

St. Mary – Holy Cross Church

460 NW Washington Ave, Elkhart, IA 50073 / 515.367.2685

Policy #:	P2.0	Subject:	Discernment - The Process and Procedure Utilized to Select Parish Council Members
Date of Origin:	17 October 2023	Revision Dates:	
Purpose:	The purpose of this policy is to identify a process by which parish council members are selected.		
Policy:	It is the policy of St. Mary - Holy Cross church to select parish council members whose objective is to always strive for the common good of the people they serve and to seek the best interest of the entire community of faith.		

1) Definition of Discernment in Biblical Context [Bible Study Tools - Discernment](#)

a) Moral Judgement

- i) Discernment involves the ability to make moral judgments based on God's standards as outlined in the Bible. This could involve distinguishing between good and evil, right and wrong.

b) Decision Making

- i) Discernment helps individuals in making wise decisions according to God's will. This wisdom comes from reflecting on God's word and seeking His guidance in prayer.

c) Spiritual Insight

- i) In the New Testament, Christians are encouraged to "test the spirits" to see whether they are from God (1 John 4:1). This means evaluating whether teachings, prophecies, or spiritual phenomena align with the truth of the Gospel and the character of God as revealed in the Bible.

2) Everyone is uniquely called and gifted by God. While no one has all the gifts, all the gifts necessary for ministry and service exist within the faith community. The gifts of potential council members for parish leadership might encompass some of the following:

- a) Qualities of Faithfulness - Actively deepening their personal relationship with Jesus Christ shared in Christian community, courage, integrity, self-giving, generosity, compassion, hope and joy.
- b) Skills for effective communication and listening, creative discernment and articulation of a vision, working collaboratively with others, and supporting and challenging others to answer their baptismal call.
- c) Values of ministry, generosity of self, compassion, justice, reflection/prayer, self-knowledge, self-evaluation, humility, integrity, simplicity, peacefulness, and balance.

3) Membership [Des Moines Diocese - Pastoral \(Parish\) Council Guidelines](#)

- a) A concerted effort should be made to include a wide variety of people. They should reflect a cross-section of people from the SMHC faith community, without being representatives of specific groups, causes or agendas. The members' objective is to always strive for the common good of the people they serve and to seek the best interest of the entire community of faith.

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- b) With the perspective of the New Evangelization, ([Evangelization is the 'oxygen' of Christian life, pope says](#)) the council should be particularly attentive to calling forth new members who may be uninvolved, isolated or marginalized with the faith community, such as: youth, elderly, ethnic minorities, divorced and the poor.
- 4) Procedure
 - a) Membership
 - i) The pastor, parish council or parishioners may recruit or suggest parish members who they feel might possess the qualities in 2-a above. Individuals can also seek an appointment with the council. This may be accomplished in writing or verbally.
 - b) Number of Members
 - i) There shall be seven members appointed to the parish council.
 - c) Membership Terms
 - i) Membership terms shall be staggered on a three-year basis with two new members being appointed every three years and shall run from Sept 1 through Aug 31st of each year.
 - 5) Candidates
 - i) A potential candidate will be provided with an application (Form #s F5.0-Form Fill or F5.1 Written) to be completed and submitted to the parish secretary by May 1 of each year if an open seat exists on the council. This can be completed in written or digital form found on the SMHC Parish website.
 - 6) Candidate Selection
 - a) At the May¹ meeting of the parish council each application shall be reviewed, and the priest will lead a discussion and seek input from the existing members of the council to determine the best candidate(s) to fill the vacant seat(s).
 - 7) Selection
 - a) The priest will review each application and the input received from the existing council members.
 - b) Prior to selection, the priest may conduct an interview with the applicant(s) selected as finalist(s) for the council.
 - c) After all considerations, the priest will select the candidate(s) he feels possesses the best qualities to fill the vacant seat(s).
 - 8) Notification
 - a) The priest will notify the candidates by the first Monday of August² of the current year of his selection(s).

¹ Since this policy was just created this portion of the selection process will be completed as soon as possible.

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