

ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH
RICHARDSON, TEXAS 75081

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL
BY-LAWS

Article I

Theological and Canonical Context

1.1 Parish

The parish is a community of believers sharing in the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ. The 1983 revised Code of Canon law emphasizes two principles for guiding a parish:

- the authority entrusted to the hierarchy
- the call for shared responsibility

Refer to Vatican II Canon 519 and canon 204 found on page two of the Guidelines for Parish Pastoral Councils for the Diocese of Dallas and other documents of Vatican II for canonical context for the Council.

These principles call for both clergy and laity to work with the church community so that the mission of Jesus Christ will continue in the world today.

1.2 Shared responsibility and Consultation

Shared responsibility is the cooperation between laity and the clergy in guiding the mission to which God calls the Church. Although the pastor is the ecclesial authority for the parish, in order for the Church to have the fullness of vision, the laity should be involved in decision making through the process of consultation.

From this perspective, the Bishop of the Diocese of Dallas encourages every parish to establish a Parish Pastoral Council, according to Guidelines for Parish Pastoral Councils for the Diocese of Dallas.

1.3 Consultative Bodies

a. Parish Pastoral Council

The pastoral council is a consultative body and is governed by norms determined by the diocesan bishop. The pastor presides over the pastoral council, although the pastor need not serve as chairperson.

b. Finance Council

Article II
Pastoral Planning

Pastoral planning work of the Parish Pastoral Council focuses upon how the ministries and activities of the parish foster the spiritual development of the whole parish. The Parish Pastoral Council promotes the spiritual growth of the parish community and plan

ways for parish life to carry out the mission of the church. It represents the interests and pastoral needs of the entire parish.

2.1 Steps

Pastoral Planning involves the following steps:

- a. Listening to the needs of the people and conducting on-going assessment of the parish life.
- b. Present recommendations to our Pastor for approval and implementation.

As decisions are made in these two areas, communication to the parishioners is crucial to making them aware of the priorities of the parish.

2.2 Work of the Pastoral Council

The work of the pastoral council, in consultation with other parish structures, concentrates its energies on:

- a. ascertaining the needs of the community
- b. setting broad directions, priorities, and policies which address the overall mission of the parish.

Note: Pastor and Finance Committee determine the level of commitment of parish resources, personnel, finances, and material. The parish annual budget should be established on the basis of these priorities.

Note: The Pastoral Council should avoid direct involvement in the details of administering the strategies. This is the work that Parish Staff, whether salaried or non-salaried, should perform.

Article III **Consultative Relationships with other Parish structures**

The Parish Pastoral Council works with existing groups and structures within the parish. The effectiveness of the Council depends greatly upon collaborative relationships with these supporting structures.

3.1 Commissions/Organizations

These groups assist the Council by developing pastoral plans and priorities in a specific area of parish life. Certain members of the Council should be designated as liaisons to Family Life, Liturgy, Outreach/Social etc. for input on their objectives and needs. Liaisons should meet with these groups on a quarterly basis.

3.2 Other relationships

The council should develop a cooperative relationship with the School Board, Finance Council and Parish Staff. Certain members of the Council should be designated as liaisons to meet with these groups on a quarterly basis.

Note: The Finance Council is required by Canon Law to advise the pastor and the pastoral council about effective stewardship of the parish's financial resources. It is responsible for developing and overseeing a parish budget process, as well as conducting long range financial planning.

3.3 Mutual concerns:

The Finance Council looks to the Pastoral Council for a statement regarding the mission of the parish, a pastoral plan, and parish priorities.

The Pastoral Council looks to the Finance Council for sound financial guidance and planning regarding the resources needed to develop and implement parish plans, programs, and policies.

Article IV **Structure and Operations of Parish Pastoral Council**

4.1 Membership

Members should be:

- Baptized and confirmed Roman Catholics
- Registered and contributing members of the parish
- Active participants in the parish life
- Informed about and committed to the church in accord with the principles of Vatican II
- Committed to prayer, listening, dialogue, and using discernment as a basis for decision making
- Committed to formation before joining the council, as well as on-going formation
- Committed to being prepared for meetings and giving the necessary time
- Able to maintain a posture of Christian love and an openness to all perspectives, even during times of conflict
- Able to maintain confidentiality when necessary
- Spouses and or members of the same family may not serve simultaneously on the council.

The council should be representative of our parish community to the extent that it can. Ideally, it should reflect parish membership, taking into consideration our demographics and the diversity of the parish in terms of age, race, family types, etc. Particular methods for recruiting a representative council should be developed.

The Pastoral Council should include a representative from the Finance Council and perhaps from other parish entities such as Faith Formation and Family & Adult Ministry and Youth Ministry as liaison members. The liaison members are not part of the Pastoral Council and could participate on a quarterly basis to give and receive reports from one another and the Pastoral Council. *This is suggested so that the liaison member would not have to attend every council meeting while also attending their council or ministry responsibilities.*

4.2 Size

The size of the Council shall be no less than nine and no more than fifteen members. The ideal council membership number is twelve. Should the number of members fall below nine, the council shall appoint appropriate number of candidates to bring the council membership to a minimum of nine. The council should be small enough to promote a sense of community among the members and large enough to reflect the diversity of the parish. Officers of the Council are Pastor, Chairperson, Vice-Chair, Secretary, and New Member Chairperson. See appendix II

4.3 Term of Office

Terms of office shall be three years. Council members shall serve no more than two consecutive terms, a total of six consecutive years. In the last year of his/her first term, any council member may petition the pastor for renewal of another term with the pastor having the rights to accept or decline the petition. Every year, members that rotate off the board will be replaced by new members to ensure we maintain the size of the council as stipulated in section 4.2.

4.4 Attendance

Members should strive to attend all meetings held by the Council. Excessive absences within a calendar year will result in re-evaluation of the member's sincerity and value in serving on the Council.

4.5 Selection

The preferred method for selecting council members is through the **Discernment** process. See appendix I for a description of this process.

4.6 Steering Committee

The council shall have a Steering committee composed of the pastor, chairperson, vice-chair, secretary, and new member chairperson. All Steering committee members will be elected yearly in May to begin serving in that role the following July and can be renewed for an additional year. This group will:

- Develop an overall working plan for the year identifying issues facing the council and estimate a time-line to deal with each issue.
- Meet before each council meeting to prepare the agenda for each meeting. This can be done by email among the five steering committee members.
- Include prayer and study as part of the council's deliberations.
- Develop methods for identifying and recruiting parishioners to receive training/formation for council service. See appendix I

Note: Additional training and resources is available to steering committee members because of the important responsibilities of this group. (The diocesan Office of Pastoral Planning offers periodic training sessions for these council members.)

4.7 Decision Making

Careful attention to decision making generates commitment and avoids conflict when a decision is finally reached. Oftentimes, this inclusiveness is far more important than the actual decision. Note: some issues are excluded from diocesan or parish agenda due to Church teaching such as liturgical norms.

Steps in Decision-Making & Planning

- An idea or proposal is put forward.
- Depending on complexity of issue brought forward, research may be required by a committee or individual.
- Implications to be considered:
 - a) What benefits will result from this action.
 - b) What are the possible obstacles?
 - c) What resources will be needed (personnel, financial, material).
 - d) Who will coordinate the action?
 - e) What training will be required of those who implement the action?
 - f) What is the time-line?
 - g) What system of evaluation will be used?

- These research findings are presented to the Pastoral Council for prayer and discussion. The council determines whether to recommend acceptance or rejection of the proposal to the pastor.
- If accepted, suggested strategies for implementation are generated by the council and a lead agent (staff person and/or committee) is named who will coordinate the implementation of the action.
- Rules, regulations, detailed steps for implementation are developed by that lead agent.
- Implementation is carried out.
- The action is monitored and evaluated periodically. The action and or strategies may be modified based on feedback acquired from the evaluation.

4.8 Amendment of By-Laws

- Membership may amend the Council By-Laws by two-thirds approval of the council.
- The pending amendment must be submitted to the Pastor for any necessary alteration and or approval.

Appendix I
Selection of Pastoral Council Members
Discernment Process

Orientation: The Pastoral Council chair, in consultation with the pastor and other council members, will set up a Selection Committee. The committee will:

- Educate parishioners about the role of the council in order to generate interest in serving on the council and ask for their prayerful consideration of service on the Council.
- Part of this information should mention representation of all cultural groups.
- This can be done through inserts in our Sunday bulletin, announcements prior to Mass and personal contact.
- Pastor and members of the Council may also submit names of potential members for service on the Council.
- The committee will host an informal meeting for those interested in serving on the Council and should include:
 - Council guidelines
 - Mission of the Pastoral Council
 - Training of Council members
 - Current issues facing the Council
 - Operations and meeting schedule
 - Other relevant data
 - Allow opportunity for potential new members to meet with those already serving on the Council and discuss their questions or concerns.

Following the orientation meeting:

- Potential members may submit his/her name for discernment process to the Steering Committee.
- Submit a brief summary of their personal background including activity in parish life, ministries, organizations and any other information they deem appropriate.

- Reading material provided each potential member for their prayerful discernment of service on the council. <https://amazingparish.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/catholic-fg.pdf>
- Council members provided with applications and personal background of each potential member for prayerful discernment of service.
- Selection committee prepares follow-up meeting with each potential member and the council members.
- Council meets to discern new membership.

Discernment: Discernment means to come to full knowledge. A process of prayerful discernment is one in which we come to knowledge of the will of God for the parish.

- Discernment of parish council membership is the process of prayer, formation, and the deepening of people's relationship with the Lord as individuals and as a community of believers.
- The process involves calling upon the Spirit to be present and providing the opportunity for prayer and reflection in each step of the process.
- The selection of parish leaders is not a race or a contest, but a **CALL** – the traditional meaning of election in the Church.
- Discernment gathers the community in prayer, lifting its needs to God, asking for an openness to God's will for us, and God's presence in our midst and ministry. This can be done through Prayers of the Faithful during Sunday masses.
- Discernment of the Pastoral Council members involves prayer, the naming of the gifts that an individual brings to the parish community and a sense of the parish community's needs in the context of the issues gathered.
- Final selection of members made during Pastoral Council monthly meeting or special session of the Council.

Appendix II Responsibilities of Officers

Pastor: While he normally does not chair the meeting, the Pastor:

- Presides at all pastoral council meetings.
- Assists in setting the agenda.
- Actively listens to the council's deliberations.
- May assist the council in developing a consensus around a particular issue by sharing information, providing his own perspectives or identifying common elements or areas of agreement.
- As minister of governance in the parish, is the final authorizer of any course of action.
- Pastor should set the context for the council's discussion by sharing Church teaching and/or setting the parameters for acceptable alternatives.

Chairperson: The chairperson is elected by the Council and responsible for:

- Organizing and coordinating the agenda and processes of the council.
- Chairing and facilitating the meetings of the Council.
- Encouraging members and committees of the Council to fulfill their specific responsibilities and delegations.
- Establish an ongoing process of evaluation of the Council's effectiveness.
- Must be the servant of the group, enabler and facilitator, promoting inclusion and participation, being sensitive to conflict and help to resolve conflicts.

Vice-Chairperson: The Vice-Chairperson is elected by the Council and responsible for:

- Serves on the Executive Committee
- Assists Chairperson and assumes the duties of the Chair in his/her absence.
- Maintains Council membership dates of service and rotation requirements so that the Council membership is refreshed on a regular basis as outlined in the By-Laws.
- Contacts and schedules staff members to present at meetings annually, maintaining a regular rotation, to give updates on their departments initiatives as well as their section of the strategic plan.

Secretary: The Secretary is elected by the Council and responsible for:

- Prepares summaries of the meetings of the Council.

- Minutes of each meeting will be placed in the Pastoral Council master binder.
- Maintains the membership roster
- Assures the preparation and dissemination of materials for the Council meetings.

New Member Chairperson: The New Member Chairperson is elected by the Council and responsible for:

- Performing all the responsibilities mentioned in Appendix I to help with the selection process and orientation of new council members, including setting up a Selection Committee of one or two council members.
- Maintaining a document that outlines the selection process with a suggested timeline of events to be passed down to the next New Member Chair.