



RESTORING CATHOLIC TRUST, LLC

P.O. Box 60515

Harrisburg, PA 17106-0515

Website: www.restoringcatholictrust.com

Email: Info@restoringcatholictrust.com

MANUAL

INDEPENDENT LAITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

For the Catholic Diocese of Harrisburg

“Turning to Mary as Mother of the Church.”

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
A. <u>MISSION STATEMENT</u>	3
B. <u>INTRODUCTION</u>	3 - 4
C. <u>RESULTS OF THE ORIGINAL QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY</u>	5 - 6
1. Executive Summary	
2. Overall Conclusions	
D. <u>COUNCIL ROLE</u>	6 - 7
E. <u>ORGANIZATION</u>	7 - 9
1. Legal Standing	
2. Council Infrastructure	
a. Council Members	
b. Advisory Consultants	
c. Qualifications	
d. Executive Committee	
e. Vacancies	
F. <u>MEETINGS</u>	10
1. Location	
2. Frequency	
3. Protocols	

PAGE

G. COMMITTEE FORMATION10 - 12

- 1. General**
- 2. Bishop Liaison**
- 3. Laity Communications**
- 4. Media Relations**

H. REPORTS12 - 13

- 1. Master Log**
- 2. Open Issues Log**
- 3. Resolved/Unresolved Matters**
- 4. Annual Report**

I. PUBLIC INFORMATION RELEASE13

J. WEBSITE13

APPENDICES

- 1. Council Intake Form14**
- 2. Master Log15**
- 3. Nomination for Council Membership16**
- 4. Understanding Spiritual Discernment.....17**

A. MISSION STATEMENT

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, please let it be known the entity “Restoring Catholic Trust, LLC” (RCT) has formed an Independent Laity Advisory Council for the Diocese of Harrisburg (ILAC). Its role is to address issues voiced by concerned Catholics. The Council’s primary focus is accountability of the Church through transparency.

The ILAC proposes to address non-liturgical issues while remaining in compliance with Canon Law. ILAC serves as a steward of unfiltered information flowing to the Bishop, allowing him to faithfully fulfill his pastoral duties. As part of its mission, ILAC responds to requests or tasks from the Bishop and monitors the disposition of all recommendations offered.

This council group depends on guidance through the Holy Spirit and prays our mission is supported and strengthened by the Holy Trinity, with the intercession of our Blessed Mother.

B. INTRODUCTION

The formation of the Independent Laity Advisory Council is an outgrowth of the clergy sexual abuse scandal as publicized in the Pennsylvania Attorney General’s report in August 2018. In the United States, Catholic clerical sexual abuse of minors is traced back to the 1940s. Worldwide, clergy sexual abuse of minors is a pervasive problem that incessantly haunts the Church and erodes part of its base of the caring. To help reestablish the frayed bond in the Church, between the hierarchy and the laity, the entity “Restoring Catholic Trust, LLC” (RCT) was formed by the laity. The specific objectives are to:

1. Fully understand the crisis
2. Build best practices through the laity
3. Develop a culture of lasting change
4. Strengthen bonds between all levels of the clergy and the laity
5. Build a spiritual renaissance
6. Evangelize the initiative to other dioceses throughout the United States

One of the initiatives under RCT was to conduct a survey among Diocesan parishioners. There were 312 respondents in this limited initial survey, thus representing a small minority of the Diocese. However, comments received were universal in touching areas of high concern that will require a long term healing process. Since the Questionnaire Survey is an important factor in the healing process, a much wider distribution of the survey is not only desirable but is imperative. Parishioners who have concerns should have the opportunity to voice their thoughts and ideas. The tabulated survey results reflected concerns over several issues.

They may be grouped as follows:

1. Church transparency in all areas
2. Laity involvement, especially women
3. A need to restore trust in the Church
4. Financial transparency and accountability
5. Proactive measures in addressing matters of homosexuality, celibacy, and pedophilia

In analyzing the survey results and comments made by the respondents, it was obvious the trust between the priests and the laity was broken. However, most of the answers stated, or at least implied, that faith and trust in God was still in place.

As a result of concerns expressed at the Bishop's Listening Sessions and the serious tone of the survey responses, the Independent Laity Advisory Council has been formed. ILAC will adhere to its mission and be a strong advocate for Church transparency and for more active lay involvement at all levels within the diocese, with particular emphasis on incorporating women.

On September 4 and 17, 2019, Bishop Ronald W. Gainer and Vicar General David Danneker met with two representatives from ILAC. The mission and its initiatives were discussed in detail. At the conclusion, Bishop Gainer recognized the merit and value of ILAC as an engaged lay group. In order to maintain credibility, he emphasized the importance of ILAC being completely independent of the Bishop and the diocese. The official acknowledgement states:

“The Most Reverend Ronald W. Gainer, Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Harrisburg, acknowledges and recognizes the existence of the newly formed Independent Laity Advisory Council of the Harrisburg Diocese. He extends his blessing for its successful implementation and development. He appreciates the assistance of an engaged laity to help him fulfill his pastoral duties.”

C. RESULTS OF THE ORIGINAL QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a result of the clergy sexual abuse scandal exposed in the August 2018 Grand Jury investigation, a survey questionnaire was conducted. There were 312 respondents from four Listening Sessions sponsored by Bishop Ronald Gainer and from parishioners in three parishes. Although this represents less than one per cent of diocesan parishioners, the comments provided valuable insight into the problems confronting the Church. While many said their faith was intact, they were emotional in expressing the degree to which their trust had been broken with the Church. Upon being analyzed, the responses could be grouped into the following five categories: 1) transparency from the Church; 2) more laity involvement, especially women; 3) the trust issues within the Church; 4) more detailed financial disclosure; and 5) confronting the issues of homosexuality, celibacy, ephebophilia, and pedophilia.

2. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

- a. More communication among the laity, parish priests, and the Bishop needs to take place. Areas that need to be addressed are:
 - Full transparency on all issues.
 - Specific financial accountability and reporting of income/expenses in understandable terms at the parish and Diocesan levels.
- b. Many respondents expressed themselves very emotionally, many were angry and hostile; however, there was a positive belief the laity, especially women, could be instrumental in helping to restore the bond of trust.
- c. From a mother's perspective, it was expressed that a more active female role in the Church could reduce the opportunity for children to become such victims.
- d. Priests and all clergy, like each of us, are flawed human beings. However, the clergy are held to the highest of standards; there should be more transparency and accountability to help them be more successful in their parish mission.

- e. The pain of this scandal runs deep and there needs to be more than an initial written and/or verbal apology from the Bishop. There needs to be ongoing interactions with the laity so that, in time, the scandal will not appear to be simply dismissed and then fade away.
- f. The homosexuality factor needs to be addressed and closely monitored.
- g. Faith and belief in God remains essentially intact; however, trust of the Vatican, bishops, and clergy is broken according to many respondents.
- h. More transparency will help dispel the notion the Diocese is more concerned about money than the mental health of its victims.
- i. The inference from many respondents is that drastic reform changes need to be made involving the laity. Greater utilization of the professional skill sets of the laity should be used in managing business affairs at the Diocese and parishes.
- j. If the Diocese does not satisfactorily address issues raised by the laity, the likelihood of its revenue stream declining further is a significant possibility.

D. COUNCIL ROLE

The independent Laity Advisory Council (ILAC) is a consultative body that provides leadership as opposed to governance. It is not the voice of the faithful; rather, it is a steward of that voice. It operates from a theologically-based, and not an organizationally or politically-based, perspective. The capacity for its mission comes explicitly from the presence of the living Christ in His Church.

1. Meetings

All meetings begin and conclude with a prayer. The agenda typically covers a summary status of all issues; updates on new developments; introduction to new matters; committee reports; and committee/ individual assignments. Agenda items for consideration must be submitted in writing. Efficient use of time and respect for each other's intellectual contribution is expected. Members are expected to have an open mind and clarity of our overall mission. Spiritual discernment is fundamental. Below is a definition and process:

Spiritual Discernment

Spiritual discernment can be separated from other types of discernment because every decision is to be made in accordance with God's will. The fundamental definition for spiritual discernment is a decision making process in which an individual makes a discovery that can lead to future action. In that process, God guides the individuals to help them arrive at the best decision. The way to arrive at the best decision in spiritual discernment is to seek out internal/external signs from God and then apply them to the decision at hand. The focus of God and Jesus when making decisions is what separates spiritual discernment from secular discernment. Catholic discernment comes from Saint Ignatius of Loyola (1491 – 1556) who created his own unique way of Catholic discernment called the Spiritual Exercises.

Process of Discernment

The process of discernment has required tasks in order to achieve the best outcome. Values in the discernment process are weighing options that decide what is most important to the situation/issue. Every individual's value system is different, which affects the group discernment process. Combining values, using both the head and heart, and taking sufficient time when making a decision are the main steps for a successful discernment process.

Dialogue and Discussion

The discernment process needs both dialogue and discussion on each issue. Dialogue expands options, explores possibilities, and stimulates the thought process. Discussion narrows the process toward prudent decisions. Dialogue must precede discussion.

2. Steps of Discovery and Analysis

The council is a consultative body whose work is mission-driven, data informed, and discernment derived. Council members use moments of encounter with each other to present group reflections as carefully considered viable options, accompanied by assessments of each of these options.

- a. Identify issues of concern
- b. Analyze issues
- c. Generate potential solutions (options) – select best solution(s)
- d. Offer solution(s) (options) to the Bishop
- e. Monitor the status of the solutions/options offered to the Bishop.

E. ORGANIZATION

1. Legal Standing

Restoring Catholic Trust, LLC is a duly authorized and registered Not For Profit Limited Liability Corporation formed in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on November 28, 2018. The independent Laity Advisory Council for the Catholic Diocese of Harrisburg is a program that operates under this entity.

2. Council Infrastructure

a. Council Members

The council shall not exceed twenty (20) members. Upon formation, temporary council members are appointed until a quorum of eleven (11) is reached. An acceptance vote will then be taken on each temporary member. Thereafter, each council member will be elected and voted upon for acceptance by the established council. Potential council members are identified by either self-promotion or nomination by another.

b. Advisory Consultants

Consultants to the Advisory Council will not exceed ten (10) members. Each should be a “critical thinker” who has a reputation for exercising common sense and good judgment. They must be willing to offer positive solutions to help resolve complex, emotional, and controversial matters. Preferred backgrounds for Advisory Consultants include various professions, such as educators, business people, attorneys, accountants, psychiatrists, psychologists, physicians, etc.

c. Qualifications

Council members shall have background qualifications and expertise to make a positive contribution to one or more ad hoc committees described in section six (6), “committee formation.” They shall be committed to the Mission and conduct themselves in a positive manner while representing this Council.

d. Executive Committee

1. The executive committee shall consist of three persons: the chair, the vice chair, and the secretary.

The Chair

- a. Chairs the meetings of the council.
- b. Convenes the executive committee as needed.
- c. Organizes and coordinates the activities and processes of the council.
- d. Appoints ad hoc committee task forces.
- e. Motivates the various members/groups of the council to fulfill their specific responsibilities.
- f. Serves as liaison with the Bishop.

The Vice Chair

- a. Assumes the duties and responsibilities of the Chair when the latter is absent or incapacitated.
- b. Performs such other duties as the Chair shall assign.

The Secretary

- a. Records and publishes the proceedings of all council meetings.
 - b. Notifies the members of all meetings.
 - c. Handles correspondence relevant to council activities.
 - d. Files all records, reports, communications, etc.
 - e. Performs such other duties as the chair shall assign.
2. The Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary are elected to three-year terms by a majority vote of the members present at the time of the annual meeting.
 3. The executive committee prepares the agenda for council meetings, conducts council meetings, motivates the various members/committees to fulfill their specific responsibilities, coordinates the activities and processes of the council, oversees the voting protocols on relevant issues, and provides the overall leadership.
 4. The council itself approves a temporary member to complete the term of a vacated member.

e. Vacancies

1. A vacancy may occur by death, resignation, or normal termination of membership.
2. Membership on the council may be terminated for cause by a vote of at least three-fourths of all the members of the council present and voting at any regular or special meeting of the council.
3. Any member who is absent from three meetings, develops a pattern of frequent absences, may be asked to reconsider membership on the council. The chair or a delegate will approach this member to mutually assess continued membership.
4. In the event one or more vacancies occur within the council membership, the advisory consultants along with the Council will elect one or more persons to complete the vacated term at the next regular meeting.

F. MEETINGS

1. Location

The initial meetings will take place at INA offices, 5235 N. Front St., Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17110.

2. Frequency

Regularly scheduled meetings will take place bi-monthly (six times a year), beginning at 7:00 p.m. on the third Wednesday of the month, unless otherwise modified.

3. Protocols

a. All issues submitted for council review must be in a written format; the author may be anonymous.

b. The Council will address all matters by:

- Evaluating the nature of each issue; determining any timeline of urgency;
- Identifying any unintended or unforeseen consequences;
- Immediately referring all high risk issues to the proper authority;
- Drafting an appropriate report to the Bishop if basic criteria is met;
- Providing each author an explanation of the outcome or reason for deferring or passing on his/her issue;
- Maintaining total transparency on all issues being addressed by the council;
- Submitting reports, requests for information and maintaining open dialogue with the bishop, clergy, and other members of the diocese.

c. Special requests made by the Bishop will receive priority attention.

G. COMMITTEE FORMATION

1. General

The nature of ILAC's mission lends itself to an "Ad Hoc Committee" structure rather than a standing committee formation. Issues to be addressed by the council may fall into unique or overlapping categories and may require an innovative approach that falls outside the parameters of conventional standing committees. After reviewing the factual circumstances of an issue and determining specific criteria is met, the executive committee will appoint, or accept, a volunteer to be the project manager for the case. When appropriate, an ad hoc committee chair may temporarily utilize one or more outside

experts to help fulfill specific needs. Council members may chair or be on more than one ad hoc committee. Most issues will probably fall under one of the three following categories:

Clergy Malfeasance

All clergy malfeasance issues should be reported directly to the bishop. However, if there is reluctance to do so because of anonymity or other reasons, a report may be made to this council. Some examples of clergy malfeasance include:

- Financial misconduct
- Ethical misconduct
- Moral misconduct
- Pastoral misconduct
- Unprofessional behavior
- Sexual misconduct

Issues of sexual misconduct must be reported to the Bishop and to civil authorities compliant with the reporting policy of the diocese.

Seminarian Formation

Conducting the appropriate due diligence on all seminarian candidates is crucial to long term stability within the Church. Assuring that unworthy applicants do not become unworthy clerics can be helpful by engaging the laity in the review and acceptance process. In addition to the comprehensive psychological testing, the detailed application process, and the focused interviewing procedures, a signed release waiver by seminarians would authorize field investigative services. This should include personal interview of references and developed references (references provided by persons other than the candidate), public record research, and social media research to include Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, the Dark Web, etc. This type of research can help to surface a possible hidden past or lifestyle.

Finance

Prudent financial management of parish and diocesan revenue is critical in maintaining those ecumenical, pastoral, societal, and administrative commitments now in place. Innovative ways to reduce expenses and increase income should be most welcomed. Fraud, waste, and inept spending must be identified, addressed, and curtailed. A primary objective of this committee is to adhere to generally accepted accounting practices.

2. Bishop Liaison

There will be two or three members on this committee who will be responsible for meeting with the Bishop, promoting transparency on all issues. A specific agenda will be prepared for each meeting. All information requests for information and other subject matter will be in written format and submitted to the Bishop prior to a meeting. As a professional courtesy, the Bishop will be personally

notified of the names and backgrounds of any newly elected Council member or Advisory Consultants.

3. Laity Communications

The majority of inquiries is expected to come from the Diocesan laity. It is critical Council communications be effective, timely, and transparent. It is further anticipated most communications will address Church matters beyond the scope and capability of the Council. Regardless, all properly identified correspondence will be answered.

4. Media Relations

For consistency of our public relations image, there will be one (1) spokesman who releases our reports and/or statements. As appropriate for the occasion or nature of the information to be disseminated, the council will utilize the following resources: print media, video media, and social media (Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, etc.).

H. REPORTS

1. Master Log

All matters that have been brought to Council's attention will be maintained on a continuous master log archived on the website <www.restoringcatholictrust.org>. Each matter will be indexed according to the standing committee evaluating the issue. Each matter will be categorized as "Relevant," "Not Relevant," or "Referred." Relevant matters are those that fall within the stated purpose of the Council and will receive further action. Not-relevant matters are those outside the Council's mission. Referred indicates the matter has been referred to an appropriate resource for their consideration. Regardless, each identified author will be notified of the status of their correspondence. All reported matters will be forwarded to the Bishop, along with any responses from the Council.

2. Open Matters Log

A log recording all open issues will be maintained by each appropriate standing committee. Identified authors addressing a matter already under consideration will be so notified.

3. Resolved/Unresolved Matters

When there has been as much transparency as can be expected on any given matter, a report will be rendered. The matter may have been satisfactorily or unsatisfactorily addressed by the Diocese. Any next steps may be determined thereafter.

4. Annual Report

An annual report will be generated and submitted in (month) each year. This report will provide an overview of the matters evaluated during the past year and summarize the status of each.

I. PUBLIC INFORMATION RELEASE

In the spirit of transparency, there may be public releases of information regarding the mission of the Council. One or more of the following media outlets may serve as a resource for dissemination of the Council's mission:

- The Catholic Witness
- Local Print Media
- Catholic Publications
- Social Media

J. WEBSITE

The Council maintains a portal on the site <www.restoringcatholictrust/independentlaityadvisorycouncil.com> for public comments on any of the matters raised by the Council. Common decency and respectful language is expected. Also, all reports in Section H are archived for future reference.

COUNCIL INTAKE FORM

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENT

AD HOC COMMITTEE FORMATION

COUNCIL DISCERNMENT

OUTCOME

- Consolidated with previous submission
 - Referred to another authority _____
 - Document returned to author because _____
 - Council action undertaken
 - Final Status _____
- _____

Committee Chair

Date

NOMINATION FOR COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

You are invited to nominate yourself or someone else for Council membership.
Membership is for a three year term of service.

Eligibility

- At least 25 year of age
- Member of the Diocese of Harrisburg
- At least 3 years of practical work experience
- Fundamental background in the Catholic faith
- Able to exercise common sense and good judgment
- Be open-minded and receptive to spiritual discernment
(See reverse side)

Name of Nominee _____

Address _____

Email _____ Cell No. _____

I make this nomination for the following reasons:

Name (Optional)

Date

UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

For the purposes of the Independent Laity Advisory Council, spiritual discernment is the process of determining God's desire in a given situation. Considered as a virtue, a discerning individual is one who possesses wisdom, common sense and good judgment. There is an interior search for the answer(s) or resolution(s) to a perplexing issue. There are basic steps to take to achieve spiritual discernment. These steps include taking time in making the decision, using both one's head and heart, and assessing important values. When time is available to assess or evaluate the situation, the discernment process is improved. The rational process is crucial to understand both the intended and unintended consequences. Complementing the rational process with feelings from the heart helps open one's mindset to the will of God. Christian Group discernment requires multiple people to have unanimous decision to move forward. All decisions are to be made in accordance with God's will. God guides each individual to help them arrive at the best decision.

Ignatius of Loyola who is often regarded as the master of discernment of spirits identifies these steps of discernment:

1. Identifying the issue;
2. Taking time to pray about the choice;
3. Making wholehearted decision;
4. Discussing the choice with a mentor; and
5. Trusting the decision made.

Acknowledged By:

Initials

Date

Initials

Date