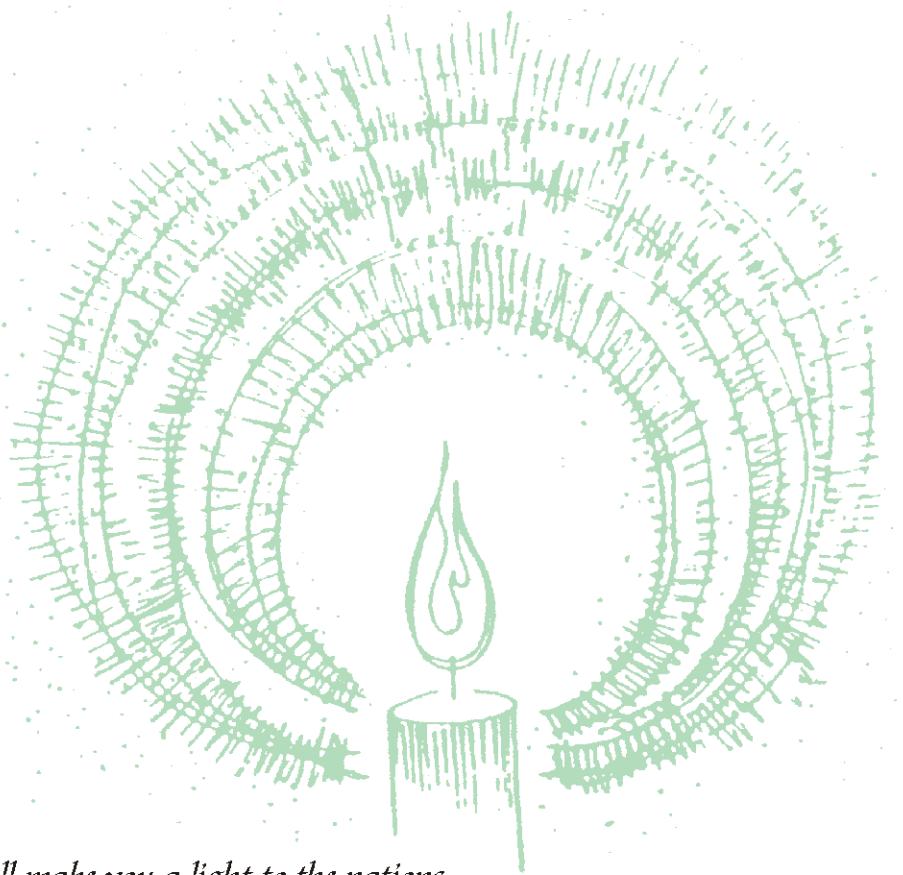


Pastoral Council Manual



*"I will make you a light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth." Isaiah 49*

Catholic Diocese of Gary, Indiana

Revised - July 2002

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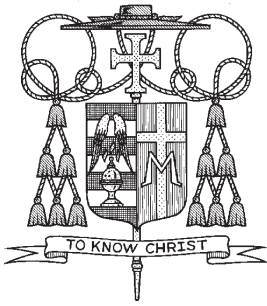
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Bishop of Gary

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July 2002

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am pleased to share with you this newly revised Pastoral Council manual. When I arrived in the Diocese of Gary in 1992, one of my first actions was to mandate that every parish establish a Parish Pastoral Council and an RCIA program. Since that time, the majority of our parishes have established active and working Parish Pastoral Councils. A few parishes have had unsuccessful starts, but they continue to work toward the development and implementation of a responsible and successful Pastoral Council.

This manual is based upon our belief that we are all called through our Baptism to be collaborators and co-workers in carrying out the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. We have been gifted with God's Spirit and called to serve the Church and society according to the gifts given to each of us. This understanding of our Baptism reflects not only the vision of Vatican II, but the spirituality of stewardship as well.

The Parish Pastoral Council is a key leadership group in the parish. Through prayer, study, and open dialogue, the devout and faith-filled members of the Council, in collaboration with the pastor, form the vision and goals to meet the pastoral and spiritual needs of all of the parishioners. Through the work of the Commissions, these goals are refined and implemented with a variety of programs and structures that are essential to a welcoming, prayerful, and vibrant parish.

For parishes which have effective Pastoral Councils in place, this new manual will provide a basis for renewal of your Councils and for orientation of new members. For those parishes without active Pastoral Councils, the manual will help in the formation of the Council. The Coordinator of the Office of Pastoral Councils is available to provide further assistance and resources to the parishes.

With blessings and all best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours in the Lord Jesus,

Most Reverend Dale J. Melczek
Bishop of Gary

Introduction

“Following Jesus is the work of a lifetime. At every step forward, one is challenged to go further in accepting and living God’s will.”

Pastoral Letter on Stewardship, NCCB

As baptized Christians, we are obliged to be stewards of the Church — collaborators and cooperators in continuing the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, which is the Church’s essential mission. This mission — proclaiming, teaching, serving and sanctifying — is our task. It is the personal responsibility of each of us as disciples of Jesus Christ to participate in this mission.

Being a good disciple, a follower of Jesus, is the work of a lifetime. With every step we are challenged to go further in accepting and living God’s will. Being a disciple is not just something else to do alongside many other things suitable for Christians, it is a total way of life that requires constant conversion. This conversion is the result of our total self being focused on God as the Creator and giver of all good gifts, the greatest of which is Jesus Christ. The invitation that Christ gave to his first disciples to “come follow me” is the same invitation given to each person who says “I believe.”

We are called individually and by name. Each one of us has a vocation and God intends each one of us to play a unique role in carrying out the divine plan. Our challenge is to understand our role and respond generously to this call. Christ calls each of us to be stewards of our personal vocations, which we receive from God. Serving on the Parish Pastoral Council or on a Commission is one way in which we can respond to this call.

Church & Parish

“ The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common.”

Acts 4:32-33

In the Acts of the Apostles Luke writes that it is the Spirit that guides this new church to be one of heart and mind, to be unified. Luke’s account of the Church still retains its importance two thousand years after it was written. The same Spirit which guided the Church of the first century guides the Church today; it is the same Spirit that calls all who are believers to be “one of heart and mind.”

The Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution) begins with the notion of the Church as a people to whom God communicates Himself in love. It speaks of the Church as the “people of God” called to proclaim, embody and serve the coming Kingdom of God. Vatican II provides us with a vision in which the ordained and laity collaborate together to fulfill the Mission of Christ here on earth.

The primary purpose or reason that the parish exists is to enable people to be Christian believers. The parish is where the Mission of Christ continues. It is where the people of God publicly express their faith, joining with others to give proof of their union with God and one another. It is in the parish where the church lives, where God gives the gift of himself in Christ, a gift that he invites us to receive and give in turn to others. It is in the Eucharistic liturgy that the parish expresses its deepest communion. The Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian life. It is the action of the entire Christian community gathered to express its identity. The assembly gathers to hear God’s Word and to be nourished at the table with the Bread of Life. The people come to the Eucharist to be commissioned to continue the work of Christ, establishing the kingdom for which Jesus lived and died. This is what it means to be Church.

“The parish is where the church lives. It is a community of faith and action.”

Salt & Light
USCCB Pastoral

The Pastoral Council

1. The Purpose

The Mission of Jesus

As Council:

- ◆ How well do we proclaim and live the message of love and forgiveness?
- ◆ Are we building a faith community where all are welcomed?
- ◆ How do we serve the poor and oppressed?
- ◆ How does our liturgy call people to thankfulness and praise?

Although the Scriptures do not give us explicit direction for a Parish Pastoral Council, the words and ideas of Jesus give us a sense of what he wanted to accomplish in his mission on earth. For the last 2000 years the Church has recognized and strived to fulfill the four marks of His mission. Jesus offered a **MESSAGE** of love and healing; he brought people together in **COMMUNITY**; he reached out to **SERVE** the poor and he modeled for us a life of **PRAYER**.

Councils have been a part of the Church throughout its history. The impact of these Councils on the Church varied depending upon what was happening in the Church at the time. Shortly after Vatican II when Parish Councils initially formed, the members primarily shared their expertise in the area of finance. Authority, that is, who will govern, frequently became a divisive issue. The focus of the Parish Council was on the temporal affairs of the parish.

The Second Vatican Council affirmed the laity's participation in the Mission of Jesus Christ by challenging all the baptized with a call to holiness, to ministry and to community. The Council no longer placed the focus of this call only on the ordained, but on the laity as well. As Pastoral Councils continued to define themselves, the theology of shared responsibility and collaboration that flows from the Vatican II documents began to take hold in the 90s. The focus shifted from the temporal activities to the pastoral activities of the parish.

This focus by the Pastoral Council on the pastoral activity of the parish embraces the mission and ministry of the Church: worship and prayer, proclaiming the Gospel and teaching, social action, care of the poor, the sick and dying and bringing God's healing power to everyone. Pastoral activity is reflected in the parish by the way the

Pastoral Council responds to:

- ◆ **How do we welcome people to our parish?**
- ◆ **Are the Liturgies vibrant and prayerful? How can we pray better?**
- ◆ **How do we meet the spiritual needs of the youth? The young adult?**
- ◆ **How do we minister to young families? To senior citizens? To the physically and mentally impaired?**
- ◆ **How do we minister to the sick, the homebound, those who have experienced loss?**
- ◆ **How can we bring friendship and unity to our parish and neighborhood?**
- ◆ **How do we invite the parishioners to share their gifts?**

The Pastoral Council is an effective structure for promoting and supporting parish life, worship and service, as well as, helping to accomplish the mission of the parish. It is the principal form of collaborative leadership on the parish level. This collaborative body enables clergy and laity to cooperate effectively in bringing about the spiritual renewal of the parish, through visioning and planning, and reaching decisions through the prayerful process of discernment.

Collaborative ministry is based on the belief that all baptized persons are gifted and called to Mission. It reflects the notion that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. No one person has all of the wisdom. Those who participate in collaborative ministry recognize and believe in the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

If the baptized are to make inroads in the critical issues that affect the lives of their families, and the community and the world in which they live, then it will require the utilization of the gifts of all the people — people of diverse cultures and race, lay and ordained, women and men, working together collaboratively to proclaim the Good News and extending the kingdom.

Effective collaboration requires work, not just thinking or talking about it. It involves breaking down barriers and boundaries and finding creative solutions to meet the spiritual and pastoral needs of the people. Collaboration is more than just a nice idea — it is the vision of the Church articulated in Vatican II.

2. Pastoral Council Structure

Members of the Pastoral Council

- **The Pastor**
- **12 Lay Members**
- **Other priests assigned full-time.**

Membership on the Pastoral Council should reflect the cultural and racial make-up of the parish. It should also reflect gender and age diversity. If youth are to serve on the Council, then their contribution must be respected at the same level as an adult member. A Deacon may serve at the discretion of the pastor. Staff members should not serve on the Pastoral Council, nor should the pastor appoint lay members to the Council.

The term of a Pastoral Council member should be three years. No member should serve more than two terms. Each year four members should rotate off the Council. A member whose first term has expired would be eligible to serve a second term, however, they must participate in the parish selection process. The members of the Pastoral Council discern the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson and the Secretary. It is suggested that each of these positions be a two year term.

Terms of Membership

**Council Member:
3 years**

**Chairperson
2 years**

Recognizing and understanding that members of the Pastoral Council have specific roles is important. Conflict is often the result of the confusion of roles.

Role of the Pastor

- ◆ The pastor presides over the parish community, and thus over the Pastoral Council. He draws the Council into communion, calling the members to abide in Christ and one another.
- ◆ The pastor collaborating with the Pastoral Council, keeps it focused on the mission of the Church, and aides them in pursuing the truth.
- ◆ The pastor assists in formulating the agenda and is at all the Pastoral Council meetings.

Role of the Chairperson

- ◆ Facilitates the Pastoral Council meetings and convenes the Agenda Committee.

Role of the Vice Chairperson

- ◆ Serves in the absence of the Chairperson; succeeds them in case of a resignation.

Role of the Secretary

- ◆ Maintain a written record of the meetings; keep a current membership roster.

3. Characteristics of the Pastoral Council

- ◆ A Pastoral Council is **prayerful**. Its members are to be persons of prayer, who are open to personal growth in holiness. The Council must spend time in prayer.
- ◆ A Pastoral Council is **pastoral**. It strives to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit among God's people. The Council must determine what actions and programs are needed to help the people on their spiritual journey.
- ◆ A Pastoral Council is **visionary**. As a result of hearing and experiencing God's Word, it brings a broader, more challenging vision to parish life. The Council sees the bigger picture.
- ◆ A Pastoral Council is **representative**. It represents the whole parish, not one group. The Council should reflect the diversity of the parish - age, gender, race, and culture.
- ◆ The Pastoral Council makes decisions through **consensus**. Through prayerful discernment the gifts, the experience, the insights and the expertise of the Council members are called upon to provide vision and direction.
- ◆ The Pastoral Council is **collaborative**. The Council collaborates with the pastor, the Commissions, and the parishioners. In addition the Council is to collaborate with other parishes and diocesan offices.
- ◆ The Pastoral Council is a **consultative** group working with the pastor. The pastor seeks the wisdom and guidance of those gathered.
- ◆ The Pastoral Council is **enabling**. The Council works to promote diversity and unity by enabling people to think, pray, work and play together. It strives to be a Stewardship Parish by acknowledging the gifts of all the people, and enabling each person's unique giftedness to surface and be shared with the faith community.

A Profile of a Pastoral Council Member

- ◆ A person who practices their faith and is a good example to the community.
- ◆ A person who is willing to pray personally and with others.
- ◆ A person who offers their gifts for the good of the parish and not for power.
- ◆ A person who is a good listener and can be an agent of change.
- ◆ A person who is approachable and able to empower others.
- ◆ A person who invites the gifts of all the parishioners for the good of the parish.
- ◆ A person who can collaborate with the pastor, the council members, commission members and the parishioners.

4. Selection of Pastoral Council Members

Although the parish is not a political system, a very political process was used in the past of electing Parish Council members from among handpicked candidates. The most popular and best known candidate generally won. This process of electing members created a win/lose situation that often kept people from participating.

The process by which a parish selects members for its Pastoral Council should be one that is inspired by the Holy Spirit. In our diocese the parishes use a discernment process with open nominations. The discernment of Pastoral Council membership is a process of formation, prayer, and reflection by the individual on the gifts that he or she would bring to the Pastoral Council.

The steps to the process are:

- ◆ The Pastoral Council will appoint a Nominating Committee from its membership to conduct the selection process. A series of articles focused on the purpose of the Pastoral Council and Commissions should be placed two to four weeks prior to nominations in the parish bulletin and/or newsletter.
- ◆ On nomination Sunday parishioners are invited to nominate a person(s) who they believe have the appropriate gifts for serving on the Pastoral Council. A person may also nominate themselves for the Pastoral Council. After receiving the nominations, the Nominating Committee personally contacts all of the nominees. Those who accept the nomination are required to attend three evenings of discernment. It is suggested that any digression from the three evenings be granted only for sickness or work.
- ◆ New members can be selected at the evening of the discernment, or through the drawing of “lots” at the Sunday liturgy. The biblical drawing of “lots” is the community’s statement that it will not be influenced by personal interests or advantage, but that it will rely totally on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The assembly is asked to pray over the candidates and those who are selected are commissioned in the presence of the assembly.

Whether the parish uses the drawing of “lots” or a full discernment, there are definite benefits in using a discernment process to select council members. These are:

- ◆ **There are no winners or losers. Participants experience affirmation, support and unity rather than defeat.**
- ◆ **The total parish is involved through prayer.**
- ◆ **The process allows new people to offer their gifts.**
- ◆ **Those who are not selected are invited to share their gifts by serving on a commission or committee.**

Nomination Ballot

The role of the baptized is to work together by sharing their gifts of time, talent and treasure in order to continue the work of Jesus Christ. Serving on the Pastoral Council is one way in which we can share our gifts. Pastoral Council members and the Pastor must work together in a cooperative and collaborative manner to fulfill the Church's mission, which is to proclaim, teach, serve and sanctify.

Nominees must be:

- ◆ A registered parishioner.
- ◆ A person who practices their faith by regularly attending Mass and receiving the sacraments.
- ◆ A person who is willing to pray and participate in ongoing formation.
- ◆ A person who has a sense of the mission of the Church.
- ◆ A person willing to listen and to invite the gifts of others.
- ◆ A person willing to make a commitment of time and talent.
- ◆ A person who can collaborate and build consensus.

Below list your name or the names of parishioners you would like to nominate to serve on the Pastoral Council.

1. _____ Phone _____

2. _____ Phone _____

3. _____ Phone _____

Nominees will receive a phone call this week to inform them of their nomination. If they accept they will be given the time and dates of the three orientation meetings that they must attend.

The Commissions

1. The Purpose

The Five Commissions

- Education & Formation
- Spirituality & Worship
- Parish Life
- Peace & Social Justice
- Stewardship

Although the Commissions can be defined as the working arm of the Pastoral Council, they are also responsible for visioning and planning for a specific area. There are five Commissions that should be operative in every parish - Education and Formation, Spirituality and Worship, Parish Life, Peace and Social Justice, and Stewardship and Administration. Evangelization and formation is an important and ongoing role of all of the commissions.

Like the Council, the Commission members are to be a prayer filled group who must be open to ongoing formation themselves. If the Commission members are to be effective evangelizers and help in meeting the spiritual and pastoral needs of the parishioners, then they must spend time studying the Vatican II documents and pastorals, and participate in diocesan programs that are both formational and educational. It is only through ongoing formation and study that a Commission can envision the possibilities for creating a vibrant parish.

In summary the purpose of the Commission is to:

- ◆ Identify what is working and what more needs to be done in the Commission's specific focus area.
- ◆ Set one or two annual objectives that respond to the parish mission and goals.
- ◆ Establish committees to implement the objectives, e.g. Adult Formation Committee, Parish Retreat Committee, etc.
- ◆ Provide support and be a resource for existing parish committees and organizations.
- ◆ Collaborate with the Pastoral Council, parish organizations and committees and with the other Commissions.
- ◆ Participate in ongoing formation by studying the Vatican II documents and pastorals, and by attending diocesan programs.

How Does it Work?

Determine the need/objective.

Define the program that will meet the need/objective.

Develop a committee to implement the need and invite parishioners to serve.

2. Commission Membership

Commission Membership

- **Pastor or his designee**
- **Parish Staff Member**
- **Parishioners**
- **Representative of Organizations**
- **Youth Member Council Liaison**

Each Commission should have a membership of 5 to 6 members. The membership includes a liaison from the Pastoral Council and a parish staff member. The Commissions also should reflect the culture, age and gender diversity of the parish. The Commissions provide an excellent opportunity for the involvement of the parish youth. Commission membership should be recruited from the existing organizations and the parish- at-large. As good stewards the Commission leadership needs to seek out the gifts of all the parishioners to serve either on the Commission or on a committee. When we block or deny the gifts of the faithful we are in fact blocking the presence of Christ in the community.

It is recommended that the term of membership on a Commission be for two years, with the option to renew additional two years. A person should not simultaneously serve on two Commissions. This limitation, as well as, the term limitation, allows for more people to be involved and for new input.

The Pastoral Council selects a liaison for each Commission. Only one person is needed to serve as the liaison. The role of the liaison is to be a communication link between the Pastoral Council and the Commission, and to provide resources and support to the Commission. The liaison should not serve as the Chairperson of the Commission.

Commissions should meet once a month at a regularly scheduled time and place. It is suggested that the meetings not exceed one hour and half. Many parishes have *Commission Night* in which all of the Commissions meet on the same evening. The Pastoral Council should meet on a separate night. The *Commission Night* format is as follows:

- **All of the Commissions members come together initially for prayer.**
- **Following prayer each Commission conducts its own meeting.**
- **At the end of the evening the Commissions share highlights of their meeting. This is followed by refreshments and fellowship.**

The advantage of a *Commission Night* is that it allows time for the Commission members to pray together; it provides opportunities for collaboration between the Commissions; and it allows the Pastor and his Staff to be present to all of the Commissions.

3. Roles and Relationships

The Pastor

The Pastor or his delegate guides and assists the Commission members in their work. He strives to unify them, to bring them in union with Christ and one another through formation and support.

The Pastoral Council

The Pastoral Council has the responsibility to give the Commissions direction, encouragement and affirmation. The Pastoral Council must focus the parish vision by establishing goals, both short and long range, The Commissions respond by setting annual objectives in order to accomplish the goals. When the Pastoral Council fails to establish parish goals then the Commissions lack direction. A liaison from the Pastoral Council serves on one Commission

The Parish Staff

The Pastor appoints a Staff member to each Commission. Through their expertise in a given area, the Staff person brings input and guidance to the Commission. The Staff and Commissions work together in a prayerful, respectful and collaborative manner making the best decisions possible for the parish community. The Commissions do not interfere with the day to day work of the Staff person, nor do the Commissions participate in the evaluation of the Staff. A Staff member should not serve as the Chair of the Commission.

Parish Organizations and Committees

Existing parish organizations and committees should appoint a representative to serve on the Commission. Commissions do not interfere with the work of the organizations or the committees, but rather provide resources and support, and seek their wisdom.

Diocesan Program Coordinators

Program Coordinators provide support, program information and assistance to the Commissions. Commission members should attend the bi-annual Diocesan Commission Nights in order to share ideas with other parishes and to stay current on diocesan events and programs.

With One Another and The Parish

The Commissions collaborate and work together in responding to the parish goals. In order for parishioners to share their gifts, they must receive ongoing formation and education on the purpose and role of the Commission.

4. The Five Commissions

The Education/Formation Commission

Mission and Purpose

The education and formation efforts in the parish are intended to enhance the faith life of the Catholic Christian. Education and formation ministry takes on many forms in the parish, such as the school, the religious education program, adult formation, and opportunities for faith sharing, to name a few. Whatever form education and formation takes, it is always guided by the needs of the people. In working to meet these spiritual and pastoral needs through formational and educational programs, the Commission is helping people grow in their faith and to deepen their relationship with God. In developing and implementing programs the Commission consults and collaborates with the Pastor, the Parish Staff, the staff members of the School, the Religious Education Program, the Youth Ministry Program, and Advisory Boards, as well as, the other Commissions.

Responsibilities of the Commission

- ◆ Commission members should study and discuss the documents from Vatican II and the Bishops' pastorals on formation and education, as well as, documents such as the National Catechetical Directory. The Commission must share these documents and the purpose of the Commission with the parish through ongoing formation and education.
- ◆ Set annual objectives that respond to the parish mission and the goals established by the Pastoral Council.
- ◆ Identify existing educational programs and prioritize what more is needed.
- ◆ Establish committees to implement the Commission's objectives and new programs. The Commission should invite the parishioners to share their gifts of time and talent by serving on the committees as members and in leadership roles.
- ◆ Prepare an annual budget.

Membership on the Commission

- ◆ The Pastor or his designee.
- ◆ The School Principal
- ◆ The Director of Religious Education
- ◆ Youth Representative
- ◆ Representatives from Organizations & Committees
- ◆ Members from the parish-at-large
- ◆ Liaison from the Pastoral Council

The Spirituality and Worship Commission

Mission and Purpose

“The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the font from which all her power flows.” It is therefore the privileged place for catechizing the People of God. Catechesis is intrinsically linked with the whole of liturgical and sacramental activity, for it is in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, that Christ Jesus works in fullness for the transformation of all. The sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire of the Church; it must be preceded by evangelization, faith and conversion. It can produce its fruits in the lives of the faithful; new life in the Spirit, involvement in the mission of the Church, and service to her unity. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Constitution on Sacred Liturgy, Catechesi Tradendae, John Paul II). The mission and purpose of the Spirituality and Worship Commission is the development of liturgical and devotional celebrations that will call the entire community to “full, conscious, and active participation” (CSL n. 14) in the heart of the liturgy: the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ. The Commission collaborates with other Commissions whenever possible for programming.

Responsibilities of the Commission

- ◆ Commission members should study and discuss the Church’s Liturgical documents. The Commission must share these documents, as well as the purpose of the Commission with the parish through ongoing formation and education.
- ◆ Set annual objectives that respond to the parish mission and the goals established by the Pastoral Council.
- ◆ Identify existing liturgical programs and structures and prioritize what more is needed.
- ◆ Establish committees to implement the Commission’s objectives and new programs. Commission members should invite the parishioners to share their gifts of time and talent by serving on the committees as members and in leadership roles.
- ◆ Foster vocations to priesthood, religious life, permanent diaconate and lay ministry.
- ◆ Prepare an annual budget.

Membership on the Commission

- ◆ The Pastor or his designee.
- ◆ The Liturgy Director
- ◆ The Music Director
- ◆ RCIA Director
- ◆ Youth Representative
- ◆ Representatives from Organizations & Committees
- ◆ Members from the parish-at-large
- ◆ Liaison from the Pastoral Council

The Parish Life Commission

The Mission and Purpose

The mission and purpose of the Parish Life Commission is to promote family life, to help build community in the parish, and to work with and support the Youth Ministry. This Commission identifies the needs for social and communal activities and programs that will strengthen the faith community and give people a sense of belonging. The Commission collaborates with the other Commissions whenever possible in implementing programs.

Responsibilities of the Commission

- ◆ Commission members should study and discuss the Church documents that pertain to family, youth and the laity. The Commission must share these documents, as well as the purpose of the Commission with the parish through ongoing formation and education.
- ◆ Set annual objectives that respond to the parish mission and the goals established by the Pastoral Council.
- ◆ Identify existing programs that support youth, family and the laity and prioritize what more is needed.
- ◆ Establish committees to implement the Commission's objectives and new programs. Commission members should invite the parishioners to share their gifts of time and talent by serving on the committees as members and in leadership roles.
- ◆ Explore methods and strategies that will build up a sense of unity within the parish community. Collaborate with the Stewardship Commission in developing a file of parishioners willing to share their gifts of time and talent.
- ◆ Prepare an annual budget.

Membership on the Commission

- ◆ The Pastor or his designee.
- ◆ Pastoral Associate
- ◆ Youth Minister
- ◆ Youth Representative
- ◆ Representatives from Organizations & Committees
- ◆ Members from the parish-at-large
- ◆ Liaison from the Pastoral Council

The Peace and Social Justice Commission

Mission and Purpose

Our baptism calls us to hear and proclaim the Gospels; to celebrate the sacraments and deepen the life of grace within ourselves and to serve the needs of others in the Church, in the community and throughout the world. In a special way this vocation calls us to promote and define the dignity of each human person. The Peace and Social Justice Commission has a threefold purpose:

1. Help people understand and act upon the conviction that peace and social justice is an essential element of the Gospel that flows from the meaning of the Eucharist.
2. Help people see that the work of peace and social justice is the work of the whole parish.
3. Help people see that the actions of peace and social justice must take place locally, nationally, and world wide.

The Commission collaborates with the other Commissions whenever possible in implementing programs.

Responsibilities of the Commission

- ◆ Commission members should study and discuss the Church documents on peace and social justice. The Commission must share these documents, as well as the purpose of the Commission with the parish through ongoing formation and education.
- ◆ Set annual objectives that respond to the parish mission and the goals established by the Pastoral Council.
- ◆ Identify existing peace and social justice programs and prioritize what more is needed.
- ◆ Establish committees to implement the Commission's objectives and new programs. Commission members should invite the parishioners to share their gifts of time and talent by serving on the committees as members and in leadership roles.
- ◆ Work with diocesan advocacy groups and the Indiana Catholic Conference.
- ◆ Prepare an annual budget.

Membership on the Commission

- ◆ The Pastor or his designee.
- ◆ Youth Representative
- ◆ Representatives from Organizations & Committees
- ◆ Members from the parish-at-large
- ◆ Liaison from the Pastoral Council

The Stewardship Commission

Mission and Purpose

Stewardship is a call to discipleship, a call to conversion of every baptized person. Stewardship is rooted in an understanding of who we are in relationship with God. All that we are and all that we have by way of time on this earth, and talent and material resources are gifts from God. We are only stewards of these gifts. The mission and purpose of the Stewardship Commission is to create a Stewardship Parish through ongoing formation that will lead the people to a true conversion - to discipleship. The Commission collaborates with the other Commissions whenever possible in implementing programs.

Responsibilities of the Commission

- ◆ Commission members should study and discuss the Bishop's Pastoral on Stewardship. The Commission must share this pastoral and other stewardship documents, as well as, the purpose of the Commission with the parish through ongoing formation and education.
- ◆ Set annual objectives that respond to the parish mission and the goals established by the Pastoral Council.
- ◆ Identify existing stewardship programs and prioritize what more is needed.
- ◆ Establish committees to implement the Commission's objectives and new programs. Commission members should invite the parishioners to share their gifts of time and talent by serving on the committees as members and in leadership roles.
- ◆ Work with the Pastoral Council concerning facility needs, care of the grounds, and environment. Collaborate with the Finance Council when it is appropriate. The Finance Council is a separate Council appointed by the Pastor.
- ◆ Prepare an annual budget.

Membership on the Commission

- ◆ The Pastor or his designee
- ◆ Parish Manager/Administrator
- ◆ Finance Council Representative
- ◆ Youth Representative
- ◆ Representatives from Organizations & Committees
- ◆ Members from the parish-at-large
- ◆ Liaison from the Pastoral Council

5. Suggested Programs and Committees

Listed below by Commission are some suggested programs and committees that can help to create an active, vibrant parish.

The Education/Formation Commission

Adult Formation Committee	Early Childhood Program
Bible Study Groups	Young Adult - Theology on Tap
Small Christian Communities	Formation/Education for Seniors
Faith Sharing Groups	Catechist and Teacher Formation programs
School Advisory Boards	Parenting Programs

The Spirituality and Worship Commission

Liturgy Planning Committee	Vocation Committee
Art/Environment Committee	Ministry of Hospitality Committee
Formation for Liturgical Ministers	Ministry of Care - Home & Hospital
Retreat/Days of Reflection Committee	Sacramental Preparation for Parents

The Parish Life Commission

Parish Welcoming Committee	Youth Ministry Program
Ministry to the Divorced	Ministry to the Widow/Widowers
Ministry to the Handicapped	Funeral Meals
Parish Social Events	Home Visitations - Block Leaders

The Peace and Social Justice Commission

CRS Committee	Habitat Committee
St. Vincent de Paul	Food Pantry Committee
Indiana Catholic Conference	Anti-Racism Committee
Pro-Life Committee	Advocacy Groups

The Stewardship Commission

Stewardship Committee	Grounds Committee
Parish Directory	Building Committee

Effective Meetings

Meetings do not just happen. Whether it is a Pastoral Council meeting or a Commission meeting they require planning. There are a number of elements that need consideration if a meeting is to be effective. Some of these are:

- ◆ **The Environment** - The meeting room should have ample space, as well as good lighting and ventilation. Tables arranged in a U-shape provide an open and welcoming atmosphere for visitors, and adequate eye contact among the members.
- ◆ **The Agenda** - This is an essential component to any meeting and members should receive it one week prior to the monthly meeting, along with other pertinent materials.
- ◆ **The Facilitator** - The facilitator or chair must enable collaboration and help the members achieve consensus in their decision making. He or she should use direct honesty and gentle compassion in leading the group. The Pastor should not be the facilitator or chair.
- ◆ **Communication Skills** - Communication involves word, gesture, expression and impression. It is important that the image we project is one that helps facilitate and foster open, honest, and trusting communications.
- ◆ **Dealing with Conflict** - We can avoid conflict by dealing directly with problems when they begin. Failure to recognize differences in personalities, values, roles, communication styles, and the lack of clarity in the decision making process can easily lead to conflict.

The Consensus Process

Consensus is a way in which the Pastoral Council and the Commissions seek to discover how the Spirit is working in the parish, that is, to develop parish unity and harmonious relationships, and to fulfill the mission the parish. With this in mind, Pastoral Councils and Commissions should discern by way of consensus. In a consensus process members try to reach substantial, though not necessarily unanimous, agreement on all matters that directly affect the life of the parish. In a true consensus a workable decision is reached through dialogue, compromise and modification. This method of decision making emphasizes the unity of the Christian

Proposed Agenda One and One-Half Hour Meeting

- ◆ Prayer
- ◆ Acceptance of the Agenda & Focus of the Meeting
- ◆ Acceptance of the Minutes
- ◆ Audience to Visitors
- ◆ Review of the Written Commission Reports
- ◆ Issues for Discussion & Decision Making
- ◆ New Business
- ◆ Closing Prayer
- ◆ Adjournment
- ◆ Pastoral Council and Commissions should meet monthly

community, it is less rigid and less competitive. A successful consensus process is based on:

- ◆ Honest dialogue among members.
- ◆ The sharing of pertinent data with all the members.
- ◆ Each member being prepared for the discussion.
- ◆ Devoting enough time to the discussion so that each member clearly understands (though may not agree with) the issues and the feelings shared at the table.
- ◆ Each member voicing his/her opinion/judgement on the issues using “I” statements.
- ◆ Each member being open to the possibility of the discussion changing or modifying his/her opinion, feelings and position.

This process of consensus allows for new ideas or recommendations to emerge from the dialogue and the sharing of wisdom at the table. Everyone shares in the discussion; everyone shares in the commitment to the direction recommended. The chairperson must ask whether the person can live with and not impede in any way the direction being recommended.

Prayer

Pastoral Councils and Commissions need to spend time in prayer. Significant time for prayer should be a scheduled part of each meeting. A warm and inviting atmosphere should be created that will help the group be attentive to the presence of God’s Spirit in their midst. When the Pastoral Council or Commissions gather for prayer, the format should be:

Invitation to Prayer: This allows the members to set aside the events of the day and open their hearts and minds to the presence of God as they focus on the meeting.

Opening Prayer: Offer the collect of the day found in the Sacramentary.

The Meeting is called to Order by the Chair/Facilitator

Close of the Meeting: At the end of the meeting time should be allowed for:

Scripture Reading - taken from the day or a thematic choice.

Reflection - on the scripture or on the meeting itself.

Final Closure: Intercessions followed by the Our Father and the Sign of Peace.

Pastoral Planning Process

The Pastoral Council can best be described as a visionary and planning group that focuses on the pastoral and spiritual needs of the parish. Planning enables the parish community “to plan its pastoral program systematically and to fulfill it effectively.” (Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops, #204). Through planning the Pastoral Council:

- ◆ **Develops a vision of what the people want the parish to be.**
- ◆ **It states and clarifies the mission of the parish.**
- ◆ **It identifies and prioritizes the parish’s needs.**
- ◆ **It draws conclusions.**

The Pastoral Council, guided by the theological expertise of the Pastor, develops the parish **mission statement**. The mission statement is a statement of identity and direction that describes a parish’s present and future. It is a clear and concise statement that tells both parishioners and the community why the parish exists and what will be different because they are parish. The mission statement helps the Pastoral Council keep their priorities in order by describing what the parish wants to be and what it ought to be. It sets the direction of the pastoral planning and is a way to measure the achievements of the parish.

From the mission statement the Pastoral Council sets the parish goals. A goal is a brief, clear statement of an outcome to be reached within three to five years. A **goal** is a broad, general descriptive statement, and it describes what the results of a three to five year effort will look like. An **objective** is a clear statement of an outcome to be reached within one year as a step toward the parish goals. An objective is specific in that it states who will be touched and what will be done. It is quantified, measurable and names the completion date within one year.

Mission Statements answer the questions:

“ Who are we?” - “Why do we exist?”

Goals answer the question:

“What do we plan to do in the next three years?”

Objectives answer the question:

“How do we plan to do it this year?”

Elements of the Parish Mission Statement

Evangelization encompasses any way in which the parish continues to spread the good news of Jesus.

Worship gives expression to the sacramental and prayer life of parishioners. Includes Sunday Eucharist and other ritual forms of sacred celebration.

Word proclaims, explains, informs, and forms parishioners of all ages in the Scriptures and tradition of the Church.

Community draws parishioners together with Jesus Christ in mutual support, activity, and celebration marked by inclusivity.

Service extends the resources of the parish to the needs of others and demonstrates a commitment to works of compassion and justice.

Leadership calls forth gifts of visioning, planning, empowering and evaluating for the service of the community.

Stewardship challenges all parishioners to share their time, talent and treasure for the fulfillment of the parish mission.

New Wine, New Wineskins, Diocese of Greensburg, PA

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The Hispanic Presence: Challenge and Commitment

Go and Make Disciples: National Plan and Strategy for Evangelization

Here I Am, Send Me: Response to Evangelization in the Black Community

Economic Justice for All: Catholic Social Teaching

The Parish: A People, A Mission, A Structure

Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: Adult Formation Plan

Acknowledgments

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