



# DIOCESE *of* MADISON

## PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS

### DEFINITION

The Parish Pastoral Council is a consultative body whose purpose is to assist the pastor in matters concerning the pastoral life of the parish. Canon 536 of the *Code of Canon Law* states:

§1. 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.

§2. A pastoral council possesses a consultative vote only and is governed by the norms established by the diocesan bishop.

The pastor has authority from the Bishop and the universal law of the Church to decide and act on behalf of the parish (cf. canon 532). The Parish Pastoral Council is strictly advisory to the pastor. It is important, therefore, that the pastor be central to the deliberations and functioning of the Parish Pastoral Council.

As the Diocese continues to implement its strategic plan, a pastor or parochial administrator who has responsibility for multiple parishes should strongly consider creating one pastoral council to jointly represent all the parishes for which he is responsible. In addition to streamlining the administrative workload, this approach can help foster collaboration among these parishes.

### MISSION AND PURPOSE

The Parish Pastoral Council assists the pastor in identifying and understanding important matters that affect the life of the parish, gathering the thoughts and ideas of the community, and discussing them with the pastor as together they seek the good of the parish.

The pastoral activity of the parish in which the council assists the pastor includes, but is not limited to, the following areas:

- Encouraging active participation in parish prayer and liturgies;
- Promoting catechesis and evangelization for parishioners of all ages as well as evangelizing efforts to the wider community;
- Fostering Catholic family life;
- Encouraging community outreach;

- Encouraging the performance of spiritual and corporal works of mercy;
- Strengthening relationships with the diocesan Bishop and Church.

Under the direction of the pastor and in cooperation with the parish staff, the council assists in:

- Discerning the strengths and needs of the parish community;
- Developing and maintaining a parish mission statement;
- Engaging in ongoing strategic planning and working to foster unity, cooperation, and mutual understanding in a pastorate or merged parish;
- Assisting in the establishment of pastoral goals, priorities, and action plans for the parish;
- Assisting in the formation of parish policies concerning pastoral matters;
- Fostering communication among different parish entities;
- Evaluating programs and processes.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

The Parish Pastoral Council shall be comprised of at-large and *ex officio* members.

### **At-Large Members**

There shall be no fewer than six (6) and no more than fifteen (15) at-large members. The requirements for membership are as follows:

- The member must be a fully initiated, practicing Catholic.
- The member should regularly participate in parish life, especially attending Mass and frequenting the sacraments.
- The member must be eighteen (18) years old or older.
- The member must be registered at the parish.
- The member must complete Diocesan Safe Environment requirements.
- The member must pass any required background checks and attend any required trainings.

### **Ex Officio Members**

Certain people are automatically members of the Parish Pastoral Council by virtue of their office (*ex officio* members). While the pastor is not a member of the pastoral council, he convokes, attends, and presides over its meetings. *Ex officio* members include the parish's secretary and treasurer trustees. While the secretary trustee should attend all regular and special meetings of the pastoral council, the treasurer trustee should attend at least those meetings that address the parish's annual budget, the presentation of the Annual Financial Statements, and the Annual Report to the Parish Pastoral Council.

## Terms

The term for at-large members shall be three (3) years and is limited to two consecutive terms. Terms of members begin on July 1.

## Selection of Members

At least two-thirds of the council members shall be elected or chosen in some manner by the parishioners. The remainder may be appointed by the pastor. At each annual selection, one-third of the members shall be selected for a term of three (3) years to fill the vacancies caused by the members whose terms are due to expire.

Several months prior to each annual selection of new members, the council shall establish a Selection Committee to manage a selection process which should include the following steps:

- 1) **Education of Parishioners:** Through the bulletin, pulpit announcements, and other forms of communication, parishioners are informed about the council selection process and asked to give prayerful consideration to nominating parishioners (including themselves) for the council.
- 2) **Nomination:** Nomination forms are made available at all liturgies for two weeks.
- 3) **Notification:** Nominated parishioners are informed. Those who accept nomination participate on the final slate of nominees or discernment session.
- 4) **Final Slate of Nominees:** Nominees submit biographical information and their statement of parish vision to the Selection Committee.
- 5) **Selection:** The Selection Committee facilitates the actual selection process and informs the parish of the results. Selection can either be via parishioner ballot or a discernment process.
  - a. *If by Discernment:* Nominees and council members, with the help of a facilitator, enter into prayerful dialog until it is discerned which nominees are best suited to serve on the council at this time.
  - b. *If by Ballot:* Ballots are provided to all parishioners. The Selection Committee administers, supervises, tabulates, and keeps records of the election. A tie vote is resolved by lot.

## Vacancies and Removals

Any at-large member of the council may resign in writing to the pastor, with a copy sent to the council chairperson. *Ex officio* members, as parish trustees, may resign their office in accord with the parish bylaws.

At any meeting of the council, with the consent of the pastor, any at-large member may be removed for good cause by consensus or by an affirmative vote of three-fourths of the council membership. Any member whose removal has been proposed shall be given an opportunity to be heard at the meeting. Good cause includes, but is not limited to, missing two consecutive meetings without good reason, physical or mental incapacity, or failure to perform duties as a council member. *Ex officio* members can be removed only in accord with the parish bylaws.

If there is a vacancy among the at-large members, the pastor shall appoint someone to serve the remainder of the term of the spot vacated.

## **OFFICERS**

The officers of the Parish Pastoral Council shall be the chairperson, the vice-chairperson, and the secretary. Officers can be selected either by ballot or a discernment process by the membership of the council. Their selection should occur at the annual transition meeting when new members begin their terms.

*Ex officio* members are ineligible to serve as council officers or committee chairpersons.

### **Duties of Officers**

The pastor of the parish presides over meetings of the Parish Pastoral Council and receives the council's proposals.

The chairperson assists the pastor in coordinating the work of the council and in preparing for meetings and developing the agenda. The chairperson performs other tasks as may be delegated to him or her by the pastor, including the possibility of facilitating council meetings.

The chairperson's name and a means to contact him or her must be published in the parish bulletin along with other parish contacts. He or she is called to serve as a resource whereby parishioners can present their needs, ask questions, or express their concerns about the parish.

The vice-chairperson fills in for the duties of the chairperson when the chairperson is unable to fulfill them for whatever reason.

The secretary records and retains (in both paper and electronic format) the minutes of the Parish Pastoral Council meetings. These minutes are an important record of council activities and should be made available upon request to parishioners who are interested in council activities.

## **MEETINGS OF THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL**

The Parish Pastoral Council is convoked by the pastor, who shall call regular meetings at least four times a year, though monthly meetings are recommended.

Special meetings of the Parish Pastoral Council may be called by the pastor or, with the prior approval of the pastor, by the chairperson or a quorum consisting of two-thirds of the total membership. Special meetings should follow an agenda pre-approved by the pastor, and if additional business is to be conducted, the pastor must approve the additional agenda item(s).

Meetings and agendas shall be arranged by the chairperson in consultation with and approval by the pastor. An agenda, minutes from the previous meeting, and materials should be distributed to all members far enough in advance to allow for review and consideration.

The pastor and council members are expected to attend all meetings except as noted above for the treasurer trustee. If necessary or useful, the pastor may allow for videoconferencing or electronic means of attending regular or special meetings.

Priests and deacons of the parish should be invited to all meetings of the Parish Pastoral Council and should be encouraged to attend. At request of the pastor, certain staff members may be expected to attend council meetings.

Advance notice of the time and place of the meetings of the council should be published in the parish bulletin, and all parishioners shall be entitled and welcome to attend as observers (except for certain sessions that the pastor considers “closed” if he deems it appropriate).

## COMMITTEES

It is recommended that the Parish Pastoral Council establish the following committees as appropriate, each of which is accountable to the council:

- **Worship:** Assists the pastor and the parish in attaining a full, conscious, and active participation in the Mass and the prayer life of the parish; Helps coordinate liturgical celebrations; Helps maintain an ongoing program of education and training for liturgical ministers.
- **Religious Formation/Evangelization:** Assists the pastor and the parish in providing lifelong opportunities for every person to grow deeper in their faith and personal conversion. Such opportunities should include sacramental preparation, adult and family ministry, youth ministry, school ministry, and child ministry. Also coordinates with the Go Make Disciples team and initiatives to coordinate evangelizing efforts and trainings at the parish level.
- **Schools (where a school is present):** Dedicated to the promotion and welfare of Catholic education.
- **Parish Life:** Supports the overall vibrancy of parish life, planning social activities, spiritual retreats, and other activities which foster community and enhance the quality of parish life; Assists the parish pastoral staff in hospitality, new member registration, and orientation; Recommends pastoral care policies and procedures.
- **Stewardship:** Promotes the giving of time, talent, and treasure through a scriptural understanding of stewardship; Helps organize ways by which parishioners offer their talents and time for the good of the community.
- **Human Concerns:** Helps parishioners discern the needs of others, especially the poor, and identifies resources to meet those needs, enlisting the active cooperation of all parishioners.
- **Vocations:** Works with the diocesan Office of Vocations to help foster vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, religious life, and lay ministry.

These committees should be staffed primarily by parishioners who are not members of the Parish Pastoral Council, with a council member simply serving as liaison between the committee and the council.