

CONSTITUTION OF THE PARISH ASSEMBLY AND PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL OF SS ALBAN & STEPHEN PARISH

1 THE PARISH ASSEMBLY

- 1.1 The Parish Assembly, hereafter called the Assembly, is an elected body responding to the call to make the body of Christ alive in our parish community of SS Alban & Stephen in the Diocese of Westminster, hereafter called the Parish.

“Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News” (Mark 16:16)

“As the Father sent me so am I sending you” (John 20:21)

- 1.2 *“From the fact of their union with Christ the head, flows the laymen's right and duty to be apostles. Inserted as they are in the Mystical Body of Christ by baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation, it is by the Lord himself that they are assigned to the apostolate. If they are consecrated a kingly priesthood and a holy nation (cf. 1 Peter 2:4–10), it is in order that they may in all their actions offer spiritual sacrifices and bear witness to Christ all the world over.”*
(Vatican II Documents on Lay People)

2 OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 To make the Church more alive and open to the Spirit and to further the spread of the Kingdom of God.
- 2.2 To provide a structure for constructive dialogue with the Parish Community and thus serve as a means of consultation and communication in the Parish.
- 2.3 To ensure an ongoing assessment of the spiritual, social and human needs of the Parish and to foster ways to meet these needs.
- 2.4 To draw out, draw together, and draw upon the talents and gifts of the Christian Community in the Parish. *“As each one has received a gift use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace.”*
(1 Peter 4:10)

3 CALLING TOGETHER OF THE ASSEMBLY AND ELECTION PROCESS

Christ said “Come and see, so they went and saw where he lived and stayed with Him for the rest of the day”. (John 1:39)

- 3.1 All members of the Parish will be invited to attend an Assembly every three years.
- 3.2 Six areas of priority for the parish will be identified at this Assembly.

- 3.3 One representative from each area of priority will be elected by that group to be members of the Parish Pastoral Council, hereafter called the PPC.
- 3.4 Five additional members of the PPC will be elected from the whole Parish Assembly.
- 3.5 The PPC shall have responsibility for organising the selection process and convening the new Assembly. An essential part of establishing the new Assembly will be arranging the preparatory nights, determining a venue and deciding on a facilitator for the Assembly weekend.

4 TERM OF OFFICE

- 4.1 The Parish Assembly, shall be selected for a three year period after which re-selection will take place. Existing delegates will be eligible for election for a maximum of one further term.

5. MEETINGS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE ASSEMBLY

- 5.1 In all Meetings of the Assembly and of all Committees within its framework, the members shall keep in mind the desire to reach a consensus. Consensus, unlike unanimity, is a state where communications have been sufficiently open and the group climate has been adequately supportive to enable each member of the group feel that they had a fair chance to influence a decision. Decision making can function only within a climate of openness, mutual trust and acceptance.

5.2 Initial Meeting

The Parish Priest shall convene a full meeting of the Assembly delegates within three months following the election and thereafter, the Assembly shall meet at least once annually under the presidency of the Parish Priest. At the first meeting it shall:

- (a) review the Parish pastoral programme in the light of the objectives at the previous Assembly and in the light of the current needs of the Parish;
- (b) decide the areas of pastoral care to be addressed during the term of office of the Assembly;
- (c) appoint such committees as are deemed necessary to carry out the requirements and work of such decisions;
- (d) ensure that a PPC is formed to coordinate the work of such committees as referred to in (c) above and to carry out the functions as set out by the PPC and to be co-responsible with the Parish Priest for the ongoing development of the Parish.

The Members of the Assembly elected for the different Areas of priority assume an ongoing role of care for those in their area and their interests.

5.3 Subsequent Meetings

At subsequent meetings the Assembly shall:

- (a) receive reports from the various committees appointed by the Assembly; and
- (b) have the authority to make adjustments in programmes and changes in areas of pastoral care.

6 VACANCIES

- 6.1 In the event of a Church Area losing a delegate/delegates, the Pastoral Parish Council can co-opt a person from the church area where the vacancy exists.

7 ELECTIONS

- 7.1 Where committees are formed as provided for in 5.2 (c) such committees shall at their first meeting elect a Chairperson and Secretary.

8 AMENDMENTS

- 8.1 Amendments to this Constitution may only be effected at a meeting of the Assembly and then by two thirds of those present and voting. All other decisions of the Assembly will be reached by consensus where at all possible and, in the absence of consensus, then a simple majority of the delegates present and voting will suffice.

9 PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

- 9.1 The PPC works in collaboration with the Priest/Clergy for the time being of the Parish under the direction of the Bishop of Westminster. The PPC is called to participate with the Priest/Clergy for the time being in the Pastoral Ministry of proclaiming God's word, celebrating the sacraments, caring for the faithful, promoting the mission of the Church to the world, and being a good steward of parish resources. The scope includes all the practical matters of Parish life, responding to the call of Christ to Peter *"Feed my lambs, feed my sheep."*

10 FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 10.1 The PPC are
- (a) to have responsibility for seeing that the programmes set out by the Parish Assembly are carried out by the various committees and to approve and supervise the carrying out of such programmes;
 - (b) to work together in harmony with the Parish finance committee as good stewards of Parish resources, having investigated,

considered and made recommendations in relation to Pastoral issues;

- (c) to consider what response, if any, should be made to initiatives proposed by parishioners or delegates between meetings of the Assembly. The PPC alone shall have the authority to make decisions on such matters;
- (d) to act with the Priest of the Parish on pastoral issues arising between meetings of the assembly and requiring urgent responses;
- (e) to arrange further meetings of the Parish Assembly.

11 MEMBERSHIP

11.1 The PPC shall be made up of the following:

- (a) Eleven members from the Assembly plus a member of the Finance Committee; and
- (b) Parish Clergy, Deacons, and Catechist Coordinator who shall always be ex-officio members.

11.2 Membership of the PPC is open to all members of the Assembly. Members appointed by the Parish Assembly will include at least one representative of each of the pastoral areas of care identified by the Assembly. In selecting representatives, cognisance should be taken of the dedicated areas of work, gender balance and age balance.

11.3 The term of membership shall be three years. Members may be reappointed for a maximum of one further consecutive term. In the event of a vacancy occurring on the Pastoral Parish Council, the Committee shall invite the Sub-Committee from which the vacancy occurred to nominate the replacement.

11.4 The Council shall appoint the following officers at its first meeting:
Chairperson and Secretary.

12 MEETINGS

12.1 The PPC shall meet at least eight times yearly. The Parish Priest or another Priest of the Parish designated by him shall preside where possible at all meetings. Special meetings may be called by the Chairperson or by a quorum of members. The quorum shall be six people.

12.2 Prior to each meeting, the Priest, together with the Chairperson and Secretary shall draw up an agenda. Members of the Committee are invited to submit motions to the Secretary for the agenda. The agenda shall concern itself with issues relative to the pastoral mission of the Parish and standing items will include reports from the Pastoral Area Committees which have been identified and set up by the Parish Assembly.

- 12.3 Each PPC Meeting shall receive reports from the Pastoral Areas and from the Finance Committee.
- 12.4 Annually, the PPC will meet with the Chairperson of the Boards of Management of the Schools in the Parish.
- 12.5 The Priest with the PPC will see to it that a Parish Finance Committee is set up.

APPENDIX A

1. Role of the Parish Priest

The Parish Priest is the custodian of the vision of the Council's Mission in Christ and the authentic unifying link between the Parish and the Bishop.

He should foster co-responsibility and encourage freedom and initiative.

He should preside over, where possible, but not chair PPC meetings.

He should participate and listen with impartiality to all sides of the case.

2. Role of the Chairperson

The Chairperson is responsible for developing the agenda for Council meetings in consultation with the Parish Priest and Secretary. He/she should:

facilitate an atmosphere of open discussion and free participation,

seek consensus rather than a decision by vote,

initiate discussion where necessary,

clarify points raised,

focus on the point of discussion,

summarise,

encourage silent members,

keep dominant members in check, and

listen with charity to all view points.

3. Role of the Secretary.

The Secretary should:

(a) keep the Minutes,

(b) ensure that Agendas are available in advance, and

(c) establish some means of communicating reports of Committee business to the Parish in general, e.g. to the Parish Newsletter, Website, through the communications Sub-Committee, special bulletins, etc.