

*Without a vision, the people perish.*  
Proverbs 29:18

A Guide  
to the Role of  
the Pastoral Council and  
Parish Commissions  
in the Life of our Parish

St. John Paul II Parish

***“Building God’s Kingdom by Growing and Making Disciples  
Through Love of God and Neighbor.”***

*If the diocesan bishop judges it opportune after he has heard the presbyteral council, a pastoral council is to be established in each parish, over which the pastor presides and in which the Christian faithful, together with those who share in pastoral care by virtue of their office in the parish, assist in fostering pastoral activity.*

Code of Canon Law  
Canon 536

The Code of Canon Law allows for diocesan bishops to permit the formation of parish pastoral councils to assist the pastor in fulfilling the Church's ministry.

The establishment of pastoral councils grew from work within the Second Vatican Council which emphasized an expanded role of the laity. The documents of Vatican II stressed the collaboration of the clergy and the faithful. Theologically, the right and duty of the faithful to participate in pastoral councils are founded in the grace of Baptism and Confirmation.

In the Archdiocese of Indianapolis the formation of Pastoral Councils was permitted in each parish beginning in the 1970's. This tradition continues to the present day as a way to aid pastors in assuring that the mission of the Church is being fulfilled in each and every parish community. No pastor can do it alone.

Parish Pastoral Councils have a long history in the Catholic Communities of St. Joe Hill and St. Paul, the founding parishes of St. John Paul II Parish. This document is intended to define and clarify the roles and responsibilities of members of the Parish Pastoral Council as well as the roles and responsibilities of the various commissions and standing committees which are formed to ensure the work of the council can be accomplished.

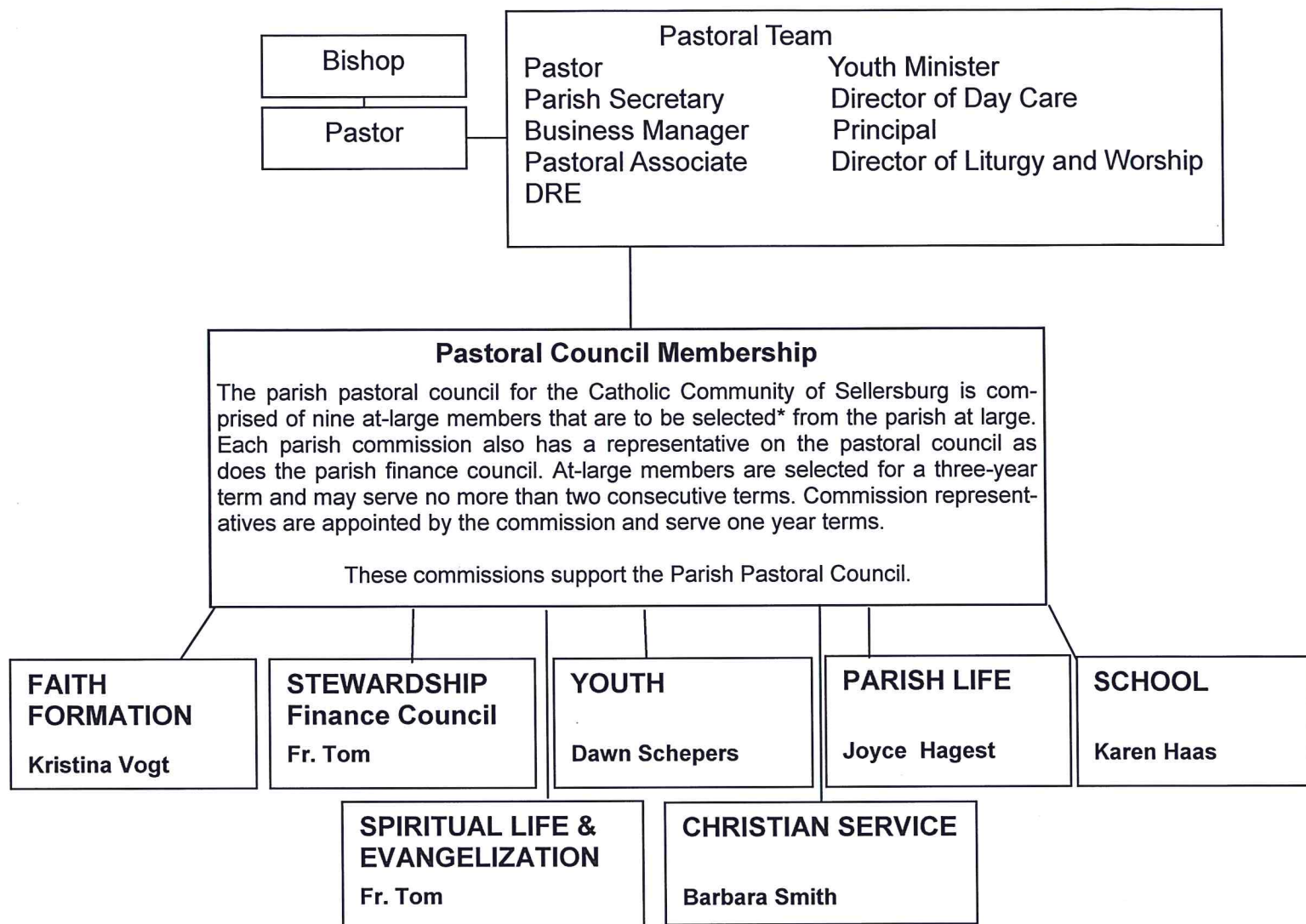
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Each parish commission determines the number of members needed to carry out its mission. In the first three years of its existence, it should strive for equal membership from each of our former parish communities. In most instances, members to a commission are selected for a 3-year term that can be renewed one time. Any parish member is eligible to serve on a commission in accordance with the commission's selection process. The following pages give more detail about the roles and duties of council and commission members. A pastoral team member is the liaison between the pastoral team and the commission.

\* The term "selected" is being used as council members can be chosen in different ways. In most parishes council members are elected from the parish at large. In some parishes, however, they are selected through some type of discernment process.

## Parish Structure Flow Chart



# Pastoral Council Members Duties and Responsibilities

Pastoral Council members (at-large) are selected for a three-year term. They may not serve more than two consecutive terms. Commission representatives serve on a year-to-year basis and can serve no more than 6 consecutive years.

Pastoral Council members assist the pastoral team in ensuring that the Church's mission is being fulfilled. They do this best by:

- Faithfully participating in the sacramental life of the Church.
- Understanding the structure of the parish including an understanding of what each Commission does as well as the structure of the parish as a whole.
- Being familiar with the parish mission statement and periodically evaluate the parish's success in fulfilling that mission statement.
- Attending all pastoral council meetings and lending their voice to discussions according to their discernment of the best interests of the Church, the parish, and its people.
- Making recommendations to the pastor and pastoral team regarding everything that occurs in the life of the parish.
- Ensuring that all diocesan and parish policies are followed especially those that pertain to ministries with children.
- Being willing to serve on ad hoc committees as their time and talents allow.
- Listening to concerns of the members of the parish and when necessary and appropriate, bring them before the council.
- Cooperating with all commissions to ensure as best we can the success of every parish endeavor.
- Being present at parish events as much as possible.
- Being visionary leaders in the parish as your talents allow, striving to see the both the big picture and details of parish life.
- Ensuring the financial stability of the parish by working with the finance council to submit and live within the parish budget.

## Roles of Commissions and Commission Members

Each commission is composed of between 6 and 12 members. The purpose of a commission is to assess the needs of the parish in regard to their particular area of concern and provide ways for those needs to be met by the parish. The commission should be a visioning organization, not simply a maintenance organization. Each commission should work closely with the pastoral team member assigned to their commission. Together, they should periodically set goals for their commission and see to the implementation of those goals. The commission structure is charged with both maintenance of existing programs (insofar as they are beneficial to the life of the parish) as well as visionary in what more can be done to enhance their area of ministry in our community. Commissions should meet as often as needed but at a minimum of 4 times a year. Each member of the commission should strive to attend all commission meetings giving input with regard to items discussed and plans made.

## Current Commissions

Christian Service  
Faith Formation  
Parish Life  
School  
Spiritual Life and Evangelization  
Stewardship  
Youth Ministry

## **Christian Service**

**Purpose:** This commission and its members continually ask how can our parish be the hands and feet and mouth and arms of Jesus to the larger community. They evaluate, promote and nurture opportunities for Christian Service in our area and beyond.

### **Areas of Concern include but are not limited to:**

- Outreach Collections
- St. Joseph the Worker
- Advent/Christmas Giving projects
- Haiti Committee
- Exit Zero Ministries
- Community Kitchen
- St. Vincent DePaul
- St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities

### **Commission Members should :**

- Participate regularly in the sacramental life of the Church
- Be willing to attend all commission meetings
- Enjoy spending time with others and planning events to bolster parish life
- Possess a strong desire to be of service to others as well as spend time together as a community
- Have a broad understanding of Catholic Social Teaching and desire to grow in their understanding of what it means to care for least of our brothers and sisters

## **Faith Formation Commission**

**Purpose:** To develop and oversee a comprehensive catechetical plan for the parishes to provide for the lifelong faith formation and catechesis of all its members as described in the *General Directory for Catechesis* and the *National Directory for Catechesis*.

### **Areas of Concern include but are not limited to:**

- Life-long faith formation including children's faith formation, youth and young adult faith formation, as well as adult faith formation
- Sacramental preparation
- Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults
- Bible Study
- Vacation Bible School
- Nursery/Children's Liturgy of the Word
- Special Programming

### **Commission Members should :**

- Participate regularly in the sacramental life of the Church
- Possess a strong belief in the need for life-long catechesis
- Have a desire to grow in their understanding of our Catholic Faith
- Be willing to attend all commission meetings



## **Parish Life Commission**

**Purpose:** Being the Body of Christ necessarily implies spending time together in all aspects of Christian life. As a parish community we pray together, learn together, grow together and have fun together. The parish life commission helps in some ways with all of these.

### **Areas of Concern include but are not limited to:**

- Fellowship Committee/Social Activities
- Quilters
- Funeral Luncheons
- Senior Luncheons
- Funeral Visitation at Church
- Men's Club
- Parish Newsletter
- Welcoming Committee
- Ladies' Club
- Turkey Shoot

### **Commission Members should :**

- Participate regularly in the sacramental life of the Church
- Be willing to attend all commission meetings
- Enjoy spending time with others and planning events to bolster parish life
- Have a genuine concern for the life of the parish in all its many facets.

## **School Commission**

**Purpose:** Since 1948, the Catholic Community of Sellersburg has operated an excellent Catholic school.

Our School Commission is dedicated to creating an exemplary Catholic School for our parish families. The commission ensures that the school meets Archdiocesan, State and National standards of excellence as well as all educational requirements and regulations.

### **Areas of Concern include but are not limited to:**

- All aspects of the operations of our parish school, Pre-K through Grade 8
- ACES Parents' Group
- School Fundraisers
- Pre-school, Day Care and Extended Care Programs

### **Commission Members should :**

- Participate regularly in the sacramental life of the Church
- Be willing to attend all commission meetings
- Be supportive of Catholic Education
- Have a heart for young people
- Participate in the Safe and Sacred Training and maintain currency with ongoing education to support the protection of all God's children.

## **Spiritual Life and Evangelization Commission**

Purpose: This commission is assigned the task of helping our parish communities grow in their prayer life and in their spirituality, thereby creating a community of true disciples. It is the task of this commission to create opportunities for parishioners to meet our God through opportunities of prayer and spiritual growth. Each parish's liturgy committee is a vital part of this overall ministry. It is also the task of this commission to reach out to others inviting them to be a part of our disciples.

Areas of Concern include but are not limited to:

- Parish Missions and Retreats
- Prayer Groups
- Liturgy/Liturgical Ministries
- Small Groups
- Catholic's Returning Home
- Spiritual Growth Opportunities
- Eucharistic Adoration
- Rosary
- Prayer Blankets
- Men's and Women's Spirituality Groups

Commission Members should :

- Participate regularly in the sacramental life of the Church
- Be willing to attend all commission meetings
- Enjoy spending time with others and planning events to bolster parish life.
- Have a genuine concern for the life of the parish in all its many facets.

## **Stewardship Commission**

Purpose: Our American Bishops have reminded us that the Christian steward receives God's gifts gratefully, tends them responsibly, shares them justly, and returns them with increase to the Lord. The Stewardship Commission promotes stewardship in our parishes not as a program but as a way of life, a way of being a disciple of Jesus.

Areas of Concern include but are not limited to:

- Parish Annual Stewardship Drive
- Volunteer Appreciation Dinners
- Opportunities to explore gifts (Strength Finders; Spiritual Gifts Course)
- Financial Peace University
- Stewardship Education
- United Catholic Appeal

Commission Members should :

- Participate regularly in the sacramental life of the Church
- Be willing to attend all commission meetings
- Have a deep commitment to generous use of time, talent and treasure
- Prayerfully discern all aspects of their lives
- Have a strong commitment to our parish

## **Youth Commission**

Purpose: This commission is assigned the task of overseeing the youth programming in our parish community. Forming our young people to become active members of the faith community is one of the goals of this commission. Programs sponsored by the youth commission help our young people and create programs that meet the needs of the eight components of youth ministry as outlined by our US Bishops.

Areas of Concern include but are not limited to:

- Junior High, High School and Young Adult Ministry
- Social and Service Opportunities
- Spiritual Growth Opportunities
- Confirmation Preparation Program
- Athletic programs

Commission Members should :

- Participate regularly in the sacramental life of the Church
- Be willing to attend all commission meetings
- Have or be willing to learn the 8 components of a comprehensive youth ministry program
- Have a heart for young people
- Safe and Sacred training and maintain currency with ongoing education to support the protection of all God's children.

### **Catholic Community of Sellersburg Standing Committees**

Cemetery Committee  
Finance Committee  
Liturgy Committee  
Buildings and Grounds Committee  
Parish Newsletter

### **Current Ad-Hoc Committees**

Long Range Planning Team  
Building Planning Team