

St Paul's Benedictine Community Constitution

I. Name

The community shall be known as St Paul's Benedictine Community.

II. Purpose

- A. In the Anglican tradition, a Religious Community is a society of Christians in communion with the See of Canterbury, who voluntarily commit themselves for a term of years, or for life, to obedience to their Rule and Constitution.
- B. The Religious life is a particular form of Christian living which is characterized by a degree of separation from worldly concerns, common celebration of the liturgy of the Church, individual prayer, and private reading of Sacred Scripture.
- C. The mission of St Paul's Benedictine Community is the development and support of Benedictine spirituality in the mixed Camaldolese tradition which integrates eremitic (individual) and cenobitic (community) religious life within St Paul's parish community, Riverside, Illinois.
- D. The Community shall, through the consecration of life offered through the Rule of St Benedict, aid in the development of the spiritual life of each of its members. The Community, through its common life, shall encourage the growth and unity of all its members, as an example to all with whom they come in contact. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, the Community shall serve God in the mission and worship of the holy Catholic Church.

III. Government

- A. The four documents by which the members of the Community shall be governed are the Rule of St Benedict as the foundation of its spirituality and life, St Paul's Parish Rule of Life, the Customary, and the Constitution.
- B. Amendment of the governing documents shall require a three-fourths majority of the members of the Chapter. All members of the Chapter shall be notified in writing of the proposed changes no less than one month before the Chapter meeting.

IV. Visitor

- A. If the Ordinary of the diocese is not the Bishop Visitor of the Community, he shall, on the occasion of a vacancy in the office of Bishop Visitor, be informed by the Superior of the vacancy within one month of its occurrence. The Chapter will proceed to elect

a new Bishop Visitor. The sanction of the Ordinary of the diocese shall be necessary for the formal tendering of the Visitorship to any Bishop other than himself.

- B. The Bishop Visitor shall be elected by at least a three-fourths majority of the Chapter on the motion of the Superior. The term of the Bishop Visitor shall be five years. There is no limit to the number of terms a Bishop may serve as Bishop Visitor.
- C. It shall be the duty of the Bishop Visitor to carry out a visitation of the Community at least once every four years.
- D. The Bishop Visitor is the guardian of the observance of the Rule and Constitution and serves as guarantor to the Church at large of the Community's sound administration, stability, and right to confidence. He shall have power to receive appeals from any member of the Community without hindrance from the Superior. On receipt of such an appeal, he shall himself appoint a time and place for the hearing of the appeal convenient to all parties. The Bishop Visitor shall make no decision without consultation with the Superior and the Chapter.

V. Superior

- A. The character of the office and ministry of the Superior is contained in the Rule of St Benedict. The Superior shall lead the Community under the guidance of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Superior shall seek the prayerful advice of the Chapter and also seek the wise counsel of the Bishop Visitor.
- B. The Superior shall coordinate, facilitate, and oversee the life of the Community and shall chair meetings of the Chapter. When acting as chair, the Superior may vote to break a tie.
- C. The Superior shall be elected by the Chapter by a three-fourths majority to serve a term of five years and may be elected to successive terms. The Superior must be a full, professed member of the Community. (A founding member may serve as Superior *pro tem* as a Postulant until the establishment of the novitiate, then may serve as Superior *pro tem* as a Novice until the first two or more members are professed.)
- D. Upon electing a Superior, the Chapter will notify the Bishop Visitor of the election.
- E. The Superior appoints the Secretary of the Chapter and the Director of Formation. The Superior also nominates to the Chapter candidates for Bishop Visitor, Spiritual Advisor, and external Confessor.

VI. Chapter

- A. The Chapter shall consist of all active professed members of St Paul's Benedictine Community, each of whom shall have one vote. Where legal corporate structure is needed, the members of the Chapter are *ex officio* the members of the corporation.

B. Meetings of the Chapter

1. The Chapter shall normally meet monthly. Special Chapter meetings may be called by the Superior or by a majority vote of the Chapter members.
2. Postulants, Novices, and Oblates attend Chapter meetings with voice but no vote. Founding members may vote as Postulants until the establishment of the novitiate, then may vote as Novices until the first two or more members are professed.

C. Conduct of meetings of the Chapter

1. The Superior shall chair meetings of the Chapter. In the absence of the Superior, the Superior's designated Chapter member shall chair the meeting.
2. The Chapter shall decide the following matters by a three-fourths majority vote:
 - a. Admission to postulancy, novitiate, and profession of vows
 - b. Admission of Oblates
 - c. Granting of a leave of absence
 - d. Dismissal or dispensation of vows
 - e. Alienation of property
 - f. Election of a Bishop Visitor
 - g. Election of a Superior
 - h. Election of a Spiritual Advisor and an External Confessor
 - i. Amendment of the governing documents
 - j. Dissolution of the Community
3. All other matters shall be decided by a simple majority vote of the Chapter.
4. Minutes of all business meetings shall be carefully recorded and presented at the next meeting by the Secretary of the Chapter.

VII. Professed Membership

A. Any active Baptized member of St Paul's parish community who is at least 18 years of age, who lives out the provisions of the three levels of St Paul's Parish Rule of Life, and who has the conviction of being called by God to the life of the Community may apply for membership.

B. Postulancy

1. Postulancy is a period of probation in which newly admitted members begin their training in the life of the Community that they may more deeply consider their vocation from God, especially to the Community, and that they may test their own resolve and fitness.
2. Postulancy shall normally require a minimum of six months. Extensions or variations shall be at the discretion of the Chapter, as shall be the release of a Postulant who is felt by them not to have a true vocation to the Community.
3. Postulants may withdraw from association with the Community at any time, if they feel that the life of this Community is not that to which God is calling them.

C. Novitiate

1. A postulant may be received as a Novice by vote of the Chapter. Special regard shall be paid to the opinions of the Superior and the Formation Director.
2. The term of the novitiate shall be two years but may be extended. Such extensions shall not go beyond one additional year. The Novice shall be released

from the Community if not nominated and approved for profession by the Chapter.

D. Profession of Vows

1. Four months prior to the possible date of profession, a Novice shall inform the Chapter, in writing, of the desire to make a profession of vows.
2. The Chapter shall determine the readiness of the Novice. Special regard shall be paid to the opinions of the Superior and the Formation Director. The Chapter shall vote on acceptance of the Novice's application for professed membership.
3. The profession of vows shall be in force for five years, and may be renewed with the approval of the Chapter.
4. By the means of vows, the Professed Members take upon themselves the public observance of the Benedictine vows of Obedience, *Conversatio morum* [fidelity to Benedictine life], and Stability as described in the Rule of St Benedict, St Paul's Parish Rule of Life, the Customary, and the Constitution, stabilized by a sacred promise to God, and the signing of an instrument of profession.
5. After acceptance by the Chapter and making a profession of vows, a Novice becomes a full member of the Community, entitled to all privileges of the same, as well as becoming liable for all the responsibilities full membership entails.
6. At the discretion of the Chapter a Professed Member may be granted a leave of absence for a specified period of time. During a leave of absence a Professed Member has voice but no vote in Chapter meetings.

E. In living out the Rule of St Benedict and St Paul's Parish Rule of Life, all Postulants, Novices, and Professed Members shall:

1. Follow a discipline of daily prayer and Scripture reading, including, a four-fold Divine Office which includes at least the monthly recitation of the Psalter
2. Be regular in attendance at the Eucharist with the Community particularly on Sundays, major weekday Holy Days, and the Triduum Sacrum
3. Read the daily reading of the Rule of St Benedict
4. Attend the Community's annual retreat
5. Have a Spiritual Director
6. Observe the Evangelical Virtues of poverty, chastity, and obedience by:
 - a. Living simply with regards to material possessions
 - b. Pursuing modesty, discipline, and purity of heart in all relationships as well as the recognized standards of Christian morality
 - c. Taking Baptismal and other sacramental vows with utmost seriousness

VIII. Oblates

A. Any active Baptized member of St Paul's parish community who is at least 18 years of age, who lives out the provisions of the three levels of St Paul's Parish Rule of Life, and who has the conviction of being called by God to the life of the Community may apply for membership as an Oblate.

B. Oblate Postulancy

1. Oblate postulancy is a period of probation in which newly admitted members begin their training in the life of the Community that they may more deeply

consider their vocation from God, especially to the Community, and that they may test their own resolve and fitness.

2. Oblate postulancy shall normally require a minimum of six months. Extensions or variations shall be at the discretion of the Chapter, as shall be the release of a Oblate Postulant who is felt by them not to have a true vocation to the Community.
3. Oblate Postulants may withdraw from association with the Community at any time, if they feel that the life of this Community is not that to which God is calling them.

C. Oblate Novitiate

1. An Oblate Postulant may be received as a Oblate Novice by vote of the Chapter. Special regard shall be paid to the opinions of the Superior and the Formation Director.
2. The term of the oblate novitiate shall be two years but may be extended. Such extensions shall not go beyond one additional year. The Oblate Novice shall be released from the Community if not nominated and approved for profession by the Chapter.

D. Profession of Vows

1. Four months prior to the possible date of profession, an Oblate Novice shall inform the Chapter, in writing, of the desire to make a profession of vows.
2. The Chapter shall determine the readiness of the Oblate Novice. Special regard shall be paid to the opinions of the Superior and the Formation Director. The Chapter shall vote on acceptance of the Oblate Novice's application for Oblate membership.
3. The profession of vows shall be in force for two years, and may be renewed with the approval of the Chapter.
4. By the means of vows, the Oblates take upon themselves the public observance of the Benedictine vows of Obedience, *Conversatio morum* [fidelity to Benedictine life], and Stability as described in the Rule of St Benedict, St Paul's Parish Rule of Life, the Customary, and the Constitution, in a manner appropriate to each Oblate's secular life as mutually agreed upon with the Superior, stabilized by a sacred promise to God, and the signing of an instrument of profession to each Oblate's individual rule.
5. At the discretion of the Chapter an Oblate may be granted a leave of absence for a specified period of time. During a leave of absence an Oblate may attend Chapter meetings.

E. In living out the Rule of St Benedict and St Paul's Parish Rule of Life, all Oblates as well as Oblate Postulants and Oblate Novices shall:

1. Follow a discipline of daily prayer and Scripture reading, including, a form of the Divine Office mutually agreed upon with the Superior which includes at least the monthly recitation of the Psalter
2. Be regular in attendance at the Eucharist with the Community particularly on Sundays, major weekday Holy Days, and the Triduum Sacrum
3. Read the Rule of St Benedict at least annually
4. Attend the Community's annual retreat
5. Have a Spiritual Director
6. Observe the Evangelical Virtues of poverty, chastity, and obedience by:

- a. Living simply with regards to material possessions
- b. Pursuing modesty, discipline, and purity of heart in all relationships as well as the recognized standards of Christian morality
- c. Taking Baptismal and other sacramental vows with utmost seriousness

IX. Temporal Possessions

- A. The administration of temporal possessions of St Paul's Benedictine Community is the responsibility of the Chapter. The Community may only be dissolved by a three-fourths majority vote of the Chapter, with the approval of the Bishop Visitor.
- B. In the event of the dissolution of the Community the assets of the Community shall be placed in a not-for-profit charitable corporation whose members shall be elected by the Chapter at the time of the vote dissolving the Community. The appointed corporation members shall then constitute a self-perpetuating Board of Directors who shall manage in perpetuity those assets and distribute the earned income from said assets to not-for-profit Christian religious and charitable agencies whose mission is consistent with the Benedictine tradition, values, and spirit; or in the case of designated endowments, with the provisions of the legal instruments establishing the endowment.

Adopted 21 June 2005