

**DIOCESE OF DODGE CITY**  
**THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL**  
**STATUTES**  
*(Revised and Approved March 20, 2018)*

**PREAMBLE**

“Priests, prudent cooperators with the episcopal order as well as its aids and instruments, are called to serve the People of God. They constitute one priesthood with their bishop, although that priesthood is comprised of different functions...Intent always upon the welfare of God’s children, they must strive to lend their efforts to the pastoral work of the whole diocese and even of the entire church.” (Lumen Gentium 28)

“Therefore, on account of this communion in the same priesthood and ministry, the bishop should regard priests as his brothers and friends...He should gladly listen to them, indeed, consult them, and have discussions with them about these matters which concern the necessities of pastoral work and the welfare of the diocese. In order to put these ideals into effect, a group or senate of priests, representing the presbyterate should be established. It is to operate in a manner adapted to modern circumstances and needs and have a form and norms to be determined by law. By its counsel, this body will be able to give effective assistance to the bishop in his government of the diocese. (*Presbyterorum Ordinis* 7)

“In each diocese a presbyteral council is to be established, that is a group of priests which, representing the presbyterate, is to be like a senate of the bishop and which assists the bishop in the governance of the diocese according to the norm of law to promote as much as possible the pastoral good of the portion of the people of God entrusted to him.” (Canon 495)

**NAME**

The name of this body shall be “The Presbyteral Council” of the Diocese of Dodge City.

**PURPOSE**

The establishment of a presbyteral council is required in every diocese. While there are certain matters that the law requires the diocesan bishop to take to the presbyteral council, there is also a wide range of pastoral concerns about which the diocesan bishop may seek the counsel of this group of priests who are to act as his collaborators in the pastoral care of the diocese. The presbyterate as a body always acts in relation to the bishop. Thus, as a “senate” this group serves a representational as well as an advisory role while the entire presbyterate functions as collaborators with the diocesan bishop in his pastoral care of the diocese, this council symbolizes, represents, and concretizes that collaboration by its direct manner that ordinarily would not be feasible with the entire presbyterate of a diocese. The council members do not supplant the role of the entire presbyterate as “assistants and counselors” to the diocesan bishop but rather facilitate the process by which he attends and listens to them.

Canon 500 states:

1. It is for the diocesan bishop to convoke the presbyteral council, preside over it, and determine the questions to be treated by it or receive proposals from the members.
2. The presbyteral council possesses only a consultative vote; the diocesan bishop is to hear it in affairs of greater importance but needs its consent only in cases expressly defined by law.
3. The presbyteral council is not able to act without the diocesan bishop who alone has charge of making public those things which have been established according to the norm of #2.

#### **RIGHT TO SERVE ON THE COUNCIL**

The following have the right to nominate themselves to serve on the presbyteral council:

1. All incardinated priests of the Diocese of Dodge City who are active and living within the diocese;
2. All incardinated priests of the Diocese of Dodge City who are retired and living within the diocese;
3. All secular priests incardinated in another diocese but living in the Diocese of Dodge City and exercising some ministry for the good of the diocese;
4. All priest members of an institute of consecrated life or a society of apostolic life living in the Diocese of Dodge City and exercising some ministry for the good of the diocese.

[Note: This excludes incardinated priests who are active in another diocese, incardinated priests who are not active in any ministry regardless of where they are living, and incardinated retired priests who do not live within the diocese.]

#### **RIGHT TO VOTE**

The following have the right to vote for priests who have been nominated for election to the presbyteral council:

1. All incardinated priests of the Diocese of Dodge City who are active regardless of whether they are living within or outside the diocese;
2. All incardinated priests of the Diocese of Dodge City who are retired regardless of whether they are living within or outside the diocese;
3. All secular priests incardinated in another diocese but living in the Diocese of Dodge City and exercising some ministry for the good of the diocese;
4. All priest members of an institute of consecrated life or a society of apostolic life living in the Diocese of Dodge City and exercising some ministry for the good of the diocese.

[Note: This excludes incardinated priests who are not active in any ministry.]

#### **TERMS**

All priests elected or appointed to the presbyteral council shall serve a five-year term.

## **RE-ELECTION AND RE-APPOINTMENT**

Having completed one term of office, a priest is not eligible for re-election until at least one year has passed.

A priest who has been appointed by the diocesan bishop may be re-appointed without restriction.

## **VACANCY**

A vacancy among elected members of the presbyteral council is filled by the council appointing a replacement. The priest appointed will complete the term of office remaining of the person who brought about the vacancy.

A vacancy among the appointed members of the presbyteral council is filled by the diocesan bishop who appoints a priest to complete the term of office of the one bringing about the vacancy.

## **CONSTITUTION OF THE MEMBERSHIP**

Four priests elected to the council (with staggered terms)

Two priests appointed by the diocesan bishop to the council (with staggered terms)

One priest *ex-officio*, namely, the Vicar General

## **COUNCIL MEMBERS' RESPONSIBILITIES**

The job description of any from the above-mentioned groups elected or appointed to serve on the presbyteral council involves:

1. agreement to attend all meetings of the presbyteral council;
2. willingness and commitment to spend time in study and reading relative to matters which concern the necessities of pastoral work and welfare of the diocese and even of the entire church;
3. willingness and commitment to serve on ad hoc committees.

## **DEFINITIONS**

1. Simple majority is "more votes than another" (e.g., it could be four votes out of ten where two others received three votes each).
2. Absolute majority is "one-half plus one" of the votes cast.
3. Qualified majority is "the margin of votes required by specific rules" (e.g., if the statutes, bylaws or guidelines require a two-thirds or three-fourths majority).

## **ELECTION PROCESS**

1. Priests who have the right to serve on the council (see above) may nominate themselves by signing and returning the nomination form to the presbyteral council secretary by the date indicated on the form.
2. Priests who have the right to vote (see above) will receive a preliminary ballot, the purpose of which is to reduce the number of nominees to two, which is twice the number of those to be elected at any given time to the presbyteral council. This determination will be made by simple majority of those voting (i.e., the two nominees who receive the most votes). A tie involving more than two (2) nominees is not a simple majority, and the process of a preliminary ballot will need to be repeated.

3. When the two final nominees have been determined by the process outlined above, priests who have the right to vote will receive a first ballot. The nominee who receives an absolute majority of those voting will be elected to the presbyteral council.

If neither nominee receives an absolute majority or there is a tie on the first ballot, there will be a second ballot, which also will require an absolute majority to elect. If neither nominee receives an absolute majority on the second ballot, there will be a third ballot. On the third ballot, a simple majority will be needed to elect.

If there is a tie on either the second or third ballot, the vacancy will be filled by lot conducted by the presbyteral council secretary in the presence of one other priest appointed by the chair of the council.

All ballots must be returned to the presbyteral council secretary by the date indicated on the ballot. Ballots received after the specified date will not be counted.

4. Ballots will be counted and certified by the presbyteral council secretary and one other priest appointed by the chair of the council, who will notify the bishop of the results. The bishop will inform the priest who has been elected as well as the entire presbyterate.
5. The presbyteral council secretary shall initiate the election process in April of each year requiring an election, and the results will take effect in July.

## **OFFICERS**

The officers of the presbyteral council shall be the chair, the vice-chair and the secretary. All officers are elected by the majority vote of the presbyteral council at its August meeting and serve a one-year term of office, renewable without limitation. A vacancy among the officers is filled by majority vote of the presbyteral council.

The chair shall preside at all meetings of the presbyteral council and all Presbyteral Assemblies and shall send an agenda to all priests prior to each meeting or Presbyteral Assembly.

The vice-chair shall preside over all meetings and Presbyteral Assemblies in the absence of the chair.

The secretary shall keep accurate minutes of all meetings and Presbyteral Assemblies, prepare the nomination forms to be mailed to all priests who have the right to serve on the council and prepare the ballots to be mailed to all priests who have the right to vote. The secretary and one other priest appointed by the chair of the council are responsible for counting the ballots.

## **MEETINGS**

The presbyteral council will meet as close as possible to the third Tuesday of January, February, March, April, May, June, August, September, and November. The presbyteral council will not meet in July, October, and December. An insufficient agenda may warrant the cancellation of a meeting by the bishop.

Each fall, the chair will consult with the diocesan bishop to determine in a timely fashion the exact dates when the presbyteral council will meet during the following calendar year. All priests who have the right to vote will be notified of these dates.

Unless otherwise specifically determined, presbyteral council meetings take place at the Chancery Office in Dodge City.

### **PRESBYTERAL ASSEMBLY**

No more than four (4) times within a calendar (January 1 to December 31) all priests who have the right to vote shall be invited by the diocesan bishop to participate in a Presbyteral Assembly to deal with matters that pertain to pastoral ministry in southwest Kansas. One of these Presbyteral Assemblies shall take place at the fall convocation, annually in October, at a pre-determined location (presently at Spiritual Life Center in Wichita).

Topics, speakers, and details of Presbyteral Assemblies are the responsibility of the Priestly Life and Formation Committee in consultation with the Bishop.

At any Presbyteral Assembly matters shall be decided either by consensus; or failing that, by an absolute majority of those voting on any issue. A tie is not an absolute majority and the issue fails.

### ***AD HOC* COMMITTEES**

The presbyteral council chair may appoint an *ad hoc* committee for specific purpose as deemed necessary by the diocesan bishop, the chair, the presbyteral council, or the priests in Presbyteral Assembly. The chair of the council will appoint the chair of an *ad hoc* committee. This newly appointed chair may accept volunteers, priests, deacons, women religious or lay persons; or he may appoint any of the same to serve on the *ad hoc* committee.

An *ad hoc* committee that completes its assigned task is dissolved by the action taken by the presbyteral council on the *ad hoc* committee report. An *ad hoc* committee that does not complete its task or is in the process of completing it, can be dissolved by majority vote of the presbyteral council at a regularly scheduled meeting.

### **FINANCES**

The Diocese of Dodge City shall provide all the financial resources required for the functioning of the presbyteral council and observe the budget approved annually by the diocesan finance council.

### **AMENDMENTS**

Any amendment to the STATUTES will require one two-thirds majority vote. It is presumed sufficient discussion will precede any proposed amendment.

### **CESSATION**

While not foreseen to happen, the STATUTES can be dissolved by the two-thirds vote of the presbyteral council at two consecutive meetings of the council.