

St. John the Evangelist Pastoral Council Guidelines

3/19/18

It is primarily the responsibility of the parish pastoral council to assist the pastor in directional and strategic planning. Consultation with the parish membership, leadership and staff by the parish pastoral council are essential to the integrity of the process. The pastoral council must ensure that systems are in place to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of goals, priorities, policies and resource allocations. These systems should lead to a recurring planning cycle resulting in new priorities and goals every three to five years.

Commissions and boards can be formed which are responsible for the development of strategic plans and policies in response to the broad directions articulated by the pastor and parish pastoral council.

Parish Pastoral Council

The parish pastoral council is a consultative body to the pastor. The purpose of the pastoral council is:

- To form community as a sign and witness of unity for the larger parish community.
- To provide recommendations for parish priorities, directions, and policies through pastoral planning; and
- To promote communication and understanding among parish organizations and between the Parish, the Archdiocese, and the Universal Church.

In forming community, council members are challenged to ongoing renewal through prayer, study, listening, retreats and dialogue. In developing priorities and directions for the parish, the council is to become the means of achieving full participation by the whole parish in its mission by giving all a voice in guiding and directing parish life. In fostering communication, each council member shall serve as a liaison to one or more parish leadership groups determined at the beginning of each year. The council encourages and initiates dialogue among parish leadership and organizations. The council can be a vehicle to inform the bishop of parish needs and directions.

Criteria for Membership

A primary value for membership of the parish pastoral council is that the council be a true reflection of the parish community. Insofar as possible, members should be inclusive of the demographic realities of the community. This does not mean that members represent a particular constituency, but rather that the council should reflect the diversity of the parish in terms of age, race, length of membership in the parish etc. In addition, members should be:

- Baptized and confirmed Roman Catholics in good standing with the Church;
- Registered and supporting members of the parish;
- In possession of an understanding of and commitment to the Church in accord with the principles of Vatican II*;
- Committed to prayer, study, listening and dialogue; and
- Committed to giving the time needed for active participation.

Size

The number of members that constitute the council, determined by the council, shall be 9 members plus the Administrative Secretary and the Pastor.

Selection

Council member terms are 3 years beginning with the first meeting in the fall. Should a council member be unable to complete his/her 3 year term, the parish council will appoint a person to complete that council member's term. This council member is then eligible to be selected to serve an additional 3 year term. Having completed a 3 year term, a council member must wait a full year before being considered for a new 3 year term. The start of terms shall be staggered so three terms start each year.

Each spring the members of the council invite parishioners to complete and submit a nomination form. Completed nomination forms are presented to the pastor for his approval. The candidates are invited to participate in a council meeting where they have a chance to introduce themselves and ask questions regarding the role of the council etc. From the candidates, two new members are selected by the current members of the council. The third new member is selected by the pastor either from the candidates identified or from the parish at large to assure diversity on the council.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role of the Pastor: While the pastor normally does not chair the meeting, the pastor presides at all pastoral council meetings and actively listens to the council's deliberations. When appropriate, the pastor may assist the council in developing a consensus around a particular issue by sharing information, providing his own perspectives or identify common elements or areas of agreement that seem present in the council's discussions. The pastor, as minister of governance in the parish, is the final authorizer of any course of action. The pastor should set the context for the council's discussion by sharing Church teaching and/or setting the parameters for acceptable alternatives. The pastor is ultimately responsible for assuring the council's effective operation.

Role of the Chairperson: The chairperson, elected by the council membership, is central to the effectiveness of the pastoral council. The chairperson is responsible for:

- Organizing and coordinating the agenda and processes of the council;
- Chairing and facilitating the meetings of the council (the chairperson may delegate facilitation of portions of the meeting to other members);
- Encouraging members and committees of the council to fulfill their specific responsibilities and delegations;
- Assuring the planning and implementation of an annual leadership gathering;
- Establishing an ongoing process of evaluation of the council's effectiveness; and
- Representing the parish at community functions as requested by the pastor.

The chairperson must be the servant of the group. She/he should be an enabler and facilitator of the council, promoting inclusion and participation, keeping the meeting on track, being sensitive to conflict and helping to resolve conflicts positively.

Role of Vice-Chairperson: The vice-chairperson, elected by the council membership, assists the chairperson and assumes the duties of the chairperson in his/her absence. The vice-chairperson may also facilitate designated agenda items during the meeting. The vice-chairperson assures that any council members absent from a meeting are contacted in a timely way to assure that they are okay and to share with them the content of the meeting missed.

Role of the Administrative Secretary: The administrative secretary prepares summaries of the meetings of the council, maintains the membership roster, assures the preparation and dissemination of materials for the council meeting, and is responsible for all council correspondence. The Administrative Secretary is a non-voting volunteer member from the community at large. Alternately, one of the members of the council may be elected by the membership to serve in this role.

Meetings

The pastoral council should determine its annual meeting calendar prior to the fall of each year. The council typically meets monthly September through June (no meeting in December) 6:30 to 8:30PM on the 3rd Thursday. Each meeting begins and ends in prayer led by a member of the council. The opening prayer should include the reading of the following Sunday's scripture with an opportunity for council members to share their reflections on the reading.

***Some key teachings of the Second Vatican Council**

- +The church as mystery, consisting of the whole people of God, who are called to holiness through their baptism to take on the mind and heart of Jesus.
- +The full, conscious and active participation of all in liturgical and communal celebrations, as well as in the decision-making processes of the people of God, a process known as collegiality.
- +The shift from seeing ministry as the exclusive domain of the ordained, to realizing it is linked to baptismal call and mission.
- +God has a universal will and desire to save all people, and the Spirit is active in the world doing just that, in the great variety and diversity that exists among human communities.
- +An incarnational spirituality in which God's Spirit is fully present and active in the world and in our cultural and social interactions, demanding a respect for the truth and goodness of the modern world.
- +A more biblically based church in its liturgical, theological and spiritual life.
- +Unity among all Christians focused on those things that join us rather than those that separate us.
- +Respect for all non-Christian faith traditions along with religious freedom as a right of all human beings to choose their own path to God.
- +Respect for culture and diversity, leading to cultural adaptation and encouragement of appropriate local customs and traditions wherever the church exists or is planted.
- +A strong emphasis on community, leading to active involvement in the world, emphasizing our active role in transforming the world into the reign of God.