

Setting a Revised Structure of Governance for Saint John Cathedral

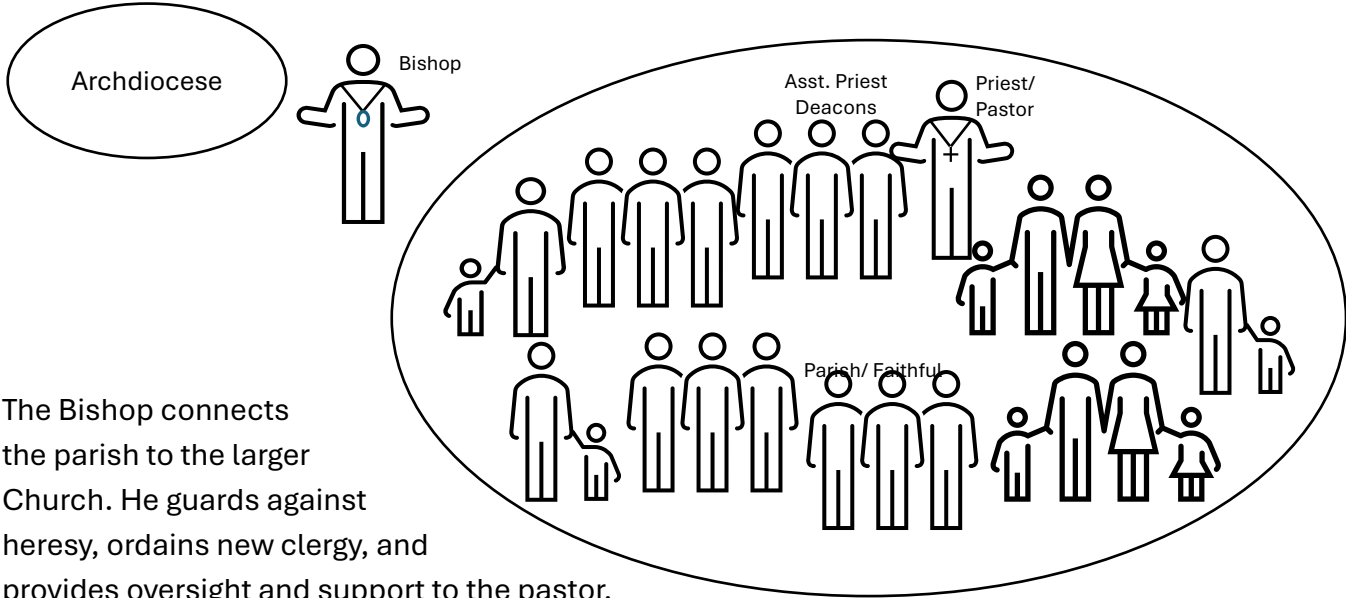
This document was prepared as part of the “Boot Camp Training” the Parish Council and others participated in with Fr. Ian PacUrar during the early part of 2024. It was offered as a revised structure of governance to better serve our Parish in the future.

I. Introduction: The Mission of the Church in the World

God’s Church in this world is expressed locally in a eucharistic community, or “parish” as this is commonly called. As the Church each of these local communities has both a divine aspect and a human aspect. In its divine aspect the parish strives to be a manifestation of the Kingdom of God, a witness to the saving work of Christ, a place of discipleship for its baptized members, a hospital to offer healing from sin and disordered desires, and a community of grace to demonstrate God’s love in a broken world. In its human aspect the parish must have a structure to provide harmony and order among its members, as well as a means of growth and continuity. It also has certain business responsibilities as it often must manage property and money. But while a parish has these two aspects, it is also understood that the human aspect and structure must always be subservient to its divine aspect and calling. Every local eucharistic community, is charged with carrying out the mission of the Church. At the same time, it is also true that each parish will often emphasize some parts of this mission more than others, parts it is especially suited to or that are unique to the needs of its particular time or setting.

What follows is a proposal for a revised structure of governance that our parish, Saint John Orthodox Cathedral, needs to refine, develop and implement in the coming months. Our Lord said, “to whom much is given, much will be required” (Luke 12:48). Saint John’s has been given much. We live in the beautiful setting of Alaska. We have 50 acres of property with multiple buildings, including the cathedral, a school, three homes, and a chapel. We also have a unique community setting where many live within walking distance of the Cathedral. It is our responsibility to use all these assets effectively to carry out the divine mission of the Church. There are three characteristics of our parish that have historically been emphasized in our community. These are hospitality, education, and working to see that Orthodox liturgy and life are accessible to American culture.

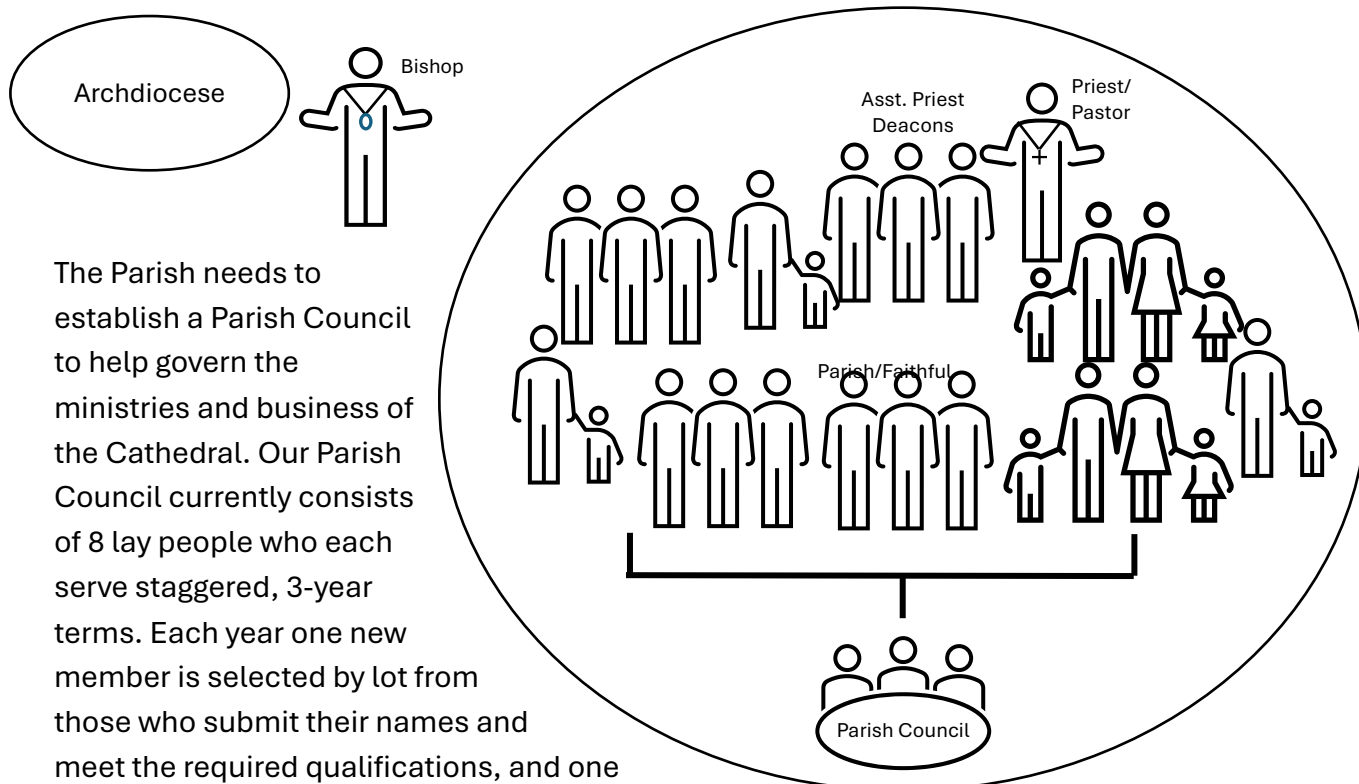
II. A Revised Structure of Governance for Our Cathedral



The Bishop connects the parish to the larger Church. He guards against heresy, ordains new clergy, and provides oversight and support to the pastor.

The Priest who is appointed as “Pastor” is the shepherd and president of the parish. This means he “presides” over all the gatherings of the Parish, first of all its eucharistic gathering; but it also includes other gatherings of the faithful, such as “Church Family Meetings.” He is assisted in this role by other ordained clergy in the parish. In terms of governance, which is the purpose of this document, the Pastor is responsible to maintain the unity of the Parish and to ensure the harmony among the various ministries of the Parish. He is also responsible to keep records and archives of the essential business of the Church, such as minutes of Parish Council meetings.

III. The Parish Council



The Parish needs to establish a Parish Council to help govern the ministries and business of the Cathedral. Our Parish Council currently consists of 8 lay people who each serve staggered, 3-year terms. Each year one new member is selected by lot from those who submit their names and meet the required qualifications, and one

new member is appointed by the Pastor. Other non-voting members of the Parish Council are the Parish Administrator, the Facilities Manager and any assistant Priests attached to the parish.

The Pastor is also a member of the Parish Council and contributes spiritual counsel and theological background, as well as his own personal insights, to the discussions of the Parish Council. The Pastor votes on Council decisions only to break a tie, if this is necessary. However, the Pastor, as President of the Parish, also has the authority to overrule any Parish Council decisions. If he chooses to do this, he must be able to explain to the Parish Council, to the Parish as a whole, and to the Bishop to why he is doing so. The Bishop can overrule such a decision by the Pastor, if this is necessary.

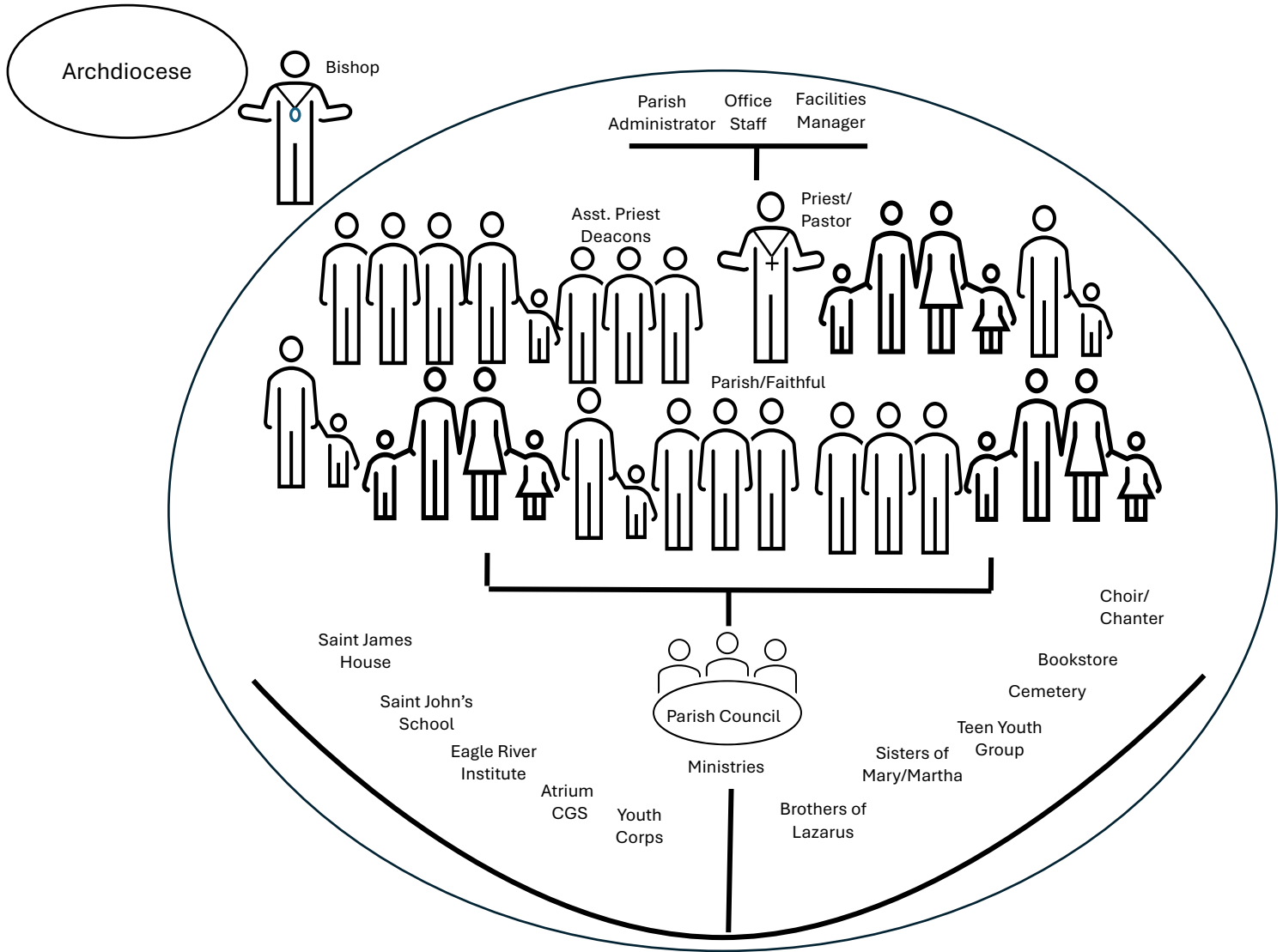
The Parish Council will appoint from its membership the following officers in order to conduct the business of the Parish Council: a Chair, a Vice Chair, a Treasurer and a Secretary. The Chair of a Parish Council would normally set the agenda for the Parish Council meeting and run the meetings.

IV. Responsibilities of the Parish Council

The principal responsibility of the Parish Council is to support and hold in trust the various ministries of the Parish and the properties and monies that serve the Parish in carrying out the divine mission of the Church. They are always to seek the good of the Parish as a whole. The Parish Council also sets the salaries and benefits of all Church employees. The salary of the Pastor is determined using the published guidelines of the Archdiocese and the Bishop.

V. Ministries within the Parish

Saint John’s has many ministries that have been a vital part of its mission. These ministries should be supported and sustained by the Parish Council acting in behalf of and in the best interest of the Parish as a whole. Just because a ministry might have a long history in the Parish that does not mean it cannot change or that it cannot be ended altogether. New ministries may also be started. All of this should take place with cooperation between the Parish Council and the Pastor, at the same time working to ensure good communication with the whole Parish.



May God lead and guide us in developing the governance structure we need, so that all we do will be to the glory of His holy name, Father Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.