

Parish Pastoral Council

1. Introduction

Saint Luke the Evangelist church in Westborough has updated the previously formed Parish Council into the newly revised Parish Pastoral Council, which builds on a greater consultative role. The documents of the Second Vatican Council recommended the establishment of such Councils by stating that Catholics have a right and duty to express their opinion on what pertains to the good of the Church. The documents say Pastors should willingly consult their people and use their prudent advice. By utilizing the Parish Pastoral Council, the Pastor acknowledges the wisdom of his parishioners and expresses his desire to share with them his responsibility for the governance of the parish.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the Parish Pastoral Council is to investigate pastoral matters, to consider them thoroughly, and to propose practical conclusions about them. The Council's task is, first of all, to study those matters brought to its attention and shed light on them. Its second task is to reflect on them thoroughly and to discern their true nature. Its final task is to draw sound conclusions. The Council presents these conclusions to the Pastor in the form of recommendations. This threefold task of the Council investigating, considering, and recommending conclusions is called pastoral planning. After the Pastor has accepted the recommendations of the Council, he directs their implementation. Council members may assist him, but strictly speaking, implementation is the responsibility of the pastor.

3. Scope

The scope of the Council is pastoral matters. These may include everything that pertains to the Pastor's ministries of proclaiming God's word, celebrating the sacraments, caring for the faithful, promoting the mission of the Church to the world, and being a good steward of parish resources. The scope includes all the practical matters of parish life. There is, in short, nothing about which the Pastor may not consult the council, apart from faith, orthodoxy, moral principles or laws of the universal Church.

4. Structure

The Parish Pastoral Council shall have the following membership and structure to operate in an efficient manner and to facilitate meetings:

4a. Pastor

The Pastor of St. Luke's represents the parish in all juridical matters and is charged to administer the goods of the parish according to the norms of the universal and particular Church. While he does not chair the meeting, the Pastor presides at all Parish Pastoral Council meetings and actively listens to the Council's deliberations. When appropriate, the Pastor may assist the Council in developing a consensus around a particular issue by sharing information, providing his own perspectives, or identifying common areas of agreement that seem present in the Council's discussion.

The Pastor has the final authority over any course of action.

The Pastor shall set the context for the Council's discussion by sharing Church teaching and/or setting the parameters for acceptable alternatives. If the Pastor is dissatisfied with the consultation, he expresses his reservations and asks the Council to clarify whatever remains obscure. When he is satisfied with the consultation, he formally accepts the Council's recommendations. He may then ask the parish staff or other parishioners to assist in their implementation. The Pastor is the convener of the Agenda committee and is ultimately responsible for assuring the Council's effective operation.

4b. Chairperson

The Chairperson, elected by the Council membership, is central to the effectiveness of the Parish Pastoral Council and is responsible for:

- 1) Organizing and coordinating the agenda and processes of the Council;
- 2) Chairing and facilitating the meetings of the Council;
- 3) Encouraging members and committees of the Council to fulfill their specific commitments; and
- 4) Establishing an ongoing process of evaluating the Council's effectiveness.

The Chairperson must be the servant of the group. He/she should be a facilitator of the Council, promoting inclusion and participation, keeping the meetings on track, being sensitive to conflict, and helping to resolve conflicts positively.

The Chairperson is elected for a single two-year term at the September meeting and his/her membership on the Council may be extended as needed to fulfill his/her term. Service of 2 years on the Council is required before someone can become Chair.

4c. Vice-Chairperson

The Vice-Chairperson, elected by the Council members, assists the Chairperson in fulfilling his/her duties and shall act as Chairperson in the Chairperson's absence. The Vice-Chairperson is elected for a single two-year term at the September meeting and his/her membership on the Council may be extended as needed to fulfill his/her term. Service of 1 year on the Council is required before someone can become Vice Chair

4d. Secretary

The Secretary prepares summaries of Council meetings, maintains the membership roster, assures the preparation and dissemination of materials for the Council meetings, and is responsible for all Council correspondence. **The Secretary is elected for a single two-year term at the September meeting and his/her membership on the Council may be extended as needed to fulfill his/her term.**

4e. At Large Membership

The Parish Pastoral Council shall consist of the Pastor, Parochial Vicar, and fifteen members, nominated and then drawn by lot, hopefully with at least two members representing the Spanish speaking community. A person may withdraw his/her name at anytime. If a person's name is drawn and that person declines the invitation to join the council, said person's name will not be placed back in the pool. He or she may wish to place their name in nomination the following year. Terms shall be for a three-year period. In the case that someone resigns before the completion of

his/her term, a new member should be recruited to fill the remainder of that term. A member may apply for a 2nd consecutive term, provided that the member has achieved at least 75% attendance at the Council meetings and has actively worked on sub-committees, in addition to fulfilling the criteria for membership listed below. A person may reapply for future membership after a one-year absence following the completion of his/her terms.

The terms of the Parish Pastoral Council members shall be staggered so that one third of the positions, five in number, will be available for new members each year. In order to set up staggered terms, the lottery to choose the first Parish Pastoral Council will run as follows: five names will be drawn for one-year terms, five for two-year terms, and five for three-year terms. After that, each year as five seats come open, all names will be drawn for three-year terms.

4f. Criteria for Membership

Parish Pastoral Council members are chosen, above all, for their ability to accomplish the main task of the Council: the work of investigating, considering, and recommending practical conclusions. They should be selected from the parish at large and be:

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

Selection of members will be accomplished by the following process:

Current members in their first term must let the Chair know by the March meeting their intention to either stay for a second term or resign, effective at the August meeting.

Candidates for membership must fulfill the requirements outlined above and shall be solicited from the total parish starting in April. This will allow candidates to attend and observe the Council meetings in May, June, and/or July. New members will be chosen by lot at the August meeting and will be formally installed at the September Council meeting.

Any member who is absent without notification for three consecutive meetings shall be removed from the Council and replaced with a candidate from the most recent lottery. A letter shall be sent after the second absence to request a response for their willingness to continue membership.

4g. Agenda Committee

The Agenda Committee shall be composed of the Pastor, Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Secretary. This committee shall develop an overall working Annual Plan from the Parish Plan (See paragraph 6). The Annual Plan shall identify the prioritized issues facing the parish, and the Agenda Committee shall determine when the Council will deal with them.

In addition, the Pastor or any Council member or parishioner may bring issues forward for the Council's attention and possible action. Any parishioner bringing forward an issue or suggestion shall be assigned a Council member as a sponsor to assist in the writing of the Statement Form (Appendix A) and its submission to the Agenda Committee. The sponsor shall advise the Council of the item in detail at the next meeting and the item shall be put on a future agenda, ensuring sufficient time for Council training or investigation. Every effort will be made to include the item within the next two meetings depending upon severity or urgency. Urgent issues shall be dealt with immediately as agreed by the sponsor and the Agenda Committee.

The Agenda Committee shall meet before each Council meeting to prepare the agenda and ensure that prayer and study are a significant part of the Council's deliberations. The agenda guides the Council meeting. It shall begin with a review of the minutes of the previous meeting and conclude with a brief evaluation. The

agenda and appropriate materials shall be sent to all Council members at least a week prior to the meeting to assure adequate time for review.

5. Meetings

The Parish Pastoral Council meets once a month from August to June on the fourth Monday of the month at 7:30pm. Meetings are usually one and a half hours in length. Between the monthly meetings, Council members are expected to follow up the previous meeting and prepare for the next. This usually entails work on ad hoc committees. The Parish Pastoral Council shall open with an annual Mass before the September meeting. Each meeting will open and close with prayer, and following the opening prayer, the agenda will be reviewed to determine adequacy prior to proceeding. When issues arise that need little discussion or analysis, these shall be voted on as appropriate and recommendations made right away. When an issue arises requiring greater analysis and consideration is agreed upon, a task committee shall be formed with Council members. The Agenda Committee has the responsibility to appoint chairpersons of task committees.

6. Operation

The Pastor, Parish Pastoral Council, and Parish Staff shall develop the Parish Plan every three years or as deemed necessary by the Council or Pastor. This shall serve as the base document for the annual prioritized working plan consistent with the objectives and priorities of the Parish Plan. The Parish Plan and the Annual Plan are living documents that shall be modified as major needs arise. The Parish Plan shall contain as a minimum the following prioritized key areas, and the means to achieve these goals shall be included in the Annual Plan:

a) Spiritual Life

Adult spiritual enrichment, Evangelization, Lay Ministries

b) Parish Life

Welcoming new parishioners, Stewardship; time, talents, Treasures, Leadership and Training

c) **Religious Education**

Religious formation, Parental involvement, Young adult and adult enrichment, Catechists, Youth ministry, RCIA program

d) **Community Concerns**

Social responsibilities, Ecumenism, Interfaith, Outreach

e) **Buildings and Facilities**

Maintenance, Utilization, Improvement

The Parish Pastoral Council shall annually compare and document results and achievements against the Parish Plan and Annual Plan.

7. Relation to the Staff and Finance Committee

The Pastor consults others besides the Parish Pastoral Council about parish governance. He relies upon the parish staff for their expertise and consults them daily about the management of parish operations. The Pastor may occasionally ask parish staff members to attend Council meetings in order to put their knowledge at the service of the Council. Moreover, the Pastor relies on the Finance Committee to develop, monitor, and report on the parish budget. Finance Council members are chosen for their technical skill in realms of accounting and finance. The Parish Pastoral Council, by contrast, offers practical wisdom: that is, the ability to investigate pastoral matters in a general way, to reflect on them deeply in dialogue, and to propose conclusions appropriate to the parish. However, it is required that Parish Pastoral Council members will consider and include financial impact as an integral part of all major recommendations.

8. Communications

The Parish Pastoral Council shall report to the parishioners the results of Council meetings. This shall be accomplished through the weekly bulletin, through a newsletter, by assembly, by published meeting minutes, or through whatever other method of communication is appropriate for the parish.

The Council will appoint Council members as liaisons to other parish organizations (e.g., the Women's Club, Knights of Columbus, Senior Adults) and will facilitate communication with these groups by including a representative of each group in the distribution of Council meeting minutes. In addition, parishioners are welcome to attend Parish Pastoral Council meetings.

Appendix A

Statement Form

- 1. Description of the problem, concern, or suggestion:**
- 2. Recommendations for solution or implementation:**
- 3. Alternatives considered:**
- 4. Financial impact to the parish if known:**
- 5. Council response after discussion:**