

Diocese of Saginaw

Parish Pastoral Council Norms

“If the diocesan bishop judges it opportune after he has heard the Presbyteral (Priests’) Council, a pastoral council is to be established in each parish, over which the Pastor¹ 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, c. 536 §1). A pastoral council possesses a consultative vote only and is governed by the norms established by the diocesan bishop (c. 536 §2).” This consultative body is called the Parish Pastoral Council.

I. Purpose

- A. The Council is advisory to the Pastor. The Pastor is present at all Council meetings.
- B. The Council shall serve the parish to fulfill the pastoral mission of Jesus Christ and His Church, specifically on behalf of the parish. It does this by promoting Catholic worship and identity, supporting religious education and (re)evangelization, and fostering stewardship and service.
- C. The Council shall provide advice and guidance to the Pastor in building a community of disciples who recognize their baptismal calls to lives of holiness, witness and service.
- D. The Council shall engage in pastoral planning, which takes into account the needs and priorities of its parishioners, the diocese, the broader community, and the world. A measurable pastoral plan might include specific goals and objectives with a timeline.
- E. The Council members shall listen attentively to the vision of the Bishop of the Diocese of Saginaw and the Pastor, promoting within the parish unity of prayer and vision, as well as collaboration in pastoral outreach.

II. Membership

- A. The Council shall be comprised of 8-12 members, all of whom must be practicing Catholics and registered members of the parish, participants in the parish worship life and at least 18 years of age. The membership shall be comprised of both *ex officio* and selected members of the parish. Depending upon the needs of the parish, *ex officio* membership shall not exceed 1/3 the total membership of the council.
- B. *Ex officio* membership, appointed by the Pastor from the parish offices, may include but is not limited to the following: priests (such as parochial vicar) or a deacon associated with the parish. The director of catechesis/youth minister or other persons holding relevant parish pastoral positions serve as resources to the Pastoral Council.
- C. Parishes may select youth representation in addition to the 8-12 adult members. Two youth representatives must be at least 14 years of age but not yet 18 at the time of selection. The youth representatives’ parents must be registered members. The youth representatives shall be selected annually from and by the youth members of the Parish.

¹ Whenever the word “Pastor” appears, the titles parochial administrator, director of parish life, and rector may be substituted.

- D. Each year, the Pastor is to educate the parishioners regarding the duties of the Council and is to provide a means by which any parishioner may nominate Council members. The nominee must be given the opportunity to accept or decline the nomination by informing the Parish Pastoral Council chair. It is recommended that the names of eligible nominees are then placed into a drawing for the selection of the new members of the Pastoral Council. The Pastor informs the parish community of the new membership.
- E. Each Council member (except the youth representatives) may serve a 3-year term, renewable one time. Acceptance of an incomplete term does not count toward the 6-year maximum in continuous Council service. Following completion of 2 terms, a member may not be appointed to another term for at least 1 year, but may be of service in other parish councils and commissions. The terms are to be staggered to avoid unnecessary turnover in Council membership, with new terms beginning July 1 each year.
- F. At least annually, the parish community is to be informed of the membership of the Council.
- G. Any member may resign by providing a written resignation to the Pastor. At his discretion, a Pastor may remove a member.
- H. Parish employees and their immediate families, and the Pastor's family may not serve on the Council. Spouses, siblings, and parent/(adult) child may not serve on the Council simultaneously.
- I. The Pastor shall appoint one member of the Parish Pastoral Council to serve on the Finance Council.

III. Meeting

- A. The Council selects from among its members a chair, who serves a 1-year term, up to 3 consecutive terms.
- B. The chair moderates the meetings of the Council by:
 - Knowing the tasks and responsibilities of the Council
 - Preparing the meeting agenda in consultation with the Pastor and submitting the agenda to the Council members at least 1 day, preferably 2 days, in advance of meeting
 - Facilitating meetings in order to promote participation in discussions and consensus
 - Maintaining an official list and terms of Council members
 - Assuring that Council notes are maintained and making the notes available to members
 - Assuring that the record of meetings are given to the parish business manager, once the minutes are approved, so that a complete record of Council activities are maintained in the parish
 - Performing additional duties as requested by the Council
- C. The Council typically meets 6 times per year. Where parishes are linked², the parishes are encouraged to form a joint Council. In circumstances of inclement weather or other significant need, participation by telephone conference or other electronic media is encouraged. Linked parishes with separate pastoral councils would typically meet together 2 or 3 times per year in order to promote the partnership goals.

² A linked parish shares a pastor with another parish.

- D. When a matter of a sensitive nature arises, the Chair, Director of Parish Life, or Pastor may move into executive session during a regular board meeting. This must occur when discussing matters relative to persons' reputation or employment.
- E. The parish business manager or bookkeeper serves as a resource to the Council and is accountable to the Pastor.
- F. It is recommended that the Finance Council and Pastoral Council meet together 1 or 2 times each year.
 - The Parish Pastoral Council, in conjunction with its standing commissions/committees, submits an annual budget for its own ministries and operations to the Finance Council for review and recommendation.
 - The Finance Council collaborates with the standing commission/committees of the Pastoral Council in its gathering of information and communication on financial matters.
- G. At the direction of the Pastor, the chair may invite commission/committee chairs to attend a portion of the meeting and serve as a resource on a particular issue.
- H. Special meetings may be called by the Pastor, chairperson or quorum (majority of members).

IV. Committees

- A. The Pastor may establish committees to assist the Finance Council and Parish Pastoral Council with their responsibilities. These committees may include the Building and Grounds Committee and the Parish Cemetery Committee, which provide financial information to the Finance Council and information helpful for long-term and short-term planning to the Parish Pastoral Council.
- B. These committees should be formed from among parishioners with relevant expertise and appointed by the Pastor.

V. Commissions

Standing commissions to assist the Parish Pastoral Council with coordination and implementation of pastoral activity in the parish could include the following:

- A. **Parish Christian Service Commission:** This Commission is responsible for serving the needs of the parish community, and for responding to the needs of the neighborhood and civic community. Services such as visiting the sick in the hospitals, nursing homes, or in their own homes; direct assistance for the poor; support groups; evangelization outreach; and Christian Service educational programs fall within the responsibility of this Commission. The Diocesan Office of Parish Life and Evangelization serves as a resource for this Commission.
- B. **Parish Education/Formation Commission:** Every parish is to have an Education Commission which is advisory to the Pastor regarding all educational/formational activities in the parish. The Diocesan Office of Parish Life and Evangelization serves as a resource for this Commission.
- C. **Parish School Committee:** In parishes where there is a school, a committee of the Education/Formation Commission, called the Parish School Committee, shall be formed to

provide advice and consultation to the Pastor and Principal in matters concerning the school. The Committee is advisory and consultative to the Pastor and Principal for the overall support of the school and for long range planning efforts of the school. It also will assist the Principal in the formulation of policy for the school. The committee is not to be involved in personnel concerns of the school. The Office of Catholic School Education serves as a resource for this Commission.

- D. **Parish Worship Commission:** The Worship Commission is responsible for seeing that the liturgical life of the parish is vibrant and that various parish celebrations of liturgy, leading up to and culminating in the Sunday Mass, truly build up the prayerful community of believers; i.e., the parishioners and all who join them in worship. The Diocesan Office of Liturgy serves as a resource for this Commission.
- E. **Parish Stewardship Commission:** This Commission educates and promotes the giftedness of all parishioners and the responsibility of disciples to steward all resources. The members collaborate with the Pastor and staff to develop strategies and practices which invite all parishioners and the parish community to share time, talent and treasure. The Diocesan Office of Stewardship and Development serves as a resource for this Commission.

VI. Commission Guidelines

Each standing commission implements the parish and diocesan priorities and goals of its specific areas of mission and responsibility. Commissions are the task groups of the Pastoral Council. Together with the Pastor and the pastoral staff, they strive to build a community of disciples who seek communion in the Church and the world.

All commissions and committees work in collaboration with the Pastoral Council. The Pastor appoints staff members, accountable to the Pastor, in specific areas of ministry to work with particular commissions and committees.

The initiation of a new area of programming, or major changes to existing programs should be proposed to the Pastoral Council for consideration, and approved by the Pastor before implementation. The commissions are consulted in their areas of mission and responsibility.

VII. Commission Membership

The number of commission members can range from 8-12, following the guidelines listed in Section II, A-G, as adjusted to the needs of the commission.