

PASTORAL COUNCIL BYLAWS

St. Athanasius Parish of Harrison

Effective March 19, 2026

PREAMBLE

In accordance with the *Diocesan Norms for the Establishment of Parish Pastoral Councils*, these Bylaws provide guidance for the work of the Pastoral Council of **St. Athanasius Parish of Harrison**.

The Pastoral Council assists the pastor in fostering the pastoral mission of the parish, offering advice and counsel on matters affecting parish life, ministries, and pastoral planning, while respecting the pastor's responsibility for leadership and governance.

These Bylaws outline the structure, responsibilities, and ethical standards of the council, ensuring collaborative and faithful participation in the life of the parish.

ARTICLE I

The Name

- A. This *consultative* body shall be known as the Parish Pastoral Council of **St. Athanasius Parish of Harrison**, within of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saginaw.

ARTICLE II

Purpose and Mission

- A. The purpose of the Parish Pastoral Council is to serve in an advisory capacity to the pastor. "This Pastoral Council possesses a *consultative* vote only and is governed by the norms determined by the diocesan bishop" (c. 536§§1-2).
- B. The council assists the parish in promoting pastoral activity in the parish.
- C. The council supports the parish in fulfilling the pastoral mission of Jesus Christ, which includes:
- Promoting Catholic worship and identity
 - Supporting religious education and Evangelization
 - Fostering stewardship and service
- D. The council provides advice and guidance in building a community of disciples who recognize their baptismal call.
- E. The council engages in pastoral planning, including measurable goals and timelines.
- F. The council assists in creating a vision for the parish in alignment with diocesan and pastoral priorities.
- G. The council promotes unity in the parish through living Gospel values.

ARTICLE III Membership

- A. The council shall be comprised of five (5) to seven (7) members and shall not exceed seven (7).
- B. The membership shall be comprised of both *ex officio* and selected members of the parish. Depending upon the needs of the parish, *ex officio* membership shall not exceed one-third of the total membership of the council.
- C. *Ex officio* membership, appointed by the pastor from among the parish staff, may include, but is not limited to, the director of catechesis or youth ministry, the bookkeeper, the administrative assistant, or other leadership positions directly related to pastoral ministry.
- D. At least one member of the Parish Finance Council is appointed to the Pastoral Council.
- E. Terms of office, processes for appointments, and related procedures shall be set forth in the Parish Council Bylaws.
- F. The pastor shall appoint three (3) members, and the balance shall be elected by the existing council members, subject to approval by the pastor.
- G. Each council member may serve a 3-year term, renewable one time. Acceptance of an incomplete term does not count toward the 6-year maximum in continuous council service. Following completion of 2 terms, a member may not be appointed to another term for at least 1 year but may serve in other parish councils and commissions. The terms are to be staggered to avoid unnecessary turnover in council membership, with new terms beginning July 1 each year.
- H. At least annually, the parish community is to be informed of the membership of the council.
- I. To qualify to serve as a member of the Pastoral Council, the person must:
 - 1. Be a practicing Catholic.
 - 2. Be in full communion with the Catholic Church.
 - 3. Lead a life of faith that is in harmony with the teachings and laws of the Catholic Church.
 - 4. Be a member of the parish, that is, the person must reside within the territorial boundaries of the parish or is registered with the parish.
 - 5. Be at least eighteen (18) years of age.
 - 6. Be not bound by any canonical penalty.
 - 7. Not be a spouse, sibling, or parent/child of a member currently serving on the council.

ARTICLE IV Limitations of Authority

- A. Matters concerning the pastor are addressed directly with the bishop; the council has no authority in pastoral appointments, discipline, or oversight (c. 532).
- B. The council serves for advisory purposes only.
- C. Employment decisions rest exclusively with the pastor, in accordance with diocesan policies.
- D. The council does not engage in the administration of the parish.

- E. Day-to-day administration of parish matters is the responsibility of the pastor.

ARTICLE V

Loss of Membership

- A. Membership ends through term completion, resignation, relocation, scandal, leaving Church, excommunication, or death.
- B. A pastor may remove a member for just cause; if so, he will explain his rationale to the council.
- C. A new pastor may remove or replace members, but not before six (6) months into the assignment.

ARTICLE VI

Officers

- A. The pastor presides over all council meetings and convenes the meetings.
- B. The council shall have a chairperson, vice-chair, and a secretary, appointed by the pastor from its membership, for a term not to exceed three (3) years.
1. **Responsibilities of the Chairperson**
 - Prepare the meeting agenda in consultation with the pastor and distribute the agenda at least one day prior to the meeting.
 - Facilitate meetings to promote participation, discussion and consensus.
 - Maintain official list and terms of council members.
 - Ensures that council meeting minutes are maintained and made available to members.
 2. **Responsibilities of the Vice-Chair**
 - Facilitates the meetings in the absence of the chair.
 - Assist the chair as necessary.
 3. **Responsibilities of the Secretary**
 - Keep accurate meeting minutes and attendance records.
 - Note unexcused absences and report to the chair (3 unexcused absences in 12 months).
 - Manage council correspondence.
 - Ensure that approved meeting minutes are provided to the parish business manager/bookkeeper so that a complete record of the council's activities is maintained in the parish.

ARTICLE VII

Meetings

- A. The pastor presides over all the meetings of the council.
- B. The meetings of the Parish Pastoral Council shall be convened by the pastor only.
- C. The council meets 4-6 times per year; remote participation is permitted if necessary.
- D. A quorum shall consist of the pastor and a simple majority of the members. This norm also shall be stated in the Parish Pastoral Council Bylaws.

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- E. The parish business manager/bookkeeper serves as a resource to the council and is accountable to the pastor.
- F. The Parish Pastoral Council and the Parish Finance Council shall meet jointly at least twice annually.
- G. These meetings shall not exceed two (2) hours.
- H. Minutes should be filed in the parish office; approved minutes should be posted in the church vestibule.
- I. Special meetings may be called by the pastor as necessary.
- J. Final decisions are made by consensus; each member has one vote if a vote is needed.
- K. Any deliberation or decision reached by a Parish Pastoral Council that is not presided over by the pastor are to be considered invalid and therefore, null and void.

Sample Agenda

- Call to order
- Roll call/attendance
- Opening prayer
- Approval of minutes
- Ordering of agenda
- Old business
- Reports by director of religious education, bookkeeper, etc.
- Commission and Committee Reports: corrections of written committee report in addition to the monthly reporting schedule as follows:
 - Liturgy/Worship: January, September
 - Stewardship: March, September
 - Christian Service: May, November
- Financial update
- Unfinished business
- New business
- Pastor's comments
- Calendar: next meetings, agenda items
- Closing prayer
- Adjournment

ARTICLE VIII Other Committees

- A. Committees may be *ad hoc* or permanent, with defined terms.
- B. Pastor may establish committees to assist the Parish Pastoral Council and the Parish Finance Council (e.g., building, grounds, cemetery, etc.).

ARTICLE IX Commissions-Guidelines

- A. Standing commissions are meant to assist the Pastoral Council in pastoral activities.
- B. Commissions implement diocesan and parish priorities.

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- C. Staff may be appointed by the pastor to work with commissions in specific ministry areas.
- D. Major new programs or changes require Pastoral Council review and pastor approval.
- E. Commissions provide written reports to the council; schedule is outlined in the sample meeting agenda.

ARTICLE X Commission Membership

- A. The number of commission members can range from 6-9, following the guidelines listed in the Parish Pastoral Council membership guidelines, but the range can be adjusted to meet the needs of the commission.
- B. Selection of commission members may be by appointment, selection or lot, election, or a combination of these methods. Terms of office shall coincide with the Parish Council terms from July 1 to June 30.
- C. Listing of Parish Commissions:
 - Parish Christian Service Commission: outreach, visitation, direct assistance.
 - Parish Education/Formation Commission: school, catechesis, diocesan resources.
 - Parish Liturgy/Worship Commission: liturgical planning, formation, ministry recruitment.
 - Parish Stewardship Commission: invite parishioners to assume stewardship role by
 - Establishing an annual Parish Stewardship Educational Program.
 - Motivating and educating parishioners to share their time and talents.
 - Organizing seminar programs on wills and one-time gift giving opportunities.
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ARTICLE XI Change in Administration

- A. In the event that the pastor dies, resigns, or is transferred, the Pastoral Council will cease to function unless called upon to do so by the Regional Vicar (who will preside during the interim period).
- B. A new pastor may confirm or appoint new members within six months.
- C. Appointments must follow diocesan norms with prudence and effectiveness.

ARTICLE XII Dissolution of the Council

- A. The Council may be dissolved by the pastor for grave cause, with prior diocesan bishop approval.
- B. Rationale must be provided to the diocese before dissolution.
- C. Arbitrary dissolution or removal may result in loss of expertise.

ARTICLE XIII Approval

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- A. Bylaws shall be drafted by the pastor in accordance with diocesan norms and approved at the parish level.
- B. Approved copies are filed in the parish office.

**ARTICLE XIV
Amendment**

- A. These diocesan norms may be amended only with the approval of the diocesan bishop or his delegate.
- B. Proposed new amendments must be discussed at a council meeting.

**ARTICLE XV
Review and Revision**

- A. Parish Bylaws should be reviewed and updated every four years or as needed, in consultation with the diocesan bishop or delegate.
- B. These norms support effective parish operation and should not restrict it.

**ARTICLE XVI
Enactment/Promulgation**

- A. These diocesan norms are issued under the authority of the diocesan bishop. They shall become effective on the date of promulgation by the diocesan bishop.
- B. All parishes in the Diocese of Saginaw are to observe these norms, unless otherwise determined by the diocesan bishop.
- C. These norms shall be promulgated by publication on the diocesan website. A copy shall also be filed in the diocesan archives for reference.

**APPENDIX
Canonical References – Canons 511-514**

Canon 511 – Pastoral councils may be established to study and advise on pastoral matters.

Canon 512 – Members are selected for their faith, morals, and prudence; they represent the diversity of the parish community.

Canon 513 – Councils serve for a defined term; they cease when the term ends unless reconstituted.

Canon 514 – The council is consultative only and presided by the pastor; it cannot act independently.

CONCLUSION

These Bylaws have been prepared in accordance with the *Diocesan Norms for the Establishment of Parish Pastoral Councils* and are to be observed in all parishes of the Diocese of Saginaw unless otherwise determined by the diocesan bishop. They provide the framework for the

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council's work in fostering the pastoral mission of the parish while respecting the pastor's canonical responsibilities.