

ONE BODY, ONE MISSION

The Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines
of the Diocese of Pittsburgh

Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ • June 6, 2010







Diocese of Pittsburgh

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Office of the Bishop

June 6, 2010

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

My dear Sisters and Brothers:

As your Bishop, it is my privilege to oversee and foster the pastoral life of the Diocese of Pittsburgh. I share that responsibility with my brother priests by appointing them shepherds of the faithful of our parishes.

The faithful, by virtue of their Baptism and full initiation into the Church, share responsibility for the pastoral mission as well. According to *Apostolicam actuositatem*, the *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* of the Second Vatican Council, "... the laity has an active part of their own life and action of the Church. Their action within the Church communities is so necessary that without it the apostolate of pastors will frequently be unable to obtain its full effect" (10).

Vatican II very wisely paved the way for the Parish Pastoral Council, where the effective collaboration of clergy and laity can impact the quality of the pastoral life of a parish. Our diocesan synod in 2000 called on every parish to have a vital Parish Pastoral Council.

Parish Pastoral Councils are a critical component of growing the *Church Alive! One Body, One Mission* is the result of over three years of research, consultation and pastoral practice. It provides guidelines for the central leadership body of the parish to plan for vital and vibrant faith communities for years to come. It is the roadmap, charting the course for the *Church Alive!* It outlines procedures and provides resources for every parish to advance the Mission of Christ and the Church into the future.

Saint Paul wrote to the early Christians, "As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:12). I ask you to receive these Guidelines with a spirit of unity and, in collaboration with me, to work toward making Christ's Mission present and alive in each and every one of our parishes.

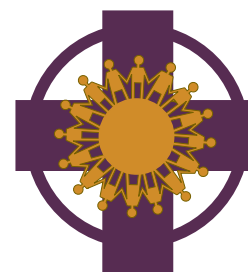
Therefore, it is my exciting privilege to promulgate these Guidelines, *One Body, One Mission*, which replace the Interim Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines of 2007, effective this day, June 6, 2010, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.

Grateful for our belief that "Nothing is Impossible with God," I am

Your brother in Christ,

Most Reverend David A. Zubik
Bishop of Pittsburgh

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INTRODUCTION

The Guidelines: Their Purpose and Use

One Body, One Mission sets forth guidelines for parish pastoral councils in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. St. Paul's statement to the Church of Rome challenges all faith communities. We recognize that nothing we do or fail to do concerns only ourselves. Rather, together we are one, and bonded to each other in Christ. The source of this holy mutuality is nothing less than the person of Jesus Christ, who charged his Body, the Church, with the responsibility to take up his Mission and carry it to all the corners of the earth. (Matthew 28:15-20)

*We, though many,
are one body in Christ
and individually parts
of one another.*

Romans 12:5

spiritually all will be one in mind and heart: one as the Body of Christ in the Church of Pittsburgh with our bishop, one in the shared responsibility for the Mission bequeathed by Christ.

Secondly, the document offers practical strategies for the ministry of parish pastoral councils. According to Vatican II and Church directives, pastoral councils are primarily visioning and planning bodies, whose ministry calls for gifts of study and prayer, listening and assessment, discernment and articulation, motivation and encouragement. Suggestions for how these leadership practices may be carried out are integrated into the guidelines.

This document sets forth the theological framework for both who we are and what we do.

Brief History of Parish Pastoral Councils

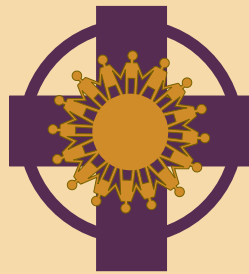
“(The laity’s) action within Church communities is so necessary that without it the apostolate of the pastors will frequently be unable to obtain its full effect.” (On the Apostolate of the Laity, ¶10)

The Second Vatican Council reaffirmed the lay claim to their baptismal call to participate in the Church. Documents such as *The Church in the Modern World* and *On the Apostolate of the Laity* pointed to the absolutely essential role of lay persons. “(The laity’s) action within Church communities is so necessary that without it the apostolate of the pastors will frequently be unable to obtain its full effect.” (*On the Apostolate of the Laity*, ¶10)

In this same document, Vatican II called for the formation of councils. “In dioceses, as far as possible, councils should be set up to assist the Church’s apostolic work. . . . Such councils should be established too, if possible, at parochial, inter-parochial, inter-diocesan levels, and also on the national and international planes.” (*On the Apostolate of the Laity*, ¶26) While Church Law had mandated Church councils to oversee the finances of parishes, little had been said about councils to oversee pastoral life. In fact, advisory committees were in place even before Vatican II, but their function was generally to organize parish activities, do fund raising, offer the pastor advice or give him approval for expenditures or major changes in the operation of the parish. Formal parish councils evolved from these earlier Church committees, but often with a lack of clarity about their purpose and tasks. Not infrequently, there was a name change from “committee” to “council” but little change in how these groups functioned. Canon Law gave some norms for diocesan pastoral councils, and these terms may be applied to parish pastoral councils as well. “A pastoral council is to be constituted which under the authority of the bishop (pastor) investigates, considers and proposes practical conclusions about those things which pertain to the pastoral works of the diocese.” (*Canon 511*)

The history of parish pastoral councils in the Diocese of Pittsburgh began shortly after the Second Vatican Council, with an attempt to engage laity in some form of collaboration in building up the Body of Christ. In many places, this resulted in a consultative body known as a parish council. The role of the parish council varied, but in most cases the council served to coordinate ministries and lead activities. Gradually, some of these groups evolved into pastoral councils, looking at the mission of the parish and planning ways to initiate or strengthen whatever was needed to fulfill that mission.

The Nineteenth Diocesan Synod of Pittsburgh in 2000 called for the establishment of a parish pastoral council in every parish in the diocese. To facilitate the movement from parish to pastoral councils, the diocese prepared a set of Interim Guidelines, promulgated in 2007. They were assessed a year and a half later. Comments from those who had actually begun working toward the establishment of pastoral councils helped to shape and give direction to these current guidelines.



**THE FOUNDATIONS
FOR PASTORAL LEADERSHIP**



THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

One God, One Community of Faith, One Mission In Christ

On the night before he went to his death, Jesus proclaimed what might be called his last will and testament. In prayer, he willed to his disciples the gift of unity, of communion. It was to be both a unity among them and a unity with

the Father and the Son. Implicit also was a communion with the Spirit, the Advocate. (*John 16:7*) Thus Jesus identified the origins and the mission of his Church: a body marked by a holy communion of members sent, as Jesus was, to proclaim the Good News of God's reign.

As the early Church began living its new life in the Spirit, it was not without difficulties. There were threatening external forces from political and religious adversaries. There were also

internal divisions, factions, doubts and differing memories of Jesus, misplaced zeal and unclear paths. Nevertheless, Paul's writings insist on the absolute value of unity. "Strive to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." (*Ephesians 4: 3-5*)

Through centuries of the Church's history, this communion has experienced stresses and breaking points, but it has also remained as a hallmark of the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic" Body of Christ. This unity is no mere human camaraderie or, indeed, a kind of monolithic uniformity of practice or

The success of a parish pastoral council depends in no small part on a shared understanding and acceptance of what the Church has said about herself over the past decades. Periodic reflection on this teaching leads to the unselfish Christian maturity demanded of pastoral leaders.

That they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, and they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.

John 17:21

theology. It is instead the very mystery of the Trinity. As in the Trinity, there is in the Church both uniqueness of persons and oneness in being. In the very dynamic of relationships among the Persons of the Trinity, the Church finds its model for drawing all the baptized into the one Body of Christ. Called as uniquely gifted persons, revered in their dignity, and honored for the specific roles they play within the body, all members form but one reality. Through baptism, they enter into relationship not only with the Triune God, but with brothers and sisters across all boundaries of time and space.

Scriptural Images

The Scriptures have provided multiple images that describe the unity of the Church, from the Church universal to the smallest parish community:

- The **VINE AND THE BRANCHES** must stay attached to one another if the branches are to live and produce abundant fruit. "Remain in me as I remain in you." (*John 15:4*)
- **JESUS THE GOOD SHEPHERD** calls by name each person summoned to be part of the flock. He seeks the lost, searching tirelessly until he can place the missing sheep on his shoulders to carry it home. In ultimate sacrifice, he lays down his life for the flock. Again Jesus reveals the unity for which he came, "There will be one flock and one shepherd." (*John 10:16*)
- St. Paul's recurrent theme of the **BODY OF CHRIST** acknowledges differences of gifts and roles in the community, but clearly indicates that without all the parts, the Body is diminished. "To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit ... As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ." (*I Corinthians 12:7,12*) Paul details many gifts, all necessary and useful for the health of the body. He also pleads, after speaking about the relationships among different gifts, that "there may be no division in the body, but that all the parts may have the same concern for one another." (*I Corinthians 12:25*)
- The early Christian community described in the **ACTS OF THE APOSTLES** as a community of believers which was of one heart and mind. (*Acts 4:32*) Or in another place, "All who believed were together and had all things in common Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. ... And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved." (*Acts 2:44,46-47*)



Disciples in Mission

Early Christians embraced the message of God's great love and mercy, but also understood that following the disciple's way involved rejection and ultimately the cross. Yet it was this faith that gathered Christians into the one Body of Christ. In this community, one central act both celebrated and sustained the bond of unity in the Lord. Eucharist lay at the heart of the early Church. This simple ritual of gathering, listening, giving thanks, eating and drinking, and then setting out once again to live the Christ-life was central. One Bread. One Cup. One Covenant. One Holy Communion.

Finally, because being members of this community was not an end in itself, the early Christians were sent forth into the everyday world in which they lived, to leaven, to serve, to be the very Eucharist they had celebrated. On the eve of his departure from their midst, Jesus declared his mandate to carry on his mission, "As the Father sent me, so I send you." (*John 20:21*) Surely Jesus' own "mission statement" reminded them what this meant. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor ... to proclaim liberty to captives ... recovery of sight to the blind ... to let the oppressed go free." (*Luke 4:18*)

In summary, the Church does not exist for its own sake. Rather it is an assembly of the Pilgrim People of God on a journey that takes them into the heart of the Mission of Jesus Christ. Through its members, the Church:

- **CONNECTS THE FAITHFUL TO GOD** through prayer, ritual, community and action
- **PROCLAIMS GOOD NEWS** to a world that often glamorizes evil.
- **OFFERS HEALING WORDS AND SERVICES** to the wounded or broken.
- **DISPELS LONELINESS AND ESTRANGEMENT** by building inclusive faith communities.
- **PROVIDES A BEACON OF TRUTH AND A CALL TO INTEGRITY** through its teaching ministries.
- **ANSWERS THE CALL** to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and shelter the homeless.
- **CARES FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE**, espousing human dignity, and sharing the fullness of life that Jesus came to offer.

It is the task of the pastoral council to keep before the faithful of the parish their baptismal commitment to make Jesus' Mission the Mission of the parish. All these actions, like the love they manifest, begin at home and in our parish settings.

Pastoral council members must grow in their understanding of the Mission of Jesus and of the Church. The Mission of Jesus is our mission. We accomplish this Mission by advancing the spiritual and pastoral life of the parish.

It is the task of the pastoral council to keep before the faithful of the parish their baptismal commitment to make Jesus' Mission the Mission of the parish.

SUMMARY POINTS FOR DIRECTION AND REFLECTION

- Through Baptism we enter into a relationship not only with the Triune God but with brothers and sisters across all boundaries of time and space.
- As with the early Christian community, we celebrate the Eucharist in our:
 - Gathering
 - Listening to the Scriptures
 - Giving Thanks
 - Eating and Drinking of the Body and Blood of Christ
 - Sending Forth
- The Church's common bond and shared mission is expressed in the scriptural images of:
 - The Vine and the Branches
 - The Body of Christ
 - The Good Shepherd
 - The Early Christian Community
- For its part, Vatican II Council captured this theme in the image of the:
 - Pilgrim People of God, united in Communion and Mission



SACRAMENTAL FOUNDATIONS

- By the SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist), each member of the Church is incorporated into the Body of Christ and is anointed priest, prophet and king. All of us are called to exercise these ministries in their broadest sense. As those who share in the priesthood of the baptized, we are called to help make our world holier by promoting peace, reconciliation, healing and unity. As prophets, we are called to give witness to and proclaim the love and truth of Jesus Christ. As kings, we are called to serve one another.

Sacraments are “powers that come forth” from the Body of Christ, which is ever-living and life-giving. They are the actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his Body, the Church.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- Unlike Baptism and Confirmation which we receive only once, we come to EUCHARIST, as did our early Christian ancestors, over and over again. We know well our need for the “daily bread” that nourishes us and renews us day after day. This Eucharist is, as our “source and summit,” how we gather, listen, give thanks, dine at the table of God, and embrace our mission. We come to recall our identity as God’s beloved children. We come

to hear a Word of encouragement or a challenge to our mediocrity. We come to say “thank you” for superabundant blessings and “please help” for ourselves and others. We do it always in community, always identifying with the Body of Christ. Here we note a dual sense of this core of our faith: we honor the Body of Christ consisting of our brothers and sisters in faith and we honor the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Christ. As surely as we believe that the elements of bread and wine are transformed into the sacrament of Christ’s Body and Blood, so, too, do we believe that each of us

Pastors and pastoral council members who understand and acknowledge the sacramental basis of leadership gifts and roles will be in right relationship with each other and the parish faith community.

is transformed. We leave Mass changed into stronger members of the Body of Christ, sent forth in the name of Jesus Christ, willing to break open our lives for the sake of others, to pour out our lives in selfless service. So by sharing in the sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood, we ourselves grow stronger in the Body of Christ, in order that we might serve the other members of the Body of Christ.

- Those who share in the ministerial priesthood by virtue of the gift of the sacrament of **HOLY ORDERS** are specifically directed toward leading the Body of Christ. Through the ministry of the



bishop and priest, the People of God are guaranteed the nourishment and graces of the sacraments, especially Holy Eucharist. It is our pastors who are ordained to preside over the Church community. Teachers par excellence, they unite everyone toward continuing the Mission of Christ in our day and age.

- In addition to the pastor who presides over the parish community by virtue of his ordination and his appointment by the diocesan bishop, the lay faithful in their vocation either as **MARRIED, SINGLE OR CONSECRATED RELIGIOUS PERSONS** show forth the Body of Christ that claims through Baptism a unique relationship with God. From their own life's witness, they bring gifts and talents to build up the Church, in collaboration with the pastor and communicating the mission of the parish as it connects to everyday life as Christians.

SUMMARY POINTS FOR DIRECTION AND REFLECTION

- Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist are the initiation sacraments that give all Catholics the credentials and grace to carry out the Mission of Christ in our day and age.
- In particular, Holy Orders enables our "shepherds" to order the gifts of all of the faithful toward fulfilling their baptismal promises.
- Married life, the single life and consecrated life are vocations that both express and contribute to the richness and diversity of God's gifts to the Church.



**THE MINISTRY OF
PASTORAL LEADERSHIP**



PASTORAL PLANNING: THE CORE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE COUNCIL

Different Ministries, The Same Lord

Early in the Church's history, some were selected and appointed for particular service to and on behalf of the community. Among the formalized ministries, three roles took on special significance:

- **BISHOPS** as successors of the apostles bear the ultimate responsibility for teaching in the name of Christ, for sanctifying the Church through celebration of the sacraments, for guiding, governing, and defending the Church and for standing with other bishops around the world in union with the Pope as a sign of unity and communion. The bishop is the Chief Shepherd overseeing all of the pastoral life of the diocese.
- **PRIESTS** are charged by the bishop to proclaim the Gospel, to preach, to celebrate the sacraments and to shepherd the people entrusted to them.
- **DEACONS** are called upon to assist bishops and priests most particularly by serving the community through works of charity and justice.

*Pastoral planning
with the lay faithful should
be a normal feature of
all parishes.*

*Apostolic Exhortation,
Ecclesia in Asia,
Pope John Paul II 1999*

**The diverse gifts of
all the baptized are
being put at the
service of the
Body of Christ.**

Over centuries, Church members seemed to lose sight of the **COMMON PRIESTHOOD OF THE FAITHFUL**. Vatican II broke open the issue, again encouraging all the baptized to assume their proper roles in the Church, actively collaborating with their pastors and other members of the community. With nearly a half-century of re-learning our call, re-thinking ministry and the



universal call to holiness, and renewing the Church's rich history, the diverse gifts of all the baptized are being put at the service of the Body of Christ.

Thus, while a priest presides at Eucharist, he is surrounded by competent liturgical ministers who enrich sacramental celebrations. While he attends to the pastoral needs of his flock, he is assisted by qualified laity as visitors to the homebound or organizers of social outreach efforts. His teaching and preaching are enhanced by the efforts of catechists, evangelization and RCIA teams, and lay-led Scripture study groups. And, not infrequently, administrative responsibilities which have grown increasingly complex are now handled by professional lay business managers.

In a similar way, the pastor is to form a lay parish pastoral council.

This leadership body is charged with studying the total picture of parish life, and in consultation with the pastor, makes recommendations to enhance the life and growth of the parish community.

While the pastor in a unique way is responsible for the life of the parish, he shares this blessed burden with the baptized laity. Together, pastor and council share a broad base of information from which to draw as they assess the scope of parish life, parish needs, and parish initiatives. Familiar with the pastoral landscape of their setting, lay leaders can offer practical, experiential wisdom to the pastor, while at the same time looking at objective data. They read the signs of the times within the culture of a particular parish: its history, values, achievements and failures, current dilemmas and demographics.

After the diocesan bishop has listened to the presbyteral council and if he judges it opportune, a pastoral council is to be established in each parish; the pastor presides over it, and through it the Christian faithful along with those who share in the pastoral care of the parish in virtue of their office give their help in fostering pastoral activity.

Canon 536

Joining Together the Functioning of the Members

In a truly collaborative way, the pastor and council become the central discerning unit at the heart of the parish. They sort through all the information they have, using the lens of prayer and reflection on Scripture and Tradition, and articulate a preferred future for the full life of the parish faith community. The regular activities of the parish continue: liturgy, catechesis, social activities and outreach into the community and groups and organizations with specific duties proceed with their purposes. But when these important functions of pastoral life seem to be taken for granted or even faltering, a pastoral plan can infuse new life into the workings of the parish. When parishioners are engaged in pastoral planning, then decisions and activities move the parish forward into God's design for its future.

See **Planning for Pastoral Life** on page 29, for an explanation of this process.

Asking for the Spirit's guidance, the pastoral council chooses to address specific areas of concern. And with confidence in the gifts of the Spirit residing in all the baptized, they draw up a systematic plan that invites parishioner participation to bring the vision to fulfillment. The discernment of direction for the parish is hard but essential work. While many in our parishes have their own "wish lists" for what might be done, unless the leaders of the parish can guide the conversation and ultimately articulate key values and directions, parish life will be moved either by random activity or stagnation with "how we've always done it."

See **Assessing Pastoral Life** on page 36, for further suggestions on how to uncover the real needs of parish pastoral life.

The Ministry of Reconciliation

Facing change or transformation can often create hesitation or even outright hostility. As pastoral councils begin the work of discernment and development of a plan for the future of the parish, they assume also the work of healing and reconciliation. Not unlike the sacraments of the same names, these tasks require pastoral sensitivity, an openness to hear people's stories, and a willingness to acknowledge previous hurts. When movement into new directions seems to threaten some deeply held traditions or values, pastoral councils will realize that it will take time for the conversion required.

Once parishioners see that there is a systematic on-going process by which major pastoral matters are discussed they then can better see how they can be more involved in parish life, especially when healing is needed and unity can better be realized. So, too, does the work of the pastoral council depend on maintaining right relationships among all in the parish and on healing places where there has been tension or active separation in the community.

Following the Spirit's Promptings

Finally, the ministry of leadership is sustained by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The challenge for council members is to become attuned to these gifts as they work toward discerning a pastoral plan. So, for example:

- Councils need to develop **WISDOM**, the kind of “big picture” thinking that is informed by reading both the Church’s Tradition and the signs of the times in the local community.
- **UNDERSTANDING** becomes more than intellectual awareness; it offers compassion and empathy about the experience of the people, especially of the marginalized.
- **RIGHT JUDGMENT** often requires **COURAGE** to pursue resulting decisions, or, if need be, to re-visit a decision that may have been made in error.
- Council members are called upon to possess real **KNOWLEDGE** about our agenda, and that requires serious study and reflection on Scripture and Church teachings, especially those of Vatican II.
- Councils are called to **REVERENCE** all that is entrusted to their care: the Mission of Jesus, parish faith community and its legacy, the broader Church and local community. Finally, the gift of “**FEAR OF THE LORD,**” invites us not to fear and trembling, but to wonder and awe, joy and hope, and a kind of contagious enthusiasm that engages the parish in active creation of its future life because it recognizes God’s never-ending grace in the past.

SUMMARY POINTS FOR DIRECTION AND REFLECTION

- Ordained ministers are not alone in carrying out the Mission of Christ. Laity are called to offer pastoral and experiential wisdom toward the greater good of the life of a parish.
- The Church has provided pastors with a leadership body, a pastoral council to work with him in discerning the pastoral needs of the parish.
- A parish pastoral council, along with the pastor, researches, reflects, and recommends a vision for the continued quality of the pastoral life of the parish.
- The research stage of pastoral planning cannot be overlooked. There are tools available to support and analyze this data.
- Every year the parish pastoral council crafts and presents a pastoral plan in response to the needs of the parishioners.
- Pastoral councils should be healers and reconcilers amidst the challenging and changing modes of parish life.



UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

Parishes in Relationships

Catholic parishes, unlike many more independent denominations, are truly catholic in the sense that the pastoral mission links us in a complex web of relationships with other Catholic communities in our vicariates, diocese, nation and world. We do not stand alone.

With Other Parishes

As Catholics we have much in common with other parish faith communities. Our sister parishes in a vicariate, neighbors across town, parishes in the next diocese or state stand with us, sharing the same mission, the same structure, the same values, beliefs and practices that we cherish. We may be linked formally with a poorer parish in our diocese or a third world parish, for which we assume some responsibility. We may travel to another continent, and still find the Church a familiar presence, even as we experience it in a very different culture. This web of relationships, when we become aware of it, helps us “see the big picture,” avoid self-absorption about our particular parish, and extend ourselves to others.

If indeed the parish is the church placed in the neighborhoods of humanity, it lives and is at work through being deeply inserted in human society and intimately bound up with its aspirations and its dramatic events.

*Pope John Paul II
Apostolic Exhortation on the Laity*

Consideration towards collaboration with other parishes is an important part of pastoral planning.

Consideration towards collaboration with other parishes is an important part of pastoral planning. This means that it may be constructive to forge formal ties around pastoral issues with other parishes in a district or a vicariate. Tasks to be addressed in this instance should be those which could be better accomplished together than separately, and which enhance the pastoral life of all in an area. For example:

- ***Within a regional vicariate***
If at the discretion of a regional vicar, a district or vicariate pastoral council is formed, the norms to be observed by parish pastoral councils should be replicated in the larger geographic area, specifically regarding assessment of needs through study and consultation, open communication, and the use of prayer and discernment in creating a plan.
- ***With a partnered parish***
If it is deemed appropriate by a pastor of more than one parish, the individual parish pastoral councils may come together to assess the needs of a given region, to address common issues, or to plan together for future pastoral initiatives. Care should be taken to cultivate a spirit of common purpose (mission), mutuality and shared responsibility in the parishes involved while maintaining each parish's identity.

With the World

Our parishes are situated in the real world and affected by economic and employment changes. In assuming their leadership roles within the parish, the pastoral council must educate themselves not only about the trends of the parish but also the demographic changes in the larger community. When growth occurs in the parish and new neighborhoods and population projections point upward, the pastoral council may determine new priorities and needs as it moves through the planning cycle. The result may be a different allocation of resources for ministries. When parish demographics change and the surrounding neighborhoods experience a downward economic trend, when finances are inadequate to maintain not only the physical plant, but the pastoral programs that are essential to parish life, then parish reconfiguration may become necessary.

See ***Studying the Parish Territory*** on page 20, for further suggestions on how to read the signs of the times.



When responding to a changing Church and society, parish pastoral councils must assume their leadership roles with compassionate determination and fervent prayer for wisdom. Seeing the reality may not be easy for parishioners with long-standing loyalties. Attachment to Church buildings and hopes for reviving dying parish organizations and events can drain energy from the task of creating new models of parish life and activity.

It is the role of the pastoral council to hold the Mission of Christ before the people, to foster an understanding of shared responsibility in all parishioners. But when vibrant ministries are no longer feasible, a parish pastoral council can recommend to the pastor that a formal study be conducted by the diocese for possible re-configuration of the parishes in the area.

We share the Mission of Christ with other parish faith communities. From that motivation, we can do more together than we can alone. It is for these larger bodies to study their geographic areas, learn each other's strengths, assess the pastoral needs of their communities, and plan how to become a stronger presence of Christ to the People of God.

It is the role of the pastoral council to hold the Mission of Christ before the people, to foster an understanding of shared responsibility in all parishioners.

SUMMARY POINTS FOR DIRECTION AND REFLECTION

- No parish is an island; no parish should pursue its mission in isolation. Rather the individual parishes that make up the diocese are linked together in mutual interdependence under the diocesan bishop.
- The responsibilities of each parish extend beyond itself to others in a regional vicariate, other dioceses and to the Catholic Church throughout the world.
- Consideration towards collaboration with other faith communities is an important part of pastoral planning.
- If a pastoral council, after serious deliberation, acknowledges that a parish can no longer sustain a vibrant pastoral life, they can recommend that a study be initiated for possible parish reconfiguration.



Studying the Parish Territory

In the investigating and research stage of pastoral planning, pastoral councils, in their leadership capacity, become more knowledgeable about their parish demographics. This seems fairly obvious. Yet many of us settle for perceptions, rumors, hunches and anecdotal accounts. What “they say,” “we’ve always known,” and “I heard” become the basis for decision-making that is quite ill-conceived. Thus, ongoing study of real data, both quantitative and qualitative becomes a necessity for good pastoral planning and certainly must be part of the transitioning of new council members.

What do we as council members need to know about?

1. Area, neighborhood, community data

- Population growth or decline
- Ethnic or age shifts
- Types and numbers of housing
- Employment patterns
- School populations
- Available social services
- Civic infrastructure plans
- Interfaith connections and services
- Relationship with the civic community: elected officials, police, school districts, etc.

2. Diocesan, vicariate data

- Plans for merging or otherwise changing configurations of parishes
- Major efforts that will impact parishes
- Relationships or collaboration with other nearby parishes

3. Parish history

- Foundation story
- Ethnicity
- Growth or decline
- School
- Significant or “legendary” events and stories
- Pastoral staffing changes

4. Parish statistics

- Household and family makeup
- Age breakdown
- Sacramental data
- Weekly and holy day mass attendance
- Available data on inactive members
- Trends of growth or decline
- Schools attended by parishioners
- Status of religious formation program(s)
- Parish eldercare efforts
- Major community-building or fund-raising activities
- Activity and viability in parish organizations
- Overview of facilities' conditions and planned maintenance
- Financial data, changes in income, debt, deferred maintenance

How can we find out the real facts? And why does this information matter to us?

1. Local Community Data

All of the parishes in the Diocese of Pittsburgh have access to an internet based information system called MissionInsite (<http://www.missioninsite.com>). It is a user-friendly map-driven demographic analysis tool that connects credible census data with the geography of each of our parishes. Much of this data is also available through city or county planning offices, through the most recent census, through realtors, merchant or chamber of commerce groups, ministerial groups, school districts or utility companies.



This “investigating” stage of pastoral planning is important and should not be overlooked because it helps councils to:

- Discover “the story” of the general population... Who are our neighbors? What are their needs? And how can we help?
- Gain perspective and understanding of the surrounding community in relation to our parish (trends, patterns, opportunities)
- Validate current ministries, modify ministries, or develop new ministries that address current and future needs

2. Parish Data

All parishes maintain registration information that is important for pastoral councils to study. Most parishes use some type of software program that can generate reports about total registration numbers as well as numbers in households, number of children in a family, the average age of parishioners, and age groupings, among others. In addition, each parish submits an Annual Parish Report each year to

the Diocese. Compiling the data from these reports over a number of years can give insight into the trends of the parish. For example:

Parish Trends – Sample 1

| | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | Change 2000-2009 |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------------------|
| Total Registration | 1,675 | 1,525 | 1,550 | 1,610 | 1,660 | 1,696 | 1,700 | 1,703 | 1,698 | 2,014 | +20% |
| October Count | 715 | 686 | 698 | 704 | 730 | 746 | 765 | 734 | 852 | 875 | +22% |
| Infant Baptisms | 25 | 28 | 14 | 23 | 25 | 15 | 21 | 15 | 25 | 28 | +12% |
| Deaths | 22 | 14 | 23 | 16 | 17 | 17 | 15 | 6 | 11 | 15 | -32% |

Parish Trends – Sample 2

| | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | Change 2000-2009 |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------------------|
| Total Registration | 3,228 | 3,259 | 3,277 | 3,196 | 2,788 | 2,730 | 2,413 | 2,235 | 2,348 | 2,306 | -29% |
| October Count | 1,070 | 1,052 | 969 | 1,018 | 889 | 705 | 865 | 721 | 635 | 612 | -43% |
| Infant Baptisms | 38 | 32 | 36 | 23 | 23 | 18 | 20 | 18 | 14 | 22 | -42% |
| Deaths | 56 | 70 | 52 | 55 | 56 | 60 | 54 | 44 | 47 | 42 | -25% |

Parish Trends Worksheet

| | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | Change 2000-2009 |
|--------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|---------------------|
| Total Registration | | | | | | | | | | | |
| October Count | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Infant Baptisms | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Deaths | | | | | | | | | | | |

All of the information above can be obtained by keeping track of the data submitted on the Annual Parish Report.

Working on this task of planning for the future is the primary focus of pastoral councils. Following a planning cycle on an annual basis forms the substance of prayer, the agenda of meetings, the public presence of the council in the parish, the roles of members as listeners and learners, evangelizers and educators, recruiters, coaches, assessors, and re-shapers. This task is put forth by the Church as a needed sharing of leadership among pastor and laity, in order to guarantee fidelity to the Mission of Jesus Christ in our time and place.

Councils should adopt an annual planning process that is both simple and cyclic. The goal is to make planning a way of life for the parish. Every individual of the parish must know that they can connect to and contribute to the mission and goals of the parish.



INVESTING THE PARISHIONERS IN PASTORAL PLANNING

Pastors and pastoral councils know that they alone do not possess all insight into the life of the parish. Rather, honoring the Spirit's presence in the parish, they know they must consult the people and pay attention to other factors. The

Let us listen to what all the faithful say, because in every one of them the Spirit of God breathes.

St. Paulinus of Nola

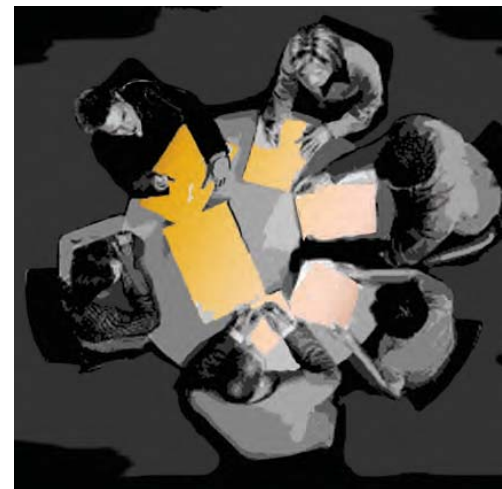
relationship between the pastoral council and other parishioners ought to be dialogic in tune with the Spirit of Communion. In that same spirit, councils should not act in isolation, nor give the appearance of exclusivity. Although they are responsible for being an official counsel to the pastor, for knowing the big picture of parish life, and for articulating the mission and direction of the parish, they do

not come to these tasks in a vacuum. Decisions and directions must arise from the pastor together with the parishioners and the "signs of the times." Therefore councils listen, collect ideas, and discern priorities.

Jesus directed a criticism to his generation: "You know how to judge the appearance of the sky, but you cannot judge the signs of the times." (Matthew 16:3)

Two thousand years later, Vatican II charged the renewing Church, "In every age, the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel, if it is to carry out its task." (The Church in the Modern World, ¶4) Therefore, as this task is assumed by pastoral councils, the same principles hold true.

See **Formal Consultation Processes** on page 24, for methods to engage parishioners in planning dialogue.





Learning about your parish is the only sure path to effective planning.

It is preferred not to use the term “town hall meetings” since it connotes a highly emotional, politically motivated, often disrespectful gathering.

Formal Consultation Processes

Our times call for a critical yet loving look into the circumstances of our parish and our local communities. The key to effective planning is for us to agree on where we are right now. This is why information about present realities is so important. Whether our world is a small parish in a rural community, a partnered or merged parish in an older neighborhood or a mega-parish planted amid suburban sprawl, we must give up our preconceived notions of how things are and learn how things came to be.

Large Gatherings or Parish Assemblies

In order to tap into the wisdom of the parish, it is especially helpful to provide occasions when a significant number of parishioners are gathered to discern God's will for the future of parish life. These types of assemblies need wide publicity, an open invitation to all, a carefully planned agenda, and concrete follow-up.

Held in the context of discernment, deep prayer and listening to God, we can use these opportunities to surface the people's hopes and dreams. When the Spirit is unleashed in the Body of Christ, ideas about truly significant pastoral matters are uncovered. Such general assemblies can become a source of excitement that energizes parish life.

Focus Groups or Smaller Gatherings

Some naturally occurring and some specially convened, these gatherings can add to the listening done by the pastoral council, especially when the council is not clear on a particular direction and would like more input.

These opportunities for consultation need the same attention to detail as do full assemblies. Before we consult anyone, we need to know what kind of information and what kind of thinking we're asking of people. Without a carefully planned agenda, smaller focus groups can run away with their own issues or special interests. They can complain or lay blame for areas of parish life that are not to their liking or place unreal expectations on the pastoral council. A prayerful context, a clear explanation of the purpose and limits of the consultation, a well-focused process, and a plan for follow-up are essential.

Most parishes have existing organizations and committees – women's and men's groups, prayer or faith sharing groups, choir and liturgical ministers, a catechetical staff, youth group, bereavement group, and social outreach teams. In addition, natural clusters of parishioners often occur in neighborhoods. Other focus groups may also be designed through random or planned invitations. These consultations can take place at the parish campus or in homes of parishioners.

Limiting the listening only to existing groups could result in the loss of important insights from parishioners who are not “joiners” or whose level of commitment to the parish is minimal. Evangelization urges us to engage and deepen every member’s involvement in the Body of Christ.

It is up to the pastoral council to recommend how many such groups are needed. Teams of council members may be designated for each focus group, with one person serving as facilitator and the other as recorder. A common agenda and feedback model will assure the usefulness of the data collected.

Appreciative Interviews

The objective of the Appreciative Inquiry interview method is to involve members of the parish in conversations of greater depth and give parishioners individual attention to increase the likelihood that they will become more actively engaged in parish life.

It consists of a series of one-on-one (or two-on-one) interviews with members of the parish. The interviews focus on discovering what is best about the parishioner’s experiences in the parish. They are centered on drawing out and hearing parishioners’ stories and on sharing with each other stories about what makes our parish meaningful to us. Rather than generating negative energy, by focusing on the problems in the parish, the Appreciative Inquiry approach generates positive energy and increases interest in becoming involved in the life of the parish in constructive ways.

Surveys

The survey always appears to be the easiest way to conduct consultation, yet many of us know the frustration of receiving almost no feedback despite the hundreds of forms we distribute. In fact, good surveys are probably the most difficult way to “listen to the promptings of the Spirit” because they do not engage people “face to face.” A survey is a very broad tool. It enables parishioners to speak on many subjects, but it rarely enables people to speak with depth on a limited range of subjects. So, a survey might be a useful tool in the assessment or evaluation process. But, visioning requires depth more than breadth. It requires an understanding of what vision is, and that is not information that can be condensed into the instructions for completing a survey

The pastoral council should determine if this is a comprehensive overview of the situation of our parishioners; in this case it is a census and not truly a survey. Are we seeking to know more about people’s values and priorities in relationship to the basic pastoral elements of the parish? This kind of survey presumes some serious prior education of the parish about the pastoral agenda. Or have we already done some larger consultation in an assembly or focus groups? Perhaps we wish only to ask for preferences among proposed ideas in order to help the Council discern as it pieces together a plan. In that case, the survey takes on another form. Nonetheless, there are times when a survey is helpful to a pastoral planning process. Designing a good instrument requires a level of skill that many do not possess. If the pastoral council does not have a person with

Limiting the listening only to existing groups could result in the loss of important insights from parishioners who are not “joiners” or whose level of commitment to the parish is minimal.

such expertise, perhaps parishioners can be invited to offer support. The survey itself must respond to our needs for information, while at the same time not being burdensome or confusing to the parishioners we invite to respond. We will need to determine exactly what we want to know, and ask only questions that are directly related to our need to know.

Surveys can be written – mailed to parishioners, attached to bulletins, or completed in the pews. Surveys can be oral – with Council members as interviewers in person or on the phone. They can be brief, just a few questions asked of parishioners in the gathering space or in the parking lot. But long or short, written or oral, they must be meticulously designed to gather the information really needed.

Survey Methods

- Telephone
- Door-to-Door
- E-mail
- Mail
- At Mass
- Internet Based

Wording Questions Advice

- Use simple and clear wording.
- Avoid the use of abbreviations, jargon, or foreign phrases.
- Be specific.
- Include all necessary information.
- Phrase personal or potentially incriminating questions in less objectionable ways.
- Use mutually exclusive categories.
- Avoid questions that are:
 - Too demanding or time consuming to answer.
 - Too precise.
 - Biased. A question is biased when:
 1. It implies that the respondent should be engaged in a particular behavior;
 2. The response categories are unequal or loaded in one direction;
 3. Words with strong positive or negative emotional appeal are used. (*liberal, conservative, freedom, equality, boss, bureaucratic, etc.*)

Example: "How would you rate the music at the 11:00 A.M. Mass? 1. Satisfactory 2. Good 3. Excellent" (Note: No negative options have been provided.)
 - Double-barreled. A question is double-barreled when it combines two or more issues or attitudes in a single question.

Example: "Did the pastoral council workshop help you identify ways to enhance the spirituality and effectiveness of your council?" (Note: The workshop could have enhanced the council's "spirituality" but not "effectiveness." Or visa versa.)



THE COMPONENTS OF AND PROCESS FOR PASTORAL PLANNING

Defining Pastoral Life

The particularities of each parish constitute both its identity and its relationships with others. Because parishes provide the most regular contact people have with the Church, it is not surprising that there is often intense loyalty to a particular parish. Family stories about our elders building the Church or sewing the altar

cloths; memories of sacramental moments – baptisms, first communions, marriages; connections to a parochial school; hours of volunteering to make festivals, bingos, dinners or special ethnic celebrations: all of these constitute the emotional ties many feel toward their parishes. Sometimes we take pastoral life for granted and forget that the exercise of quality of pastoral life is the reason for the existence of the parish.

And the Lord said to me... Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets so that one can read it readily.

Habakkuk 2:2

Constitutive elements have been named and numbered in a multitude of ways, and yet the substance of pastoral life derives directly from the mission of the Church, the Mission of Christ. The needs of the flock of Christ remain consistent. The obligations of the flock of Christ remain consistent. Pastoral life both addresses and calls forth the response to these needs.

- We have a deep desire for ritual, celebration, and ways to touch the God of our lives; hence the need for worship and prayer.
- We yearn to hear God's Word as guidance, instruction, inspiration and challenge; hence the need for catechesis and formation.
- We share with all our brothers and sisters a hunger for belonging, for inclusion and participation; hence the need for community.
- We sense the call to ministry, to justice, to the practical living out of the demands of our baptism, the Eucharist and, indeed, the Gospel itself; hence our need for service and stewardship.

Pastoral council members who have an understanding of the unique character of the parish are better equipped to place emphasis on the broad pastoral nature of the parish rather than on the management aspects.

Pastoral life must evoke a response to the needs of the human community.

These key areas of the life of the parish find their source and summit in the Eucharist and are to be the main focus areas for the pastoral planning efforts of the parish pastoral council. In fact, the convergence point for these four basic needs is the Eucharistic celebration. We are called to hear God's Word, express the great prayer of thanksgiving for the Paschal Mystery and the presence of Christ as our very Food and Drink, strengthen the bonds of communion with others and accept the commission on leaving the assembly to serve one another. So interwoven are these dimensions of pastoral life, that it is impossible to separate them. Prayer that does not lead to service is hollow, whereas service without reference to communion becomes mere activism. Pursuing Church teachings or studying the Scriptures is mere intellectual exercise if it does not impact how we worship or interact with others.

A parish is a definite community of the Christian faithful established on a stable basis within a particular Church (a diocese); the pastoral care of the parish is entrusted to a pastor as its own shepherd under the authority of the diocesan bishop.

Canon 515

Finally, in light of the Mission of Jesus, pastoral life must evoke a response to the needs of the human community. We do not simply consume what we hunger for, seeking consolation in prayer, fellowship in parish activities, stimulation in programs, or response to our sacramental needs. We are the evangelizers, whether in formal processes or by the hospitality and welcome we extend to others. We are teachers of the faith in action by how we live with our families and in our neighborhoods. We witness to the power of the gospel in our workplaces and in the marketplace. We are *The Church Alive!*

SUMMARY POINTS FOR DIRECTION AND REFLECTION

- A parish is the primary means for providing pastoral resources for individuals and families, to experience Christian Community and to live out the mission of the Church.
- The term "pastoral" refers to the ministry of shepherding the flock of Christ. A "pastoral" council's main purpose is to examine, consider, and draw conclusions concerning the pastoral matters of the parish in order to recommend a course of action to the pastor.
- Areas of pastoral life that deserve examination are:
 - Worship and Spirituality, most especially Sunday Eucharist
 - Catechesis and Formation
 - Community life both internal and local
 - Evangelization and outreach
 - Stewardship and Service
- The parish pastoral council is the primary parish structure for establishing and maintaining a vital and vibrant parish. A vibrant parish life is the best Evangelization strategy a parish can have.

Planning For Pastoral Life

The following graphic shows a complete pastoral planning cycle and the flow of activities and inter-relationships that will meet the criteria of effectiveness. Each of the steps is done in sequence with possible back-tracking if necessary. Whatever process is chosen it should be information based, highly collaborative, committed to on-going communication, flexible, and realistic.

Materials detailing how to do all types of planning are numerous. Terminology may differ somewhat, depending on the source, but the same general principles underlie the process. With whatever model the pastoral council chooses, it is important to remember that it is an annual, continuous process to insure the quality of pastoral life in a parish. Here are several key components of the pastoral planning process.

Whatever model the pastoral council chooses, it is important to remember that it is an annual, continuous process to insure the quality of pastoral life in a parish.





1. CRAFTING THE MISSION STATEMENT

This most basic understanding of parish identity and purpose:

- Provides the overarching declaration of who we are, what values we hold sacred, and what we aspire to be, within the Mission of Christ entrusted to us.
- Is short, succinct and compelling, honoring both the unique history and the dreams of the parish.
- Develops through extensive consultation and discernment.
 - Articulated by the pastor in consultation with council.
 - Discerned by the council through consultation with entire parish.
- Stays alive by efforts of the pastor and council who use it as a template against which to measure all of parish life.

Whose Mission Statement Is It?

Without owning the particular mission of a parish, the parishioners will not be energized to act on it. If only the pastoral council or parish staff create a parish mission statement parishioners may read it in the bulletin or notice it on the bulletin board but it is not theirs. Language is very important. When you are on a mission you should use language that will rally the troops. The mission statement is supposed to arouse the imagination and fervor of the parish to a sense of pride and desire to fulfill a dream — a hope to become a true sign of the coming Kingdom of God. Statements written in heavy legal language or filled with theological jargon do not inspire. Words that the people in the pews would understand and resonate with are more effective.

A Sense of Identity and Purpose

Even though every parish in the universal Church is charged with continuing Jesus' Mission here on earth, every parish does that differently, from different perspectives with different gifts. Basically every parish has its own special uniqueness that is its strength and beauty. Questions like: What makes us distinctive? Who are our people? What do they hunger for? What are our issues? What are the "signs of the times?" should be answered in a parish mission statement. Because we too often forget WHO we are and WHAT we are committed to each parish member needs to be reminded. The Parish Pastoral council crafts a Mission Statement with the parishioners for just that very reason.

Other Practical Uses

Placing the Mission Statement in a picture frame is not the goal. It should be a living document that guides and inspires everyone in the parish. It can steer the pastoral council as it sets priorities. It can inspire parish staff meetings. It can be used as a frame of reference for liturgical planning. It can provide topics for Sunday homilies. It can be used as a teaching tool

in religious formation classes. All parish organizations could take their cue from the Mission Statement as to their own reason for existing. If a particular phrase stands out it can become the parish slogan or motto. It may also inspire a symbol or logo to be used to advertise the parish identity by every organization of the parish.

All parish organizations could take their cue from the Mission Statement as to their own reason for existing.

Evaluating an Existing Mission Statement

Every year the pastoral council should find time to evaluate the Mission Statement to keep it alive and active. Questions like: How much does the Mission Statement motivate parishioners to become active participants? If not, why not? Are our present strengths and vision reflected in it? What has changed in the parish that should be noted in our Mission Statement?

Inviting the Parishioners

The goal is to have as many parishioners as possible to participate in the input to the Mission Statement. The rewards reaped from this somewhat challenging effort are many. Not only does this inclusion inspire ownership and pride, it teaches parishioners what it means to be a parish in this day and age and place. Parishioners can be prepared for this in part by solid catechizing from the pulpit and with creative invitations and marketing from the pastoral council.

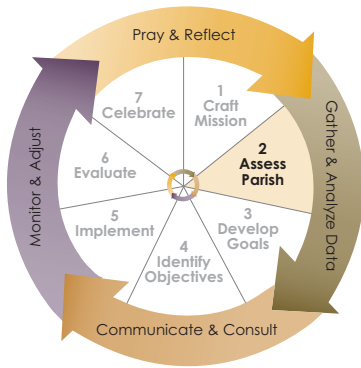
A Sample Process for Gathering Input

Schedule parish meetings or several focus groups solely for the purpose of getting parishioner input for the Parish Mission Statement.

1. Begin with a series the questions which would shape the Mission Statement.
 - Sample "Identity" questions:*
 - Who are our people, what is their history?
 - What do they hunger for in their spiritual lives?
 - What are our issues as a parish?
 - What are the "signs of the times" that affect us as a parish?
 - Sample "Purpose of a Parish" questions:*
 - Why do we exist?
 - Why is it important that we continue to exist?
 - Why would anyone want to be a part of us?
 - Sample "Direction and Meaning" questions:*
 - What are we called to do and be?
 - What challenge do we as a parish need to embrace for the future?
2. Print each question on a separate color-coded card.
3. Distribute the first card to each individual.
4. Have a council member give a brief "lead in" to stimulate the thinking of the group.
5. Allow 2 minutes for individual written responses in silence.
6. Have individuals share their responses with others at their table for another 2 - 3 minutes.
7. Designate one person from each table to report ONE idea discussed among his/her group.
8. Collect all cards and distribute the next one.

Checklist for the Mission Statement

- Does it reflect the Scriptures as well as the Tradition of the Catholic Church?
- Does it provide a strong sense of identity?
- Does it make sense in the light of the needs, gifts, and history of the parish?
- Is it brief, inspirational and understandable?
- Does it inspire, motivate and challenge?
- Share the draft statement with parishioners to get added comments.
- Once finalized, "promulgate" the Mission Statement at a special event!



2. ASSESSING PASTORAL LIFE

The five essential qualities of parish life, according to Bishop David Zubik's June 2008 Pastoral Letter to the Church of Pittsburgh *The Church Alive!* are:

Eucharist

The convergence point of all the vital elements of parish life, the source and summit of the parish's expression of its life in Christ as the Body of Christ.

Examples in parish life:

1. The Sunday Eucharist is a priority in the life of the parish and is celebrated with full and active participation of the parishioners.
2. The Diocesan Guidelines for Scheduling Sunday Eucharistic Liturgies are followed.
3. The majority of registered parishioners participate weekly at Mass.
4. Sunday Eucharist offers quality preaching, music and environment which assists parishioners in their worship and prayer.
5. Well-trained and effective parishioners and lay ecclesial ministers serve in the liturgical ministries at Sunday Eucharist: Lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Altar Servers, Ushers and Greeters, Organists and Cantors.
6. Preaching is directly related to the Scriptures and to the real life experience of the people.
7. Quality in music, including instruments, musicians, and hymn selection, enables the assembly to participate in sung prayer.
8. Worship aids are contemporary and in good condition.
9. The parish budget indicates a priority of financial resources toward enhancing Sunday Eucharistic celebrations.

Evangelization

The element which encompasses any way in which the parish continues to spread the good news of Jesus and to bring others to God.

Examples in parish life:

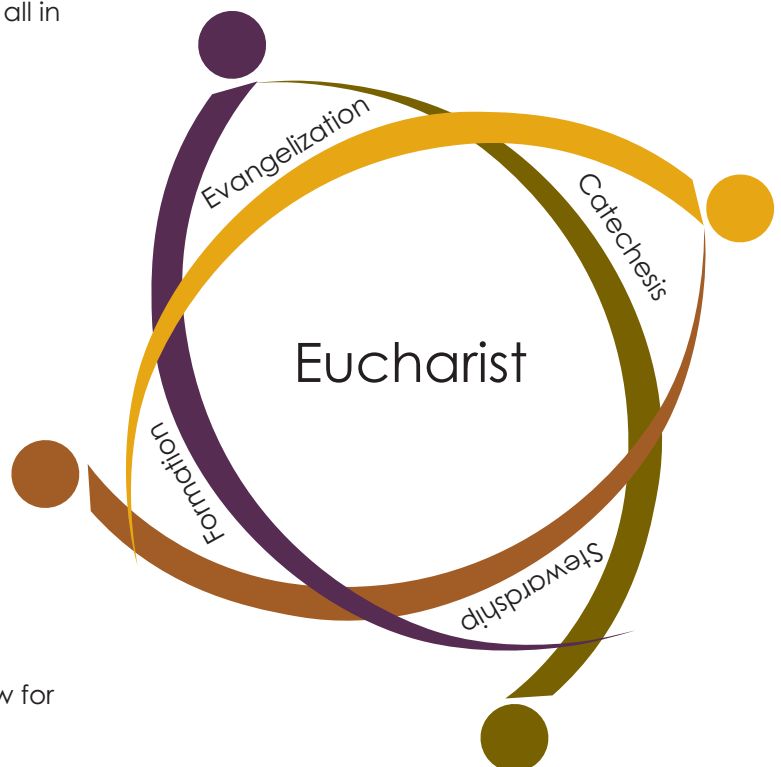
1. Parish renewals, evenings of prayer and/or retreat days are planned to enliven and deepen the faith of the parishioners so they will be true witnesses to the faith.
2. Hospitality and welcoming to all is a hallmark quality of the parish.
3. Efforts are made to reach out to the alienated, the inactive, and the unchurched.
4. Adults, youth and children are given opportunities for evangelization formation.
5. The parish takes steps to influence the values and decisions of the larger community through prophetic action and works of justice and outreach.

Catechesis

The element which teaches, explains and informs parishioners of all ages in the Scriptures and Tradition of the Church.

Examples in parish life:

1. The parish Catechetical Leader has appropriate education, ability and experience to provide catechist formation and effective administration of religious education efforts.
2. Catechesis is planned and evaluated for all in the parish: adults, youth, and children.
3. Those who teach religious education are properly educated, well prepared and equipped with proper teaching tools.
4. Strengthening marriages and nurturing the life of families are priorities for the parish.
5. Assistance is provided to help parents understand their roles as ministers to their children in the formation of Christian values.
6. The parish or regional school has a strong Catholic identity and excellent curricular experiences and is financially stable.
7. Effective means are in place to reach out to youth and young adults.
8. Appropriate investment of resources allow for a well established adult faith program.



Formation

The element which promotes a lived faith which is bold, courageous and effective.

Examples in parish life:

1. There is a good spirit of working together among parish groups and organizations.
2. The parish collaborates with neighboring parishes as appropriate to enhance the mission of the Church.
3. The parish focuses on the needs of the human community, beginning with its own members and extending to the poor and marginalized in the local area, the nation, and the world.
4. The parish makes every effort to accommodate persons with special needs.
5. Programs which minister to the sick, the bereaved and the homebound are ongoing.
6. Racial and ethnic harmony, peacemaking and non-violence, respect for life at all stages, and the practice of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy are priority areas for study and action in the parish.

Stewardship

The element which encompasses prayer of thanksgiving for the many gifts of God and the sharing of those gifts through acts of service.

Examples in parish life:

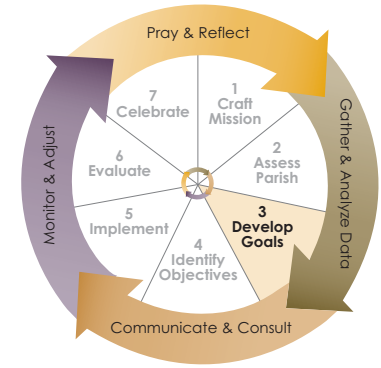
1. Formation efforts help parishioners understand their baptismal responsibility to steward their gifts, including the gifts of faith and life in the Church.
2. Parishioners who offer their gifts in service to the parish mission are given adequate training, encouragement and supervision.
3. The parish demonstrates a commitment to works of compassion and justice.

3. DEVELOPING LONG-RANGE GOALS

Long-range goals are at the heart of a parish plan that:

- Utilize information and data from the research stage.
- Consider the consultation with parishioners about their ideas.
- Identify concrete ways to live out the mission in the future.
- Discern and prioritize what is feasible, realistic to accomplish.

A decision by the pastoral council to focus on these pastoral goals gives a clear message to parishioners that they have been heard. Thus everyone will know that both human and financial resources will contribute to accomplishing these priorities.



Writing Parish Goals

A goal is a brief, clear statement of an outcome to be reached in a certain period of time. It should be directly related to one specific element of parish life, with one expected outcome usually as a result of parishioner input or other pertinent data. For example, improving the quality of liturgical music or focusing on family life might have surfaced from parishioner feedback at a parish meeting or survey.

- Choosing the right verb is an important part of writing a goal. Use a verb that specifically describes what is to be accomplished. For example, there is a difference between “to establish” and “to expand.”
- Briefly describe what is to be done and denote any specific details.
- Because goals are “do-able” and measurable projects they should be accomplished in due time through effective yearly strategies.

See **Sample Parish Goals and Objectives** on page 55.

Writing Long-Range Goals

Address the following questions.

See Qualities of Parish Life described on page 36ff.

On which quality of parish life are we focusing? _____

What one outcome are we addressing? (A program, activity, condition)

*What movement do we wish to see in the parish regarding this topic?
(An active verb)*

Examples:

To **establish** a family based neighborhood network in **at least one-third of the parish** by <<DATE>>.

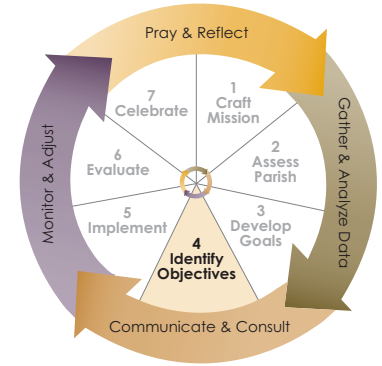
When do we anticipate it should be complete? (Usually in three to five years)

*How will we know we have accomplished the goal?
(Criteria for measuring results)*

4. IDENTIFYING OBJECTIVES OR STRATEGIES

Goals are broken down into incremental parts that:

- Set forth concrete, measurable steps needed to reach the goal.
- Outline practical, specific, sequential tasks.
- Establish realistic and relatively short timelines (usually under one year).
- Involve consideration of what, by whom, when and at what cost.
- May involve additional action plans detailing internal schedules and responsibilities.



This is “where the rubber meets the road” part of pastoral planning. A major challenge for pastoral councils is “rallying the troops” to get the job done. In doing so it is so important to consider the realistic demands of modern life. By specifying tasks of how a goal might be accomplished in a brief period of time eliminates the kinds of nebulous or unending projects that turn parishioners away from offering their time and talent.

Writing Objectives

- Be careful to use an action verb that indicates what the implementer(s) is expected to do. There is a difference between “to recruit 10 parishioners” and “to train 10 parishioners.”
- Only one specific task should be allotted to each objective.
- Suggest a date by which the task is to be done.
- Suggest the costs likely to be incurred so the individual implementers will know the budget boundaries.

See **Sample Parish Goals and Objectives** on page 55.

Sample

Goal To establish a family based neighborhood network in at least one-third of the parish by December 30.

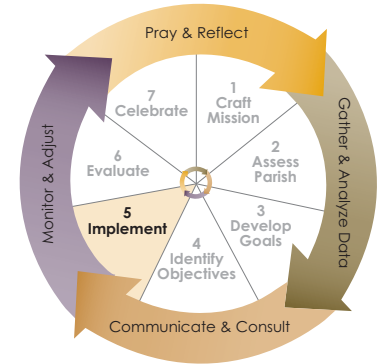
| Objectives or Strategies | Completion Date | Costs | Implementer(s) |
|--|-----------------|--|--|
| Recruit 10 family teams for the family neighborhood network. | July 31 | publicity & postage | John Smith Mary Jones |
| Train 10 family teams to lead neighborhood network gatherings. | September 30 | training mtgs, stipend for guest speakers, printing & mailing | parish staff/ diocesan consultant |
| To conduct a parish wide contest for a “logo” or picture for the parish neighborhood network | November 30 | publicity flyers prize | parish staff/ parish org./ Catholic School or CCD classes |

5. IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Once the plan — the mission statement, goals and objectives — has been developed and agreed to by the parish, the next step is to put it into action. Goals are accomplished:

- By individuals or ad hoc implementation groups of the parish.
- By maintaining communication between the objective group and council members.

The success of any planning process is in its implementation. Parish plans will be effective if they help mobilize the parish towards action on behalf of mission. Implementing a pastoral plan requires the parish pastoral council take on a role of leadership by calling forth gifts and mentoring new leaders. As servant leaders, the pastoral council members have crafted the plan on behalf of the parish faith community. It is the parish's plan so all must have a stake in its completion. Here are some suggested steps and strategies toward the implementation stage of pastoral planning:



Publish the Plan Widely and Often

- Invest in an attractive brochure containing the Mission Statement Goals and Objectives. Mail it to every household and distribute it as widely as possible.
- Prayerfully present the mission statement and plan at a parish liturgy (The pastor is the spokesperson of the plan on behalf of the pastoral council.)
- Publicize the plan on the parish website, on parish bulletin boards, etc.
- Print prayer cards with the Parish Mission Statement to use frequently by all groups and organizations.
- Highlight one goal on specific weekends with a progress report.

Host a Goal Sign Up Sunday

- Invite parishioners to the parish hall to review the goals and offer suggestions for their implementation.
- The individual goals can be printed clearly and visibly on newsprint with room for them to write their ideas. Another sheet can be adjacent inviting parishioner to list their name if they would be interested in working on the particular goal. Pastoral council members should be stationed at each goal sheet to answer questions.

Guarantee a One Year or Less Task

Write and publicize the strategies for each goal with a definite time frame of a year or less. This tactic is important for our parishioners who are often overwhelmed with so many other tasks and responsibilities. If the task is clear, concise and simple the council will be more successful at attracting implementers.

Communication and Consultation

Throughout the planning cycle, parishioners:

- Need to be informed – via bulletin, newsletter, website, pulpit announcements.
- Have the right to be consulted – about direction, goals and priorities.
- Actively participate in fulfilling the pastoral plan – not assuming the council will do it all.

Parish Staff:

In certain cases parish staff members may be the most obvious persons to be the implementers of objectives that lie in the area of their expertise. If the staff person has been part of the planning process all along and contributed to the direction of the plan, he or she would have been aware of the need and given their perspective. Otherwise the pastor would be the one to approach the staff member to implement the particular objective.

Discern the Gifts

Every individual in the parish has gifts to offer for the mission. When the parish pastoral council begins the process of discerning implementers, it should be done with faith that the gifts needed to accomplish the plan already exist, and need only be identified and called forth from the parish faith community. Specific bulletin blurbs advertising a very specific task for a defined period of time of a year or less may draw out those who might otherwise be hesitant to become involved.

Look for implementers among:

- Individuals who attended Goal Sign-Up Sunday.
- Registration Lists. Don't overlook senior/newly retired parishioners. Think about using your parish software to maintain information about parishioners' interests and abilities.
- Existing organizations or parish committees.
- Staff members recommendations.
- Individuals who attended PPC Information sessions but were not discerned as council members.
- Parishioners who have never been involved and may only need a personal invitation.
- Names that emerge at a council meeting while discussing objectives.

Provide Support and Oversight

Once individual implementers or implementation groups are in place, pastoral council members may provide support in helping the groups get organized as well as providing clarity about the objectives of their task. A particular council member can be assigned to an implementation group for oversight and communication with the pastor and the council. They serve as the connecting agent to the "big picture." Even though the council is not involved in the actual work of implementing objectives it is important that their care and concern be known to the implementers.

Oversight and Assessment

From the outset, council offers oversight of implementation that:

- Provides an accountability structure for the entire plan.
- Evaluates progress on objectives in an ongoing manner.
- Keeps council members apprised of accomplishments toward the larger goals.
- Allows achievements to be acknowledged by the council in a public way.
- Offers possibility for council to intervene when implementation groups struggle, either to encourage, offer suggestions, or reconsider the timing or suitability of the objective.

Evaluate with the Implementers

As adults we all need to be appreciated and respected for our accomplishment or at least for our faithfulness. As the time for completing objectives nears the pastoral council meets with the implementers to evaluate the pros and cons of their experience. They will teach council members many things. Most importantly, if they had a good experience they will more than likely contribute their gifts again.

6. EVALUATING THE PLAN

Evaluating the Pastoral Plan

Given how much time, energy, and effort a parish pastoral council puts into the planning and execution of goals and objectives, it would seem appropriate to reflect on the yearly outcomes in order to learn from the experience.



Evaluating the Pastoral Council

Another important evaluation effort takes place with the pastor and pastoral council members regarding the status and quality of individual membership and the ministry of the pastoral council as a whole.



Evaluating the Pastoral Plan

What did we set out to do? What were we trying to accomplish?

Did we actually do what we set out to do? Did we accomplish what we were hoping for?

How well did we do what we set out to do?

What helped us to do what we wanted to do? What helped us accomplish our purpose?

What hindered us in doing what we set out to do? What got in the way of accomplishing our purpose?

Was it worth doing? Were the time, energy, and effort worth the results that were achieved?

What did we learn from this experience?

What's next?

Evaluating Self

Respond to each item using this scale:

- 3 Strong influence
- 2 Some influence
- 1 Not true for me

I. Getting in Touch with My Motivation

I accepted a role in parish leadership as a member of the pastoral council because:

- I enjoy leadership roles.
- I felt guilty about not accepting.
- I thought it was my turn / my time to do it.
- I enjoy working with people, especially when what we do makes a difference.
- I felt flattered that people thought I could do it.
- The external perception of my gifts matched what I know about myself.
- I have some ideas about how we can grow as a parish and want an opportunity to use them.
- I like the challenges associated with leadership.
- I like working on a team.
- I wanted a chance to grow more spiritually myself.
- I thought it would be interesting.
- I thought I could find out more about what's going on in the parish.
- Other *(List here.)*

- Other *(List here.)*

- Other *(List here.)*

II The Rewards of Leadership

I find the most rewarding part of being on the pastoral council to be:

- ___ The feeling that I have contributed to the future direction of our parish.
- ___ The professional/intellectual/spiritual growth resulting from working in leadership.
- ___ Helping to make things happen in our parish.
- ___ Having an opportunity to involve parishioners in implementing goals.
- ___ Feeling more a part of things in the parish.
- ___ Working with a group to shape a vision and plan for the parish.
- ___ Feeling a sense of personal affirmation for my work on the council.
- ___ Experiencing a common purpose with other council members.
- ___ Being able to pray and talk about significant religious issues with others.
- ___ Learning about and practicing discernment and consensus building.
- ___ Engaging parishioners in the process of developing the pastoral plan.
- ___ Other *(List here.)*

- ___ Other *(List here.)*

- ___ Other *(List here.)*

Respond to each item using this scale:

- 3 Highly rewarding
- 2 Somewhat rewarding
- 1 Not my experience

Respond to each item using this scale:

- 3 Highly frustrating/
disappointing
- 2 Slightly frustrating/
disappointing
- 1 Not my experience

III The Challenges of Leadership

What I find frustrating/disappointing about participation on the pastoral council is:

- Other members do not seem to make the council a top priority.
- I'm so busy that I can't always make the council a top priority.
- Our meetings don't seem to take us anywhere.
- Parishioners don't understand how important they are to our pastoral plan.
- Our relationships with the pastor are strained.
- Generally, our council doesn't quite understand the role of the parish pastoral council.
- We slip back into old models of parish council with issues which are not part of the pastoral agenda or with processes which are based on power and voting.
- We haven't been able to involve parishioners in implementing the parish goals and objectives.
- We haven't yet developed a level of trust and sense of purpose in council.
- Things are moving too slowly in our parish.
- The quality of our prayer and faith reflection doesn't meet my expectations.
- It's still the "same old people" who are involved in doing things in the parish.
- There is stress or tension between some council members.
- Other *(List here.)*

- Other *(List here.)*

- Other *(List here.)*

IV Personal Gifts/Strengths for Leadership

- ___ I see what the future of our parish can be.
- ___ I am unafraid to take risks or ask difficult questions.
- ___ I am goal oriented and can move toward goals, making necessary corrections along the way.
- ___ I know what I think and feel about most issues and can express those thoughts and feelings to others.
- ___ I feel myself in a constantly growing relationship with God and attend to that dimension of my life consistently.
- ___ I can suspend judgment until I have as much evidence as possible from all involved.
- ___ I am generally optimistic and future-oriented about our parish.
- ___ I can ask others to make a commitment to action and give support and clear direction when needed.
- ___ I can become excited and commit myself to a goal, even if all the details are not perfectly worked out or the outcome totally clear.
- ___ I care about others on the council and in the parish and can build trusting relationships with others.
- ___ I get excited when a goal is achieved, when someone excels in doing a task, even if I was not directly involved in implementation.
- ___ I like to generate positive feelings and enthusiasm in people, and can foster an atmosphere where this happens.
- ___ I enjoy the uniqueness of people and can motivate people to work together from their strengths to accomplish common goals.
- ___ I am a good listener who can reflect back to the speaker both the content and the feelings of what I have heard.
- ___ I have a lifestyle which balances commitments to family, work, community and church and generally possess stamina for participation in all these areas.

___ Other *(List here.)*

___ Other *(List here.)*

Respond to each item using this scale:

- 3 Very true of me
- 2 Somewhat true of me
- 1 Rarely or never true of me

Evaluating the Pastoral Council as a Whole

1. A parish pastoral council is prayerful. Its members are to be persons of prayer; that is, they see the value of private prayer for their own personal growth in holiness as well as the value of community prayer for growth in Christ's community of faith and love. The council thus spends time together in prayer and retreat experiences for the purpose of drawing together in love and trust, to foster reconciliation, and for the discernment of God's will for the community.

- *How much time do we as a council spend in prayer? What is the quality of our prayer experiences? How well prepared are they?*

- *In what ways can I as a council member share responsibility for insuring that the council is a prayerful and living sign of Christ present in the parish?*

2. A parish pastoral council is pastoral. It strives to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit among God's people in the parish. It does this by investigating and weighing matters that bear on pastoral activities affecting the lives of parishioners, and by formulating, on behalf of the parish, practical conclusions regarding them. The council proposes specific priorities and plans the parish should adopt to perform its spiritual mission in the areas of word, worship, and service. Only then can the parish, with the advice of the parish finance council, determine what resources (people, facilities, money) are needed to carry out those actions or programs, and how to provide such resources.

- *What is the focus of our agendas as a council? To what extent do we devote our attention to the spiritual mission of the parish?*

- *How can I foster that "holy indifference" which frees me to seek and follow God's will, whatever it may be?*

3. A parish pastoral council is representative. It is a representative body rather than a body of representatives. A council member is not the representative for a particular neighborhood, age bracket, special interest group or organization: each councilor ministers to the entire parish community. Thus, the council represents all areas of parish life: old and young, men and women, laity, clergy, and religious, people with divergent viewpoints, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. All work together in a spirit of trust and openness, merging their expertise, insights, and experiences to further the mission of Christ among all people.

- *What efforts do we as a council regularly use to know and understand the parish as a whole?*

- *How can I be a more effective link between the members of the parish and the pastoral council?*

4. A parish pastoral council is discerning. Its members participate effectively in the decision-making process for the parish by bringing together the needs and the hopes of the parishioners and of the entire community (neighborhoods) in which they live. Through dialogue and deliberation, the council merges the insights, diverse experiences, expertise, and faith of parishioners in order to provide vision and direction for the parish community. That vision finds expression in the priorities and plans proposed by the council.

- *How effective are council meetings? How well does council foster dialogue so that each possible solution is explored before a decision is made?*

- *How effectively have we as a council tapped the insights and gifts of the parishioners?*



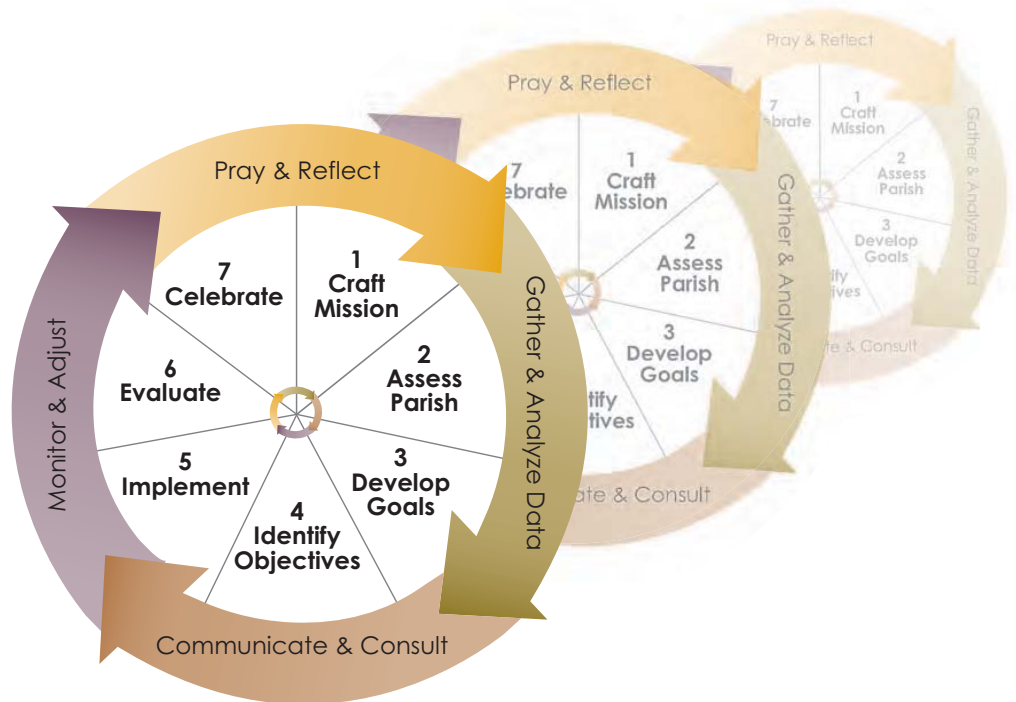
7. CELEBRATING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

An important step and often neglected in an annual pastoral planning year is celebrating accomplishments and lessons learned. This can be done at a parish assembly or other parish event where everyone is recognized and thanked for their contribution to the overall parish plan including the implementers. Once again it is the pastor who officially expresses appreciation for the year's work on the parish plan on behalf of the pastoral council and the whole parish.

BEGINNING ANEW

Having evaluated the pastoral planning process of the past year, the parish pastoral council is ready to help the parish begin anew with the planning cycle. At the end of each year, the parish pastoral council needs to:

- Measure progress made toward goals.
- Determine the need for revision through clarification, addition or deletion.
- Review new data or new circumstances (new pastor, new building effort, new required diocesan program).
- Look at all goals to reaffirm, eliminate as inappropriate for the present, or add something new.
- Seek the advice of implementation groups to advance new objectives.



Sample Parish Goals and Objectives

Note that the three GOALS in each set remain the same and the OBJECTIVES demonstrate a progression in developing strategies to achieve the GOAL.

Year 1 (Finalized in the Spring of 2010)

GOAL 1: To establish religious formation opportunities for all ages in the parish.

(related to the pastoral element of Catechesis)

Objectives

1. To evaluate current catechetical efforts for children by January 2011.
2. To research available materials and processes for children's catechesis by April 2011.
3. To explore with other parishes in the area the feasibility of beginning junior high youth ministry by January 2011.
4. To host one event for junior high youth and invite youth from other parishes to participate by May 2011.
5. To develop a program for parents of elementary children on their role as primary religious educators by May 2011.
6. To plan and offer an adult Bible study during the Lenten season 2011.

GOAL 2: To enhance the celebration of Sunday Eucharist.

(related to the pastoral element of Eucharist)

Objectives

1. To invite the diocesan Worship office to visit our parish and provide an assessment of the present celebration of the Sunday Eucharist by November 2010.
2. To initiate the role of cantors by Lent 2011.
3. To provide "refresher" training for those who are presently servers, ushers, lectors, and Eucharistic ministers by March 2011.
4. To recruit new liturgical ministers on Pentecost 2011.

GOAL 3: To establish public outreach efforts in the local community.

(related to the pastoral element of Stewardship)

Objectives

1. To survey service opportunities already in existence in the area by January 2011.
2. To determine which parishioners are already assisting with both civic and ecumenical social outreach projects by January 2011.
3. To plan and provide a forum for the parish to study the U.S. Bishops' document, *Communities of Salt and Light*, by April 2011.
4. To decide what involvements would be appropriate future service opportunities for our parish by May 2011.

Year 2 (Finalized in the spring of 2011)

GOAL 1: To establish religious formation opportunities for all ages in the parish.

(related to the pastoral element of Catechesis)

Objectives

1. To offer a series of six sessions for parents of elementary children on "Parenting the Faith of Children" by May 2012.
2. To plan and offer two intergenerational "Family Formation Days" in November 2011 and February 2012.
3. To study and revise the post-initiation programs for children between third and sixth grades by May 2012.
4. To convene a junior high team (youth and adults) to serve with others who are organizing junior high youth ministry in the area by October 2011.
5. To expand adult Bible study to include the Advent and Lenten seasons during 2011-2012.
6. To plan a total parish renewal project to be held in fall, 2014 by June 2011.

GOAL 2: To enhance the celebration of Sunday Eucharist.

(related to the pastoral element of Eucharist)

Objectives

1. To plan and offer a retreat/workshop for all liturgical ministers by Advent 2012.
2. To hire a part time music coordinator to work with cantors and the choir by June 2012.
3. To educate parishioners on a basic understanding of Eucharist throughout Ordinary Time during 2011-2012.

GOAL 3: To establish public outreach efforts in the local community.

(related to the pastoral element of Stewardship)

Objectives

1. To publicize existing service commitments by parishioners and possible opportunities in our area by October 2011.
2. To organize a "response team" to work with the St. Vincent de Paul store in meeting emergencies in our area by September 2011.
3. To support through special collections the work of the local food bank and the interfaith shelter, beginning monthly in July 2011.
4. To organize and hold a program on "The Everyday Face of Violence" by June 2011.

Year 3 (Finalized in the spring of 2012)

GOAL 1: To establish religious formation opportunities for all ages in the parish.

(related to the pastoral element of Catechesis)

Objectives

1. To offer a series of four sessions for parents of junior high children on "Keeping Our Kids Catholic" by May 2013.
2. To plan and offer four intergenerational "Family Formation Days" by June 2013.
3. To initiate and evaluate a new program of religious formation for third through sixth graders by May 2013.
4. To train two leaders and introduce the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd for pre-school children by September 2013.
5. To hire a qualified Director of Religious Formation in collaboration with two neighboring parishes by June 2013.

GOAL 2: To enhance the celebration of Sunday Eucharist

(related to the pastoral element of Eucharist)

Objectives

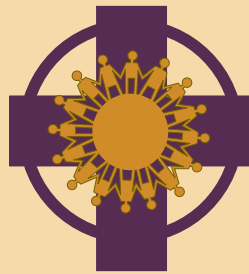
1. To introduce Eucharistic ministers to the homebound after all Sunday masses on Easter 2012.
2. To sponsor with other parishes in the region a music workshop for developing choirs and cantors by December 2013.
3. To offer Evening Prayer on Sundays in Advent and Lent of 2012-2013.
4. To develop details of parish renewal project "The Day of the Lord" and begin publicity to the parish by January 2012.

GOAL 3: To establish public outreach efforts in the local community.

(related to the pastoral element of Stewardship)

Objectives

1. To explore adopting a refugee family, and if feasible to begin that process by January 2013.
2. To initiate and plan with appropriate local organizations a Justice Rally for Immigrants by July 4, 2013.
3. To recruit and train 10 parishioners (teens and adults) to work at the food bank on the first Saturday of each month beginning July 2012.
4. To plan and offer three educational sessions with other Churches in town on "Breaking the Chain of Violence" by June 2013.



THE STRUCTURE FOR PASTORAL LEADERSHIP



RELATIONSHIPS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND ROLES

Proper Relationships

The identity of the parish pastoral council – and, by extension, pastoral councils at other levels – is revealed by its relationships, its responsibilities and its roles. Acknowledging and committing to right relationships helps in fostering community and healthy communication. In fact, pastoral councils find that their agenda frequently involves cultivating relationships on many levels.

- **RELATIONSHIPS WITH EACH OTHER.** First, they need to work at becoming a leadership body themselves. That means spending some deliberate time in prayer and study, faith sharing, story telling and purposeful conversation about their hopes and dreams for the parish. In this task, the pastor teaches, oversees and participates with everyone around the table. There must be a high level of trust within this body, for it will need to hold confidences, to explore ideas with openness, and to present a consistent message to the parish community.

The very variety and richness of the graces bestowed by the Spirit invite us constantly to discern how these gifts are to be rightly ordered in the service of the Church's mission.

*Pope Benedict XVI
Pope Benedict in America*

- **RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL.** Parish finance councils bear the responsibility for parish temporalities and are closely related to the parish pastoral council. The pastor should see to it that these two leadership bodies meet occasionally to review the parish

For good order and harmony, it is important that the pastoral council itself is organized before it attempts to engage the parish in planning efforts.

This means that the pastor and council must discuss the proper connections it has to other parish groups as well as the necessary components of the internal structure of the council.

budget in light of the fiscal needs of the goals of the annual parish plan. The finance council can also be instrumental in informing the pastoral council of important administrative and fiscal matters that could influence future planning.

- **RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARISH STAFF MEMBERS, ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL AND LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTERS.** Communication and collaboration with these partners in mission are essential. In some cases these individuals may be instrumental in influencing or carrying out the objectives of the annual parish plan. Parish staff members can be a resource to a parish pastoral council by offering their expertise when appropriate. Their relationship to the pastoral council may vary. In some parishes they may participate in council meetings as consultants or resource persons when the specific area of their expertise is being discussed. Whether they regularly attend meetings or not, it is important that they be kept informed of the council's direction by the pastor. It is advised that parish staff members be present and participate in the broad consultation efforts conducted by the parish pastoral council such as parish assemblies or parish meetings. This assures not only that they hear the wisdom of the people of God, but also that they have the opportunity to offer their ideas in a public forum where parishioners may benefit from their expertise and experience.
- **RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARISHIONERS.** Council members must make an effort on a regular basis to listen to and dialogue with parishioners at various levels. This listening is an integral part of the research and consultation in preparation for deciding the directions of the annual pastoral plan.

Responsibilities and Roles

For good organization specific responsibilities and roles within the council should be inaugurated. Three persons comprise the **AGENDA TEAM**, which collaborates on preparing agendas for important pastoral council meetings and events:

- **PASTOR.** While the pastor has ultimate responsibility for the total life of the parish, he actively seeks wisdom from the Holy Spirit present in the persons of other council members who sit around the table. His official role is that of presider, presiding in a way similar to the way he presides at liturgy. That is, he assures that all who share in the ministry of leadership are equipped for their task and then trusts that together their activity will flow toward its ultimate purpose. For liturgy, that end is a worthy celebration of Eucharist. For pastoral council, it is making real and concrete the Mission of Jesus in the parish. Not inconsequentially, neither of these happens without the full, active participation of the faithful.

The Pastor presides by assuring that the council performs its tasks. He sees to the ongoing development, training and replacement of council members

and is ultimately accountable for the quality of the planning decisions of the council. He assists the council in developing consensus around particular pastoral issues by sharing information, teaching ecclesial principles or providing his own perspectives from experience. In the end he authorizes any final course of action in relation to the pastoral plan and is the chief spokesperson for that vision to the parish.

- **FACILITATOR.** The facilitator organizes the council's work toward the completion of an agenda and ultimately the process parts of pastoral planning. In particular the facilitator should have a knack for group dynamics and be able to listen, respond appropriately to what is going on in the group, and move the agenda towards its end.
- **RECORDER/SCRIBE.** The recorder or scribe documents necessary information, disseminating it appropriately.

The facilitator and recorder roles could be discerned from among the council members or councils may choose to have non-member volunteers serve in these capacities especially if they are equipped with the necessary skills for the tasks at hand. This way all council members can participate fully in council proceedings.

SUMMARY POINTS FOR DIRECTION AND REFLECTION

- Acknowledging and committing to right relationships helps in fostering community and healthy communication.
- Out and About:
 - Council members must make an effort on a regular basis to listen to and dialogue with parishioners at various levels. This listening is an integral part of the research and consultation in preparation for deciding the directions of the annual pastoral plan.
 - Parish staff members can be a resource to a parish pastoral council by offering their expertise when appropriate. They are an invaluable support to implementing the objectives of a pastoral plan.
 - Even though the parish finance council and parish pastoral council function interdependently the pastor should nurture a strong relationship between them so that the expertise of each council can be shared.
- At the Council Table:
 - The pastor presides by assuring that the council performs its tasks. He sees to the ongoing development, training and replacement of council members and is ultimately accountable for the quality of the planning decisions of the council.
 - The facilitator organizes the council toward the completion of an agenda.
 - The recorder or scribe documents necessary information, disseminating it appropriately.
 - These three persons comprise the Agenda Team, preparing the process for each council session.



MEMBERSHIP

Council members should be chosen by a process of discernment because leadership ministry requires particular gifts.

Some leadership teams depend solely on talents or experience in organizational management. Other committees may be formed by representatives of constitutive parts, as, for example, delegates from parish committees or organizations. Pastoral councils are unique insofar as they are dependent on an awareness of and commitment to the Mission of Christ; dedication to the total life and good of the parish and a willingness to enter into consensus decision-making.

Membership on the parish pastoral council is not a matter either of appointment by the pastor or election by popular vote. However, because leadership ministry requires particular gifts, council members should be chosen by a process of discernment with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Discernment is the formal prayerful process by which a group discovers God's will in a particularly significant situation or decision.

The discernment and ultimately the transition of new members to the council can be an opportunity for renewal and growth in all members of the council. Recalling the reason for our council's existence, our giftedness for the ministry,

You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be servant of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served by to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Mark 10:42-45

our enthusiasm for the future of our parish and the sacred trust we bear in the name of our faith community are essential for experienced members as well as newcomers to the ministry of leadership.

- **IDENTIFYING MEMBERS.** Every parishioner should have the opportunity to identify potential members. Council members are to be active, participating, fully initiated members of the parish and possess enough experience, confidence and maturity to maintain wholesome relationships with the parish priests, deacons, other parish staff members and fellow council members. Consideration is to be given to individuals who have backgrounds in community organization, planning or organizational development.
- **BALANCING RESPONSIBILITIES.** Discernment begins with appropriate attention to family responsibilities with caution toward overextension of time and talent. It is also highly advised that parishioners who already serve the parish as finance council members, employees of the parish including staff members not be considered for pastoral council selection.

Discerning Members

Unlike governmental models, the parish pastoral council does not operate from standards of voting, winning and losing, or popular recognition. Rather, council members are selected through a process of prayerful discernment. This approach identifies those with gifts for the ministry of leadership and comes to consensus about which parishioners are needed to carry on the leadership role.

Several important stages are part of this process.

Information

The parish at large is given information about the requirements needed for the role of a pastoral council member. They are asked to identify those parishioners who, in their experience, have these gifts. In general, council members need to be:

- Women and men of prayerful faith, motivated by the desire to grow in faith themselves, and to see similar spiritual growth in the parish.
- Optimistic and enthusiastic about the future of the parish.
- Desirous of working within model of shared leadership, i.e., one based not on power or authority, but on collaboration and consensus.
- Eager about facilitating parish efforts to identify its mission and goals.
- Capable of the careful listening to others' ideas, of articulating their own ideas, and of practicing the art of building consensus.
- Willing to invite, delegate and encourage parishioners to bring the parish pastoral plan to fruition.

Discernment, Part 1

After names have been surfaced from the parish (including input from the pastor and current council members), all potential members come together to learn more about the ministry of leadership. Such sessions might include:

- A time of prayer focused on call, giftedness, service, discipleship or other Scriptural themes related to the ministry of leadership.
- Foundational theology of Church and ministry, basic history and background on the role of councils in the diocese and parish.
- Clarifications about the constitutive elements of pastoral life.
- Basic information on parish statistics and liaisons with other parts of the local Church for shared activities.
- Information from the present council on the status of the pastoral plan and its anticipated direction.
- Expectations about practical matters, such as time commitment, frequency of meetings, role of prayer and faith sharing in meetings, specific tasks assumed by members in regard to the inner functioning of the council.
- Time for questions from potential members.
- Opportunity for potential members to consider and declare whether they feel attracted and called to this ministry.

Discernment, Part 2

Those who have determined that they wish to be considered for membership on the pastoral council gather with the pastor and current council. This process takes place within a context of prayer and involves the actual selection of new council members. It may include the following:

- Self-introduction by potential members, focused primarily on their relationship with and history of involvement in the parish.
- Open-ended questions addressed by potential members around their perceptions of the mission of the parish, their hopes and dreams for the future of the parish, their own self-awareness of their gifts for this ministry.
- Decision by the potential council member to withdraw from consideration after discussion of the open ended questions.
- Additional rounds of questions, responses, and choices when discernment is not completely clear.
- Affirmation and blessings of those selected for the council.
- Announcement to the parish community of who has been discerned for this ministry.

Council Size

The size of the council can range from 7-10 members. The size is proportionate to the task of a planning body that empowers other parishioners to implement the objectives of the parish plan on an annual basis. But in the case of partnered parishes or of a very small parish, these numbers may vary to maximize effectiveness. There is no need for alternate members since 100% commitment is expected from each person, with the hope that continued presence and participation promotes a sense of community among the members so necessary for effective leadership.

There is no need for alternate members since 100% commitment is expected from each person.

Length of Service

The length of service is determined by the pastor. Stability without stagnation is the norm with allowances for resignations and natural attrition. Some pastors for example, might keep a council intact to see a 3-5 year pastoral plan to completion; others may choose to stagger membership on a cycle of years. It is important to note that as pastoral councils begin to be formed and to develop a working relationship, length of service may be longer, simply to allow time for the group to coalesce and carry out the initial steps of pastoral planning. Flexibility with the natural changes of life itself could suggest that a pastor take stock at least once a year, perhaps at the annual pastoral council retreat, as to the quality of commitment of each of the council members. Thought should be given to the fact that too many turnovers in membership can hinder the ongoing trust and the establishment of a group confidence level necessary for faith sharing and consensus building. Careful discernment to ending an individual's service is also important. Resignations should be taken in stride with appropriate appreciation and acclamation given to outgoing individuals.

Flexibility with the natural changes of life itself could suggest that a pastor take stock at least once a year.

SUMMARY POINTS FOR DIRECTION AND REFLECTION

- Because leadership ministry requires particular gifts, council members should be chosen by a process of discernment with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- The size of the council can range from 7-10 members. The size is proportionate to the task of a planning body that empowers other parishioners to implement the objectives of the parish plan on an annual basis.
- The length of service is determined by the pastor. Stability without stagnation is the norm with allowances for resignations and natural attrition.



MEETINGS

The pastoral council meets as often as needed to guarantee the establishment, implementation and evaluation of an annual pastoral plan.

Experience has proven that more meetings are necessary at the start-up of a pastoral council. There is no set number of meetings since the pastoral council meets as often as needed to guarantee the establishment, implementation and evaluation of an annual pastoral plan.

For example, the council schedules meetings to review data, arrive at consensus on goals and objectives, evaluate the progress of the implementation groups, plan a discernment session for new members, etc. In some busy seasons, such as working on designing and hosting parish consultation opportunities or collating and discussing data, there may be a need for more frequent meetings.

Sometimes task groups of council members can meet independently of the whole body and report later to the whole group. On the other hand, all council members and the pastor must be present at meetings when matters are presented for consensus.

The apostles and presbyters met together to see about the matter. After much debate had taken place, Peter got up and spoke to them...

Acts 15: 6-7

Once a plan is in place and implementation is begun, councils may need to gather only bi-monthly, exchanging necessary information regularly, but without a formal meeting. On the other hand, if too much time elapses between meetings, momentum is lost and it may be difficult to continue the level of conversation necessary to ensure that the mission of the parish is still at the forefront of pastoral council activity.

Creating A Meeting Agenda

Before each meeting of the whole council the pastor, facilitator and recorder meet to plan a meeting agenda.

There is nothing so draining and debilitating as a poorly planned and executed meeting. Conversely, there is nothing so energizing and rewarding as a well-planned and executed meeting. The council is a planning body. Its meetings need to be planned with careful forethought and attention to detail.



- Know what you need to accomplish at a particular meeting. Some meetings will have only one objective; others will have multiple objectives. But whatever you want to accomplish at a pastoral council meeting needs to be linked to what stage you are in the overall planning cycle. For example, the council might be at the point of planning a parish assembly or putting the final touches on a survey. Perhaps the final revision of the mission statement is the objective or finalizing the goals and objectives.
- Once you know what stage in the planning cycle the council finds itself, you can begin the process of agenda planning for a specific meeting. Step number one is to list the topics which need to be discussed at this meeting. For each topic, clarify the desired outcome, i.e., what you expect to achieve during the meeting regarding that topic. In some ways, each topic becomes a "meeting within a meeting."
- Consider what process or steps are needed to achieve the desired outcome for each topic. You may need first to brainstorm and then prioritize. Brainstorming may involve several steps such as small groups generating separate lists, merging the lists to remove duplications, and then clarifying what statements mean so as to ensure a shared understanding before attempting to rank the ideas.
- Once the steps are finalized it is important to estimate the amount of time required to work through the process to achieve the desired outcome for each topic. In estimating time, be conservative. It usually takes longer than people think to work through a process with a group of people with diverse backgrounds, understandings and perspectives. Don't forget to budget at least 10-15 minutes for a prayer experience at the beginning of the meeting.
- Determine what, if any, background materials are needed. There may be "homework" that council members can do on their own time to prepare them to participate in a discussion. Alternatively, you may need to assemble data or prepare options for the full council to consider as a way to make the best use of the time when the council is in session.
- Once background materials are finalized the recorder can assemble available materials that need to be developed prior to the meeting. In either case, there will always need to be preparation of materials, even if only the agenda itself, prior to the actual meeting.

- Depending on the topic, the objective and/or the background materials, different people might lead some or all of the discussion for a particular topic. Consider who best would make the report or guide the group through a particular process. Related to this, take into account any special roles (e.g., resource person) that may be required for the topic at hand.
- With this information in hand, you can now go about the actual setting of the agenda. Identify the sequence for dealing with each topic on the agenda. Sometimes the stage in the planning cycle in which you find yourself will dictate the sequence. When that is not the case, it is always best to put those topics at the beginning of the agenda that require the most energy, such as creative thinking, problem solving or decision making for that is when people's energy and focus is the greatest.
- Lastly, don't forget about the meeting logistics. Choose a room that fits the purpose of the group. Arrange the room preferably with a table and chairs arranged so everyone is able to have eye contact with all present. Prepare audio-visual equipment, newsprint, easels, pens, refreshments ahead of time. It's sometimes the little things that make members feel welcome and ready to engage in the work at hand.



PRAYER

There is no better way to grow in Christian community than with communal prayer. Every time the pastoral council gathers, it must include significant prayer and faith sharing with scriptural texts. While not designed or intended to be a prayer group, prayer and spiritual reflection should inform all our deliberations. This aspect of the meeting is so important that council members are responsible for preparing a structured prayer experience each time they gather. The pastoral council must witness to the rest of the parish faith community that it is Jesus they listen to and his Good News that they live out in all of their deliberations.

This aspect of the meeting is so important that council members are responsible for preparing a structured prayer experience each time they gather.

Annual Retreat

It is recommended that the pastor schedule an annual retreat for the pastoral council as an opportunity to nurture the spiritual life of the council as well as to evaluate and review the progress and membership commitment of the council.

One thing is certain. If we do not “tend” the life of council and parish, managing change and renewal efforts, it is very easy for the seeds that have been planted to dry up, be trampled underfoot, or choked out by weeds.

*Ask and it will be given you;
search and you will find; knock and
the door will be opened for you.
For everyone who asks, receives;
and everyone who searches, finds:
and for everyone who knocks, the
door will be opened.*

Matthew 7: 7-8

Councils should not underestimate the influence that their communal prayer has on their ongoing work as well as its power to bond and unify council members.

Planning Spiritual Enrichment

It goes without saying that without deliberate planning the council's prayer time could deteriorate or be totally absent. For this reason it is highly suggested that individuals be assigned to prepare quality prayer experiences for pastoral council meetings or when the parish gathers for consultation. Parish staff members who are skilled in liturgy can be a great asset in this regard. Here are some things to consider when preparing group prayer experiences.

Prepare the Setting

The prayer time can take place at the meeting table or in a liturgical space if it is nearby. Whatever space is chosen it should be a quiet warm and inviting atmosphere where council members can easily enter into reflection. Soft sacred music or a simple centerpiece, candle or open scriptures can create a sense of the "holy" in the midst of a "worktable."

Choose a Theme

The theme should not be a random selection, but could be determined by the liturgical season, a particular situation in the parish or council, or the particular agenda for the evening. The best scenario is that the prayer time easily transitions to the agenda at hand.

Use the Daily or Sunday Lectionary Readings

There is something to be said for uniting ourselves with the universal Church through reflection on the daily or upcoming liturgical readings. This is a simple but solid way of bringing the message of Scripture to the council table and into the parish's life story. Read a short passage with a short reflection then after a brief silence invite council members to respond to one or two prepared questions which relate the reading to their own lives and the life of the parish.

Sufficient Time

Allow for at least 10 – 15 minutes for the prayer experience. After busy work days it is important to slow down and not rush. There is something very important to inviting the Holy Spirit into the heart of the council. Councils should not underestimate the influence that their communal prayer has on their ongoing work as well as its power to bond and unify council members to each other and to their pastor all for the grater good of the parish in its mission.

SUMMARY POINTS FOR DIRECTION AND REFLECTION

- It is recommended that the pastor schedule an annual retreat for the pastoral council as an opportunity to nurture the spiritual life of the council as well as to evaluate and review the progress and membership commitment of the council.
- There is no better way to grow in Christian community than with communal prayer. Quality experiences of prayer should be a regular practice when councils gather.



DECISION MAKING

Consultation

While the pastor has ultimate authority for authorizing all decisions, he must take particular care to sanction a course of action in such a way that the unity of the parish is promoted. Although in no way obliged to accept recommendations, the pastor should give strong consideration to supporting the council's consensus unless he states a compelling reason for overriding it.

*What touches all ought
to be considered by all.*

Rules of Law, Pope Boniface VIII

In the context of pastoral planning the decisions to choose future pastoral initiatives and the necessary human and financial resources to support them are important ones that have long ranging effects.

Closely connected to discernment, consultative decision making takes the form of consensus. Servant leaders should always be in the search for wisdom, for the course of action that has the best hope of being what God wants for the parish. It is God's will that is important, not "mine." When the pastor leads in a consultative way, he invites the pastoral council to come together to make decisions with him.

After due diligence is certain by obtaining as much information as needed, surrounded by prayer, we allow the truth to be made known in and through all of the "listening" members.

Consensus

Consensus is a group process for decision making in which the pastor and council members dialogue toward reaching substantial, though not necessarily unanimous commitment, to move forward with certain pastoral initiatives.

The important thing is that all agree to support the decision. Because of the nature of the spiritual bond that exists at the council table, majority rule (voting) seems inappropriate since it promotes competition and winners and losers. It is important to note that some issues, such as official Church teachings and Church law are not subject to a decision making process. This is where the pastor must exercise his teaching role. In the end, the parishioners' experience of inclusion in suggesting ideas and goals for the future can often times be far more important and have more far reaching consequences than the actual decision.

Discerning God's will is not easy and reaching consensus is often a time consuming process. But the time spent building consensus about major parish priorities can ultimately save time in obtaining greater parishioner commitment. Therefore less energy is expended in the authorization and implementation stages of the planning process.

Once a consensus is attained and directions (objectives of the plan) are determined, the tasks are delegated to appropriate individuals, groups or organizations

SUMMARY POINTS FOR DIRECTION AND REFLECTION

- Striving for consensus is the preferred decision making model for servant leadership settings. Consensus is the process of decision making in which the pastor and council members dialogue toward reaching substantial, though not necessarily unanimous commitment to move forward with certain pastoral matters.

Obtaining A Consensus



What are the four steps of a consensus process?

1. Input
 - Issue is clearly stated.
 - Background information presented.
 - Opportunity for clarification given.
2. Discussion
 - Facilitator introduces issue, others respond. Facilitator keeps discussion on the issue.
 - When most viewpoints have been expressed, facilitator tests for consensus.
3. Reflection
 - Does what is proposed support the Gospel?
 - In light of the parish Mission Statement, will this be good for the entire parish?
 - Can each of us live with this and publicly support this?
4. Review
 - Summarize the issue, basic background, areas of agreement and disagreement, statement of consensus reached.
 - If there is not consensus, continue to discuss the problematic areas.

What can be done when consensus is difficult to reach?

- If the discussion is “going around in circles,” drop the matter and continue the meeting. Return to it later.
- If there seems to be missing information, do further research and gather more data before trying to complete the consensus process. Postpone further discussion until all have had the opportunity for prayer and reflection time.

What if I'm the one who's outside the circle of agreement?

- Are you considering what is best for all?
- Do you understand all the data given?
- Have you carefully justified your reasons for disagreeing?
- Can you say, “Well, I don't agree completely, but I see the validity of your position and I can live with that”?
- Can you suggest areas where more research or data is necessary which might help the group see your viewpoint?

What attitudes are helpful and harmful to the process?

Helpful:

- Openness
- Honesty
- Respect for the truth in everyone
- Patience
- Enthusiastic support for outcome (often a brand new idea)

Harmful:

- Rigidity of opinions
- Hostile or suspicious attitude
- Determination to win
- Sabotaging the process: "Why do we have to do it this way?"

When should our council use a formal consensus process?

- Only when discerning major decisions that are intended to establish goals and objectives for the future.
- Not about operational issues or day to day decisions. Most of these issues are not brought to council anyway.

What are the "non-negotiables" of consensus?

- Built on prayer.
- Seeks the will of God, not "my" will.
- Based on mutual trust among persons making the decision.
- Honors the teachings of the Scriptures and the Church.

What is not involved in consensus?

- Majority rule (*No votes are taken*).
- Compromise (*People don't give in to keep the peace*).
- Competition (*There are no winners and losers*).
- Quick decisions (*It takes time to work through to consensus*).
- Dependence on the leader (*All engage in the discussion and come to decision*).



TRANSITIONS

Special attention should be given to transitions, whether it is a change of pastor or member resignations or new additions. The transfer of a pastor, the arrival of a new staff person, the resignation or end of service of council members or the dismantling of a parish council in favor of a pastoral council are significant moments in the life of parish leadership. As a matter of fact, when a pastor is changed the whole parish community and the council are also in transition.

Special attention should be given to transitions, whether it is a change of pastor or member resignations or new additions.

Tell it to your children, and your children to their children, and their children to the next generation.

Joel 1:3

Whether it is an individual or a group, there are things that a pastor and council should consider a ritual of separation and closure, planning for the in-between time, and assuring a smooth new beginning. Too often when changes are announced we too readily begin preparing for replacements. When do we get to

Providing an opportunity for bringing closure benefits not only those leaving, but also those who continue on.

say good-bye, or ask the person or persons involved in the change to share parting words for the good of the parish community? Providing an opportunity for bringing closure benefits not only those leaving, but also those who continue on.

The pastor in particular is responsible for coordinating the selection of new members with the parish at large, orienting the new members to the process of visioning and planning, and familiarizing the new members with the current goals and objectives of the parish pastoral plan.

Tending to Transitions

New council members need a deliberate orientation to the currently working council. It is essential that they develop a familiarity with the purpose, and how a pastoral council functions. A sub-group from the council needs to assume responsibility for orientation of new members.

A process, which might include:

- Some social time for members to get to know one another on a personal level. (Normally, a special event for this purpose should be planned, since simply dropping new people into meetings can be disconcerting to both the flow of the meeting and the specific needs of the newcomers.)
- Review of the language used by council, especially since it is a more specialized expression of how the body operates.
- History of the planning process in the parish, from the plan's inception up to the present time.
- Overview of council roles and the council's relationships with other parish leadership groups.
- Sharing of the council's calendar for the next year, including parish events where council presence is expected.
- Overview of tasks on the agenda for the next meeting(s).
- Opportunity to ask questions.

The Church

Alive!

CONCLUSION

By working together for the fulfillment of the parish mission the Vatican II ideal of shared responsibility can be realized. The clergy, pastoral council, finance council, parish staff, parish organizations and all parishioners are vital

parts of the whole. Together they form the Body of Christ. Together they commit themselves to the very Mission of Jesus Christ. Pastoral councils are charged with guaranteeing that all of parish life never wavers from the WHY of every single parish effort – the vision of the Gospel, the realization of the Kingdom of God within and without the parish boundaries. Through a pastoral planning process the Pastor and Pastoral Council lead the parish step by step, year

The leadership ministry of the parish pastoral council is both challenging and rewarding and it is essential to the life of the Church.

I give thanks to my God at every remembrance of you, praying always with joy in my every prayer for all of you, because of your partnership for the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 2:3-6

by year to envision a fuller manifestation of the Kingdom, to particularize how that Kingdom will look in their parish, in their milieu, to prepare the way for it to be made real, and to invite parishioners into both the vision and its accomplishment.

GLOSSARY

CATECHESIS: An essential element of parish life through which individuals and communities systematically acquire and deepen their Christian faith.

CODE OF CANON LAW: Law enacted and promulgated by the Pope for the orderly pastoral administration and government of the Church. The revised Code, effective November 27, 1983, consists of 1,752 canons in seven books.

COLLABORATION: The act of working together through reflective listening and genuine articulation of ideas, in a partnership of mutual respect and diversity.

CONSENSUS: A method of making decisions through which the pastor and pastoral council strive to reach substantial, though not necessarily unanimous, agreement on the overall direction of the pastoral life of the parish.

CONSULTATION: The act of conferring and deliberating in order to come to decisions together. Refers particularly to the relationship between pastor and laity, respecting the pastor's unique role as canonical head of the parish.

DELEGATE: To assign responsibility and authority to the appropriate level.

DIOCESE: The local or particular Church, referring to a geographically designated area in which Catholics, usually gathered in parishes, are united in faith and sacraments with their bishop, ordained in apostolic succession.

DISCERNMENT: The formal prayerful process by which a group discovers God's will in a particularly significant situation or decision.

DISTRICTS: A geographic segment of a pastoral vicariate region.

EMPOWER: To provide individuals and or groups with skills, information, authority and resources in order to carry out their responsibilities.

EUCCHARIST: An essential element of parish life which is the central and fundamental prayer of the Church. The Eucharist is where Jesus is fully present in His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. It is through the Eucharist that Jesus gradually transforms those who receive Him, leading them to witness their faith in the world.

EVALUATION: Can be formative or summative. Formative evaluation involves collecting feedback in an ongoing way as a plan is monitored and adjusted. Summative evaluation is a systematic way of measuring performance against objectives at the end of the planning cycle.

EVANGELIZATION: An essential element of parish life which encompasses any way in which the parish continues to spread the good news of Jesus, especially, although not exclusively, through personal and corporate sharing of faith.

FINANCE COUNCIL: A consultative body within the parish that offers expertise in matters of finance and plant management as they relate to the mission of the parish.

FORMATION: The element of parish life which promotes a lived faith which is informed and integrated.

GOAL: A clearly defined, constructive statement of desired direction or activity in broad, general terms.

HOLY ORDERS: The sacrament of apostolic ministry which includes three degrees: bishops, priests and deacons.

INITIATION SACRAMENTS: Baptism, Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist lay the foundation of every Christian life. As members of the Catholic Church all men and women assume responsibility for using their gifts to build up the Body of Christ in their time and place.

LEADERSHIP: A parish ministry that calls for gifts of visioning, planning, empowering, and evaluating for the on-going pastoral life of the parish faith community.

MINISTRY: The active service of the baptized, dependent upon the gifts of the individual and the needs of the community, and always directed to the building up of the Body of Christ.

MISSION (OF THE CHURCH): The purpose for which Christians are gathered in faith: to create a new people, healed and saved through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

MISSION STATEMENT: A brief, general statement which identifies and establishes the unique direction of a parish as it lives out the mission of Christ in our day and age.

OBJECTIVE: A planned action which directs efforts toward attaining a goal. Besides describing a result, an objective also specifies what is to be done, who is to do it, and when it is to be completed.

PARISH: A gathering of the people of God united in faith and dedicated to continuing the universal mission of the Church in their local setting. Its life is expressed through the pastoral elements of EUCHARIST, EVANGELIZATION, CATECHESIS, FORMATION AND STEWARDSHIP.

PASTOR: The proper shepherd of a parish who exercises pastoral care in the community entrusted to him under the authority of the diocesan bishop. The pastor is given the charge to preside at the parish pastoral council deliberations.

PASTORAL: An approach of caring for the life of the parish as a whole.

PASTORAL COUNCIL: A consultative structure in a parish designed primarily to investigate, consider and recommend pastoral initiatives to further the mission of the parish faith community as an extension of the Mission of Jesus.

PASTORAL PLANNING: A prayerful and participative process by which a pastor and pastoral council identify and craft a unique mission and future goals within a particular span of time on behalf of the parishioners.

PASTORAL VICARIATE REGION: A geographical grouping of the parishes of a diocese under the pastoral care of a Regional Vicar. Vicariates are established to foster dialogue, communication and networking with and among the parishes of a particular region.

RECONCILIATION: A spiritual effect of the Sacrament of Penance which moves members of the Church toward forgiveness and healing.

REGIONAL (EPISCOPAL) VICAR: A qualified priest with pastoral and administrative experience appointed by the diocesan bishop to oversee a specific region of the diocese. The regional vicar represents the bishop to the parishes in issues of administration, pastoral planning and sacramental life within his assigned region.

SACRAMENTS: Instituted by Christ, these outward signs of God's love build up the Church as the Body of Christ and give worship to God.

SELECTION: A method by which leaders are chosen to serve on the parish pastoral council, through a discernment rather than election process.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY: The theological principle that each member of the Church, by reason of baptism, has the right and duty to participate in the Church's mission.

STEWARDSHIP: An essential element of parish life which encompasses prayer of thanksgiving for the many gifts of God and the sharing of those gifts through acts of service.

TRADITION: The long-standing practices and beliefs of the Church, developed since the days of the Apostles, and revered as normative, along with Scriptures, for the life of the Church.

VATICAN II: The most recent of 21 Church councils in which bishops from throughout the universal Church gather with the Pope to discuss and decide on matters of Church teaching and practice. A Council of this nature has supreme and full teaching authority over the Church.

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