

PARISH COUNCIL AND COUNCIL MEMBER DISCERNMENT PROCESS

ST. PETER'S FIRESIDE

St. Peter's Fireside is governed in four capacities: our bishop, lead pastor, parish council, and ministry team. Our Bishop provides spiritual authority and oversight and works through an appointed Lead Pastor (traditionally called the Rector). The Lead Pastor collaborates with the Parish Council and the Lead Pastor oversees the Ministry Team (other ordained ministers and staff) in the equipping and building up of the church.

As a church, one of our core value is *Under Authority*. We are citizens of the kingdom of God, not culture, led by Jesus through his Word, Spirit, and Church. In the kingdom of God, authority is not wielded in the same way as the world. Rather, we follow Jesus who uses his authority to serve and not be served. The Parish Council is called to model our value of Under Authority for the well-being of our church.

THE ROLE OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Council is composed of annually elected and appointed members who uphold the constitution and bylaws of St. Peter's Fireside. They work alongside the Lead Pastor to ensure the responsible implementation of the church's vision, stewardship of our resources, and management of our affairs as an incorporated religious society. As the name *Council* suggests, the team serves as an advisory and administrative support to the Lead Pastor. For example:

- Under God, the Council advises the Lead Pastor on the spiritual oversight and leadership provided for the overall direction of the church.
- The Council offers administrative support to ensure the responsible governance of the affairs of the church. They help implement and develop policy.
- The Council, through the Lead Pastor, set the standards of conduct of employees of the church. Although the Council advises on these matters, the hiring and management of the staff is delegated to the Lead Pastor.
- The Council offers careful thought to the long term strategic health and effectiveness of the mission of Christ among us.

LIMITS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Council is not an Elder board. Members on the Parish Council are not elders (*presbyters*) in the biblical sense, as within the Anglican tradition this is the role of an ordained priest. Rather, members of the Parish Council function more like deacons in the New Testament. Deacons in the New Testament can serve the world on behalf of the church, and can also serve the church on behalf of the church. Council members primarily serve in this latter capacity. For example, in Acts deacons are appointed to care for the widows to allow the Apostles to focus on preaching and prayer. Similarly, we appoint Council members to serve the structural needs of our church and free the Lead Pastor and ministry team from excess administrative responsibilities in the management of the affairs of the church as a incorporated religious society.

The Parish Council does not set doctrine or standards of worship as these matters are established by the formularies of our diocese and province. However, the Council will sometimes assist the Lead Pastor in discerning how our doctrines speak into pressing social issues and pastoral situations, and how to best contextualize our worship services for our environment. But the Council is never responsible to establish or change doctrine or set standards of worship.

The Parish Council serves under the authority and spiritual guidance of our Bishop and Lead Pastor. In times of difficulty or crisis, they defer to the structures of our denomination and not into their own authority.

DISCERNMENT PROCESS

Potential Council members can be recommended to the Parish Council at any time. These recommendations can be directed to the People's Warden. Additionally, at every Annual Vestry Meeting, there is an opportunity to put forward potential candidates. The Parish Council considers recommendations and invites potentially well-suited candidates to begin the discernment process.

Members of the Parish Council must go through a discernment process. St. Paul writes to Timothy, "Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. *And let them also be tested first*; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 3:8-13)

When considering potential candidates, the Parish Council looks for men and women who exhibit spiritual maturity and a diversity of gifts and skillsets. For example, one Council member may bring a strong theological background, another may be gifted in vision casting, whereas another is gifted in wisdom and discernment, still another Council member may have skill in human resources or finances, and another may bring a gifting in administration. A well-balanced Council provides spiritual depth and giftedness coupled with excellence in needed skills. In a sense, they are a microcosm of the body of Christ: many members in one body working together under the Head.

REQUIREMENTS

All members of the Parish Council must be an active participant at St. Peter's for a minimum of a year. Participation means consistent Sunday attendance, giving both in finances and time, and ideally engaged in a Community Group.

Council members will be in agreement with the doctrinal distinctives of St. Peter's Fireside and the theological stances of the Anglican Network in Canada, and will embrace the vision, mission, values, and ethos of St. Peter's Fireside.

DISCERNMENT PROCESS: DOCUMENTATION

Applicants to the Council complete the following requirements. All documents submitted will be confidential and only viewed by existing Council members.

1 - THREE REFERENCES

- 1) Personal (Friendship of 5+ years): This reference should address how the person handles conflict, how they invest into building a meaningful friendship, and any weaknesses.
- 2) Employer: This reference should address work ethic.
- 3) Not-yet-believer: This reference should address character and how the person's faith is perceived.

II - THEOLOGY

- 1) An affirmation of the 39 Articles and Jerusalem Statement. If there are any disagreements with the articles or statement, a document must be submitted noting what article(s) are in dispute and where the disagreement lies (around 200 words max per article). *Note:* The 39 Articles are a historical document and we do not expect people to share its polemic stance toward the Catholic church or Anabaptists, nor embrace its stance toward church and State or Christians and war.
- 2) Short-form (500 words) theological statements/stances on:
 - 1) What is the Bible?
 - 2) What is the gospel?
 - 3) How does the gospel speak to the LGBTQ2S+ community?
 - 4) How does the gospel speak to people in the process of deconstruction?
 - 5) How does the gospel speak to abortion and euthanasia?
 - 6) What are your views on women in ministry?
- 3) Short-form (500 words) essay on your understanding of St. Peter's Fireside's vision. Please do not regurgitate our vision statement to us! Express your own understanding, even if it diverges from our formal statement.

III - PERSONAL INFORMATION

- 1) Cover letter explaining why you would like to join the leadership team (800 words max).
- 2) Brief written testimony (750 words max)
- 3) Answer the following questions briefly (100-200 words each):
 - 1) Do you have any persistent or habitual sins that would disqualify you from Christian leadership? In considering this question, please read the Timothy passage above.
 - 2) Are you in any debt? If so, what kind? (i.e. Credit Card, Mortgage, Student Loans); And what are the circumstances of your debt?
 - 3) What are your current spiritual disciplines and practices?
 - 4) How do balance work and rest? Do you keep a Sabbath?
 - 5) Who holds you accountable? What does that look like?
 - 6) What are your discerned spiritual gifts?
 - 7) Who are your theological influences?

Please submit parts I, II, and III in single document.

DISCERNMENT PROCESS: INTERVIEW

Once the documentation is submitted the Parish Council reviews it. If any clarification is required an email will be sent to the candidate requesting more information. If the Parish Council approves the documentation, 1 to 2 of the existing members of the Parish Council along with 1 regular member of St. Peter's Fireside conduct an interview with the candidate. This interview is usually 90 minutes.

DECISION AND INSTALLATION

Once the discernment process is complete, the Parish Council may offer a position on the team. When a seat is offered, an announcement will be made to the church soliciting any feedback about the candidate. All new members initially serve as non-voting members for a trial basis before being elected as voting-members. This period may range from three to six months. If the candidate is a good fit, they are presented to community as a potential voting-members. This happens at the Annual Vestry Meeting or All Parish Meetings. Council members can be appointed for 1-3 years at a time, with a maximum of 7 consecutive years (according to our bylaws).