

Guidelines for Area/Parish Social Concerns Committees in the Diocese of New Ulm

I. Name, Nature, and Powers

- A. The name of this body shall be the Social Concerns Committee of the Church/es of _____, hereafter referred to in this document as *the committee*.
- B. The committee is a collaborative body of the Christian faithful with the pastor/pastoral administrator, and is a committee of the area/parish pastoral council. With the area/parish pastoral council, the committee assists the pastor/pastoral administrator “to foster works by which the spirit of the gospel, including social justice, is promoted” (canon 528.1). The committee helps the area/parish community to fulfill its mission to “reach out to all people, especially to the poor, the sick and the needy...and witness to God’s love in daily life—in family life, work and recreation, education and cultural life, business and agriculture, parish and civic activity, works of mercy and justice.” (from the *Diocesan Mission Statement*)
- C. The committee fosters the pastoral mission and ministry of service by animating the area/parish community to:
 - 1. deepen its understanding of Catholic social teaching, and its awareness of local, national and international social concerns [EDUCATION];
 - 2. identify and address the needs of people in the parish and wider community; develop programs of outreach and service, and/or cooperate with service groups and agencies [DIRECT SERVICE, WORKS OF MERCY];
 - 3. speak out for people who are poor and vulnerable; work for legislation and social policy which reflects justice and respect for human dignity and rights [ADVOCACY];
 - 4. promote action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world [SOCIAL ACTION, WORKS OF JUSTICE].

II. Membership

- A. *Number and Composition*
The committee is composed of four to twelve adult (18+ years of age) members of the area/parish—a nearly equal number of laymen and laywomen. The pastor/pastoral administrator, and the area/parish director of social concerns (if any), are *ex officio* members of the committee.
- B. *Qualifications*
Committee members are to be fully initiated and practicing members of the Catholic church, committed to Catholic social teaching and to promoting works of mercy and justice.
- C. *Selection*
The initial chairperson and committee members are selected by the area/parish pastoral council, with the approval of the pastor/pastoral administrator. After the committee is established, the committee itself selects qualified members, and selects its own leadership with the approval of the area/parish pastoral council and the pastor/pastoral administrator.
- D. *Representative to the Area/Parish Pastoral Council*
One member is selected by the committee to serve as its representative to the area/parish pastoral council. This representative cannot be an *ex officio* member of the committee. The

representative normally serves for two years, is expected to attend all meetings of the area/parish pastoral council, and reports to the area/parish pastoral council regarding the committee's activity.

E. *Term*

Each member of the committee serves a three-year term, which can be renewed. No member can serve more than two consecutive terms without being off the committee for one year.

F. *Vacancies*

A member who resigns the committee or who within a year misses three regular meetings of the committee, ceases to be a member. Vacancies are filled as indicated in section II. C.

III. Leadership

A. The *chairperson* of the committee plans an agenda for each meeting of the committee; sends the meeting agenda and any related documentation to committee members; conducts each meeting of the committee; coordinates the committee's activities.

B. The *vice-chairperson* of the committee assumes the duties of the chair in the absence of the chairperson, and fulfills those duties delegated to him/her by the chairperson.

C. The *secretary* of the committee records the minutes of each meeting of the committee; publishes the minutes within one week of each meeting; and sends copies of the minutes to all members of the committee.

D. The committee shall have an area/parish staff person (either the pastor/pastoral administrator or a staff person appointed by and responsible to the pastor/pastoral administrator) who assists the committee's chairperson to plan meeting agendas, and monitors the committee's decisions and actions.

IV. Meetings

A. The committee generally meets monthly, or at least quarterly.

B. At each regular meeting, significant time is devoted to prayer, study, and reflection.

C. Special or additional meetings may be called by the chairperson, or by consensus of the committee's members, provided three days notice is given to members.

D. Decisions and actions of the committee are determined by consensus of the members. No official decision or action may be carried out without the consensus of the members and the approval of the pastor/pastoral administrator.

V. Subcommittees

A. The committee's chairperson, in consultation with the committee's members, appoints any subcommittees or task forces, as needed.

VI. Amendments

A. Any amendments to these statutes must be recommended by the committee and approved by the area/parish pastoral council and pastor/pastoral administrator.