Suggestions for Pastoral Councils

Guiding the Parish
Moved by the Spirit

Para Concilios Pastorales
Sugerencias

Oficina para la Planificación Pastoral
Diócesis de Oakland
Septiembre del 2006
We have gathered ideas for Suggestions for Pastoral Councils from various sources. Please use whatever is helpful for your ministry. Please turn over this book for the Spanish translation. Por favor de vuelta al libro para la traducción al español.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dedication to Sister Barbara Flannery, CSJ</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to the 2006 Revision</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Thanks to the Diocesan Board for Pastoral Councils</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome Letter from Bishop Allen Vigneron</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chapter One: Pastoral Councils: Past and Present**
The Evolution of Councils                              6
The Mission and Ministries of Jesus                    6
Thoughts from Vatican II                                7
Support from Canon Law                                  7
Our History in the Diocese of Oakland                   8

**Chapter Two: Direction from the Diocese**
The Strategic Plan: Faith in Service to the World       9
The Four Core Values                                    9
The Diocesan Mission                                    10

**Chapter Three: A Vision for Your Parish**
The Ten Essentials of Parish Life                        11
Parish Needs and Wants Assessments                      12
Parish Mission Statement                                12
Goals, Objectives, and Strategies                       14

**Chapter Four: Organizing Your Pastoral Council**
Educating the Community                                 16
Qualities for Council Members                           16
Gifts for Council Ministry                              17
Forming the Leadership                                  18
Exploring a New Model                                   18
Selecting New Members                                   20
Offering Days of Clarification and Discernment          20
### Chapter Five: Roles and Responsibilities

- Pastor
- Pastoral Council
- Facilitators/Chairpersons
- Recorder/Secretary
- Agenda Team (Executive Committee)
- Prayer and Ritual Team
- Hospitality Team
- Committees

### Chapter Six: Parish Relationships

- Parish Finance Council
- Pastoral Staff
- Diocese of Oakland
- Parish Organizations

### Chapter Seven: Practical Suggestions

- Council Size
- Meeting Times
- Terms of Office
- Makeup of the Council
- Sample Agendas
- Sample Calendar

### Chapter Eight: Resources

- Diocesan Offices
- Office for Pastoral Planning
- Bulletin and Newsletter Ideas
- Pastoral Councils and Canon Law
- Additional Reading

### Chapter Nine: A Glossary of Terms
We dedicate this 2006 edition of *Suggestions for Pastoral Councils* to *Sister Barbara Flannery, CSJ*

*Sister Barbara has served as Chancellor of the Diocese of Oakland from 1994 – 2006.*

*During that time she has been an advocate for consultative bodies and promoted a vision of pastoral councils that invites parishioners to take on more responsibility for the spiritual and pastoral needs of the parish and diocese.*

*We are grateful for her commitment to lay ecclesial ministry and her desire that all the voices be heard and all gifts be celebrated.*
Introduction to the 2006 Revision

The 2006 revision of Suggestions continues the emphasis on pastoral councils as visioning and planning bodies. For the last ten years we have stressed the importance of councilors developing the vision and articulating the mission of the parish. The subtitle of the booklet, Guiding the Parish, Moved by the Spirit, expresses our hope that councilors will accept their role of collaborating with the pastor in guiding the spiritual and pastoral direction of the parish. We also want councilors to feel confident that they are in touch with and moved by the Spirit of the living God.

Special Thanks to the Diocesan Board for Pastoral Councils

I wish to thank the Diocesan Board for Pastoral Councils that has advised me over the past ten years. Although the membership has changed, the board has consistently produced materials, workshops, and retreats for the development and support of parish pastoral councils.

Also, I want to express my gratitude to the Archdioceses of Los Angeles, Seattle, and San Francisco, and the Diocese of Greensburg, PA. for sharing their resources with us as we developed our Suggestions: Guiding the Parish, Moved by the Spirit.

Finally, thanks to all who have offered insights and shared successes. I am especially grateful for the opportunity to facilitate the discernment process in many parishes. This has been a spiritually enriching experience as I hear the faith stories of parishioners and their deep desire to serve.

I hope this booklet gives you support and inspires your creativity as you continue to carry on the mission of Jesus and plan for the pastoral needs of your parish.

With gratitude and appreciation,

Chuck Siebenand
Director for Pastoral Planning
Diocese of Oakland
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510 – 267 -8358
Dear Parish Pastoral Council Member:

The Diocese of Oakland can take justifiable pride in its tradition of pastoral councils on the diocesan and parish levels. I have enjoyed working with the Diocesan Pastoral Council over the past three years. The members have helped me by carefully listening to the needs of the parishioners in Alameda and Contra Costa counties, by wisely analyzing what they have heard and by offering me helpful recommendations.

Pastoral Councils in our parishes function in a similar way. Councils speak on behalf of their fellow parishioners and share the wisdom of the community as they advise the pastor about pastoral concerns. No other group in the parish has this responsibility. As my predecessors mandated and encouraged pastoral councils, I also wish to express my desire that every parish not only have a council, it is my particular expectation that these councils promote pastoral planning.

In my gathering with you in January of 2005 I stressed this point: that the most important work that you do is planning, especially planning on how you can witness to Jesus and bring his presence into the world. I believe that is your task. When you work with your pastors in developing a pastoral plan, you are helping to assure that you are a vibrant parish and that the presence of Jesus is shining forth.

A key document for our planning here in the Diocese of Oakland is The Ten Essentials of Parish Life. I encourage you to reflect on those essentials as a resource that can expand our vision and enrich the life of our parishes. As we plan we also need to keep before us the mission of Jesus, a mission He has shared with His Church. This is the vision of our diocese: to be the Church of Christ Jesus in the East Bay.

As I thank you for your work as pastoral councilors, I hope this revised booklet gives you direction and confidence. Yours is a very important service for the Church today. I know that you are dedicated to the task at hand. Planning has always been a key ingredient in the life of the Church, but it is even more important today as we face growth and change at an amazing rate. We need to pray and plan so as the local Church we can welcome people into community, offer them opportunities for catechesis and service, and help them raise their voices in prayer to our gracious God, and in all this respond to Our Lord's call to be holy as He is holy.

I am grateful for all you do to spread the Kingdom of God in our diocese.

Sincerely yours,

The Most Reverend Allen H. Vigneron
Bishop of Oakland
Chapter One: Pastoral Councils: Past and Present

The Evolution of Councils

Pastoral councils were a topic of the Second Vatican Council of 1962-65. It is in the “Constitution on the Church in the Modern World” where the bishops of Vatican II speak about pastoral councils. Although the bishops discuss these councils, it is not clear until later how these councils are to be viewed. So in the late sixties there emerged a variety of pastoral councils; some thinking they were legislative and others more of a “coffee-hour-advice-group.” For the most part we can assume that the early pastoral councils were composed of parishioners who had some expertise to share with the pastor regarding finances.

During the seventies and eighties when lay ministry began to develop, pastoral councils focused their attention on organizing the new ministries that were appearing, especially the liturgical ministries. This seemed to be what they could do best, that is, help the pastor give some direction to all these new ministries. During the eighties some councils became very efficient in organizing the existing ministries and developing new projects in response to parish needs.

As we moved into the nineties, a new vision of councils was developing - pastoral planning. On the national level two conferences merged into The Conference for Pastoral Planning and Council Development. It sent a clear message that the work of planning needed to be connected to councils and the focus of pastoral councils would be in pastoral planning. Although councils continued to deal with the matters brought before them by the pastor, they were also charged with developing plans for the pastoral life of the parish.

The Mission and Ministries of Jesus

As you can guess, the Scriptures do not give us explicit direction for parish pastoral councils. However, the words and actions of Jesus offer us an idea of what he wanted to accomplish in his mission on earth. Through the centuries the church has recognized four marks of his mission. These have been the four main ministries of the church for the last 2000 years.
Quite simply, Jesus offered a MESSAGE of love and healing; he brought people together in COMMUNITY; he reached out in SERVICE to the poor, and he modeled for us a life of PRAYER. For 2000 years the church has carried on these four major ministries. They are key marks of the church on the universal level as well as in small Christian communities. So we can ask ourselves as church or as pastoral councils:

- How well do we proclaim and live the message of love and forgiveness?
- How are we building community where all are welcomed with open arms?
- How do we reach out to the poor and oppressed?
- How does our liturgy call people to thankfulness and praise?

**Thoughts from Vatican II**

We mentioned earlier that Vatican II did not give us a clear direction for pastoral councils. However, the bishops at the Council did support and encourage council development. The Vatican Council itself was a great example for pastoral councils. It strengthened our understanding of terms like **collegiality, subsidiarity, and justice participation**. It is in seeing pastoral councils as collegial that we can understand the working of priests and laity together. It is in the principle of subsidiarity that we can grasp the need for different organizations to make decisions on the local level. It is in justice participation that we gain the insight of councils being prophetic.

**Support from Canon Law**

It was in 1983 with the new Code of Canon Law that we began to see more clearly the enumeration of the councils on the parish and diocesan level. Canons 511-514 (pp 32 - 33) speak about a Diocesan Pastoral Council. Canon 537 states that finance councils (page 33) must exist in every parish. Canon 536 speaks of parish pastoral councils; it says:

“After the diocesan bishop has listened to the presbyteral council and if he judges it opportune, a pastoral council is to be established in each parish; the pastor presides over it, and through it the Christian faithful along with those who share in the pastoral care of the parish in virtue of their office give their help in fostering pastoral activity. This pastoral council possesses a consultative vote only and is governed by norms determined by the bishop.”
From canon law we see that once the bishop judges it opportune, pastoral councils are to be formed in every parish. We note also the clear distinction between finance councils that advise the pastor on the administration of parish goods and pastoral councils that are to examine pastoral issues, study them, and offer recommendations to the pastor.

**Our History in the Diocese of Oakland**

Here in the diocese all three bishops have recommended pastoral councils. In 1976 the priests’ council and Bishop Floyd Begin endorsed the idea of parish pastoral councils. In 1989 Bishop John Cummins supported the work of the Diocesan Pastoral Council in recommending councils in each parish. Our current bishop, Allen Vigneron, has expressed in this booklet his desire for pastoral councils. Presently 98% of the parishes in the diocese have pastoral councils. We are grateful for the many pastoral councilors who have labored over the years to give guidance to their parishes, as we strive today to develop councils that can be instruments of visioning and planning.
Chapter Two:  
Direction from the Diocese

The Strategic Plan

Through the years we have encouraged parochialism by saying “my parish is the local church.” In fact many of us see the parish as the only church, because that is where we are involved with our time, talent, and treasure. However, the local church includes all of the parishes in the diocese guided by the bishop. He is the person who is a successor of the Apostles and is responsible for the people of God on the local level. It is difficult for many of us to see the diocese as the local church because it is removed from our daily activities, but we need to keep the diocese in our vision. As we plan, we look first at the mission of Jesus and how the church has carried on that mission through the years. We mentioned in chapter one that this mission included proclaiming the Good News, worshipping, building community, and reaching out in healing service.

Next we need to be aware of the vision and mission of the local church. This local church we call the Diocese of Oakland has expressed its vision in a document entitled Faith in Service to the World. This strategic plan of 1994 captures in its title the desire to form us as a people of faith who go forth in loving service. Some see in this plan a vision to guide us for 20 years. The document offers many action plans to create a church that is prophetic, communal, and justice-centered.

The Four Core Values
When the twenty directors of diocesan offices met on retreat in 1996, they discussed and reflected on Faith in Service to the World. From their time in prayer they concluded that four core values emanated from the strategic plan:

- ACCOUNTABILITY
- COLLABORATION
- SPIRITUALITY
- DIVERSITY
Thus, part of the vision we have for the Church of Oakland is that it be a church accountable in carrying out its action plans as well as its financial matters. It is a church willing to work collaboratively and consultatively as it makes decisions for the future. The Gospel and the spiritual life need to be at the heart of our planning, and we as church appreciate and celebrate the diverse makeup of our diocese. These values can be applied to the work of our pastoral councils both on the diocesan and parish levels.

**The Diocesan Mission**

Another influence in the planning of pastoral councils is the mission of the diocese. The members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council agreed on this statement of mission at their December 1999 meeting.

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**Diocese of Oakland Statement of Mission**

We, the Catholic Church of the Diocese of Oakland, inspired by our Baptismal call, nourished by the Eucharist, and united in our diversity and love, seek to accomplish Christ's mission by:

- deepening our life of faith and prayer
- promoting hospitality and building community
- involving youth and young adults in parish life
- working toward reconciliation and evangelization
- developing pastoral leadership and social justice
- strengthening our relations with other faith communities

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We need to reflect on our strategic plan, *Faith in Service to the World*, and its core values along with the mission of the diocese as we go about planning on the parish and deanery levels.
Chapter Three: Developing a Vision for Your Parish

Looking at the Ten Essentials of Parish Life

As you develop a vision for your parish we hope the mission of Jesus, the vision of the Church, and the mission of the diocese will be a foundation for your planning. A document, arising from the Diocesan Pastoral Council, has captured much of Jesus’ mission and the hopes and dreams of the Diocese of Oakland. The diocesan convention of 1989 ratified The Ten Essentials of Parish Life. The Diocesan Pastoral Council then spent three years in elaborating on these essentials. The document was published in 1992 and revised and updated in 2003. Today, it remains as a valuable resource in pastoral planning. Since 1992 various tools have been developed for engaging councils, staffs, and communities in assessing the ten essentials.
Parish Needs and Wants Assessments

As you discuss your parish vision take a look at the needs and wants of the parishioners. What they voice as wants and needs will help you in determining where you are and your future direction. In order to determine the present condition of a parish there are various ways of gathering information; we offer these possibilities:

- Conducting parish surveys
- Hosting parish assemblies (Successes and Concerns)
- Using The Ten Essentials instruments
- Doing a parish history
- Offering a S.W.O.T. analysis (Looking at Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats)
- Creating focus groups
- Offering a “from here to there” session
- Any combination of the above

The Office for Pastoral Planning can give you some examples of these materials or work with you to develop new tools to determine more clearly the needs and wants of your parish.

Creating a Parish Mission Statement

Your needs and wants assessments give you some idea of where you desire to go as a parish. If you know where you are coming from and where you want to go, you can develop a mission statement. Mission statements are common today not only in the business world but also in people’s personal lives.

Father William Bausch, who wrote The Parish of the Next Millennium, believes that mission statements are important, but they need to be specific. Let the mission statement say who you are as a parish as well as where you are headed. Mission statements are not something that you have accomplished but rather something that is guiding you toward your vision. You have not yet arrived. In creating a mission statement make sure that you get a lot of input. Consult those in the ministries, a large part of the congregation and members of the neighborhood community.
One way of looking at the mission statement is to ask three questions:

1. Who are we? (or who comes here?)
2. What are we? (or what are we known for in this parish?)
3. Why are we? (or why do people come to this place?)

If you honestly answer those questions, you will have a pretty good idea of where the parish is now. Then take some time to dream of where you want the parish to be. In your ideal parish what do you want to see happening? What are the things that you feel most passionate about in this vision?

If you are having trouble dreaming and visioning, you can get some movement from asking similar questions:

- Who do we want to come here?
- What do we want to be known for in this parish?
- Why do we want people to come to this church?

These questions will help you formulate what you want your church to be. This is your dream, your vision, or your model of church.

Now all you have to do is put the present together with the future. That is an easy way of formulating your mission statement.

THE PRESENT plus FUTURE VISION

equals

YOUR MISSION
Now that you have a mission statement, what is the next step?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understand it:</th>
<th>Make sure there are no fancy words that look good which no one can explain.</th>
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<td>Advertise it:</td>
<td>Let the word out that you have a mission statement to guide the parish and its activities.</td>
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<td>Publish it:</td>
<td>Some parishes put it on the bulletin cover every Sunday; others place it in prominent locations so everyone can see where the parish wants to go and what it stands for.</td>
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<td>Promulgate it:</td>
<td>Read it at meetings and let people know how the mission connects to what they are doing.</td>
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<td>Use it:</td>
<td>Let it influence the decisions of the pastoral council, the pastoral staff, and the finance council. Let it filter down to every organization in the parish.</td>
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**Setting Goals and Developing Objectives and Strategies**

Once the mission statement is in place, the goals will easily surface. Most likely the goals have been part of the process thus far. If they have not, just look at the mission and ask, “What can we do to make this mission statement more of a reality in our parish?”

From your discussion of the mission, you have surfaced some pastoral concerns that can become long-range goals. If you need help in discovering issues or goals, you can use the revised booklet, *The Ten Essentials of Parish Life* to help stimulate your thinking. These long-range goals become a major part of your pastoral plan for three to five years. Under these long-range goals you develop objectives, which might be considered short-term goals. Following the goals and objectives are the detailed plans that are called strategies.

For example, a council could say one of its long-range goals is to create a sense of community from all the diversity in the parish. Under this goal it could list ten objectives - ten ways of bringing about this goal in the next three years. Under the objectives it develops the concrete details or strategies. The council invites other parishioners to help explore the possibilities so that their interest and energy make sure that the objectives and strategies are actualized.
Do not try to change everything at one time. Select three to five goals. Some of them you can accomplish in six months, others will take three to five years. This might seem slow, but remember you are working on some really significant spiritual and pastoral dimensions of your parish. They will take time to accomplish. Here are some examples:

**Some Possible Goals:**

- To develop our parish as a young adult friendly place
- To become a hospitable and evangelizing parish
- To create a total youth ministry program
- To develop stewardship as a way of life
- To utilize the wisdom and talent of our senior members
- To make faith formation available for all parishioners
- To develop a social justice ministry
- To increase participation of members (stewardship)

Brainstorming objectives and developing strategies are often energizing. The next step is to engage the staff and empower the parishioners to carry out the goals and the action plans. This is a challenge because many parishes say that parishioners are not involved in parish life. The pastoral council has the responsibility to plan with vision and goals, but not to do all the work. The pastoral council needs to invite and empower other parishioners to become involved in carrying out the plans.
Chapter Four: Organizing Your Pastoral Council

Educating the Community

Perhaps the first step in making changes to your pastoral council is to educate the parish community. If you are moving from a model of council that is into managing the details of parish life and you want a council that does pastoral planning, then you need to tell the people you are looking for something new in the members. This education can come in the form of pulpit announcements and Sunday handouts. It can also happen through presentations to the parish leaders and heads of organizations. Talking about a new way of being council can help clarify your vision for yourself as you explain it to others.

Qualities for Council Members:

- Registered and participating member of the parish
- A working knowledge of parish and diocesan life
- A Vatican II vision of the Church
- An ability to listen to the needs of the parishioners
- A desire for spiritual growth
- An openness toward study and reflection
- An eagerness to carry out the parish mission
- An ease in working with groups
- A willingness to empower others
- A desire to work with consensus decision making
- An availability of time and energy
Some parishes might also require that candidates for the council be members of the parish for a certain number of years. Also, you might ask new council members to resign from other parish committees so that they can give their attention to the pastoral council.

**Gifts for Council Ministry**

As you explain your vision of a council that does pastoral planning, you will think of the gifts that you are looking for in the membership. Here are some possibilities to start your thinking:

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<tr>
<th><strong>Prayerful:</strong> Council members are asked to develop their prayer life as individuals and as community. Perhaps they take turns in guiding the prayer at meetings.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pastoral:</strong> They will need a sense of what it means to be a pastor, that is, to be concerned about the pastoral and spiritual issues of the whole parish. Some of the critical pastoral issues are formation, spirituality and worship, outreach, senior citizens, and youth. As <em>pastoral</em> councilors you are asked to shepherd or guide this community of faith, together with the pastor.</td>
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<td><strong>Prophetic:</strong> Councilors need to be able to move the parish in a direction that is faithful to the Gospel even if it is not the popular choice. They need to move the parish from maintaining the status quo to a challenging mission.</td>
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<td><strong>Discerning:</strong> Members of the council are invited to discern the direction of the parish. This is a prayerful, reflective process that surfaces the pros and cons and enables councilors to consider what is at the heart of their decision.</td>
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<td><strong>Consensus Building:</strong> Members are challenged to talk things out (dialogue) so that they are in agreement rather than voting on significant issues and ending up as winners and losers. The gift of consensus building takes time.</td>
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Forming the Leadership

If people are educated to a new way of being council, then those in leadership positions and heads of organizations quickly see what kind of candidates they need for the council. The leaders can help surface names of people who have the desired qualities. These potential candidates can be formed through the years so that there is always a pool of possible councilors. Once the concept is understood, then the parishioners can see why there is no longer a need for a popularity contest to elect councilors. Much like the selection of people for other ministries (lectors, Eucharistic ministers, youth coordinators) we are looking for people with particular gifts to serve on the pastoral council. These potential council members can be further trained by sending them to workshops and retreats. Exposure to deanery and diocesan activities also gives them a better sense of the larger church.

Exploring a New Model

Today councils are functioning in different ways. Some are running parishes, some are listening to reports, some are the eyes and ears of the pastor, some are organizing ministries and programs, and some are doing pastoral planning. In most cases the council needs to be designed in a way that is comfortable for the pastor. However, our belief is that in many parishes the pastoral council could take on greater responsibility in planning for the spiritual and pastoral life of the community.

Here are three models that are operating in the diocese today. We encourage parishes to use the third model which promotes mission and vision.

Councils of:  

Emphasis on:

Maintenance:  
Keeping things going and even adding a few new programs. Mainly concerned about material needs: parking lots, stoves, etc.  

Administration

Ministries:  
Looking at the major ministries and evaluating and improving them.  

Organization:

Mission:  
Reflecting on the mission of Jesus and all the spiritual and pastoral needs of the parish.  

Vision:

We offer the diagram on the next page to show how councils have been changing over the years. Today there is much agreement that councils have moved or are moving from the left column to the right. If you find that your council has already arrived in the right hand column, perhaps there are still areas for growth there. Ask yourself where you have moved in the last five years? And where do you want to go in order to be a more vibrant pastoral council?
MOVEMENTS

From          To
Parish Council   Pastoral Council
Board of Directors   Spiritual Directors
Representatives of Organizations   A Visioning Body
Coordinating Ministries   Articulating the Mission
Crisis Management   Pastoral Planning and Goals
Doing Activities   Empowering Parishioners
Business and Politics   Prayer and Discernment
Competition   Collaboration
Voting on Issues   Building Consensus
Committee Reporting   Active Listening
Elected by Popularity   Selecting by Gifts (Charisms)
Constitutions and By-laws   Guidelines
Selecting New Members

Almost all parishes at one time used elections to select new members for their pastoral councils. Today a variety of methods are employed. It seems that the growing trend is to use some form of discernment. The Office for Pastoral Planning will assist you in finding someone outside the parish to help with a discernment process.

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<td>Jan/Feb</td>
<td>Explain to the parishioners what you are planning and that you want them to think about possible new council members.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Have the parish nominate people as candidates for the council. They can nominate others or themselves.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Depending on the number of candidates, host a day of clarification where people can better understand the type of council that you are proposing. At the end of the day ask if they are still willing to stay in the discernment process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Have a day of discernment for those who are willing to stay in the process. They can reflect on their gifts, the commitment that is being asked, and the issues they will deal with in the months ahead. At the end of the day you will have the new members you need. Later you can install or recognize them at communal prayer.</td>
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Days of Clarification and Discernment

As councils develop, days of discernment are helpful and positive, providing opportunities for people to clarify their understanding of pastoral councils and to pray about their participation as a member. These days are positive spiritual experiences even if candidates decide that the time is not right for them to be on the council. It is a time for them to ponder the meaning of parish and to give thanks for their gifts. Some parishes have a series of evenings; others host a one day event.
Chapter Five: Clarifying Roles

Pastor

The pastor is responsible for the overall welfare of the parish and is accountable to the bishop. The pastor works collaboratively with the pastoral council. Although the council is a consultative body for the pastor, he participates and fully collaborates in the workings of the council. He presides over the meetings, but does not necessarily facilitate or chair them. Together with the council the pastor leads the parish in the ongoing discernment and realization of its mission.

Pastoral Council

The pastoral council is an advisory or consultative body for the pastor. The council does not manage parish operations. The members meet with the pastor and offer him the wisdom of the community. The council is responsible for seeing the bigger picture of the parish. Whereas the finance council has a limited scope that deals with budget and financial matters, the work of the pastoral council embraces all the pastoral dimensions of the parish. In addition to doing long range planning, the council members deal with whatever pastoral concerns the pastor brings before them. See the next chapter for relationship to parish finance council and pastoral staff.

Facilitators/Chairpersons

In an attempt to do away with political titles, those who are selected to coordinate the workings of the council are called “facilitators” or “chairpersons.” The title of "chairperson" indicates one who is running the meeting, and the focus might still remain on him or her. This title has a connotation of being in control, but it is less formidable than the term "president." In our diocesan mailings we have used the word "chairperson," although we agree that the leader is to facilitate rather than draw attention to oneself. The title "facilitator" best describes the task of promoting dialogue and inviting everyone to participate.

In addition to facilitating the meeting, this person is responsible for the ongoing organization of the council. This facilitator meets with the pastor, the assistant facilitator and the recorder to plan a detailed agenda and determine other materials that would be helpful in preparation for the meeting. The facilitator can also serve as a representative of the parish at deanery gatherings and other meetings. Facilitators need to have a good understanding of church, parish life, and group interactions. The task of the facilitator is to invite the members to share their wisdom and participate fully in the consensus decisions of the council. It is very helpful to take time in selecting the person with the best gifts to facilitate.
Recorder/Secretary

The recorder keeps track of the progress of meetings and records official decisions.

Some other duties of the recorder might include:

- Corrresponding with the members of the council, making sure that they receive the agenda in advance of meetings.
- Sending in a new list of the council members after the annual selection process. In many cases the selection takes place in the spring, so the list can be sent by July 1st of each year. This list is sent to: Office for Pastoral Planning, 2900 Lakeshore Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610.
- Contacting the media for newsworthy events. This would include articles to the diocesan newspaper, The Catholic Voice.

Agenda Team (Executive Committee)

The facilitator, the assistant facilitator, and the recorder need to meet with the pastor to organize the agenda for the meeting. This organizational meeting is important in order to get the information to the members prior to the meeting so they have time for reflection on the agenda items. In addition to the agenda this team also determines study materials that the members need in preparation for the meeting.

Some other tasks for this team might include:

- Preparing materials for the spiritual enrichment of the members.
- Planning an annual retreat or evenings of reflection.
Prayer and Ritual Team

This team is responsible for creating prayer and the environment for a prayerful meeting. Perhaps some people want to volunteer to do this for a year, or maybe you wish to shift this leadership around so everyone gets a chance to facilitate the prayer.

Hospitality Team

It is always nice to come to a meeting when people are glad that you came and there is some preparation for your arrival rather than finding a locked door and a cold room. Hospitality sets the tone for a meeting and helps people to work collaboratively. One or two people can be responsible for the climate of the room, the refreshments, and the welcoming atmosphere.

Committees

From time to time there is a need to form various committees. When you are first organizing a pastoral council you might have a steering committee to develop guidelines. The executive committee is what we call the agenda team; they plan the flow of the meetings. Periodically you might develop an ad hoc committee to deal with a special research project (e.g. youth concerns, evangelization opportunities, neighborhood gangs, etc.)
Chapter Six: Developing Relationships

Parish Finance Council

A diocesan survey done in 1996 indicated that in 50% of the parishes the pastoral council and the finance council were equal. In 40% of the parishes the finance council was under the pastoral council. There can be tension between the two councils, but what we need is collaboration. Both councils need to exist and communicate with each other.

Canon 537 states:

“Each parish is to have a finance council which is regulated by universal law as well as by norms issued by the diocesan bishop; in this council the Christian faithful, selected according to the same norms, aid the pastor in the administration of parish goods...."

The parish finance council serves as an advisory body to the pastor in the administration and stewardship of parish finances, budget, parish facilities and long range financial development.

Members of the finance council are appointed by the pastor on the basis of their expertise in accounting, finance, investment, development, budget, and law. Usually the finance council consists of 3-7 members.

The parish finance council and the parish pastoral council function interdependently; it is essential that they communicate with one another in carrying on the parish mission. Some parishes have a member of the finance council attend pastoral council meetings; in other parishes the pastor is the one who makes sure there is communication and consultation taking place. The pastoral council needs to be aware of the finances of the parish, but their expertise is not in financial matters. The pastoral council is charged with keeping the vision alive and seeing the bigger picture of pastoral issues.

Pastoral Staff

The staff works with and for the pastor. He hires them and supervises them. The staff does not work for the pastoral council, but they work to implement the vision that the council and pastor have developed. The pastoral council needs to be in collaboration with the pastoral staff. Once the pastoral plan is in place the pastoral staff needs to be involved in carrying out the goals and strategies so that the plan can be realized.
This diagram helps clarify the roles of the pastoral staff, the pastoral council and the finance council. Some parishes have overlap between the three groups to ensure good communication. However, if the pastor collaborates well and there are quarterly meetings with all the leadership in the parish, then the mission and goals of the parish are communicated clearly.

## Parish Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parish Administration</th>
<th>Pastoral Council</th>
<th>Finance Council</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pastor's Role</strong></td>
<td>oversees daily operations</td>
<td>presides over</td>
<td>presides over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Membership</strong></td>
<td>hired or appointed</td>
<td>selected through parish discernment process</td>
<td>appointed by pastor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
<td>day-to-day ministry</td>
<td>long-range pastoral planning</td>
<td>annual budget long-range financial planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Areas of Responsibility</strong></td>
<td>matters pertaining to a job description or specific area of parish life</td>
<td>matters pertaining to the life of the whole parish: ten essentials</td>
<td>matters pertaining to budget, facilities, or development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship to Pastoral Plan</strong></td>
<td>assists as resource</td>
<td>develops, monitors and evaluates plan</td>
<td>assists as resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship to Pastor</strong></td>
<td>accountable to pastor</td>
<td>consultative to pastor</td>
<td>consultative to pastor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Method of Decision Making</strong></td>
<td>by consensus when appropriate</td>
<td>by consensus</td>
<td>by consensus when appropriate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Diocese of Oakland

If we see the local church as the Diocese of Oakland, then pastoral councils will want to be connected to the pastoral plan of the diocese. Sometimes the diocese will promote programs and activities for all the parishes, like RENEW or Stewardship.

When the diocese suggests a program, this can create tension in a parish, because this program may not fit with the parish vision or the five-year goals. If the pastor and staff are in communication with the diocese, they will know what is being proposed by the diocese and will understand the vision behind the new program.

It would also be helpful if the chairpersons can stay in touch with the deanery and diocese so they are aware of diocesan efforts. There is a quarterly newsletter mailed to chairpersons. Some deaneries bring their parish pastoral councils together once or twice a year. All of these gatherings help parishioners see a larger view of church.

Parish Organizations

In the past some parishes had all the organizations/ministries report to the pastoral council. They would either do that directly or have the organizations report through a committee or commission. Today most pastoral councils are not set up to represent organizations/ministries because their main task is to do long range planning rather than listen to reports from various committees. People sometimes worry about communication if the organizations are not represented on the council. In order to keep the communication open, we suggest twice a year or perhaps quarterly the council, the staff and the organizational leadership meet together to clarify the vision. It is a wonderful opportunity for all the leaders to spend time in prayer and let each other know what progress is being made in living out the mission of the parish. This presupposes that all the leaders have bought into the mission and long range goals and are working collaboratively to carry them out.
Chapter Seven:
Offering Practical Suggestions for Pastoral Councils

Council Size

Because the pastoral council is a visioning body, not a coordinating committee of ministries, 8 – 12 members are sufficient. Many of our parishes have decided that a 9 member council works best for them. In this way they can select three new members each year.

Meeting Times

The majority of our pastoral councils meet for 2 – 3 hours a month. These are usually evening meetings that include gathering time for refreshments and the opportunity to share faith and life events. Some councils meet on a Saturday or Sunday. A few are meeting less often but for longer periods on Friday evening and Saturday. A good number of councils also have an annual retreat or planning day for all the council members.

Terms of Office

Most of the councils have three year terms, and the terms are staggered so new members are selected each year. A few parishes have everyone come on the council at the same time and ask them for a three-year commitment. We would suggest that the length of service be no less than three years and no longer than nine. Continuity and stability without stagnation are important elements to keep in mind. Through a parish wide nomination process, some parishes are able to attract a large number of candidates to serve on the pastoral council.

Makeup of the Council

Simply stated we suggest that the pastoral council reflect the makeup of the parish. Our diocese has great diversity; most parishes are also diverse. It is good to keep in mind the many avenues of diversity: age, gender, race, ethnicity, economy, education, and theology. Each parish has some form of diversity, and that diversity needs to be reflected in the membership of the council.
Sample Agendas

In the past when we operated under Robert’s Rules of Order, our agendas looked like this:

- Opening prayer
- Secretary’s report
- Approval of minutes
- Old business
- New business
- Adjournment

Today when we are concentrating more on critical pastoral issues, an agenda might look more like this:

- Check-in: What we have seen and heard in the parish
- Gathering prayer/ ritual
- Study and reflection
- Update and dialogue on long range goal: (examples)
  - Developing the spiritual life of parishioners
  - Creating an awareness of justice issues
- The pastor’s concerns
- Announcements
- Next steps – future needs, next meeting
- Evaluation of the meeting
- Final blessing
Sample Calendar

The pastoral councils throughout the diocese are not on the same calendar. They select new members at different times of the year. However, we have found that many of the selection processes are during the spring and summer, so we offer this calendar as a possibility. You can adapt these suggestions to the time of year when you select new members.

**July - August**
- Provide orientation for new pastoral council members
- Offer some socializing opportunities
- Assist in the transition of new staff members

**September**
- Participate in the Annual Diocesan Retreat for Pastoral Councils
- Clarify who you are as a council
- Review mission statement and goals

**October - December**
- Examine and study pastoral issues
- Host a parish assembly
- Meet with finance council to review annual budget and long range plans

**January**
- Have a retreat for your council or the councils of the deanery
- Share the conclusions of your parish assembly

**February - March**
- Brainstorm on new objectives and strategies for your goals

**April**
- Evaluate your council on how well you...
  - Keep the vision alive
  - Articulate the mission of the parish
  - Deal with critical pastoral issues
  - Offer your wisdom to the pastor

**May - June**
- Give annual feedback to the parish
- Facilitate the selection of new pastoral council members
- Celebrate your successes
Chapter Eight: Recognizing Resources

Diocesan Offices

The Chancery exists in order to carry on the work of the bishop. Some of the diocesan offices might seem to be connected indirectly to the work of the bishop. Others can more easily be seen as supporting the ministry that is happening throughout the diocese. We encourage pastoral councils to use the resources of the diocese. You can call on these people who work in pastoral ministries. They can help you in developing goals and strategies as you look at the overall picture of your parish. Although many people can be a resource for you as you further develop The Ten Essentials of Parish Life, here are some possible aids from the diocesan offices:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#1 Worship</th>
<th>Liturgy Resource</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>510-267-8345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2 Spirituality</td>
<td>Faith and Ministry Dept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>510-273-4981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3 Formation</td>
<td>Catechetical Resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>510-267-8340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4 Leadership</td>
<td>Office for Pastoral Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>510-267-8358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5 Hospitality</td>
<td>Evangelization Resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>510-267-8340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6 Small Communities</td>
<td>Small Christian Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>510-267-8340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7 Diverse Cultures</td>
<td>Ethnic Pastoral Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>510-273-4998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8 Stewardship</td>
<td>Stewardship Resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>510-267-8340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#9 Parish Social Ministry</td>
<td>Social Justice Resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>510-267-8379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#10 Evangelization</td>
<td>Evangelization Resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>510-267-8340</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Office for Pastoral Planning

This office has responsibility for supporting and developing parish pastoral councils. It is also charged with working with the Diocesan Pastoral Council and other consultative bodies. In addition the office looks at the overall needs of the diocese in terms of expansion, consolidation, and closure. It has two advisory boards: the Diocesan Planning Board which recommends changes regarding facilities, ministries, and properties, and the Diocesan Board for Pastoral Councils which gives advice for parish pastoral council development and offers annual retreats for all council members. The pastoral council retreat is held in September.

The planning office corresponds with facilitators and pastors through a quarterly newsletter entitled, Beyond Coffee and Donuts. Workshops and retreats for individual or deanery councils are planned as requested. Contact the office at 510-267-8358.

Bulletin and Newsletter Ideas

Parishioners often do not know that there is a parish pastoral council, or what it does, or who is on it. In addition to having a parish assembly to inform people, you can run periodic bulletin information.

Here are some things that you might consider:

- Education of what the pastoral council is and what it does
- Some of the major decisions that the council makes
- The progress being achieved in regard to parish goals
- A periodic listing of the council members
- A newsletter feature on various members of the council
- Prayers for the council as they discern critical pastoral issues
Pastoral Councils and Canon Law

Canon 511

In each diocese, to the extent that pastoral circumstances recommend it, a pastoral council is to be established whose responsibility it is to investigate under the authority of the bishop all those things which pertain to pastoral works, to ponder them and to propose practical conclusions about them.

Canon 512

1. The pastoral council consists of Christian faithful who are in full communion with the Catholic Church, clerics, members of institutes of consecrated life and especially lay persons, who are designated in a manner determined by the diocesan bishop.

2. The Christian faithful who are appointed to the pastoral council are to be so selected that the entire portion of the people of God which constitutes the diocese is truly reflected, with due regard for the diverse regions, social conditions and professions of the diocese as well as the role which they have in the apostolate, either as individuals or in conjunction with others.

3. No one except Christians of proven faith, good morals and outstanding prudence are to be appointed to the pastoral council.

Canon 513

1. The pastoral council is to be established for a period of time according to the prescriptions of the statutes which are issued by the bishop.

2. When the see is vacant the pastoral council ceases to exist.

Canon 514

1. It pertains exclusively to the diocesan bishop to convoke the pastoral council according to the necessities of the apostolate and to preside over it; the pastoral council enjoys only a consultative vote; it is for the bishop alone to make public what has been done in the council.

2. The pastoral council is to be convoked at least once a year.


**Canon 536**

1. After the diocesan bishop has listened to the presbyteral council and if he judges it opportune, a pastoral council is to be established in each parish; the pastor presides over it, and through it the Christian faithful along with those who share in the pastoral care of the parish in virtue of their office give their help in fostering pastoral activity.

2. This pastoral council possesses a consultative vote only and is governed by norms determined by the diocesan bishop.

**Canon 537**

Each parish is to have a finance council which is regulated by universal law as well as by norms issued by the diocesan bishop; in this council the Christian faithful, selected according to the same norms, aid the pastor in the administration of parish goods.

**Additional Reading**


*Four Ways to Build More Effective Parish Councils: A Pastoral Approach*, edited by Mark Fischer and Mary Margaret Raley, Twenty-Third Publications, 2002


Chapter Nine: Gathering a Glossary of Terms

BAPTISM: Sacrament of initiation by which men and women become members of the Catholic Church and assume responsibility for using their gifts to build up the community in fulfilling the mission of Jesus.

CATECHESIS: Process through which individuals and communities systemically acquire and deepen Christian faith.

CODE OF CANON LAW: Law enacted and promulgated by the Pope for the orderly pastoral administration and government of the Church. The revised Code, effective November 27, 1983, consists of 1,752 canons in seven books.

COLLABORATION: Act of working together through reflective listening and genuine articulation of ideas in a partnership of mutual respect and diversity.

COLLEGIALITY: A characteristic of church leadership based on mutuality and unity in diversity: in reference to the universal communion of the bishops with the Holy Father, of pastors with their bishop, and of the faithful with their pastor.

CONSENSUS: A method of making decisions. A group strives to reach substantial, not necessarily unanimous, agreement on matters of overall direction and policy that can be supported by all.

CONSULTATION: Act of conferring and deliberating and making decisions together. Refers particularly to the relationship between pastor and laity, respecting the pastor’s unique role as canonical head of the parish.

DELEGATE: To assign responsibility and authority to the appropriate level.

DIOCESE: The local or "particular" church, referring to a geographically designated area in which Catholics, usually gathered in parishes, are united in faith and sacraments with their bishop, ordained in apostolic succession.

DISCERNMENT: Formal prayerful process where a group discovers God’s will in a particularly significant situation or decision.

DIVERSE CULTURES/GIFTS: One of the ten essentials of parish life which recognizes, appreciates, celebrates and uses the gifts of all peoples.

EMPOWER: Provides individuals and or groups with skills, information, authority and resources in order to carry out their responsibilities.

EVALUATION: Systematic way of measuring performance against objectives.
**EVANGELIZATION:** One of the ten essentials of parish life which encompasses any way in which the parish continues to spread the Good News of Jesus, especially, although not exclusively, through personal and corporate sharing of faith.

**FINANCE COUNCIL:** A consultative body within the parish that offers expertise in finance and plant management as they relate to the mission of the parish.

**FORMATION/EDUCATION:** One of the ten essentials of parish life which explains, informs and forms parishioners of all ages in the Scriptures and tradition of the church. Encompasses many traditional ministries of "education."

**GOAL:** A clearly defined statement of desired direction or activity in general terms.

**LEADERSHIP:** One of the ten essentials of parish life which calls forth gifts of visioning, planning, empowering, and evaluating for the service of the community.

**MINISTRY:** Active service of the baptized, dependent upon the gifts of the individual, the community's needs, and always directed to the building up of the Body of Christ.

**MISSION (OF THE CHURCH):** Purpose for which Christians are gathered in faith.

**MISSION STATEMENT:** Brief, general statement which identifies and establishes the unique direction of a diocese or parish as it lives out the mission of the church.

**OBJECTIVE:** Planned action that directs efforts toward attaining a goal. Besides describing a result, an objective also specifies what is to be done, who is to do it, and when it is to be completed.

**OUTREACH:** One of the ten essentials of parish life, which extends the resources of the parish to the needs of others and demonstrates a commitment to works of compassion and justice.

**PARISH:** A gathering of the people of God united in faith and dedicated to continuing the universal mission of the Church in their local setting. Its life, is expressed through the ten essentials.

**PASTORAL:** An approach of caring for the life of the parish as a whole.

**PARISH COUNCILS:** Each parish has two councils. One is finance; the other is pastoral.

**PASTORAL COUNCIL:** A consultative structure in a parish designed primarily to envision, plan, and oversee the mission of the parish community as an extension of the mission of Jesus.

**PASTORAL PLANNING:** The process which turns the parish vision into reality within a particular span of time, through a systematic, cyclical design. Involves the mission statement, long range goals, and annual objectives.
**PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL**: The consultative body of the bishop that assists with the governance of the diocese and the concerns of the presbyters (priests) formerly called Priests' Council.

**REIGN OF GOD**: The Biblical expression of God's dynamic rule of the universe, the values and qualities of which were most clearly manifested in the sayings and deeds of Jesus.

**REPRESENTATIVE**: A characteristic of the makeup of parish pastoral council, namely, their concern with the common good of the entire parish as opposed to special interest groups or organizations.

**SELECTION**: A method by which leaders are chosen to serve on the Parish Pastoral Council, through a discernment rather than election process.

**SENSE OF BELONGING/HOSPITALITY**: One of the ten essentials of parish life that welcomes people in a friendly, inclusive, and non-judgmental manner.

**SMALL COMMUNITIES**: One of the ten essentials of parish life which draws parishioners together with Jesus Christ to share the message, build community, pray and reach out in action.

**SPIRITUALITY**: One of the ten essentials of parish life which invites us to deepen our relationship with God. This often involves prayer, study, and activities that nurture our spirit and call us to growth.

**STEWARDSHIP**: One of the ten essentials of parish life, which challenges all parishioners to share their time, talent and treasure for the fulfillment of the parish mission. If people feel included, they will increase the depth of their involvement and participate in ministries and activities.

**SUNDAY EUCHARIST**: An essential element of parish life which is both source and summit of the parish's expression of its life in Christ.

**TRADITION**: The long-standing practices and beliefs of the Church, developed since the days of the Apostles and revered as normative, along with Scriptures, for the life of the Church.

**VATICAN II**: The most recent of 21 church councils (1962-1965) in which bishops from throughout the universal church gather with the Pope to discuss and decide on matters of church teaching and practice. A Council of this nature has supreme and full authority over the Church.

**WORSHIP**: One of the ten essentials of parish life that gives expression to the sacramental and prayer life of parishioners. Encompasses both Sunday Eucharist and other ritual forms of sacred celebration.