

NORMS FOR PARISH FINANCE COUNCILS AND PARISH ADMINISTRATION

As a matter of justice, the Church must exercise faithful stewardship of its temporal goods. Finance councils at the diocesan level and at the parish level are mandated by the Law of the Church. There is no question concerning their necessity.

Canon 537:

Each parish is to have a finance council which is regulated by universal law as well as by the norms issued by the diocesan bishop; in this council the Christian faithful, selected according to the same norms, aid the pastor in the administration of parish goods with due regard for the prescription of Canon 532 (which names the pastor as the representative of the legal personality of the parish.)

The Bishop of the Diocese of Spokane sets forth the following norms regarding the establishment and function of parish finance councils:

I. Establishment:

- A. In compliance with Canon 537 of the Code of Canon Law, every parish will establish a Finance Council.
- B. A combined Finance Council may be appropriate for two or more smaller faith communities served by the same pastor.
- C. Each parish Finance Council shall develop a constitution which is in harmony with universal law and Diocesan norms. This constitution which sets forth the elements of its own functioning is incorporated as an appendix to the Parish's Pastoral Council Constitution.

II. Purpose:

- A. The purpose of the Finance Council is to provide consultation and assistance to the pastor in the financial administration of the parish. The pastor will respect the recommendations of the Council in the spirit of Canon 127. This consultation should be undertaken in a spirit of prayerful reflection. Through prayer, reflection and frank discussion of the issues brought to the Council, the members should strive to develop consensus on those issues which they address.

III. Functions of the Finance Council:

- A. The Finance Council recommends procedures to carry out the financial affairs of the parish and assists the pastor in the administration of the temporal goods of the parish.
- B. Particular responsibilities of the Parish Finance Council include the following:
 - 1) To assist in the preparation of the parish budget.
 - 2) Preparation and/or review of the financial report of the parish at the end of the fiscal year (June 30th) which is to be shared with the parish and transmitted to the Office of the Bishop prior to September 15th following the end of the fiscal year.
 - 3) Assist the pastor in carrying out the fiscal policies and procedures established by the Bishop of Spokane and the Bishop's Finance Council.
- C. The Bishop of Spokane designates these particular actions as "acts of extraordinary administration" which a pastor may not undertake without consultation and the consent of the Parish Finance Council.
 - 1) Sale of parish property
 - 2) Borrowing funds from the diocese
 - 3) Undertaking a planning process for capital construction

IV. Membership:

- A. Members of the Finance Council are to be Catholics of the parish who are mindful of the common good, compassionate, prudent, faithful in the stewardship of time, talent and resources, who participate regularly in the worship of the community and who are competent to assist in financial management.

- B. In consultation with the Parish Pastoral Council and the parish staff, the pastor appoints the members of the Finance Council. The Council shall have at least three lay members. Terms of office shall be set forth in the Constitution.

V. Meetings:

- A. The Parish Finance Council will meet quarterly or more frequently as established by the local Constitution.
- B. The pastor presides at meetings of the Finance Council. The actual conducting of meetings may be delegated to a chairperson selected according to the local Constitution. Other officers such as a vice-chair and secretary may be selected according to the local Constitution.

VI. Relationship with the Parish Pastoral Council:

- A. The Finance Council collaborates with the Parish Pastoral Council in financing the pastoral needs of the parish. The method of collaboration is determined by the pastor through consultation with both Councils.
- B. Neither Council is to usurp the constituted responsibilities of the other. Both universal law and these diocesan norms assume that two distinct councils are formed by each parish. This does not preclude the presence of a delegate from the one council who participates in the other. Only with the permission of the Bishop may one council assume the functions of both the Pastoral and Finance Councils.

VII. Suspension and dissolution of the Finance Council:

- A. When a parish becomes vacant the Finance Council is suspended unless directed otherwise by the Bishop. In the absence of a pastor, the Bishop may appoint or confirm the appointment of one who is to administer the goods of the parish on a temporary basis.
- B. The Parish Finance Council cannot be dissolved without permission of the Bishop.

VIII. Fiscal Authority:

- A. All the parishes and institutions of the diocese are entities of the Catholic Bishop of Spokane, a corporation sole. As incumbent Catholic Bishop of Spokane, the ordinary grants to each pastor authority to carry out the ordinary financial management of the entity including signing checking accounts, yearly professional contracts, service agreements and other ordinary instruments of parish business. The Bishop alone retains the authority to sign capital construction contracts and property contracts.
- B. The pastor, with the written permission of the Bishop, may appoint and sub delegate another person to carry out the financial administration of the parish. This person is accountable directly to the pastor, who remains the one accountable to the Bishop for the administration of the parish. In such cases, this administrator is an ex-officio member of the Finance Council.
- C. Pastors and Finance Councils are to act in compliance with Diocesan policies concerning the Deposit and Loan Fund and Building and Remodeling as well as other policies legislated by the Diocesan Bishop (cf. Policy Manual, 5.03.01, 5.03.02 and 5.03.03).

Approved by Bishop William S. Skylstad in April, 1992, following consultation with the Presbyteral Council.