

**SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST ROMAN CATHOLIC CONGREGATION  
COLUMBIA, MARYLAND**

**PASTORAL COUNCIL STANDING RULES**

June 2006

Revised June 2015

Revised November 2020

Revised March 2022

Amended April 2022

Revised April 2026

**PREFACE**

The purpose of these Standing Rules is to implement the provisions of the Pastoral Council Bylaws last amended June 2025 by documenting the practices and standardizing the operations of the Pastoral Council.

**I. PASTORAL COUNCIL**

The purpose of the Council is stated in Section II of the Pastoral Council Bylaws.

**A. Membership**

1. Membership and qualifications for the Pastoral Council members shall be in accordance with Pastoral Council Bylaws (Sections III.A and III.B, respectively).
2. Youth Members
  - a) Up to 2 of the Members of the Pastoral Council may be Youth Members in accordance with the Pastoral Council Bylaws (Sections III.A and III.B, respectively).
  - b) Youth Member Candidates will be identified by the Parish Youth Minister and/or active parishioners.
  - c) Youth Members will be appointed by the Pastor after consultation with the Pastoral Council.

**B. Selection of Council Members**

1. The selection of Council Members will follow a discernment process detailed in Section IV of these Standing Rules.
2. In accordance with Section III.A of the Pastoral Council Bylaws, there shall be at least nine (9) and at most sixteen (16) Members of the Pastoral Council at any time.

**C. Terms of Service**

1. The terms of Service are stated in Section III.C of the Pastoral Council Bylaws.
2. Procedures for filling a Pastoral Council vacancy shall be in accordance with Pastoral Council Bylaws (Section III.D) and are detailed in Section II.E.3 of

these Standing Rules.

#### D. Officers

1. The President and Vice President are chosen at the annual June meeting by majority vote of all eligible Pastoral Council members. President and Vice President candidates must be adult members and have served at least one year on the Pastoral Council.
2. The term of office for officers shall be one year. Officers may serve in the same office for a maximum of two Pastoral Council sessions if selected to do so, as stated in Bylaws Section IV A .
3. Election of Officers: Officers are elected at the June meeting each year by majority vote of all eligible Members of the Pastoral Council.

##### a) President

- i. Nominations for President are made publicly within the meeting and must be accepted by the potential candidate.
- ii. A nomination may be declined if the potential candidate chooses not to be considered.
- iii. Once nominations are complete, a private ballot is cast by each member of the Pastoral Council.
- iv. If there are more than 2 candidates, and none receives a majority of the votes, the person with the fewest votes shall be removed from candidacy.
- v. The private ballot voting process is repeated until a single candidate receives a majority of the votes.
- vi. Once a candidate receives a majority of the votes, that candidate is elected as President.

##### b) Vice President

- i. Following selection of the President, nominations for Vice President are made publicly within the meeting and must be accepted by the potential candidate.
- ii. A nomination may be declined if the potential candidate chooses not to be considered.
- iii. Once nominations are complete, a private ballot is cast by each member of the Pastoral Council.
- iv. If there are more than 2 candidates, and none receives a majority of the votes, the person with the fewest votes shall be removed from candidacy.
- v. The private ballot voting process is repeated until a single candidate receives a majority of the votes.
- vi. Once a candidate receives a majority of the votes, that candidate is elected as Vice President

c) Secretary

- i. After the election of the other officers is complete, nominations for Secretary are made publicly within the meeting and must be accepted by the potential candidate.
- ii. A nomination may be declined if the potential candidate chooses not to be considered.
- iii. Once nominations are complete, a private ballot is cast by each member of the Pastoral Council.
- iv. If there are more than 2 candidates, and none receives a majority of the votes, the person with the fewest votes shall be removed from candidacy.
- v. The private ballot voting process is repeated until a single candidate receives a majority of the votes.
- vi. Once a candidate receives a majority of the votes, that candidate is elected as Secretary.

4. Duties of the Officers:

- a) The duties of each officer are stated in section IV.A of the Pastoral council Bylaws.

E. Pastoral Council Member Roles and Responsibilities

1. Attend monthly scheduled standing Pastoral Council meetings September to June.
2. Attend additional Pastoral Council meetings, as able to do so.
3. Be active in Pastoral Council activities outside of standing meetings (e.g. serve on a Pastoral Council Committee, lead an activity, support a Pastoral Council task, assist with the duties of the Secretary when necessary).

F. Vacancies:

1. A vacancy in the office of President shall be filled with the Vice President ascending to the role of the President in accordance with Section IV.A of the Pastoral Council Bylaws.
2. A vacancy in the office of Vice President shall be filled for the remainder of the previous Vice President's term in office via an election process as described in Section I D.3.2. above.
3. A vacancy in the office of Secretary shall be filled for the remainder of the previous Secretary's term via appointment by President and Vice President.
4. Filled Vacancy impact on Terms of Service (ref: Section I.C.2.):
  - a) If more than 6 months remain in the Pastoral Council session, then the new officer shall be considered to have served a full term and shall only be able to serve 1 additional consecutive term in the new office.
  - b) If fewer than 6 months remain in the Pastoral Council session, then

the new officer shall not be considered to have served a full term and shall be eligible to serve in that office for 2 additional consecutive years.

## II. PASTORAL COUNCIL MEETINGS

### A. Meeting Schedule:

1. The Pastoral Council will meet monthly from September to June.
2. The Pastoral Council may be compelled to meet at other times and frequency as requested by the Pastor or President, as stated in Bylaws Section IV B.
3. The President may direct minor changes in the routine schedule of meetings based on the Pastor's request, conflicts with Parish events, facility availability, weather emergencies, and other reasonable requests made by the Pastor or Pastoral Council Members, as contained in Bylaws Section IV B.
4. Pastoral Council Members may request special meetings to address a specific topic which is not part of the typical agenda items or has a time-relevant urgency and cannot be addressed at the next scheduled meeting.
  - a) The Pastoral Council member(s) must submit a written request to the President which details the purpose and topic for the special meeting.
  - b) No business except that specified in the request may be transacted at a special meeting without the unanimous consent of Pastoral Council Members in attendance.
  - c) The requesting Pastoral Council member(s) will recommend an agenda for the special meeting to the President at least 1 week prior to the meeting.
  - d) As schedule and conditions permit, the President will notify the Pastoral Council of the need and purpose for the special meeting as soon as possible. The goal is that notification occur at least 10 days prior to the proposed date of the meeting.
5. If the Governor of Maryland or the Howard County Executive direct the closing of facilities or restrict the number of attendees in a gathering for any reason, the President may reschedule meetings or move to alternate facilities or modes as described below.
6. If Howard County Public Schools are closed for any reason, the President may reschedule meetings or move to alternate facilities or modes as described below.
7. The President will notify Pastoral Council Members of additional meetings or changes in schedule, facility, or mode as soon as possible with a goal of 5 days advance notice.

### B. Meeting Location:

1. Meetings will be held in person at the Wilde Lake Interfaith Center or the

Oakland Mills Interfaith Center.

2. If conditions prohibit the use of the Interfaith Center, meetings may be held at an alternate facility or via telephone, online meeting or collaboration software (e.g. Zoom).

C. Meeting Attendance:

1. Pastoral Council Members are expected to prioritize attendance, in person, at scheduled meetings.
2. Pastoral Council Members may attend any meeting via telephone, online meeting or collaboration software if extenuating circumstances prevent them from attending in person.
3. Newly Appointed Members shall attend the orientation meeting, if scheduled, by the President
4. Newly Appointed Pastoral Council Members should attend an information meeting prior to discernment.
5. Outgoing Members shall attend their final meeting in June at the end of their terms of service.
6. The outgoing President shall preside at the June meeting.

D. Meeting Agenda and Duration:

1. As schedules and conditions allow, the President and Vice President shall consult with the Pastor to establish the specific agenda for the upcoming meeting. The goal is to have this agenda planning meeting at least 1 week prior to the scheduled meeting.
2. Pastoral Council Members and members of the congregation may propose items for consideration prior to the planning meeting via email to the Pastor, President, Vice President and Secretary.
3. As schedules and conditions permit, the President shall provide the agenda and pertinent documentation (e.g. text of resolutions, Pastor communications, Committee Reports, etc.) to Pastoral Council Members as soon as they are available. The goal is to provide these documents at least five (5) days in advance of the scheduled meeting

The monthly agenda will change depending on the Liturgical season and Pastoral Council session requirements. However, there will be common parts of the agenda (order may be adjusted by President or Vice President as required):

- a) Opening prayer by Pastoral Council member
- b) Approval of minutes from previous meeting (if required)
- c) Pastor's Report by Pastor or Associate Pastor(s)
- d) Ministry Report (if scheduled)
- e) Pastoral Council Committee Reports (as necessary)
- f) Community Activity Report

- g) Open Forum for new topics of discussion by the Pastoral Council which reflect issues about the life of the Parish and considers possible future agenda items
  - h) Closing prayer by Pastor, Associate Pastors or Pastoral Council member
4. Each Pastoral Council member shall have an opportunity to address an agenda item, if desired.
  5. The President may set time allotment for each agenda item, taking into consideration the priority of each item and the anticipated need for presentation and discussion. The goal is to complete normally scheduled meetings in 90 minutes. Unless there is an emergency topic under discussion, meetings shall be completed in no more than two (2) hours.
  6. The Pastoral Council may use email or other collaboration software to acquire formal votes and motions to support the efficient operations of the Pastoral Council.
  7. The President may terminate discussion of any item as needed to ensure all topics are addressed within the allotted time for the meeting.

E. Meeting Minutes:

1. Minutes shall be recorded for all Pastoral Council meetings.
2. The Secretary will prepare meeting minutes.
3. A template may be used to ensure consistency in format and readability of minutes throughout the Pastoral Council session.
4. The Secretary shall distribute the minutes to Pastoral Council Members within 2 weeks after a meeting.
5. Pastoral Council Members are expected to review and may then suggest additions and corrections to the proposed minutes.
6. The Secretary may submit revised sets of minutes, in consultation with the President, up to 3 days prior to the following meeting.
7. Minutes shall be approved by Council Members at the following month's regular meeting. However, the President may request prior approval of the minutes via telephone, text, or email response by the Pastoral Council Members in order to reduce the time required for the upcoming scheduled meeting.
8. Electronic versions of meeting minutes, once approved, will serve as the historical record

F. Council Decisions and Recommendations

1. A quorum of Council members as stated in Section IV.B is required to reach final Council positions on decisions and recommendations.

G. Pastoral Council Committees and Reports:

1. The President may establish Pastoral Council Committees as needed with requirement for at least one (1) Pastoral Council member serving as a

member of the Committee. The President is an ex-officio member of all Council committees.

2. All Committees shall be open to Members of the Parish community.
3. The Pastoral Council member does not have to be the Chairperson of the Committee but is responsible for keeping the Pastoral Council aware of progress or areas of concern, through verbal reports during scheduled monthly meetings.
4. A Committee shall be established for up to one (1) year and can be renewed on a yearly basis.

### III. PASTORAL COUNCIL DISCERNMENT PROCESS

This section details the process and timelines to nominate and appoint Pastoral Council Members.

- A. In general, the Pastor expects Pastoral Council members to exhibit the following attributes:
  1. Have knowledge of St. John's history and tradition
  2. Embrace the congregation's diversity and St. John's role in the Interfaith Centers and community
  3. Have a vision of what St. John's can become consistent with its mission
  4. Support the implementation of the Pastoral Plan
  5. Lead a spiritual life of prayer
  6. Be willing and excited to serve St. John's and the extended community
  7. Be committed to the Roman Catholic Church
- B. The Discernment Process Timeline: The timeline presented below assumes normal operations with no restrictions or extenuating circumstances (such as the date of Easter) which may require adjustments by the Pastor or President.
  1. Publicity: March
    - a) Announcement of the upcoming Pastoral Council nomination process shall be made at all Masses and distributed through written and online communications. The announcement shall include at least the following information:
      - i. The number of new Members to be appointed
      - ii. Explanation of the Discernment process
    - b) The Council will establish specific contacts within the process to provide additional information/advice to interested parishioners.
  2. Nominations: April
    - a) All Parishioners are encouraged to submit names for potential new Pastoral Council members (or self-nominate) at a Sunday Liturgy via a sign-up sheet, online form on St. John's website, and/or by

contacting the Parish office over a two- week period, ending no later than April 15.

- b) Invitations are sent to nominees to attend the Information Night before they make the personal decision to enter the Discernment process.

### 3. Information Night: Early May

- a) The meeting will include a presentation on the roles and duties of Pastoral Council members, and time for Nominees to ask questions.
- b) Nominees leave to pray over what they have heard, and if they still feel called, to come to the Discernment Night.
- c) Nominees who plan to move forward review the Archdiocesan Guidelines for Pastoral Councils and St. John's Pastoral Council Bylaws and Standing Rules.

### 4. Discernment Night: May

- a) 1-2 weeks after the Information Night, the Pastor, Associate Pastors, current Pastoral Council members and Nominees gather to discern new Pastoral Council membership in the context of prayer.
- b) Prior to Discernment Night, nominees share written responses to a series of questions provided by the Council at the information night.
- c) At the Discernment Night:
  - i. Nominees jointly introduce themselves to the Council,
  - ii. Nominees separately/individually share their responses to the questions orally with Council Members, while other nominees are outside the meeting room. Council Members listen and may ask any follow-up questions.
  - iii. After each nominee has had the opportunity to share their responses, the Council will excuse the nominees and discern each nominee to come to consensus on who they wish to invite to join the Council based on current Parish needs. Council Members will participate by identifying individuals whose gifts would contribute to the Council and explain briefly the reasons for their choice. This input will result in a consensus recommendation to the Pastor, to be shared by the Council President.
- d) Information shared by nominees throughout the discernment process will be treated by the Council with confidentiality.
- e) The Pastor and Associate Pastor(s) will consider the recommendations and make the decision to accept, or amend, within 72 hours.
- f) New members receive formal invitation from the Pastor or President to join the Council within one week. At the same time, those not selected will be notified.
- g) Announcement of the new Pastoral Council Members shall be made at

weekend Masses and on the St. John's website not later than the first weekend in June.

- h) The President may convene an orientation meeting with the new Pastoral Council Members if time and schedules permit, prior to the scheduled June Pastoral Council meeting.
  - i) All Pastoral Council Members, current and new, are to attend the scheduled June Pastoral Council meeting.
5. Commissioning of New Members
- a) Commissioning of new members occurs at Mass within two weeks after completing Discernment, or otherwise as soon as practicable.
  - b) Departing Members are also recognized at the same Mass, to include words from the Pastor (or his delegate) to recognize accomplishments of Council Members and emphasize the appreciation of the Parish.

#### IV. Communications

Consistent communications between the Pastor, Officers, and all Pastoral Council Members are critical to the effectiveness of the Pastoral Council's ability to serve the St. John's community. Electronic communications are preferred; however written or oral correspondence is also acceptable for both internal and external communications described below.

##### A. Internal Communications:

- 1. Any new version of the Pastoral Council Bylaws and these Standing Rules shall be made available to all Council members upon approval by the Council and also published on the SJERC.org webpage.
- 2. An electronic version of the Pastoral Council Bylaws and these Standing Rules shall be provided to each Member upon their appointment.
- 3. Pastoral Council Roster:
  - a) A telephone and email roster will be made available to all Pastoral Council Members and the Parish staff.
  - b) This roster will not be released to the broader congregation to preserve the privacy of the Pastoral Council Membership.
- 4. Official Materials and Correspondence:
  - a) Pastoral Council official materials shall take the form of written documents (e.g. reports, minutes, or presentations) and will be distributed via email to the Council.
  - b) Pastoral Council official correspondence shall take the form of written letters.
  - c) As determined by the President or Vice President, official correspondence may be released to the general public via the St. John's website or via social media applications.

- d) Electronic versions of official materials shall serve as official record of Pastoral Council activities, decisions, or recommendations.

#### B. External Communications

1. The primary means of Pastoral Council communication with the Parish shall be via the SJERC.org webpage.
2. Any new version of the Pastoral Council Bylaws and these Standing Rules shall be published on the SJERC.org webpage.
3. Pastoral Council official materials (e.g. agendas, presentations, reports, and final work products) will be published on the SJERC.org webpage following use or approval at a Parish Council meeting.
4. The Pastoral Council email address ([pastoralcouncil@sjerc.org](mailto:pastoralcouncil@sjerc.org)) will be published on the SJERC.org webpage to provide the Parish Community with a way to contact the Parish Council.
5. Any external communications by the Pastoral Council will be coordinated in advance with the Pastor.
6. Information and dates regarding the Pastoral Council Discernment process will be shared to the maximum extent possible (for example, Mass Announcements, Bulletin).

#### V. Amendments

Any proposed amendment to these Standing Rules shall be presented as an agenda item at a regular meeting in accordance with Section II.D. If a quorum is established and a majority of all Pastoral Council voting Members cast the vote in the affirmative, the proposed amendment shall be incorporated into these Standing Rules.

#### VI. Emergency Authority

As contained in Section VII of the Bylaws, if emergency conditions exist that disrupt the implementation of these Standing Rules, the President or Vice President, in consultation with the Pastor, may exercise an Emergency Authority to adjust any portion of these Standing Rules.