

PASTORAL COUNCIL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

PRESIDER (PASTOR/PASTORAL TEAM)

The pastor/pastoral team leads the process of discernment, expression, and fulfillment of the parish's mission in his role as PRESIDER of the parish pastoral council. He attends all meetings of the council and participates in the discussion and decision-making process. Prior to the group's coming to consensus, the pastor is obligated to raise questions or objections relating to issues that could affect the outcome of the decision. When consensus occurs, the pastor ratifies the decision.

In his role as presider, the pastor does not facilitate the meetings but rather oversees and participates in all council deliberations. He sheds light on church teachings and parish or diocesan background and/or guidelines, and actively listens to council's deliberations. "Because he is ultimately responsible for the care of the parish, the pastor presides at the parish council in a way strikingly similar to his presiding at the Eucharist."

Tasks:

- sets agenda with the coordinator, facilitator, recorder, and convener
- sees that the council performs its duties
- sees to the ongoing development and training of council members
- gives the council direction and assistance when necessary
- is accountable for the quality of the decisions of the council
- is available to all members of the council

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ALL COUNCIL MEMBERS

ALL COUNCIL MEMBERS have responsibility for the quality of council life and especially of its meetings. Even if all those with assigned roles—and many or most council members will serve in at least one role—perform their duties faithfully, without the preparation and participation of all members, the group will flounder. It behooves council members to spend some time in both remote and proximate preparation for the meetings.

Tasks and Techniques:

- prepare for every meeting by reviewing the agenda and the previous meeting's notes
- make a strong commitment to regular, on-time participation in council meetings
- complete “homework”—reading, duties for the meeting, assignments
- formulate what they honestly believe, but come willing to hear others
- sit in different places, avoid forming cliques
- enter into the prayer and faith sharing
- participate in the discussion, listen carefully to others
- avoid negative assumptions, defensiveness
- focus their energies on the issues at hand
- refuse to judge the motives of others, put words in their mouths, or cut them off in discussions
- assure that key ideas are accurately recorded
- give honest feedback and evaluation of the quality of the meeting

The council itself has no committee structure. It may, however, establish AD HOC IMPLEMENTATION GROUPS for the accomplishment of the yearly objectives established as part of the pastoral plan.

Existing parish groups and/or committees may also be called upon to perform certain tasks or functions in light of the parish's pastoral plan. These persons, however, are not council members. Rather, all work together in different capacities and in consultation with one another toward the realization of the parish mission and the promotion of the Gospel.

RECORDERS

RECORDERS keep track of the progress of each meeting and records official decisions for reference. The recorder is also responsible for any council correspondence or other clerical tasks, including disseminating the agenda and meeting reminders to the council in advance of each meeting. The recorder may also be the designated contact with the media and/or diocesan or local newspapers for publicity on newsworthy items.

Tasks:

- prepares agenda with coordinator, presider, facilitator, and convener
- keeps a record of basic information, decisions, assignments of council—not a detailed set of “minutes”—action items and those assigned to carry out action
- remains neutral, and contributes his/her ideas only after stepping aside from role
- provides copies of the record within a week of the meeting
- disseminates pertinent information to council members between meetings

Techniques:

- listens for key words, basic ideas, the essence of the record
- writes legibly and quickly when doing public recording
- uses abbreviations, is unconcerned about spelling
- stops the group and asks for repetition if ideas are coming too fast
- isn't defensive if someone calls for a correction
- uses markers, variations in size of writing, symbols (stars, arrows, dots) to indicate importance and relationship of data
- numbers, titles, and dates all sheets

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THE AGENDA TEAM

The AGENDA TEAM consists of a member of the Pastoral team, coordinator, facilitator, recorder, and convener. These individuals meet ahead of time to formulate the meeting's agenda and discuss practical arrangements for the meeting. The recorder sends the agenda and any other necessary materials to the council members.

Tasks and Techniques:

1. Formulates the agenda for each council meeting
 - reviews previous meetings' agendas for unfinished business
 - consults the annual planning cycle to identify current items: evaluating the parish plan, planning an assembly, meeting the finance council, scheduling a retreat, orienting new parish personnel
 - reviews council skill development needs: coming to consensus, understanding roles, empowering implementers, learning to pray
2. Considers practical matters related to council meeting
 - seeks a speaker or other resource
 - arranges for changes in time or place of meeting
 - researches any topics that will be discussed
 - decides about pre-meeting study materials
3. Assigns tasks for the meeting
 - communicates special prayer needs to spiritual formation team
 - engages transition team if there are transitional issues
 - invites any special guests, consultants, staff persons
 - alerts convener to any special needs for the meeting
 - prepares materials needed for meeting (with convener or recorder)
 - issues the agenda at least a week in advance to council members (with recorder)
 - calls council members to remind them about time, place, agenda at least three days in advance (with convener)

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CONVENERS

CONVENERS are responsible for calling the council meetings, reserving the meeting space, preparing whatever materials are needed for the meeting, and generally making sure that the environment is conducive for the meeting and that the necessary practical preparations have been made. The convener works with the recorder to ensure that members are adequately informed and reminded of the meeting date and time and agenda.

Tasks:

- prepares the essentials:
 - name tags/table tents for the meeting
 - resources (books, documents, diocesan guidelines) [as needed or requested]
 - materials (charts, newsprint, markers, tape, videos) [as needed or requested]
 - equipment that works (VCR, tape player, projector) [as needed or requested]
- arranges the room:
 - well lighted, well ventilated room (a lack of oxygen drains mind and body!)
 - comfortable physical setup for a small group
- hospitality:
 - welcomes members to the meeting
 - provides food or refreshments

Techniques:

- creates an atmosphere of hospitality and comfort for relaxed concentration
- chooses space that fits the group
- arranges table, chairs in a way that facilitates eye-to-eye contact
- makes friends with the janitor or maintenance crew
- keeps interruptions during the meeting to a minimum by getting rid of distractions (including unwanted noise, etc.)

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SPIRITUAL FORMATION TEAM

The SPIRITUAL FORMATION TEAM plans programs of spiritual enrichment for council members. This team is also responsible for the preparation of the prayer/study segment of each meeting. It may also plan an annual retreat or periodic evenings of reflection for the council as important means of ongoing spiritual formation.

Tasks and Techniques:

1. Plans programs of spiritual enrichment
 - gets input from council to determine direction for spiritual growth
 - procures prayer/reflection materials for the council resource shelf
 - seeks sources of input on spiritual formation topics
 - plans for council attendance at diocesan-sponsored renewal programs

2. Prepares prayer/study portions of each meeting
 - considers the parish situation, liturgical season, council agenda, or other factors which would inform the prayer experience (with agenda team)
 - designs prayer with sensitivity to the need for song, silence, listening to God's word, sharing reflections, and general prayer for the council and parish needs
 - prepares all the details of the prayer—music, texts, rituals, and roles (with convener)

3. Designs evenings of prayer or an annual council retreat
 - reserves time for such during council calendar planning
 - develops ideas for themes and format
 - makes needed arrangements and prepares details

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FACILITATORS

These individuals design and oversee the process of each council meeting, assisting the group with planning, decision-making, and problem solving. A facilitator is not a chairperson to whom comments are addressed, but rather someone who assists the group in fulfilling its tasks and responsibilities.

Tasks:

- prepares the agenda with the presider, coordinator, recorder, and convener
- is the servant of the group, not its authority leader
- focuses the group on a common task
- encourages everyone to participate
- is neutral, not evaluating the ideas of others
- contributes his/her ideas only after stepping aside from role
- suggests alternatives, varies methods and procedures
- helps arrive at win/win solutions
- calls for concensus

Techniques:

- defines issues clearly
- does not have all the answers, but refers questions back to council members
- maintains a positive atmosphere, giving positive feedback and compliments
- doesn't talk too much
- isn't afraid to make mistakes or to seek clarifications
- isn't defensive
- asks the council for a critique of his/her role

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COORDINATOR

The **coordinator** of the pastoral council would be responsible for:

- Gathering the agenda team
- Serve as the “memory” of the council. A consistent person from meeting to meeting
- Touching base with a member of the pastoral team to see if there are agenda items from the team
- Making sure that the minutes were sent out to all members in a timely manner
- This would be a year commitment

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL
THE CHURCH OF SAINT ANN
LAWRENCEVILLE, NEW JERSEY

Selection of Functioning Team

I have read the role expectations of the various functioning groups for the Parish Pastoral Council and reflected on my own gifts, skills, and interests. I feel at this time that I would best serve on the (choose one):

- a. Facilitator team
- b. Convener team
- c. Recorder team
- d. Spiritual formation team
- e. Chairperson

Signed _____ Date _____