

**Proposal for  
A LAY ADVISORY COUNCIL AND LAY DEANERY COUNCILS  
In the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis**

**I. Introduction:**

Catholic Coalition for Church Reform (CCCR) and Council of the Baptized propose that Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda establish and fund a Lay Advisory Council to advise him of the perspective of parishioners on the well-being of their parishes and of the local Church.

In general, pastors and parishioners have different life experiences as well as experiences of parish life, and each group has a perspective for assessing the needs of the faithful; both perspectives are valuable and should be heard independently. There are lay men and women in each parish who are willing to develop a shared ecclesiology and to represent the ideas of their fellow parishioners to the Archbishop in response to the Holy Spirit and for the good of the local church.

Fortunately, the Archdiocese has in place a potential channel for lay communication with the Archbishop. Following Canon Law, 374, section 2, parishes are grouped into 15 geographical deaneries "to foster pastoral care through common action." We envision that each parish council would appoint a representative to a Lay Deanery Council in each of the 15 parish deaneries and that each Lay Deanery Council would appoint its Chair as a representative to the Archbishop's Lay Advisory Council.

**II. Rationale:**

Through our baptism, all Church members, lay and ordained, are responsible, as *Lumen Gentium*, the Vatican II Constitution on the Church, puts it, to make sure "the light of Christ shines out visibly from the Church" to the world. Although bishop, clergy, and laity also have specific roles, together, in communion, we discern the Spirit of Christ and are responsible to build the institutional community that is the Church in this Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

Although there are many lay people employed in parishes and in Archdiocesan management, the majority of Church members in the Archdiocese--through whom the Spirit speaks--have no channel of communication to fulfill their responsibility. Without communication the Communion hoped for at Vatican II cannot exist.

**III. Lay Advisory Council**

The Archbishop shall establish a Lay Advisory Council to provide a channel of communication with parishioners in the Archdiocese. The Archbishop shall be responsible for introducing his decision to form a Lay Advisory Council and a Lay Deanery Council to the Presbyteral Council, to parish pastors, and to the people of the Archdiocese.

- A. Purposes: The Lay Advisory Council shall be established:
1. For the laity to communicate concerns, ideas, and the sense of the faithful with regard to parish life and the overall spiritual well-being of the Archdiocese to the Archbishop.
  2. For the Archbishop to teach and to communicate information, requests, and encouragement to the people through Deanery Councils to the parishes.
- B. Composition: The Lay Advisory Council shall be composed of:
1. The Chair or another member from each of the 15 Lay Deanery Councils.
  2. The Archbishop as an ex-officio member.
  3. Other ex-officio members as may be designated by the Archbishop.
- C. Organization: The Lay Advisory Council shall be governed by:
1. A Chair, Co-Chair, and Secretary elected from the members, and
  2. A Facilitator, employed by the Archdiocese, who also administers the Lay Deanery Councils and reports to the Archbishop or an Office designated by him.
- D. Meetings: The Lay Advisory Council shall hold meetings:
1. Every other month.
  2. At a regular time and place convenient to the Archbishop.
  3. With timely notice to all members of the Lay Deanery Councils.
  4. Open to members of Lay Deanery Councils as observers.
  5. Recorded in minutes by the Secretary.
- E. Agendas: The Lay Advisory Council agendas shall be:
1. Determined by the Chair and Co-Chair of the Lay Advisory Council, in collaboration with the Facilitator.
  2. Composed of items submitted from Parish Councils or Members of Parishes to Lay Deanery Councils or initiated by Lay Deanery Councils and prioritized by them, and
  3. Composed of items initiated by the Archbishop and submitted through the Facilitator.

#### **IV. Lay Deanery Councils**

- A. Purposes: The Lay Deanery Council is a structural means to:
1. Channel two-way communication between the lay community and the Archdiocesan decision-makers.
  2. Provide a source for archdiocesan pastoral council and/or Synod delegates.
  3. Provide a vehicle for implementing archdiocesan programs among the member parishes.
  4. Build community among the parishes in a deanery and among the deaneries.
  5. Provide support for struggling parishes within deaneries.
  6. Enable lay leaders to become familiar with archdiocesan governance and have empathy for issues beyond their own isolated parish communities.
  7. Enable lay leaders to learn collaboration skills and build relationships with other leaders with diverse backgrounds and viewpoints.
  8. Filter and refine a wide range of competing recommendations for archdiocesan ministry and mission.
- B. Composition: Lay Deanery Councils shall be composed of:

1. One member appointed by the Parish Council of each parish in the Deanery.
2. If the parish does not have a parish council, the delegate shall be invited by the pastor or, if the pastor declines, by other parish members.

C. Organization:

1. Each Lay Deanery Council member serves for a one-year commitment, renewable each year with a limit of five years of service.
2. Each Lay Deanery Council elects a Chair and a Secretary annually.
3. The Lay Deanery Councils meet monthly.
4. Meetings are open to parishioners from any parish in the Deanery.
5. Members set the meeting agendas and implement their own programs.
6. The Chair represents the Lay Deanery Council on the Archbishop's Lay Advisory Council and works closely with the Facilitator.

D. Commitment:

1. Each member commits to communicating within his/her parish and bringing the concerns of the parishioners to the Lay Deanery Council.
2. Each member commits to decision-making by consensus when feasible.
3. Each member is committed to understanding the mission of the Church as it is true to the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels and guided by Vatican II.

**V. Facilitator**

The Archbishop shall appoint a Facilitator to organize and administer the Lay Advisory Council, to organize and administer the 15 Lay Deanery Councils, and to facilitate their operation. The Facilitator shall be an employee of the Archdiocese and shall report to the Archbishop or an Office designated by him. The Facilitator may invite volunteers to assist in the organizational work.

The Facilitator shall:

A. Establish the 15 Lay Deanery Councils.

1. Budget for a three-year plan of operation.
2. Obtain buy-in from pastors and parish councils.
  - a. Formulate materials and documents for the introduction of the system.
  - b. Devise a plan for the introduction of the system.
  - c. Conduct interviews and meetings to introduce the system.
3. Invite the parish councils in each Deanery to delegate members for the Lay Deanery Council.

B. Set up a communication network with all the members of the Lay Deanery Council system.

1. Maintain email and U.S. mail lists of the delegates from each parish and deanery.
2. Establish a regular schedule of communication.
3. Maintain a separate list for the 15 deanery representatives to the Lay Advisory Council.

C. Advise Lay Deanery Councils and providing on-going education.

1. Create templates for organizational and meeting structures.
2. Assist the Lay Deanery Council Chairs in formulating material for the meetings of the Lay Advisory Council, held every other month.

3. Hold development meetings of Deanery Council Chairs in quadrants or vicariates.

D. Administer Lay Advisory Council meetings.

1. Notify Lay Advisory Council members of meetings and agendas.
2. Develop agendas with Lay Deanery Council Chairs and Archbishop.
3. Distribute meeting minutes to Lay Deanery Council Chairs.

## **VI. Suggestions for Procedure in Deanery Organizing**

### Stage 1:

A. Obtaining Pastors' buy-in

1. Archbishop announces the plan in writing to each pastor, giving the rationale and asking for cooperation
2. Archbishop appoints an Organizing team (OT), with a point person from staff and competent parishioners, who will visit with the pastor in each parish of the deanery, with literature describing the plan
3. OT presents plan and asks for discussion at Presbyteral deanery meetings
4. Pastors in Deanery meeting decide what parish will host the Lay Deanery Council meetings for an initial 6 month period

B. Obtaining Parish Council buy-in

1. OT meets with Parish Council chair and whoever he/she invites to attend
2. OT offers to meet with entire Parish Council if the Chair wants help in describing the plan
3. Parish Council decides whether one of its members or a person not on the Parish Council is best for the role of delegate to the Lay Deanery Council
4. Parish Council s/elects its delegate

### Stage 2:

A. Formation of Lay Deanery Council members: Each Council member is committed to understanding the mission of the Church as it is true to the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels and guided by the development of Vatican II.

1. Meet and greet session--brief presentation of task and Q&A
2. Study session--presentation of ecclesiology by theologian; determine course of study
3. Organizing session--election of Chair, note taker, logistics not provided by host parish
4. Discussion sessions:
  - Role of the Lay Advisory Council and Lay Deanery Councils
  - Role as representative of parish, not exclusively one's own opinion
  - How to listen; what to listen for
  - Dynamics of group discernment
  - How to formulate recommendations for the agenda

B. Selection of Lay Advisory Council Members by discernment from each Deanery Council

## **VII. Conclusion:**

CCCR and Council of the Baptized will cooperate in whatever way possible in the implementation of this proposal.