

# St. John Fisher Chapel University Parish

A Catholic Christian Community in the Archdiocese of Detroit

**Our mission** - *To be the presence of Christ in the world today actively announcing the Kingdom of God in every aspect of our lives by the gospel quality of our sharing and our service.*

**Our vision** - *To become an increasingly Spirit filled, inclusive, Catholic, Christ-centered community of disciples carrying on the Mission of Jesus.*

### **We value being a community of faith and ...**

- *Ministering to and with the St. John Fisher Community, the Oakland University Community and the Pontiac Area Vicariate (V1)*
- *Proclaiming the Good News of Jesus through word and deed (V2)*
- *Challenging societal values which are contrary to the Gospel of Jesus (V3)*
- *Respecting God's gift of creation – both human life & the earth that sustains it (V4)*
- *Acknowledging the image of God in all persons regardless of race, creed, gender, status or sexual orientation. (V5)*
- *Collaborating with people of all faiths in an ecumenical spirit (V6)*
- *Sharing our Time, Talent and Treasure (V7)*
- *Committing ourselves to personal spiritual growth & communal worship (V8)*

### **Our goals are to:**

- *Offer creative and unique liturgies and programs that inspire individuals to live their lives as exemplified by Jesus (N1)*
- *Integrate the needs of the Oakland University Community with the needs of our St. John Fisher at-large members (N2)*
- *Lead our community through programs, communications and ministry activities to challenge societal values which are contrary to the Gospel of Jesus (N3)*
- *Provide spiritual and sacramental growth for our youth while increasing opportunities for them to practice autonomy and leadership (N4)*
- *Expand opportunities for adult spiritual renewal, growth and development (N5)*
- *Increase our focus on the family (N6)*
- *Focus activities within our ministries to address all demographic groups (N7)*
- *Improve communications within the St. John Fisher community (N8)*
- *Support individuals' needs throughout transitional life phases (N9)*
- *Continue to evaluate & monitor our SJF financial & physical needs (N10)*
- *Measure and evaluate the effectiveness of all our ministries and activities (N11)*
- *Continue to evaluate and monitor our vision and mission (N12)*

Promulgated and proclaimed by the St. John Fisher Chapel University Parish Members on Pentecost, June 2/3, 2001

# St. John Fisher Chapel University Parish

## PARISH COUNCIL Constitution and Guidelines



A Catholic Christian Community  
Pontiac Area Vicariate  
Archdiocese of Detroit

### **Our mission . . .**

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### **Our vision . . .**

*To become an increasingly Spirit filled, inclusive, Catholic, Christ-centered community of disciples carrying on the Mission of Jesus.*

3665 Walton Blvd  
Auburn Hills, MI 48326  
248-373-6457/Fax: 373-5479  
[www.stjohnfisherparish.org](http://www.stjohnfisherparish.org)

# ST. JOHN FISHER CHAPEL UNIVERSITY PARISH

## Purpose

1. To collaborate with the Pastor and the Pastoral Team in the ongoing development and implementation of the Parish Mission/Vision/Values/Goals:
  - Participate in the ongoing formulation and evaluation of parish goals;
  - Assume an oversight role to insure that the parish is living up to the Mission/Vision/Values.

**Implication: The Parish Council must insure that we, the St. John Fisher Faith Community, are being who we say we are.**
2. To act as a liaison for the continuing improvement of communications at all levels of the Parish Community:
  - Seek out opportunities to improve communications to/from the Community (i.e. the “pew”), the Commissions, and/or the PC;
  - Report on Commission progress to the PC as appropriate;
  - Report on PC progress as appropriate;
  - Attend as many Commission activities as possible to gain familiarity.

**Implications: The role of “liaison” has some key responsibilities:**

  - **Know and understand the intent of the current objectives of the assigned Commission and its supporting committees;**
  - **Contact the Commission leader and/or attend Commission meetings on a regular basis to keep abreast of activities and progress toward objectives;**
  - **Inform the Parish Council regarding Commission implementation progress at least twice a year.**
3. To actively participate in the meetings and activities of the Parish Council and designated Commissions:
  - Participate in welcoming activities;
  - Fulfill meeting assignments;
  - Contribute to the ongoing discernment process.
4. To pursue personal growth as a Parish leader and steward:
  - Attend as many Parish functions (especially those unfamiliar) as possible;
  - Enroll in training/growth opportunities when available.
5. To represent the Parish in the building up of the Area Church, the Pontiac Area Vicariate and the Church of Detroit, the Archdiocese of Detroit.

- The agenda will be communicated to all Council members before the meeting. It is the responsibility of each member to come prepared for each meeting.
- Minutes of the Council meeting will be distributed after each meeting and will become an integral part of the discernment process.

## Parish Council Chair, Vice-Chair and Pastor

- At the beginning of each fiscal year, the Parish Council will elect a Chair and Vice-Chair, who together with the Pastor, will be the Parish Council Officers.
- The role of the Officers will be to prepare the agenda for each meeting, facilitate the Council meetings, insure good communication among the Council members and meet with other groups, i.e. pastoral team members, ministries etc. upon request or as appropriate. Before the Officers meet to prepare the agenda, the Chair will solicit input from all Council members regarding suggested agenda items.
- The Officers will be rotated every year, except for the pastor, i.e. the Vice-Chair will become the Chair the following year etc.

## Attendance and Vacancy on the Council

Council members are expected to attend every meeting. In case of excused absence, the Council member who missed a meeting will make every effort to be informed of the results of the missed meeting.

In the event a member resigns, the position will be filled by one of the nominees identified at the time of the selection process after having confirmed with the nominees their willingness to serve on the Council.

## Retreat for Parish Council

At the beginning of each new Parish Council, the Council will share in a Retreat (usually one day) to get to know one another better, to share a common understanding of the discernment process, to pray and reflect about the Mission, Vision and Values of St. John Fisher Chapel University Parish, to develop group work skills and to establish plans for the coming year. This Retreat is considered essential for all members to set the tone for the year.

## Group Behaviors for Council Meetings

Council members are expected to maintain a high level of openness, receptivity and non-judgmental attitudes during Council meetings. To maintain a free atmosphere in the Council deliberations and a respect for confidentiality will be expected from Council members.

## Step 2: Establish Initial List of Potential Candidates

This can be done in the following ways:

- From the “pulpit” by the Pastor or a Council Member;
- Invitation to parishioners to attend a one evening session to listen to a presentation on the role of the Parish Council;
- Information in the pastor’s article or Council section of the weekly bulletin and/or parish Quarterly Network Newsletter.

Three (3) concurrent processes:

- Self nomination and nomination by other community members after an explanation of the role of the Parish Council;
- One valid nomination by each Pastoral Team member with input from the different ministries;
- One valid nomination by each Council member, based on discernment of specific need (s).

Before the nomination process begins, information/communication needs to take place at-large to insure that the community and potential candidates understand the purpose of the Council as well as its functioning and what is required of candidates.

Nomination process should be completed within a month (30 days).

**Step 3: Parish Council sets up two sessions to review the Parish Council Constitution with the potential candidates and gets a firm commitment from each Candidate nominated.**

**Step 4: Listing of the Candidates by Female, Male, Campus/Young Adult, Teen and Catholic School representatives.**

**Step 5: Final Selection**

At the weekend Masses after Easter in a context of prayer and of trust in the Spirit, candidates’ names will be drawn to fill required positions, in the spirit of Acts 1:12-26 when Matthias was chosen to join the Apostles. This needs to be well positioned and explained in order to avoid a sense of “gimmick”.

## Other Operating Guidelines

### Frequency and Organization of Council Meetings

- The Parish Council will meet at least once a month from August through June, or more often if special needs require it.
- An agenda for each meeting will be prepared by the Officers of the Council.

## How the Parish Council will carry out its purpose.

The Parish Council is to **listen to the Spirit** always present and active in all the members of the community and its ministry,

- to ensure that we remain faithful to our Mission and Values,
- to be the promoters of our Vision.

In order to achieve this,

- we will pray together,
- we will listen to one another,
- we will challenge one another,

but most of all, we will remember that our service as leaders is a **Leadership of Discernment**.

## Discernment

### *What is discernment?*

Discernment is a process by which we, as a community, try to discover God and God’s will again and again in the day-to-day experience of the community. It is based on the belief that God’s revelation is an on-going process and always through human experiences.

### *How do we discern?*

Discernment is done in a prayerful context and requires four fundamental components:

1. a trusting attitude
2. a listening posture
3. a sharing disposition
4. an integrity which requires the search for *all* available information.

- **Trusting** that our personal experience as well as others’ experiences are “places of God’s revelation”.
- **Listening** to one another without judging and condemning one another, listening to diversity not as a threat to our own opinion but as a richness.
- **Sharing** and being open so that there is no “private agenda”, no hidden “political maneuvering”.
- **Integrity** requires that the Council Leadership look for all available information in its discernment process.

Differences of opinion are good, and should be welcome, if they take place in the context of trusting, listening and sharing.

### *When do we know that we have done the proper discernment?*

St. Paul talks about the fruits of the Spirit in the Epistle to the Galatians: “The Spirit brings: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*”. Proper discernment will bring peace of mind, unity of the community, acceptance of the diversity, and real love.

We recognize that

- Discernment requires time and patience;
- There is never certainty in the discernment process, but the fruits of the Spirit are signs of proper discernment;
- Discernment requires humility that we do not always “own” the truth!

Discernment requires good group process to ensure that all and every one can fully participate.

### **Size of the Parish Council**

The size of the Parish Council will be 13 people plus the Pastor. If necessary, to ensure diversity or for a specific reason, the Council could be expanded.

### **Membership**

Membership should reflect the purpose of the Parish Council, which is the exercise of the leadership of Discernment. The following suggested criteria should guide the selection of Council Members:

- Balance of women and men including representation from our teens, campus/young adults and Catholic School;
- Diversity of experience, background, etc.;
- Maturity of individuals to participate in a discernment process (Christian maturity);
- Ability to work in a group context;
- Relatively free of “personal” and/or “political” agendas;

### **Selection Process**

The selection of the Parish Council members will follow a two-step process:

1. A nomination process, which ideally would include three times the number of candidates needed to fill the Council positions open;
2. A selection process from the pool of nominees.

### *Nomination process - February through April of each year*

The Council Officers acting as the Selection Committee (after consultation with the Commissions and their Ministries, Pastoral Team and/or other appropriate

groups) will draw up a list of nominees in line with the recommended criteria (maturity, diversity, etc.) as well as a prayerful consideration of special needs of the community at a given time.

### *Terms*

Nominees will be contacted and, after explanation of the purpose of the Parish Council, will be asked to confirm their willingness and their commitment to serve on the Council for a three (3) year period. An extension can be suggested and approved by the Council. This commitment is a commitment of time, a willingness to work as part of a team, and a commitment to accept discernment as a way of working together. Exceptions may apply to the teen, campus/young adult and Catholic School representatives

### *Selection Process – May/June of each year*

In a prayerful atmosphere and, if possible, in the context of a liturgical celebration the weekend after Easter, the names of the nominees will be drawn in order to meet the number of Parish Council positions opened. Alternate members will be chosen at the same time to fill in for vacancies happening during a year. In any case, membership is only for a limited time and turnover has to take place every three years with two members remaining on for an additional year as Chair and Vice-Chair to ensure continuity and experience. No parishioner can be on the Council for more than two consecutive three year terms.

### Parish Council Operating Guidelines

### **Selection Process**

#### **Step 1: Parish Council Officers will serve on the Selection Process Committee.**

Role of the Selection Committee:

- Guide the total process of selection for open positions on Council;
- Work with the Council to establish criteria for nomination in line with the criteria approved through the Constitution;
- Encourage all to discern carefully about those they wish to nominate;
- Establish final list of nominees and review of candidates;
- Contact nominees to insure willingness to serve;
- Keep the Council informed during the entire process.