The Priests’ Handbook

Policies for the Ministry and Life of

The Presbyterate of Richmond

Revised as of September 23, 2021
# Diocese of Richmond
## The Priests’ Handbook

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DECREE OF PROMULGATION

Diocese of Richmond

DECREE OF PROMULGATION

To assist priests who are serving in the Diocese of Richmond in their ministry, I, Barry C. Knestout, Bishop of Richmond, hereby promulgate the accompanying norms and faculties which are contained in the Priest’s Handbook, Policies for the Ministry and Life of the Presbyterate of Richmond.

The faculties granted are meant to broaden and extend those given to priests in the universal law of the Church or the particular law for the United States.

These norms are published for the good order of this local church. The accompanying policies shall guide the ministries and activities of the priests of the Diocese of Richmond and are to take effect immediately.

All previously published versions of the Priests’ Handbook are hereby abrogated.

Given at the Diocesan Pastoral Center on the 23rd day of September 2021.

Most Reverend Barry C. Knestout
Bishop of Richmond

Rev. Msgr. R. Francis Muench, J.C.L.
Judicial Vicar, Chancellor
A. Priests’ Code of Conduct

I. Preamble

All members of the presbyterate of the Diocese of Richmond are to conduct themselves in a manner that upholds Catholic values. In addition to the Code of Conduct for all Church personnel of this Diocese, the following is a set of standards in providing or in supporting the pastoral care of the Christian faithful and all others. It does not present an exhaustive list of expectations, standards, or requirements. Rather, this accompanies the Universal Law of the Church, national and other diocesan policies, and the norms of civil law. Priests are to be aware of and committed to all of these norms that govern pastoral conduct.

II. Responsibility

Priests’ public and private conduct can inspire and motivate people, but it can also scandalize and undermine people’s faith. At all times, priests are to be aware of the responsibilities that accompany their work and to know also that God’s goodness and grace support them in their ministry.

Responsibility for adherence to all policies rests with each priest. Those who disregard them will be subject to remedial action up to and possibly including dismissal from the clerical state. Corrective action may take various forms, from a verbal reproach to removal from the ministry, depending on the specific nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of the harm.

III. Personal Standards

Priests will model a life consistent with the teachings of the Gospel, promoting through their own behavior the way to love God and to love neighbor as self. Priests will also exhibit a deep commitment to the Church and loyalty to its traditions and teachings in the way that they interact in the lives and circumstances of the people they serve.

In all personal and professional relationships, priests will, by their words, actions and attitudes, reflect fidelity to the promises they made at ordination and, in the case of pastors, at the time of their installation. A consistent fidelity to the Church’s teaching in pastoral practice and selflessness in pastoral service are essential dimensions of priestly life and ministry. The collaborative relationship with the bishop and with other members of the Presbyterate further exemplifies the ecclesial reality of the sacred orders they have received.

Priests are to be faithful to the pursuit of holiness through their commitment to the celebration of the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours and the reception of the sacrament of reconciliation, and to prayer, meditation, spiritual reading, and the study of the Scriptures and an annual retreat. These disciplines are fundamental to the effective proclamation of the Gospel and their fulfillment of their ministerial responsibilities.
Priests are responsible for their own spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional health. They are to strive to keep physically and emotionally healthy by getting proper nutrition and adequate sleep, by exercise, by taking allotted days off and vacations, by guarding against addictive or abusive behaviors (e.g., abuse of alcohol, prescriptive drugs, and/or illicit drugs) and by nurturing appropriate friendships outside pastoral relationships.

Priests make a promise of celibacy and are called to witness faithfully to this promise in all their relationships. They are to be aware of warning signs of potential problems in regard to their own health and in their personal and professional lives and are to strive for greater self-awareness in order to recognize the unique dynamics at work in pastoral relationships and to heed the warning signs in their lives which indicate when they may be approaching boundary violations.

**IV. Pastoral Standards**

Priests will honor the equality of all people, avoiding all forms of discrimination and respecting the dignity of each person by providing service without regard to economic status, age, gender, race ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or physical or mental abilities.

Priests will reach out to all people in a spirit of humility, reverence, and respect, especially to those who feel estranged from the Church. Priests will take care to be approachable and available to help those who seek their assistance and to be sensitive to the good of the community as they respond to the diverse forms of spirituality and theology within it.

Priests should not restrict the rights of the Christian faithful beyond what the laws of the Church provide.

**V. Specific Provisions**

1. **Conduct for Pastoral Counseling and Spiritual Direction.** In providing pastoral counseling or spiritual direction, priests are to respect the rights and advance the welfare of each person.

   - Priests are not to step beyond their competence in pastoral counseling situations and are to refer clients to other professionals when appropriate. Priests are to consider carefully the possible consequences before entering into a counseling relationship with someone with whom they have a pre-existing relationship (i.e., as an employee, professional colleague, friend, or other pre-existing relationship).

   - A priest is responsible to establish and maintain clear, appropriate, boundaries in all pastoral counseling and counseling-related relationships. Physical contact of any kind (i.e., touching, hugging, holding) between a priest and the persons he counsels can be misconstrued and is to be avoided and sexual intimacies and inappropriate sexual comments are never to occur.

   - Counseling or other appointments are to be conducted at appropriate times and in appropriate settings, not in private living quarters or in places that would tend to cause
confusion about the nature of the relationship for the person being counseled. In offices, the person’s ease of exiting should be assured. If possible, doors should have a glass pane.

- Counseling sessions are not to be audio or video taped. Priests providing pastoral counseling or spiritual direction are to maintain a log of the times and places of sessions with each person being counseled.

2. Confidentiality. The sacramental seal of confession is inviolable (c. 963); therefore, it is absolutely forbidden for a confessor to betray the confidence of a penitent in any way and for any reason. This is applicable whether the penitent is living or dead. Outside the forum of the sacrament, the following should be observed:

- Priests are to hold in strict confidence information disclosed to them during the course of counseling, advising, or spiritual direction, except for compelling professional reasons or as required by law. Priests are to discuss the nature of confidentiality and its limitations with each person in counseling.

- Consultation with the appropriate Church authority, e.g., one’s immediate supervisor, is required before disclosure of records at the request of a government agency or, if there is clear and imminent danger to someone, of information necessary to protect the parties affected and to prevent harm. Before disclosure is made, if feasible, priests are to inform the person being counseled about the disclosure and the potential consequences and are to obtain the permission of the one who has disclosed private information before using it in a public way.

- Priests are to keep minimal records of the content of sessions. Knowledge that arises from professional contact may be used in teaching, writing, homilies, or other public presentations only when effective measures are taken to safeguard absolute both the individual’s identity and the confidentiality of the disclosures. In no form should any allusion be made to matters under the seal of Confession.

- While counseling a minor (i.e., anyone under the age of 18) in a formal setting, if a priest discovers that there is a serious threat to the welfare of the minor and that communication of confidential information to a parent or legal guardian is essential to the child’s health and well-being, the priest is to attempt to secure written consent from the minor for the specific disclosure and to disclose only the information necessary to protect the health and well-being of the minor if consent is not given.

3. Conduct with youth. Priests are to be aware of their own and others’ vulnerability when working alone with the youth and are to use a team approach to managing youth activities.

- Physical contact with youth can be misconstrued and is to occur only when it is (a) completely nonsexual, (b) otherwise appropriate, and (c) in public.
• Priests are to abstain from (a) the use of alcohol when working with youth and from (b) the possession or use of illegal drugs at all times. Priests are not to allow alcohol use by youth under 21.

• Priests are not to allow minors to stay overnight in a priest’s private accommodations or residence/rectory nor to share private, overnight accommodations with individual young people. This includes, but is not limited to, accommodations in any Church-owned facility, any private residence or hotel room, or any other place where there is no other adult supervision present.

4. Sexual Conduct. Priests are committed to a celibate lifestyle and are to be an example of celibate chastity in all relationships at all times. Any conduct against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue is forbidden (c. 1395).

• No priest is to exploit for sexual gain or intimacy the trust placed in him by the faith community or its members. Priests must not initiate sexual behavior and must refuse it when another person invites it. Priests must show prudent discretion before touching another person since how physical touch is perceived cannot be predicted.

• Priests are to avoid developing inappropriately intimate relationships with minors, other Church personnel, or parishioners. Particular care should be taken in relationships with those who are most vulnerable: children, teenagers, and those who are developmentally delayed.

• Allegations of sexual abuse involving a minor are to be taken seriously and reported immediately to the appropriate Church authority and the proper civil authorities.

• Allegations of all sexual misconduct (i.e., sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or sexual harassment) involving adults are also to be taken seriously and are to be reported to the appropriate Church authority who may also report the allegation as required by law. The policies of the Diocese regarding sexual misconduct and sexual abuse are to be followed to protect the rights of all involved.

• Priests are to review and know the contents of the child abuse regulations and reporting requirements for the Commonwealth of Virginia and are to follow those mandates.

5. Harassment. Priests will establish and maintain ministerial relationships characterized by openness, honesty and integrity, avoiding any abuse of ministerial power and respecting the dignity of others who are called to participate in the mission of the church.

• Priests must refrain from any statements that are false, degrading, defaming, invasive or harmful to another’s reputation.

• Priests are not to engage in physical, psychological, written, or verbal harassment of staff, volunteers, or parishioners and are not to tolerate such harassment by other Church staff or volunteers.
• Harassment encompasses a broad range of physical, written, or verbal behavior, including, but not limited to, the following: physical or mental abuse; racial insults or derogatory ethnic slurs; sexual advances, touching, comments or jokes; requests for sexual favors used as a condition of employment or to affect other personnel matters such a promotion or compensation; display of offensive materials.

• Harassment can be a single severe incident or a persistent pattern of behavior where the purpose or the effect is to create a hostile, offensive, or intimidating work environment.

• Allegations of harassment are to be taken seriously and reported immediately to the appropriate Church authority such as the pastor, principal, catechetical administrator, or the Vicar General. At the same time, merely calling others to fulfill the legitimate expectations of their positions is not, in and of itself, harassment. Diocesan policies are to be followed to protect the rights of all involved.

6. Records and information. Confidentiality is to be maintained in creating, storing, accessing, transferring, and disposing of Church records.

• When compiling and publishing statistical information from these records, great care is to be taken to preserve the anonymity of individuals. Information regarding adoption and legitimacy remains confidential, regardless of age.

• Priests in parish ministry are to see that Church personnel authorized to access such records are to be instructed in preserving their confidentiality.

• Parish records of financial contributions are also confidential.

• Information regarding the custody and use of church funds is to be made available to the Parish Finance Council and, in summary form, to the Parish at least on a yearly basis. The Diocesan Financial Policies are to be carefully observed.

7. Conflicts of Interest. Priests are to avoid situations that might present a conflict of interest. Even the appearance of a conflict of interest can call integrity and professional conduct into question.

• Priests will avoid relationships that could impair professional judgment, create conflicts of interest, or lead to exploiting a relationship for personal gain (e.g., with employees, employees’ family members, students, friends, business relationships, family).

• Priests must lessen the potential for conflicts of interest and exploitation by maintaining clear roles and boundaries and by being clear about whose needs are being met.

• Priests are not to take advantage of anyone to whom they are providing services in order to further their personal, political, or business interests.
Conflicts of interest may arise when a priest’s independent judgment is impaired by prior dealings with the person(s), by becoming personally involved in the matter, or by becoming an advocate for one (person) against another. In these circumstances, priests are to advise the parties that he can no longer provide services and refer them to other competent persons who are qualified to provide assistance.

8. Reporting Misconduct. Priests have a duty to report their own professional and ethical misconduct and the misconduct of others.

- Priests are to be aware of and clearly understand the ethical and professional standards of behavior that arise from our Catholic tradition and which have been developed and elucidated by the Catholic Diocese of Richmond and are to determine that their behaviors comply.

- Priests strive to hold one another accountable to these ethical standards in accord with the approved accountability process for the Diocese. When there is an indication of illegal actions by any Church personnel, the Diocesan Chancery Office is to be notified immediately, as well as the proper civil authorities when the law requires.

- When an uncertainty exists about whether a situation or course of conduct violates Church law or diocesan policies, or other religious, moral, or ethical principles, priests are to consult with the appropriate Church authority.

- The obligation of all Church personnel to report misconduct is subject to the duty of confidentiality. However, any agreement or duty to maintain confidentiality is to yield to the need to report misconduct that threatens the safety, the health, or the spiritual, psychological, or physical well-being of any of the persons involved except as provided for in Section 2 above.

9. Administration. Whatever their role or office, priests are to observe the personnel and financial policies of the Diocese of Richmond.

- Priests are to take special care to observe the moral, ethical, legal, and fiscal standards and sound business practices that are the fundamentals of good stewardship.

- Priests are responsible for the stewardship and the clear accounting of all Church resources entrusted to their care and are not to use or borrow money or resources from pastoral or ministerial accounts for personal use. Priests will exercise prudent judgment in the giving or accepting of gifts or benefits.

- Pastors are required to make a full disclosure of all assets of the parish to the diocesan bishop in the manner required.
• Personnel and other administrative decisions made by priests are to meet the requirements of both canonical and civil law and are to reflect Catholic social teachings and this Code of Pastoral Conduct.

• Upon the publication of this Code of Conduct or upon the acceptance of a ministerial role in the diocese, each priest shall sign and return to the Chancery Office his acceptance of this Code.
B. Incardination and Excardination

1. Incardination: The Process and Stages

A priest is incardinated in a diocese with his ordination to the diaconate (c. 266, #1). A priest incardinated in another diocese or in a religious community and now wishing to be incardinated in the Diocese of Richmond normally must have completed two years of ministry in the Diocese of Richmond before formally requesting incardination. Two distinct stages or goals, each with its own particular objective, form the process by which a priest is incardinated into the Diocese of Richmond.

Stage One – Initial Application

(a) A priest must have on file a letter from his own proper ordinary giving him permission for ministry in the Diocese of Richmond. In addition, the candidate for incardination must supply:

1. An original letter, addressed to the Bishop for use by a screening committee and concerned parties. This letter should clearly request incardination and explain the reasons for the request to serve outside one’s own diocese or religious province and a thorough and clear explanation of the request for pastoral work within this diocese (c. 267);

2. The priest should include a statement concerning his training, experience, and the type of ministry he prefers. Age will be a factor in considering incardination requests;

3. An original letter from his bishop or religious superior, addressed to the Bishop of the Diocese of Richmond, wherein permission is given the priest to seek incardination (c. 267 §1);

4. A complete and accurate Diocesan Personal Record Form and a recent photo (passport quality) must be enclosed.

5. Four original letters of recommendation, written by colleagues (one of whom is a fellow priest) with whom the priest has worked during the most recent three years, are to be sent to the Bishop on his behalf. An outline of issues that must be included in the letter of recommendation will be provided by the Vicar for Clergy.

(b) The Vicar for Clergy will form a screening committee to be composed of four (4) persons (two priests and two others) to review the information assembled, to interview the candidate, and when possible to visit the site of his ministry and confer with those with whom priest has ministered.

(c) When all the above has been received by the Vicar for Clergy and references have been checked, the recommendations of the Vicar for Clergy and of the Diocesan Screening Committee are to be forwarded to the Bishop for his decision.
(d) If the applicant is found acceptable to begin the process of incardination by the Bishop, he will be asked to undergo a psychological interview and assessment and physical examination with a professional designated by the Vicar for Clergy. These results will be reviewed by the Bishop and the Vicar for Clergy as a condition for his moving to the next stage of the process. If a psychological and physical examination has already been undertaken recently, these may be accepted as satisfying this requirement. If the applicant is found acceptable, he can be accepted for ministry in the diocese ad experimentum for three years.

(e) If the applicant has been found not acceptable for incardination, the applicant is notified as soon as possible by the Bishop or his delegate, stating the reasons for his non-acceptance or noting that additional information is requested.

Stage Two – Evaluation and Acceptance

(a) After three years of ministering in the diocese, a formal evaluation of the applicant for incardination will be conducted by the Vicar for Clergy and a Screening Committee, and a recommendation of each will be forwarded to the Bishop. The Bishop shall make a decision in accord with the norms of Canon Law.

(b) If he agrees to the priest’s incardination, he shall indicate this to the priest and ask him to request an official letter of excardination from his diocesan bishop. When this letter is received, the Bishop will then write a letter of incardination to the priest.

(c) For the acceptance and incardination of foreign clerics and seminarians, the norms issued by the USCCB will also be observed.

2. Excardination

(a) The process of excardination begins with the request of a priest of the Diocese of Richmond to be released for service in another diocese. Once the Bishop has granted permission for this, the priest is to submit to the Vicar for Clergy annually a report of his ministry elsewhere.

(b) If he has determined to request incardination in another diocese, he should so notify the Bishop of the Diocese of Richmond and request permission to begin the process of incardination elsewhere. Prior to the time of incardination, he should also request an official letter of excardination from the Bishop of the Richmond.
C. Assignment

Classifications

A. Pastor

The pastor (parochus) is the proper pastor (proprius paroechiae) of the parish entrusted to him. He exercises the pastoral care of the community entrusted to him under the authority of the diocesan Bishop, whose ministry of Christ he is called to share, so that for this community he may carry out the offices of teaching, sanctifying and ruling with the cooperation of other priests or deacons and with the assistance of lay members of Christ's faithful, in accordance with the law. (c. 519)

If, because of a shortage of priests, the diocesan Bishop has judged that a deacon, or some other person who is not a priest (e.g., pastoral coordinator), or a community of persons, should be entrusted with a share in the exercise of the pastoral care of a parish, he is to appoint some priest who, with the powers and faculties of a pastor, will direct the pastoral care. (c. 517.2)

B. Parochial Administrator

When a parish is vacant, or when the pastor is prevented from exercising his pastoral office in the parish ... by reason of incapacity or ill health or some other cause, the diocesan Bishop is, as soon as possible, to appoint a parochial administrator, that is, a priest who will take the place of the pastor in accordance with can. 540. (c. 539)

C. Parochial Vicar

Whenever it is necessary or opportune for the due pastoral care of the parish, one or more parochial vicars can be joined with the pastor. As cooperators with the pastor and sharers in his concern, they are, by common counsel and effort with the pastor and under his authority, to labor in the pastoral ministry (c. 545.1). A parochial vicar may be assigned to minister in more than one parish (c. 550,#1).

D. Rector (for the Basilica and the Cathedral)

Rectors of churches are here understood to be priests to whom is entrusted the care of some church [building] which is neither a parochial nor a capitular church, nor a church attached to the house of a religious community or a society of apostolic life which holds services in it (c. 556). The Rectors of both the Basilica of St. Mary and the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart normally serve also as pastors of the parishes who worship within their churches (c. 560).
**E. Chaplain (e.g., Campus Ministry, Hospital, Military)**

A chaplain is a priest to whom is entrusted in a stable manner the pastoral care, at least in part, of some community or special group of Christ’s faithful, to be exercised in accordance with universal and particular law (c. 564). Chaplains for the Archdiocese for the Military Services are given the faculties of a Parochial Vicar in the parish where their station is located. The ministry of Chaplains is governed by can. 564-574.

**F. Special Assignment**

Those with special diocesan assignments enjoy the powers specified for those offices. In the parishes where they reside, they have the faculty appropriate for the position to which they are assigned.

**G. Retired**

Retired priests have the faculties of a Parochial Vicar of the parish in which they reside. They are to notify the pastor of that parish of their residence.

**H. In Residence**

Those priests to whom the faculties of the Diocese of Richmond have been given and who are in residence in a parish, whether in the rectory or in other housing. If they are Episcopal Vicars, they enjoy the faculties appropriate to their specific competency as defined by law. If not, they have the faculties of a Parochial Vicar in the parish in which they reside. They are to notify the pastor of that parish of their residence. When assisting in other parishes, they are to obtain the proper permission or delegation of the pastor as the occasion requires.

**I. Assignment outside the Diocese**

Priests assigned outside the Diocese of Richmond retain the faculties given to all priests of the Diocese. A yearly written statement of ministry should be sent to the Diocesan Bishop. Recall or return to the Diocese should be preceded normally by a year’s notice.

**J. On Leave**

1) **Authorized Leave of Absence:** When the Bishop grants a leave of absence, diocesan faculties are not withdrawn, unless otherwise indicated by the Bishop in his letter of authorization.

2) **Unauthorized Departure from Ministry:** When a priest leaves his assignment of designated residence without the express permission of the Bishop or Vicar for Clergy, his faculties are automatically withdrawn. He is forbidden to exercise any function of his priestly ministry with the exceptions noted in canon 976.
D. Faculties

1. Granting and Revocation

Diocesan faculties are given to empower priests for ministry and are intended for the spiritual benefit of the faithful and the common good of the Church. Some faculties or authorizations are granted by the law itself either with ordination to the priesthood or with the appointment as pastor or as parochial vicar. Other faculties are granted by the diocesan bishop, the vicar general, or the chancellor either with the appointment to these offices or upon request.

Faculties will ordinarily be given in writing to a specific person by name either for the anticipated length of a priest’s ministry in the diocese or habitually for the duration of the ministry of a priest incardinated in the diocese.

Faculties are revoked by a leave of absence, by suspension, by departure from the diocese of a non-incardinated priest, or by the explicit revocation of them by those who can grant them.

Noted below are those faculties or authorizations to act that are given by the Code of Canon Law and then those given by the Bishop of the Diocese of Richmond. In other situations, priests should contact the Chancellor or the Vicar General of the diocese.

2. Faculties Granted by Law

This section is provided for information only, to make clearer where the diocesan faculties noted below extend those faculties already granted by the canons of the Church.

Ministry of the Word and Sacraments

All Priests:

- To preach the Word of God everywhere with at least the presumed consent of the pastor of the parish (c. 764).

- To preach to religious in their churches or oratories with the permission of the competent superior (c. 765).

- To administer all the sacraments and sacramentals, except those that require faculties or other delegation from the diocesan bishop or other authority.

Baptism

All Priests:

- To admit a Christian who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community to be a witness to baptism, but only in the company of a Catholic sponsor (c. 874, #2).
Confirmation

Priests:

- To make an exception to the required age of 16 for a sponsor at baptism or confirmation, but only for a just reason (c. 874, #1.2; c.893).

- To administer the sacrament of confirmation within one’s own territory to those in danger of death (c. 883.3)1.

Pastor:

- To confirm when baptizing those who are no longer infants (i.e., those over the age of reason)2.

Parochial Vicar:

- To confirm when baptizing those who are no longer infants3.

Eucharist

Priests:

- To celebrate the Eucharist according to the norms of the Code of Canon Law and of liturgical law (c. 900, #2).

- To consume food or drink before the second or third celebration of the Eucharist on the same day (c. 919, #2).

- To celebrate the Eucharist privately and to celebrate while sitting, if one is sick or elderly (c. 930).

- To celebrate the Eucharist by using the text of any approved Mass, if one is blind or suffering from another infirmity (c. 930).

- To celebrate and distribute the Eucharist on any day and at any hour, except those excluded by liturgical law (c. 931).

- To celebrate the Eucharist in any fitting place (c. 932).

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1 In this case the faculty extends to any priest without limitation.
2 All those beyond age of reason for purposes of baptism are considered as adults.
3 All those beyond age of reason for purposes of baptism are considered as adults.
Pastors:

- In case of necessity, to have another priest satisfy the *missa pro populo* on Sundays and holydays of obligation (c. 534, #1).

- In case of necessity, to celebrate the *missa pro populo* on another day (c. 534, #1).

**Penance**

Priests:

- Those who have the faculty habitually to hear confessions by office or concession may exercise that faculty everywhere unless it has been restricted by the local ordinary (c. 967, #2).

- Any priest, even though he lacks the faculty to hear confessions, can validly and lawfully absolve any penitents who are in danger of death from any censures and sins, even if an approved priest is present. (c. 976).

Pastors:

- Within his own territory, to hear confessions by virtue of office (c. 968).

**Parochial Vicars:**

- Within his own territory, to hear confessions by virtue of office (c. 968).

**Marriage**

Priests:

- In danger of death, if no local ordinary can be contacted, the priest who assists at a marriage can dispense from ecclesiastical impediments, except ordination (c. 1079, #2), but never from impediments of divine law.

Pastors:

- By virtue of office to assist validly at the marriage both of subjects and non-subjects, provided one of the parties is of the Latin Rite, but to do this only within his own parish (c. 1109). Priests are reminded also to obtain permission from the proper pastor of a Catholic party for laity (c. 1115).

- To delegate the faculty to assist at marriage to other priests and deacons for a particular marriage (c. 1111, #1). The fact of the delegation is to be noted in the marriage register.
• To give general delegation to assist at a marriage, provided this is done in writing, to a priest or deacon not assigned to the parish (c. 1111, #1).

• To grant permission for the marriages of his subjects to be celebrated outside his own parish (c. 1115).

• To grant permission for the marriage of two Catholics or of a Catholic with a baptized non-Catholic to be celebrated in another Catholic Church or oratory than the proper parish church (c. 1118).

**Days of Penance and Obligation**

**Pastors:**

• In regard to individuals or families within his parish, or a just reason, to dispense from the obligation of observing a holy day or a day of penance, or to commute the obligation to some other pious work. This faculty may also be exercised on behalf of a person or family visiting within his parish (c. 1245).

**Other**

**Priests:**

• To carry the oil of the sick so that, in case of necessity, the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick may be administered (c. 1003, #3).

• To impart blessings except those reserved to the Roman Pontiff and bishops (c. 1169, #2).

**Pastors:**

• To exercise the pastoral care of the community entrusted to him under the authority of the diocesan bishop, so that, for this community he may carry out the offices of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling with the cooperation of other priests or deacons and with the assistance of lay members of Christ’s faithful in accord with the law (c. 519).

• To act in the person of the parish in all juridical matters (c.532).

• To dispense from private vows made by his subject or by a visitor within the parish, but only if no injury is done to the acquired rights of others (c. 1196).

• To commute to a lesser good what has been promised by a private vow made by his subject or a visitor within his territory (c. 1197).

• To suspend, dispense, or commute a promissory oath. This faculty may not be exercised if the dispensation from the oath would tend to prejudice those who refuse to remit its obligation (c. 1203).
3. Faculties granted by the Diocesan Bishop

**Baptism**

Priests:

- To baptize those who are no longer infants according to the norms of the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults. [N.B.: The faculty to confirm the above is given by law.]

**Confirmation**

Priests:

- To confirm those who were baptized as Catholics but not raised in the Catholic Church and those who are lapsed Catholics being reconciled to the Catholic Church, who have been prepared appropriately.
- To confirm those over the age of 18 who, while baptized Catholic and only partially catechized, have prepared appropriately.

**Eucharist**

All Priests:

- For good reason to celebrate Mass twice on a weekday and three times on a Sunday or Holy Day of Obligation if pastoral necessity requires it (c. 905, #2).
- To appoint a qualified person to serve as an extraordinary minister of the Holy Communion.
- When celebrating Mass more than once on the same day, to offer the Mass for an intention for which an offering has been given, provided the offering is given to the parish or another charity (c. 951, §1).

**Penance**

All Priests:

- To hear confessions and absolve. This habitual faculty is granted to priests incardinated in the diocese or assigned in the diocese by the bishop or having a domicile in the diocese to whom this faculty is not given in the law itself (c. 969, #1).

- To remit the *latae sententiae* penalty of excommunication from abortion, apostasy, heresy, and schism provided the penalty has not been declared and is not reserved to the Apostolic See. When the *latae sententiae* penalty incurred for apostasy, heresy, or schism is remitted in the external forum, the penitent is to be notified that this is to be noted in the baptism register, together with the date (c. 1364).
• To absolve in the act of the sacrament of reconciliation anyone whomsoever of the faithful from all censures, with the exception of those reserved to the Apostolic See (c. 1355).

Censures that are reserved to the Holy See:
  o desecration of the consecrated species (c. 1367);
  o use of physical force against the Roman Pontiff (c. 1370);
  o absolution of a partner in a sin against the sixth commandment (c. 1378);
  o consecrating a bishop without a pontifical mandate (c. 1382);
  o being consecrated a bishop without a pontifical mandate (c. 1382);
  o direct or indirect violation of the sacramental seal of confession (c. 1388).

**Marriage**

**Pastors:**

• To grant permission for the marriage of a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic in some suitable place other than the parish church.

**Funerals**

**Priests:**

• To allow ecclesiastical funeral rites for an unbaptized child, if the parents had intended to have the child baptized (c. 1183, §2).

• To allow ecclesiastical funeral rites for non-Catholic unless it is evidently contrary to the will of the deceased and provided a minister of the faith of the deceased is not available (c. 1183, §3).

**Liturgy of the Hours**

**Priests:**

• To omit the Liturgy of the Hours on Christmas Eve, Holy Thursday, Holy Saturday, and on days when participating in the Chrism Mass or an ordination.

• To omit from the Liturgy of the Hours all but morning and evening prayer on Christmas Day, and Sundays and Holydays when celebrating two or more masses.

**Faculties from the Apostolic See**

**Priests:**

• No further expression of consent on the part of the Ordinary is needed for the lawful exercise in this diocese of any faculty received from the Apostolic See (c. 68).
E. Remuneration

1. Salary

Each priest is to be provided with a monthly salary in the amount established by the diocese annually. (See Appendix A). This salary is to be paid by the parish (or other institution).

In addition, the parish (or other institution) will provide adequate withholding in an amount specified by the diocese to help defray the self-employment tax expense. Any monies above this amount if deemed necessary by the priest are to be sent to the IRS using Form 1040-ES with a check made payable to the “United States Treasury.”

2. Mass Offerings, Stipends, Stole Fees, and Free Will Gifts

Mass Offerings

In accordance with the approved custom of the Church, any priest who celebrates or concelebrates a Mass may accept an offering to apply the Mass for a specific intention. (c. 945.1) Mass offerings are to be handled in accord with cc. 945-958.

A Mass intention with an accompanying offering must be given to the priest who satisfies the intention in the amount of the offering. Bookkeepers should be attentive to be sure that the offering in its full amount is given to the celebrating priest.

NB.: No one may accept more offerings for Masses to be celebrated by himself than he can discharge within a year (c. 951). Further, a priest may only accept one Mass offering per day. He may offer Masses for specific intentions at more than one Mass, but the offering must then be surrendered to the parish. (c. 951.2). Mass offerings follow the schedule for remuneration as approved by the bishops of the Province or the diocesan bishop (c. 1264, 2º).

Stipend

This is money provided to a priest other than the pastor, parochial vicar, or chaplain, as remuneration for his assistance at a Sacrament or other celebration. Stipends follow the schedule established by the diocesan bishop.

Stole Fees

All stole fees, that is suggested or established fees given on the occasion of the celebration of baptism, marriage, or funeral, are to be surrendered to the parish. If a parish indicates any

4 Stoles Fees are those monies which are requested by the parish to help defray the cost of the operation of the church. In establishing such fees, pastors are to be mindful of the right of the faithful to the spiritual goods of the church and to avoid any appearance of simony.
amount as a suggested or recommended fee to the priest, this is a stole fee and must be surrendered to the parish.

It is important that any stole fees be modest and not be a burden on the faithful who desire the Sacraments and cannot be required. Further, a parish shall not establish an exceedingly high stole fee in the hopes of dissuading people from asking for the Sacrament (particularly Matrimony). All appearances of simony are to be avoided.

**Free Will Gift**

On the occasion that a member of the lay faithful desires to give a free will gift to a priest – whether connected to a Sacramental celebration or not – the priest retains it as a free gift. This gift must not be the result of a suggested amount and no appearance should be given that it is required for the spiritual work of the priest. Pastors should note that if a funeral home or wedding coordinator suggests a “clergy fee” this is a Stole Fee, not a Free Will Gift, and must be surrendered to the parish.

### 3. Housing

The pastor is obliged to reside in the parochial house or rectory. In particular cases, however, where there is a just reason, the local Ordinary may permit him to reside elsewhere, especially in a house common to several priests, provided the carrying out of the parochial duties is properly and suitably cared for (c. 533, #1).

Whenever possible the parish or institution to which a priest is assigned shall provide a residence for the priests separate from his office or place of work.

When a place of residence is not provided, the parish or institution should provide a housing allowance of equivalent value.

In providing room and board, it is understood that the parish provide adequate food and house furnishings, housekeeping expenses, and maintenance for the priest’s residence. These items are to be included in a budget prepared and approved by the pastor and the parish Finance Council, for which the priest is to be accountable, with due regard for diocesan directives.

It is expected that those items identified as the personal possessions of the priest will be purchased by him and not by the parish. These items include, among others, personal clothing, personal vestments, books for personal use, entertainment systems, music tapes/records/CD’s, personal toiletries, etc. A list of personal possessions, including personally owned furniture, furnishings, or equipment in a parish rectory or office, should be on file with the parish. Priests are to obtain their own insurance on the value of personal property that exceeds the amount covered by diocesan insurance.
Personal expenses which are incurred by the priest outside of his ministerial responsibilities are borne by the priest himself, e.g., personal telephone, personal long-distance calls, postage for personal correspondence, etc.

4. Automobile

So that every priest is able to have adequate automobile transportation for his ministry, the Diocese of Richmond has established a Priests’ Automobile Fund, which is managed by the Diocesan Finance Office.

Each year the parish or institution to which a priest is assigned contributes an amount of money to the priests’ Auto Fund (cf. Appendix A). Periodically, the priest may apply for a grant of that amount from the Auto Fund through the Director of Finance for the lease or purchase of an automobile for his ministry. No priest or estate of any priest may claim a right to such a grant.

At ordination, money may be made available to the newly ordained from the Auto Fund for the purchase or lease of a car.

Parishes are expected to pay the ordinary operating expense of the priest’s auto, including insurance. It is the responsibility of the priest to pay the personal property tax on his own car.

5. Vacation

Unless there is a grave reason, priests are permitted to be absent from the parish each year for vacation at most one continuous or interrupted month, exclusive of those days of absence for retreat or continued education (c. 533, §2). No priest should be away from his parish for more than three consecutive weekends; priests should avoid connecting leave time with retreat or continuing education as this places an excessive burden on the parish as well as assisting clergy.

Every effort should be made to have a priest in good standing substitute for the pastor in his absence, especially to celebrate the Sunday Eucharist(s). Only in the case of emergency should the Rite of Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest be used as the Sunday ritual. In the event that a Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest is used in an emergency, the Pastor is obligated to inform the Vicar for Clergy upon his return.

6. Substitutes

The stipend and appropriate housing and travel expenses for substitute priests should be paid according to current diocesan norms as approved by the Office of Finance and the Bishop. In the event the visitor is asked to celebrate the Missa pro populo, the pastor is to provide the customary Mass offering from his own funds.
F. Continuing Formation and Retreat

1. INTRODUCTION

The Diocese of Richmond is committed to the promotion and support of the continuing formation of its priests, both for their personal well-being and for their effectiveness in the life of the Church. Continuing formation is “not a luxury, but a necessity for effective priestly ministry” (Program for the Continuing Education of Priests, NCCB, #1). Further, every priest has a right and an obligation to continue his spiritual growth and education. He has a right to strong support from his superiors, peers, and the people he serves. He also has an obligation to his superiors, and peers, but, above all, to his people, to continue to grow in grace and in knowledge” (PCEP, #2). He has a corresponding responsibility to “take the initiative in continuing his personal and professional education, which the changing needs of the church and the world demand of him” (PCEP, #16).

2. GENERAL POLICIES

1. Each priest is expected to determine his personal and professional growth needs and to plan a program to meet these needs.

2. The Vicar for Clergy will enter into dialogue with an individual priest when the priest desires to begin an extended course of studies or program while at his parish or institution, when a priest requests a sabbatical leave, or whenever a priest requests permission to be away for further systematic studies.

3. Each priest shall be expected to demonstrate his continued development in the areas of personal and ministerial growth. Minimally, evidence of continued development should be included in the priest’s Ministry Statement at the time of a request for ministerial transfer or at the time when the term of assignment is completed.

4. Generally, any priest who has had the opportunities of continuing education and gained skills should make himself available to the diocese in general and to local parishes or institutions for the purpose of sharing his skills and talents.

5. The needs of the Diocese at times will require that certain priests will be asked to forego their present ministry and enter formal training to become skilled in helping meet these diocesan needs.
3. SPECIFIC POLICIES

1. Each priest is entitled to take up to one work week per year away from his normal ministerial setting for continued education and formation.

2. The Diocesan Finance Office each year shall publish the amounts to be budgeted by each parish or institution to finance one week of continuing education and formation as well as the annual Priests’ Convocation. The time and funds are not cumulative.

3. If a parish or institution cannot provide the allotted funds, supplementary funds may be made available by the diocese, upon request to the Finance Office and the Vicar for Clergy’s approval.

4. A priest may use his allotted time and funds for available courses of study at nearby institutions of higher learning.

5. Since continuing education and formation is intended for both the growth of the individual priest and the enhancement of his ministry, each priest shall keep the parish, especially the Parish Pastoral Council, apprised of his planned program of continuing education and formation. Continuing education should not remove the priest from his parish for Saturday evening and Sunday Masses. The parish or other entity to which the priest is assigned is responsible for the cost of coverage for weekday Masses, if scheduled.

6. Each priest is expected to make an annual five-day retreat. The retreat should be scheduled so as not to remove the priest from the parish for Saturday evening/Sunday Masses. The Diocesan Finance Office each year shall publish the amount to be budgeted by each parish or institution for the financing of the retreat.

7. At times the Diocese of Richmond needs priests to be trained for specialized areas of ministry. Once the areas of need are delineated, the Bishop may ask a particular priest(s) to pursue further studies, or an individual priest of the diocese may request to begin extended study for the future benefit of the diocese. The Bishop shall consider both the needs of the Church as well as the personal inclinations and abilities of the priest when he is making his decision. The Bishop along with the priest appointed will determine the place, length, and program of study or training.

8. Each priest is entitled and expected to attend the annual Priests’ Convocation of the Diocese of Richmond.

9. If a priest attends a conference that is on the weekend, the priest should request permission of the Vicar for Clergy.
4. SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS

Specialized programs may include:
- Mentor/Pre-Pastorate Program
- Pre-Retirement Program
- Orientation Program for priests new to the diocese
- Acculturation/ Language Study
- Extended Study Programs

5. SABBATICALS

a. Definition. A sabbatical is defined as time away from one’s assignment for the purpose of personal and professional growth and renewal, through a program of study, work, prayer, and rest. A sabbatical is to be distinguished from special studies to meet diocesan needs, extended vacation, therapeutic leave, leave of absence from ministry, or leave for ministry outside the diocese.

b. A Normal Sabbatical is three (3) months or an academic semester, after which the priest is expected to return to his assignment. In consultation with the Bishop, the priest seeking a normal sabbatical is to make arrangements for his pastoral responsibilities to be handled by others.

An Extended Sabbatical is longer than an academic semester but no longer than one year and shall incorporate a structured program of study. It shall normally occur between assignments.

c. A priest may apply for a Normal Sabbatical after six (6), and before twelve (12), years of ordination, or after six (6) years of service in the diocese, and within every twelfth (12th) year thereafter. Every priest is expected to take a normal sabbatical.

A priest may apply for an Extended Sabbatical after the twelfth (12th) year of ordination or of priestly service in the diocese. Before retirement, the diocese will give consideration to granting an extended sabbatical.

d. Process of Application and Approval. The Vicar for Clergy is responsible for the administration of the sabbatical program. He shall be available to assist priests in designing and arranging sabbaticals most suited to meet individual needs and inclinations. He shall work in collaboration with a Priest Personnel Committee that shall evaluate requests in light of the personal well-being of the priests and the ministerial needs of the diocese.

In promoting and approving sabbatical applications, priority will be given to those priests with seniority of service in the diocese. When a choice must be made among participants, a priest’s personal needs, as well as his age, will be considered.

One extended sabbatical will be granted annually, provided funding is available and a priest’s pastoral responsibilities can be handled by others.
e. **Requests for a normal sabbatical** should be submitted no later than February 1 of the fiscal year preceding the sabbatical.

- Priests shall make written applications for sabbaticals to Vicar for Clergy. Upon receipt of the application, the Vicar shall immediately give copies of the request to the bishop and the Sabbatical Review Committee.

- The sabbatical request shall thoroughly outline the sabbatical particulars, detail the expenses, delineate a specific timeline, and offer recommendations for coverage of his ministerial responsibilities if necessary.

- The parish or institution to which the priest is assigned shall provide salary, normal priestly benefits and supply. The diocese will assume the cost of the sabbatical program, *i.e.*, tuition and designated fees; required textbooks and related materials, room and board; transportation or travel costs to and from the sabbatical place(s). If the normal sabbatical is granted in between assignments, the diocese shall pay the salary and normal priestly benefits.

f. **Request for Extension of Sabbatical.** Those interested in requesting an extended sabbatical should contact the Vicar for Clergy for instructions on applying for an extended sabbatical.

- The request should be as detailed as possible regarding the specifics of the program, the time lines, finances, and how such an extended sabbatical fits into the priest’s ministerial plan.

- Extended sabbaticals shall normally be granted between assignments. A priest on extended sabbatical shall be involved at appropriate times with the Personnel Committee in discerning on a new assignment.

- Only in exceptional cases shall extended sabbaticals be considered during an assignment. Any decision on the possibility of returning to an assignment after an extended sabbatical shall be made in dialogue between the priest applicant, the Bishop, the Priest Assignment Committee.

- Both the Vicar for Clergy and the Sabbatical Review Committee shall offer their recommendation to the Bishop.

g. **Accountability.** A priest on a sabbatical is responsible for staying in communication with the Vicar for Clergy and shall submit to him and to the bishop a written review of his sabbatical at the conclusion of the program.
G. Health Care

The holistic emphasis common today in medicine, psychology and even spiritual theology is based on the assumption that the body, mind, and spirit are so closely interrelated that problems in one often produce very real effects in the others. Sometimes a priest will fail to recognize that his whole life, in all its facets, is being negatively affected by poor physical fitness. Perhaps he is not eating properly or taking suitable recreation, not exercising, or not seeing a doctor regularly. Trying to cope with tension, he may have a problem with weight, alcohol or medications/drugs. The net result will be a ministry significantly diminished. The Bishops’ Committee on Priestly Life & Ministry has stated that the physical health of priests is one of the most critical issues facing the Church today.

With deep concern for the total well-being and effective ministry of its priests, the Diocese of Richmond has established the policy that each priest have a routine annual physical examination. In addition to this examination, a priest is encouraged to have a more extensive examination with the following frequency:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Through age 34</td>
<td>Every 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 35-49</td>
<td>Every 3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 50 and over</td>
<td>Annually</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Diocesan Health insurance policy provides for this health benefit. The Priest is expected to pay the insurance co-payment.

The Diocese will regularly publish the provisions of the Health Care Plan for Priests. For particular questions regarding current health insurance benefits, the Diocesan Health Benefits Administrator should be contacted.

When a priest engages the service of a mental health professional, the Diocesan Health Insurance Plan covers the cost. There is a copayment that the priest pays. This copayment is shared equally with the Diocese. Reimbursement for one half (½) the copayment is handled through the Vicar for Clergy. The Priest is expected to present receipts.
H. CRISIS INTERVENTION AMONG PRIESTS

The following is a process to address crisis intervention among priests. We believe this process is professional, compassionate, and clear.

The Diocese uses a team approach. Professionals in mental health services rely on the consultation process with other professionals to assure the best quality care for clients. Our team currently consists of three professionals from complimentary backgrounds, all of whom are committed to the care of priests and who are skilled in the areas of counseling, psychology, and clinical social work. This team approach assures objective and quality care for priests.

As licensed professionals, all team members are strictly bound to the Code of Ethics in their disciplines, which mandates strict confidentiality and all have received specific training in this area. The team will be available to all priests to answer questions about mental health and counseling on both a personal and professional level.

1. Crisis Intervention

The team helps the Diocese provide a professional response to a wide variety of situations. A set form of methodology and structure allows the Bishop, his Vicar for Clergy, and the Regional Episcopal Vicars to respond to difficult or crisis situations effectively.

The team of professionals will assist in situations such as substance abuse and/or addiction, inappropriate sexual behavior, and any other mental health issues such as depression and affective behavior. They will not intervene in pastoral dispute situations between a priest and a parish community. However, they are available to offer advice in pastoral situations, as necessary. In the case of inappropriate sexual behavior, the civil authorities may be notified.

The chair or convener of the team will consult with the other team members to obtain their insights and recommendations. The Vicar for Clergy, the Regional Episcopal Vicar, or the Bishop will notify the team immediately when a crisis situation is presented.

Whenever a crisis arises, the respective Regional Episcopal Vicar will be notified. He will collaborate with the team throughout the process. He and the Bishop will be kept apprised of the situation as it unfolds. After the chair has been apprised of the situation, he will consult with the other team members to determine a methodology and approach to the crisis.

When personal safety or health issues or legal ramifications are involved, the chair can decide to put together an intervention team immediately. When necessary, any pertinent information about the priest’s behavioral history will be provided. When intervention takes place, an appropriate treatment plan will be formulated.

If immediate intervention is not necessary, a team member will either consult with the Vicar for Clergy and the Regional Episcopal Vicar up to date about the situation. With the Regional
Episcopal Vicar, a team member will form a “fact-finding" group to interview the person or persons who have brought concerns forward.

The priest and those affected by the situation will always be included in the interview process. The priest and others will be informed about the allegations that are being made.

After they have gathered as much information as possible, the fact-finding group, including the Regional Episcopal Vicar, will submit a summary report to the Vicar for Clergy and the Bishop. The group will review the situation and outline a course of action. The group will then submit to the Bishop the recommendations of the team.

When an intervention causes the removal of the priest from his current assignment, the parish staff, which is left behind, will be provided care and direction following the priest’s departure. Following an intervention, canonical requirements will be followed so that the rights of the priest are always protected, including the right to a good name (c. 220).

Special concern should also be shown towards any victim of a priest’s actions, the victim’s family, and the parish family that are affected by the sudden departure of a priest. The Diocesan Victim’s Assistance Coordinator will immediately be consulted.

2. The Role of Regional Episcopal Vicars in the Process of Crisis Intervention

The Regional Episcopal Vicars represent the Bishop throughout the diocese, each within the region to which he is appointed. A Regional Episcopal Vicar enjoys ordinary jurisdiction and therefore speaks for the Bishop and brings the authority of the Bishop to difficult or crisis situations involving a priest.

Whenever a critical situation involving a priest might arise, both the Bishop, the Vicar for Clergy, and the respective Regional Episcopal Vicar will be informed immediately. Likewise, the Bishop and a Regional Episcopal Vicar will alert one another when they become aware of a critical situation.

In a pastoral dispute situation between a priest and a parish community, the Bishop and the respective Regional Episcopal Vicar will collaborate on an appropriate course of action. In a situation of this nature, advice will be available to the Bishop and the Regional Episcopal Vicar from a crisis team, but the team will not be directly involved in an intervention. In a situation of more serious proportions, a crisis team of professionals will be directly involved in formulating and carrying out an appropriate course of action.

The respective Regional Episcopal Vicar will always take part in the response process from beginning to end, even in those situations that involve the intervention of the crisis team. He will collaborate with the crisis team as it devises a course of action and will participate directly with the fact-finding group. Throughout the entire process, the crisis team will confer with the Regional Episcopal Vicar and apprise him of developments as they unfold.
In order to uphold the rights and protect the interests of all parties, including those of the diocese itself, the Regional Episcopal Vicar will, whenever it is appropriate, see to it that advice and guidance is sought from diocesan legal counsel. All involved in the process, legal counsel, therapists, vicars, and others, should observe to keep the matter confidential so that the good name of the innocent and the victim may be protected. The presumption of innocence is assumed in both civil and canon law (Cf. M.P. Vos estis lux mundi, Art. 12 §7).

The aim of any response will be to bring about a resolution that is equitable for all involved. An awareness of the possibility of false accusations will be operative in every case. In each situation, the Bishop, the Vicar for Clergy, and the Regional Episcopal Vicar will see to it that great care is taken to gather facts in a way that will safeguard the good name of a priest. At the same time, the facts will always be pursued in an impartial manner, ensuring that suitable remedies, required care, and equal justice are available to all parties.
I. PRIESTS’ RETIREMENT

1. A BRIEF HISTORY

The Retirement Fund was instituted in 1970 to provide a regular pension allotment for priests in the Diocese of Richmond. The administration of the fund is under the direction of the Diocesan Bishop working closely with a Committee composed of priests chosen by the Presbyteral Council. It is registered with the Treasury Department of the United States as a non-profit pension plan. Over the years there have been changes made in the fund to allow it to reflect the current needs of our priests. This fund belongs to the priests of the Diocese. If for any reason the retirement fund would be dissolved, all of the assets would be allocated to the incardinated priests both active and retired in the Diocese.

2. BENEFITS

The Retirement Fund is only one part of the retirement benefits for priests who are in good standing when they retire. It is considered part of a package that also assumes that the priest will be collecting social security benefits and will be under Medicare for health care. It also assumes that the priest will have personal savings to supplement his living situation.

In addition to the monthly pension from the Retirement Fund, the retired priest also is provided medical insurance to supplement Medicare. He is afforded, at no cost, access to the annual priests’ retreats, convocations, and other diocesan workshops for the clergy.

If the retired priest is assisting in parish work on weekends within the Diocese for at least half the year, he is also eligible to apply for a grant from the New Car Fund for the purchase of a car. The retired priest shall receive a stipend for each liturgy and be reimbursed for transportation expenses according to the Diocesan norm.

There may be special situations that affect the financial situation of a retired priest. Those needs may be presented to the Bishop directly, to the Vicar for Clergy, or through the Retirement Committee.

The Retirement Committee seeks to be in regular contact with our retired brothers and to monitor special needs as the aging process continues. Working with the Bishop, the Committee seeks to provide for our priests when they need special nursing care through the retirement/nursing facilities sponsored by the Diocese.
3. ELIGIBILITY FOR BENEFITS FROM THE RETIREMENT FUND

Every priest who is ordained for or incardinated into the Diocese of Richmond is eligible for benefits from the retirement fund. The plan currently is only for those priests; it does not cover priests who leave the active ministry or who are not in “good standing” unless the diocesan bishop has determined otherwise. Because the retirement plan does not include those priests who have left the active ministry, the Diocese has instituted a severance plan. (cf. Section J)

The normal age for retirement in the Diocese of Richmond is 70. In consultation with the Bishop, a priest may continue to serve in active ministry beyond that age. The Retirement Fund also provides disability retirement at full cost for any priest who for medical reasons cannot continue in full active ministry. These situations require the positive recommendation by the Retirement Committee to the Bishop and will be evaluated by the Committee on an annual basis. It is the hope of the Retirement Committee that such priests will help serve the Church in whatever way their health will allow.

4. ADMINISTRATION AND SUPERVISION OF THE FUND

Funding is through an annual assessment of each parish/ministry center. This assessment covers the actual costs of the pensions, administration, and future liability of the fund. Some significant gifts to the plan by our Bishop and some of our retired priests in their wills have blessed the fund.

These funds are invested with the wise counsel of the Diocesan Finance Council. The Retirement Committee works to insure that the Fund is ready to take care of present and future needs.

Each year, the Retirement Committee meets with the Bishop and its actuarial and financial agents, if necessary, to assess the level of funding for the annual pensions and the parish assessment. It seeks to provide a cost of living increase each year.

The on-going health of the active priests is a major concern for the committee, since funding early retirees is a major draw on the fund. Priests are urged to take good care of themselves so they can plan for a healthy retirement.

Moreover, since the retirement pension, even with Social Security, will require substantial personal savings, all active priests should be pro-active in planning for retirement.

The Presbyteral Council appoints the members of the Retirement Committee not only to supervise the funding of the plan but also to provide pastoral care and concern for the retired priests of the diocese, in consultation with the Vicar for Clergy.
J. WITHDRAWAL AND SUSTENANCE

1. Authorized Leave

It happens at times that a priest, in his personal life-journey, may face a critical point of decision regarding his continuing in ministry. In some cases, this can be resolved in the midst of active ministry. When this is not possible, he may seek a leave of absence for a prolonged retreat, a course of studies, or a program designed to address the issues at hand. When such a leave is considered helpful, the diocesan bishop may wish to support the priest to a reasonable and affordable extent, assisting him in his quest for greater clarity in his life.

A leave of absence may be granted to a priest incardinated in the diocese by the Bishop. Diocesan faculties are automatically withdrawn, unless otherwise indicated by the Bishop. The priest shall not exercise his ministry in public without special authorization of the Bishop. The priest must sign an agreement of the conditions of his leave. With the approval of the Bishop, financial assistance and benefits shall be provided for the priest according to the norms of Canon Law. The priest must notify the Vicar for Clergy no later than one month before the leave is to expire to inform him of the results of the leave and his intentions regarding the future.

2. Unauthorized Departure from Ministry

A priest who leaves his assignment or designated residence without the permission of the Bishop or Vicar for Clergy is considered on an unauthorized leave of absence. His priestly faculties are immediately suspended, and he is forbidden to exercise any function of priestly ministry with the exceptions noted in canon 976. Salary and all other benefits cease immediately. Health insurance may be negotiated on an individual basis with the Vicar for Clergy.

A return to priestly ministry shall depend upon the conditions set forth by the Bishop.

3. Permanent Withdrawal from Priestly Ministry (Severance)

Should a priest choose to leave active ministry, the severance package will be calculated using the following criteria:

For those with less than 5 years of service in the Diocese after incardination:

- No salary
- Diocesan health insurance plan for one year
- No grant from the Auto Fund, since at ordination a priest is given a grant for the purchase of a car

For those with 5 years of service in the Diocese after incardination:
Three (3) month’s salary
Diocesan health insurance plan for one year
Accrued car allowance

For those with 10 years of service in the Diocese after incardination:

Six (6) month’s salary
Diocesan health insurance plan for one year
Accrued car allowance

For those with 15 years of service in the Diocese after incardination:

Nine (9) month’s salary
Diocesan health insurance plan for one year
Accrued car allowance

For those with 20 or more years of service in the Diocese after incardination:

Twelve (12) month’s salary, plus one month’s salary for each year in the ministry in excess of 20 years of service
Diocesan health insurance plan for one year
Accrued car allowance

The salary is based on the total compensation paid during current year. The accrued car allowance is the amount that is contributed by parishes for benefit of the priest from beginning of the program (7/1/1983), less the amount actually used to purchase cars.
K. DEATH

Each priest is required to have a sealed copy of his will on file with the diocese within thirty (30) days of his entry into ministry within the diocese.

Each priest is strongly urged to maintain a personal financial inventory, advanced directives regarding medical care, funeral and burial instructions, and the names of persons to contact in the event of incapacity or death.

A priest’s funeral and burial expenses are ordinarily paid by his estate.

Personal financial records should at all times be kept separate from the parish or institution records.
CONSTITUTION OF THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL
Approved September 15, 2021

Preamble

The Bishop and the priests of the Diocese of Richmond share in the one priesthood of Jesus Christ by their baptism and, in a special way, by their call to Holy Orders. While all members of the church belong to the one Body of Christ, priests, by their ordination, are called to a unique ministry in the Church. The Bishop and the priests are called to the same purpose: to proclaim the kingdom of God and to build the Body of Christ.

The Presbyteral Council will be the forum for mutual, open reflection and fraternal dialogue between the Bishop and the priests of the Diocese. The Council is, by law, advisory to the Bishop (c. 495 §1).

Conscious of our responsibility to the Diocese and the communion of the Catholic Church; aware of the bonds of fraternity among all priests of this Diocese, diocesan and religious; seeking to strengthen and promote the bond of unity and affection among all the people of God of this Diocese; mindful of the call of the Second Vatican Council and in conformity with the revised Code of Canon Law; we, the Bishop and Presbyters of the Diocese of Richmond, do hereby ratify this constitution of the Presbyteral Council of the Diocese.

Article I: Name

The name of this body shall be “The Presbyteral Council of the Diocese of Richmond” and may be referred to as “The Diocesan Priest Council.”

Article II: Purpose

The purpose of this Presbyteral Council shall be:

1. To provide a forum for the full and free discussion of all issues of pastoral concern in the Diocese.

2. To aid the diocesan Bishop in the governance of the Diocese according to the norm of law so that the pastoral welfare of the people of God committed to the Bishop with the cooperation of the Presbyters may be carried forward as effectively as possible.

3. To search for and propose ways and means for effective pastoral ministry.

4. To be representative of the unity and diversity of the Priests of the Diocese.
Article III: Membership

1. To guarantee that as far as possible the priests of the *presbyterium* are represented in their diversity (cc. 498-499), the Council shall consist of elected, ex-officio, and appointed membership.

   a. Elected Membership shall consist, at a minimum, of one elected member from each designated deanery. Additional elected membership and categories can be determined by the Bishop.

   b. Ex-Officio membership shall include any diocesan Vicars, to include and not limited to, the Vicar General, Vicar for Clergy, Regional Episcopal Vicars, Judicial Vicar, and Vicar for Catholic Mission and Identity. Ex-officio members will not be eligible to be on the election ballot.

   c. Appointed membership shall be at the discretion of the Bishop to ensure various populations or individuals are represented if they are not otherwise elected by the presbyterate. Appointed membership may include, and are not limited to priests from the following categories:

      i. Diocesan Consultors
      ii. Retired
      iii. Religious
      iv. Newly Ordained
      v. Ethnicities and cultures reflective of the Presbyterate

2. Each member, except for the newly ordained, shall hold a three-year term beginning July 1 and ending June 30. The term of newly ordained members shall be for two years beginning July 1 after ordination. Terms shall not be staggered.

   a. Elected members may be re-elected for a further three-year term; however, at the end of the second term, they will be ineligible for one election cycle; however, they may be appointed by the Bishop at his discretion.

   b. The number of elected members must always be about half of the combined total of *ex officio* and appointed members. (c. 497, 1°).

3. Elections shall be held by online ballot, or by some other secure means, in May of each election year, and terms shall begin on July 1. A plurality of the votes cast shall elect in each Deanery. In the case of a tie, the Bishop will determine the winner. Each priest of this Diocese in good standing, each priest of another Diocese living in this Diocese, and each religious priest living in this Diocese and exercising some office for the good of the Diocese shall be eligible to vote and to be elected. Disputed cases concerning eligibility to vote, and to be elected shall be decided by the Executive Committee.

   a. In the event of incapacity, resignation, extended leave of absence, or death of an elected council member, the priest who had received the next highest number of votes in his category in the immediate previous election shall assume the vacated seat for the unexpired term.
b. If a priest is reassigned to a different Deanery or his status changes (e.g., from active to retired), he remains on the Council in his previous capacity and another priest is not selected to replace him.

4. From among the members of the council of priests, the diocesan Bishop freely appoints not fewer than six and not more than twelve priests, who shall constitute the college of consultors for a term of five years. The college functions according to the norm of law.

**Article IV: Officers**

1. The officers of the Presbyteral Council shall be the President, the Chairman, Executive Committee Officer 3, and Executive Committee Officer 4.

2. The President of the Council shall be the diocesan Bishop. The President shall have the right to call meetings of the Council, to preside over meetings of the Council, to place matters of concern on the agenda of the Council, to accept or reject (except where otherwise provided by canon law) the results of the Council’s deliberations, and to promulgate officially decisions arising therefrom.

3. The Chairman shall ordinarily preside at meetings of the Council (not presided over by the President), shall be the chief executive officer of the Council, and shall have the duties prescribed for this office by the parliamentary authority and by such standing rules as the Council shall adopt.

4. Executive Committee Officer 3 or Executive Committee Officer 4 may preside at any meetings of the Council and its Executive Committee in the absence of the Chairman and/or at the request of the President.

5. The Officers other than the President shall be elected by and from among the members of the Council by written ballot at the first meeting after July 1 for a term that will conclude on June 30 of the following year. No Officer, other than the President, shall hold more than three consecutive terms. In the event of a vacancy in an elected office, the Council shall elect an officer to fill the un-expired portion of the term.

**Article V: Meetings**

1. The Council shall meet ordinarily five times a year in the months of September, November, January, March, and May, and at the call of the President.

2. A simple majority of the members including a majority of the elected members shall constitute a quorum.

3. The rules contained in the current edition of Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised shall assist the Council in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with Canon Law, this constitution, and any special rules of order the Council may adopt.
**Article VI: Committees**

1. The following standing committees shall be established: an Executive Committee, a Personnel Committee, a Priestly Life and Formation Committee, a Priests’ Benefits Committee, and any other committees the Bishop and Council may deem appropriate to create.

2. The **Executive Committee** shall consist of the President, the Chairman, Executive Committee Officer 3, and Executive Committee Officer 4, elected for one-year terms. It shall receive all proposals made by the Bishop, by members of the Council, or by priests in the Diocese. It shall prepare the agenda that will be emailed to all the priests prior to the next meeting. This Executive Committee of the Presbyteral Council shall work closely with the Executive Committee of the Diocesan Pastoral Council throughout each year. The Executive Committee, at least once a year, shall solicit a reaction from all the priests to the work of the Council and shall invite priests to make specific recommendations for Council discussion.

3. The **Personnel Committee** is intended to serve the Bishop and the clergy in a collegial and co-responsible manner on personnel matters related to the pastoral needs of the Diocese. The Vicar for Clergy will serve as chairman of the Personnel Committee. Members of the Personnel Committee are appointed by the Bishop either *ex officio* to include the Vicar General, Vicar for Clergy, and the three regional Vicars Episcopal, as well as from the presbyterate at large to reflect the diversity of the presbyterate, that is, two priests representing the international clergy and one priest each in the years of ordination 1st to 15th; 16th to 31st; and 31st and above. The appointment of each member is for a term of two years. Through the work of the deans and regional Vicars, the Committee offers consultation to all diocesan priests regarding assignment and re-assignment, seeking to match the individual talents of the priests and the present and future needs of the diocesan Church. The Committee recommends assignments to the Bishop.

4. The **Priestly Life and Formation Committee** shall concern itself with the intellectual, spiritual, and emotional growth of the priests, and will provide opportunities for continuing education, spiritual formation, and personal improvement.

5. The **Priests’ Benefits Committee** shall concern itself with all phases of priests’ benefits. A report on the welfare of the retired priests and on the financial status of the retirement program shall be made each year to the Council.

6. The Chairman of the Presbyteral Council, with the consent of the Council, shall appoint the chairman of the above committees, unless stated otherwise. In each case, the chairman of the Presbyteral Council will seek to appoint the committee chairman from the Council membership whenever this is possible and practical.

7. The Chairman of the respective committee, with the consent of the Council, shall recommend the members of the above committees to the Bishop for approval, unless stated otherwise. In each case, the chairman of the respective committee will seek to appoint its membership from the Council membership whenever this is possible and practical.
Article VII: Finances

The expenses of the Council and its committees shall be paid by the Diocese of Richmond, according to an annual budget, approved by the Bishop.

Article VIII: Amendments

1. This constitution may be amended by a vote of two-thirds of the members of the Council, and subject to the concurrence of a majority vote by ballot of all those eligible to vote in Council membership elections and to the approval of the diocesan Bishop.

2. This constitution shall be adopted by a two-thirds ballot of the presbyterate of the Diocese and the subsequent approval of the diocesan Bishop and shall become effective ten days after the date of such approval.
## Appendix A — Diocese of Richmond Priests’ Benefits

(Updated July 2021)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Salary</strong></td>
<td>$27,554.02 ($1,059.77 per pay period)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Allowance for Social Security</strong></td>
<td>$3,306.94 ($127.19 per pay period)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Allowance for Priest Pension</strong></td>
<td>$6,000 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Allowance for Retired Priest Health Insurance</strong></td>
<td>$5,200 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Allowance for Retired Priest Long Term Care</strong></td>
<td>$2,500 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>403(b) Employer Matching Contributions (based on a 4% or more priest contribution)</strong></td>
<td>$550.88 (if fully participating at 4% employee contribution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Allowance for Retreat Expense</strong></td>
<td>$750 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Allowance for Continuing Education</strong></td>
<td>$1,000 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Allowance for Priests’ Convocation</strong></td>
<td>$1,100 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health Insurance / Medicare Supplement</strong></td>
<td>$13,026 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Car Allowance</strong></td>
<td>$4,680 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gym Membership</strong></td>
<td>$600 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medical and Prescription Reimbursement</strong></td>
<td>Priests in the Diocese are eligible for reimbursement of Medical and/or Prescription expenses after the first $750 on an annual basis. Amounts over $750 and under $2,000 are paid by the parish. Any out-of-pocket expenses over $2,000 per year are paid by the Diocese. Any request for reimbursement over $2,000 should be sent to the Office of Human Resources, Benefits Manager. All requests will need to have receipts attached from the pharmacy or doctor’s visits.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Credit Card receipts are not acceptable for reimbursement.

The parish/diocese will be responsible for the moving expense reimbursement of up to $5,000. Once a priest is reassigned, the new assigned location will pay the moving costs.

Certain items, i.e. those with exceptional costs for moving, are to be considered separate expenses to be paid for by the priest (e.g., antiques, precious works of art, pets, etc.). Opting for insurance to cover losses/damages when utilizing a rental truck, van, or company should be considered, as the parish or Diocese is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

Additional ancillary expenses such as car insurance, gasoline, auto repairs, etc. will be paid by the assigned location.
Appendix B — Benefits for Retired Priests

1. **Retirement benefit:** $30,000 per year (effective beginning July 1, 2017). (50% deemed housing allowance and not taxable). (Program in place to move to $30,000 per year, in $2,000 annual increments).

2. Retired priests are placed on a comprehensive Medicare supplement plan, paid in full by the Diocese. Retired priests also continue with Anthem Vision and Dental insurance.

3. Priest continues to receive offerings for Masses said for deceased as if he were on active duty.

4. Potential continuation of draw on Car Replacement Fund. (Priest must say Mass at least 26 weekends a year in the Diocese of Richmond and be certified by Vicar for Clergy; Diocese makes annual contribution).

5. Priest receives $100 per Sunday Eucharist, $50 per Daily Eucharist, $50 for Reconciliation and $75 for Communal Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Priest also receives mileage per IRS published rate and reimbursable meals by receipt (not to exceed amounts issued by IRS for reasonable per diem rate).

6. Hearing aids every five years not to exceed $3,000.

7. Continue to attend annual Diocesan Priest Retreat.

8. Continue to attend annual October Priests’ Convocation.

9. Continue to attend other Diocesan conferences and seminars for priests.

10. Ability to reside in Diocesan-owned retirement homes.

   - Priest must be evaluated and need assisted living care. Priest pays a portion each month, dependent on level of care; Diocese pays remainder.

   - Priest picks location and effort is made to place him.

   - This arrangement continues as long as priest needs assisted living, nursing care, or memory (e.g., Alzheimer care).
Appendix C — Highlights of Priests’ Disability Plan

Short-Term Disability

- 1st of Month following date of Ordination
- $400 weekly benefit
- 29 Calendar-Day Waiting Period
- Benefit payments for 22 weeks (5 months)

Long-Term Disability

- $1,750 monthly benefit
- 180-day elimination period
- Benefit duration:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age When Disabled</th>
<th>Benefit Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 63</td>
<td>Social Security normal retirement age, but not less than 42 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>30 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>24 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>21 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>18 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>15 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69 or older</td>
<td>12 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Mental illness, alcoholism, drug abuse — 24 months’ outpatient
- Disability benefits are not available for retired priests.

Disability Claims Procedures

- The telephone number to report a disability is: 1-800-445-9057
- Call the toll-free number from 8:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M. Monday through Friday. The following information will be asked:
  - Name and identification information (e.g., Social Security number)
  - Employing location and the last day of work
  - Manager’s name and phone number
  - Give the current Diocesan Benefit Manager’s Name
  - Nature of claim and whether it is work-related
  - Treating physician’s name, address, and telephone number
  - The group name is **CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF RICHMOND** and the group number is **677571**.