

PARISH FINANCE COUNCILS

Norms of the Diocese of Fresno

Effective March 1, 2006

Canon 537: “Each parish is to have a finance council which is regulated by universal law as well as by norms issued by the diocesan bishop; in this council the Christian faithful, selected according to the same norms, aid the pastor in the administration of parish goods with due regard for the prescription of canon 532.” (Canon 532 and Canons 1281-1288 referred to in Canon 532 are found at the end of this document.)

The following provisions are norms, which shall be followed in all cases, except where the context shows that its provision is only a guideline or suggestion.

I. OVERALL PURPOSE OF THE PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL

1. The Parish Finance Council (PFC) is consultative to the Pastor. The role of the Parish Finance Council is to advise the pastor on important financial and related matters of parish business, and to assure that diocesan norms are being followed regarding financial matters, as well as to perform specific tasks that the pastor requests to be undertaken or elects to delegate. Its recommendations are to be considered seriously by the pastor in making decisions that are his responsibility by Canon Law.
2. A Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) over which the pastor presides, helps with the administration of pastoral aspects of parish life. The Parish Finance Council, over which the pastor presides, helps with the administration of the temporal and financial concerns that support the pastoral aspects of parish life.
3. The Diocesan Finance Officer is available as a resource and support to the pastor for administrative temporal concerns. Contact with him by the Parish Finance Council members should be made in writing, with a copy of the letter given to the pastor. Any written communication to the Diocesan Finance Officer, without the knowledge of the pastor, is only to be done for a serious financial reason and ordinarily only with the knowledge of the other Parish Finance Council members.

II. MEMBERSHIP

1. A Parish Finance Council may consist of not less than three nor more than seven lay members. Each member is to be a practicing Catholic with expertise or experience in temporal affairs. The associate pastor should be invited to the meetings to prepare him for his future ministry as a pastor.
2. The term of all appointed members is three years, at which time the pastor is free to appoint others or to reappoint members as he sees fit. Terms of all members end four months after a new pastor has taken office. The new pastor at that time is to reappoint or appoint new members as he sees fit.
3. To ensure the stability of this canonical structure, the Pastor shall forward the names, addresses and phone numbers of the appointed and reappointed members to the Bishop who shall review them for his confirmation. The qualification for each member to serve on the PFC is to be included. The Pastor is to use the form provided in the Clergy Handbook. For a serious reason the pastor may remove an individual from office before his or her term expires. The pastor must state in writing to the Bishop the reason for this removal requesting his approbation. Any vacancy for whatever reason should be filled promptly.

III. MEETINGS

1. The pastor is the president of the Council. He may if he wishes appoint a chairperson to run the meetings.
2. The PFC shall have a minimum of quarterly meetings at which the income and expenditures are to be reviewed. Other meetings may be held as demanded to fulfill its responsibilities. Larger parishes would be expected to have monthly meetings to review the budget.
3. A secretary shall be appointed to take minutes of the meetings to have a permanent record of all matters discussed for later review as needed. These minutes are to be kept chronologically in a binder. The Bishop or his delegate will review and sign these minutes at the Confirmation visit.
4. For larger parishes, subcommittees may be set up as the pastor sees necessary to fulfill the responsibilities of the Parish Finance Council. Non-PFC members may be members of these subcommittees but they need the approval of the pastor.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES

(These responsibilities are Diocesan norms unless the context shows specifically that a matter is a guideline or suggestion.)

1. Members are to familiarize themselves with all diocesan policies, norms and guidelines, regarding financial and temporal affairs. These include:
 - a. a. Directions for Parish Finance Council
 - b. b. Diocesan Policies regarding Administration of Goods.
 - c. Stipend policy for the Diocese regarding the salary of the priest and Sacramental stipends.
 - d. Recommendation for business (ministry) and automobile expenses.
 - e. Diocesan Deposit and Loan Fund Policy
 - f. Construction policies and guidelines
 - g. Instructions and Forms for parish inventories
2. Aid the pastor to ensure that all diocesan policies and norms are followed in the parish regarding the administration of all temporal affairs in the parish (Canon 532).
3. Develop with the pastor a parish budget process which results in an annual parish budget. This process should involve those responsible for parish programs and take into account parish and diocesan pastoral goals and priorities. (Canon 1284.3)
4. Review actual income and expenditures, discuss variances with the budget and make recommendations to the pastor. (Canon 1284.2.7)
5. Assist the pastor to provide the parishioners with an annual financial report (Canon 1284.2.8)) and to assist the pastor to provide regular financial reports to the faithful in the Sunday bulletin. (Canon 1287.2)
6. Be consulted by the pastor and to give advice for any expenditure in excess of \$10,000 before the request is made by the pastor of the Bishop. (Canon 1281.2)
7. Be consulted by the pastor and give advice for any other extraordinary decisions regarding temporal affairs of the parish (e.g. construction, contractual arrangements) before the request is made by the pastor of the Bishop.

8. For the sake of accountability the pastor will determine with the Parish Finance Council reasonable household expenses reimbursable to the priest.
9. Assure that ministry related expenses that are reimbursed (priest, seminarians, employees, volunteers) are valid and clearly itemized on reimbursement check request forms with receipts attached. (Examples of ministry related expenses for the priest: dues and subscriptions, clerical clothing and cleaning, cell phone except for personal calls, business related entertainment and travel. For basic health and wellness programs and other items reimbursable refer to the Priests' Benefits Table.
10. Review activity summaries of parish credit card(s) and assure that diocesan policies are followed with these cards.
11. Review bookkeeping and accounting procedures for the parish and school and assure that internal controls are in place and being followed.
12. Review and suggest security and safety procedures for handling, counting, and depositing of parish monies and assure that diocesan norms are followed.
13. Assure that the parish and school develop a complete inventory of all assets with photos or video and that these inventories are updated every three years and at the time of the transfer of the Pastor. (Canon 1283.2 and .3) Forms for these directions are found in the Clergy handbook and are to be signed by the Pastor and the chairman of the Parish Finance Council and the principal for the school.
14. Suggest possible ways of improving administrative efficiency and lowering overall costs.
15. Beyond the above points, tasks and responsibilities will vary depending on such variables as parish size, complexity of operations, financial position, and particular leadership style of the pastor. Below are listed examples of other tasks the pastor may wish to entrust or delegate to the Parish Finance Council.
 - a. Periodic review of the parish buildings and grounds and suggest procedures to help with risk management.
 - b. Recommend the level of salaries for parish employees.
 - c. Prepare forms for request for loans from the Deposit and Loan Fund.
 - d. Conduct long range financial planning with regard to funding operational and capital needs, taking into account future growth in the area.
 - e. Coordinate and assist in parish fund raising programs and promote the understanding of Christian tithing and stewardship.
 - f. Work in conjunction with other parish committees or organizations as directed by the pastor, e.g., Parish Council, Building Committee, Major fund raising committee, etc.