

ARTICLES OF UNDERSTANDING OF THE PASTORAL COUNCIL  
OF ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE CHURCH

MISSION STATEMENT

The Roman Catholic Faith Community of St. Thomas the Apostle recognizes God's call to be a sign of His Kingdom in the communities we serve. We respond to this call by:

- Leading people to a deeper relationship with Christ by providing opportunities for spiritual growth, renewal, education, the celebration of the Sacraments, and the worship of God in the sacred liturgy;
- Encouraging a commitment to justice and to service of those in need;
- Promoting good stewardship of our time, talent and treasure;
- Building a community of hospitality and support in the daily living out of Christian ideals by nourishing mutual respect and understanding within our Church, our families, our community, and other faith traditions.

## ARTICLE I — PURPOSE

The purpose of the Pastoral Council of St. Thomas The Apostle Church is to ensure that the life of the parish reflects the mission of Jesus Christ and that all parishioners are provided with the opportunity to share in that mission. It must be remembered, however, that the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ is carried out in union with the church universal and has to be reflected in the local church by collaboration of the faithful with the pastoral leadership of the Archbishop, the pastor and pastoral staff. The Council, therefore, serves as an extension of the saving work of Christ in a particular place and time, and shares in the living witness of a faith community animated by the Spirit.

## ARTICLE II: FUNCTION

1. The Pastoral Council of St. Thomas The Apostle Parish shall meet to:
  - a) Be a body of the faithful that represents the lay community in the pursuit of the mission of the Church;
  - b) Provide consultation and support to the pastor and staff regarding the activity of the parish;
  - c) Use its collective wisdom by responding to the needs and concerns of the lay parish community by investigating, evaluating and proposing recommendations regarding timely local, national and/or global concerns;
  - d) Consult and advise the Pastor, with the Pastor being responsible to make all final decisions, either alone or collegially, regarding acceptance or rejection of the Council's recommendations; and
  - e) Be responsible for carrying out any specific action or program in the parish either through

its own membership or by designating specific persons or groups.

### ARTICLE III: ANNUAL YEAR

The Council annual year shall be from June 1 through May 31.

### ARTICLE IV: PASTORAL COUNCIL MEETINGS

1. The criteria for Pastoral Council meetings follow:
  - a) There shall be a minimum of six (6) regularly scheduled meetings per year. A quorum for any meeting shall be a total of fifty (50%) of the elected council members plus one.
  - b) A calendar of the scheduled meetings shall be prepared by the Chairperson and the Pastor and presented at the June meeting.
  - c) Additional meetings and alterations to dates may be called by the Pastor or the officers after consultation with the Pastor or upon the written request of a majority of the Council members upon one week's notice to all of the Council members.
  - d) Each meeting shall open with a prayer and a climate of prayerful discernment shall prevail at all meetings with a constant attempt at acting in a true spirit of consensus.
  - e) At the close of each meeting, the members shall spend some brief time reflecting on the meeting itself as a Christian experience.

### ARTICLE V: COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

1. The membership criteria follow:
  - a) The Council membership shall consist of:

- The Pastor,
  - A minimum of twelve (12) and a maximum of fifteen (15) registered and active parishioners; and
  - Ex-officio members to include the Deanery Representative, at least one Trustee and two other members appointed by the Pastor in conjunction with the Chairperson.
- b) All members shall represent themselves and the congregation.

#### ARTICLE VI: TERM OF PASTORAL COUNCIL MEMBERS

1. The term of the Pastoral Council members shall be as follows:

- a) Each registered parishioner member shall serve for a three year term.
- b) Each Ex Officio member shall serve for a one year term renewable by appointment of the Pastor in conjunction with the Chairperson.
- c) A Council member shall be ineligible to complete his or her term in event of the following:
  - A religious who is transferred or moves from the parish;
  - A parishioner who moves out of the parish or no longer attends parish liturgical celebrations; and
  - A Council member absent from two consecutive meetings without sufficient cause and notification to the Chairperson of the Council.
- d) All Council members shall attend all Council meetings and shall serve on committees or task forces as needed.
- e) Vacancies shall be filled either by election or appointment in accordance with the consensus

of the Council members. A replacement member serves for the duration of the original term and becomes eligible for election at the end of the original term. If the replacement term is one year or less, the replacement member is eligible for two consecutive terms.

#### ARTICLE VII: LIMITATION OF TERM OF CONSECUTIVE SERVICE

1. The limits of the term of consecutive service follow:
  - a) With the exception of a replacement member in Article V(e) and the Ex-officio members, no Council member shall serve more than six years consecutively as a Council member.
  - b) A Council member with six years of consecutive service shall be eligible for reelection after a two-year period of interruption.

#### ARTICLE VIII: PROCESS FOR SELECTION OF NEW MEMBERS

1. The process for selection of new members follows:
  - a) An Election Committee for the selection of new members shall be comprised of five Council members: One member to be selected by the Pastor, one member to be selected by the Chairperson and three members to be selected by the Council at large.
  - b) This Election Committee shall be in place by the end of March.
  - c) The Election Committee shall solicit names of potential candidates for new members, discuss and evaluate the candidates and report to the Council at the April meeting. The Election Committee shall present at least two candidates for each vacancy.

- d) In the selection of the candidates the Election Committee should be guided by:
- (1) the principle that the Council should reflect a cross section of the parish community and
  - (2) the qualities outlined in the Guidelines For Parish Pastoral Councils, Fourth Edition, pages 22 — 23 (See Appendix I).
- e) An election by written ballot shall be held at the May meeting at which time additional nominations may be made by any Council member. Those candidates receiving the highest number of affirmative votes shall be adjudged elected.
- f) One third of the elected Council members shall be elected annually.
- g) Each newly elected member will be notified by the Chairperson of the Pastoral Council and be issued a written invitation to take his or her Council seat at the June meeting.
- h) If an elected candidate declines the invitation, the invitation shall be extended to the candidate with the next highest number of votes.

#### ARTICLE IX: OFFICERS

1. The criteria for Pastoral Council officers follow:
  - a) There shall be three Officers, i.e., Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Secretary.
  - b) The term of Office shall be two years and said officers shall be elected at the same election.
  - c) No officer shall serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office. Further, after

serving four consecutive years as an officer, a member cannot serve in any office during the remainder of his or her term on the Council.

- d) If a vacancy occurs in an office, the Council shall appoint a replacement to serve out the balance of the term.
  
- e) The roles of the Pastor, Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and the Secretary are defined on pages 24 – 26 of the Guidelines For Parish Pastoral Councils, Fourth Edition (See Appendix II).

#### ARTICLE X: ELECTION OF OFFICERS

1. The criteria for election of officers follows:

- a) The Council shall solicit names of candidates at the April meeting.
  
- b) At the May meeting, the election of officers shall be the first order of business and election shall be held by secret ballot. Majority vote shall be necessary to gain election.
  
- c) At the June meeting, the newly elected officers shall assume their positions and be responsible for the meeting including the agenda.

#### ARTICLE XI. VOTING ON MOTIONS, ISSUES, ETC

1. The criteria for voting on motions and issues follow:

- a) Consensus of the Council shall prevail on all recommendations to the Pastor.

#### ARTICLE XII: AMENDMENTS

Any portion of this document may be amended by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the total membership of the Council provided that a copy of the proposed amendment is submitted to each Council member one month prior to the meeting at which the amendment will be considered. Any amendment is subject to the approval of the Pastor.

### ARTICLE XIII: MISCELLANEOUS

1. At a designated Sunday in the months of September or October the members of the Pastoral Council shall EITHER (1) be introduced to the church membership in an appropriate manner OR (2) participate in a commitment ceremony.
2. Photographs of the Parish Council members shall be displayed at the main and side entrances to the church and should be updated annually.

N.B. The foregoing Articles of Understanding were amended by a committee consisting of Mary Pat Bogart, Robert Blackman, Richard Miller and Brian Murphy (Chairman), further amended by Pastoral Council and adopted by the Pastoral Council in May, 2003.

## APPENDIX I<sup>1</sup>

### (3) Qualities To Be Developed

Thus, the pastor, parish staff and Pastoral Council serving as special leaders of collaborative ministry must develop certain personal and communal qualities to help them accomplish their task, as well as to contribute to their own conversion process. Principal among these qualities are the following:

- Spirituality - prayer, a close relationship with Jesus and his mission, and a keen appreciation for Gospel values are indispensable to this ministry of leadership.
- Understanding of Church - familiarity with the concepts of Vatican II as well as an openness to change and continued learning are needed for the role of leadership.
- Patience - personal growth and the continued building of Christian Community require the ability and the persistence to tolerate delay and deal with ambiguity and diversity.
- Charity - a Christ-like care and compassion for all, within (and beyond) the parish, is intrinsic to shared responsibility.
- A Sense of Justice - a commitment to Gospel values and a respect for the dignity of others will help to inspire trust and confidence in parish leadership.
- Enablement/Empowerment - the ability to help people recognize and develop their gifts and to give them the opportunity to use them for the benefit of all is central to a communal style of parish leadership.
- Commitment - understanding our baptismal call to ministry is to willingness to accept the responsibility and special demands of leadership so critical to the parish's mission and ministry.
- Fidelity - the sense of belonging to a universal Church community and being guided by the teaching of the Holy Father.

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<sup>1</sup> *Growing in Shared Responsibility: Guidelines from Parish Pastoral Councils*, Oct 2003, Page 22 -23

## APPENDIX II – Roles of Pastor and Officers<sup>2</sup>

### 8. Roles

#### a. Role of the Pastor

The pastor exercises his pastoral role on the Council in a variety of ways by:

- developing a clear structure for sharing responsibility
- building a community of faith, hope and love ;
- promoting consultation so that people may share in forming those decisions which affect them ;
- working with the Council to achieve consensus
- ensuring the formation of Council members
- motivating people to work together
- helping to form the Council's agenda
- listening to and weighing carefully the concerns and advice of the Council ;
- making certain that the scope of the Council's concerning the entire mission of the Church ;.
- sharing in the formation of parish policy and in planning for the pastoral care of the parish ;
- ensuring the Finance Council is provided with the parish pastoral plan in order to develop a parish financial plan ;
- clarifying points of church law or archdiocesan policy when necessary ; and
- making parishioners aware that they are members of the (arch)diocese and of the Universal Church and that they must reflect this in their work.

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<sup>2</sup> *Growing in Shared Responsibility: Guidelines from Parish Pastoral Councils*, Oct 2003, Page 25 -26

#### b. The Role Of The Chairperson

The leadership of the Parish Pastoral Council chairperson is of paramount importance in achieving the Council's purpose and objectives. The chairperson's work goes beyond the mere facilitating of council meetings. Much, of this work is centered on maintaining regular contact with other members of the Ministry of Shared Responsibility to ensure a frequent exchange of information with regard to the parish's mission and direction. These contacts are a means of ensuring that proper coordination and communication is taking place between and among the various ministries, committees and/or communities.

During Council meetings, the chairperson must continually strive to create an atmosphere of trust and openness that will enable productive dialog and Christ-centered activity. Fundamental to this atmosphere is a respect for the members' ideas and abilities, a desire to achieve consensus and a willingness to seek this guidance of the Holy Spirit by calling the Council to prayer and reflection whenever appropriate.

The chairperson also ensures that an election/selection process is set up and clearly understood by parishioners prior to the time for new members to be called forth.

#### c. The Role Of Vice Chairperson And Secretary

Arrangements should be made for the selection of a vice chairperson to perform the duties of the chairperson in the latter's absence. In addition, a person who is not a Council member, ought to be recruited to serve as secretary to the council, thus permitting every Council member to participate fully in the proceedings. In some cases, the parish staff secretary serves in this capacity to record the work of the Council, maintain records and distribute minutes and other pertinent information and handle Council correspondence.

Amendments to the Articles of Understanding of the Pastoral Council of St. Thomas the Apostle Church.

Article XIV: Parish Ministry

- 1) A person who assumes a leadership role in the parish ministry must be a registered parishioner and an active member of the St. Thomas the Apostle Parish community.

The above mentioned article was formulated and accepted at the St. Thomas the Apostle Pastoral Council meeting of October 6, 2003.

Change History

Date of Revision	Revision Description	Revised By
05/23/07	Initial Release	T. Rossano
02/11/09	Updated by adding Article XIV based on Mary Pat Bogart's paper copy.	T. Rossano
05/09/09	Update Mission Statement with the one approved by the council on June 9 <sup>th</sup> , 2008.	T. Rossano