



ONE in Christ ... from me to WE

ARCHDIOCESE OF GALVESTON-HOUSTON PASTORAL PLAN



PARISH PASTORAL PLAN



Overview

Based on feedback from the archdiocesan regional meetings, the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council -along with priests, deacons, religious, and lay delegates- gathered and consolidated information reflecting parishes' hopes for how to support the vision of an Archdiocese that lives the Spirituality of Communion. They formulated these themes and some objectives to lead us to our vision of the future.



Figure 1. The Archdiocesan Pastoral Plan

The Pastoral Objectives approved by the Cardinal are not in priority order. For planning purposes, no one is more important than another, yet each is relevant to the faithful of the Archdiocese.

It is important to note that you are not asked to create plans for every objective. Choose only the objectives that address the spiritual hopes, aspirations and available resources of your parish. **What is important is taking action.**

In this way, a **spirituality of communion** will continue spreading throughout the Archdiocese. Since the spirituality of communion is the foundation for the Pastoral Plan, we encourage all parishes to create *at least one* action plan to support the first objective.



This guide purpose is to assist you in conducting a robust planning process for your parish resulting in an actionable and meaningful plan for your community. We divided the planning process into seven steps:

1. **Reinvigorate** your Parish Pastoral Council (PPC).
2. **Formalize** your pastoral planning effort.
3. Begin every meeting with **prayer**.
4. Select the appropriate **objectives** for your parish by **consensus**.
5. Define an **action plan** for each objective.
6. **Document your plans**.
7. **Review, approve and activate** your plans.



Figure 2. Planning Steps

Once your plan is ready, we kindly ask you to share with us of your **Parish Action Plan & Tracking form**¹. By email, to jbarrette@archgh.org or by mail to Secretariat for Pastoral and Educational Ministries, 2403 Holcombe Blvd., Houston, TX 77021.

On the following pages, you will find detailed instructions for completing your plan. You can also access our related instructional video at www.archgh.org/7steps

¹ **Highlighted texts** indicate free downloadable documents at www.archgh.org/pastoralplan/eventresources



Creating a Parish Pastoral Plan

The 7-Step Guide

Step 1: Reinvigorate your Parish Pastoral Council.

Start your planning by assembling the right team. The Pastor should **discern** which parishioners would best work collaboratively to design and write a plan that addresses the spiritual needs and hopes of the parish at-large. Consider inviting Parish Council members, deacons, key ministry lay leaders, and selected practicing Catholics, 18 years old or older.



- A. Spirituality. Remember the ultimate goal is to foster a **spirituality of communion**. Will the new members proactively contribute to extending or living a more profound communion?
- B. Insight. Council members should help to integrate initiatives to reach the vision of the future: which current activities, events, projects, or ministries do you want to retain? Which do you want to extend, expand or enhance? As a unity, your council should have a comprehensive perspective on the spiritual needs and aspirations of your community.
- C. Disposition. New members should have a combination of energy and availability for actively engaging in every step of the process, in collaboration with others.

You will know you are ready to start planning when can observe, with the eyes of faith, you have formed a team, and it has the appropriate spiritual unity for the task.



Step 2: Formalize your Pastoral Planning Process

Activate your planning team with an agreement on the job and the rhythm. Use your planning meetings to make progress, not to catch up. Ask members of your PPC to complete the pre-reading tasks.

- A. Review the three Archdiocesan **Pastoral Plan Pathways** in the Pastoral Planning Booklet.
- B. Read the Nine **Pastoral Objectives** of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Plan. Consider each one related to your situation. Discern which ones your community needs. We encourage all parishes to create *at least one* action plan to support Objective 1.
 1. Review your Current Parish View document to align with your initial planning and interests.
- C. Analyze the **demographics** of your parish's territory, as they provide objective data on age, ethnicity, income, household composition and other useful variables reflecting the reality in your area. Also, check the **pastoral activity** in your parish.
- D. Check this Step-by-Step **Planning Guide**, to facilitate a common understanding of the task at hand. If you need it, we have a Spanish version of it.

During your kickoff meeting agree on a destination point and an approach to work together. We suggest to start your **agenda** with 1) your pastor's vision for the parish, 2) Pathways, and Pastoral Objectives, 3) Demographic characteristics of your territory, 4) The required steps to create or update your plan. We also recommend you reach an agreement on 5) Next steps, 6) An appropriate work rhythm for the PPC, 7) Meetings place and time, programming a schedule, and 8) The most efficient media to stay communicated between meetings.

You will note this step is complete when you can confidently say that you have achieved clear procedures, roles, and responsibilities. Everyone will be aligned and ready to take on the planning task at hand.



Step 3: Begin every meeting with prayer.

Pastoral Planning is a spiritual work by itself. According to the plan of Our Lord, you proactively need to set the right orientation and tone for your meetings. Having Christ as the center of your activity is not an additional element to include, it is the cornerstone of all, and prayer reminds us so.



- A. Select the right prayer by discerning what is more relevant to the people, events and times you live. Do not improvise.
- B. When in doubt, ask your pastor for his leadership and guidance. There are many **prayers** available for you.

Open your hearts and minds to God's love, joy, and energy by praying, and let the spirituality of communion start bearing fruits in your Pastoral Council from day one.



Step 4: Select spiritual objectives by consensus.

Discuss the Nine Pastoral Objectives to determine the group's consensus on the top ones and prioritize them, tailoring them to your parish spiritual needs. Keep in mind consensus means unanimous and committed agreement.



- A. Start by momentarily detaching from your personal ministry, skills, and interests. In that way, you will be more open to perceive what initiatives will generate the most positive impact in your parish.
- B. Observe the spiritual needs in your community. Are the ministries and activities aligned with them? Are they active enough? Their scope and depth meet spiritual aspirations? Make thorough **assessments** of your parish life as you consider this appropriate.
- C. Use your meetings to orderly share and discuss your findings and reflections, actively and respectfully listening to each other.
- D. Take time to read and prayerfully reflect upon the narrative and the reflection questions for action

plans. You can find this information in the **Pastoral Planning Booklet**. Note the resources cited in the text.

- E. Facilitate this discussion and discern your objectives, until all members agree and commit to the objectives which support a parish need or interest and for which you will write a Parish Action Plan.

Don't rush it. This step in the process is the most critical and thus deserves more time, more prayer, and more discernment than any of the other steps. Your chosen objectives will become clear priorities and a joyful commitment on WHAT to pursue, to which time, personnel, and resources will be assigned ...and rightly so!

Step 5: Define the action plan for each selected objective.

Once you have selected objectives, your PPC is ready to assign actions to reach them. An Action Plan is a clear and brief statement indicating leaders, initiatives, and resources you need to coordinate to achieve the objective.



During your planning meetings find the best way to reach your selected objectives using these principles:

- A. Be effective. Each action will generate a meaningful contribution and may also create synergy with other ones. In some occasions, you may need multiple actions to support an objective, depending on your



community aspirations, and goal's scope. For example, you might find that Objective 9 *Ensure a vibrant, comprehensive youth ministry* is highly relevant for your parish and decided to work with another parish to develop a joint program AND also enhance your current program. So you will need to write an action plan to partner on creating a program for younger adolescents and a second one to improve your current program focusing on servicing older teenagers.

- B. Be simple. Various actions will increase success probabilities, but will also raise complexity. In many situations, simplicity is the key to success.
- C. Be realistic. Consider what leaders, time and resources you will need and have available at the parish and at the Chancery office to address an objective. Make your best effort to make the best match every time.

As a result of your action planning conversations you should reach unanimous agreements in the form of *"to achieve this objective, these persons and ministries will lead these actions, using these resources, and we will see results in this time frame."* Note action planning makes objectives come to life, providing specific HOW's for moving towards them!

Step 6: Document your plans.

With consensus in objectives and action plans, you are ready to write them down. To facilitate this, the Archdiocese provides an Action Plan Tracking Form for you to complete, detailing all you will require to implement and meet each objective.



We recommend filling out one form for each agreed objective in the previous step. Below is an explanation or definition of each component in the form:

- A. Parish Objective. Start by stating what you want to achieve in your parish.
- B. Select boxes. Simply circle how your parish objective relates to Archdiocesan Pathways and Objectives, and who will shepherd the objective.
- C. Actions – List all steps or tasks required to achieve your objective. Please note that *steps* indicate sequence, while *tasks* suggest concurrence.
- D. Leaders – Be sure to identify the individual or group taking care of each action and overtly delegate them. Again, the agreement here is essential too. In some cases, the person or group will be doing the action; in other situations, the names cited will reflect the responsible for delegating them and making sure they are completed on time.
- E. Resources– Resources refer to time, talent, people, and materials and money. A mark on the parish calendar might be enough for a particular task or event. Some other duties may require volunteers or parishioners with unique talents. You may list



Materials in this column. However, if the action involves many types of materials (such as for a retreat), you may register each one of them in a separate row.

- F. Complete by– Indicate each action due date or beginning date for future ongoing projects.
- G. Questions/Obstacles – You can improve your success chance by anticipating problems and pitfalls. Determine what might go wrong and problem-solve before it does. List questions that you cannot answer when you are writing your Action Plan. You may resolve some issues or concerns at a later date.

We suggest your Parish Action Plan comprises a 3 to 5-year time frame. Also, you may complete some specific objectives in a shorter amount of time (i.e., 3-10 months or 1-2 years). By completing this step, you have clearly defined and formalized your intentions and actions for the spiritual direction of your community. Not a small achievement at all!

Step 7: Approve and activate.

Once your PPC has completed the plan, use the [Checklist for a Completed Action Plan](#) to self-evaluate your efforts. When ready,

- A. Turn your Action Plans to your pastor for final approval.
- B. Communicate your approved Plan to action leaders to begin implementation. The most important aspect now is putting your things in motion!
- C. Share a copy with the Archdiocese. We will utilize it for collective learning, cross-pollination and additional support.
 - By email to pastoralplan@archgh.org or
 - By mail to Secretariat for Pastoral and Educational Ministries, 2403 Holcombe Blvd., Houston, TX 77021.



The outcome of this final step will be to activate your pastoral plan. A vibrant spirituality of communion in your parish, obtained through consensual priorities, specific activation initiatives, and active leaders to carry them out. May Our Lord guide you every step of this incredible journey for your parish and its pastoral leadership team!

We would love hearing from you! We are here to help and have many resources at your disposal. If you have further questions or specific needs, please contact Jim Barrette, Director of Pastoral and Educational Ministries in the Archdiocese Galveston-Houston, at jbarrette@archgh.org or call us at 713-652-4446. ✝



Appendix: The Archdiocesan Pastoral Plan

Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.” Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, “Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.” **Luke 4:16-21**

This excerpt from Luke calls us to continue the mission of Christ. Pope Benedict XVI proclaimed 2013 the Year of Faith. What better way to embrace the Pope’s charge than to promote a **spirituality of communion** throughout the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, a concept coined by Pope John Paul II at the beginning of the millennium?

*This **spirituality of communion** indicates above all the heart’s contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the faces of the brothers and sisters around us. A **spirituality of communion** also means an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as “those who are a part of me.” This makes us able to share their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine friendship. A **spirituality of communion** also implies the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God: not only as a gift for the brother or sister who has received it directly but also as a “gift from me.”¹*

The Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston and its shepherd, Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, in response to the ever-present inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has worked prayerfully and diligently to develop an Archdiocesan Pastoral Planning Process...a process that will ultimately identify and utilize the gifts of those in our archdiocese, as well as in all local parish communities. Beginning with listening sessions in the spring of 2011, approximately 7,000 of the faithful met to share and discuss issues they deemed important to them as Catholic Christians. Data gathering and analysis of our “Current Reality,” followed by prayerful discernment of “A Vision for the Future” culminated with three pathways that serve as a roadmap to help the archdiocese move from its current reality to the vision of a future – a future where we practice a **spirituality of communion** throughout the archdiocese. Parishes are invited to participate in reaching our goal to foster a **spirituality of communion** by writing action plans for objectives in support of one or more pathways. (Refer to the Archdiocesan Pastoral Plan Timeline, page 4 in this document, for more details. Additional information may also be found online at www.archgh.org/pastoralplan).