

What Does a Charter Look Like?

We hesitated about putting a “model” charter in this book, because there are so many variables that each parish can (and should) decide to handle differently. Only you, for example, can make a judgment about how big your committee should be, or how you choose your chairperson. After all, one reason we devoted Chapters 2 through 4 to organizational issues is because there are so many questions where each committee will need to make its own judgments. In addition, you may have a parish council structure in place that already addresses how other parish committees, like your liturgy committee, will be formed and led.

So we regard the document below as just one *sample*, not a model. We include it primarily to convince you that a useful committee charter doesn't have to be endlessly long or detailed. Make all the changes in it you need to, and remember that there's little here that's required. If you don't have good, productive people to fill all the committee slots suggested here, then *don't fill them*, or feel free to set up the layout of your committee's membership in another way entirely. Read this charter for a few ideas, and then go out one night to a comfortable local bar and draft one of your own.

St. Athanasius' Liturgy Committee Charter

The purpose of our committee is to serve our parish through the ministry of liturgy. We hope to build the faith of our community through an understanding of our church's rituals and traditions, and through the art of finding the most helpful expression of those traditions for our parish and its people.

1. We will advise the pastor on all matters relating to liturgy, including but not limited to all the matters he chooses to ask our opinion about.

2. We will work closely with our parish council on any liturgical question it chooses to assign to us for reflection and comment.
3. The parish liturgy committee will meet at least ten times annually. The attendance of the chairman, the music director, and the pastor (at least) is required at each meeting.
4. While our decisions and reactions are not binding upon the parish or its staff, as a matter of course the liturgy committee should be informed in advance about decisions and actions that affect the parish's liturgies. These areas include the hiring of parish musicians and liturgists, changes in the church environment, and important changes in the liturgical schedule.
5. At least once a year, our committee will devote a meeting to an overall reflection on the parish's liturgical life and the successes and failures of the past year. After that meeting, we'll circulate notes describing the committee's discussion and its consensus to the pastor and the parish staff.
6. The pastor will serve as a member of the liturgy committee but will not serve as chairperson.
7. The parish music director will serve as a member of the committee, but not as its chairperson. At least once a year the committee will devote all or part of a meeting to providing feedback and reflections on the parish music program overall. The pastor retains full decision-making authority concerning the music director's employment and compensation. However, the pastor will consult with the liturgy committee before hiring or terminating a music director, and members of the liturgy committee chosen by the chairperson and the pastor will form a search committee together with the pastor when seeking any new music director for the parish.
8. The chairperson of the liturgy committee will be appointed by the pastor and will serve for a term of two years, which can be renewed upon mutual agreement of the pastor and the chairperson. The chairperson will set the times and places for committee meetings and will be responsible for preparing an agenda in advance of each meeting. The chairperson will also prepare notes or digests of each meeting for subsequent distribution to its members, the parish council, or the parish at large.

9. The leaders of principal parish liturgical ministries, including lectors, eucharistic ministers, and ministers of hospitality, will serve as members of the parish liturgy committee. The leaders of these ministries will be jointly chosen by the pastor and the liturgy committee's chairperson, and will serve for terms of two years, which can be renewed upon mutual agreement of the leader, the pastor, and the committee chairperson.
10. The pastor and the chairperson will appoint one member of the committee to serve as coordinator for art and environment, who will serve for a term of two years and may be reappointed by the mutual consent of the chairperson, the pastor, and the member involved. This member will coordinate the work of other parish volunteers on issues related to the worship environment.
11. The pastor and the chairperson will jointly choose at least two other members of the liturgy committee, who will serve for terms of two years each. They may be reappointed by mutual consent of the pastor, the chairperson, and the member involved.
12. At least one new member will be appointed to the committee each year, either as a replacement for an outgoing member or as a new member.
13. Any other member of the parish may attend a liturgy committee meeting, unless certain meetings involve discussions of personnel or other sensitive matters and are closed to the public by the pastor and the chairperson. Any member of the parish is welcome to bring a suggestion or a complaint before the liturgy committee in person or in writing, and is entitled to receive an official and prompt response from the committee. Unsigned letters will not be considered by the committee in any way.
14. Before the beginning of each budget year, the liturgy committee will receive an annual description from the pastor or the parish council of the budget for parish liturgy for that coming year. The liturgy committee has the right to comment and ask questions concerning the overall level of spending on parish liturgy and to recommend particular spending items for the consideration of the pastor, the parish council, and the finance committee.