



## **Constitution of the Parish Pastoral Council of Holy Trinity Parish**

**1. Name:** Holy Trinity Parish Pastoral Council, hereinafter referred to as “the Council”

The Holy Trinity Parish, 34 Stevens Street, Queenscliff, Vic. 3225, incorporates the worship communities of Holy Family, Barwon Heads, Our Lady Star of the Sea, Ocean Grove and Holy Trinity, Queenscliff.

**2. Mission of the Church:** The Church is the living body of Christ in which all share in various and diverse ways the responsibility for the mission given to the Church by Jesus to:

- Worship God in joyous celebration of the Mass and Sacraments
- Proclaim the Word of God to all people
- Witness the love and redemptive healing of Christ
- Serve those in need in both Church and society

**3. Purpose and Function of the Council:**

3.1 Based upon the document, *The Constitution of the Church in the Modern World*, of Vatican Council II, the Council shall be the instrument through which a representative body of the People of God, that is Holy Trinity Parish, in a relationship of shared responsibility with the Parish Priest, enables the parish to express itself as a community of faith called to the Good News of God's Kingdom present among us.

3.2 The Council seeks to:

- Listen and respond to the hopes, ideas, needs and concerns of parishioners.
- Generate responses to these identified issues.
- Encourage and support the continuing good work of existing groups within our parish.
- Provide opportunities for parishioners
  - to grow in their relationship with God and with each other, and
  - to support and encourage them in their continuing efforts to be a Christian influence in the wider community.
- Set realistic and achievable short-term and long-term pastoral goals for our parish community within the framework of diocesan priorities.
- Oversee the implementation of these goals.
- Contribute towards making parish decisions that reflect the values of the Gospel and the teachings of the Church.
- Provide support for our Parish Priest, working collaboratively with him and with each other to formulate policies concerning parish and pastoral matters consistent with faith and morals, civil and church law, and Archdiocesan policies.

**4. Membership:**

4.1 The Council shall consist of at least eight (8) voting members.

4.2 For purposes of this Constitution, “Eligible Person” means a person who broadly meets the following requirements: Catholic; eighteen years or older; baptized and confirmed; a registered participating parishioner; has a basic understanding of the teaching and practice of the Catholic Church; has a commitment to Christian values. Should the Council determine that there be youth representative/s on the Council, those persons should be of Secondary School age.

4.3 The Parish Priest and pastoral associate are ex-officio, non-voting members of the Council.

4.4 The currently serving Principals from Our Lady Star of the Sea Primary School, Ocean Grove, and St Aloysius Primary School, Queenscliff, will serve as members of the Council.

4.5 At least six (6) at-large members of the Council shall serve from among the parishioners of Holy Trinity Parish. These shall include at least two (2) at-large members from the Ocean Grove community, at least two (2) at-large members from the Barwon Heads community and at least two (2) at-large members from the Queenscliff community. Each at-large member will serve a two-year term. No at-large member may serve more than two consecutive two-year terms, but must stand down for at least one year before again being eligible to serve.

**5. Filling Seats and Terms of Office:**

5.1 Vacant Council at-large seats will be filled annually by means of the following process:

- A. Prior to Pentecost Sunday, all Eligible Persons will be encouraged to prayerfully discern whether they are called to volunteer their time and talents as potential at-large members of the Council or whether they should nominate another person as a potential at-large member. Any Eligible Person who is called to serve will confidentially submit his or her name to the Parish Priest and will thereby become a candidate. The willingness to serve of any candidate who is nominated by another person will be verified prior to proceeding to the discernment process.
- B. A Discerning Committee of the Parish Priest and up to two current Council members shall be formed.
- C. The Discerning Committee contacts all persons recommended and invites them to an Information Meeting.
- D. At the Information Meeting, prospective members are given a clear outline of the Council’s current role and function, together with details of expectations and responsibilities of members. An information pack will be provided. Provision should be made to answer any relevant questions raised by participants. Each prospective member should be given an opportunity of speaking briefly (two minutes?) on his/her hopes for the parish, together with a self-introduction according to a specific outline provided to the nominees. Those parishioners who have been recommended are then invited to accept or decline possible membership.
- E. Time of prayerful reflection.

- F. Choice, by ballot, of the number of councillors required. It might be considered appropriate to negotiate an outcome or, even, to increase the number of serving councillors for a term.

5.2 The newly selected Council members shall assume their duties at the first regular meeting after July 1st of that year. The newly selected at-large members are encouraged to attend the Council meeting in June, if a meeting is scheduled. Attendance at this meeting would be as observers for familiarization purposes only.

5.3 Additional at-large seats are available to be filled by the Parish Priest at his discretion, based on particular representational or advisory needs that he deems to be important from time to time.

5.4 Any term of office that cannot be completed by a Council member shall be filled, according to previous negotiation, or by drawing by lot an additional name from the remaining candidates assembled during the process described in Section 1 of "Filling seats and Terms of Office". This person shall complete the unexpired term of the member. If there are no additional volunteers remaining from that process, the Parish Priest shall appoint that replacement.

5.5 At a Sunday Liturgy in July, members of the new council and members of the retiring council shall come to the Installation Mass. Retiring council members will be called forward to receive the gratitude of the parish community for their service to the parish as council members.

## **6. Officers:**

6.1 At the first meeting of the Council in July, the members of the Council shall elect a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Secretary from their own membership. These officers, together with the Parish Priest, shall constitute the Executive Committee. The Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Secretary shall serve a two-year term. The Council may determine that it is more appropriate for a parishioner to be co-opted as an ex-officio member to perform the duties of Secretary.

6.2 The Chairperson shall have the following duties:

- call and chair all meetings of the Council;
- oversee all activities of the Council;
- convene the Executive Committee in order to prepare Council meeting agendas and when special assistance or decisions are required on parish business.
- prepare the summary statement of Council activities for inclusion in the Parish Bulletin.

6.3 The Vice-Chairperson shall have the following duties:

- chair meetings in the absence of the Chairperson;
- assist the Chairperson in overseeing Council activities;
- succeed the Chairman in case of resignation or disqualification.

6.4 The Secretary shall have the following duties:

- ensure that written records of the minutes of all Council meetings are filed in the archives;
- maintain an attendance record of all Council members;

- maintain a current record of the names, addresses, telephone numbers and dates of selection and terms of office of all Council members;
- organize agenda items with the Executive Committee then give to parish staff for typing and distribution to Council members;
- ensure that Minutes of meetings are distributed to councillors within 10 days of the council meeting and that agendas and meeting papers are available to councillors at least one week prior to a meeting.

**7. Meetings:**

7.1 Regular meetings of the Council shall be held at least 8 times each year.

7.2 Each meeting will begin and close with a prayer to guide the members in the ministry of the Council. Each Council meeting will last for not more than 90-minutes, unless the Council decides on an extension of time.

7.3 Additional meetings of the Council may be called by the Parish Priest or the Chairperson, with the consent of the Parish Priest, upon written or verbal notice being given to all members of the Council.

7.4 Members are expected to attend all Council meetings. Absences need to be reported to the Secretary prior to the meeting. Frequent unexcused absences will be addressed by the Executive Committee. Any member who is absent from three consecutive regular meetings without having notified the Secretary or Parish Office in advance of the meeting shall be removed from the Council, if the Council so decides.

7.5 Any member may be removed for good cause by a consensus of the council.

7.6 A quorum of the Council shall be half the number of members plus one. No official action may be taken or decisions rendered in the absence of a quorum. As the Parish Council is an advisory body to the Parish Priest, should voting be equally divided on any given issue then the Parish Priest shall make the decision.

7.7 Notice of regular meetings will be published in the weekly church bulletin. The council may hold an annual reporting meeting which will be open to all parishioners.

7.8 A representative from the Finance Committee will attend a Council meeting at least once per annum to inform the Council on parish financial arrangements.

7.9 Proposals may be submitted to the Council by presenting the proposal, in writing, to the Executive Committee at least two weeks in advance of the regular Council meeting. The presenter of the written proposal may be required to attend an Executive Committee meeting to present the proposal. Disposition of the proposal follows the normal procedure for new business for the Council.

7.10 Meeting minutes are recorded and distributed by parish staff in a timely manner.

7.11 A summary of each Council meeting will be made available to parishioners on the Church notice board and/or Church bulletin.

### **8. Decision-Making:**

8.1 The decision-making process of the Council shall be by consensus action.

8.2 All decisions and actions of the Council must be ratified by the Parish Priest.

8.3 Upon explaining his reasons, the Parish Priest may recommend that the decision be reconsidered.

### **9. Amendments and Revisions**

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

9.2 Amendments and revisions must be presented in writing to all members of the Council within five (5) days prior to any meeting. Any amendments or revision submitted to the Council shall be discussed at the meeting at which it is presented, but not formally accepted or declined until the next regular meeting.

9.3 Amendments may be accepted by a full consensus of the Council or, in the absence of a full consensus, by a two-thirds majority of the voting members.

### **10. Ministries**

10.1 Special ad hoc committees may be established by agreement of Council membership to meet specific objectives.

10.2 Established parish ministries and special ad hoc committees should submit to the Council annually a brief summary report on the status of goals, objectives, and activities of the ministry or the ad hoc committee.

10.3 The Parish Priest and parish staff may be members of a particular ministry or ad hoc committee but are not to serve as their representative on the Council.

This Constitution was adopted at the Parish Pastoral Council meeting of September 4, 2019; further revised on March 1, 2023.

### **Notes to accompany the Constitution**

1. The Parish Priest is ex-officio the president of the Parish Pastoral Council.
2. In calling the Church to a new sense of community and mission, the Bishops of Vatican II sought to change the emphasis from passive to active involvement for all members of the *People of God*. The baptised followers of Jesus are not simply members of the Church; they **ARE** the Church. Some of the key understandings highlighted were:

- The Church is the *People of God* with whom God communicates in love.
  - Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist form a common bond that unites everyone (priests and laity), calling all to active participation in the Church's mission for the life of the world.
  - All are called to engage in mission in the concrete circumstances of their lives.
  - Each person's contribution to the mission of the Church is unique and indispensable.
3. "Consensus is a group decision (which some members may not feel is the best decision, but which they can live with, support and commit themselves to not undermine), arrived at without voting, through a process whereby the issues are fully aired, all members feel they have been adequately heard, in which everyone has equal power and responsibility and different degrees of influence by virtue of individual stubbornness or charisma are avoided so that all are satisfied with the process."—M. Scott Peck, London, 1993.
  4. Majority voting should be used only as a last resort.
  5. Rather than focusing on a specific perspective, the Pastoral Council operates from a broad overview, promoting a sharing of responsibility for the development of a more vital Christian community. Its underlying aim is to encourage and support all. The Pastoral Council is not a management or an administrative body.
  6. Qualities required of Parish Pastoral Council members:
    - Commitment to Christ and the Church, with a parish community perspective
    - Openness to listen and evaluate
    - Willingness to work in a team
    - Positive and hopeful outlook
    - Respect for the efforts of others, including earlier decision-makers and parishioners
    - Sufficient time and energy
    - Reliability in attendance and tasks undertaken
    - Readiness to include others in action
    - Loyalty to the Parish Priest and to one another
    - Willingness to serve for a time and then let go
  7. Each member of the Parish Pastoral Council is expected to:
    - act in accordance with the purpose of the Parish Pastoral Council;
    - attend regular meetings and formation day/s;
    - be a liaison officer and listen to parishioners so as to understand and respond to the issues affecting the life of the parish, including those of the structured ministries;
    - represent the Parish Pastoral Council when required (for example at other parish meetings, deanery or Diocesan meetings);
    - take their opportunities for personal faith and skill development for effective participation in the Parish Pastoral Council.
  8. Ideally, the members of the Pastoral Council are representative of the whole parish community. Each member aims to take a community view of issues and not an individual or group perspective. All parishioners are potential members.

9. Canon Law requires the setting up of a separate Parish Finance Committee. The Parish Pastoral Council will be required to dialogue and collaborate with that Committee where necessary in fulfilling the mission of the parish.