

CONSTITUTION OF THE GREAT FALLS-BILLINGS DIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL

PREAMBLE

The Diocesan Pastoral Council is a consultative body, representative of Catholics in the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings. The Council, recommended in the revised Code of Canon Law (cc. 511-514) and called together in Christ by the bishop, seeks to assist the bishop in providing vision and direction for nurturing the faith, the pastoral life and the activities of the People of God through the observance of this constitution.

ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this body is “The Diocesan Pastoral Council of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings.” Throughout this constitution and for related references, the short title “Council” will correctly identify this body.

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE AND COMPETENCE

1. The Council is a consultative body in which representative clergy, religious and laity of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings come together with their bishop to review, plan and evaluate all matters pertaining to the pastoral life of the Church and the mission of the People of God in Eastern Montana, and to make recommendations about those matters to the bishop. The Council assists the bishop in assessing the needs of the diocese, in recommending priorities and in establishing goals and objectives. The Council may review recommendations of all other diocesan collegial bodies and, while honoring the principles of subsidiarity, may submit to the bishop conclusions regarding major recommendations which affect diocesan goals and priorities.

2. The Council serves as a forum for open communication throughout the diocese, and forms a united voice with the bishop, after full and free discussion, in speaking publicly to contemporary religious and ethical issues. The Council exists as a visible sign of the unity of the People of God in the diocese.

3. The Council ceases to exist when the diocesan see is vacant.¹ During such vacancy, however, the administrator of the diocese may exercise discretion to convene the Council as an *ad hoc* advisory committee. In accordance with Canon Law, the recommendations of the Council to the bishop are consultative only, and it remains to the bishop alone to determine the extent to which the work of the Council is made public.²

ARTICLE III. MEMBERSHIP

1. Council members, *ex officio*, appointed and chosen, are faithful, active and respected women and men of the Church who are dedicated to the welfare of the entire diocese.³

2. The members of the Council shall be designated as follows:

¹ 1983 *Codex Iuris Canonici* c. 513 § 2.

² 1983 *Codex Iuris Canonici* c. 512 § 1.

³ 1983 *Codex Iuris Canonici* c. 512 § 1.

- a. The bishop and vicar general of the diocese are *ex officio* members;
- b. The bishop shall appoint two (2) laypersons from each vicariate from names submitted by a representative search committee in each vicariate;
- c. The Priests' Council and Sisters' Council shall each choose two (2) of their assembly as members of the Council.

3. The term of members of the Council shall be three (3) years. No member of the Council may serve more than two (2) consecutive, full terms.

To ensure that approximately two-thirds of the members of the Council have experience, the terms of the first members of the Council shall be staggered so that approximately one-third have one-year terms, approximately one-third have two-year terms, and approximately one-third have three-year terms. The terms of all successive members selected for membership on the Council (with the exception of those selected to fulfill the terms of members who cannot fulfill their own terms) shall be three years.

4. Vacancies shall be filled in the same manner in which the original member was chosen. Any person chosen to fill a vacancy as described in this paragraph shall serve only for the period of time remaining in the term of the person she or he replaces.

5. The bishop shall designate an Executive Coordinator who shall not be a member of the Council nor of the Executive Committee. The duties of the Executive Coordinator include, but are not limited to the following: (1) preparing necessary Council materials; (2) administering the budget of the Council; (3) distributing agenda for Council meetings; (4) taking minutes of meetings of the Council and the Executive Committee; (5) handling correspondence from the Council as directed by the Council.

6. If a member cannot be present for a Council meeting, that member shall give the Executive Coordinator advance notification.

ARTICLE IV. MEETINGS

1. The Council meets no fewer than three (3) times each year in the spring, fall and winter at a time and place which the Executive Committee designates with the approval of the bishop. The bishop may call special meetings of the Council.

2. A majority of all members constitutes a quorum for meetings of the Council.

3. The Executive Committee shall prepare the agenda for each meeting.

4. Members of the diocese may suggest agenda items for possible inclusion in the agenda for meetings of the Council by submitting suggestions to members of the Executive Committee or to the Executive Coordinator.

5. The Executive Coordinator shall mail the agenda and supporting material to each member of the Council at least four (4) weeks prior to each meeting.

6. In keeping with the consultative nature of the Council, and the fact that it is not a voting body, the Chairperson of the Council shall conduct the meetings in a discussion/consensus manner, recognizing in turn those who wish to speak and attempting to engender a consensus of the members.

ARTICLE V. OFFICERS

1. The bishop of Great Falls-Billings shall preside over the Council.

2. The executive committee shall consist of three persons selected by the membership. One shall serve as a Chairperson, and one shall serve as a Vice-Chairperson. One shall serve as the at-large member of the executive committee who will also represent the Diocesan Pastoral Council at Diocesan Finance Council meetings. The Council shall nominate and elect the executive committee at the spring meeting in a manner of its own choosing. The process will include the designation of persons to serve as chairperson, vice chairperson, and at-large member. The terms of office shall be two years.

3. If an office becomes vacant during a term a replacement shall be elected at the next meeting of the Council to serve the remainder of the unexpired term.

4. The Chairperson shall conduct all meetings of the Council and of the Executive Committee. If the Chairperson is not able to be present, the Vice-Chairperson shall conduct the meeting.

ARTICLE VI. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

1. The Executive Committee of the Council will be composed of the bishop and the officers of the Council.

2. The Executive Coordinator shall record minutes of all meetings called by the Chairperson, send copies of minutes of all meetings to members of the Council and to other persons at the instruction of the bishop.

3. The Executive Committee shall establish the agenda for Council meetings and carry on the work of the Council between meetings.

ARTICLE VII. STANDING AND AD HOC COMMITTEES

1. The Diocesan Pastoral Council shall have one standing committee, the Committee on Planning for Parish Ministries.

A. The purpose of the committee shall be:

- 1) To develop and maintain a process for assessing the needs and concerns in parishes and in the Diocese concerning pastoral leadership.
- 2) To involve the parishes in each vicariate in this process.
- 3) To serve as a communication link regarding this process with the parishes, the Priest Personnel Board, the DPC, and the Bishop.
- 4) To insure that planning addresses the needs of the diocese as a whole.
- 5) To evaluate periodically the planning recommendations (especially as conditions change).
- 6) To report to the Bishop and the DPC on progress in planning.
- 7) To make recommendations on staffing to the Priest Personnel Board.

- B. Committee members shall be appointed by the Diocesan Pastoral Council and shall consist of at least one (1) member of the Council. Representatives of the Diocesan Pastoral Council shall serve a two-year term. All other Committee members shall serve a three- year term. To ensure that the members of the committee have experience, the terms of the first members of the committee shall be staggered so that approximately one-half have two-year terms, and approximately one-half have three-year terms. The first committee shall determine length of term by lot. The Committee shall select a chairperson and secretary.
- C. The committee shall determine the frequency of meetings necessary to complete its mandate. The committee will make recommendations on staffing to the Priest Personnel Board by July of each year.
- D. The Committee shall provide copies of its minutes to members of the DPC. The Committee chairperson shall provide reports to the DPC as requested by the executive committee and at least annually. The committee will evaluate its progress in relation to its mandate on a regular basis and will include this evaluation in its regular reports to the DPC.

2. The Chairperson of the Council may appoint ad hoc committees of the Council. Such committees shall consist of at least two (2) members of the Council, one of whom shall be the chairperson of the committee, and may include persons who are not members of the Council. Each ad hoc committee will submit a report of its activities at each meeting of the Council. As soon as the appointed task of an ad hoc committee is accomplished, that committee will cease.

ARTICLE VIII. ADOPTION AND AMENDMENT

1. An amendment to this constitution must be proposed in writing to the office of the Executive Coordinator at least forty-five (45) days prior to a scheduled meeting of the Council in order to be included on the agenda for that meeting. The Executive Coordinator shall mail the text of the proposed amendment to each member of the Council with the agenda required by Article IV, ¶ 5. This constitution shall be amended upon acceptance of the amendment by two-thirds of the Council and ratification by the bishop.

Constitution approved on April 4, 1995
by Most Rev. Anthony M. Milone
Revised May 2000