CHAPTER II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LAY PEOPLE STRUCTURE AFTER THE VATICAN COUNCIL II
CHAPTER II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LAY PEOPLE STRUCTURE AFTER
THE VATICAN COUNCIL II

The Vatican Council II is popularly known in the Catholic Church as Vatican II. It began on October 11, 1962 and officially ended on December 8, 1965. It was the 21st Ecumenical Council in the Catholic Church. It was convoked by Pope John XXIII and held in Saint Peter’s Basilica, Rome.¹ The Council was carried out in four sessions:

- **Session I**: October 11 to December 8, 1962
- **Session II**: September 29 to December 4, 1963
- **Session III**: September 14 to November 21, 1964
- **Session IV**: September 14 to December 8, 1965

Pope John XXIII had suffered due to health problems over the early part of 1963, and he expired on June 3, 1963. The Cardinals chose Pope Paul VI, who convoked the Council for the remaining sessions. The Vatican Council II is considered the greatest of all the previous Councils in the Catholic Church for the following reasons.² (1) The total number of participants to this Council greatly exceeded the number of any previous Councils. The largest number of participants in the previous Council had been in Vatican I with 737. Vatican Council II had more

---

than 2600 Bishops from all over the world. And taking into account other experts, the number of participants was 3000. (2) This Council was not only the largest in number, but also the most representative in terms of nations and cultures. Vatican Council I, with its 737 delegates, was dominated by Europeans. But between Vatican Council I and Vatican Council II, a major change happened in the Catholic Church in the increase in native Bishops in each country. This change was visible in the representatives, who attended Vatican Council II. 1089 were from Europe, 489 from South America, 404 from North America, 374 from Asia, 296 from Africa, 84 from Central America, and 75 from Oceania. (3) This Council was also more representative than earlier Councils in terms of non-Catholic and Lay people observers. There were 63 non-Catholic observers in the Council. And there were 52 Lay people observers, of whom 29 were Lay men and 23 were Lay women. (4) This was the first Ecumenical Council to have telephones, typewriters and other modern means of communication and transportation. It was also the first to be covered by newspapers and magazines from all over the world, as well as by radio and television. (5) This Council was also special in its purpose. Unlike so many Councils before it, this Council was not convoked to confront a serious attack upon the Christian truth or Principles of the Catholic Church. Pope John XXIII in his opening address on October 11, 1962 said that the Council’s purpose was to promote peace and the unity of all people in the world. With this purpose, the Catholic Church made a movement from an European cultural custody to a genuine World Catholic Church. The Vatican Council II discussed, revised and finally approved the following 16 documents.³

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Approved date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Constitution on Sacred Liturgy</td>
<td>04-12-1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Decree on Means of Social Communication</td>
<td>04-12-1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dogmatic Constitution on the Church</td>
<td>21-11-1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Decree on the Churches of the Eastern Rite</td>
<td>21-11-1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Decree on Ecumenism</td>
<td>21-11-1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Decree on Pastoral Office of Bishops</td>
<td>28-10-1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Decree on Renewal of Religious life</td>
<td>28-10-1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Decree on Priestly Training</td>
<td>28-10-1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Declaration of Christian Education</td>
<td>28-10-1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Declaration on Non-Christian Religious</td>
<td>28-10-1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation</td>
<td>18-11-1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Decree on the Apostolate of Lay people</td>
<td>18-11-1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Declaration on Religious Freedom</td>
<td>07-12-1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Decree on Mission activity of the Church</td>
<td>07-12-1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Decree on the Ministry of Priests</td>
<td>07-12-1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World</td>
<td>07-12-1965</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These 16 documents differ in content. The Dogmatic Constitutions are said to be more powerful than decrees and declarations. Constitutions speak on matters that pertain to the nature of the Catholic Church. Decrees and declarations speak about practical questions in human life. All the 16 documents are divided into major documents and minor documents. The following are the 7 major documents in summary form:⁴

---

1. **Dogmatic Constitution of the Church:**

   This document speaks the Church as the whole people of God. “Everything which has been said so far concerning the people of God applies equally to the Lay people, Religious and Clergy.” The authority of Pope and Bishops is for the service of the People of God. The Lay people have full share in the Mission – service of the Church.

2. **Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World:**

   This document emphasizes that the Catholic Church exist in the World. It does not exist apart from the world. Church’s purpose is to serve the whole human family in order to make the human more human.

3. **Decree on Ecumenism:**

   This document calls for collaboration and dialogue with non-Catholic communities. And the unity with other Christian Communities has to be achieved through a change of heart.

4. **Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy:**

   Since the Church is the whole people of God, everyone (including Lay people) must be encouraged to participate in the ritual celebrations. And the rituals should be understood in terms of their meaning and application in the life of the people.

5. **Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation:**

   God speaks to the people of God through Bible, sacred tradition and the teachings of the Church. These are linked and joined together for the growth of the Church.

---

5 Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Vatican II, 1964, No: 31-32.
6. **Declaration on Religious Freedom:**

This document stresses the fact that no one is to be forced to accept the Christian truths. This principle is rooted in human dignity and the freedom of the act of worship.

7. **Declarations on Non-Christian Religions:**

This document states that God speaks also through other religious. Catholic Church has the obligation to engage in dialogue with other religions. And the Jewish people cannot be blamed as a people for the death of Jesus.

The following are the minor documents in summary form:  

1. **Decree on Missionary Activity of the Church:**

This document insists that the Catholic Church should recognize and preserve whatever truth is found among the nations. And the whole Church should involve in missionary activities. It is an obligation for every member of the Church.

2. **Decree on the Apostolate of the Lay People:**

This document emphasizes that the Lay people are full members of the people of God. And the Lay people share directly in the mission of the Church. The activity of the Lay people is in the world – the world of family, culture, economic affairs and politics.

3. **Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches:**

This document speaks about the importance of keeping the spiritual riches of the Eastern Churches. And it is necessary to make peace with the churches of the East.

---

4. **Decree on Pastoral Office of Bishops:**

This document speaks about the authority of the Bishops in terms of service to the People of God. Bishops function at three levels: on their own Diocese, national levels with other Bishops, and world level with the Pope. Bishops need to exercise their power as a servant to the People of God.

5. **Decree on the Ministry of Priests:**

Priests are united among themselves as brothers. They do their service in the Diocese under a Bishop. The purpose of their work is to build up the Lay people as one family.

6. **Decree on Priestly Training:**

This document insists on a close connection of seminary formation with the Lay people’s daily life problems. The Priests should be given continuing education in life.

7. **Decree on Renewal of Religious life:**

The Religious life must be based on the message of the Bible, and the original purpose of the community. The Religious life must take into account the changing conditions of the times.

8. **Declaration on Christian Education:**

The emphasis of this document is placed on school education. Education must be humane, keeping with the changes in all the Sciences. Education must give personal maturity and social responsibility.
9. **Decree on the Means of Social Communication**:

The instruments of social communication such as cinema, radio, television and similar media must be properly used. The Church needs to be careful toward media because of the danger of abuse. But media must be used where it is needed.

In brief, the Vatican Council II (1962-1965) was the most significant event in the modern era of the Catholic Church. This Council was the reason for the self-understanding of the Catholic Church, its relationship to other Christian traditions, other religions and the world today. The Vatican Council II asserted that the joys and hopes, the sorrows of the poor are the joys and hopes of the Church as the People of God. The Council officially ended on December 8, 1965 as it was scheduled.\(^7\)

**Salient Features of the Vatican Council II on the Lay People**

In the Catholic Church, no Council in past 2000 years had ever written a document on the Lay people. Vatican Council II is the first Council to emphasize the distinct and real role of the Lay people in the society. Several documents of the Vatican Council II speak about the nature and functions of the Lay people. The following documents of the Vatican Council II addresses the different activities of the Lay people:\(^8\) Document on the Nature of the Church, Document on the Sacred Rituals, Decree on instruments of social communication, Decree on Ecumenism,

---

Decree on Pastoral Duties of Bishops, Declaration on Christian Education, Decree on Missionary Activity of Church and Decree on Priestly Ministry. The statements on the Lay people in these documents can be briefly brought out in the following salient points:

1) The Lay people are full members of the People of God – the Church.
2) The Lay people are the biggest number in the Church.
3) The Lay people are equal in dignity with the Bishops, Priests and Religious. And they are called to become holy people.
4) The Lay people share in the activity and responsibility in the Church.
5) The Lay people are empowered to bring the message of the Bible to other people. The place and context of the Lay people is the world. Through their ordinary work and life, friendship and example, they can lead others to know about God and become holy people.

There is one document of the Vatican Council II called “Decree on the Apostolate of Lay people” answers several questions about the Lay people. What role do the Lay people play in the Church’s missionary activity? Are they simply to follow the instructions of those in authority? Do they have a mission in their own right? These questions are answered by this particular document that was issued on November 18, 1965. This document has a brief introduction, and six Chapters. In the introduction, the Council insisted that the activities of the Lay people should be broadened and intensified due to modern conditions such as population increase, progress in science and technology. Besides, the Lay people belong to the community of the people of God with a fundamental equality in dignity and rights.

---

The First Chapter, “The Vocation of the Lay People in Activity” defines “Activity” as all activities that are experienced in the life of the Lay people. Through their life experience, the Lay people are called to involve in the Mission of the Church. Second Chapter, titled “Objectives” the Council invites the Lay people to communicate God’s love to the world. This is the primary Mission of the Lay people. The Mission of the Lay people includes other aspects of life such as family, culture, arts, work, politics, and all the professions. Everything, the Lay people do should be motivated by love. The higher degree of love involves having compassion for those in need. The dignity of humans requires that they have food, drink, clothing, shelter, medicine, access to work, education and freedom.\textsuperscript{11} It is the duty of every Lay person to provide comfort and opportunity in ways, they can. The Lay people should seek what is just. Third Chapter “The various Fields of the Activity”-the Council identifies the areas of action such as Parishes, the family, youth, and the social situation at the local, national and international levels. The document discusses the need for the Lay people to work in good relationship with their Parish Priests in the building up of the Parish community. This Chapter takes a special notice of the importance of activities that are done by married couples and entire families. Their activities should affirm the rights and duties of parents to educate children, and defend the dignity of the family.\textsuperscript{12}

Fourth Chapter “The various form of the Activities” the document emphasizes that the individual Lay activity is as important as the group activity.


\textsuperscript{12} O’Malley, John, \textit{What Happened at Vatican II}, Harvard University Press, 2008, p.84.
Individual Lay activity includes public worship, prayer, hard work and sufferings in life. The document stresses the point that Lay people’s activities are essential today because the Priests and religious have no longer effective access to many areas of society in several countries. The Lay people are encouraged to form associations in cooperation with the Bishops and Priests. Fifth Chapter, “External Relationships” briefly discusses the need for proper relations between the Lay people and the Church authority. The Council asks the authority to promote the works of the Lay people, to provide them with support, and to direct the conduct of the Lay people to the common good.  

While the Lay people have the obligation to renew the society, the authority (Bishops and Priests) have also an important role. The Bishops have the duty to help the Lay people by interpreting the moral principles to be followed in the transformation of the society. The Bishops are given the power to judge whether or not the activities of the Lay people conform to the moral principles. This document asserts that:

“Bishops, Parish Priests of Parishes, and other Priests should keep in mind that the right and duty to exercise these tasks is common to all the people of God – both Clergy and Lay people, and that the Lay people have their own roles in building up the Community.”

And the Final Chapter, “Formation for the Activities” emphasizes that Lay people must be well trained in their tasks. They are invited to understand religious truths that are associated to their daily tasks. Lay people need to make use

---


of their talents and skills. All the activities of the Lay people must promote their willingness to love. In the final section of this Chapter, the document recognizes that a special training is required for the Lay people in the present materialistic age. The Lay people are encouraged to witness by their simple life against all forms of materialism. The document recommends training the Lay people in the right use of material things. They are always to be attentive to the common good in line with the principles of the social teachings of the Catholic Church. The concluding “Exhortation” reaffirms that through this Vatican Council II invitation is extended to all the Lay people to associate themselves with God and Society.\footnote{Faggioli, Massimo, Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning. Paulist Press, New York, p. 214}

The Vatican Council II has been a special Council in the history of the Catholic Church. One of the primary reasons is because the Lay people are placed as a major issue of consideration. The Vatican Council II has been referred to as the ‘Council of the Lay People’. The Lay people are the Church. They comprise 99 % of the total Catholic Population. The tasks of the Lay people are vital today because the society is becoming more material and consumer driven. And with all the great growth in technology, man is controlled by technology. Therefore, the Church encourages the Lay people for active involvement in transformation of society, with special concern for the poor.\footnote{Latourelle, Rene, (ed.), Vatican II: Assessment and perspectives, Paulist Press, 1988, p.78.}

The Lay People Structure in the Parish Level

\textit{Basic Christian Community:}

Basic Christian Community is a forum where Christianity is practically lived. This is a movement where the Bible is read and contemplated in the context of
daily life in order to practice the values of the Bible. This is a training ground for Lay leadership and involvement. These values are imprinted in the minds of Lay people living in Kanyakumari District.\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{Dawn of Basic Christian Community (BCC):}

BCC is the union of Christian families. In the Vatican Council II the importance of BCC was highlighted and efforts were taken to flourish it. As a result Basic Christian Communities were started. Initially in South America and Italy they were started among Catholic Christians and established during 1960-1970. Realizing and experiencing that ‘God lives among people’ is the primary objective of Basic Christian Communities.\textsuperscript{18}

Today in all Dioceses seminars on BCC (Anbiyam) are conducted and training camps are organized. Particularly in Kanyakumari District, a Zonal Conference for BCC was planned to conduct on April 18 2014. This Conference united all the Basic Christian Communities around Kanyakumari District.\textsuperscript{19}

A Catholic Priest by name Father Edwin was the pioneer of BCC activities. He had decided to practice the maxim that “Every Christian should be dedicated to live for others” in small groups. During those days he came to know about the Basic Christian Community in Latin America. So inspired by that, he started Basic Christian Communities in Kodimunai, where he was serving as the Parish Priest in 1977. There were initially some oppositions, but it was gradually

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Letter of Bishop Peter Remigius to Fr. Joseph, Co-ordinator of Basic Christian Communities, dt. 9 October 2014.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Minutes of Christian life Commission, Christhu Nager, dt. 6 September 2013.
\end{itemize}
accepted by all. Diocese of Kottar itself came forward to form it in all parishes. Today the Church in Tamil Nadu is implementing their scheme.  

Basic Christian Community is a small group of Lay people gathering together in order to read the Gospel, and to reflect in the context of life, and to strive hard to realize the Bible values in their daily lives.

**Objectives of Basic Christian Communities in Kanyakumari District:**

- To give the attitude of sharing and praying.
- To come together with love.
- To give opportunities to develop talents.
- To attend the events both good and bad which take place in the Basic Christian Communities.
- To perform the Parish and Diocesan activities.

**The Agenda for the BCC meeting:**

1. Introductory Prayer.
2. Scripture Reading
3. Proclamation of the Bible
4. Exchange of reflections on the Bible
5. Prayer
6. Evaluating and Praying
7. Song of BCC.

---


(OR), The alternate way of conducting Meeting.

1. Song of BCC
2. Welcome
3. Attendance
4. Scripture reading & sharing
5. Reports of the Secretary and the Treasurer, Discussion
6. World news
7. Resolution and planning
8. Guidance of a Priest or a Religious
9. Vote of thanks
10. Concluding prayer.

**Sharing and Services of BCC:**

During the BCC meetings Lay people contribute money as much as possible for the public works. From this amount, aid for marriage of poor girls, study of poor children and medical expenses for poor and sick people are distributed. Cleaning the surroundings, performing street awareness programs and visual exhibitions still bind the people together. During Lenten days, praying the way of cross along the streets, celebrating Mass in BCC, participating in the liturgy conducted in the Church especially reciting the rosary in groups are pious exercises specific to BCC spirituality. An important function of BCC is to faster friendship among the families and to help them to lead a good Christian life. In short Basic

---

Christian Communities are considered as the backbone of our Parishes in the district.\textsuperscript{23}

\textit{Activities and Future Visions of BCC:}

- Getting the government aid for the school going students.
- Performing awareness programs at parish level.
- Supplying Bible to the families which do not possess it.
- Encouraging the School going students to attend the Sunday catechism class and movements for children.
- Visiting the sick and praying together.
- Solving family problems amicably.\textsuperscript{24}
- Encouraging the BCC members to take part in the Holy Mass, liturgy and in sacraments.
- Attending together the events both good and bad which take place in the BCC families.
- Motivating the members to do more good things.\textsuperscript{25}

BCC is considered important in all the parishes. Kanyakumari District is a model in this line. BCC is a forum to express love friendship and communication for others. It is a place where the word of God is read and shared. This is the most suitable forum to establish the God’s presence in Kanyakumari District by the Lay people.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{23} Basic Christian Community booklet-Adithalam, No: 479, dt. August 2014.
\textsuperscript{24} Minutes of Christian Renewal Movement of India Association, Christhu Nagar, dt. 6 March 2014.
\textsuperscript{25} Minutes of Christian Life Community Association, Enayam, dt. 20 February 2014.
\textsuperscript{26} Basic Christian Community booklet – Adithalam, No: 480, dt. September 2014.
The Parish Council

The Parish Council and Parish Finance Council are the two Lay people structures in the Parish level. These two structures came into existence after the Vatican Council II in the Catholic Churches. The document Decree on Activities of Lay people recommended the establishment of Councils to increase the Lay people participation in Parish decision making, and to co-ordinate Lay people initiatives.\(^\text{27}\)

According to the documents of the Vatican Council II, the Parish Council has threefold purpose: (1) The Parish Council investigates spiritual and social matters; (2) The Parish Council reflects on those matters; (3) The Parish Council reaches conclusions that are recommended to the Parish Priest. These three purposes are emphasized in the rule of the Canon Law of the Church in Canon 536 and 511.\(^\text{28}\)

In the Diocese of Kottar, the Parish Council and Parish Finance Council guidelines were made in 1973. In the same year, these Councils were established in many Parishes. However, the establishment of Parish Pastoral Council in all the Parishes was made as a law in the Diocese in 1984 by Bishop Arockiasamy.\(^\text{29}\) In 1990 and 1997, the guidelines of the Parish Pastoral Council and Parish Finance Council were revised on the recommendations of the Priests, Religious and Lay people. The revision of the guidelines was done under the leadership of Bishop Leon A Tharmaraj. Again, these guidelines were reformed in 2010 by the present Bishop Peter Remigius, who made it a rule to establish Councils in every Parish.\(^\text{30}\)

\(^\text{28}\) The Code of Canon Law, Vatican, 1983, Canon 511, and 536.
Every Parish Council has the following office bearers: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Joint-Secretary and Treasurer. Except for the President, all other positions belong to the Lay people. The Priest, by his appointment as a Parish Priest becomes the President of the Parish Council. The President of the Council is to be the animator and motivating the Lay people to work together. Consultation with the Layparishioners as individuals and as a community is required for the Parish Priest to carry out his duties and responsibilities. This is clearly stated in the Canon Law of the Catholic Church (Canon 519).\(^{31}\) Normally, the composition of the Council is balanced between members elected by the Parish People and members, appointed by the Parish Priest. Council members (Lay people) are elected from the Basic Christian Communities and from the Associations in the Parishes.\(^{32}\) The total numbers of Parish Council members differ from Parish to Parish. The following qualifications are proposed by the Church for membership in the Council: (1) Strong Belief in God, (2) Good Conduct, (3) Having Wisdom and Prudence, (4) Willing to commit time, talent and wisdom in a consultative and collaborative manner, (5) Willing to recognize and respect the viewpoints of others.

The Parish Council is a consultative body in the Parish. As such, it is responsible to the Parish Priest in helping him in his leadership role.\(^{33}\) The Parish Council recognizes the different talents of the Lay people in the Parish, and invites them to an active role in the community. Through the Lay members of the Parish Council, the Parish Priest comes to know the voice of the Lay people in the Parish. The Parish Council Lay members represent the entire Parish Community, and exercise

\(^{31}\) The Code of Canon Law, Vatican, 1983 Canon 519.


their responsibility with a concern that includes all the Lay people in the community. The Lay people’s needs and ideas are discussed and decisions are made as to the directions and priorities of the Parish community.\(^{34}\)

Following are the data collected on the Agenda items for the Parish Council.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>The activities of the Parish Council</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Building Community Halls for the Parish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Planning for new roads, lighting and roads widening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Acquisition of Church land and its maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Provision and maintenance of Public toilets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Planning for programs to promote Bible values including issues of Social justice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Attending to the needs of the disabled people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Planning to show concern for the poor, the sick and the afflicted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Planning to strengthen relations with the Diocese and the Bishop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Designing plans to foster solid Christian families in the Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sketching steps to execute and follow the decisions and guidelines from the Bishop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Devising plans for the long-term development of the Parish Community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Planning to build water tank to supply water for Parish Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Building up good relation with the Parish Financial Council and Associations in the Parish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Devising plans to increase the income of the Parish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Designing plans for the religious education of children and young adults.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Lay people in the Parish Council hold their membership for three years, with possibility of reselection or re-appointment. Parish Council members

would hold their membership only for two consecutive terms.\footnote{Kottar Diocese: Guidelines for the Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils, \textit{op.cit.}, p.20.} The Parish Priest appoints Lay people to the Parish Council. Since the election process may not bring sufficient representation of the total Parish Community, the Parish Priest appoints three Lay people to achieve this goal.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.} p.15} The total number of Lay members depends on the size of the Parish. Ordinarily, the minimum number is ten, the maximum twenty. The Parish Council members meet once in a month on a regular basis. The Parish Council structure at the Parish level has increased the interactions between the Lay people and the Parish Priest. Leadership is shared in the Parish Council. While the Parish Priest presides over the Council, he shares the responsibility of agenda – setting with the Lay people. The Parish Priest even names a Lay person to preside over the Council. Since rules are needed to regulate the behavior of all the Council members, the Parish Priest establishes group norms and Council by-laws in consultation with the Lay members of the Council. The Council plans for the formation programs for the Council members to achieve open communication and mutual trust among the members. The Parish Priest communicates with all the Lay people in the Parish about the activities of the Parish Pastoral Council. The Parish Priest and Lay members of the Parish Council make decisions through effective group processes.\footnote{Loughlan, S., \textit{Collaborative Ministry: Skills and Guidelines}, Ave Maria Press, London, p.65.}

The Parish Finance Council

The Parish Finance Council is the second structure for the Lay people in the Parish level. The Canon law of the Catholic Church No:537 requires each
Parish to establish a Finance Council as a compulsory structure to play an advisory and consultative role with the Parish Priest:

“In each Parish there is to be Finance Council which is governed, in addition to the universal law, by norms issued by the Diocesan Bishop and in which the Christian faithful (Lay people) selected according to these same norms, are to assist the Parish Priest in the administration of the goods of the Parish.”\(^\text{38}\)

The structure of the Parish Finance Council is established for the following purpose (1) To give technical skills in financial matters to the Parish Priest, (2) To assist and advise the Parish Priest with respect to the supervision of all material goods belonging to the Parish, (3) To advise the Parish Priest concerning the administration of Parish possessions within the limits of the Diocesan and Canon Law guidelines.\(^\text{39}\) The minimum requirements and qualities needed for individuals to be on Finance Council are (1) He or she should be a Catholic, (2) Should be a member of the Parish, (3) Should have skills in Finance Management, (4) May have additional knowledge and experience in construction, maintenance and purchasing material things.\(^\text{40}\) In the Diocese of Kottar, 80 % of the total Parishes have established Finance Councils. Leadership roles are established in the Finance Council. Accordingly, the Parish Priest presides over the Finance Council. A Vice-chairperson, normally a Lay person is working with the Parish Priest to set the agenda of the Council meetings, and to provide the agenda and other materials to Finance Council members in advance.

---

\(^\text{38}\) The Code of Canon Law, Vatican, 1983, Canon 537.


\(^\text{40}\) Kottar Diocese: Guidelines for the Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils, *op.cit.*, p.35.
of meetings. A Secretary records the minutes of the Council meetings. The other Finance Council members consist of the Vice-President, Secretary, Treasure and Joint Secretary of the Parish Council. A representative from each Association in the Parish becomes the member of the Finance Council. And the Parish Priest appoints two Lay persons who have experiences to contribute to the Finance Council. The membership term is fixed for three years, but renewable once. The Finance Council meetings are scheduled once in four months or more frequently if required. Some Parishes hold their Finance Council meetings once in a month. Since the purpose of the Parish Finance Council is to provide advice and support to the Parish Priest, the Parish Priest is required to be present at the meetings. In every Finance Council meeting, there are vital interactions between the Parish Priest and the Lay people.

The Finance Council helps the Parish Priest in the preparation of a budget of the income and expenditures foreseen for the activities of the entire Parish in the coming years. This yearly budget is reviewed by the Pastoral Council, and approved by the Parish Priest prior to the beginning of each year. The Parish Finance Council supports the Parish Priest in the preparation of an annual financial report of income and expenditures covering all Parish activities. The Finance Council members help the Parish Priest in assuring that the following functions are performed at the right time: (1) Timely payment of debt (2) Timely interest payments and (3) Investment of surplus funds. The Finance Council members plan with the Parish Priest to increase revenue through various means such as Parish taxes and special


fund raising programmes. The Council assists the Parish Priest in the co-ordination of the activities with other Parish organizations such as the Pastoral Council. The Parish Pastoral Council recommends to the Parish Priest’s priorities, goals and objectives for the Parish. The Parish Priest reviews those priorities, goals and objectives and approves them for planning with the Finance Council. The Finance Council members estimate income and suggest amounts for each category of the budget. If budget money is inadequate for all the goals and objectives, the Finance Council suggests financial alternatives for the Parish Pastoral Council’s consideration. If there is excess amounts, the Finance Council recommends to use of the money in several other ways such as payment of debt or investment for the future, or use the money for persons who are really inneed.43

Parish Finance Council members who are majority Lay people promise a duty of loyalty to the Parish. They are to function in the Finance Council in the interest of the Parish rather than in the personal interest or interest of other organization. In particular, the duty of loyalty requires the Finance Council members to avoid conflicts of interest that are destructive to the Parish. The members of the Finance Council are required to maintain confidentiality on those matters marked as confidential.44 Materials such as agenda, meeting minutes, and review materials cannot be disclosed to others, if marked as confidential. Reports to the Parish Community are shared, once decisions are finalized. Communication with the Parish Community is done to invite revenues of the Parish community.

In several Parishes the Finance Council is divided into subcommittees of Lay people to deal with responsibilities and duties. The works of the subcommittees include the following.\footnote{Kottar Diocese: Guidelines for the Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils, \textit{op.cit.}, p.39.}

\textbf{(1) Budget Sub-committee} – It assists the Parish Priest in the preparation, presentation, and review of the annual budget. It analyzes Parish revenue and makes recommendations to the Parish Pastoral Council for maintaining and increasing revenues in order to meet Parish objectives and priorities. It periodically (monthly) reviews income and expenditures and makes recommendations to limit the expenses within set limits. It provides all Lay people of the Parish with periodic (semi-annual) comprehensive written reports on the Parish’s financial situation. It reviews financial audits of the Parish performed by an independent auditor and advises, on how to correct identified mistakes. It communicates results of audits to the Parish Community. It educates the Parish Lay people on the need for Parish involvement and support.\footnote{Fisher, Mark, \textit{op.cit.}, p.98.}

\textbf{(2) Maintenance Sub-committee} – It advises the Parish Priest regarding the results of quarterly inspection of all Parish infrastructures. It recommends repairs or replacements based on priorities established by these inspections. It develops teams of Lay people in the Parish as volunteers, who will donate their time and skills for Parish maintenance tasks.
(3) Development Sub-committee – It provides long term planning for both the financial and structural needs of the Parish Community. It works closely with the budget and maintenance subcommittees. The Parish Pastoral Council and other Parish organizations plan for the long term financial needs of the Parish. Through these subcommittees, a good relationship is fostered between the Parish Priest and Lay members of the Parish Finance Council. Sharing information, listening, contributing to the discussion, and promoting consensus are taking place in the Finance Council between the Parish Priest and Lay members of the Council.\(^{47}\)

The Lay People Structure in the Diocesan Level

There are two structures, namely the Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Diocesan Finance Council for the Lay people in the Diocesan level. In these Councils, there is broad representation from Lay people from all over the Diocese.

Diocesan Pastoral Council

The Vatican Council II document ‘Decree on Bishop’ states that in each Diocese, a Pastoral Council is established.\(^{48}\) The Bishop himself will preside over it, while specifically chosen Clergy, Religious and Lay people will participate. The same idea is stressed in the Canon Law of the Catholic Church:

“In each Diocese, to the extent that Pastoral circumstances recommend it, a Pastoral Council is to be established whose responsibility it is to investigate under the authority of the Bishop all those things which pertain to Pastoral works, to ponder them and to propose practical conclusions about them.”\(^{49}\)


\(^{48}\) The Code of Canon Law, Vatican, 1983, Canon 491:1

\(^{49}\) Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops, Vatican, 1973, No: 204.
This Canon Law indicates the following key elements of a Pastoral Council in the Diocese. (1) The nature of the Pastoral Council is Pastoral (spiritual and social). The Bishop may ask the Lay people and the participants of the Pastoral Council for Pastoral-related advice. Even that advice needs to be related to the spiritual and social development of the Diocese. (2) The membership in the Pastoral Council is to be representative. According to the Catholic Church, all Lay people are eligible for membership if they are of good conduct. The fact that Lay people can participate as members in the Council along with the Clergy and Religious, emphasizes on certain equality all have as ‘People of God’. (3) The Council is advisory. The Council is consultative in the sense that the Bishop makes the final decision. However, the members of the Pastoral Council help the Bishop to arrive at the right decision and their help is valuable and real.

The Diocesan Pastoral Council gives consultation to the Bishop on problems and proposals by making recommendations based on careful reflections. This work includes the following functions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>The activities of the Diocesan Pastoral Council</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>To review and respond to Diocesan issues and proposals under consideration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>To participate in the Pastoral planning process by reviewing existing goals and recommending changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>To encourage and support spiritual growth and shared responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>To identify and present the experiences, hopes, needs and concerns of diverse ethnic groups in the Diocese.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>To develop ways for dialogue and communication between the Diocesan Pastoral Council and Parish Pastoral Councils, Diocesan administration and other groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Membership in the Pastoral Council of the Diocese of Kottar includes the Bishop, Vicar General, Chancellor, Treasurer, Secretary of Priest’s Council, four Vicars from four Vicariates (Kottar, Colachel, Thiruthuvapuram, Mulagumoodu), Secretaries of the Diocesan Commissions, one representative from each Parish Council in the Diocese, two representatives from the Religious organizations and those Lay people appointed by the Bishop. The Pastoral Council represents the age, gender, culture and race of the entire Diocese. The Lay people make up the majority of the membership in the Council. This Council could be called as a ‘Lay Council’, because 80% of the membership is of Lay people. The criteria for selecting the Lay people for the Diocesan Pastoral Council consist of the following:

- They (Lay people) are in touch with Parish life.
- They show concern about their local communities.
- They are significantly involved in Church-related matters and Parish life.
- They have the skill to listen to others
- They are able to represent the opinions of others
- They are able to assess issues and proposal and their implications for the community

The Bishop is the President of the Diocesan Pastoral Council. The Vicar General functions as the Vice President. In the absence of the Bishop, the Vicar General conducts the meeting. A Lay person is appointed as the Secretary of the

---

Council. The duties of the Secretary include (1) Keeping an accurate record of all
meetings of the Council, (2) Maintain an updated record of the names, addresses,
telephone numbers of all Council members, (3) Maintaining an attendance record of
all Council members, (4) Attending to all correspondence related to the Council and,
(5) Serving as a resource person for the Council by attending to the needs for regular
and special meetings. The Diocesan Pastoral Council meets four times a year. The
President, Vice President and Secretary have the responsibility of setting the place,
date and time. The Bishop as the President of the Council calls for special meetings.\textsuperscript{54}

The basic agenda followed at meetings are:

1) Call to Order
2) Presentation of Minutes
3) Approval of Minutes
4) Reports from Particular Commissions
5) Discussion items
6) Action items
7) Announcements by the Bishop
8) Adjournment

The discussion items are for sharing local experience and concerns in
the Parishes and Diocese. Action items refer to the in-depth discussion of major
issues and proposals, and the development of related recommendations. The Pastoral
Council gives opportunities for the Bishop to lead the discussion on particular topics
such as how to celebrate Parish-festivals in the Parishes within moderate expenses.\textsuperscript{55}


The Pastoral Council may also propose issues for further study or research related to diocesan planning. At the choice of the Pastoral Council, and according to need, other permanent or ad hoc committees are also formed. These committees include:\(^{56}\)

(1) **Development Committee**: It is responsible for Diocesan Pastoral Council internal development, including prayer and social gatherings and Council performance evaluation.

(2) **Nominating Committee**: It is responsible for selection and orientation of new members.

(3) **Long Term Planning Committee**: It is responsible for taking steps for long term planning and for challenging the Council members to a long term perspective in its reasoning.

(4) **Short Term Planning Committee**: It is established by the Bishop to look into short term solutions for issues. Diocesan Pastoral Council represents the entire Diocese. And Lay people (members) devote time to be present and participate in the agenda. They contribute to the discussions through future-oriented thinking and a constructive attitude.

**Diocesan Finance Council**

Diocesan Finance Council is one of the structures established by the Church for the Lay people involvement in the Diocese. Qualified Lay people are invited to be in the Diocesan Finance Council. This is a development that is brought

out by the Vatican Council II. The involvement of Lay people in the Finance Council is considered as a powerful sign of openness. Such openness is expected to lead to true transparency and accountability that is essential to build the relationship between the Lay people and the Bishop in the Diocese. The Catholic Church’s Canon Law 492 states:

“In every Diocese, a Finance Council is to be established, over which the Diocesan Bishop himself or his delegate presides ever and which consists of at-least three members of the Christian faithful (Lay people) truly expert in Financial affairs and Civil law, outstanding in integrity, and appointed by the Bishop.”

In the Diocese of Kottar, the Diocesan Finance Council consists of seven persons from Clergy and eight persons from the Lay people. The Clergy consists of Bishop, Vicar General, Treasure of the Diocese, and four Forane Vicars from four Vicariates. The Lay people are: one representative from each Vicariate, two Lay auditors appointed by Bishop, and two experts (Lay experts) in financial matters. The Bishop appoints and manages the Diocesan Finance Council for the following purpose:

- To provide for transparency and accountability with respect to all Diocesan financial matters.
- To provide a real Lay people involvement in Diocesan Financial affairs
- To avoid conflict of interest in Diocesan Financial matters.

The Diocesan Finance Council has a majority of Lay people, who are not employed by the Diocese, and do not have a material business or processional interest with the Diocese. They are appointed with minimum requirements of character to function on the Finance Council. The minimum requirements are that they are practicing Catholics, and have the experience necessary to contribute to the Finance Council. The Diocesan Finance Council is presided over by the Bishop and determines the agenda for those meetings. The Vicar General has the role of the Vice–President to preside over at the meetings in the absence of the Bishop. The Vice-President with the help of the Treasurer of the Diocese assists the Bishop in determining the agenda for the meetings. The Treasurer, who is considered very important to the Council reports regularly to the Council. He also acts like a Secretary in the Council to keep an accurate record of the proceedings at the Council meetings. The term of membership in the Finance Council is three years. One more term of three years is granted to the members, who are reappointed by the Bishop. After working for two terms, the reappointed member cannot continue in the Finance Council. The Bishop has the power to remove a member from the Council at any time for genuine reason. The cause can be either mental or physical inability. The Finance Council meets four times a year. Special meetings of the Council are also called at the wish of the Bishop as situations may require. Written notice of all meetings is provided in the form of a meeting agenda at least one week in advance of a meeting date. Any member, who misses two scheduled Council meetings without

---

giving prior notice to the Bishop or to the Treasurer of the Diocese, could be removed from the Council.\textsuperscript{62}

The following are the responsibilities of the Diocesan Finance Council:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>The Activities of the Finance Council</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Oversee the preparation of the Annual Diocesan budget, as well as periodic review of that budget.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Receive and review the Annual Diocesan Audit Reports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Receive and review an annual report on the financial condition of the organizations under the Bishop’s control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Provide consultation to the Bishop in the light of the financial situation of the Diocese.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Give or withhold consent by deliberative vote in matters of extraordinary business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Receive and review a regular report on the financial condition of the Diocesan development programmes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Advice the Bishop regarding the appointment of the Treasurer of the Diocese.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 8     | Advice the Bishop regarding an overall development plan for the Diocese on  
|       | (a) Property Transactions  
|       | (b) Construction Projects  
|       | (c) Development and Revenue Programs  
|       | (d) Insurance Programs |
| 9     | Advise the Bishop regarding any changes in the Diocesan practices in the following  
|       | (a) Parish contribution to the Diocese  
|       | (b) Investments of Diocesan assets  
|       | (c) Diocesan Development Fund |
| 10    | Advice the Bishop regarding Financial settlement and negotiations as needed or requested. |

\textsuperscript{62} The Code of Canon Law, Vatican, 1983, Canon 492: 2.
Give consultation to the Bishop, for important matters of the business of the Diocese, in the light of the Financial situation of the Diocese.

Advise the Bishop on the change of wills and properties of the people, if there is sufficient reason and the power to change is granted by the donor.

Give suggestions to the Bishop on the appointment of auditors.

Review with the Bishop the annual reports from the Parishes.

Give suggestions to the Bishop on appointing legal advisors.

These responsibilities involve adequate interactions between the Lay people in the Finance Council and the authorities – the Bishop, Vicar General, and Treasurer of the Diocese. The Finance Council of the Diocese is also empowered to form several standing committees to help the work of the Council. The following are some of the standing committees.

- **Audit Committee**
  
  It is responsible for co-ordination of the Annual Diocesan Audit and other auditors of the Diocesan organizations.

- **Budget Committee**
  
  It is responsible for co-ordination of Annual Diocesan budget and periodic review of that budget. It is also to review the Annual Parish reports.

- **Investment Committee**
  
  It is responsible for periodic review of Diocesan investments and recommendations regarding management of those investments.

---

In each Standing Committee, there are three to six members. A representative from the Diocesan Finance Council coordinates the works of the standing committees. All the standing committees are appointed by the Bishop, depending upon need. The Diocesan Finance Council especially the Lay members of the Council have the opportunity to work closely with the Bishop, who is responsible for the material goods of the Diocese. Consultation between the Lay members and Bishop is at the Centre of the decision-making process. In this process, there is sharing information, listening, contributing to the discussion, and promoting consensus.\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{64} Oliver, Robert, \textit{The Vocation of the Laity to Evangelization}, Gregorian, Rome, 1997, pp.80-85