God. This fact, fully understood by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, recurred with renewed clarity and increased vigor in all the works of the Synod: ‘Indeed, Pastors know how much the lay faithful contribute to the welfare of the entire Church. They also know that they themselves were not established by Christ to undertake alone the entire saving mission of the Church towards the world, but they understand that it is their exalted office to be shepherds of the lay faithful and also to recognize the latter's services and charisms that all according to their proper roles may cooperate in this common undertaking with one heart’” (*Christifideles Laici, 1988, 32.*)

“The Christian faithful are free to make known to the pastors of the Church their needs, especially spiritual ones, and their desires. According to the knowledge, competence, and prestige which they possess, they have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful, without prejudice to the integrity of faith and morals, with reverence toward their pastors, and attentive to common advantage and the dignity of persons.”
(*Code of Canon Law, Canon 212.2-3, 1983.*)

“The same spirit of personal responsibility in which a Catholic approaches his or her parish should extend to the diocese and be expressed in essentially the same ways: generous material support and self-giving. As in the case of the parish, too, lay Catholics ought to have an active role in the oversight of the stewardship of pastoral leaders and administrators at the diocesan level.” (*Stewardship: A Disciple's Response – The US Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Stewardship, USCCB, 1993, pg. 35.*)

THE PARISH: MEMBERSHIP, STRUCTURE, & LEADERSHIP

1. Overview

As defined by Canon law, the law of the Roman Catholic Church, a Parish is “a certain community of Christ’s faithful stably established within a particular Church [diocese], whose pastoral care, under the authority of the diocesan Bishop, is entrusted to a parish priest as its proper Pastor” (Canon 515).

A Parish is the community where the faith life of each member is nourished. It is a family where, under the leadership of the Pastor, each member contributes to the success of the whole, of the building up of the Kingdom of God in the local community, as part of the Universal Church.

Each Parish comprises the following:

- **Parishioners** are the lay members of the Parish. They partake of the Sacraments and are encouraged to play an active role in the Parish mission, volunteering in many capacities. They are relied upon to financially support the Parish as their means permit.
- **Parish Clergy.** The head of the Parish is the **Pastor** or, in some cases, the **Parish Administrator**, appointed by the Bishop. He is the spiritual, sacramental, and administrative leader of the Parish. Additional clergy assigned to a Parish may include **Priests** (Parochial Vicars or Resident Priests), **Priests in Residence**, and **Deacons**, who assist the Pastor in fulfilling the Church’s mission. In some parishes, due to a shortage of priests possessing the powers and faculties of a pastor, a **Parish Life Director** may be appointed by the Bishop to provide the spiritual and administrative leadership while the sacramental function is provided by **Priests**.
- **Religious Women (Sisters) and Men (Brothers)** may work in the Parish and assist, for example, in Parish religious education programs, the Parish nursery school or child care, etc.
- **Lay Employees** of the Parish assist the Pastor in fulfilling the Parish mission. Employees can include the Director of Religious Education, Youth Minister, Music Minister, Parish Secretary, Bookkeeper, Business Manager, Accountant, Custodian, Cook, Housekeeper, and so forth.
- **Parish Pastoral Council** This advisory body, comprised of parishioners and Parish clergy, meets regularly with the Pastor to offer advice and assistance on the short-and-long-term needs of the Parish.
- **Parish Finance Council.** This advisory body, required by Canon law, is comprised of parishioners and Parish clergy. It, too, offers counsel to the Pastor on all Parish financial matters, including budgets, investments, capital expenditures, and reporting to parishioners.

2. The Parishioner

Every Catholic is a member of a Parish. Every Parishioner is encouraged to register in his/her Parish and play a full and active role in Parish life. In addition to the proper reception of the Sacraments, including Sunday Eucharist, and ongoing catechesis, parishioners may volunteer to help as catechists in religious education, organize youth ministry and adult events, assist in charitable activities in the community, and so forth. They may be invited to serve as, among other roles, Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, Lectors, Altar Servers, and Ushers.

Parishioners are encouraged to offer their talents and expertise to further the Parish mission by serving on the Parish Pastoral Council and Parish Finance Council.

Parishioners have a responsibility to offer financial support to their Parish, according to their means. They rightly expect to be informed, annually, of the financial affairs of their Parish through a Financial Report prepared by the Pastor with the assistance of the Parish Finance Council.

They are also obliged to express their concerns about Parish finances by meeting with their Pastor

God calls all of us to holiness, especially the laity, manifested in their work and activity and nurtured by participation in the life of the Church. This effort helps to bring about the sanctification of the world and assist in its evangelization.

In his 1988 Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (“The Lay Members of Christ’s Faithful”), Pope John Paul II issued a timely reminder to every parishioner of this vocation, which is achieved through participation in the life of the Church:

“The whole Church, Pastors and lay faithful alike . . . ought to feel more strongly the Church’s responsibility to obey the command of Christ, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation’ (Mark 16:15), and take up anew the missionary endeavor. A great venture, both challenging and wonderful, is entrusted to the Church – that of a re-evangelization, which is so much needed by the present world.

3. The Pastor

According to Canon law, the Pastor “exercises the pastoral care of the community [Parish] entrusted to him under the authority of the Diocesan Bishop, whose ministry of Christ he is called to share, so that for this community he may carry out the offices of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling with the cooperation of other priests or deacons, and with the assistance of lay members of Christ’s faithful, in accordance with the law” (Canon 519).

Canon 517.2 is new to the 1983 Code of Canon Law, the law of the church. It permits the diocesan bishop, because of a lack of priests, to entrust participation in the pastoral care of a parish to a deacon, another person who is not a priest, or a community of persons who are not priests. In this situation, the bishop is to appoint a priest, provided with the

powers and faculties of a pastor, to direct the pastoral care. **Parish Life Directors** in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles are appointed in accordance with Canon 517.2

The role of a **Parish Life Director** is to oversee the work of individuals and groups who serve as staff and parish leaders, and offer pastoral care on a daily basis to the people of the parish. In doing so she or he is supervised by a **Priest Moderator** and collaborates with one or more priests who serve as **Sacramental Ministers**. In an article on parish pastoral leaders, James A. Coriden points out the importance of such a role. “Partial [pastoral care] does not imply a small or minor participation, nor does it imply that the sharing is temporary or an emergency situation. Indeed, a partial sharing can be the major share, all except the sacramental roles reserved to priests.” (“**Parish Pastoral Leaders: Canonical Structures and Practical Questions**”)

For purposes of clarity and consistency, in this **Guide for Parish Finance Councils**, whenever the term **Pastor** is used, **Pastor** includes **Parish Life Director** except in areas of Sacramental Service and any other responsibilities reserved to the Pastor by Canon Law.

3.1 Leadership

The Pastor is the spiritual leader of the Parish community. He is also the person directly responsible for the daily administration of the Parish, including oversight of clergy, employees, and volunteers, and stewardship of all financial matters – all matters pastoral and financial of his Parish.

The Pastor should lead by example, always calling forth a good and faithful effort from Parish clergy, religious, lay employees, and volunteers. Pastors recognize that the lay faithful must play an important role in assisting them in the administration of the Parish, contributing their time and talents to further the mission of the Church. One of the most important ways to help is through the Parish Finance Council, where members can share their professional advice and expertise.

The Pastor is expected to serve as mentor and coach of the clergy assigned to his Parish. He is to involve them in administrative matters and encourage their participation in meetings of the Parish Pastoral Council and the Parish Finance Council, as well as attend meetings of the Parish Corporation.

3.2 Pastoral Responsibilities

According to Canon law (Canons 528-529), the Pastor’s pastoral responsibilities include:

- Ensuring that the Word of God and all the Truths of the Faith are proclaimed to the people of the Parish through preaching, teaching, and catechesis.
- Ensuring that the Eucharist is the center of life in the Parish, and making certain that all of the other Sacraments are offered and faithfully administered through sound and systematic catechesis, preparation, and instruction. The Pastor must “strive to ensure that Christ’s faithful are nourished by the devout celebration of the Sacraments.”
- Getting to know the people under his care, offering the consolation of God’s love and supporting family life. The Pastor “is to be especially diligent in seeking out the poor, the

suffering, the lonely, those who are exiled from their homeland, and those burdened with special difficulties.”

- Recognizing and promoting the role of the laity and their specific vocation in the Church. The Pastor “is to endeavor to ensure that the faithful are concerned for the community of the Parish, that they feel themselves to be members both of the Diocese and the Universal Church, and that they take part in and sustain works which promote this community.”
- Encouraging vocations to the priesthood and the religious life.
- Maintaining Sacramental records.
- Creating and overseeing various Parish organizations such as the Parish Pastoral Council, the Parish Finance Council, and other evangelization and social societies.

3.3 Financial Responsibilities

The administration of the goods of the Parish is to be carried out by the Pastor under the vigilance of and in accord with instructions of the Bishop, who retains the right to intervene in case of negligence (canon 1276; 1279§1).

The *Code of Canon Law* (canons 1284-1287) contains some general norms for Pastors on the administration of Parish property, goods, and finances.

These include:

- Overseeing the implementation of all Parish policies, procedures, and guidelines as defined by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.
- Making certain that the Parish is in compliance with all civil laws.
- Overseeing the use of Parish assets, properties, and buildings.
- Developing short-term and long-term financial budgets.
- Maintaining Parish bank accounts and all investments.
- Maintaining adequate insurance for the protection of all Church properties.
- Implementing financial controls and the monitoring of such controls.
- Creating and administering Parish spending policies.
- Archiving the documents and records on which the property rights of the Church are based, and deposit authentic copies of them in the archive of the Diocese.
- Administering the lay personnel policies of the Diocese (hiring, terminating, performance evaluations).

In addition, the Pastor is expected to enlist the help of the Parish Finance Council in the preparation of budgets and annual financial reports to be issued to the Parish.

4. The Parish Finance Council

In each parish there is to be a finance council which is governed, in addition to universal law, by norms issued by the diocesan bishop (see Appendix I, p. 29) and in which the

Christian faithful, selected according to these same norms, are to assist the pastor in the administration of the goods of the parish, without prejudice to the prescript of can. 532. (Canon 537).

The Parish Finance Council is a consultative body of clergy and laity that advises the Pastor in matters pertaining to the financial affairs of the Parish. As a good steward, the Pastor is expected to invite qualified parishioners to sit on the Parish Finance Council and share their expertise and advice.

The Parish Finance Council assists the Pastor in the following ways:

- Supports the Pastor to safeguard the assets of the Parish.
- Assists the Pastor in the preparation of budgets.
- Monitors, with the Pastor, the financial performance and effectiveness of offertory collections and other fund-raising activities.
- Helps to develop, with the Pastor, long-range plans for the financing of repairs and renovations of property and purchase of equipment, as needed.
- Oversees, with the Pastor, implementation of all Diocesan policies on financial matters, spending guidelines, and long-range plans for Parish investments.
- Monitors, with the Pastor, procedures and controls to ensure that all requirements of federal and state tax and employment laws are met and accurate records are maintained.

With the help of the Parish Finance Council, the Pastor prepares and publishes annual Financial Reports for distribution to the Parish Pastoral Council and to the Parish community

5. The Bishop

“Bishops, who by divine institution succeed to the place of the Apostles through the Holy Spirit who has been given to them, are constituted partners in the Church, so that they are teachers of doctrine, priests of sacred worship, and ministers of governance”. (Canon 375.1).

“Since the diocesan bishop is mindful of his obligation to show an example of holiness in charity, humility, and simplicity of life, he is to strive to promote in every way the holiness of the Christian faithful according to the proper vocation of each. Since he is the principal dispenser of the mysteries of God, he is to endeavor constantly that the Christian faithful entrusted to his care grow in grace through the celebration of the sacraments and that they understand and live the paschal mystery.” (Canon 387).

The Bishop is also the chief Pastor and Shepherd of the Diocese, overseeing all of its activities, ministries, and Parishes which, together, seek to fulfill the mission of the Church in a particular place. He exercises his authority with the assistance of both clergy and laity. The College of Consultors and the Presbyteral Council provide advice on matters pastoral and financial. In addition, two consultative bodies comprised mainly of lay people, the Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Diocesan Finance Council, provide advice and assistance on matters.

The Archbishop of Los Angeles is responsible for overseeing the proper administration and conduct of each community of faithful. He does so by appointing a competent priest as Pastor (or, in some cases, an Administrator or a Parish Life Director), and receiving regular reports and updates on the Parish and its mission. The Regional Bishop, moreover, visits each Parish as often as practicable, to celebrate Mass, administer the Sacrament of Confirmation, or attend Parish activities and events.

It is not necessary, or practical, for the Regional Bishop to attend all meetings of the Parish Finance Council. However, major decisions regarding Parish finances, fundraising, real estate transactions, or capital expenditures do require, under civil and Canon law, the consent of the Archbishop or his designee.

In terms of effective stewardship of the resources entrusted to the care of the Church, the Archbishop seeks the advice and support of experienced Priests who comprise the College of Consultors, and the Diocesan Finance Council, which includes clergy as well as lay men and women with appropriate professional expertise.

PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL

What is the purpose of the PFC?

The PFC is a consultative organization and its purpose is to be of assistance to the Pastor in the financial management of the parish.

Can I Serve?

To be eligible to serve on a Parish's Finance Council (PFC), the person should have no known conflict of interest with any entity doing business with the parish. This is a volunteer position.

What are the qualifications?

Members should have some type of financial expertise. This includes, but is not limited to:

- An appreciation for Church ministry.
- A willingness to work co-operatively with others.
- Experience with banking or investing.
- A general interest of church financial issues.
- A general understanding of proper accounting practices and internal controls.
- Experience preparing, auditing, analyzing, or evaluating financial statements.
- An understanding of PFC duties (see Charter below).

What is the term and how often do we meet?

The PFC consists of individuals with the gift of knowledge of finance, serving for a 3-year period, which is renewable. One member will be designated as liaison with the

Parish Pastoral Council. The PFC meets regularly and terms are staggered to ensure continuity.

SAMPLE PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL CHARTER

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SAMPLE PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL CHARTER

(May be modified or amended as needed, however must be submitted to the Bishop and Canonical Vicar for review)

FOR

The Church of _____ in the city of _____
_____ in the San Gabriel Pastoral Region of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

ARTICLE I – Name and Purpose

The Parish Finance Council (hereinafter referred to as “Council”) is established pursuant to the requirements of Canon 537 of the *1983 Code of Canon Law* for the Roman Catholic Church, and is subject to the provisions of Canon Law. The Council exists to assist the pastor, administrator or Parish Life Director in the administration of the goods of the parish. The Council is advisory only and is accountable to the pastor.

The Council is envisioned as a select group known for their spiritual maturity and love of Christ and the Church, endowed with special competence in financial matters and of prudent judgment, who offer their time and talents in Christian service to assist the pastor with the development and management of the parish's financial resources so that the parish may effectively pursue its proper mission of spreading Christ's Gospel and love.

The Council must serve in accord with the Gospel, over any secular business philosophy. Efficient use of resources and money management, in the context of the Catholic Church, must be measured primarily by the ability to nurture and foster the Christian mission and

ministry of the parish community and archdiocese. A truly Catholic understanding of the mission of the Church assures "good business practice".

ARTICLE II – Structure, Membership, and Officers

1. Council members shall be appointed by the pastor as determined by the pastor or recommended to the pastor by members of the parish. When a pastorate changes, the new pastor is to meet with the current Council. Within 90 days, the pastor is to decide whether to reappoint the Council's current membership to complete the balance of the respective term of office or to appoint new members to complete the respective term of office of each replaced Council member. Members should be skilled in business or have some expertise in management, financial, accounting, legal, fundraising, or related fields. The membership of the Council is not to include anyone who could have a conflict of interest from such affiliation including a parish staff member or any relative of the pastor up to the fourth degree of consanguinity (related by blood) or affinity (related by marriage) (Canon 492 §3, *by extension*).

2. There shall be at least three (3) appointed members (Canon 492 §1, *by extension*). More members may be added up to seven (7). Appointed members shall serve for three years. The terms of the Council will be staggered to ensure continuity. Upon initial formation of the Council, the pastor shall designate either a one, two, or three year term, in succession, for each appointed member. Thereafter, members who are appointed or re-appointed shall serve for three years. In the event a member resigns or is removed by the pastor for a just cause, the replacement shall assume the remainder of the term of the replaced member. A person appointed to complete an unfinished term will first serve for the remainder of that term before being considered for appointment to an additional three-year term. Generally, and where practical, no member should serve for more than two consecutive three year terms without a one-year break; also, no member may serve on the Council simultaneously with another closely related person.

Pastors should include the parish business manager/bookkeeper and should consider other staff resource persons, such as the school principal, in meeting discussions.

The Parochial Vicar(s) should be present at all meetings.

3. The pastor may remove a member from the Council at any time for cause. Cause is defined here as physical or mental incapacitation, public non-support of Church teaching or participation in public scandal, or acting contrary to the Code of Canon Law of the Catholic Church and/or rules and regulations of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

4. An appointed member who misses two regularly scheduled Council meetings in any given year without giving prior notice to the pastor or Chairperson shall be removed from Council membership.

5. The pastor shall preside at all meetings. If the pastor cannot attend, the meeting either must not take place, or take place with the pastor's prior permission and subsequent positive or negative acknowledgement of recommendations made to the pastor. Any

meeting held when the pastor is not present or has not granted proper permission is to be considered null and void.

6. The Council should have the following officers: Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Secretary. Officers may be re-appointed or re-elected.

a. The Chairperson assists the Pastor, The Chairperson chairs all meetings. In consultation with the Pastor, The Chairperson is responsible for selecting the hour and location of meetings, preparing the meeting agenda and effecting any other duties assigned by the Pastor.

b. The Vice Chairperson, in the absence of the Chairperson, assists the pastor, who presides at all meetings and performs any other duties assigned by the Chairperson or the Pastor.

c. The Secretary is responsible for the recording and distribution of Council meeting minutes, notifying members of upcoming meetings, maintaining a permanent record of business conducted by the Council and each member's tenure, and any other duties assigned by the Chairperson or the Pastor.

7. The Council may establish committees, either standing or ad hoc, to assist in carrying out its responsibilities.

ARTICLE III – Voting

1. While seeking consensus is the Archdiocesan norm, it may be necessary for a consultive vote for the pastor to get the sense of the council on a particular matter. If the advice of the members of the Council is unanimous on a given matter, the pastor will give serious consideration to the recommendation and not lightly reject it.

ARTICLE IV – Meetings

1. Regular meetings shall be held at least quarterly, more frequently if necessary, at a time and place established by the Pastor and Chairperson. Special meetings may be called by the Pastor or the Chairperson, with the Pastor's concurrence, upon two days notice.

2. An annual calendar of meetings and outline of major action items should be proposed and agreed upon at the first meeting of each fiscal year (see Article V Duties/Responsibilities).

3. The agenda and study material should be communicated to the members prior to the regular meetings.

4. The Secretary is responsible for taking minutes at each Council meeting. The minutes should be kept as a permanent record.

ARTICLE V – Duties/Responsibilities

A. Budgets

1. Assist in establishing timelines for development and implementation of the annual capital and operating budget for parish, school, and parish organizations. The Pastor is responsible for the actual coordination/preparation of all parish budgets, but is to seek the advice of the Council. The Pastor is to elicit the assistance of the parish business manager, bookkeeper and/or Parish Finance Council Chairperson to prepare the parish budget. Parish organizations include those with fund accounts in the general operating budget. Each organization should present its plans and a summary of expected cash receipts and disbursements to the Council during the budget cycle. All are an integral part of parish life and provide services to parishioners and/or general operations/special funding. Financial statements shall be submitted to the Council at least annually.
2. Determine if the parish and school budgets are prepared in accordance with the chart of accounts and reporting formats required by the Archdiocese.
3. Review the proposed annual parish, school, and organizations' capital and operating budgets; and, make recommendations to the Pastor for changes as appropriate.

B. Financial Records and Reporting

1. Review financial statements, including annual reports, to help determine that Archdiocesan policies regarding fiscal and accounting procedures are being followed.
2. Review monthly and/or quarterly income and expense reports for the parish and school. Whenever possible, compare actual results to budget and prior year numbers. All significant variances should be explained with particular attention given to expenditures not included in the capital or operating budget. The Council should recommend budget amendments to bring revenues and expenditures into balance or propose a plan to correct the problem(s).
3. Assist with recording detailed inventory of assets annually and update the inventory prepared in accordance with Canon 1283. 2. This detailed inventory should include photographic and/or video images of specific valuable parish property such as stained glass windows, precious metal objects, etc.
4. Review the annual financial report, prior to submission to the Archdiocese, to help determine the accuracy and completeness; ensure that it is submitted by the prescribed due date.
5. Annually, after the end of the fiscal year, each pastor is asked to send a letter together with the financial report to the bishop containing:
 - A. the names and professional titles of the members of his parish finance council;
 - B. the dates on which the parish finance council has met during the preceding fiscal year and since the end of that fiscal year;

C. a statement signed by the parish finance council members and the pastor stating that they have met, reviewed, and discussed the financial report of the parish, and that it includes all parish related matters, and is accurate and complete.

6. Review, at least annually, the financial statements and verify the cash balances of all parish organizations with fund accounts. Make sure all accounts for the parish and for each parish organization are included on the annual financial report.

7. Assist in preparing/presenting/communicating a parish financial report (Balance Sheet and Statement of Activity/Cash flow) to all parishioners. Specific information should be included on the parish, school, and parish organizations.

8. Monitor accuracy and timeliness of payments for all parish bills and/or obligations.

9. Monitor parish contribution trends by studying sources of parish revenue: make recommendations for maintaining and enhancing parish revenue, assist in the development of programs and processes to that end, and coordinate fundraising programs. Oversee and review fundraising programs and expenditures for the parish, school, and affiliated groups/organizations.

C. Strategic Planning

1. The Parish Pastoral Council develops the long-term parish plan, including implementation and funding sources. The Pastor may request the advice of the Parish Finance Council in his determination for adoption.

2. Assist the Pastor in developing a program for the care and maintenance of all parish facilities.

3. Assist in the development and maintenance of position descriptions for the parish business manager/bookkeeper and other staff/personnel engaged in the management, operation or administration of the parish. Consultation with the Archdiocesan Human Resource Coordinator is encouraged.

4. Serve as a resource to advise the Pastor on significant expenditures before making a purchase or lease commitment.

5. Assist the Pastor in soliciting assistance and/or information from the Archdiocesan Finance Officer and members of the Finance Office staff as appropriate.

D. Internal Controls

1. Assist in developing a system of internal controls in accordance with Archdiocesan policy.

2. Review/audit the financial reports for parish general operations, school and other organizations with fund accounts to determine that proper accounting practices and internal control procedures have been implemented and are being followed. Generally, a

self audit using the archdiocesan Self Audit Report instrument is sufficient. However, there may be an occasion, after consultation with the Archdiocesan Finance Office; the parish may engage an outside CPA firm to perform the annual audit.

3. When a change of Pastor or Parish Administrator occurs, assist with providing a complete report of the parish's financial condition and inventory of parish assets for the new Pastor or Administrator (in accordance with Canon 1283, 2).

4. When a change of Pastor or Parish Administrator occurs, assist and cooperate with a financial review of the parish, school, and organizations by the Archdiocesan Finance Officer or other Archdiocesan representative.

E. Insurance Issues

1. Review property valuations annually to determine if adequate.

2. Assist in completing Self-Inspection Reports or assist with on-site inspection by a loss control representative, and assist with follow-up items.

3. Ascertain that required policies are implemented and enforced.

4. Assist with reporting claims that may arise.

5. Ascertain that background checks are completed for all church workers, as defined by the *The Archdiocese of Los Angeles*, and also for those with access to parish funds.

F. Other Considerations

1. Follow established Archdiocesan guidelines and participates in Archdiocesan training sessions and/or workshops. The Archdiocesan Finance Office and its Chief Finance Officer should provide major direction and assistance in this regard. The Archdiocesan Chief Financial Officer: recommends, communicates, and oversees Archdiocesan financial policies and procedures with Archdiocesan entities as well as some of the administrative areas of the Archdiocesan Catholic Center. The Chief Finance Officer assists parishes in their operations by placing at their disposal support and resources.

2. Ascertain that all employees have been informed about and offered the opportunity to participate with their own contributions in the Archdiocesan coordinated 403B program.

3. Ascertain that independent contractors comply with Internal Revenue Service regulations; retain a copy of a signed statement stating they are independent contractors as defined by the IRS.

4. Members of the Council must be given complete access to all records and documents relating to financial status and operations of the parish.

5. The Pastor must consult the Council concerning any major commitment of parish funds in excess of \$10,000 for all construction, renovation, additions and/or building type

projects or property transactions or a series of small amounts for a single purpose that will exceed \$10,000. The Council shall assist, if needed, with obtaining the required authorization from the Bishop for amounts exceeding \$10,000, and with adherence to the Contract Review Policy.

6. Assist in “Operations” audits to assure monies are handled prudently and safely. This should be an annual audit procedure.

ARTICLE VI – Communication

If concerns exist within the parish, they should be resolved by contacting in this order: 1) Pastor; 2) Regional Bishop, and 3) Diocesan Finance Officer, if finance related. All attempts to resolve an issue should be taken at the lowest level possible under the principle of subsidiarity.

ARTICLE VII – Confidentiality

Members of the Parish Finance Council must observe strict confidentiality concerning all matters discussed at Council meetings and provided to them in confidence. Council members generally should not have access to the records of individual parishioners which pertain to their financial contributions or other confidential information.

ARTICLE VIII – Charter Review and Change

This charter is to be reviewed annually by the Council.

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APPENDIX I

GUIDELINES FOR PARISH FINANCE COUNCILS

Archdiocese of Los Angeles

Role

The Code of Canon Law (Canon 537) mandates Parish Finance Councils in each parish. The role of the Parish Finance Council is to assist and advise the pastor in overseeing and controlling the financial affairs of the parish, including any schools (P.A.M. pg. 2-2). The Parish Finance Council is accountable to the pastor who has the responsibility for final decisions. If the advice of the Parish Finance Council is unanimous on a given matter, the pastor will give serious consideration to the recommendation.

Structure of the Finance Council

- Members of the council shall be appointed by the pastor and if necessary are not required to be members of the parish community. Members are to represent the parish at large. No member will represent a specific group within the parish or school community. When a pastorate becomes vacant, the Finance Council members will submit their resignations to the new Pastor who may or may not accept the resignations.
- Members should, if possible, be skilled in business and have some expertise in management, financial, accounting, and legal, fund raising or some related field. The membership of the council cannot include anyone who could have a conflict of interest. For example, the council should not include anyone who is, or becomes at any time, a vendor to the parish. If such a relationship should develop during the tenure of a Finance Council member (who becomes a vendor), that member shall immediately submit his resignation from the Parish Finance Council. No member of the parish or school staff can be a member nor can any relative of the pastor. The parish bookkeeper, lay administrator, or business manager should be required to attend all meetings, however, since their activities are an integral part of the scope of a Finance Council.
- The Finance Council shall have a minimum of three members and a maximum of ten members. Members shall serve for three years. The terms of the Finance Council will be staggered to ensure continuity. Upon the initial formation of the council, the pastor shall designate either a one, two, or a three year term, in succession, for each member the pastor has appointed. Thereafter, members who are appointed or re-appointed shall serve for three years. In the event a member resigns or is removed by the pastor for just cause, the replacement will assume the remainder or the term of the removed person.

Confidentiality

Members of the Finance Council must exercise prudent judgment concerning the confidentiality of any Parish or School financial records to which they have access. Except for the Pastor, no member of the Finance Council shall have access to the records of individual parishioners as regards to financial contributions or any other confidential information. In addition, the subject matter in certain meetings should not be discussed openly with other parishioners until a consensus has been reached.

Functions of the Finance Council

The pastor is responsible for all financial decisions and will establish annual operating budgets for the parish and school in consideration with the Finance Council (P.A.M. Page 2-12). The pastor should also develop an annual capital expenditures budget including source of funds, in consultation with the Finance Council. Actual income and expenses for the parish and the school should be reported monthly and reviewed by the Finance Council at least quarterly. Whenever possible current year results should be compared with previous year results.

The members of the Finance Council must be given complete access to all records and documents relating to the financial status and operations of the Parish and School. In conjunction with this responsibility, the Finance Council shall do the following:

Budget

- Establish a timeline for budget development and implementation by the parish/school staff.
- Ensure that the Parish and School follow the Chart of Accounts provided by the Archdiocese to facilitate budgeting and reporting conformity, (P.A.M. Page 2-7 and Appendix 2-3)
- Review proposed operating and capital budgets.
- Review significant budget variances and develop a plan of action to correct the problem.
- If the variances cannot be corrected, the Finance Council should recommend amending the budget.
- Review the proposed expenditures not included in the approved budget.
- Review the proposed budgets for all parish and school organizations handling significant sums of money. Financial statements from these organizations should be submitted monthly to the Finance Council.
- Provide parishioners with an approved budget and periodic financial reports, at least annually.

Other Financial and Reporting Activities

- Review financial statements, including annual reports, prior to submission to the Archdiocesan Catholic Center.
- Perform annual self-audits of the Parish and School to determine that proper accounting procedures are being followed (P.A.M. Exhibits 2-13 through 2-15)
- Evaluate and make recommendations for maintaining and enhancing parish and school revenue, including investments, (P.A.M. Pages 2-38 through 2-44), fund raising and stewardship programs.

- Review all banking and financial institution relationships and make recommendations for improvements if needed.
- Ensure all Archdiocesan policies and procedures are being followed at all times with regard to fiscal and accounting activities. (P.A.M. Section 200)
- Advise the pastor in developing a program for care and maintenance of all Parish and School facilities.
- Assist the pastor in developing a long-range program for funding and implementing a long-term capital improvement campaign.

Financial Responsibility

The Pastor may appoint a member of the Finance Council to be an authorized signatory for the Parish checking accounts. The appointed member would be authorized to sign checks up to \$3,000.00.

Meetings

The Finance Council will meet at least quarterly, but monthly meetings are preferred. Special meetings of the Finance Council may be called at any time by the Pastor. A quorum of the Finance Council at any regular or special meeting shall consist of two thirds of the membership.

APPENDIX II DISCERNMENT OF NEW MEMBERS

While the appointment of Finance Council members is always the prerogative and responsibility of the pastor, councils that work together most effectively commonly employ a process of discernment, decision making rooted in prayer, to aid the pastor in the selection and appointment of those from among the Christian faithful most qualified and able to serve.

An ancillary benefit to the discernment process is the catechetical instruction of the Christian faithful of their need and duty to fully participate in the life of their church. In the past, the parish finance committee or council has been largely an unknown to the parishioner in the pew or has been viewed as the domain of the few who had the ear of the pastor. Transparency in the financial matters of the local church is much needed and the public formation and the publicity associated with discernment will contribute to a system of openness and trust.

By using discernment, we acknowledge that God is at work in our lives, especially when making important decisions. Prayerful discernment helps people to free their minds from vested interests and distractions, focusing the Parish Finance Council on the needs of the parish at that particular time and place. The Holy Spirit calls forth these gifts in ministry. The many benefits of a formal discernment process include:

- Encourages participation of the entire faith community
- Informs and educates the parish about financial planning and the role of the Parish Finance Council
- Focuses on the gifts of individuals and not their visibility or popularity
- Uses prayer, faith sharing, listening, and consensus-building consistent with Church Tradition
- Honors the reflection/decision-making process of the individual
- Allows the pastor to reflect on the gifts that are needed on the council at that time
- Elicits names of potential leaders within the parish
- Affirms all candidates and minimizes the sense of a winner/loser dynamic
- Provides an open and transparent process

Those who are not selected are invited to share their gifts in other ways. A further benefit is to those parishes and pastors that at this time do not have a Parish Finance Council in place. Canon 537 of the Code of Canon Law promulgated in 1983 mandates that every parish is to have a parish finance council. The Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles has ruled by particular law, also, that each parish have a functioning parish finance council. Use of the discernment model presented here provides

the pastor a real opportunity to learn of the unique talents and abilities of the Christian faithful in his parish. Some might be wonderful and qualified to be appointed to the Parish Finance Council, while others, not appointed to the Parish Finance Council, may be a source of ministry and leadership in other areas of need.

A Model for Nominating and Discerning Council Members

To discern new members, a nominating committee of two or three people is formed from the existing Parish Finance Council. If no council exists, a steering committee is formed to accomplish these tasks.

The discernment of new members occurs in the following parts:

- 1. Publicity** – Bulletin and pulpit announcement or other means of advertising to make the parish aware of the existing council and their role in it.
- 2. Nominations** – All parishioners are encouraged to submit names (or self nominate) at a Sunday liturgy.
- 3. Invitations** – Invitations are sent to nominees inviting them to attend a Night of Information to learn more about the Parish Finance Council and to ask questions.
- 4. Night of Information** – A session to explain in detail the Parish Finance Council, including explanation of roles and duties of Parish Finance Council members. It also provides time for the nominees to ask questions. This night ends by encouraging nominees to prayerfully consider what they have heard and, feeling called, to come the following week to Discernment Night.
- 5. Discernment Night** – Exactly one week after the Information session, the current Parish Finance Council members and returning nominees gather to discern new council members in the context of prayer. The nominees answer a series of questions and listen to everyone else as they offer their answers to the same questions. From these gathered Christian faithful, the pastor selects and appoints new members to the Parish Finance Council. Prior to making a decision on appointments, the pastor may wish to have a private interview with some or all of the discerning nominees. This is certainly his prerogative, since he will be calling on these parishioners for advice and counsel.
- 6. Commissioning of New Members** – This is usually conducted by the pastor at a Sunday liturgy. This commissioning could also be a time to recognize those who are leaving the council.

Timeline for the Selection Process

(sample materials of all forms mentioned are located at the end)

Weeks 1 – 3: Publicity

Financial Planning and the Parish Finance Council are explained throughout the parish while publishing the discernment process. Use mediums such as:

Pulpit description

Bulletin announcements

Posters, flyers, homily references and other means created by the council (such as prayer cards or general intercessions which pray for the success of the process)

Parish Web site.

Publicity is meant to clarify the role of the Parish Finance Council, particularly that council members are not chosen by virtue of their office (i.e. from among heads of parish organizations) but serve from particular talents and abilities. A list of qualities for a Parish Financial Council member is included on the nomination form and may be also used in publicity materials.

Week 3-4: Nominations

At all Masses on one weekend, Nomination/Identification forms are distributed to everyone present along with pencils or pens to be used in filling them out. Parishioners are encouraged to fill out a form during the announcement period. They nominate a fellow parishioner or self nominate. Before the parishioners leave, the ushers or hospitality ministers collect the forms the way they would a second collection.

Week 5: Invitation to an Information Night

The nominating committee of the Parish Finance Council (or steering committee) collects the Nomination forms and reviews the results with the Pastor. Invitations and/or phone calls should be made as soon as possible after the nominations have been collected. The invitations should include the date and time of the Information session as well as a note of congratulations for being nominated. A nomination signifies that someone in the parish thinks that this person has the gifts of leadership and particular talents and abilities needed for parish financial matters.

In addition, the use of a formal invitation allows the Pastor, if necessary, to remove any names based on his own pastoral insight. However, the removal of nominations must be used with great discretion to maintain the integrity of the discernment.

Week 6: Information Night

This presentation is a time for nominees to learn about the Parish Finance Council and ask questions regarding this ministry. It consists of:

Faith sharing

A presentation on the basics of parish finance councils (Code of Canon Law)

Time for the Pastor, who is the Presider of the Parish Finance Council, to express his hope and vision for the parish .

Logistical details – including the frequency and number of meetings and the needed commitment for the formation process.

The Night of Information is held at the parish and usually lasts 1 to 1 1/2 hours. It is recommended that a member of the Parish Finance Council facilitate the session using the materials provided here.

Week 7: Discernment Night

The Night of Discernment is held one week after the Night of Information. Because this process seeks to narrow the number of nominees, those who were not able to attend the Night of Information are not usually invited to attend the Night of Discernment.

Week 8 or later: Commissioning of New Members

The commissioning of the new members is conducted by the Pastor shortly after the Night of Discernment. A sample commissioning service is included in this Appendix. This commissioning could also be a time to recognize those who are leaving the council or to recognize a steering committee that has now completed its task.

Sample Bullet Points for Pulpit talks on Parish Finance Councils

The Code of Canon Law (Canon 537) mandates every parish have a Parish Finance Council to assist the pastor in parish financial affairs. This Council is collaborative and advisory only. The final financial decisions are to be made by the pastor.

The Archbishop of Los Angeles has ruled by particular law that every parish in the Archdiocese is to have a functioning Parish Finance Council.

The people on the council are chosen based on the gifts they have to offer.

The council is a working body. They develop, implement, and review the financial plan for the parish that addresses the needs of the parish as documented in the Parish Pastoral Plan and/or brought to their attention by the pastor.

The council is consultative to the pastor and it is a way to assist the pastor in listening to the needs of the parish and addressing those needs.

Council members are not experts. They are people who are committed to the parish and want to see the parish live and thrive in the future.

This process ultimately involves everyone in the parish in some way through development and implementation of the parish plan.

Sample Bulletin Announcements for the Discernment Process

Sample # 1

Dear Parishioners,

In a few short weeks, the parish is going to hold nominations for additional membership on the Parish Finance Council.

We are in need of ## parishioners who have these qualities: a desire for spiritual growth in themselves and in the parish, a background in accounting, law, or business, an enthusiasm about the future direction of the parish, and unquestioning integrity.

Nominations will take place on the weekend of _____ at all masses. Those identified as nominees will be invited to attend an information night on _____. At this session all nominees will learn about the role of the Parish Finance Council. After this evening, all will be asked to reflect and pray on this information and discern whether or not they feel called to this ministry of service and leadership. The following week on __, a formal discernment night will be held. Please pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Fr. _____

Sample # 2

Last week at all the masses, nominations were held and individuals identified who might be potential candidates for the Parish Finance Council. These parishioners have been sent an invitation to come to the Information Night on _____. At this session all nominees will learn about the role of the Parish Finance Council. After this evening all will be asked to reflect and pray on this information and discern whether or not they feel called to this ministry. The following week, a formal Discernment Night will be held. Let us all continue to pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance throughout this process.

Fr. _____

Sample #3

Dear Parishioners,

Following the “Information Night” held this past _____ night, all those who attended were asked to reflect and pray on the information they received regarding the role of the Parish Finance Council. They were also asked to prayerfully discern whether or not they feel called to this ministry of service and leadership. This _____, a formal Discernment Night will be held. All those who feel called to this ministry will return. These individuals will be asked to address several questions regarding their gifts and their feelings about the life and future of the parish. The entire night is conducted in the context of prayer and reflection. I ask you to keep all those involved in this process in your prayers throughout the week.

Fr. _____

Sample #4

Dear Parishioners,

Last _____ night, the final discernment process for the Parish Finance Council was held. Through this evening of prayer and reflection, those nominees who returned after the Information Night listened to one another and responded to questions regarding those gifts they bring. The names of the new Parish Finance Council members are: _____.

Thank you to those members of the Parish Finance Council who will be leaving the council after _____.
Their involvement and dedication to this important ministry of leadership has been a great asset to me and to our parish. Those members who will be leaving the council are: _____. Thank you for your commitment to this ministry and to our parish.

The newly discerned members of the Parish Finance Council will be commissioned at the ###:## mass on _____. Thank you for your consistent prayer during this discernment process. May the Holy Spirit continue to guide our Parish Finance Council.

Fr. _____

Parish Finance Council Identification Form

Our parish is in need of Christian leadership to help make decisions about our pastoral life and growth. Please help identify persons in this faith community who could enable us to foster stewardship of our spiritual and temporal goods as our Lord, Jesus Christ, would have us.

Members should have some type of financial expertise. This includes, but is not limited to:

An appreciation for Church ministry.

Experience with banking or investing.

A general interest of church financial issues.

A general understanding of fund accounting practices and internal controls.

Experience preparing, auditing, analyzing, or evaluating financial statements

.Desire for spiritual growth in themselves and in the parish

We are in need of ## members for our council. Please list the name(s) of a parishioner(s) whom you identify as having the **gifts** for Parish Finance Council leadership. This person will receive an invitation to participate in an Information Night during which he or she will learn about the role and function of the Parish Finance Council. Following the information session, each of these individuals will be asked to discern if they are being called to this ministry. They have the option to remain in the selection process or not.

PLEASE FOLD BEFORE PLACING IN THE COLLECTION BASKET

I suggest the following individual(s) be invited to consider leadership ministry through service on our Parish Finance Council. I will continue to pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance during the selection process.

Information Night – Suggested Points

A number of pastors in the San Gabriel Pastoral Region of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles have asked for information to help them facilitate the Information Night for Parish Finance Councils. It is important to make this night your own, specific to both the facilitator's style and the parish needs. That being said, the next few pages include points of information relevant to Parish Finance Councils that can be incorporated into an Information session.

A typical one and one half hour Information Night session includes the following:

- Opening prayer
- Explanation of purpose
- Why we are here?
- What is discernment?
- How many members are being discerned?

Background info: Brief history/Theology of financial planning and Canon 537. (adapt this to specific parish needs)

Planning process and Function of the Council.

Specific commitments involved and/or Parish Finance Council members giving witness to their experience of being on the Council.

Questions / Answers

Invitation to discernment

*Please note that these points are **NOT** intended to be read verbatim. Consider the needs of your council, the knowledge / experience of those present, and what information will assist those present in discerning their own involvement.*

The intent of this very general overview is to keep the "Information Night" focused and not overwhelm councils or parishioners with information that they will receive at a later date. Very specific questions related to models of planning and forms of consultation can be gently set aside for another time, such as individually after the meeting.

Facilitating the Discernment Session

Environment

It should be clear as soon as people enter the room, that this is very different from the Information Night. The room should be very purposefully arranged. Participants should sit in chairs arranged in a circle. The facilitator also sits in the circle.

A small table sits in the center with a cloth that reflects the current liturgical season. The table contains a candle, a Bible, A crucifix or other symbols. Soft music could be playing in the background. The use of subdued lighting also is effective. The entire environment should contribute to an atmosphere of quiet. There should be nothing to interfere with reflection and sharing with all the participants.

Process

The enclosed worship aid incorporates all the steps of discernment. The reading is done by one of the nominees. The opening prayer is done by the facilitator or the Pastor and should invoke the Holy Spirit to be with the group. The faith sharing question is done in the large group. After the facilitator states the question and encourages sharing, there will be a time of silence. Not everyone needs to speak, but enough time must be allowed so that all who wish to share may do so. After each speaker. There may again be a time of silence. **This is normal.** Do not hurry!

Participants must continually be reminded that we are looking for the Holy Spirit to illuminate the discerning of the **GIFTS** (NOT THE PEOPLE) that are needed at the table at this time. This helps to depersonalize the process so that everyone is affirmed.

Faith sharing provides the opportunity for people to view this process in light of the Gospel, and begin to talk to each other in an open and honest fashion. It would be helpful to remind the group that while those being discerned will be asked to respond to questions later on, faith sharing is not mandatory and is open to all in the room who wish to respond.

Questions:

In Part 1, the questions are straightforward. Anyone can begin, but once someone begins, continue around the circle in order. As people answer, take note of their name. Then after each person speaks, the facilitator guides the group in the affirmation, so that each person is prayed for after speaking. The night should be done in a prayerful pace, but it also must be kept moving.

The questions in Part II and Part III form the heart of the discernment. The role of the facilitator is to ensure each person being discerned has a chance to respond. The facilitator should accept what was said and ensure that people do not respond or begin a dialogue over what someone has shared.

Discernment:

First, ask if there is anyone who wishes **not** to continue in the process. Those who do not wish to be considered for selection should make themselves known. It is important that the selection process be transparent. It is recommended that the affirmation of **gifts** be done aloud. Interestingly, transparency also helps ensure a compassionate discernment. As participants witness the process unfold, people's gifts are affirmed.

Once the round of the first question is finished, ask for the group's permission to move forward and pray over those discerned.

The second round repeats the process. Go around the circle in the opposite direction as the first round. Again, after the second question has been answered, ask the group to pray over those being discerned. Repeat for the third round.

Inform everyone that it is now the pastor's turn to prayerfully discern those Christian faithful he thinks would best collaborate with other members of the Parish Finance Council and with him. This will be no easy task as each of those present have brought unique gifts to this circle. Let us now ask the Holy Spirit to give him guidance and peace.

Discernment Night for Parish Finance Council

“An Invitation to Prayer”

Opening Prayer

Leader: Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful

All: And kindle in them the fire of your love.

Leader: Send forth your Holy Spirit and they shall be created

All: And you will renew the face of the earth.

Reading (From the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans)

Now I urge you: do not conform yourself to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect. For by the grace given to me I tell all of you not to think of yourselves more highly than you ought to think, but to think soberly, each according to the measure of faith that God has apportioned. For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually.

Since we have gifts that differ according to the gifts given to us, let us exercise them: if prophecy, in proportion to the faith; if ministry, in ministering; if one is a teacher, teaching; if one exhorts, in exhortation; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is a leader, with diligence, if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Let love be sincere, hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection, anticipate one another in showing honor. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality. Have the same regard for one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly, do not be wise in your own estimation. If possible, on your part, live at peace with all. The Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God.

Reflection

(Faith sharing open to all attendees)

Of all the advice Paul gives in this reading, what line or phrase seems most significant to you?

Thank you for sharing.

Discernment Process

Those who are being considered to fill the role of council member are asked to address several questions, without judgment, interrogation, or interruption by others. Respectful listening and continuing prayer to the Holy Spirit marks this time.

Part I.

Each person introduces himself or herself. Candidates should include the following information:

Name
Length of time as a member of the parish
Ways in which they have been involved in the parish over the years
The church activity, ministry, or service they found most rewarding

After each person speaks, the group affirms and prays for him or her.

Leader: Let us pray in gratitude for the life of _____
and all the gifts she/he has already shared with this faith community. May
God continue to lead him/her in discipleship and service of God's people?

All: Amen! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.

Now that all have spoken, this is the time for questions and answers, if there are any.

At this time, people may withdraw their names from consideration. However, if you do, you are invited to stay with the group and to listen to others and pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit.

Part II *Each person being discerned answers the question:*
What gifts do you bring to the ministry of leadership and the Parish Finance Council?

We now thank the Holy Spirit for being with each of us this evening as we continue with this discernment process. + In the name of the Father, and The Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Part III *Each person answers the following question.*

What is your concept of stewardship?

We thank you for discerning your service as a member of The Parish Finance Council.

It now is Father's task to prayerfully discern the person(s) he thinks would best collaborate with other members of the council and with him. Let us pray for him this week as he makes his selection(s).

Closing Ceremony

Reading (From the Letter to the Hebrews)

Therefore, we must attend all the more to what we have heard, so that we may not be carried away. For if the word announced through angels proved firm, and every transgression and disobedience received its just recompense, how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? Announced originally through the Lord, it was confirmed for us by those who had heard. God added his testimony by signs, wonders, various acts of power, and distribution of the gifts of the Holy Spirit according to his will.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Closing Prayer

Leader: Let us pray:

In gratitude for your presence with us, O Holy Spirit, we bring you thanks and praise. Now bless your servants, as they assume the ministry of leadership among our parishioners. Give them unity, vision, wisdom and a great love for you and your people. We pray this in the name of Jesus, our model and our shepherd, now and forever. Amen

Leader: We now pray in the words that Jesus gave us. Our Father...

May almighty God bless us, the Father + and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen

Leader: Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord in one another.

All: Thanks be to God.

Commissioning Ceremony for Parish Finance Councils

This usually takes place within Mass following the homily. If there is already a Parish Finance Council in existence, begin with **A.** If it is a brand new Parish Finance Council, go to **B.** and omit the words in square brackets.

A.

Presider: I invite those who have completed their term of office on our Parish Finance Council to come forward. (*Names of outgoing members are read out as they come forward*)

Presider: On behalf of our parish community, I would like to thank you for your contribution to the work of the Parish Finance Council. Please accept this token of our appreciation, and may you continue to respond to your baptismal call by being of service to others.

Presider hands each person a gift (e.g. plaque or certificate) and invites the congregation to offer a round of applause. He then hands each member a lighted candle.

B.

Presider: You have worked to bring the light of Christ to our parish. This work now passes to others. I [now] invite those who have been chosen to serve our community as [new] members of the Parish Pastoral Council to come forward.

Names of [new] members are read out as they move toward their places in the sanctuary facing the people. The Priest stands to one side.

Presider: Each of you has been called from this Parish community to serve as a member of the Parish Finance Council. Do you accept the responsibilities of parish leadership that we place on you?

New members: We do.

Presider: Will you strive to be more like Christ so that you will be better able to serve his people?

New members: We will.

New members: We are grateful for the trust you are placing in us and accept this ministry within our community. We pledge ourselves to serve with love, joy, and enthusiasm. We will work to help build the life of the Christian community in our Parish and in the Archdiocese. We will be conscious of the needs of all our parishioners and to

make Christ present for everyone, following his example as one who served. We ask your prayerful support, encouragement and insights as we commit ourselves to serve this community.

Presider: May God bless and sustain you in the work you have taken on for this parish community. Be a beacon of light in the life of the Church. Christ is the light of the world. Your task is to walk in the light of Christ and share it with others. *[omit if it is an all new Parish Finance Council]* The light that has been tended by these former members of the Parish Finance Council now passes to you. May this candle remind you of our mission to let the light of Christ shine out for all to see. (The outgoing members of the PFC or the presider if it is a new PFC) present a lighted candle to each new member saying: **Let your light shine before all.**

The members now return to their places in the congregation.

The priest invites the congregation to show their support in a round of applause.

Intercessions – The Prayers of intercession might include a prayer for the Parish Finance Council members, their families and the grace to lead with dignity and courage.

A prayer of thanks for the work of the outgoing members might also be included.

Check list

Preliminary

- _____ Determine how many Parish Finance Council members will be discerned.
- _____ Decide methods of publicity and possible creative options.
- _____ Determine who will facilitate Information Night and Discernment Night.
- _____ Delegate tasks to council members or pastor as appropriate.
- _____ Create bulletin announcements (which include dates and times for Information Night and Discernment Night)
- _____ Make enough Nomination forms for all parishioners at each Mass.
- _____ Make sure pencils or pens are available for Nomination forms.
- _____ Create pulpit announcements to describe process.

Nomination Sunday

- _____ Place nomination forms and pens/pencils in every pew for each Mass.
- _____ Describe nomination process from pulpit.
- _____ Provide time for parishioners to fill out nomination forms.
- _____ Ushers collect forms (not unlike a second collection).

Post Nomination

- _____ Review all nomination forms and select, with the pastor, those to be invited to the Information Night.
- _____ Mail out invitations for Information Night (and/or phone calls).

Information Night

- _____ Arrange chair set up (tables or assembly style).
- _____ Hospitality (coffee, snacks)

Discernment Night

- _____ Arrange for chair set up (enough chairs in a circle for participants and current council members who wish to be involved in the process plus one for the facilitator. A second row of chairs for non-participating council members and the pastor and associate pastors). **Family members as spectators or supporters are not to be encouraged.**

- _____ Provide table, altar cloth, and symbols for sacred space.

Commissioning ceremony – Normally held during Mass after the homily on a Sunday shortly following Discernment

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APPENDIX III Joint Meeting of the Parish Pastoral Council and the Finance Council

The relationship between the Parish Pastoral Council and the Parish Finance Council is crucial to the development of relevant and prudent Pastoral Plans. The Parish Pastoral Council is encouraged to meet with the Parish Finance Council to review the Parish Pastoral Plan before it is published to the parish and submitted to the Bishop.

The San Gabriel Region Pastoral Council has developed the following suggested agenda for a joint meeting of the Pastoral Council and the Finance Council.

In addition, it is encouraged that a permanent liaison member from the Finance Council sit on the Parish Pastoral Council.

Purpose of Meeting:

At least once per year, the entire Parish Pastoral Council and Parish Finance Council should come together with the pastor to discuss the financial resources of the parish in light of the parish pastoral plan. The purpose of this meeting is to:

- Examine the financial status of the parish
- Coordinate the Parish Pastoral Plan with the future financial plan of the parish
- Identify financial concerns that may impact the parish in the near future
- Allocate funds towards certain objectives of the Parish Pastoral Plan.

Participants

- Pastor
- Pastoral Staff members
- All Parish Pastoral Council members
- All Finance Council members

When

This joint meeting should occur **before** publishing the final Parish Pastoral Plan to the Parish and submitting the plan to the Bishop.

The meeting should also occur **after** the Parish Pastoral Council has affirmed goals and objectives for the Parish Pastoral Plan and the Finance Council has prepared a financial statement for the PPC to review.

Anticipated Results of the Meeting

The result of this joint meeting should be:

An agreement among the pastor, the PPC and the Parish Finance Council regarding the funding of the initiatives of the Parish Pastoral Plan and all other activities of the parish and a sharing of the financial status of the parish and priorities for the future.

Opening Prayer:

Lord, God of Holiness,

You have called us to be the servants of Your servants – our brothers and sisters in the parish.

We meet here as their representatives,

and so we ask for the Grace of Your Guidance. Help us to truly represent them and not simply ourselves.

May the true needs of our parish

and the common good of all be our concern.

And above all, may Your Will in these matters become our Will. Help us who serve in leadership

remember that all of our concerns are aimed at

the spiritual transformation of our parish community. May the material aspects we discuss not blind us to the primary work of our parish: the holiness of all its members.

May the Holy Spirit,

who inspired the Pentecost meeting of the Apostles, visit us and grant us the light of Divine Wisdom.

We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ,

who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever.

Amen.

(Prayer from Prayers for the Servants of God by Edward Hays)

Before the Meeting

In anticipation of the meeting, the Parish Pastoral Council should have prepared copies of the Parish Pastoral Plan including both the Goals and Objectives decided upon by the PPC and ratified by the Pastor. The Pastor and members of the PPC should also have estimated the resources (especially financial resources) that will be needed to accomplish each objective.

The Parish Finance Council should have prepared the most recent annual financial statement of the parish including all revenue, expenses, debts and investments. The Guidelines for Parish Pastoral Councils recommends that a liaison member from the Parish Finance Council sits on the Parish Pastoral Council. This liaison member should consistently inform both Councils on the progress of the other. In anticipation of this meeting the liaison member should share the emerging objectives with the finance council and make recommendations back to the Parish Pastoral Council on the feasibility of funding each objective in light of the financial situation of the parish.

This liaison position is crucial to the success of this joint meeting. The liaison member and the pastor should inform the Pastoral Council on the financial situation of the parish even as they are creating the initial pastoral plan. The more complete this information sharing the more successful this joint meeting.

During the preparation for a parish assembly or other parish-wide consultation, the liaison member should share the parish finances with the Pastoral Council and decide upon a

method for distributing a report to the wider parish on the financial status of the parish. Transparent information sharing is necessary to create a collaborative and effective pastoral and financial plan for the parish.

Sharing the Pastoral Plan and Parish Resources

1. After the prayer, the meeting begins by the Finance Council giving a presentation of the current financial statement of the parish. A copy of the parish financial statement is given to all members of the PPC. The Finance Council chairperson also makes clear any financial concerns that will have an impact on the future life of the parish.
2. Once the financial status of the parish is presented and clarification questions have been made, a member of the PPC provides a brief overview of the parish pastoral plan and distributes copies of the plan to the Finance Council. The PPC shares with the Finance Council the estimated cost of any objectives (action steps) within the plan.
3. All members then consider the costs associated with the pastoral objectives. The two councils consider any changes or adjustments to the objectives that may be necessary due to financial restrictions. Once a decision is made on the objectives and the financial resources allotted to each objective the costs should be added to the budget.
4. The ultimate goal of the conversation is to agree upon a fiscally sound budget which takes into consideration the priorities of the parish pastoral plan but also is balanced or, at the very least, seeks to reduce or eliminate debt steadily year to year. If necessary, both councils discuss the need for additional revenue to fund initiatives of the Parish Pastoral Plan.
5. The meeting should conclude with a consensus among the group regarding a financial plan that takes into account the pastoral priorities and initiative of the Parish Pastoral Plan, the activities of the parish as well as salaries, maintenance and all other financial obligations of the parish.
6. The pastor is finally responsible for approving any budget adjustments and the spending associated with the objectives of the Parish Pastoral Plan.
7. If agreement cannot be reached during this meeting, the pastor should schedule a follow-up meeting with the chairpersons of the finance council and the pastoral council to reach a decision.

Closing Prayer

Lord of Day and Night, of beginning and ending As we prepare to conclude this meeting, we once again lift up our hearts to You, the Divine Source of All Life. We thank You for the gifts that have been present within this act of service to the community. For the gifts of fellowship and understanding, Of mutual respect and shared vision, We are grateful .for the gifts of perseverance and insight into the common concerns we share. For these and all other graces, we are thankful.

As You have blessed our coming together, now bless our departure and journeys

Amen

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Appendix IV Consensus Decision Making

In simple terms, consensus refers to agreement on some decision by all members of a group, rather than a majority or a select group of representatives. The consensus process is what a group goes through to reach this agreement. The assumptions, methods, and results are very different from traditional parliamentary procedure or majority voting methods. Consensus is based on the belief that each person has some part of the truth and that no one has all of it (no matter how tempting it is to believe that we ourselves *really* know best!) It is also based on a respect for all persons involved in the decision being considered.

Acting according to consensus guidelines enables a group to take advantage of all group members' ideas. By combining their thoughts, people can often create a higher-quality decision than a vote decision or a decision by a single individual. Further, consensus decisions can be better than vote decisions because voting can actively undermine the decision. People are more likely to implement decisions they accept, and consensus makes acceptance more likely.

What the consensus process requires

Consensus demands a high level of trust among the members of the group. People need to believe that each member is a fair and reasonable person of integrity who has the organization's best interests at heart. There are no perfect groups or perfect individuals, but for consensus to work the members must believe that everyone is honestly doing their best.

Another important element of the consensus process is a good facilitator. This person is responsible for seeing that everyone is heard, that all ideas are incorporated if they seem to be part of the truth, and that the final decision is agreed upon by all assembled. The facilitator is the servant of the group, not its leader. It is his/her job to draw out and focus the best thinking of the group, not to use his/her position to impose or elevate his/her own.

It's important that the facilitator never show signs of impatience or disfavor towards an idea or a member. Total objectivity may be an unattainable ideal, but the facilitator should strive to remain as neutral as possible in the discussion. If he/she can't manage this, then someone else should be facilitating. For this reason, many groups rotate the facilitator role on some kind of regular schedule, or choose a facilitator for each discussion depending on who is willing to forgo taking a more active part.

A good facilitator needs to be patient, intuitive, articulate, and able to think on his /her feet, and have a sense of humor. He/she should always be on the lookout for things that are missing--a person who wants to speak but has been too shy, an idea that was badly articulated or dismissed too quickly but has potential, or anything happening on the nonverbal level that might be significant. The facilitator should periodically state and restate the ideas on the table, the elements that have been agreed on, and the questions still being decided. This allows everyone to see that progress is being made, and to focus on the work left to be done

Key guidelines for consensus decision-making

1. Come to the discussion with an open mind. This doesn't mean not thinking about the issue beforehand, but it does mean being willing to consider any other perspectives and ideas that come up in the discussion.
2. Listen to other people's ideas and try to understand their reasoning.
3. Describe your reasoning briefly so other people can understand you. Avoid arguing for your own judgments and trying to make other people change their minds to agree with you.
4. Avoid changing your mind only to reach agreement and avoid conflict. Do not "go along" with decisions until you have resolved any reservations that you consider important.
5. View differences of opinion as helpful rather than harmful.
6. Avoid conflict-reducing techniques such as majority vote. Stick with the process a little longer and see if you can't reach consensus after all

Variations on basic consensus

No matter how well the discussion is carried forward, how good the facilitator and how much integrity and trust exist in the group, there sometimes comes a point where all are in agreement but one or two. At this point there are a few possible courses of action. One is to ask if the individuals are willing to "step aside." This means that they do not agree with the decision but do not feel that it is wrong. They are willing to have the decision go forward, but do not want to take part in carrying it out.

Depending on the size and nature of the group, if more than one or two people want to step aside from a decision, the group should probably take another look at it. The facilitator might ask for a few minutes of silence to see if there is another decision or an amendment that should have been considered but has been overlooked, or something that would ease the situation.

Another possibility is to lay aside the issue for another time. Although this alternative may create some difficulties, the world will probably continue to turn with or without a decision being made right now. The need to make a decision promptly is often not as important as the need to ultimately come to unity around a decision that has been well-crafted, taking the time it needs to do it right.

A third possibility is that one or two people may stop the group from moving forward. At this time there are several key considerations. Most important, the group should see those who are withholding consensus as doing so out of their highest understanding and beliefs. Next, the individual(s) who are preventing the group from making the decision should also examine themselves closely to assure that they are not withholding consensus out of self-interest, bias, vengeance, or any other such feeling. A refusal to enter consensus should be based on a very strong belief that the decision is wrong--and that the

dissenter(s) would be doing the group a great disservice by allowing the decision to go forward.

This is always one of those times when feelings can run high, and it's important for the group not to put pressure on those who differ. It's hard enough to feel that you are stopping the group from going forward, without feeling coerced to go against your examined reasons and deeply felt understandings.

Some groups operate under a modified consensus approach called "Consensus-Minus-One." What this means is that it takes more than one dissenting member to block consensus. One voice at odds with the rest is considered a workable way to go forward, but more than one is a sign that the decision should be re-thought. Consensus-Minus-One can be a reassuring arrangement for people who are new to the process of consensus decision-making, or in groups where members aren't well acquainted enough to have the level of trust needed to commit to achieving full consensus. In practice, many groups have found that Consensus-Minus-One serves as a safety valve that rarely gets used. If even one member has strong reservations about a decision, it's often enough to keep the group searching for a better answer.

Some difficulties with consensus

1. Achieving consensus can take considerably longer than a simple majority vote.
2. People who don't actively try to find a decision that is acceptable to everyone (all-win) can dominate a group's discussion by trying to make everyone else go along with them (win-lose).
3. A group can coerce or manipulate individuals into saying they accept a decision, even when they don't. That is groupthink, not true consensus.

Consensus and groupthink are different. Groupthink occurs when everyone expresses agreement with a decision, but some people are just going along because they feel obligated to reach an agreement and avoid conflict. Thus although there appears to be a consensus, some people have not resolved disagreements they consider important. **In consensus, all agree with the decision and all important disagreements are resolved.**

The time required to reach consensus can't usually be avoided. Instead, look at it as an investment in better decisions and a healthier, more egalitarian, more participatory organization.

The other pitfalls can best be dealt with through openness and continuous effort on everyone's part to do what is ethical and right for the group. A willingness to take risks and to give and receive honest feedback are keys to developing the trust required to let the process work.

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APPENDIX V Parish Rights and Obligations

For the first time in the Church's history, the 1983 Code of Canon Law contained a list of the rights and obligations of individual Catholics. (cc.208-223). Even though a similar list of rights and obligations for parish communities was requested at the time, it was not forthcoming. Nevertheless, there are numerous canons that protect and regulate parishes, as well rights that arise from the theology of the local church and Catholic social teaching on subsidiarity.

This list is a brief summary of a more comprehensive list found in chapter six of *The Parish in Catholic Tradition*, by the preeminent canon lawyer, Fr. James Coriden. Fr. Coriden is one of three general editors of the *Code of Canon Law* and a professor on the faculty of the Washington Theological Union. He is careful to say his list is not meant to encourage legalism or to increase juridical battles over competing claims. Rather, his intent is to enhance parishioners' self-understanding of their parish's dignity and inherent authority as true churches and "not administrative units of some larger entity" (Coriden, p.80).

1. To Exist. The most fundamental right of a parish in canon law is the right to come into existence, be acknowledged and continue in existence (c. 374.1). Once a community of faith is formed and recognized it becomes a "juridic person" which by nature is perpetual unless it is legitimately suppressed or stops all activity for 100 years (c. 120.1). To be suppressed, the impossibility of continued life must be clearly demonstrated.

According to Fr. James Coriden: "**A shortage of priests for pastoral leadership is not an adequate reason to suppress or combine parishes**". Canon law strongly recommends liturgies of the word and group prayer in the absence of priests (c.1248.2), clearly implying that the life and worship of the community must continue even when priestly leadership is absent." Canons 516.2 and 517.2 say the pastoral care of a parish may be entrusted to others such as lay ministers or deacons. A diocese's presbyteral council, which is a body of parish priests whose function is to advise the bishop, must be consulted before any action is taken to suppress or merge parishes. Those with rights or interests in the parish must also be consulted (c. 515.2, 50, 1222.2). (Coriden, p. 73)

2. To Maintain Communion. Each local parish has the right and the duty to maintain active communion with the larger church. Some signs of this include a profession of the common faith, celebration of the sacraments and recognition of the church's governance, diocesan and universal (cc. 206, 209, 212.1, 392.1). In addition parishes are obliged to contribute to and receive assistance from other parishes. This includes providing and receiving assistance in meeting worship needs, performing works of charity, supporting ministers in other communities and apostolic outreach (cc. 209.2, 529.2, 1261-1263).

3. To Equality. Canon 208 says that each local community of Catholics shares in the "...true equality in dignity and action whereby all cooperate in the building up of the Body of Christ." This means that even though parishes differ in numbers of parishioners, wealth, geographical size, ethnic composition or other parameters they are all equal. Because local communities are stable gatherings of Christians in which the Spirit dwells,

no parish is more privileged than another, and no parish is second-rate compared to others and may not be treated as such.

4. To Hear the Word of God and Celebrate the Sacraments. Canon 213 tells us that "The Christian faithful have the right to receive assistance from the sacred pastors out of the spiritual goods of the church especially the word of God and the sacraments." The right to the Eucharist is especially underscored because of its centrality to Catholic life and worship: "For a parish or other local community to be without the regular, weekly, worthy celebration of the Eucharist is a most serious deprivation. It is a violation of the community's right to the sacrament in which it finds its own fullest realization and self-expression. It constitutes a grave impoverishment that can gradually deform the community, that is, transform it into one no longer Eucharistic ally centered". (Coriden, p. 75).

5. To Parish Leadership and Ministry. Ordinarily, a priest pastor is to be entrusted with the pastoral care of a parish (c 515.1). But canons 516.2 and 517.2 make allowances for cases of pastoral need (such as no available priests) and permit pastoral care to be entrusted to others such as competent lay ecclesial ministers, lay leaders, deacons or religious. Pastoral leadership is to reside within the parish (c.529.1), see to the preaching of the word, teach the faith, provide sacramental preparation and "see to it that the Most Holy Eucharist is the center of the parish assembly of the faithful" (cc. 528.1 and 2, 757, 764-771, 835-836, 843.1).

The local congregation has a right and obligation to participate in the direction of its pastoral and financial affairs through consultation via the parish pastoral council and the finance council (cc. 536-537, 1280). It also has the right to appropriate administration of its monies and properties, organizational direction and pastoral guidance (cc. 519, 532, 1279-1289).

6. To Initiate and Sustain Activities and Services. Each local community has a right to begin and sustain the special projects for justice, charitable works, apostolic and evangelical outreach that one would expect from a group of believers whose faith is alive. (cc. 211, 215-216, 298-299, 384.2, 839.1) The community has a duty to promote social justice and assist the poor (c. 222.2). It has the right to form groups and associations to promote Christian witness in the world (cc. 215, 225, 227).

7. To Information, Communication, and Consultation. Parishioners have a right to timely and accurate information from both the parish and the diocese about matters that concern their parish. Catholic people and communities have the right and the duty to make known to church leaders and each other, their needs, desires and perspectives on matters concerning the good of the church (cc. 212.2 and 212.3, as well as Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium*).

8. To Formation and Education. Every Catholic Christian community has a right and obligation to assist all its members both adults and children in growing in their faith, knowledge and understanding of God's love through Jesus Christ. (c. 217) These rights and responsibilities include catechumenal programs, Catholic schools, and other suitable education (cc793-798, 800).

9. To Evangelization and Missionary Activity. Canon 211 tells us "All the Christian faithful have the duty and right to work so that the divine message of salvation may increasingly reach the whole of humankind in every age and in every land." Vocations (lay and ordained) to missionary work and financial help are fostered and sought from local faith communities

10. To Spiritual Growth. Each parish community must be concerned about and attend to its ongoing spiritual growth, repentance and conversion. It provides various special practices, prayers, and retreats to meet those needs." The Christian faithful have the right . . . to follow their own form of spiritual life consonant with the teaching of the church" (c. 214).

11. To Own and Use Goods and Property. On their own authority, and in keeping with canonical norms, parishes have the right to acquire, retain, administer and dispose of their own goods and property (cc. 1255-1256). To this end, each parish is required to have a finance council (c.537). Responsibility for and decision making about parish temporal goods belongs to the parish that purchased or inherited them (c.1256)

12. To Vindicate and Defend Rights. Local communities of "the Christian faithful can legitimately vindicate and defend the rights which they enjoy in the church before a competent ecclesiastical court" (c. 221.1). By virtue of their establishment as parishes (c. 515.3), parishes have standing to uphold their rights.

Limitations on Rights and Obligations.

Coriden says "Rights and duties are not absolute but conditioned or limited in at least three ways: (1) by circumstances, (2) by the rights of others and (3) by the common good."

1. Rights and duties are not exercised in a vacuum. Parishes and other local congregations exist in the real world. They must recognize and operate within the limits of concrete situations. Resources of personnel, time and money are limited; sometimes they can be stretched no further. No one should expect the impossible.

2. The prerogatives of one parish or community cannot be advanced to the detriment of others. A sense of balance, fairness and respect for rights must characterize the claims of each.

3. The principle of the common good governs rights claims and the demands of obligations. It calls for coordination. All of the communities within a diocese "have a place at the table." All must be heard from and accounted for, and each one must show consideration for the rest and for the good of the entire church."

In exercising their rights the Christian faithful, both as individuals and when gathered in associations, must take account of the common good of the church, and of the rights of others as well as their own duties toward others.

In the interests of the common good, church authority has competence to regulate the exercise of the rights which belong to the Christian faithful (cc. 223.1, 223.2)

Reference: Coriden, James A. *The Parish in Catholic Tradition: History, Theology and Canon Law*. New York: Paulist Press, 1999.

APPENDIX VI Code of Canon Law References

THE CHRISTIAN FAITHFUL

Canon 204.1. The Christian faithful are those who, inasmuch as they have been incorporated in Christ through baptism, have been constituted as the people of God. For this reason, made sharers in their own way in Christ's priestly, prophetic, and royal function, they are called to exercise the mission which God has entrusted the Church to fulfill in the world, in accord with the condition proper to each.

Canon 204.2. This Church, constituted and organized in this world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church governed by the successor of Peter and the bishops in communion with him.

Canon 208. From their rebirth in Christ, there exists among all the Christian faithful a true equality regarding dignity and action by which they all cooperate in the building up of the Body of Christ according to each one's own condition and function.

Canon 209.1. The Christian faithful, even in their own manner of acting, are always obliged to maintain communion with the Church.

Canon 209.2. With great diligence they are to fulfill the duties they owe to the universal Church and the particular church to which they belong according to the prescripts of the law.

Canon 210. All the Christian faithful must direct their efforts to lead a holy life and to promote the growth of the Church and its continual sanctification, according to their own condition.

Canon 211. All the Christian faithful have the duty and right to work so that the divine message of salvation more and more reaches all people in every age and in every land.

Canon 212.1. Conscious of their own responsibility, the Christian faithful are bound to follow with Christian obedience those things which the sacred pastors, inasmuch as they represent Christ, declare as teachers of the faith or establish as rulers of the Church.

Canon 212.2. The Christian faithful are free to make known to the pastors of the Church their needs, especially spiritual ones, and their desires.

Canon 212.3. According to the knowledge, competence, and prestige which they possess, they have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful, without prejudice to the integrity of faith and morals, with reverence toward their pastors, and attentive to common advantage and the dignity of persons.

Canon 213. The Christian faithful have the right to receive assistance from the sacred pastors out of the spiritual goods of the Church, especially the word of God and the sacraments.

Canon 215 The Christian faithful are at liberty to found and direct associations for purposes of charity or piety or for the promotion of the Christian vocation in the world and to hold meetings for the common pursuit of these purposes.

Canon 222.1. The Christian faithful are obliged to assist with the needs of the Church so that the Church has what is necessary for divine worship, for the works of the apostolate and of charity, and for the decent support of ministers.

Canon 222.2. They are also obliged to promote social justice and, mindful of the precept of the Lord, to assist the poor from their own resources.

Canon 223.1. In exercising their rights, Christian faithful, both as individuals and gathered together in associations, must take into account the common good of the Church, the rights of others, and their own duties towards others.

Canon 223.2. In view of the common good, ecclesiastical authority can direct the exercise of rights which are proper to the Christian faithful.

BISHOPS

Canon 375.1. Bishops, who by divine institution succeed to the place of the Apostles through the Holy Spirit who has been given to them, are constituted partners in the Church, so that they are teachers of doctrine, priests of sacred worship, and ministers of governance.

Canon 375.2. Through episcopal consecration itself, bishops receive with the function of sanctifying also the functions of teaching and governing; by their nature, however, these can only be exercised in hierarchical communion with the head and members of the college.

Canon 386.1 A diocesan bishop, frequently preaching in person, is bound to propose and explain to the faithful the truths of the faith which are to be believed and applied to morals. He is also to take care that the precepts of the canons on the ministry of the word, especially those on the homily and catechetical instruction are carefully observed so that the whole Christian doctrine is handed on to all.

Canon 386.2. Through more suitable means, he is firmly to protect the integrity and unity of the faith to be believed, while nonetheless acknowledging a just freedom in further investigating its truths.

Canon 387. Since the diocesan bishop is mindful of his obligation to show an example of holiness in charity, humility, and simplicity of life, he is to strive to promote in every way the holiness of the Christian faithful according to the proper vocation of each. Since he is the principal dispenser of the mysteries of God, he is to endeavor constantly that the

Christian faithful entrusted to his care grow in grace through the celebration of the sacraments and that they understand and live the paschal mystery.

CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE FINANCE COUNCIL

Canon 492.1. In every diocese a finance council is to be established, over which the diocesan bishop himself or his delegate presides and which consists of at least three members of the Christian faithful truly expert in financial affairs and civil law, outstanding in integrity and appointed by the bishop.

Canon 492.2 Members of the finance council are to be appointed for five years, but at the end of this period they can be appointed for other five year terms.

Canon 492.3. Persons who are related to the bishop up to the fourth degree of consanguinity or affinity are excluded from the finance council.

FUNCTION OF THE FINANCE COUNCIL

Canon 493. In addition to the functions entrusted to it in Book V, *The Temporal Goods of the Church*, The finance council prepares each year, according to the directions of the diocesan bishop, a budget of the income and expenditures which are foreseen for the entire governance of the diocese in the coming year and at the end of the year examines an account of the revenues and expenses.

Canon 494.1. In every diocese, after having the college of consulters and the finance council, the bishop is to appoint a finance officer who is truly trained in financial affairs and absolutely distinguished for honesty.

Canon 494.2. The finance officer is to be appointed for a five year term but can be appointed for other five year terms at the end of this period. The finance officer is not to be removed while in this function except for a grave cause to be assessed by the bishop after he has heard the college of consultors and the finance council.

Canon 492.3. It is for the finance officer to administer the goods of the diocese under the authority of the bishop in accord with the budget determined by the finance council and, from the income of the diocese, to meet the expenses the bishop or others designated by him have legitimately authorized.

Canon 492.4. At the end of the year, the finance officer must render an account of receipts and expenditures to the finance council.

PASTORS

Canon 515.1. A parish is a certain community of the Christian faithful stably constituted in a particular church, whose pastoral care is entrusted to a pastor (*parochus*) as its proper pastor (*pastor*) under the authority of the diocesan bishop.

Canon 515.2. It is only for the diocesan bishop to erect, suppress, or alter parishes. He is neither to erect, suppress, nor alter notably parishes, unless he has heard the presbyteral council.

Canon 515.3. A legitimately erected parish possesses juridic personality by the law itself.

Canon 516.1. Unless the law provides otherwise, a quasi-parish is equivalent to a parish; a quasi-parish is a definite community of the Christian faithful in a particular church, entrusted to a priest as its proper pastor but not yet erected as a parish because of particular circumstances.

Canon 516.2. When certain communities cannot be erected as parishes or quasi-parishes, the diocesan bishop is to provide for their pastoral care in another way.

Canon 517.2. If, because of a lack of priests, the diocesan bishop has decided that participation in the pastoral care of a parish is to be entrusted to a deacon, to another person who is not a priest, or to a community of persons, he is to appoint some priest who, provided with the powers and faculties of a pastor, is to direct the pastoral care.

Canon 519. The pastor (*parochus*) is the proper (*pastor*) of the parish entrusted to him, exercising the pastoral care of the community committed to him under the authority of the diocesan bishop in whose ministry of Christ he has been called to share, so that for that same community he carries out the functions of teaching, sanctifying, and governing, also with the cooperation of other presbyters or deacons and with the assistances of lay members of the Christian faithful, according to the norm of law.

Canon 528.1. A pastor is obliged to make provision so that the word of God is proclaimed in its entirety to those living in the parish; for this reason, he is to take care that the lay members of the Christian faithful are instructed in the truths of the faith, especially by giving a homily on Sunday and holy days of obligation and by offering catechetical instruction. He is to foster works through which the spirit of the gospel is promoted, even in what pertains to social justice. He is to have particular care for the Catholic education of children and youth. He is to make every effort, even with the collaboration of the Christian faithful, so that the message of the gospel comes also to those who have ceased the practice of their religion or do not profess the true faith.

Canon 528.2. The pastor is to see to it that the Most Holy Eucharist is the center of the parish assembly of the faithful. He is to work so that the Christian faithful are nourished through devout celebration of the sacraments and, in a special way, that they frequently approach the sacraments of the Most Holy Eucharist and penance. He is also to endeavor that they are led to practice prayer even as families and take part conscientiously and actively in the sacred liturgy which under the authority of diocesan bishop, the pastor must direct in his own parish and is bound to watch over so that no abuses creep in.

Canon 529.1. In order to fulfill his office diligently, a pastor is to strive to know the faithful entrusted to his care. Therefore he is to visit families, sharing especially in the cares, anxieties, and griefs of the faithful, strengthening them in the Lord, and prudently correcting them if they are failing in certain areas. With generous love he is to help the

sick, particularly those close to death, by refreshing them solicitously with the sacraments and commending their souls to God; with particular diligence he is to seek out the poor, the afflicted, the lonely, those exiled from their country, and similarly those weighed down by special difficulties. He is to work so that spouses and parents are supported in fulfilling their proper duties and is to foster growth of Christian life in the family.

Canon 5/16/2011529.2. A pastor is to recognize and promote the proper part which the lay members of the Christian faithful have in the mission of the Church, by fostering their associations for the purpose of religion. He is to cooperate with his own bishop and the presbyterate of the diocese, also working so that the faithful have concern for parochial communion, consider themselves members of the diocese and the universal Church, and participate in and sustain efforts to promote this same communion.

Canon 532. In all juridic affairs the pastor represents the parish according to the norm of law. He is to take care that the goods of the parish are administered according to the norm of Canon. 1281 – 1288.

PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL

Canon 537. In each parish there is to be a finance council which is governed, in addition to universal law, by norms issued by the diocesan bishop and in which the Christian faithful, selected according to these same norms, are to assist the pastor in the administration of the goods of the parish, without prejudice to the prescript of Canon. 532.

SUPERVISORY ROLE OF ORDINARIES

Canon 1276.1. It is for the ordinary to exercise careful vigilance over the administration of all the goods which belong to public juridic persons subject to him, without prejudice to legitimate titles which attribute more significant rights to him.

Canon 1276.2. With regard to rights, legitimate customs, and circumstances, ordinaries are to take care of the ordering of the entire matter of the administration of ecclesiastical goods by issuing special instructions within the limits of universal and particular law.

Canon 1279.1. The administration of ecclesiastical goods pertains to the one who immediately governs the person to which the goods belong unless particular law, statutes, or legitimate custom determine otherwise and without prejudice to the right of the ordinary to intervene in the case of negligence by an administrator.

Canon 1279.2. In the administration of the goods of a public juridic person which does not have its own administrators by law, the charter of the foundation, or its own statutes, the ordinary to whom it is subject is to appoint suitable persons for three years; the same persons can be reappointed by the ordinary.

Canon 1280. Each juridic person is to have its own finance council or at least two counselors who, according to the norm of the statutes, are to assist the administrator in fulfilling his or her function.

Canon 1283. Before administrators begin their function:

1. they must take an oath before the ordinary or his delegate that they will administer well and faithfully;
2. they are to prepare and sign an accurate and clear inventory of immovable property, movable objects, whether precious or of cultural value, or other goods, with their description and appraisal; any inventory already done is to be reviewed.
3. one copy of this inventory is to be preserved in the archive of the administration and another in the archive of the curia; any change the patrimony happens to undergo is to be noted in each copy.

Canon 1284.1. All administrators are to perform their duties with the diligence of a good householder

Canon 1284.2 Consequently they must:

1. exercise vigilance so that the goods entrusted to their care are in no way lost or damaged, taking out insurance policies for this purpose insofar is necessary;
2. take care that ownership of ecclesiastical goods is protected by civilly valid methods;
3. observe the precepts of both canon and civil law or those imposed by a founder, a donor, or legitimate authority, and especially be on guard so that no damage comes to the Church from the non-observance of civil laws;
4. collect the return of goods and the income accurately and on time, protect what is collected, and use them according to the intention of the founder or legitimate norms;
5. pay at the stated time the interest due on a loan or mortgage and take care that the capital debt itself is repaid in a timely manner;
6. with the consent of the ordinary, invest the money which is left over after expenses and can be usefully set aside for the purposes of the juridic person;
7. keep well organized books of receipts and expenditures;
8. draw up a report of the administration at the end of the year;
9. organize correctly and protect in a suitable and proper archive the documents and records on which the property rights of the Church or the institution are based, and deposit copies of them in the archive of the curia when it can be done conveniently.

Canon 1284.3. It is strongly recommended that administrators prepare budgets of income and expenditures each year; it is left to particular law, however, to require them and to determine more precisely the ways in which they are to be presented.

Canon 1285. Within the limits of ordinary administration only, administrators are permitted to make donations for purposes of piety or Christian charity from the movable goods which do not belong to the stable patrimony.

Canon 1286. –Administrators of goods:

1. in the employment of workers are to observe meticulously also the civil laws concerning labor and social policy; according to the principles handed on by the Church;
2. are to pay a just and decent wage to employees so that they are able to provide fittingly for their own needs and those of their dependents.

Canon 1287.1. Both clerical and lay administrators of any ecclesiastical goods whatever which have not been legitimately exempted from the power of governance of the diocesan bishop are bound by their office to present an annual report to the local ordinary who is to present it for examination by the finance council; any contrary custom is reprobated.

1287.2. According to norms to be determined by particular law, administrators are to render an account to the faithful concerning the goods offered by the faithful to the Church.

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APPENDIX VII

Glossary of Terms

Administrative Decision

A course of action determined to address or resolve a matter concerned with the daily operation of the parish.

Accountability

To account for one's actions in regard to his/her participation on a committee, organization, ministry, or other designated function.

Ad Hoc Committee

A group of people selected to accomplish a particular task. This can be to consider, investigate, report and/or make a recommendation regarding a particular issue, project, or concern.

Archdiocesan Chief Finance Officer

Mandated by Canon Law, a member of the Christian faithful trained in financial affairs, appointed to assist the Bishop. Recommends, communicates, and oversees Archdiocesan financial policies and procedures with Archdiocesan entities as well as some of the administrative areas of the Archdiocesan Catholic Center. Assists parishes in their operations by placing at their disposal support and resources.

Archdiocesan Finance Council

A consultative body to the Archbishop, mandated by Canon Law, regarding the financial affairs of the local Church.

Archdiocesan Pastoral Council

A consultative body to the Archbishop, mandated by Canon Law, regarding the pastoral needs of the local church.

Chart of Accounts (COA)

Is a list of the accounts used by an organization. The list can be numerical, alphabetic, or alpha-numeric. The structure and headings of accounts should assist in consistent posting of transactions. Each nominal ledger account is unique to allow its ledger to be located. The list is typically arranged in the order of the customary appearance of accounts in the financial statements, profit and loss accounts followed by balance sheet accounts.

Charter	A document issued creating a public or private institution, and defining its purposes and privileges
Committee	A group of people selected to examine, analyze, inform or carry out recommendations.
Standing Committee	A committee which remains for a prolonged period of time.
Code of Canon Law	A set of norms or laws, approved and adopted by the universal Church, intended to bring order into the life of the ecclesial community. It is articulated by those who are entrusted with the community's care, and its purpose is to serve the common good.
Collaboration	The process of working together for a common cause and for the benefit of many.
Consensus	General agreement by the members of a group concerning an opinion, position, proposal or course of action.
Consultation	A process in which people come together to seek the advice or opinion of one another. Through the process, they are called to listen, reflect, and through exploration and judgment, come to an understanding and hopefully to a wise decision.
Consultative Body	A group of advisors who, through prayer, reflection, research, discussion, interaction and deliberation are able to give an opinion.
Councilor	A member of a Council.
Discernment	The process of arriving at a decision through prayer, deliberation and reflection.
Evaluate	The action taken to assess the positive and negative aspects of a plan, goal or concern of the Council.

Fund Accounting	Is an accounting system emphasizing <i>accountability</i> rather than <i>profitability</i> , used by <u>non-profit organizations</u> and governments. In this system, a <i>fund</i> is a self-balancing set of <u>accounts</u> , segregated for specific purposes in accordance with laws and regulations or special restrictions and limitations
Goal	A desired achievement.
Guideline	Predetermined principles, objectives and standards that direct the pertinent performance of a group.
Mission Statement	A statement which expresses the vision of the future. It creates a clear, convincing purpose and reason for being, while defining the principles and values that sustains and guides particular entity in setting future goals.
Moderator	At the Parish Pastoral Council or at the Parish Finance Council, a member entrusted by the Pastor to help discussions stay productive and within the guidelines.
Norm	A set pattern or method that must or should be followed; an authoritative standard, a principle of right action binding upon the members of a group and serving to guide, control, or regulate proper and acceptable behavior.
Objective	A clear account of the course of action to be taken to achieve a goal.
Operational Guidelines	Roles, rights, and responsibilities by which members of a group will function. They reach agreement on these, and clearly communicate them to every member of the group.
Parish Finance Council	Mandated by Canon 537, it is a consultative group formed to assist the pastor in the proper administration of the parish's resources.

Parish Life Director	A professional minister who is appointed by the Archbishop and entrusted with the spiritual welfare and leadership of a parish which does not have the benefit of a priest pastor.
Pastor	A priest in charge of a parish. He is responsible for administering the sacraments, instructing the congregation in the doctrine of the Church, and other services to the people of the parish.
Pastoral Planning	Method by which the parish community, through prayer, reflection and study, defines its identity, common purpose, vision, mission, goals and priorities. They then establish the means to accomplish them.
Pastoral Staff	Consists of pastors, associate pastors, pastoral associates, pastoral administrators, deacons, women and men religious, lay ministers, and other staff that collaborate with the pastor in carrying out the pastoral care ministries and programs within the parish.
Pastoral Team	The group composed of priests, deacons, men and women religious and lay pastoral ministers who make administrative and pastoral decisions judiciously and responsibly and are accountable for establishing these decisions.
Planning	A procedure by which the needs, goals, objectives, resources and the means to achieve the desire outcome are determined.
Preside	To lead, direct, officiate, chair or oversee a meeting, gathering or liturgical function.
Presider	The individual who leads, directs, officiates, and oversees a meeting, gathering or liturgical function. The Pastor is the Presider of the Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils.
Priest Moderator	According to canon law, a priest moderator is assigned to a parish where participation in the exercise of the pastoral care of a parish is entrusted to a person who is not a priest.

The priest moderator represents the parish in legal affairs and is the Vice-President of the parish corporation. The Bishop is President. The priest moderator is to relate as much as practical with the parish community; is responsible for supervising the pastoral care of the parish and reviews the annual parish report and budget.

Priority

A matter, need or goal ranked a preferential: it therefore takes precedence over others.

Regional Pastoral Council

A consultative body to the Regional Bishop, an Auxiliary Bishop to the Archbishop of Los Angeles, for pastoral needs of the local Church within a designated geographic area.

Sacramental Ministers

The Sacramental Minister is a diocesan or religious priest who is appointed by the bishop to provide sacramental ministry for a parish whose leader is the Parish Life Director. The Sacramental Minister collaborates with the Parish Life Director and appropriate committees to provide sacramental ministry for the parish.

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