

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church Parish Council Constitution

Article I: Purpose and Function

Section 1:

The Parish Council, in a relationship of shared responsibility with the Pastor, shall enable the parish to experience itself as a community of faith called to proclaim the Good News of God's Kingdom present among us.

Section 2:

The Parish Council strives to fulfill its purpose by:

Prayerfully discerning the needs of the parish community;

Serving as a vehicle for constructive dialogue with the parish community;

Serving as a consultative body to the Pastor;

Collaborating with the Pastor to formulate policies concerning parish and pastoral matters consistent with faith and morals, civil and church law, and Archdiocesan policy;

Identifying and calling forth the gifts and talents of the members of the parish community;

Developing and maintaining a mission statement which embraces the total life and mission of the parish;

Establishing clear and concise goals and objectives based on the parish mission statement and the emerging needs of the parish community;

Cooperating with and effectively implementing Archdiocesan policies and directives; and

Coordinating, encouraging, and promoting every apostolic activity within the parish through which the parish community discharges its common responsibility to make the Gospel message known.

Article II: Membership

Section 1:

The Council shall consist of fifteen (15) members.

Section 2:

Every person who is a registered Catholic member of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish is eligible to serve as a member of the Council.

Section 3:

The Pastor, Pastoral Associate (if on staff), School Commission Chair and Finance Chair are ex-officio members of the Council.

Section 4:

The chairperson of each of the four Parish Pillars (Community Engagement; Dialogue,

Truth and Faith; Spiritual Growth; and Stewardship) shall serve on the Council. Pillar chairs will be appointed by the Pastor in consultation with the Parish Council.

Section 5:

In addition to the ex-officio members of the Pastor, Pastoral Associate (if on staff), School Commission Chair and Finance Chair, there will be three (3) elected at-large-members, four (4) Pillar chairs, three (3) non-elected at-large-members (appointed by the Pastor in consultation with each Pillar Chair, with the exception of the Stewardship Pillar), and a high school youth representative who is an active member of the Parish.

Section 6:

Special ad hoc committees may be established from time to time by agreement of Council members to meet specific objectives. Such ad hoc committees will serve the purpose as defined by the Council.

Article III: Elections and Terms of Office

Section 1:

Council elections will be held annually.

Section 2:

The term of office of all members elected to the Council and all Pillar chairpersons shall be three (3) years. No member may serve more than two (2) consecutive terms.

Section 3:

In the case of a vacancy on the Council of an elected member, the pastor shall appoint a replacement in consultation with the Council. The new member shall fulfill the unexpired term of the former member until the next election at which time the new member may stand for election. If elected, such person shall be limited to two (2) three-year terms plus the length of the unexpired term.

Article IV: Officers and Executive Committee

Section 1:

The Pastor, in consultation with the Parish Council, shall discern the appointment of the President, Vice President and Secretary from the Council's membership. These officers, together with the Pastor and Finance Chair, shall constitute the Executive Committee. The President, Vice President and Secretary shall not serve more than three (3) consecutive three-year terms.

Section 2:

The President shall have the following duties:

To call and chair all meetings of the Council;

To oversee all activities of the Council;

To convene the Executive Committee in order to prepare Council meeting agendas and when special assistance or decisions are required on parish business; and

To serve as advisor to the Council as an Executive Committee member for one year after term is completed.

Section 3:

The Vice-President shall have the following duties:

To chair meetings in the absence of the President;

To assist the President in overseeing Council activities; and

To succeed the President in case of resignation or disqualification.

Section 4:

The Secretary shall have the following duties:

To maintain written records of minutes of all Council meetings;

To maintain an attendance record of all Council members;

To maintain a current record of the names, addresses and telephone numbers of all Council members;

To distribute prior to Council meetings the agenda of the forthcoming meeting and the minutes of the previous meeting; and

To publish regularly to the parish the minutes and agenda of the Council.

Section 5:

The Finance Committee Chairperson shall have the following duties:

To monitor and report to the Council financial matters on both a short- and long-term basis.

Article V: Areas of Ministry

Section 1:

The Council is assisted in its duties by parish ministries which are categorized within (4) Pillars: Community Engagement; Dialogue, Truth and Faith; Spiritual Growth; and Stewardship.

Section 2: Each Pillar is led by a Pillar Chair. Pillar Chairs shall have the following duties:

Serve on the Parish Council as defined by the Parish Council Constitution;

Create a system of governance and succession for their respective Pillar;

Meet with the head of each ministry of their respective Pillar either in person, by phone or via email to understand issues impacting those ministries;

Share with the Parish Council activities of the ministries under their respective Pillar, bringing forth any concerns; and

Be actively involved in at least one ministry under their respective Pillar.

Section 3:

Under each Pillar, standing committees may be established to assist in accomplishing the objectives for each Pillar.

Section 4:

Each ministry, in consultation with the Pillar Chair, may develop its own bylaws that complement the St. Thomas Aquinas Parish Council as well as Archdiocesan Directives.

Section 5:

A brief summary report is to be submitted to the Council regularly on the status of goals, objectives, and activities of each Pillar and its ministries.

Section 6:

The Pastor and the Pastoral Associate may be members of a particular Pillar or ministry, but they are not to be the representative of that Pillar or ministry on the Council.

Section 7:

Pillar Chairs will be appointed by the Pastor in consultation with the Parish Council.

Each Pillar shall have written policies concerning the selection of and the creation of new ministries under its Pillar, which are subject to review by the Council.

Article VI: Meetings

Section 1:

Regular meetings of the Council shall be held at least four (4) times each year. All members, or their designees, should attend. Repeated absences are subject to review by the Executive Committee.

Section 2:

Other meetings of the Council may be called by the President or Pastor upon written or verbal notice being given to all members of the Council at least forty-eight (48) hours prior to the date of the meeting

Section 3:

Regular Council meetings shall be open to all members of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish. When

necessary, the Council may meet in executive session if the majority of those present agree.

Section 4:

Proposals by any parishioner may be submitted to the Council by presenting the proposal, in writing, to the Executive Committee at least two (2) weeks in advance of the regular Council meeting. Disposition of the proposal follows the normal procedure of new business for the Council.

Article VII: Decision-Making

Section 1:

The decision-making process of the St. Thomas Aquinas Parish Council shall be by consensus.

Section 2:

All decisions, recommendations and actions of the Council shall become effective upon ratification by the Pastor. The Pastor's ratification will be automatically presumed upon his knowledge of said decisions or actions unless otherwise indicated to the Council within thirty (30) days.

Withholding ratification would be based on the following:

Faith or morals;

General church law;

Archdiocesan policy as established by the Archbishop and the duly recognized Commissions/Councils with which he consults;

The pastoral and administrative needs of the parishioners; or

The general good order of the parish.

Article VIII: Nominations and Elections

Section 1:

Prior to Council elections, the Council President, in consultation with the Pastor and other Council members, appoints a Nomination Committee. The Nomination Committee will present the names of persons eligible for election to the Council, and the Council will then proceed to hold elections in May that are open to all members of the Parish in accord with a process and procedure approved by the Council and ratified by the Pastor.

Section 2:

All newly-elected Council members shall assume their duties at the next regular meeting following the election and start of the new parish fiscal year.

Article IX: Amendments and Revisions

Section 1:

This Constitution may be amended and/or revised at any regular or special meeting of the Council.

Section 2:

Amendments and revisions must be presented in writing to all Members of the Council at least ten (10) days prior to any meeting. Any amendment or revision submitted to the Council shall first be discussed at a regular meeting. An approved amendment may be ratified at the meeting in which it is presented, but not formally adopted until the next regular meeting.

Section 3:

Amendments and revisions must be published for the parish at large at least ten (10) days before they are adopted at a Council meeting.