



CONSTITUTION OF THE PRIESTS' COUNCIL

Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

Preamble:

The bishop and priests of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings, both diocesan and religious, aware of their unity with one another in the priesthood of Christ, realizing that they form one presbytery and one brotherhood in the service of the People of God, are called to fulfill the ordained ministry of the pastoral mission of the Church.

The bishop and priests share a communion in the same priesthood and ministry. The Priests' Council will be the forum for consultation and discussion about those matters which concern the necessities of pastoral ministry and the welfare of the diocese. This forum will be characterized by mutual, open reflection, and fraternal dialogue between the bishop and the Priests' Council.

Mindful of our responsibility and in response to the leadership of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, and in conformity with the revised Code of Canon Law, we, the bishop and presbyters of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings do hereby adopt this ***Constitution of the Priests' Council of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings*** as a means to promote with our bishop, the exploration of evermore dynamic ways to implement our shared ministry in a Church ever-renewing itself to serve the modern world.



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ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this body shall be ***"The Priests' Council of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings"***.

ARTICLE II - PURPOSE

The purposes of the Priests' Council will be:

1. to assist the bishop, as a primary consultative body for the governance of the diocese according to the norm of law in order to promote the pastoral welfare of the People of God within the diocese as effectively as possible;
2. to provide a forum for the full and free discussion of all issues of pastoral concern in the diocese;
3. to search for and to propose ways and means for effective pastoral ministry and to promote the pastoral care and continuing formation of the priests of the diocese;
4. to promote greater collaboration between the bishop and the priests;
5. to foster a stronger bond of fraternity among all priests, diocesan and religious, and to further a consciousness of their unity with the bishop;
6. to be representative to the unity and diversity of the priests of the diocese; and
7. to acknowledge and promote the dignity of the laity, religious and deacons and the role which is proper to them in the mission of the Church.

ARTICLE III - MEMBERSHIP

Section 1: The membership shall consist of the diocesan bishop, seven (7) elected members (one (1) from each vicariate and two (2) at-large) and two (2) appointed members.

Section 2:

- a) All priests domiciled and licensed to minister, i.e., having faculties within the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings, shall be eligible to vote in the elections and to be elected.



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b) All priests incardinated and licensed to minister within the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings, but domiciled outside the diocese, shall be eligible to vote in the elections but shall not be eligible to be elected.

Section 3: The terms of office for elected members shall be three (3) years. An elected member may serve only two (2) successive full terms.

Section 4: The appointed members shall be appointed by the diocesan bishop for a term of three (3) years, which can be renewed upon expiration at the discretion of the bishop. Appointees may serve two consecutive terms. The vacancy of any appointed member's seat shall be filled by an appointment by the bishop for the unexpired portion of the term.

ARTICLE IV - ELECTIONS

Section 1: The elected members shall be elected at the fall meeting of the presbyteral assembly and their terms shall begin November 1.

Section 2: Priests in each vicariate shall elect one (1) priest from their vicariate. Following the election by vicariate, all priests shall elect two (2) at-large members from the total presbyterate. The priests receiving the highest number of votes cast at the fall assembly shall be elected.

Section 3: Voting will be done by secret ballot.

Section 4: In the event that an elected member of the Priests' Council, by reason of inability, resignation, death, or transfer to a new constituency, is unable to complete his term, a replacement to fill the unexpired term will be elected at the next assembly.

Section 5: Procedural details of nomination and election shall be determined by the committee on membership and elections with the approval of the Priests' Council.

ARTICLE V - OFFICERS

Section 1: The officers of the Priests' Council shall be the president, the chairman, the vice-chairman, the secretary and the treasurer.

Section 2: The president of the Priests' Council shall be the diocesan bishop. The president has the right to call meetings of the council, to preside over meetings of the



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council, to place matters of concern on the agenda of the council, to accept or reject (except where otherwise provided by canon law) the recommendations of the council, and to promulgate decisions arising there from.

Section 3: The Chairman:

- a) The chairman of the Priests' Council is to be elected from the seven (7) elected members of the Priests' Council.
- b) The chairman of the Priests' Council will be elected by the members of the presbyterate present. The priest receiving the highest number of votes shall be elected.
- c) The chairman shall serve a term of three years. He may serve two consecutive terms.
- d) In the event that the chairman of the Priests' Council, by reason of inability, resignation, expiration of elected position, or death is unable to complete his term, the vice-chairman shall complete the unexpired term of the chairman, and shall be eligible for re-election as chairman for two full terms.
- e) Duties: The chairman shall preside at meetings of the council not presided over by the president. He will forward to the president proposals regarding matters to be added to the agenda from the Priests' Council and the Presbyteral Assembly. In general, he shall perform all duties incident to the office of the chairman and such duties as may be prescribed by the Priests' Council, the Executive Committee, or the president from time to time.

Section 4: The Vice-Chairman:

- a) The vice-chairman is to be elected from the six (6) remaining elected members of the Priests' Council according to the same procedure as the election of the chairman.
- b) The vice-chairman shall serve a term of three years. He may serve two consecutive terms.
- c) In the event that the vice-chairman, by reason of inability, resignation, loss of elected position, or death, is unable to complete his term, a



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new vice-chairman will be chosen by the Priests' Council members from among the elected members to complete his term.

- d) Duties: The vice-chairman shall prepare, for the approval of the Priests' Council, the program and make arrangements for the semi-annual meetings of the Presbyteral Assembly. In the absence of the chairman, the vice-chairman shall assume all the duties of the chairman as described in Article V, Section 3(d). In general, he shall perform all the duties incident to the office of the vice-chairman and such other duties as from time to time may be assigned to him by the president, the chairman or the Priests' Council.

Section 5: The Secretary:

- a) The secretary of the Priests' Council will be elected by a majority of the members of the Priests' Council. The secretary shall serve a term of one year. He may be re-elected. In the event that the secretary, by reason of inability, resignation, loss of election position, or death, is unable to complete his term, a new secretary will be chosen by the Priests' Council members.
- b) Duties: He will be responsible for the minutes taken at the Priests' Council meetings. He will be the archivist of the council. He will call the roll. He will take the minutes of the council and committee meetings. As directed by the president, or in accordance with the provisions of the constitution, or any by-laws hereafter adopted, he will be responsible for communication with the council members and the presbyterate. In general, he shall perform all the duties incident to the office of the secretary and such other duties as from time to time may be assigned to him by the president, the chairman or the Priests' Council.

Section 6: The Treasurer:

- a) The treasurer of the Priests' Council will be elected by a majority of the members of the Priests' Council. The treasurer shall serve a term of three years. He may serve two consecutive terms. In the event that the treasurer, by reason of inability, resignation, loss of elected position, or death, is unable to complete his term, a new treasurer will be chosen by the Priests' Council members.



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- b) Duties: He will be responsible for the financial records of the Priests' Council in coordination with the business manager of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings. For the semi-annual presbyteral assemblies he shall have charge of and custody of, and be responsible for all funds received and give receipts for monies due and payable from any source whatsoever, and deposit all such monies in the name of the presbyteral assembly in such bank or institution as determined by the executive committee. He shall also be responsible for physical arrangements for the semi-annual presbyteral assembly. He shall be responsible to make an accounting of the finances of the Priests' Council and the presbyteral assembly to both bodies.

In general, he shall perform all the duties incident to the office of the treasurer and such other duties as from time to time may be assigned to him by the president, the chairman or the Priests' Council.

ARTICLE VI - MEETINGS

Section 1: The Council shall meet at least six (6) times each year on an annual schedule to be adopted by the council, and at the call of the president. The chairman or any five (5) members may request the president to call a special meeting of the Council.

Section 2: A simple majority of the members shall constitute a quorum.

Section 3: The meetings of the Priests' Council and its committees shall be open to observers, unless the council or committee by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting, or by the decision of the president, the chairman of the council or the chairman of a committee, decides that they meet in a closed session.

Section 4: Unless otherwise provided, no proxy or absentee voting is valid at any meeting of the Priests' Council.

Section 5: The Priests' Council shall recommend to the president those times when issues of significance would need consultation with the full presbyterate.

Section 6: Unless otherwise specified by canon law or this document, decisions will be reached by means of the consensus model.

Section 7: Regarding consensus building, refer to Appendix I of this document.



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ARTICLE VII - COMMITTEES

Section 1: The council shall have an executive committee and an elections and membership committee and such other outstanding or special committees as shall be necessary to carry on the work of the council.

Section 2: The executive committee shall consist of the officers of the council. This committee shall assist the president in preparing the agenda for meetings of the council, and shall coordinate, where necessary, the work of the other committees. The executive committee shall not have the power to act in the name of the council except as specifically authorized by the council.

Section 3: The elections and membership committee shall have supervision over matters pertaining to eligibility to vote and to be elected and shall conduct the elections for elected members of the council. Members of the elections and membership committee should be appointed at the August Priests' Council meeting to allow for proper preparation and promotion of the elections at the fall presbyteral assembly meeting.

Section 4: Other committees may be created by the council and shall have the rights and duties that the council shall from time to time specify.

Section 5: The chairman of the Priests' Council, after seeking the advice and consent of the council, should recommend the chairman and members of the standing and special committees of the Priests' Council to the president.

ARTICLE VIII - FINANCES

Section 1: The operating budget for the council shall be prepared by the treasurer, presented to the president, and approved by the council. The budget shall then be included in the diocesan budget preparation process.

Section 2: The operating budget shall provide for necessary funds to be underwritten by the diocese to cover the expenses of the council.

Section 3: As directed by the president, the treasurer of the Priests' Council shall make an annual financial report to the council and the presbyterate for the Priests' Council and the Presbyteral Assemblies.



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ARTICLE IX - THE PRESBYTERAL ASSEMBLY

Section 1: Two assemblies of the presbyterate shall be scheduled each year. The presbyteral assembly shall provide the opportunity:

- a) to voice pastoral needs and concerns;
- b) to gather input on issues under consideration by the Priests' Council;
- c) to provide greater collaboration among all those who minister as priests within the diocese;
- d) to offer direction to the work of the Priests' Council;
- e) to promote the pastoral care for, and continuing formation of, the priests and others in pastoral ministry; and
- f) to strengthen and demonstrate the unity among priests in matters affecting pastoral ministry and the governance of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings.

Section 2: Pastoral Administrators shall be invited to attend meetings of the presbyteral assembly and to take part in discussions and educational/formational opportunities regarding the pastoral ministry of parish communities within the diocese.

Section 3: Deacons, religious brothers, religious sisters, and lay ministers shall be invited to particular Presbyteral Assembly sessions which will help them to fulfill their respective roles in pastoral ministry.

Section 4: Dues will be paid by the parishes, institutions, or the diocese to support the planning for, and meetings of the presbyteral assembly. Those in attendance at the presbyteral assembly will provide the funds for the meeting of the assembly itself through registration fees.

The amount of the dues and the registration fees will be determined by the Priests' Council based on a separate budget for the assemblies prepared by the treasurer. The total amount collected should be equal to the expenditures of the presbyteral assemblies. Any deficit will be underwritten by the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings.

Section 5: The Priests' Council shall determine which meetings of the presbyteral assembly should involve only the presence of the members of the presbyterate of the diocese.



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Section 6: The chairman of the Priests' Council shall serve as chairman of the presbyteral assembly. In accord with Article V, Section 4, of the Constitution of the Priests' Council of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings, the vice-chairman shall prepare the program and make arrangements for the semi-annual meetings of the presbyteral assemblies with the approval of the Priests' Council.

ARTICLE X - AMENDMENTS

Section 1: This constitution may be amended by a vote of two-thirds of the members of the council, provided that the amendment has been submitted in writing at the previous meeting of the council, and subject to the concurrence of a majority of all those eligible to vote in council membership elections and to the approval of the diocesan bishop.

Section 2: This constitution shall be adopted by a two-thirds ballot of the presbyterate of the diocese and the subsequent approval of the diocesan bishop and shall become effective ten days after the date of such an approval.

Reviewed September 2002
Approved by Bishop Milone 7/15/00
Approved as Amended 1/17/00
Approved by Bishop Milone 11/1/97
Approved as Amended 9/23/97
Approved by Bishop Milone 11/11/94
Approved as Amended 9/19/94
Approved by Bishop Milone 10/21/88
Approved as Amended 9/28/88
Approved by Bishop Murphy 3/30/87
Approved by Presbyterate 1/27/87