

## MODEL CONSTITUTION OF PARISH COUNCIL/PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

### PART I GENERAL PRINCIPLES

*Art.1* Name: The name of the Council is the “Parish Council/Parish Pastoral Council\* of \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Parish) \_\_\_\_\_ (hereinafter referred to as “the Council”).  
( \*Please delete whichever inapplicable.)

*Art.2* Address: The registered office of the Council is \_\_\_\_\_.

*Art.3* Nature and Functions:

- A. The Council is established in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council (cf. Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, n.26; Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, n.37) and the faithful in the parish, namely, the clergy, the religious, and the laity. It is co-responsible with the pastor and assistant priests (or the parish pastoral team) in building up the parish into a community of faith, hope and love, so that it can take part in the mission of the Church in preaching the Gospel and in sanctifying the world;
- B. The Council is an “assembly of the laity” for getting parishioners together so as to hear their views and ideas and to promote lay apostolates and pastoral work;
- C. The Council is the “advisory or consultative body” to the pastor (parish priest and assistant priests, or moderator and member of the pastoral team) on pastoral matters;
- D. The Council is the ex-officio member of the Hong Kong Central Council of Catholic Laity.

*Art.4* Aims and Objectives:

- A. To carry out the Mission of Evangelization
  1. To promote, unify and co-ordinate the apostolates of the laity in the parish according to the teachings of the Church, and to lend support to lay apostolates at diocesan and supra-diocesan levels;
  2. In the spirit of the Gospel, to encourage the laity to live their Christian Life in the present world and to commit themselves to the apostolic mission in their proper environment.
- B. To participate in the Parish Pastoral Work
  1. To Offer advice to the pastor personnel on pastoral matters and priestly ministry, and to assist in planning, unifying and co-ordinating pastoral work in the parish, setting proposal for the work to be undertaken, and bringing forward a comprehensive proposal in these respects;
  2. To assist in carrying out the pastoral plan as decided upon by the pastoral personnel.
- C. To promote the communion of the Church
  1. To promote the cooperation and sharing of experiences among lay associations, communities and team within the parish;
  2. To strengthen the communications and linkages between the parish pastoral personnel and the laity, and among the laity and among the laity themselves, so that through mutual support a

sense of community could be built within the parish.

*Art5* Priorities of Work

- A. Planning and fostering the entire mission of the parish in pastoral care and evangelization;
- B. Deepening Christian life as well as the sense of communion and the spirit of cooperation among the parishioners through formation programmes;
- C. Promoting the relation between the parish on the one hand, and other parishes, the deanery, and the diocese on the other, seeking, among other things, to convey the ideas of the parish to the Diocesan Pastoral Council, and to give support to the activities of the Hong Kong Central Council of Catholic Laity as well as the pastoral plans and evangelization projects of the diocese;
- D. Offering charitable services, promoting justice and peace, and fostering the relations between the Church and society, and between the Church and other religious bodies through dialogue and cooperation.

**PART II COUNCILLORS**

*Art.6* A. Ex-Officio Councillors:

- 1. The parish priest/ moderator of the pastoral team;
  - 2. The assistant priests of the parish/ members of the pastoral team;
  - 3. Full-time pastoral workers of the parish, e.g. Pastoral sisters, catechists, etc.
- Ex-officio councilors may not exceed one-third of the council membership.

B. Organization Councillors: Representatives selected by the parish lay associations, communities and teams.

(Such councilors shall represent all parishioners and not their own organization.)

C. Elected Councillors: Councillors elected by the Central Committee or by the whole parish.

D. Appointed Councillors: Persons directly appointed by the parish priest/ moderator of the pastoral team. The presbyteral team, the pastoral team, or the present councilors can also recommend candidates to the parish priest/ moderator of the pastoral team. Appointed councilors may not exceed one-fifth of the council membership.

A total number of around twenty councilors will be most sufficient.

*Art.7* Right of the Ex-officio Councillors:

- A. The right to appoint/ ratify/ nominate candidates;
- B. The right to attend the Annual General Meeting and the Central Committee Meetings
- C. The to participate in the activities of the Council.

*Art.8* Duties of the Ex-officio Councillors:

- A. Attend the Annual General Meeting and the Central Committee Meeting of the Council;
- B. Promote the common resolutions duly passed;
- C. Give active support to the plans of action that have been resolved at the Council's meetings.

- Art.9* Right of the Organization Councillors, Elected Councillors and Appointed Councillors :
- A. The right to elect;
  - B. The right to vote;
  - C. The right to nominate and to be elected;
  - D. The right to attend the Annual General Meeting and the Central Committee meetings;
  - E. The right to participate in the activities of the Council.

- Art.10* Duties of the Organization Councillors, Elected Councillors and Appointed Councillors:
- A. Attend the Annual General Meeting and Central Committee Meeting of the Council;
  - B. Promote the common resolutions duly passed;
  - C. Give active support to the plans of action that have been resolved at the Council's meetings;
  - D. Receive christian formation and leadership training to enhance one's own ability and willingness for service.

### **PART III OFFICERS/ THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

- Art.11* The Executive Committee shall consist of:
- the President (to be served by the parish priest/ moderator of the pastoral team);
  - the Chairperson;
  - the\_\_\_Vice-chairperson;
  - the Secretary;
  - the Treasurer;
  - the\_\_\_Councillors.

(N.B. The constitution should specify the titles of the Vice-chairperson if there are more than one, such as, external and internal vice-chairperson, the first and second vice-chairperson, etc.

The Executive Committee usually includes the above-listed officers and the chairpersons of all standing committees. The outgoing chairperson of the Council shall be invited as an Ex-officio Councillors.)

- Art.12* Duties of the Spiritual Director/ Advisor/ President:

The parish priest/ moderator of the pastoral team is the spiritual director and advisor of the Council when relating to matters concerning the evangelical mission of the laity .On matters concerning the parish pastoral work and priestly ministry, the pastor is the president of the council and has the ultimate authority. Duties of the president are as follows:-

- A. To involve in all matters and in the decision-making process of the Council;
- B. To monitor the endorsed proposals of the Council to ensure that they would not be contrary to the universal law of the Church, and the diocesan rulings or civil law, and that they would not

jeopardize the common good of the parish;

C. To conduct meetings or appoint the chairperson to conduct meetings.

*Art.13* Duties of the Chairperson:

- A. To assist the President to conduct meetings, and to ensure that resolutions duly passed are effectively carried out;
- B. To present the annual report to the Annual General Meeting;
- C. To represent the Council, or to appoint representatives to attend the Central Committee Meetings of the H.K Central Council of Catholic Laity and other meetings, and to report back to the Central Committee of the Council.

*Art.14* Duties of the Vice-Chairperson:

- A. To assist the Chair-person on the execution of all matters pertaining to the Council;
- B. To execute all matters of the Chair-person during his absence;
- C. Whenever the Chair-person shall be out of office, to temporarily take over all matters related to the Chair-person's office until the new Chair-person shall have been duly elected and shall have assumed office.

(N.B. If there are more than one Vice-Chairperson, the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-Chairperson shall act on behalf of the Chair-person.)

*Art.15* Duties of the Secretary:

- A. To handle and keep the documents, files and official chop of the Council in order;
- B. To record the minutes of the meetings and send copies to all concerned within two weeks;
- C. To send meeting's agenda to all concerned at least two weeks in advance;
- D. To handle correspondences of the Council.

*Art.16* Duties of the Treasurer:

The Treasurer is only responsible for the everyday expenses of the Council (refer to Art. 38) which include:

- A. To be in charge of the income and expense account of the Council;
- B. To keep the petty cash of the Council;
- C. To prepare the monthly financial statements of the Council and to submit them to the Executive Committee;
- D. To present financial report of the Council to the Central Committee;
- E. To prepare the annual statement of accounts which, having been properly audited, shall be submitted to the to the Annual General Meeting;
- F. To prepare the annual budget of the Council.

*Art.17* Duties of the Councillors:

- A. To help those concerned to promote the work of the Council;
- B. To attend all meetings of the Council.

#### **PART IV MEETINGS**

*Art.18* Meeting of the Council include:

- A. Annual General Meeting;
- B. Central Committee Meeting;
- C. Executive Committee Meeting.

##### **A. The Annual General Meeting**

*Art.19* The Annual General Meeting shall be held once a year upon convocation by the President. The place, date and agenda of the meeting shall be notified to all concerned at least two weeks in advance.

*Art.20* The functions of the Annual General Meeting are as follows:

- A. To examine and adopt the annual report presented by the Executive Committee;
- B. To examine and adopt the financial report of the Council;
- C. To study and pass the annual plan of the Council and its related annual budget submitted by the Parish Finance Committee;
- D. To discuss and decide upon matters submitted for discussion;
- E. To amend this Constitution.

*Art.21* The following shall attend the Annual General Meeting:

- A. Ex-Officio Councillors;
- B. Organization Councillors;
- C. Elected Councillors;
- D. Appointed Councillors;
- E. Members of the Executive Committee.

*Art.22* The following are entitled to attend the Annual General Meeting:

- A. All parishioners;
- B. Spiritual Directors/ Directresses of lay associations/ teams/ communities of the parish who do not belong to the pastoral team;
- C. Guest invited by the Executive Committee.

*Art.23* The necessary quorum for the Annual General Meeting shall be not less than two-third of total number of executive members and councillors. If a quorum is not arrived at within half an hour from the time appointed for the Annual General Meeting, the President shall announce that the meeting stands dissolved and adjourned to the date appointed, no later than 14 days. The necessary

quorum for that meeting shall then be the number presenter at current meeting.

*Art.24* Except for the case of amending the Constitution, any decisions to be adopted by the Annual General Meeting shall require one half plus one of the votes of the members present at the meeting. In the case of a tie, a second ballot shall be held. If the tie remains unbroken ever after the second scrutiny, the chairperson of the council or, in his absence, the acting chairperson, shall have the casting vote.

*Art.25* In case of emergency, the Executive Committee or two-third of the councilors may, by means of a joint-signed later, demand the convocation of an Extra-ordinary General Meeting whose power shall be equal to that of the Annual General Meeting, but matters for discussion shall be limited to those listen in the agenda.

## B. THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

*Art.26* The Central Committee, the deliberative organ of the Council, shall meet once every \_\_\_\_\_ mouths, upon the convocation of the President. Notice and the agenda shall be sent to those concerned two week in advance.

*Art.27* The function of the Central Committee are as follow:

1. To work our the annual plan of action and the practical means for its execution, and to report to the councilors on the progress of work;
2. To set up ad-hoc committee whenever necessary for the carrying out of special project;
3. To set up Election Committee to be responsible for the election matters;
4. To elect members to the Executive Committee.

*Art.28* The follow shall attend meetings of the Central Committee:

1. Ex-officio Councillors ;
2. Organization Councillors;
3. Elected Councillors;
4. Appointed Councillors;
- 5.Members of the Executive Committee.

*Art.29* The follow may attend meetings of the Central Committee:

1. All parishioners;
2. Spiritual Directors/ Directresses of lay associations/ team/ communities of the parish who do not belong to the pastoral team;
3. Guests invited by the Executive Committee.

*Art.30* The necessary quorum of the Central Committee shall be not less than one half of the total number

of concillors and executive committee members. If a quorum is not arrived at within half an hour from the time appointed for the Central Committee Meeting, the President shall announce that meeting stands dissolved and adjourned to the date appointed, no sooner than seven days later. The necessary quorum for that meeting shall then be the number present at the current meeting.

*Art.31* Except for the case of amending the constitution, any decision to be adopted by the Central Committee Meeting shall require one half plus one of the votes of the concillors present at the meeting. In the case of a tie, a second ballot shall be held. If the tie remains unbroken even after the second scrutiny, the chairperson of the council or, in his absence, the acting chairperson, shall have the casting vote.

*Art.32* In case of emergency, the Executive Committee or one-third of the concillors may, by means of a joint-signed letter, demand the convocation of an Extra-ordinary Central Committee Meeting whose power shall be equal to that of the central Committee Meeting, but matters for discussion shall be limited to those listen in the agenda.

#### C. THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

*Art.33* The Executive Committee shall hold monthly meetings. The agenda of the meeting is to be prepared by the President and the Chairperson and distributed to all members of the Executive Committee two weeks in advance.

*Art.34* The function of the Executive Committee:

1. To prepare the agenda of the meetings of the Central Committee and of the Annual General Meeting;
2. To promote all resolution begin passed in meetings of the Central Committee and of the Annual General Meeting.

*Art.35* The necessary quorum for the Executive Committee shall be one half plus one the members of Executive Committee.

#### PART V COMMITTEES/ SUB-COMMITTEES

*Art.36* Committees and Sub-committees are to be set up by the Central Committee according to the needs of the Council, to collect research date for their deliberation and to assist in implementing their decisions.

*Art.37* Types of Committee:

- A. Standing Committee: Such committees include:- Catechetical Instruction Committee, Christian Formation Committee, Liturgical Committee, Social Concern Committee and Family Life

Committee.

( Parish Council/ Parish Pastoral Council can set up different standing committees to take care of the ongoing needs of the council. The names, responsibilities and functionings of the standing committee should be listed under the by-laws of the constitution.)

B. Ad-hoc Committees: to take care of specific concerns.

*Art.38* Relationship between the Council and the Parish Finance Committee

The Council is responsible for the pastoral life and ministry of the parish as well as for lay apostolates; the Finance Committee, for finances.

(N.B. In spite of the functional distinctions between the two bodies, they are closely related. The Council's Constitution should specify how the relationship between the Council and the Finance Committee could be maintained. References could be made to model (a) or (b) under Section XII of the Diocesan Guidelines for Parish Council/ Parish Pastoral Councils, or to other models.

The financial arrangements of the Council, such as, financial budget, source of income, day-to-day management, etc. should be listed under the by-laws of the constitution.)

## **PART VI ELECTION AND TENURE OF OFFICE**

*Art.39* Elections should be held around August or September to coincide with the annual pastoral planning of the diocese to be undertaken in October each year, and to be able to supply up-dated membership informations for the printing of the "Hong Kong Catholic Church Directory" of the coming year.

*Art.40* An Election Committee is to be set up by the Central Committee to be responsible for all election matters.

*Art.41* Qualification of a candidate:

Any Catholic over 18 years of age and have registered in the parish, or who belong to other parishes but nevertheless have a close link with the parish in question, are qualified to become a candidate.

*Art.42* A candidate should possess the following qualities:

- A. Deep commitment to Christ and to the Church's mission;
- B. An active participative role or length and breadth of experience in the parish life or ministry, with a proper understanding of the parish as a local ecclesial community;
- C. A capacity to communicate and co-operate with others, and willingness to accept them as persons with their strengths and weaknesses;
- D. Far-sighted in vision, balanced and open-minded outlook, with adequate understanding of the function of the council and communal procedures;
- E. Able to participate actively in council meeting and related activities (e.g. joining council

committees or sub-committees.), as well as to spiritual and formation programmes organized for council, members;

F. The qualities for the Chairperson should in principle include spirituality, impartiality, ability to unify, knowledge about the Christian faith, and leadership.

*Art.43* Mode of Nomination:

- A. Any qualified Catholic, upon the joint support of \_\_\_\_\_ parishioners, can self-nominate to become a candidate;
- B. Qualified Catholics can be nominated or appointed by the priest/ moderator of the pastoral team;
- C. Qualified Catholics can be nominated by the councilors;
- D. Qualified members can be nominated by lay associations/ communities/ teams;  
( Candidate nominated through this channel only represents himself/ herself and does not represent his/ her respective organization.)
- E. Nominations made through B, C listed above must obtain the prior consent of the candidates. The councilor being elected through A, and the candidates being nominated through C & D must obtain the approval of the parish priest/ moderator of the pastoral team.

*Art.44* Mode of Election:

Elections can be made by ballot voting of the Central Committee or of the whole parish.

*Art.45* **Election by the Central Committee**

- A. Except for the President of the Council, the chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, treasurer, executive committee, members and elected councillors should be elected at a Central Committee Meeting.
- B. The Election Committee shall submit a short curriculum-vitae of the candidates to the Executive Committee one month before the election. The Executive Committee shall then send the curriculum-vitae of the candidate together with the agenda of the Central Committee Meeting to those concerned.
- C. Proper introduction of the candidates shall be made before the election.
- D. All Executive Committee members and councillors (except Ex-officio councillors ) have the right to vote with one vote each.
- E. Election shall be made by secret ballot.
- F. When a candidate has received two-third of the votes of the councillors present, he/ she shall be considered elected. If he/ she has not received the necessary number of votes at the first ballot, he/ she be considered elected if he/ she receives one half plus one of the votes at the successive ballot. If a third ballot is required, the candidate who has received the highest number of votes shall be considered elected.

OR

### **Election by the whole parish**

- A. Except for the President of the Council, the chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, treasurer, executive committee members and elected councillors should be elected by ballot voting of the whole parish.
- B. The Election Committee shall openly announce the curriculum-vitae of the candidates to the whole parish one month before the election.
- C. The Election Committee shall organize meeting to introduce the candidates.
- D. Any Catholic over 18 years of age and have registered in the parish, or who though below 18 years of age, yet serving as officers in youth associations, have the right to vote.
- E. The election shall be carried out by ballot voting, with one vote each.
- F. The candidate who has received the highest number of votes shall be considered elected.

( N.B. Parishes are free to choose any one of the above modes of election.)

#### *Art.46* Tenure of Office

- A. Except for the President of the Council, members of the Executive Committee shall remain in office for two years; he/ she shall be eligible for re-election for one extra term of two years.
- B. In order to maintain stability and efficiency, it is best that not more than one-half of the members be replaced at each election.

#### *Art.47* Ceasing of Office

The member of the Executive Committee shall be deemed to have ceased from office under the following conditions:

- A. Wherever their resignations by writing are accepted by the Central Committee in meeting.
- B. Whenever the President, having received from at least one-fourth of the councillors a written request for such a resignation, and having discussed a motion to that effect, shall have, by a majority of three-fourth of the votes of the councillors present at Central Committee Meeting, required such a resignation.

#### *Art.48* Re-election

Wherever any office of the Executive Committee becomes vacant, an election shall be carried out according to the Constitution as soon as possible. The person who fills the vacancy could server the unexpired terms and be re-elected once, independently of how long the previous member had already served on the Committee.

*Art.49* The Constitution of the Council shall be effective after same being adopted by the Annual General Meeting and ratified by the parish priest/ moderator of the pastoral team. A copy of the ratified constitution should be sent to the Chancery Office and the Hong Kong Central Council of Catholic Laity respectively for record purpose.

*Art.50* Amendments of the Constitution

- A. All amendments shall be made only at the Annual General Meeting.
- B. All proposed amendments shall be presented to the Executive Committee in writing two months in advance of the Annual General Meeting. The Executive Committee shall notify in writing to the Councillors of the proposed amendments within 14 days of receipt. The amendments shall come into effect after obtaining two-third majority vote of members of the Executive Committee and councillors (except the Ex-officio Councillors) present at the Annual General Meeting and the ratification of the President of the Council.

**PART VII INTERPRETATION OF THE CONSTITUTION**

*Art.51* Should any doubt arise about the interpretation of any part of this constitution, an interpretation shall be given by the President with Executive Committee. An appeal thereafter shall be made through the Vicar General for parish affairs to the diocesan Bishop, whose decision shall be final.

**PART VII CONCILIATION**

*Art.52* In cases involving unresolved disputes and major grievances, the same shall be referred for the purpose of conciliation to the Vicar General in charge of parish affairs, who shall reach a decision in consultation with the Dean concerned. An appeal thereafter shall be made to the diocesan Bishop, whose decision shall be final.

**PART IX DISSOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL**

*Art.53* The Council may only be dissolved for very grave reasons and only with the prior approval of the Bishop.

*Art.54* If upon the dissolution of the Council, any property whatsoever remains, the same shall be at the disposal of the parish priest/ moderator of the pastoral team.

**PART X BY LAWS**

*Art.55* The President or the Chairperson shall conduct the Annual General Meeting, and of meetings of Central Committee and the Executive Committee. In case the chairperson shall conduct and if he/she is absent, the Vice-chairperson ( or the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-chairperson) shall conduct the meeting in his/her place; If neither the chairperson nor the Vice-chairperson are present, the Present shall assign one of the members of the Executive Committee to chair the meeting.

*Art.56* The Council shall respect the full autonomy of each lay association/community/team of the parish. Such organizations shall have its own constitution made according to its nature and shall submit

one copy of its constitution to Council for record.

*Art.57* The Council shall not raise any loan, unless authorized by resolution passed by the Central Committee and approval has been obtained from the President/

*Art.58* The procedures for amending by-laws shall be specified in detail.

(The Chinese text is the authentic text of the Constitution.)

**Drafted by the Hong Kong Central Council of Catholic Laity  
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