

Constitution of the Pastoral Council and Finance Committee of the Parish of St Teresa of the Infant Jesus, Newcastle upon Tyne

Preamble

On 10-11 December 2011 Fr Michael Hickey convened a meeting of lay members of the Parish, together with those of St Aidan's, to learn from Fr Johnny Doherty CSsR about Parish Pastoral Councils. This led to a General Meeting of the Parish on 4 January 2012, which elected a Steering Group, consisting of five lay members of the Parish together with the Parish Priest, to guide a process of consultation throughout the Parish and with the Bishop. This process concluded with a second General Meeting on 21 April 2012 to receive the results and agree some principles and priorities. This constitution has been drawn up by the Steering Group to give effect to the wish of that General Meeting that a Pastoral Council should be formed.

This constitution is a statement of the purpose and powers of the Pastoral Council and the Finance Committee which have been set up by the Parish Priest and agreed by representatives of the wider membership of St Teresa's Parish. It includes aims or objects, functions of the respective groups (Council/Committee), functions of officers (e.g. Chair, Secretary and President), arrangements for appointments or election by a General Meeting, provision for membership, rules for conduct of meetings, how the constitution can be amended and how the Pastoral Council can be dissolved.

Nature and Purpose of the Pastoral Council and Finance Committee

- 1 The purpose of this constitution is to enable the Parish Priest (here meaning any priest appointed to the charge of the Parish by the Bishop) to share responsibility for the ministry of the Church in this place with all the faithful, in a spirit of partnership and mutual service between clergy and laity, in the sacramental grace of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders, and in accordance with the Code of Canon Law together with the constant teaching of the Universal Church.
- 2 There shall be a Parish Pastoral Council ('the Council') and a Finance Committee ('the Committee') in accordance with Canons 536 and 537 respectively and any directions made by the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle.
 - 2.1 The Parish Priest alone is responsible to the Bishop for the pastoral care and temporal goods of the Parish under Canon Law and to the Trustees of the Diocese under Charity Law. Accordingly any resolution of the Council or Committee requires the assent of the Parish Priest, who will act as President of the Council and of the Committee.
 - 2.2 The Council helps the Parish Priest to exercise his leadership of the pastoral care of the Parish. The Council co-ordinates the work of the Parish, by providing a forum where issues can be raised and changes or initiatives can be proposed, and by encouraging and empowering other groups and individuals to take responsibility for particular tasks and areas of activity. The Council exercises a strategic function, identifying long-term goals and short-term objectives, and designing those procedures and processes by which the mission of the Church can be promoted by the Parish as a whole.
 - 2.3 The Committee assists the Parish Priest in discharging his responsibility for the sound administration of the Parish and its material resources, including fund-raising, finance and accounting, parish records, compliance with legal

and Diocesan requirements, and the administration and maintenance of the physical facilities.

Responsibilities of the Parish Priest and the Laity to each other

- 3 The Parish Priest will consult the Council or the Committee, as appropriate, before making any significant decision affecting the life, worship, mission or property of the Parish.
- 4 Exceptionally, in case of urgency, the Parish Priest will consult between meetings of the Council or Committee with the respective Chair, who may require the involvement of one or more other members, and any decision will be reported to the next meeting.
- 5 Individual members of the Council and Committee are expected:
 - 5.1 to attend every meeting unless prevented by other serious responsibilities or incapacity;
 - 5.2 to make use of opportunities for training and formation in their role;
 - 5.3 to accept the need to reach consensus (if possible) and to respect the ultimate responsibility of the Parish Priest for the Parish.

THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

Composition of the Council

- 6 The total number of members of the Council shall not exceed twelve, in addition to the Parish Priest.
 - 6.1 The Parish Priest, together with any other clergy and religious appointed to the pastoral care of the Parish, shall be members ex officio.
 - 6.2 The Chair of the Finance Committee shall be a member ex officio and may appoint another member of the Committee as a representative.
 - 6.3 The Headteacher of St Teresa's School may be a member ex officio or appoint a representative.
 - 6.4 At least seven lay Catholics over 16 years of age who participate in the life and worship of the Parish shall be elected.
 - 6.5 Up to three lay members of the Council may be co-opted.
- 7 Every member of the Council shall be given upon appointment a copy of this constitution and the current Diocesan guidelines on the nature and duties of parish pastoral councils.

Meetings of the Council

- 8 The Council shall ordinarily meet each month except July and August on dates to be agreed at its first meeting after the Annual General Meeting unless otherwise subsequently agreed. Every meeting shall include a period of prayer and reflection on the Gospel. Meetings shall be adjourned after two hours if not concluded earlier. The business of the meeting may include
 - 8.1 formulating the vision, strategy and plans for the pastoral care of the Parish over the next five years;

- 8.2 establishing working groups for implementing such plans;
 - 8.3 co-ordinating and reviewing the development of pastoral care in the Parish;
 - 8.4 preparing an annual report to the General Meeting and the Bishop on the pastoral development of the Parish.
- 9 An extraordinary meeting of the Council may be called by the Parish Priest or two other members. The business to be discussed shall be declared in advance. Seven days' notice is required unless waived by all the members.
 - 10 The quorum shall be half the lay members of the Council together with the President. If two ordinary meetings in succession are inquorate for lack of lay members, all lay members shall vacate their seats and the Parish Priest shall call a General Meeting to elect members to fill the vacancies or else to dissolve the Council.
 - 11 Minutes of a meeting of the Council shall be published within 14 days.

Officers and committees

- 12 The Council shall include the following officers:
 - 12.1 The Parish Priest is President of the Council.
 - 12.2 The Council shall elect a Chair to hold office until the end of the second Annual General Meeting following. The Chair is responsible for the orderly conduct of meetings, including proposing the agenda after consulting with the President, discerning the resolution of a meeting on any motion, and approving a draft of the minutes before circulation.
 - 12.3 The Council shall elect a Communications Secretary, whose role is to facilitate communication between members, with parishioners and with external bodies.
 - 12.4 The Parish Priest may, as an occasional exception, appoint another priest of the Parish to preside at a meeting of the Council in his place. The Council shall elect deputies for the Chair and Communications Secretary, who will succeed upon a vacancy, at which time a new deputy will be elected.
 - 12.5 The Council may remove the Chair or Communications Secretary or their deputies from office.
- 13 The Council may appoint advisory committees or working parties consisting of Council members and others.

Retirement and election

- 14 One-third of the elected members and all co-opted members shall retire each year at the Annual General Meeting. The members to retire by rotation shall be those who were last elected earliest. Where members were last elected on the same day, those to retire shall (unless they agree otherwise among themselves) be determined by lot. No elected member shall serve more than two full terms of three years without a break of one year. Any member failing to attend two consecutive meetings without good cause shall be deemed to have resigned. The Council may remove an elected or co-opted member and declare his or her seat vacant.

- 15 The Council shall determine the number of vacancies to be filled at an election. Candidates are to be nominated by a proposer and a seconder. A candidate shall address the General Meeting at which the election takes place.

THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Composition of the Committee

- 16 The total number of lay members of the Finance Committee shall be not less than three and not greater than six, in addition to the Parish Priest.
- 17 The members of the Committee shall be appointed by the Parish Priest in consultation with the Council from among lay Catholics over 16 years of age who participate in the life and worship of the Parish. One-third of the members shall retire each year at the Annual General Meeting. The members to retire by rotation shall be those who were last appointed earliest. Where members were last appointed on the same day, those to retire shall (unless they agree otherwise among themselves) be determined by lot. No member shall serve more than two full terms of three years without a break of one year. Any member failing to attend two consecutive meetings shall be deemed to have resigned. The Council may remove a member of the Committee and declare his or her seat vacant. The Bishop or one of the Episcopal Vicars and the Financial Secretary shall be consulted if there is a need to replace the entire committee in any one year.
- 18 Every member of the Committee shall be given upon appointment a copy of this constitution and the current Diocesan guidelines on the nature and duties of such committees.

Meetings of the Committee

- 19 The Committee shall ordinarily meet each quarter on dates to be agreed at its first meeting after the Annual General Meeting unless otherwise subsequently agreed. Its business shall include preparing the budget, measuring progress against the budget and approving the accounts, together with any other matter relating to the sound administration of the Parish and its material resources.
- 20 An extraordinary meeting of the Committee may be called by the Parish Priest or two other members. The business to be discussed shall be declared in advance. Seven days' notice is required unless waived by all the members.
- 21 The quorum shall be two lay members together with the Parish Priest.
- 22 Minutes of the meetings of the Committee shall be circulated to the members of the Committee and Council and be available for inspection by the Bishop or Episcopal Vicar, and the internal or external Auditor.

Matters reserved to the Committee

- 23 The Committee shall approve a report and financial statements for presentation to the Annual General Meeting as well as the annual financial return to the Diocese, which shall be signed by the Parish Priest and a duly authorised member of the committee as representing a true account. The account books shall be made available for inspection at every ordinary meeting of the Committee.
- 24 The name and address of the Chair of the Committee shall be sent to the Diocese each year with the financial return.

- 25 The Committee shall approve and duly authorise the signature by the Parish Priest and a member of the Committee of the record of the consultation required by the Diocese in connection with applications for permission to:
- 25.1 incur expenditure above £5,000 for any project including contributions to school building projects;
 - 25.2 lease, sell, demolish or structurally alter parish property;
 - 25.3 appoint an architect or other professional advisor;
 - 25.4 borrow from the Diocese for any purpose;
 - 25.5 enter into a lease for equipment or other goods or a long-term contract for services;
 - 25.6 employ staff;
 - 25.7 apply for a licence to sell alcohol on a parish property other than an 'occasional license'.

GENERAL MEETINGS OF THE PARISH

- 26 There shall be an Annual General Meeting of the Parish once in every 12 months on a date to be fixed by the Council. At least 14 days' notice of this meeting shall be given in the Parish Newsletter. Nominations of candidates for election to the Council shall be in writing signed by the candidate and a proposer and given to the Parish Priest not less than two days before the Annual General Meeting. The business of the meeting shall include receiving the reports and accounts from the Council and Committee and the election of members of the Council.
- 27 An extraordinary General Meeting of the Parish may be called by the Parish Priest upon giving 14 days' notice in the Parish Newsletter of time, place and the business to be considered.
- 28 The quorum for a General Meeting shall be twelve lay Catholics over 16 years of age together with the Parish Priest.
- 29 General Meetings shall be chaired by the Chair of the Council or deputy unless these offices are vacant in which case the Parish Priest will appoint the chair of the meeting.
- 30 Minutes of the meeting shall be approved by the chair of the meeting and published within 14 days.

OTHER CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

- 31 The Parish Priest may amend this constitution by public notice after consulting the Council and, if appropriate, the Diocese.
- 32 The Council shall be dissolved if a General Meeting so resolves or by notice in the Parish Newsletter by the Parish Priest after consultation with the Bishop or Dean.
- 33 Fr Michael Hickey states his wish that, unless otherwise directed by the Bishop, his successor will allow himself to be bound by this constitution for a period not less than one year.

Signed this sixteenth day of July in the two thousand and twelfth Year of Our Lord.

Susan Clarke
Deputy Chair of the Steering Group

Brian Dale
Member of the Steering Group

Mark Hayes
Chair of the Steering Group

Julia Henzell
Member of the Steering Group

Michael Hickey
Parish Priest

Jean Potts
Member of the Steering Group