

St. Mark's
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH



Parish Council Constitution

Edition 1.3
3/31/2016

Table of Contents

PREAMBLE.....	3
The Nature of the Church.....	3
The Mission of the Church.....	3
The Laity in the Church.....	4
The Laity in the Parish.....	4
THE BODY OF THE CONSTITUTION	6
Mission.....	6
Purposes.....	6
Scope of Responsibilities	6
Authority	7
Independence of Parish Organizations	7
Relationship with Other Church Levels	7
Structure	8
Formation	8
Duration of Service	9
Replacement of Members.....	9
Executive Roles.....	10
Meetings.....	11
Voting.....	11
Amendments.....	11
ST. MARK'S PARISH COUNCIL NOMINATION FORM.....	12
ST. MARK'S PARISH COUNCIL NOMINATION ACCEPTANCE FORM.....	13
LIST OF SOURCE DOCUMENTS.....	15

St. Mark's Parish Council Constitution

PREAMBLE

The Nature of the Church

The eternal Father, in accordance with the free and mysterious design of His wisdom and goodness, not only created the whole universe, but also chose to give humanity the incredible privilege of sharing in His own divine life, to which He calls all people in His Son. The Father determined to call together in a holy Church those who should believe in Christ.

Christ is the light of humanity; the Church has no other light than His. The Church is born primarily of Christ's total self-giving for our salvation.

The Church is the People that God gathers in the whole world. She exists in local communities and is made real as a liturgical, above all a Eucharistic, assembly. She draws her life from the Word and the Body of Christ, and so she becomes truly Christ's Body. In the unity of this Body, there is a diversity of members and functions. All members are linked to one another, especially to those who are suffering, to the poor and persecuted.

The Church, in Christ, is like a sacrament -- a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all people. The Church's first purpose is to be the sacrament of the inner union of humanity with God. Because people's communion with one another is rooted in that union with God, the Church is also the sacrament of the unity of the human race. The Church is the visible plan of God's love for humanity, because God desires that the whole human race may become one People of God, form one Body of Christ, and be built up into one temple of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord Jesus endowed His Church with a structure that will remain until the Kingdom is fully achieved. The Church constitutes one complex reality that is both divine and human. *Its structure is totally ordered to the holiness of Christ's members.*

The Church is not yet perfect, but she will receive her perfection in the glory of heaven, at the time of Christ's glorious return.

The Mission of the Church

The Church on earth is by her nature missionary. Her ultimate purpose is none other than to make disciples of all nations. All members of the Church share in this mission in various ways. The Christian vocation is, of its nature, a vocation to the apostolate. Christ, sent by the Father, is the source of the Church's whole apostolate, and so the fruitfulness of all apostolic activity depends on a vital union with Christ.

Christ was sent to evangelize the poor. So too, the Church, urged on by the Spirit of Christ, must walk the road He Himself walked, a way of poverty and obedience, of service and self-sacrifice even to death. This missionary endeavor requires patience. Only by walking the path of penance and renewal, the narrow way of the cross, can the People of God extend Christ's reign.

The Laity in the Church

Like all the faithful, God entrusts lay Christians with the apostolate by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation. The lay faithful have as their own vocation to seek the Kingdom of God by illuminating and ordering temporal affairs according to the plan of God. They carry out in this way their call to holiness and to the apostolate, a call given to all the baptized.

They participate in Christ's priestly office especially in the Eucharist by offering as a spiritual sacrifice "acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (*1 Peter* 2:5) their own lives with all of their works, prayers, apostolic undertakings, family life, daily work and hardships borne with patience and even their consolations of spirit and body. In this way, even the laity, dedicated to Christ and consecrated by the Holy Spirit, offers to God the world itself.

They participate in the prophetic function of Christ by welcoming evermore in faith the Word of Christ and proclaiming it to the world by the witness of their lives, words, evangelizing action, and catechesis. This evangelizing action acquires a particular efficacy because it is accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world. Truly, lay believers are in the front line of Church life.

They participate in the kingly function of Christ because they have received from Him the power to overcome sin in themselves and in the world by self-denial and the holiness of their lives. They exercise various ministries at the service of the parish community and they imbue temporal activities and the institutions of society with moral and spiritual values.

The Laity in the Parish

"A parish is a definite community of the Christian faithful established on a stable basis within a particular church; the pastoral care of the parish is entrusted to a pastor as its own shepherd under the authority of the diocesan bishop." ¹ It is the place where all the faithful can be gathered together for the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. The parish initiates the Christian people into the ordinary expression of the liturgical life: it gathers them together in this celebration; it teaches Christ's saving doctrine; it practices the charity of the Lord in good works and brotherly love. ²

Parish councils respond to several desires of the Second Vatican Council. The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church asks pastors "to recognize and promote the dignity as well as the responsibility of the layperson in the Church. Let them willingly make use of his prudent advice. Let them confidently assign duties to him in the service of the Church, allowing him freedom and room for action." ³ The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, reflecting on the common priesthood of all the baptized, states: "As sharers in the role of Christ the Priest, the Prophet, and the King, the laity has an active part to play in the life and activity of the Church. Their activity is so necessary within Church communities that without it the apostolate of the pastors is generally unable to achieve its full effectiveness." ⁴

The 1983 Code of Canon Law ⁵ applies the teaching of the Second Vatican Council when it defines the rights and duties of all the people of God, and states among other things: "Flowing from their rebirth in Christ, there is a genuine equality and action among all of Christ's faithful. Because of this equality, they all contribute, each according to his or her, own condition and office, to the building up of the Body of Christ." ⁶ Other canons describe how this cooperation should take place in practice. "Lay people, who are outstanding in the requisite knowledge, prudence, and integrity, are capable of being experts or advisors, even in councils in accordance with the law, in order to provide assistance to the pastors of the Church." ⁷

St. Mark's Parish Council Constitution

“Like all the faithful, laypeople should gladly accept with Christian obedience whatever their spiritual leaders decide, when this is in the name of Christ and in virtue of their teaching authority and position of leadership in the Church. When they act in this way, it is the example of Christ they are following, for He was obedient unto death, and thus opened for all, the way to the freedom of the children of God. They should not fail in their prayers for their priests, for the care of their souls, so that they may carry out their task in joy and not in tears.”⁸

Called from many lands, the parishioners of St. Mark's Parish have formed into one people, worshipping God in Spirit and in Truth. With the Eucharistic Christ at the centre of our parish life, under the protection of the Mother of God and of St. Mark, in joyful obedience to our Holy Father, our Archbishop, and the Magisterium of the Church, we strive for personal holiness to be fit instruments to bring the Gospel message to all people and places. In doing this, we work in the apostolic spirit of the Second Vatican Council, which teaches that “on all Christians therefore is laid the splendid burden of working to make the divine message of salvation known and accepted by all people throughout the world.”

THE BODY OF THE CONSTITUTION

Mission

St Mark's Parish Council, informed by God's vision for the Church as outlined in the preamble, brings together the pastor, deacons, and laity in order to build our parish as a living Catholic community. The Parish Council is called to consider the needs of the faithful and the growth of the parish through:

- prayer and reflection
- planning and researching resources within the community, and
- bringing forth and supporting the ministries, services and activities of the parish

While focusing on St. Mark's Parish, we also care about parish life in other communities of the Archdiocese, and about the concerns of the Universal Church.

Purposes

The purposes of the Parish Council are:

1. to advise and assist the pastor in his service to the People of God entrusted to his care by the bishop,
2. to function as a consultative body to the pastor in caring for the spiritual and temporal affairs of the parish, especially by:
 - a. discerning the needs of the parish, where appropriate, of the wider community, and planning effective and practical ways of responding to them,
 - b. seeing that all aspects of parish life are considered with a view to the overall pastoral development of the parish,
 - c. encouraging the various parish organizations to work for the good of the parish, and
 - d. providing an orderly forum for regular communication among all members of the parish,
3. to help coordinate parish participation in the activities of the Archdiocese and of the universal Church.

NOTE: Although the work of the Council is definitely 'pastoral', for simplicity we chose to utilize the name: Parish Council

Scope of Responsibilities

1. The Parish Council encourages the growth of different parish activities, and assists in the coordination and harmonious integration under the parish mission.
2. The Parish Council is commissioned to action, namely to work at finding solutions to the parish's needs. To this end, Parish Council may establish subsidiary committees ensuring that they do not duplicate or overlap the roles of existing committees. For example; the Parish Council does not undertake work directly concerned with helping the poor, but leaves that responsibility to the *Society of St. Vincent de Paul*.
3. The Parish Council respects the responsibilities of the structures and organizations already in place. The Parish Council may submit recommendations to various parish groups through the pastor, but a unity of spirit inspires the relationship between the Parish Council and other parish committees and organizations.

Authority

1. The Parish Council's voice is always consultative with its focus on the common good of the parish. The pastor is directly responsible to the Archbishop for pastoral care in the parish and for its integration into the life of the Archdiocese. The authority of the Parish Council must be seen in the context of a consultative decision making process that leaves the final decision to the pastor. Even if the pastor collaborates with the Parish Council and ratifies its suggestions, in strictly legal terms only he is responsible for the decisions. The Parish Council's recommendations/decisions have authority, only when ratified by the pastor and is regulated further by norms defined by the bishop.
2. The Parish Council does not have the authority to make decisions that would contradict the common good of the parish, established Archdiocesan policies, or canon law.
3. Financial matters are under the jurisdiction of the Parish Finance Council who report directly to the Pastor.

Independence of Parish Organizations

Current or future parish organizations are to manage their own affairs. The Parish Council will not attempt to direct them, but it may meet their requests for help when possible, or offer advice if the activities of any organization need to be aligned more closely with the good of the parish.

Relationship with Other Church Levels

1. The Parish Council is autonomous within the Archdiocesan context; it is not a sub-unit of Regional or Archdiocesan Pastoral Councils. However, it is concerned with the needs of both the Archdiocesan and Universal Church. For example, if invited, Parish Council members may participate as delegates in various Archdiocesan structures or activities, and take part in education sessions promoting the exchange of experiences among Parish Councils.
2. The Parish Council is especially concerned about Archdiocesan pastoral priorities and aligns its activities with them since parishes are the place where these priorities are generally implemented.
3. To operate effectively and in line with the Universal Church, Parish Council members will have the opportunity to become familiar with the pastoral publications of the Archdiocese, the Canadian and Ontario Conferences of Catholic Bishops, and the Holy See, as they pertain to parish council deliberations.
4. The pastor handles all communication with the Archdiocese.

Structure

1. The Parish Council seeks to be representative of the faithful of the parish and of the various pastoral activities it carries out. All members of the Parish Council must meet certain basic requirements, such as:
 - a. practicing their Catholic faith,
 - b. registered member with St. Mark's Parish for one year
 - c. be at least 18 years of age
 - d. a keen desire to help the parish grow,
 - e. the ability to work well with others,
 - f. the ability to listen, reflect, and express themselves with care,
 - g. adaptability, and
 - h. commit several hours per month to the Parish Council.
 - i. willing to comply with the Archdiocesan requirements for volunteer screening

As far as possible, the parish council should include:

- a. both men and women,
 - b. people of different age groups,
 - c. people of different statuses (married, single, student, walks of life, etc.), and
 - d. people reflecting the ethnic diversity of our parish.
2. The Parish Council is composed of members as follows:
 - a. Permanent members:
 - i. the Pastor
 - ii. the Permanent Deacon
 - iii. if an Associate Pastor is appointed to the parish, he will also be a permanent member. Likewise, if there is more than one Permanent Deacon, all will be permanent members. In these cases, the total number of council members will increase accordingly.
 - b. Four (4) members appointed by the pastor. The pastor may select, as one of the 4 appointed members, a person under the age of 18, with parental consent, to represent the interests and needs of youth in the parish.
 - c. Six (6) members-at-large are selected from nominees according to a "random draw" process. Parishioners may nominate themselves or be nominated by others; however, candidates must be proposed or seconded by at least one other parishioner. Please see Nomination Form attached to this document.
 - d. Parish Council members are appointed or selected on a staggered basis; thus, there will be a nomination and appointment process each year.

Formation

1. Faith

Ongoing formation in the faith is an important component of the Parish Council. Although this formation is the special concern of the pastor and chairperson, all Parish Council members are encouraged to participate in planning and implementing it. While the Parish Council is not a prayer or discussion group, there should be time for spiritual reflection throughout the year, and spiritual formation sessions should be set up to encourage a mature and communal spirituality among Parish Council members.

2. Action

Experienced Parish Council members should have a special consideration and attentiveness for new members, helping them integrate into full participation as quickly as possible. To this end, each new member should be assigned a mentor or "guardian angel" for the first six months.

Duration of Service

1. The working year for the Parish Council is July 1 to June 30. Appointments and selections of members for the following working year will take place during the last two months of the current working year. Regular meetings occur September to June.
2. For appointed members, the duration of service is two years, renewable twice for a total of six years. Once the Parish Council has been functioning for three years after its inception, the Pastor will ideally aim to include one new appointed member in his annual appointments in order to ensure fresh ideas and energy. After three consecutive terms, appointed members may be re-appointed, and are eligible for selection as a member at large, after a hiatus of one term. If their appointed status has not been renewed after either their first or second terms, appointed members are eligible for selection as a member-at-large after a hiatus of one term.
3. For members-at-large, the duration of service is three years, after which, any such member is eligible to serve for one additional consecutive term, if so selected. The maximum duration of service for members-at-large is two terms (6yrs). After two consecutive terms, members-at-large are eligible for re-selection as a member-at-large, or may be appointed, after a hiatus of one term.
4. At the Parish Council's inception, in order to obtain the staggered membership desired, the first two Appointed Members will serve their full term while the last two Appointed Members will serve for a reduced one-year term only. The first two members-at-large drawn through the random draw process will serve the full designated term, while the following two drawn members will serve a two year term and the final two members drawn will serve for a one year term only.
5. Any member-at-large who at the inception of the Parish Council takes up a reduced term, is eligible to serve as a member-at-large for one more additional consecutive full term, if so selected, or may be appointed for up to two additional terms, before a hiatus of one term.
6. Whenever a new pastor is appointed, the Pastoral Council ceases to function until the new pastor re-establishes or reconstitutes it.
7. The pastor can, at any time disband the Parish Council, as he deems necessary.

Replacement of Members

1. If a current non-permanent member resigns or is removed from office:
 - a. The pastor will choose a replacement for an appointed member.
 - b. A replacement for a member-at-large may, at the discretion of the Parish Council, be drawn immediately from that year's nomination pool or be drawn at the following scheduled selection time.
2. If a non-permanent Parish Council member fails to attend three scheduled meetings within a working year without notice, he or she is considered to have resigned from the Parish Council. A replacement will be chosen as in Point # 1 above.
3. If a non-permanent Parish Council member fails to attend three meetings within a working year for any reason, he or she may be removed from the Parish Council by a two-thirds majority vote of all the voting members, either in person or by written proxy. A replacement will be chosen as in Point # 1 above.

4. For reasons of misconduct or dereliction of duty, a non-permanent Parish Council member may be removed from the Parish Council by two-thirds majority vote of all the voting members, either in person or by written proxy. A replacement will be chosen as in Point #1 above.
5. Any non-permanent member of Parish Council may resign by filing a written communication with the Parish Council Secretary including a cc. to the Pastor.

Executive Roles

The Parish Council executive is comprised of the Pastor, Chairperson, Vice- Chairperson and the Secretary. The Chairperson, Vice- Chairperson and Secretary are to be chosen by the Parish Council Members at the last meeting of each working year for a term of up to 2 years, when a vacancy arises; provided, however, that in the case of Secretary, the parish council may approve an interim appointment of any suitable person to serve as a Non-Voting Acting Secretary until the next election cycle. Further, it is understood that for the purpose of these Executive Role choices, the permanent members of the Parish Council will have a vote.

Pastor

1. As Pastor:
 - establishes the Parish Council
 - acts as spiritual advisor,
 - defines goals, and ensures proper functioning,
 - outlines the needs of the parish, and
 - convenes Parish Council meetings.
2. Only the Pastor can convene Parish Council meetings.

Chairperson

Elected by the Parish Council, the Chairperson:

- assists the pastor to oversee the effective operation of the Parish Council,
- strives to make the Parish Council active and be fully aware of its responsibilities and accountability,
- encourages all members to participate actively and freely, and ensures all comments and viewpoints are given due consideration, and
- encourages communication among parish organizations and the parishioners as a whole.

Vice-Chairperson

Elected by the Parish Council, the Vice-Chairperson:

- aids the Chairperson with his or her duties, and
- acts as Chairperson in his or her absence.

Secretary

Elected by the Parish Council, the Secretary:

- gives notification of Parish Council meetings at the request of the pastor,
- prepares and circulates necessary documents,
- records and maintains minutes of meetings,
- maintains and circulates lists of action items, and
- keeps records of all Parish Council activities, such as dates of selection or appointment,.

Meetings

1. A non-executive member of Parish Council is chosen for the working year, to assist the Pastor and Chairperson with drawing up the meeting agenda before each Parish Council meeting. This may occur by e-mail, no quorum is required. Any Parish Council member may offer input to the agenda. The agenda is then to be distributed to all Parish Council members one week before the upcoming Parish Council meeting.
2. The Parish Council aims to meet every other month beginning in September (September, November, January, March, and May).
The minimum requirement for meetings is once each calendar quarter.
 - a) Quorum for a meeting is a majority of the full Parish Council.
 - b) At the beginning of the meeting, any Parish Council member may suggest additional agenda items either for that meeting or, at the discretion of the Parish Council, at a subsequent meeting.
3. The pastor, acting either on his own authority or at the request of one or more Parish Council members, can call a special meeting of the Parish Council at any time. The minutes of all such special meetings must be recorded and presented at the next regular Parish Council meeting.
4. There will be an annual general meeting at the end of each working year, so that the Parish Council can meet with the whole parish to report on its activities and to receive ideas and suggestions and respond to questions.

Voting

1. Except for the election of the Executive Role Positions, and any proposed change to the Constitution, the Pastor, Associate Pastor and Deacon(s) shall be non-voting members of the Parish Council.
2. Practically speaking, the Parish Council should always strive for consensus so that vote taking is rarely necessary. However, if a vote is needed, approval by a majority of all of the voting members is required to carry any such recommended action, except as otherwise provided in this constitution (see replacement of members and amendments sections).
3. The pastor has the right to ratify, veto or hold off, on any or all recommendations or actions.

Amendments

1. With the exception of the Preamble, this Parish Council Constitution, may be amended at any regular Parish Council meeting by a two third majority vote (in person) of the Parish Council including the permanent members. Advance notice of intent to propose an amendment, including the rationale, needs to be communicated, as per Section 1 of Meetings. When an amendment is approved, through either consensus or a vote, the pastor must ratify it. The ratified amendment will then be carefully recorded in the minutes and the updated constitution will be re-issued under a new revision number.
2. All amendments must reflect the intent of *The Parish Pastoral Council (CCCB)* and the *Guidelines for Parish Councils* (Archdiocese of Toronto), as well as guidelines for parish councils issued by the Archdiocese of Toronto or the Universal Church.

ST. MARK'S PARISH COUNCIL
NOMINATION FORM

I, _____,

(Please Print Full Name)

as an active member of St. Mark's Parish, freely and willingly

NOMINATE:

(Print Name) (Address)

Telephone # (Res) _____ (Cell) _____ (Work) _____

Email address: _____

(Signature of Nominator) (Date)

As a nominator, please complete the following questions.

1. What has inspired you to nominate this candidate for Parish Council?

2. What talents, gifts, work or life experiences do you feel that this person could contribute to St. Mark's Parish Council?

ST. MARK'S PARISH COUNCIL
NOMINATION ACCEPTANCE FORM

I, _____,
(Please Print Full Name)

as an active member of St. Mark's Parish, agree to allow my name for inclusion in the random draw for members of the Parish Council.

I understand that six parishioners will be selected through the random draw process, and will serve on the Parish Council together with the pastor, the permanent deacon(s), and four parishioners appointed by the pastor.

If my name is selected, I agree to serve for the term as specified under the Constitution and to support the pastor, the Parish Council, and the parish in any initiatives they undertake.

I confirm that I have read and understand the *St. Mark s Parish Council Constitution*: and that I fulfill the requirements as outlined in Section 1 of the Structure of the Parish Council. I agree to abide by the Constitution.

(Signature) (Date)

(Address)

Telephone # (Res) _____ (Cell) _____ (Work) _____

Email address: _____

Please complete the back portion of this form before submitting.

St. Mark's Parish Council Constitution

As a candidate for Parish Council, please complete the following three questions.

1. What has inspired you to let your name stand as a candidate for Parish Council?

2. What talents, gifts, work or life experiences do you have, that you feel would be of contribution to St. Mark's Parish Council?

3. What would you hope to gain from being a member of St. Mark's Parish Council?

LIST OF SOURCE DOCUMENTS

1. Documents of the Second Vatican Council
 - a. *Lumen Gentium*
 - b. *Apostolicam Actuositatem*
2. Catechism of the Catholic Church
3. Code of Canon Law
4. Guidelines for Parish Councils, Archdiocese of Toronto, 1983
5. The Parish Pastoral Council, Guidelines for the Development of Constitutions, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1984
6. Parish Pastoral Council Constitution and By-Laws of St. Luke's Catholic Church (Toronto)
7. Constitution of St. Paul the Apostle Parish Pastoral Council, May 1997 (Toronto)
8. Our Lady of Fatima Parish Council Constitution and By-Laws (Toronto)
9. St. Albert the Great Parish Council Guidelines, (Weymouth, Massachusetts, U.S.A.)
10. Parish Pastoral Council Constitution of St. Dunstan's Catholic Church (Toronto)

¹ Code of Canon Law, Canon 515

² Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2179

³ Documents of the Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 37

⁴ Documents of the Second Vatican Council, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 10

⁵ This paragraph is from *The Parish Pastoral Council*, Page 3

⁶ Code of Canon Law, Canon 208

⁷ Code of Canon Law, Canon 228, 2

⁸ *Lumen Gentium*, 37. Quoted in *Guidelines for Parish Councils*, Archdiocese of Toronto, 1983