

**Constitution**  
**of**  
**The Parish Council**  
**Of**  
**St Carthage's Church,**  
**Parkville**

## **1. NAME**

The Council will be known as the St Carthage's Parkville Parish Pastoral Council (from here on referred to as the "Parish Council").

## **1. VISION STATEMENT FOR OUR PARISH**

We are the Church, called to be:

- a) An honest, warm accepting and compassionate community where all are welcome, all experience sustained adult faith pastoral support and engagement with social justice
- b) Committed to transparency, accountability, consultation and the participation of lay men and women in every aspect of our work.

## **2. PURPOSE OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**

The Parish Community welcomes the place of the Priest as one who listens and discerns with the Parish Council to meet the needs of the Parish Community. The role of the Parish Council is to be of service, as spoken about by Jesus in the Gospels.

The Parish Council accepts responsibility for envisioning and being Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, including the need to accept and support the upheavals of future transition.

In this context, the responsibilities of the Parish Council include:

- a) discerning and responding to the needs and aspirations of the Parish Community
- b) being aware and respectful of the diversity of our Parish Community
- c) being a vehicle for fostering a sense of community in the Parish
- d) being a vehicle for communication between all parishioners, as well as providing liaison between the Parish and Diocesan bodies
- e) providing leadership in the development of strategy and programs in consultation with the Parish Community
- f) maintaining awareness of all Parish activities. This includes striving to foster congruence and fidelity of these activities to the Parish mission and values save for those matters that are duties of the Finance Committee referred to in paragraphs 4 and 8.13.

- g) approving the creation of and offering support to Parish groups who wish to conduct activities in the Parish or in its name
- h) providing oversight of activities which include but are not limited to:
  - 2.h.1. liturgy preparation, conduct, involvements (including special seasonal events, speakers), First Communions, Confirmations, weddings, funerals and other rituals (including planning, advertising and funding as required)
  - 2.h.2. music program (including choir, visiting artists);
  - 2.h.3. Parish events (purpose, timing, costs);
  - 2.h.4. community building and pastoral care (welcomes, engagement, visitations);
  - 2.h.5. social justice, animal justice activities and care for the environment (such as: support for St Vincent de Paul, asylum seeker support groups and similar social justice initiatives);
- i) assist in all aspects Parish administration including secretarial and co-ordination work. This includes the use of the Parish house in consultation with the Parish Priest, and maintenance of Church buildings.

### **3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FINANCE COMMITTEE AND THE PARISH COUNCIL**

The Parish Council:

- a) acknowledges the Finance Committee is part of the governance structure of St Carthage's Parish.;
- b) notes the centrality of sound financial planning to all activities of the Parish Council and all Committees of the Parish; and
- c) recognises the full autonomy of the Finance Committee save for:
  - 3.c.1. The reporting requirements of the Finance Committee elaborated in paragraphs 4 and 8.13 of this Constitution; and
  - 3.c.2. A capacity for the Parish Council to request and receive information on reasonable notice concerning the state of the Parish finances from the Finance Committee on request from time to time.

#### **4. COMPOSITION OF THE PARISH COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE**

The St Carthage's Finance Committee is accountable to the St Carthage's Parish Council. This includes:

- a) Seeking endorsement of significant financial decisions, prior to implementation, including but not limited to:
  - 4.a.1. Decisions requiring expenditure in excess of \$50,000
  - 4.a.2. Incurring debt on behalf of the Parish.
- b) That the annual budget, both expected revenue and expenditure, is submitted to the Parish Council for endorsement prior to the commencement of the relevant period.
- c) That the parish finances, associated decision-making processes, accounting and reporting is independently audited annually with the Financial statements and Independent auditor's report published prior to the annual general meeting.
- d) The Parish accountant and or Finance Committee members cannot perform the duties of an independent auditor. Preferably the independent auditor should not be a member of the parish, and while he/she should make recommendations he/she should not be involved in the financial operations of the Parish.

#### **5. ELECTION/APPOINTMENT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**

- a) Elections will be held on the first Sunday in June of every second year commencing in 2020.

##### **First election cycle in 2020**

- b) The first election in 2020 will be for 3 members with a term of two years until 2022 ("the shorter-term members") and three members for a term of four years until 2024.

##### **From 2022 the election cycle will be for three members every two years.**

- c) The term of the shorter-term members term will expire in 2022.
- d) In 2022, an election to replace the shorter-term members will be held. The members then elected at that election (and at all subsequent elections) will be for a term of four years.

- e) By this model, an election will be held every two years for half of the Parish Council (i.e. three members) as their four-year terms expire.
- f) For the absence of doubt, any member whose term expires can renominate for a subsequent term.

### **The election processes**

- g) Nominations will be taken in time for them to be received four (4) weeks before the June elections.
- h) Nominees will provide a candidate statement of no more than 200 words to the outgoing Parish Council who will communicate each statement to the Parishioners.
- i) Formal elections will be conducted by secret ballot under the supervision of Returning Officers appointed by the Parish Council where there are more nominations than vacancies. Otherwise, the nominees will be deemed to have been elected to fill the vacancies in the Parish Council.
- j) No member of the Parish Council shall serve more than three consecutive terms of office without a personal invitation to do so by the Parish Council.
- k) A member shall be deemed to have resigned if the member fails to attend three (3) consecutive meetings of the Parish Council, without an apology, unless excused by the Parish Council.
- l) If an elected member leaves the Parish Council, the Parish Council may resolve to appoint another Parishioner as a replacement. The replacement will serve out the remainder of the term, of the ex-member they are replacing.

### **6. VOTERS**

Those eligible to vote are those Catholics committed to life as a people of God as Catholic Christians, who are at least sixteen (16) years of age and who are parishioners of St Carthage's, whether by way of residence within the parish or, in the case of residents elsewhere, by way of treating St Carthage's as their home or habitually attended parish.

## **7. PROCEDURE OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**

- a) Parish Council members shall elect a Chair at the first meeting of the Parish Council each year.
- b) The Parish Council will meet six times a year unless otherwise determined by the members of the Parish Council. However, a period of not more than three (3) months shall pass between each meeting. The Chair of the Parish Council shall give members at least seven (7) days' notice in writing of each meeting by way of an itemized agenda.
- c) Each meeting will begin and close with a prayer or reflection to guide the members in the ministry of the Parish Council. The preparation and delivery of the prayer and reflection will be shared amongst the Parish Council members.
- d) Each Parish Council meeting will last for not more than two (2) hours, unless the Parish Council decides to extend the time.
- e) Parish Council Members will be allocated duties that will include (but will not be limited to):
  - 7.e.1. arranging meetings;
  - 7.e.2. keeping minutes and records, receiving;
  - 7.e.3. ordering and distributing agenda items and reports;
  - 7.e.4. informing Parishioners of the Parish Council's activities;
  - 7.e.5. assisting the Parish Priest in recruiting, selecting and training paid staff;
  - 7.e.6. selecting volunteer leaders (e.g. event Coordinators);
  - 7.e.7. oversight of paid staff and volunteers as required and appropriate liaison.
- f) Each formal Activity Group (for example, a Men's Book Group) which is operational within the Parish Community shall be required to deliver an annual status report on its activities to the Parish Council prior to the Annual General Meeting. This may include a current list of group leaders. Should a group overseen by the Parish Council disband, the Council must be notified of this in writing.
- g) The Parish Council will cause minutes to be taken at each Parish Council Meeting and will require that these minutes be confirmed (subject to any amendments that it may accept) at the subsequent meeting.

- h) A summary of each Parish Council meeting will be made available to Parishioners on the Church notice board and/or Church bulletin or by other electronic means.
- i) The Parish Council will have power to appoint Parishioners as ad hoc members of the Parish Council, to appoint individuals to Committees or to act as event Coordinators at such times and for such purposes as it deems fit. Such ad hoc members or individuals to Committees shall not have Parish Council voting rights. The period of appointment of any ad hoc member will expire no later than the next election of the Parish Council.
- j) Parishioners may attend and participate in any Parish Council meeting. Parishioners wishing to have any matter considered at a Parish Council meeting will be required to submit such a matter in writing to the Chair of the Parish Council at least three days prior to the meeting.
- k) A quorum of the Parish Council shall be half of the number of the elected or ex officio members plus one. Should voting be equally divided on any given issue then the Chair shall have the casting vote.
- l) A decision may be made by the Parish Council to defer voting on specific issues until a quorum can be convened and/or consultation can take place with the broader Parish community on a specific issue/issues. This may be appropriate where decision-making concerns issues of strategy with substantive immediate and/or long-term ramifications.
- m) The Finance Committee will report to the Parish Council on a quarterly basis to address the Parish financial arrangements. The quarterly Financial Report will be delivered in person to the Parish Council by the Chair of the Finance Committee or a nominated Deputy; Financial Reports will be included with the Agenda and other Parish Council papers and circulated at least one week before to the relevant Parish Council Meeting. The Annual Financial Report will be provided to each Parish Council member at least two weeks before the Annual General Meeting.
- n) Each year the Parish Council will convene a meeting to reflect on the achievements and failures of the past year and determine whether its work reflected this vision.

## **8. THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)**

- a) An Annual General Meeting of Parishioners (Parish Assembly) will be held on the first convenient Sunday in February or March of each year. It will address the following matters:

- A full report from the Parish Council – including the Annual Financial Report -
  - It will consider any other matter for which not less than fourteen (14) days' notice has been given to/by Parishioners.
- b) Parishioners wishing to have any matter or notice of any motion to be put to the Annual General Meeting for consideration, will be required to submit such matter or notice of motion in writing to the Parish Secretary not less than fourteen (14) days before the Annual General Meeting.
- c) Advance notice of at least twenty-one (21) days of the Annual General Meeting will be given in the Parish notices, from the pulpit, by online channels of communication and in any other convenient way the Parish Council considers proper.

**9. SPECIAL GENERAL MEETINGS (OTHER THAN THE INAUGURAL GENERAL MEETING)**

- a) A Special General Meeting (SGM) shall be called by the Parish Council at any time in response to a petition signed by twenty (20) members of the Parish or on the authority of the Parish Council.
- b) Parishioners are to be given fourteen (14) days' notice of an SGM in the Parish notices, the pulpit and in any other way the Parish Council considers proper. The subject of the Meeting is to be stated in the Notice of Special General Meeting and the outcome to be published in the Parish Newsletter.



## **10. CHANGES TO CONSTITUTION**

- a) The Parish Council Constitution (including any amendments duly made from time to time) may only be changed at an Annual General Meeting, provided that:
  - 10.a.1. the conditions contained in Clause 10 are observed in submitting a proposal for constitutional change to an Annual General Meeting, and
  - 10.a.2. at least two-thirds of those present at the Annual General Meeting who are eligible to vote, agree to such a change.

## **11. LIFE OF CONSTITUTION**

- a) The Parish Council Constitution shall remain in force until a motion for abolishing or reconstituting the Parish Council and its Constitution is passed at an Annual or Special General Meeting, provided that:
  - 11.a.1. the conditions contained in Clauses 9 and/or Clause 10 are observed (as the case may be) in submitting such proposal for abolishing the Parish Council and its Constitution to an Annual or Special General Meeting; and
  - 11.a.2. at least two-thirds of those present at such meeting who are eligible to vote, agree to so abolish the Parish Council and its Constitution.

**END**