

Guidelines for the Ministry of Parish Pastoral Councils

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Section I— We, the Church | 1 |
| Understand Our Mission..... | 2 |
| Share Our Responsibility..... | 2 |
| Appreciate Our Roles and Relationships..... | 3 |
| Are Invited to Live Our Baptismal Promises..... | 8 |
| | |
| Section II— We, the Parish Pastoral Council | 9 |
| Are Called to Holiness..... | 10 |
| Understand Our Functions..... | 11 |
| Are Directed by the Church..... | 11 |
| Provide Direction and Formulate Policy..... | 11 |
| Policy Making or Administrative..... | 15 |
| Set Parish Direction..... | 16 |
| Goals, Objectives, Implementation..... | 16 |
| Grow Through Spiritual Direction..... | 21 |
| Form Community Among Ourselves and Within Our Parish..... | 22 |
| Know the Hallmarks of Any Christian Community..... | 23 |
| | |
| Section III— Commissions of the Parish Pastoral Council | 24 |
| General Considerations..... | 25 |
| Recommended Commissions..... | 25 |
| Optional Commissions..... | 26 |
| The Role of Committees Within the Commissions..... | 26 |
| The Role of Commissions Within the Parish Pastoral Council..... | 26 |
| Recommended Commissions in All Parishes..... | 29 |
| Liturgy (or Worship) Commission..... | 29 |
| (Recommended) Christian Formation (or Education) Commission..... | 31 |
| (Recommended) Christian Service Commission (or Social Justice Concerns)..... | 35 |
| (Recommended) Stewardship and Development Commission..... | 37 |
| (Recommended) Administration and Finance Commission..... | 40 |
| Chart of Recommended and Optional Commissions..... | 43 |

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Practical Helps | 44 |
| Selection Process for New Parish Pastoral Council Members | 45 |
| Structure of the Parish Pastoral Council | 46 |
| Installation of Parish Pastoral Councilors | 47 |
| Meetings of the Parish Pastoral Council | 48 |
| Principles of an Effective Parish Pastoral Council Meeting | 50 |
| Building a Faith Community | 51 |
| A Model for Parish Planning | 53 |
| Consensus | 55 |
| | |
| Glossary | 56 |
| Glossary of Terms | 57 |
| | |
| Resources | 59 |
| Books (specifically for parish council formation and development) | 60 |
| Books (background reading pertaining to the ministry of the Church and of the parish) | 61 |
| Formation Programs | 65 |
| Online Publication | 66 |
| Video | 66 |
| Archdiocesan Resources for Required Commissions and Optional Commissions | 67 |
| | |
| Appendix | 68 |
| Appendix A— Archdiocesan Mission Statement | 69 |
| Appendix B— Sample of Consensus Process | 70 |
| Appendix C— Sample Pew Card | 72 |
| Appendix D— Discernment Process | 73 |
| Appendix E— Sample Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines | 74 |
| Appendix F— Ceremony of Gratitude | 78 |
| Appendix G— Developing a Parish Mission Statement | 79 |

Section I

We, the Church

Understand Our Mission

Of Church

The Church, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is the living Body of Christ. The mission of the Church is to proclaim His Word, build His Community, celebrate His Presence, and serve His people. All Christians, because of their baptism, share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ and because of this, they have been given a special role, or ministry, as an extension of Jesus' ministry. All the people of God (priests, religious, and laity) share in these gifts and responsibilities.

Of Parish

The parish is that unit of God's family that fulfills within its local area the universal mission of the Church: to make Christ more fully present in and through the parishioners, in all that they say and do. The essence of parish as a community is a union of people who care about one another, who think of themselves as the Body of Christ, as the people of God.

Share Our Responsibility

Within the parish, all individuals have been called by God. Every individual has been sent into the world just as Jesus was sent into the world by the Father. Therefore, every Christian, regardless of circumstances, is called to share responsibility in the ministry of the Church. The Church carries on Christ's ministry through the members.

This call, given in baptism and confirmation, will be referred to in these guidelines as shared responsibility. God has assigned this shared responsibility to each of us. All Christians, therefore, are offered the opportunity to pray and work together to make the message of Christ known and accepted.

The concept of shared responsibility affirms that the people are actively involved in the decision-making for pastoral ministry. Prior to the Second Vatican Council, the Church perceived God's guidance and direction as flowing almost entirely through the leaders—the hierarchy: pope, bishop, pastor—finally to be activated in parishes through programs and other projects.

This pre-Vatican II thinking was changed by the concept of shared responsibility. The theological meaning of shared responsibility is that God's truth, which provides the guidance for the Church, comes not only through the hierarchy but also through the laity. In order for the Church to have the fullness of God's light and guidance, everyone must be consulted as far as possible.

Thus, a totally new ministry of the people of God was born. This is the ministry of the parish pastoral council, where the people of God (priests, religious, and laity) together reflect on the parish's ministerial activity and, on the basis of that reflection, discern what needs to be

changed or developed in the parish to make it more faithful to what God is calling it to be. This relationship of priests and people is the foundation of all the ministries that serve within the parish pastoral council.

Appreciate Our Roles and Relationships

Within the Church, members have specific roles and vocations, but all share and support one another in carrying out the promises made at baptism and renewed at the time of confirmation. All members promised to share in the **priestly**, **prophetic**, and **kingly** ministry of Christ.

Priestly (Worship)

By sharing in this ministry with Christ, all are called to bring God to people and people to God in a community of faith through prayer, liturgy, and the sacraments so that we, the Body of Christ, can continually be sanctified. This is our common role as priestly people.

Prophetic (Teach)

By sharing in this ministry with Christ, we are all called to proclaim the Good News by word and example. The role of the prophet in today's Church is not to predict the future but to witness (both in word and deed) in Jesus' name in the here and now.

Kingly (Serve)

By sharing in this ministry with Christ, we are all called to acknowledge "that the Spirit moves among all the People of God, prompting them according to their particular gifts and offices, to discern anew the signs of the times and interpret them boldly in light of the Gospel." (U. S. Bishops' Pastoral: *Called and Gifted: Catholic Laity*). We address variances in cultures and values by evaluating them according to the teachings of Jesus. Thus, we are called to bring forth a new kingdom—a kingdom based on service to one another.

As the people of God in the Church today, each one of us has a role to play, a role so intimate that St. Paul describes us as being a part of one another. In order to support one another in living and proclaiming the Gospel, we must have a clear idea of our particular role and an understanding of the various relationships in the Church, the parish, and specifically the parish pastoral council.

Parish pastoral councils represent all areas of parish life: old and young, poor and rich, clergy, religious, laity, people with divergent points of view, and ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Members of a council, as well as all parish members, are called forth to merge their expertise, insights, and diverse experiences out of love and concern for those to whom they minister. Hence, membership on the parish pastoral council ideally would reflect this rich diversity. In considering the roles and relationships as members of parishes and parish pastoral councils, the following points should be kept in mind:

Laity

“One of the chief characteristics of lay men and women today is their growing sense of being adult members of the Church. Adulthood implies knowledge, experience and awareness, freedom and responsibility, and mutuality in relationships.

It is true, however, that the experience of laypersons as ‘Church members’ has not always reflected this understanding of adulthood. Now, thanks to the impetus of the Second Vatican Council, lay women and men feel themselves called to exercise the same mature interdependence and practical self-direction which characterizes them in other areas of life.” (U.S. Bishops’ Pastoral: *Called and Gifted: Catholic Laity*)

“Just as by divine institution bishops, priests, and deacons have been given, through ordination, authority to exercise leadership as servants of God’s people, so through baptism and confirmation lay men and women have been given rights and responsibilities to participate in the mission of the Church. In those areas of life in which they are uniquely present and within which they have special competency because of their particular talents, education, and experience, they are an extension of the Church’s redeeming presence in the world. Recognition of lay rights and responsibilities should not create divisiveness between clergy and laity but should express the full range of the influence of the people of God. We see this and affirm it.” (U.S. Bishops’ Pastoral: *Called and Gifted: Catholic Laity*)

Laypersons do all in their power to make their parish a center for spiritual growth and apostolic formation where people are prepared to meet responsibilities not only in the parish, but also in the secular world.

They view their parish as a body of inter-dependent parts: home, school, religious education programs, adult education, and the pastoral team. Each part of this body continually calls and challenges the people to:

- Pause, reflect, and study our purpose as Church.
- Work toward and experience justice in all areas of life.
- Compassionately care for all in the world. Indeed, they are concerned about the entire cosmos. The laity should declare themselves on a mission to the world.
- Enjoy the peace of God and rest in His love.

The parish pastoral council enables the laity to participate in the total vision of the parish by setting a mission statement, parish policies, goals, and objectives.

Each parishioner gives serious consideration to serving on the parish pastoral council.

In a spirit of cooperation and a community of faith, all should be prepared to implement the conclusions of the parish pastoral council. Parishioners need to feel free to offer constructive commentary on council decisions.

Religious

The vowed man or woman religious is committed by profession to service and to building community and living in community. Religious today are serving in many kinds of ministries. They provide spiritual leadership, often calling forth the services and gifts of the people and growing with them in union with Christ through shared prayer and learning.

By their lives they bear witness to the call to holiness and are a sign of total availability to God and to the Church.

By their vows and lifestyle they are a challenge to the world and to the Church itself.

As consecrated persons they are willing and free to leave everything to go and proclaim the Gospel in whatever circumstances and places the Holy Spirit directs them.

Because they live in community, religious can have excellent insights into the needs of the parish community, and they are often sensitive and dedicated builders of that community.

Many religious orders have extensive experience in areas of importance to parish pastoral councils such as consensus, planning techniques, group dynamics, communal discernment, and world vision. Representation from the working religious in the parish can be a valuable resource to the council.

All religious in the parish, whether members of the parish pastoral council or not, actively support the work of the parish pastoral council. It is important to give thoughtful consideration to the great potential present in the ministries of the religious when planning future parish direction.

Permanent Diaconate

A permanent deacon is an ordained minister of the Church empowered by the sacramental imposition of hands of his bishop to perform specific functions and duties relating to the ministry of the Word, the ministry of the Liturgy, and the ministry of Service.

As a minister of the Word, the deacon may teach, and instruct converts, adults, and children; participate in marriage and family enrichment programs; proclaim the Gospel; and preach homilies after receiving his preaching faculties.

As a minister of the Liturgy, he may assist the priest at the celebration of the Eucharist, distribute Holy Communion, officiate at Benediction, administer sacramentals, witness and bless marriages, and officiate at wakes, funerals, and burial services.

As a minister of Service, he may visit the sick and lonely, participate in social work on behalf of the needy and homeless, counsel, cheer, and console the disturbed, and dispense food and alms to the poor.

Section I – We, the Church

The uniqueness of the permanent deacon is that while he establishes solemn lifelong ties with the Church and his bishop, he continues his previous relationships in the economic and social world. His marital status remains unaltered and he retains his former employment.

Duties of the deacon are assigned on the basis of his talents and the needs of his parish and diocese. In the Archdiocese of St. Louis, much emphasis is placed on the ministry of Service; therefore, much of the permanent deacon's work takes place outside the church building. His whole ministry is rooted in community.

Pastors and Associate Pastors

Pastors and associate pastors, as extensions of the Archbishop in a parish community, are responsible for proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ, which leads people to repentance and belief. They lead the people of the parish into an ongoing faith community through worship, community life, service, and instruction in the faith. They are fulfilling their pastoral role more and more by enabling the people to live their baptismal promises. The priests, then, preside over the ministry of their people and share with the people in that ministry.

By virtue of his office, the pastor is to provide a ministry of spiritual leadership and pastoral supervision in the parish community. He shares in the pastorate of the Archbishop and bears the ultimate accountability for the development of a faith community in the parish.

The pastor recognizes that his authority is not for his own benefit, but for the service of others. He also knows that his leadership will not be effective without proper communication and consultation with the people of the parish and their representatives on the parish pastoral council.

All priests by ordination are called to a leadership role in the Church. For this reason, the parish pastoral council needs the active involvement of all priests in the parish. The support of all priests is required to achieve the participation of all groups and interests in the parish.

The priest calls forth the ministries and gifts of the people in the parish. He encourages the initiative, creativity, and service of all parishioners. The priest actively supports the full role of the laity. The apostolic formation of people is of special interest to him. He sees the development of lay leadership as particularly important for our time.

The priest's understanding and support of the concept of shared responsibility enables him to offer positive leadership within the parish. The development of shared responsibility under the leadership of the priest will lead to a desire for unity and create an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect among all members of the council.

As a preacher of the Word, the priest bears a special responsibility to see that the council knows and applies God's Word. By word and example, he frequently calls the council to

Section I – We, the Church

prayer and reminds all members of the need to practice Christ's teachings. He shares the benefits of his knowledge by offering biblical and doctrinal insights, and by interpreting the prophetic message of the Gospels.

The priest as a builder of community is a unifier, coordinator, and mediator within the council. He works for unity by calling all members toward a deeper union with Christ, whose power enables people to overcome human weakness and differences. The priest also helps the council to realize its responsibilities through an understanding of Church teaching, *Code of Canon Law*, and Archdiocesan policy.

Beyond attendance at parish pastoral council meetings, meetings of the Worship/Liturgy Commission, and Administration/Finance Commission, the priest, while not required, is encouraged to participate actively in the work of standing commissions/committees. His skills as a motivator, researcher, and resource person are invaluable.

The communal style encouraged by the parish pastoral council allows the priest to share his human feelings and also to gain knowledge from the wisdom and experience of other council members. The council's pursuit of true Christianity can lead the priest to a deeper life of prayer and a clearer understanding of his role as spiritual leader.

Ordinary

The Archbishop of St. Louis, with the Pope and other bishops, offers spiritual leadership for the Catholic Church in the World.

An archbishop or a bishop, as ordinary of his diocese, is responsible for the local Church, that is, all those who profess faith in Jesus Christ in a particular geographic area.

The Archbishop of St. Louis is charged with the ministry of enabling the presence of Christ to become more fully realized in that particular region so that the Good News of Jesus is effectively and faithfully proclaimed.

He is responsible, as well, for recognizing, identifying, and utilizing the gifts, which the Holy Spirit has given to the members of the Archdiocese for the building up of the community.

The Archbishop sees to it that all members of the Archdiocesan community are sharing according to their proper role, the responsibility for the apostolate of the Church. "In exercising this pastoral care he should preserve for his faithful the share proper to them in Church affairs; he should also respect their duty and right of actively collaborating in the building up of the Mystical Body of Christ." (Vatican Council II *Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church*, #16.)

The Archbishop “should always embrace priests with a special love since the latter to the best of their ability assume the bishops’ anxieties and carry them on day by day so zealously. They should regard the priests as sons and friends and be ready to listen to them. Through their trusting familiarity with their priests they should strive to promote the whole pastoral work of the entire diocese.” (*Decree on the Bishops’ Pastoral Office in the Church*, #16)

In order to strengthen communication and his bond with his people, the Archbishop has established parish pastoral councils.

Are Invited to Live Our Baptismal Promises Through Parish Pastoral Councils

The parish pastoral council is the coordinating and unifying structure of the parish community. It is a means of achieving full participation by the whole parish in the mission of Jesus as revealed in the Gospels. Through proclamation, community, service, and celebration, all council members will have a voice in encouraging, guiding, and directing the various aspects of parish life. The council is a parish in miniature. Its members gather the thoughts and ideas of the community, discuss them until some general agreement has been reached, and translate this consensus into parish goals. They then direct the actions of the parish community in order to reach the desired goals.

Every parish and every parish pastoral council should be an expression of our baptism and confirmation commitments. When we promised to share the life of Jesus at the time of our baptism, we agreed to carry on His ministries of priest, prophet, and king: to sanctify, to teach, and to serve. This is why we, the Church exist—this is why parish pastoral councils were born. Parish pastoral councils are a process of renewal of our basic purpose—to make Christ evermore present in all areas of parish life.

Although all of us who are baptized and confirmed are called to share the priestly, prophetic, and kingly ministries of Jesus, some of us are specifically called by God and the community to lead and nourish the people of God in a parish by means of the parish pastoral council. Parish pastoral councils, therefore, aren’t just convenient. Without a council, a parish may not have the full access to God’s guidance that it would otherwise have.

The parish pastoral council should reflect the viewpoints of all people of the parish: young and old, rich and poor, the laity, religious, and clergy. By sharing their expertise, their insights, their experience, and their loving concern, they seek to bring together the needs, anxieties, and hopes of all the parishioners.

Section II

We, the Parish Pastoral Council

Are Called to Holiness

Members of the council are people of prayer who see the value of private prayer for personal growth in Christ and the value of communal prayer for growth in Christ's community of faith and love. This suggests a willingness to spend time in prayer with other council members for the purpose of growing together in love and trust and thereby becoming an example of unity and cooperation to the entire parish, and especially becoming a living sign of the presence of Christ in the parish community.

Members of the council recognize that Christ has called all to holiness. This ancient clarion call has been echoed in the documents of the Second Vatican Council. Parish pastoral council members have some knowledge of what it means to be Church today. To be Church means that all of God's people (Pope, bishops, priests, religious, laity) share the life of God through and in Christ and are guided by the Holy Spirit. It means speaking and listening to one another to discern what the Spirit is saying is necessary to meet the needs of our times and of our community.

Members of the council have some knowledge of the Vatican II documents – their purpose, spirit, direction, theology – or at least are open to learning about them. This is necessary if one recognizes that structural reforms without the corresponding spiritual renewal soon become empty shells. A background in the Vatican II documents will allow Gospel values and genuine Christian concerns to surface and challenge one's Christianity, preventing the councilors from becoming immersed in trivia.

Members of the council have a sense of mission. This implies:

- 1) an awareness of shared responsibility for the work of the church;
- 2) recognition of differing roles and a plurality of ministries within the Body of Christ;
- 3) recognition of the need to use the variety of talents and charisms for the building up of the Universal Church;
- 4) a sense of accountability.

A council member is willing to become considerably involved in the parish, in its life and activities. Council members must make a greater commitment in time and energy than attendance at monthly meetings. Council members are listening people (which is essential to the dialogue process) who are trying to discover the real issues and concerns.

Each member of the parish pastoral council is aware of offering a talent or skill to council ministry. Council members do research, background reading, attend workshops, and seminars, and lead their fellow council members through study sessions on various aspects of council ministry. They do their homework and attend council meetings well prepared to discuss the issues that are placed on the council agenda.

Section II – We, the Parish Pastoral Council

Council members are aware of enriching their skills of listening, facilitation, conflict management, etc. as necessary tools of the total communication that is essential to all councils.

Parish pastoral council members represent the total parish and must promote the whole mission of Christ. They cannot limit their concern to specific interests or groups such as religious education, school, or liturgy. When they sit as a council they are responsible for the total needs of the Universal Church as well as those of the parish.

Since parish pastoral council experience enlightens council members through extra study, discussion, and deliberation, members must use this broader vision when determining the direction of the parish through mission statement, goals, and objectives.

Understand Our Functions

To develop a simple parish mission statement in keeping with the overall Archdiocesan mission. (See Appendix A.)

To establish goals and objectives for the parish and priorities for their implementation.

To coordinate all parish-related activity and to ensure that the stated goals, objectives, and priorities are implemented and maintained.

To promote meaningful dialogue and decision making among the priests, religious, and laity in fulfilling the mission of Jesus.

To identify and encourage the use of the gifts and talents of the members of the parish.

To implement directives of the Ordinary of the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

Are Directed by the Church

All the members of the parish community are to share in the decision-making process through a broadly based and representative council. Each parish should have such a council formed according to these guidelines, established by the Ordinary, that guarantee openness, freedom of action, and due process.

Provide Direction and Formulate Policy

Universal Church...*Code of Canon Law* – Canon 536

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, over which the pastor 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."

Section II – We, the Parish Pastoral Council

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

Local Church

The norms for parish pastoral councils determined by the Ordinary of the Archdiocese of St. Louis:

It is the policy of the Archdiocese of St. Louis that a parish pastoral council is to be established and maintained in every parish to unite laity, religious, and clergy in a community of prayer, leadership, service, and pastoral action.

The parish pastoral council is at all times to be in communication with and sensitive to the parish members and their needs and concerns. The parish pastoral council develops and maintains a mission statement and engages in a continuous process of pastoral planning which takes into consideration all the needs of its own parishioners as well as the needs of the broader community and the world.

The revised *Code of Canon Law* states that the parish pastoral council “possesses a consultative vote only”; pastors, as members of the parish pastoral council, are expected to give careful consideration to the consultation of the parish pastoral council. This *Guidelines for the Ministry of Parish Pastoral Councils* calls for decisions to be made by the process of consensus. This process of consensus requires the action of the pastor since there can be no consensus without the agreement of the pastor. Unilateral decisions on either side are not appropriate to the Christian community. The new code makes that requirement clearer.

The *Code of Canon Law* stipulates that the pastor is to preside at the parish pastoral council. He does not have to do so formally in the council chairperson role. He presides:

- by making certain that the scope of the council’s concerns reflects the entire mission of the church.
- by enabling the council to build a community of faith in an atmosphere of trust among council members, making certain that they receive adequate resources and formation.
- by leading in formulating the council agenda.
- by sharing in the dialogue that leads to the formulation of policy.
- by serving as chief administrative officer of the parish.
- by executing the policies formulated by his decision with the council.

Section II – We, the Parish Pastoral Council

It is required that the pastor be a participating member of the parish pastoral council. Associate pastors in the parish may also be members. Priests, religious, and laity together form the council. It should be a rare occasion when the priest cannot be present at council meetings. The council, therefore, does not set parish policy independently of the pastor, nor does the pastor establish policy independently of the council.

The pastor has the responsibility to make certain that the decisions of the council are in accord with canon law, civil law, and archdiocesan policy. The council in this way reflects the working union of the parish with both the Archdiocese and Universal Church.

All council members are to be adequately prepared for their role as Christian leaders by attending and participating in workshops and programs that provide necessary spiritual formation, theological foundation, and skills required for assuming their responsibilities. (Examples—Paul VI Institute classes, parish pastoral council workshops) **(See Resources for information.)**

Consensus

The parish pastoral council is involved basically in setting the policies, objectives, and vision of the parish. Keeping in mind what has been previously stated in this chapter on the role of the pastor concerning decision-making, ideally consensus is achieved by a council when everyone can live with its decision.

The process of consensus, when used within a Christian setting, brings opportunities for spiritual growth. As baptized Catholics, members bring to the council meeting their own faith experiences and share these with the other members, thus building a trust and a bond that can continue to develop. The Holy Spirit, always present, calls the members to openness to God's love and inspiration and to one another. As each individual shares his/her Christ-life, the parish pastoral council truly grows into a community—a model for the entire parish.

Consensus is the community way of decision-making, placing emphasis on persons and on the growth of the group of people rather than simply on getting things done. Our society is geared toward efficiency and productivity, which often occur at the expense of people involved. The voting process, for example, places more emphasis on getting things done, rather than placing the value on building community where people and group development come first.

In consensus everyone has an opportunity for input, and everyone's input is taken seriously. The proposal is changed or at least could be changed as a result of the input. In fact, probably no one has achieved exactly what he or she wants. The final decision represents progress because the council can identify with the conclusion. **(See Appendix B for Sample of Consensus Process.)**

Section II – We, the Parish Pastoral Council

Parish Policies

A policy may be defined as a guide to discretionary action—narrow enough to give guidance and broad enough to leave room for creativity and flexibility in its implementation. A policy is future-oriented. Policies help to chart direction, identify a thrust, and express the shape, character, and uniqueness of a plan of action within the parish community.

The policies developed by a council apply to activities, projects, or policy changes that affect the parish as a whole, or more than one commission, or a significant number of parishioners. Before setting a policy, the council consults with the appropriate commission, staff, or ad hoc committee who will be involved in its implementation.

In setting parish policy, the council reflects on the total parish needs: spiritual, material, social, educational, emotional, cultural, etc. and how these needs are being met. The council reflects on what should be changed or developed in the parish to make it more in keeping with what God is calling it to be. This is one way the council is fulfilling its primary purpose: to make the Gospel a living reality and to set parish policy in keeping with the Gospel.

Delegate Authority

Once a policy has been determined by the council (in terms of what they want to accomplish or where they want to go), the implementation of such a policy becomes the responsibility of a commission, ad hoc committee, administrator, parish team or staff. The responsibility to implement policy carries with it the freedom to create plans of action and programs, or to establish regulations that will achieve the goals of the policy. The delegated commission, ad hoc committee, administrator, parish staff is accountable to the parish pastoral council to follow the spirit of the policy established by the council.

Most generally, the council will delegate authority for the implementation of its policies to its commissions. The commissions are a major part of the parish pastoral council structure – the working bodies of the council. They are the backbone of the council's effectiveness inasmuch as they are established to broaden the base for dialogue and for parishioner representation and participation in the mission of the Church.

Subsidiarity

In implementing parish policy, the council and its commissions follow the principle of subsidiarity, which simply means making decisions at the lowest possible level. For example, a judgment that affects only the workings of a particular commission and not more than one commission nor a significant number of parishioners, does not become the responsibility of the council. Likewise, the endless decisions involved in carrying out a policy established by the council are best left to the commissions or other delegated persons or committees (smaller groups with special competence and interest in a particular area/ministry/apostolate).

Section II – We, the Parish Pastoral Council

Council members sometimes feel they must make all the decisions. Council members are to be concerned with parish-wide issues and policies, and not involve themselves with minute details. The principle of subsidiarity allows the council and its committees to operate more effectively, because the council is not bogged down in administrative details, duplicating commission efforts and decisions.

Policy Making or Administrative?

Parish pastoral councils are policy-making groups. Council commissions implement policies of the parish pastoral council and may do some administrative tasks delegated to them. Council commissions may also set procedure in their area of concern using the principle of subsidiarity.

Some “Rules of Thumb”

| Policy Making: Council | Administrative: Staff Commissions |
|--|---|
| Issues that will arise in the future | Issues that arise in day-to-day operations |
| Ongoing issues | Issues that arise only once |
| More than one commission involved | Only one commission involved |
| Significant number of parishioners affected | Small group of parishioners affected |
| Establishes long-range policy to meet future-oriented goals | Deals with an immediate demand or need |
| Formulated only at council meetings (not by individual councilors) | Usually takes place outside of council meetings |
| Pastor as Policy Maker | Pastor as Administrator |
| Representative of the Archbishop and Church policy | Chief administrator of the parish, bears the ultimate accountability for the development of a faith community in the parish |
| As a member of the parish pastoral council shares policy-making role with council according to canon law and archdiocesan norm | Delegates responsibility for administration to staff, commissions, or individuals |

Set Parish Direction

Pastoral Planning

One of the parish pastoral council's major functions is pastoral planning. Pastoral planning is not just a means of operating efficiently but is a process of prayerful and reflective discernment of needs and commitments, which then receive administrative attention.

Mission Statement – Our Parish Identity

The pastoral planning process begins with the mission statement that defines the purpose of the parish.

The mission statement is founded on the community's past experience; it examines the present faith life and the reasons behind that life; it articulates a hopeful future. It can answer such questions as: Why do we exist? Who are we? Whom do we serve? How do we serve or hope to serve? What part of the universal mission do we hope to emphasize?

A mission statement can be compared to a tree. The mission itself is the trunk, which is not static, but gradually changes and grows out as each new layer of life experience is added to it. To stay healthy, it must be rooted solidly in the Gospels, in tradition, in the universal, and Archdiocesan Church. The roots provide the nurturing necessary for future growth.

The outgrowths of the mission are the limbs of worship, formation, service, and community.

All areas of parish life find their direction in the mission.

The mission statement must be owned by the parish at large. It should be celebrated at a liturgy and installed in a prominent place in the church as the visible marker of our journey.

To help the parish pastoral council find direction for the parish, the mission statement is kept current and in keeping with the current vision, needs of the parish, and Archdiocesan mission. **(See Appendix A.)** Therefore, the statement should be evaluated every three to five years and revised, when necessary, to make it better fit the parish.

All realistic planning flows directly from the mission statement.

Goals, Objectives, Implementation

While the mission statement sets the tone for all activity in a parish, the mission statement comes alive through implementation of objectives. The parish pastoral council, through its leadership, develops the goals and objectives, and retains an interest in them; and is responsible for evaluating them annually. The actual accomplishment of the goals – through objectives and implementation – is the responsibility of the parish pastoral council working through its commissions, the parish staff, ad hoc committees, and the parish at large.

Section II – We, the Parish Pastoral Council

Goals – Parish Direction

Each goal is rooted in and is derived from an aspect of the mission statement. It provides a broad, general direction for eventually achieving a desired result. Therefore, goals are usually in place for a stated time of three to five years.

Goals, as developed by the parish pastoral council in response to apparent parish needs, give direction, continuity, and unity to parish activity: They eliminate the problems of duplication of effort and fragmentation of resources.

After the goals have been developed, they should be put in order by the parish pastoral council according to the urgency of the parish need. This setting of priorities allows for the most effective use of personnel, time, and energies.

The parish pastoral council should limit itself to approximately five (5) goals at any one time. At the annual evaluation, the council may find that goals have been achieved. At this time, goals may be revised or new goals added.

Depending upon the nature and direction of a goal, more than one commission may be involved in its eventual fulfillment. Example: A goal that relates to religious education of adults may need the combined efforts of the Christian Formation, Christian Service, Worship, and Administration/Finance Commissions in its objectives and implementation.

Points to consider:

- Goals grow out of the application of the mission statement to the needs of the parish that are considered most apparent.
- Goals should be developed to respond to each need.
- Key questions:
 - What do we want our parish and ministries to look like?
 - What qualities do we want our parish and ministries to have at the end of the next three to five years?

Objectives – Parish Direction Becomes Specific

Objectives flow from and are based on a goal. They are further refinements for action. Each objective is designed to produce a single key result. Several objectives may be developed from each goal.

The parish pastoral council, working in small groups on one goal at a time, writes objectives. The lists of objectives are brought to the parish pastoral council. The council as a whole selects objectives for the current year.

Their action orientation is easily seen from the manner in which objectives are written: each one begins with the word “to” and is followed by an action verb.

Section II – We, the Parish Pastoral Council

Each objective provides the action's "what," and the "for whom," and "with whom," the action is to be done. The "how" is avoided in writing objectives.

An objective is set specifically within the time frame of the present year. If cost factors are a part of the action, they should be stipulated.

Care should be taken to write objectives clearly so that they will be easily understood by all who will participate in their implementation.

Ingredients of a Good Objective

TO
+
Action Word
+
Key Result
+
Target Date
+
Resources

Implementation – Parish Direction Becomes a Reality

This is the final step in the planning process. Implementation is "how" an objective will be accomplished.

Implementation may be one step or one specific action needed to bring about a desired result, or it may be a plan of action spelling out how an objective will be reached.

The commission assigned the responsibility for implementing an objective needs to analyze that objective and the resources available and determines how the objective can be most effectively implemented.

After decisions are made concerning place, materials, dates, training, publicity, personnel required, refreshments, any and all details necessary to produce a successful event or action, then tasks are assigned.

Results of the overall effort are recorded so that the objective – and eventually the goal – can be evaluated by the parish pastoral council.

Section II – We, the Parish Pastoral Council

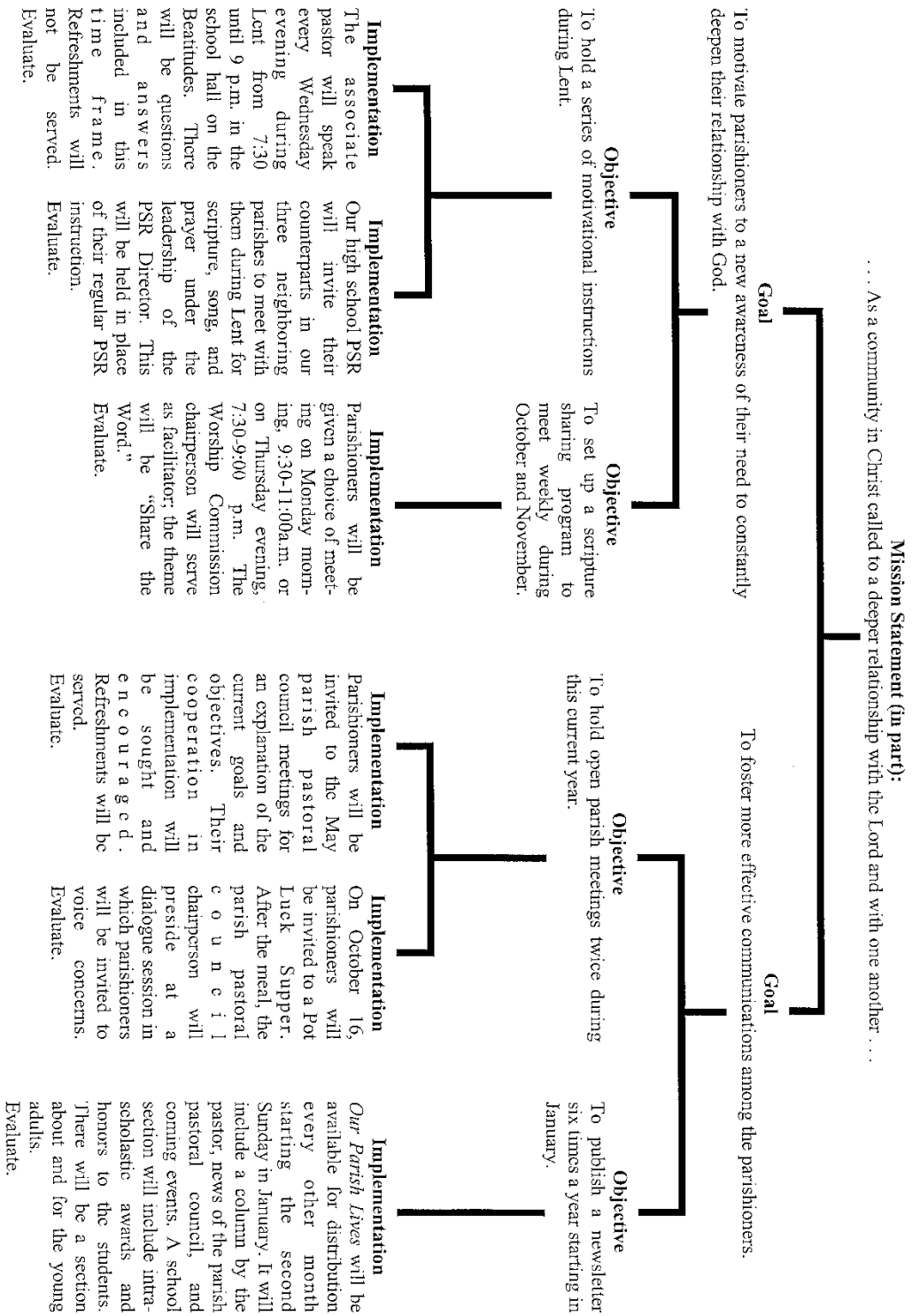
Evaluation

Some questions to consider when evaluating goals, objectives, and their implementation:

- Based on the outcomes that were chosen in the planning stage to show that the endeavor met the needs of the parishioners, how successful was the objective?
- What factors surfaced during the implementation of the objective that were not foreseen? How were these handled? Would the same objective have been established if these factors were anticipated?
- How realistic was the goal or objective?
- If the objectives have been met, how did they contribute to the building of the faith community of the parish?
- What events, situations, or factors should be noted when setting future objectives?
- What additional resources (people, funds, equipment, etc.) are needed to see that the endeavor is able to continue or to grow?

Flowchart Sample

Goals, Objectives and Implementation



Grow Through Spiritual Development

The ministry of parish pastoral councils draws us closer to God, helps us appreciate Him and His Church, and fosters a growth in our faith.

Our parish pastoral councils are a training ground for parish leaders: people who know why the parish exists and how to make Christ's presence felt in all areas of parish life.

The average parishioner does not acquire this information upon being called to the parish pastoral council. The parish pastoral council member needs to grow and develop into the role of a parish leader, into the work of God.

How can this be done?

- **Parish Pastoral Council Meeting**

The parish pastoral council meeting consists of three elements, each necessary for the growth of the person and the growth of the council as community. Through these three elements, the attitude of parish pastoral council becomes one of ministry. Parish pastoral council is not an organization; it is a service of ministry to the whole parish.

A parish pastoral council member looks for God's will, not his or her own. This means that prayerfulness is pervasive at a council meeting and does not just begin and end the meeting. Members pray for light to discern God's call, openness to accept it, and freedom to live it out.

- Prayer/Reflection/Scripture

Time limits are not important and it would benefit the council to have no ending on prayer, so that the presence of God would continue throughout the entire council meeting.

- Formation/Education

This area of concern has not been mentioned too often; it has been found through experience to be the missing link to successful council meetings. Leaders in the parish have to know what the Catholic Church, the bishops, and theologians are saying in today's world. But we also need to know about our history, our formal documents, canon law, and especially to know and understand a deeper sense of scripture and of the sacraments. We never stop learning and growing and, as council members, should be updated constantly.

- Business Meeting/Discussion/Decision

An agenda is essential to any well-planned meeting. Brainstorming, dialogue, and consensus are important and necessary to reach a clear, well thought out decision. All members must do their homework so as to bring to the meeting all aspects of any item on the agenda. All members must be heard. This preparation is part of the responsibility of being a parish pastoral council member.

Section II – We, the Parish Pastoral Council

- **Prayerful Discernment**

The primary call of parish pastoral council members is not to do more for the parish but rather to be more for the parish, to become the Christ-people to which their baptismal vows have committed them.

A parish pastoral council is made of members who are learning to discern God's call to them in their lives. Members of the council are people of prayer who see the value of private prayer for personal growth in Christ. When they come together as a group for parish pastoral council meetings, they bring with them that sensitive discernment.

They are gathered to discern God's call to the parish. They are not there to get their own way, have their pet ideas or projects accepted, feel power, or play politics. These attitudes have no place at a parish pastoral council meeting.

- **Days or Evenings of Recollection**

It is important for the council to come together at least once each year for the purpose of praying and reflecting on their ministry as council members and how they are helping to fulfill the mission of the parish: to make Christ present in and through the parishioners. We cannot lead anyone where we have not been ourselves.

Form Community Among Ourselves and Within Our Parish

Clearly, Jesus called His followers to be a community, rather than scattered individuals receiving His message and simply going their own way. When the apostles had a dispute, He brought them together. At the Last Supper He prayed frequently: "That all may be one as you, Father, are in me, and I in you." (John 17:21)

There are times when working together can be difficult, times when one would rather gravitate only toward his/her "kind of people." We do not have that luxury. We are called by Jesus to be a community. The people of God must journey together. There is room for young and old, rich and poor, liberal and conservative, because the Gospel is designed to bridge this diversity.

"There does not exist among you Jew or Greek, slave or freeman, male or female. All are one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:28) All parishioners then, as part of the mission given them by Jesus, are called to build their community into a group giving witness to unity and love.

Know the Hallmarks of Any Christian Community

- Founded on Gospel values.
- Sharing of joys and sorrows.
- Service to others.
- Members know one another.
- Real concern for one another.
- Members pray together.
- Members share their beliefs.
- Members reach out to others, especially those in need.
- Disagreements are dealt with openly.
- Decisions are made on the basis of Gospel values.
- A willingness to share everything.
- An openness to respond to future promptings and renewal by the Holy Spirit through personal prayer and continuing education.

Section III

Commissions of the Parish Pastoral Council

General Considerations

Commissions are established at the core of the parish pastoral council. They are a vehicle for participation, to enable as many people in the parish as possible to share their talents and faith.

Commissions, as part of the parish pastoral council ministry, foster a collaborative spirit and interdependent relationship among themselves. This interaction results in a coordinated effort in developing a total pastoral plan for the parish rather than fragmented efforts involving remotely related programs and activities.

Parish pastoral councils look to the commissions, for the most part, to carry out the goals and objectives set by the council. Commissions, to which anyone in the parish can belong, are open channels to the council. Commission plans and proposals to the council must help the parish move toward becoming the kind of Christian community outlined in the parish's mission statement. All (council, commissions, staff) must understand that they are on a spiritual journey and share a common vision together as they strive to make their mission statement a reality.

Commissions are an expression of our baptismal and conformational promises that provide avenues in which to fulfill these commitments. When we promised to share the life of Jesus at the time of baptism and confirmation, we agreed to carry on His ministries of priest, prophet and king – to pray, to teach, and to serve.

Recommended Commissions

Therefore, as a minimum, each parish pastoral council in the Archdiocese of St. Louis should establish commissions for the following areas of concern:

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Liturgy (or Worship) | To pray |
| Education (or Christian Formation) | To teach |
| Christian Service (or Social Justice Concerns) | To serve |
| Stewardship and Development | To Live |
| Administration/Finance | To support* |

**Canon 537 of the revised Code of Canon Law states: "In each parish there is to be a finance council which is governed, in addition to universal law, by norms issued by the diocesan bishop and in which the Christian faithful, selected according to these same norms, are to assist the pastor in the administration of the parish goods without prejudice to the prescript of Can. 532." The pastor's rights and duties as set forth in Canon 532 are to be observed, namely: "In all juridic affairs the pastor represents the parish according to the norm of law. He is to take care that the goods of the parish are administered according to the norm of Canons 1281-1288."*

While the revised *Code of Canon Law* does not specifically state that the finance council has to be part of the parish pastoral council, it does state that the norms, which regulate it, are issued by the diocesan bishop. Therefore, in harmony with this revised Code, in the Archdiocese of St. Louis, the finance council as referred to in Canon 537 functions as the Administration/Finance Commission with the parish pastoral council structure and norms as presented in these guidelines.

Optional Commissions

Parish ministries, committees, programs, etc. can be grouped under one of the four required commissions. However, other commissions may also be included depending on the size, personality and needs of individual parishes. Examples are: Family Life, Vocations, Social Activities, Youth, and Athletic Commissions.

The Role of Committees Within the Commissions

Commissions carry on their ministries by the formation of committees within their commissions. Committees bear the responsibility of one specific area of the commission's concern.

Examples of committees within commissions can be found on the chart "Recommended Commissions." (See page 43.)

Representatives of each committee are present at each commission meeting so that the total needs of each particular commission are met.

The Role of Commissions Within the Parish Pastoral Council

Commissions within the parish pastoral council serve the parish community by providing many ways in which the parishioners can live their baptismal promises by sharing their skills and gifts as a benefit to the community and its mission.

Fostering a Collaborative Spirit

The council has an important responsibility to foster a collaborative spirit and an interdependent relationship among the commissions. This interaction results in a **coordinated** effort in developing a total pastoral plan for the parish, the major task of the council, rather than a fragmented group of remotely related activities, which makes people sigh and comment that the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing.

Qualifications for Commission Membership

Commissions are open to anyone in the parish and qualifications should include an interest in and knowledge of the area of responsibility of the commission or a willingness to learn more; an understanding of how the commission's ministry relates to overall parish goals and the relationship of the commission to staff and council; a sense of the importance of searching out and responding to the needs of the people; and an ability to work well with

others. One source of members would be candidates who were not selected to serve on the council.

Organizing a Commission Structure

Good organization is no sin! Each commission of the council needs to consider the following elements when organizing: purpose, scope, structure, operation, relationship to council, and spiritual and skill formation.

- **Purpose**

Why does the commission exist? What will be its contribution to the people of the parish and to the larger community? The council needs to give clear direction to each of its commissions and make certain the commission understands its purpose, how it will be achieved, and how it relates to the broader mission of the parish.

- **Scope**

How does the commission interact and/or overlap with the other commissions? Commission members need to understand its relationship to the council, to other commissions, and to the committees/organizations whose work it is called to coordinate. The commission also needs a clear understanding of its limitations – for example, what are the requirements of civil law or archdiocesan policy that affect the commission's ministry?

- **Structure**

Based on the scope of the commission's work, committees or teams working under the commission's supervision are necessary; their responsibilities will need to be outlined. What other individuals or groups are available to help carry out the commission's ministry? Involvement of as many parishioners as possible is good stewardship of time and talents. A structure that encourages teamwork is essential to successful commission ministry. Professional staff hired by the parish to fulfill specific pastoral functions (e.g. Director of Liturgy, Director of Music, Director of Religious Education) are members of appropriate commissions as resources – to train and develop as many parishioners as possible. **They are not hired to replace the participation and involvement of parishioners but to expand and extend the various ministries to all in the parish.**

- **Operation**

Commissions are to meet regularly and follow a well-planned agenda. (Since commission members tend to be talented, knowledgeable types, it is sometimes difficult to keep them to an agenda!) The minutes of meetings form the basis for a monthly report to the council. Early in the year, the commission sets goals and objectives for its ministry, which relate to the parish mission statement and are in keeping with the goals and objectives of the parish pastoral council.

Commission members all have something to offer. They should be encouraged to think for themselves, to present alternatives, insights, and recommendations rather than problems, to be assertive and enthused, and to seek consensus in all commission deliberations.

Crucial to the operation of any commission is a clear idea of what resources – physical, financial, personnel – are available to accomplish its tasks. Otherwise, its planning could be unrealistic.

Commissions generally make decisions that involve only their commission's concerns, following the principle of subsidiarity, and they then inform the council of their decisions. Unless there is a serious reason, the council respects these decisions. Parish-wide concerns and concerns that involve two or more commissions are submitted to the council for consideration.

Regular communication with the parish forms the basis for commission program planning; surveys of time, talent and needs, whether written or verbal, are essential to the commission's planning. Elaborately planned programs can fail if this effort is unheeded; it is important to start where the people are, not where we think they should be.

- **Relationship to the Parish Pastoral Council**

Much of a commission's work is ongoing and is summarized in a regular report to the council that should include pertinent information about the commission's ongoing work and a rationale for any proposed future development of its ministry and for any proposal and recommendations. These reports are submitted to the council members prior to the agenda-planning meeting and items are placed on the agenda when necessary for council members.

If an idea for a program or a project to be undertaken by a commission would involve a major policy decision by the council (e.g., a substantial change in Mass schedules, the hiring of a youth minister, or the renovation of a convent into an adult formation center), the commission follows this procedure: it determines if the idea is feasible, consults with other appropriate commissions, considers alternatives, prepares a recommendation for the council (a proposal) and submits the proposal to the council for discernment. The proposal ought to include two or three alternatives from which the council may choose. If the council accepts the proposal, it is returned to the proper commission(s) for implementation. Any matters not sufficiently worked out to a decision stage should be referred again to the commission.

- **Formation**

Part of every commission meeting should be spent on the development of the commission members. This is accomplished through shared prayer, study, and reflection

on scripture and resource materials. An integral part of this formation is the time spent in dialogue that results from the reflection and study. Opportunities to have fun together, occasionally, also help build the commission into a small faith community.

The Role of the Chairperson

Each commission chooses its chairperson from the commission's membership. The chairperson of the commission does not pursue his/her personal objectives by giving speeches or dictating, but helps the commission come to appropriate conclusions by providing resource materials, etc. He/she also attempts to create an atmosphere of trust, openness and respect for all members' ideas and abilities.

The commissions of the parish pastoral council are the backbone of the council's effectiveness.

The commissions communicate on three levels in order to accomplish the work they undertake:

- The commission is the channel through which the parish pastoral council implements its policies; the parish pastoral council retains and exercises the right to entrust, affirm and review commission programs and activities.
- The commission is a channel through which the people of the parish make requests and/or observations known to the parish pastoral council.
- The commission maintains constant communication with the archdiocesan agency, committee, or commission that directly pertains to the area of responsibility of the parish pastoral council commission.

Recommended Commissions in All Parishes

Liturgy (or Worship) Commission

The liturgy commission of the parish pastoral council researches, initiates and coordinates those activities in the parish that pertain to the celebration of the liturgy of the Church and the spiritual growth of the members. Since the celebration of the liturgy is the heart of parish activity, it follows that worship be the major focus of this commission. However, other dimensions of the spiritual life of the Christian are not to be overlooked.

Liturgy is the public worship of the Church. According to the Vatican II *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, it "is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time, it is the font from which all her power flows." (Chapter 1, Paragraph 10)

Since Vatican II, the entire community has been given the responsibility for planning and implementing the liturgy that celebrates the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

“Since Christian worship, in which the common priesthood of the Christian faithful is carried out, is a work which proceeds from faith and is based on it, sacred ministers are to take care to arouse and enlighten this faith diligently, especially through the ministry of the word, which gives birth to and nourishes the faith.” (Canon No. 836)

“Liturgical actions are not private actions but celebrations of the Church itself which is the sacrament of unity, that is, a holy people gathered and ordered under the bishops. Liturgical actions therefore belong to the whole body of the Church and manifest and affect it; they touch its individual members in different ways, however, according to the diversity of orders, functions, and actual participation.” (Canon No. 837, #1)

Purpose

The overall purpose of the Liturgy Commission is to plan and provide for the spiritual development of each member of the community through liturgical celebrations. “A group of people gathered to celebrate, no matter where this community exists, will never be exactly the same as another community – even a neighboring parish. Each group has its individuality and uniqueness, almost like persons. It is always we who celebrate and the celebration must be ours.” (*Liturgy Committee Handbook*, The Liturgical Conference)

Functions

- To develop a faith community among the members of the commission.
- To set goals and objectives for the development of the spiritual life of the parish, in keeping with the mission of Christ and of the parish.
- To work closely with the parish staff in implementing liturgical norms of the universal church and policies of the Archdiocese of St. Louis.
- To plan, develop, and evaluate liturgy and spiritual development programs that will enable the entire parish to grow into a deeper relationship with Jesus.
- To analyze the liturgical needs of the parish community and to identify areas in need of development.
- To recommend appropriate architectural change in order to enhance the liturgical and sacramental life of the parish.
- To promote and implement such educational programs as preparation for the reception of the sacraments, training for ministerial roles in worship (lectors, extraordinary ministers, leaders of song and altar servers) and parish-wide liturgical information projects.

- To educate the members of the commission through study, prayer, and participation in workshops and seminars, and to encourage other parishioners to participate in these programs.
- To participate in the development and preparation of parish liturgies and paraliturgies.
- To work towards the development of liturgy teams that will plan Sunday liturgies, liturgies for special celebrations (such as Thanksgiving, Christmas season, Lenten season, Easter, etc.), and liturgies for specific groups in the parish: children, teenagers, families, senior citizens, etc.
- To prepare a budget for liturgical needs of the parish and submit it to the parish pastoral council, through the Administration/Finance Commission, for approval.
- To assist and coordinate the liturgies by other groups in the parish, if needed.
- To unify liturgical service in the parish so that readings, homilies, music, art, and petitions are coordinated.
- To work with parish musicians to aid in the integration of music into parish liturgy.
- To evaluate the progress the parish has made in the area of liturgy.
- To encourage participation in Archdiocesan wide liturgical celebrations.

Membership

- A priest representative is required at all meetings, because the priest is the official liturgist in the name of the Archbishop and the Church.
- Parishioners who are interested in the field of liturgy and worship.

(See chart on page 43 for full membership.)

(Recommended)

Christian Formation (or Education) Commission

The parish pastoral council, concerned with total parish ministry, addresses the broad area of total religious education (not only Catholic schools) through its Christian Formation Commission. “Rapid changes in society and the Church make adult catechesis especially important today. Adults need help in dealing with their problems and communicating their faith to the young. Adult catechesis is also relevant to the Church’s mission on behalf of justice, mercy, peace, and respect for human life – a mission that depends heavily upon

informed and motivated lay people. Adults need to learn and practice the Gospel demands of stewardship: God gives everyone a measure of personal time, talent, and treasure to use for His glory and the service of neighbor.” (No. 188, *National Catechetical Directory*)

Perhaps the greatest challenge of the parish pastoral council is to define and plan the educational mission of the parish. *To Teach as Jesus Did* presents the scope of the council’s concern.

“Education is one of the most important ways by which the Church fulfills its commitment to the dignity of the person and the building of community. Community is central to educational ministry both as a necessary condition and an ardently desired goal. The educational efforts of the Church must therefore be directed to forming persons-in-community, for the education of the individual Christian is important not only to his solitary destiny but also to the destinies of the many communities in which he lives.” (No. 13)

“The educational mission of the Church is an integrated ministry embracing three interlocking dimensions: the message revealed by God (didache) which the Church proclaims; fellowship in the life of the Holy Spirit (koinonia); service to the Christian community and the entire human community (diakonia). While these three essential elements can be separated for the sake of analysis, they are joined in the one educational ministry. Each educational program or institution under Church sponsorship is obliged to contribute in its own way to the realization of the threefold purpose within the total educational ministry.” (U.S. Bishops’ Pastoral, *To Teach as Jesus Did*, No. 14)

Religious education today is emphatically aware of the above. For these reasons, it sees no particular age level or type of person as the goal of its message. Today, religious education extends from “the cradle to the grave” – from children to the elderly.

Purpose

The primary role and mission of the Christian Formation Commission is to develop within the parish an understanding that the community as a whole has the responsibility for promoting the educational mission of the Church. The Christian Formation Commission embraces all the formal and informal programs in which the parish is involved in fulfilling its mission to bring the message of Jesus to the world.

The Christian Formation Commission has the responsibility of developing, promoting, and evaluating education programs, which answer educational needs that parishioners feel and express. It gives leadership to the parish’s efforts to move people beyond where they are to a deeper understanding and experience of faith. In cooperation with the pastor, the parish pastoral council, and other parish professionals in education, the Christian Formation Commission sets policy concerning education programs in the parish.

Functions

- “Educational needs must be clearly identified; goals and objectives must be established which are simultaneously realistic and creative; programs consistent with these needs and objectives must be designed carefully, conducted efficiently and evaluated honestly.” (*To Teach as Jesus Did*, No. 138)
- “Under the leadership of the Ordinary and his priests, planning and implementing the educational mission of the Church must involve the entire Catholic community. Representative structures and processes should be the normative means by which the community, particularly Catholic parents, addresses fundamental questions about educational needs, objectives, programs, and resources.” (*To Teach as Jesus Did*, No. 139)
- To make recommendations to the parish pastoral council regarding the total educational ministry of the parish: religious education for adults and children, family religious education programs, and liturgical programs (in cooperation with the respective commissions), and (in cooperation with the school board) the total ministry of the parish school.
- To determine the areas of educational strength in the parish and the areas in need of greater depth or development.
- To determine the policies and programs that will promote and support total parish religious education in all areas of the parish.
- To coordinate all parish educational activities.
- To work with the parish professional staff and volunteers to support parish educational programs.
- To evaluate parish educational policies and parish educational programs.
- To interpret and implement the policies of the Catholic Education Office as they pertain to the parish.
- To recommend policies related to the planning, operation, and maintenance of the education facilities and equipment of the parish (in cooperation with the school board and the Administration/Finance Commission).
- To act as liaison with the local and regional public and private schools.
- To prepare a budget for educational needs of the parish and submit it to the parish pastoral council through the Administration/Finance Commission for approval.

Section III – Commissions

- To understand the relationship of the parish pastoral council and the board of education. The parish pastoral council is concerned with total parish ministry and therefore, must embrace the broad area of total religious education (as stated in the preceding paragraphs) as the means of fulfilling its mission, goals, and objectives.

The consultative board of education works in the context of the parish's mission statement and parish policies which are established by the pastor and parish council. It is the responsibility of the board to bring to the attention of the pastoral council all those matters that are broader than the educational program for which the board is responsible. In the area of finance and in instances where building additions or renovations are involved, the board makes its recommendations to the finance committee of the pastoral council. The board should provide a regular means of communication with the parish pastoral council about educational programming, accomplishments and needs.

See *A Manual for Parish Boards of Education*, Archdiocese of St. Louis
Relationships with Other Organizations

- “Vocations is the fundamental problem of the Church.” (*Pope John Paul’s Homily at Second International Congress for Vocations, 1981*) “The duty of promoting vocations belongs to the whole Christian Community.” (*Conclusive Document on Vocations*)
- To encourage positive attitudes for all vocations – married, single, religious.
- To develop a strong educational program that will inform parishioners about general vocation awareness as well as religious vocation possibilities and opportunities for all ages of parishioners.
- To foster and encourage persons interested in a religious vocation/priesthood.

Membership

- A priest representative is welcome but not required.
- Parishioners who are interested in the field of religious education.

(See chart on page 43 for full membership.)

(Recommended)

Christian Service Commission (or Social Justice Concerns)

“Personal ministry and social justice ministry are not two options for the Church, but two essential and interdependent elements of one ministry. The purpose of social justice teaching in the Church is to provide a vision of what kind of society Christians ought to struggle to create; the task of social justice ministry is to give this vision concrete embodiment through various forms of Christian witness. Without vision we lack direction; without witness we lack credibility. Both vision and witness need to be cultivated and sustained as we move into the last segment of this century.” (Father J. Bryan Hehir, Ph.D., “Social Teaching and Social Ministry: The Recent Past and Immediate Future,” *Social Thought*, National Conference of Catholic Charities, Vol. VI (3), Summer, 1980.)

Every Christian is called to service, so it is important to understand that members of this commission are not responsible actually to do all the work but to seek out and involve others in actively accepting the responsibility of their baptism. The Christian Service Commission also supports those in the parish and archdiocesan community who are already involved in service, whether church-centered or in other areas. The Christian Service Commission is involved with both personal and social justice ministry.

Purpose

It is the purpose of the Christian Service Commission to promote and coordinate programs that will guarantee all God’s children in the worldwide community, in the local community, and especially within the parish boundaries, justice and charity in full measure. It has the responsibility of enabling members of the parish to respond to the social justice problems of today. It also concerns itself with the physical, mental, and emotional needs of the people of the parish, giving special care to the poor, the lonely, the aged, the oppressed, and minority groups.

The dignity of each person is central to Catholic social justice teaching, scripture and our faith tradition. The call to service challenges us to assure this dignity for all. Parish pastoral councils, through the Christian Service Commission, can integrate the work of service and justice into the life of our parishes. In order to give direction to its Christian Service Commission, the parish pastoral council must be informed about the social justice issues that affect our lives and how our faith tradition offers ways to respond to those issues.

Functions

The Christian Service Commission coordinates the work of justice and responds to needs through direct service, advocacy, empowerment, and education (social justice teaching).

- To give direct service by an immediate response to need (e.g. meal programs, etc.).

Section III – Commissions

- To be an advocate by speaking out for others who are unable to speak for themselves. We can advocate on an individual basis or as a member of organizations.
 - Consult with and participate in legislative action activities that seek justice for the oppressed.
 - Work to change city-county building codes to accommodate all levels of the physically disabled – and this includes the parish plant, etc.
- To empower people by teaching them skills and by convening groups to draw on their own resources and talents in order to develop and implement plans for solving personal and community problems.
- To develop a strong educational program that will inform parishioners about the human needs of people as well as educate them on social justice issues. Social justice teaching implements the justice dimension of our faith tradition (scripture, encyclicals, pastoral letters) into all areas of parish life.
- To identify, challenge, and change unjust systems which prevent all of God’s children from living a life of dignity or freedom.
- To develop a broad Christian Service action plan and assign programs to specific committees.
- To promote pro-life and quality-of-life activities.
- To teach that our roles in service are not confined to a one-to-one basis but also include participation in activities (i.e. voting, etc.) which attempt to Christianize our environment and protect the rights of the Church.
- To motivate all in the parish to learn to think globally and to act locally (i.e. To encourage individual tithing for parish needs and to promote the involvement of the total parish in parish-wide tithing for specific community and worldwide needs).
- To prepare a budget for the Christian service needs of the parish and submit it to the parish pastoral council, through the Administration/Finance Commission, for approval.

Membership

- A priest representative is welcome but not required.
- Parishioners who are interested in Christian Service and Social Justice.

(See chart on page 43 for full membership.)

(Recommended)

Stewardship and Development Commission

In their 1992 Pastoral Letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, the US Catholic Bishops clearly established the importance good stewardship plays in the overall mission and ministry of the parish community. They introduced stewardship by explaining, *"Disciples who practice stewardship recognize God as the origin of life, the giver of freedom, the source of all they have and are and will be. They are deeply aware of the truth that 'The Lord's are the earth and its fullness; the world and those who dwell in it.' (Ps 24:1) They know themselves to be recipients and caretakers of God's many gifts. They are grateful for what they have received and eager to cultivate their gifts out of love for God and one another."*

However, our US Catholic Bishops recognized that our modern materialistic culture has turned many away from a life of stewardship. They voiced their concern, *"...while many Catholics are generous in giving of themselves and their resources to the Church others do not respond to the needs in proportion to what they possess. The result now is a lack of resources, which seriously hampers the Church's ability to carry out its mission and obstructs people's growth as disciples."*

The conclusion of the pastoral letter carried a strong message for parish leadership. *"Parishioners must accept responsibility for their parishes and contribute generously – both money and personal service – to their programs and projects. The success or failure of parish programs, the vitality of parish life or its absence, the ability or inability of a parish to render needed services to its members and the community depend upon all."*

In 2002, ten years after the release of this landmark document, the Bishops again examined the message of their stewardship pastoral letter to determine if they needed to change their message in anyway. They voted to release the document again, exactly as they had in 1992, to re-emphasize the importance of stewardship in the life of a parish and in the life of the individual. The only change to the original document was a new preface, which strongly declared, *"Once one chooses to become a disciple of Jesus Christ, stewardship is not an option."* Thus, it is that stewardship is not an option for Parish Councils. Any organization or individual concerned with the healthy spiritual development of the parish community must understand, embrace, and teach good stewardship.

Purpose

The Stewardship and Development Commission is responsible for calling forth the resources – both personal and financial – that are necessary for a parish community to fulfill its mission and to carry out the work of Jesus Christ here on earth. The Commission fulfills this responsibility in two important ways: through teaching stewardship and practicing development.

Teaching stewardship means constantly reminding parishioners that each of us is called to live as God's stewards. Throughout sacred scripture we continually hear the three-fold message of stewardship.

- 1) Everything we are and everything we have is a gift from God. We are entrusted with these blessings primarily to help build up the kingdom of God.
- 2) We need to take time to be grateful to God for the many gifts He has given to us.
- 3) Once we spend time appreciating our gifts we begin to realize that God has given us more than enough. In fact, He has given us gifts to share. The gifts we share include our time, talent, and treasure.

When we teach the message of stewardship we encourage parishioners to be both faithful and generous in returning a portion of their time, talent, and treasure back to God.

Practicing development means putting into practice the good development techniques and procedures that all successful non-profit organizations use to encourage donors to become interested, involved and invested in the mission of the organization. Today, development is serious business. Throughout the St. Louis metropolitan region alone more than 8,000 organizations are recognized by the IRS as non-profits, meaning they are able to solicit funds and support. They solicit this support in very professional, compelling and well-researched ways. They make sure they clearly communicate their needs, their mission, and their accomplishments. They are abundantly gracious in their efforts to recognize and appreciate their donors. If our parishes do not invest the same efforts in cultivating their own donors they may soon discover that parishioners are making their charitable contributions to other organizations that show more interest in receiving and using their gifts.

Functions

- To regularly and consistently promote the stewardship message throughout the parish community.
- To plan for the parish's annual observance of Stewardship Awareness Sunday, either on the 3rd Sunday of September with the rest of the Archdiocesan community or at a time that best fits into the parish's calendar.
- To annually encourage parishioners to examine their financial giving and to commit to a generous amount that is in proportion to all the blessings that God has bestowed upon them.
- To plan regular opportunities – such as Festivals of Ministries and Time and Talent Catalogs – for parishioners to review the volunteer opportunities available in the parish and commit their own time and talent to help carry on the mission and ministry of the parish.

Section III – Commissions

- To evaluate and approve all parish fundraising activities ever conscious of the purpose of the activity, the mission of the parish, and the cry of our Lord, “...stop making my Father’s house a marketplace.” (John 2:16)
- To plan and carry out a program that would encourage parishioners to remember the parish through planned gifts including wills and bequests, gift annuities, stocks, life insurance gifts, and other forms of planned giving that, through tax advantages and other financial planning, can often be equally beneficial to the parish and the donor.
- To establish, maintain, and promote a parish endowment fund.
- To establish and oversee a memorial gift program for the parish.
- To work with the Administration/Finance Commission to release an Annual Stewardship Report to the parish which includes not only the financial report but also a report on all parish activities, accomplishments, and giving for the last year.
- To promote good communications in the parish, possibly through the web site, parish newsletter, informational displays, etc.
- To make sure that procedures are in place to properly recognize every financial gift made to the parish, including gifts made from wills and estates.
- To coordinate any appropriate appreciation activities such as an annual Mass of Appreciation, a Memorial Society, or a donor recognition display.
- To conduct any capital campaign that might be necessary in the parish.
- To annually conduct the Annual Catholic Appeal in the parish.
- To assist in carrying out any other Archdiocesan development effort that might require the support of the parish.
- To work with the school in identifying alums and conducting an annual appeal for the school, should this be helpful.
- To prepare a budget for the stewardship and development needs of the parish and submit it to the parish pastoral council, through the Administration/Finance Commission, for approval.

Membership

- Because stewardship and development deals both with the faith formation of the community and the commitment of the parish to use well the gifts entrusted into its care, the pastor should serve as a member of this commission.
- Parishioners who are interested in the fields of stewardship and development, deeply committed to their own stewardship and/or skilled in the areas of communications, marketing, development, or public relations.

(See chart on page 43 for full membership.)

(Recommended)

Administration and Finance Commission

The work of the Administration and Finance Commission is based on the concept of stewardship. The ministry of stewardship, to which we are all called, is the carrying out of the mission of Jesus.

The Administration and Finance Commission is an integral part of the parish pastoral council commission structure, sharing in the vision and mission of the parish. It works closely with and lends support to all the other commissions of the parish pastoral council.

Purpose

The Administration and Finance Commission works with the stewardship commission for the parish, giving all parishioners an opportunity to share time, talent, and treasure to serve the mission of the Church in the parish, to make recommendations to the council concerning all aspects of parish financial and budget matters, and to be concerned with the maintenance of parish property. This commission does not decide priorities for the parish – that is the responsibility of the council itself.

Functions

- In cooperation with the other commissions, to research, prepare and submit to the parish pastoral council for approval the annual parish budget for both operating and capital expenditures. The budget is based on the goals and objectives determined by the parish pastoral council as the council discerns the needs of the parishioners in the areas of liturgy, education, Christian service, etc.
- To periodically evaluate the functioning of the Administration and Finance Commission itself, as well as the various aspects of parish life, with an eye toward planning for the future. This evaluation should include where the money comes from and how it is spent. The figures in the financial report reflect how the parish

Section III – Commissions

understands its mission. Whether it is intended to be so or not, the parish budget is a proclamation of parish vision!

- To provide parishioners with periodic and annual reports on the financial position of the parish.
- To work with the Stewardship and Development Commission to coordinate all fundraising in the parish, emphasizing the biblical concept of stewardship: realizing that all that we have and are comes as a gift and that our only authentic response can be a thankful sharing of our time, talent, and treasure for the good of others.
- To review and approve all banking arrangements, capital expenditures and long-term contracts.
- To set up procedures for the counting of monies, for recording the monies received, and for the proper controls in the depositing of the monies.
- To recommend to the parish pastoral council that the purchase or transfer of property be in accordance with archdiocesan policy.
- To work with the Stewardship and Development Commission to encourage support of archdiocesan fundraising campaigns.
- To work with the Stewardship and Development Commission to encourage individual tithing for parish needs and to promote the involvement of the total parish in parish-wide tithing for specific community and worldwide needs.
- To conform to the archdiocesan parish accounting system.
- To periodically inspect all parish properties and recommend needed repairs, remodeling, and new construction according to priority.
- To write necessary specifications for desired repairs and have several contractors submit firm quotations.
- To recommend purchase of equipment, supplies, and qualified maintenance services.
- To help prepare guidelines concerning use of parish facilities.
- To help form policy regarding safety (ice and snow removal, fire hazards, playground conditions, etc.) and security. Inspect regularly for hazards. Study parish needs for heat, lighting, and air conditioning with the aim of conserving energy.

Section III – Commissions

- To maintain a complete set of architectural plans, drawings, specifications, etc., which cover all existing buildings and remodeling projects of the parish plant. Consult with Archdiocesan building Commission when developing plans for any extensive remodeling or building new facilities.
- To establish ad hoc committees as deemed necessary to fulfill the above functions or to explore new avenues of stewardship.

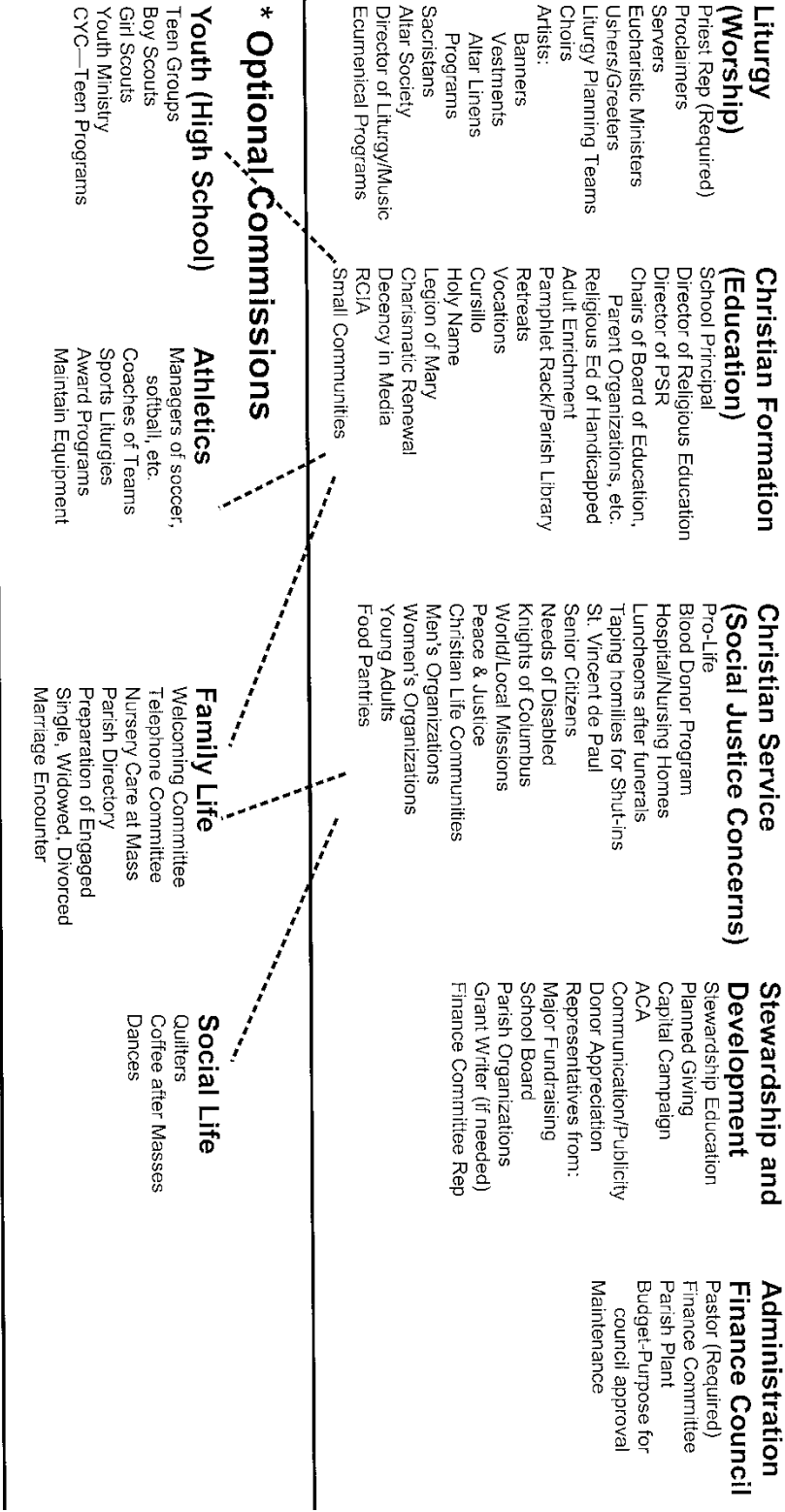
Membership

- The pastor is a required member, in accordance with Canon 532: “In all juridic affairs the pastor represents the parish according to the norm of law. He is to take care that the goods of the parish are administered according to the norm of Canon 1281-1288.” (cf. Canon 537)
- Parishioners who are knowledgeable or interested in the fields of administration, finance, construction, building trades, maintenance, etc.

(See chart on page 43 for full membership.)

Parish Council ———> Evangelization

Recommended Commissions



* If a parish does not desire (because of size or need) to have more than the recommended commissions, these committees, etc, under the optional commissions can be placed under the recommended commissions as indicated by the broken lines.

Section IV

Practical Helps

Selection Process for New Parish Pastoral Council Members

The following process should be used in the formation of a parish pastoral council.

On a given weekend at all Liturgies, cards are placed in the pews with pencils. Parishioners are asked to write the names of those in the parish they feel would be good parish council members. The pastor gives direction and allows time after Communion for everyone to fill out the cards. The cards are collected and given to the parish secretary. **(See Appendix C for Sample Pew Card.)**

The pastor writes a letter to each person whose name was suggested on the cards, inviting them to attend an orientation session. The orientation lasts for no more than an hour. They hear the purpose of a Parish Pastoral Council, and the Spirituality, and Practical elements of Councils. Time is given for questions and answers. At the end of the meeting, prospective council members are given a Discernment Process to take home to help them decide whether God is calling them to this ministry. They return the bottom portion of the paper with their signature one to two weeks after the meeting. **(See Appendix D for Discernment Process.)**

At a Sunday liturgy (example, the first Sunday of Advent) the names are chosen by lot (twelve is a good number for a Parish Pastoral Council). The pastor has the privilege of appointing members. If the pastor chooses to appoint members, ten are chosen and two appointed. The new parish pastoral council, along with the pastor, is encouraged to attend a full day workshop as soon as possible. Workshop information can be found on the Archdiocesan website: www.archstl.org/laityandfamilylife. Choose **Parish Pastoral Council** from menu on the left.

Structure of the Parish Pastoral Council

Structure

It is recommended that all parish pastoral councils in the St. Louis Archdiocese have the following structure:

- Chairperson – any member of the council selected by the council after the third meeting. (The previous chairperson chairs the first three meetings.)*
- Vice-Chairperson – any member of the council, to succeed to chairperson the following year. Selected by the council.*
- Secretary – any member of the council selected by parish pastoral council members.*

*** These officers may serve a period of one, two, or three years.**

- The pastor is a required member of the council.
- The permanent deacon and parish religious are optional but welcome members of the council.

Parish Pastoral Council Selections

- Entire parish membership (with optional minimum age) is eligible to nominate and eligible to serve on the council.
- Convenient opportunity is provided for the entire parish to participate in nominations.
- The council's guidelines clearly state:
 - Number of members to be selected and/or appointed by the Pastor
 - Each selected or appointed member will serve three consecutive years all beginning and ending on the same day.
 - Selection process
 - Vacancies will be filled from the names of parishioners nominated but not selected.

Ad Hoc Committees

The standing commissions will be able to handle the majority of issues raised by the council. When some special research or task is called for, the chairperson may appoint an ad hoc committee.

A council member is appointed chairperson of the committee. The responsibility of the committee is clearly formulated and a deadline for the completion of the task set.

Guidelines

A Parish Pastoral Council operates from a simple set of guidelines drafted by an ad hoc committee. These guidelines include the make-up and operation of the council allowing for change in structure and procedure when necessary. It is helpful to review the guidelines periodically.

(See Appendix E for Sample Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines.)

Installation of Parish Pastoral Councilors

Since the parish pastoral council is a ministry of service for the entire parish, an installation that introduces and blesses the new members is appropriate. The *Order for the Blessing of a Parish Council* is found in The Roman Ritual Book of Blessings. The ritual includes scripture, general intercessions, and a prayer of blessing for use within a Mass or a celebration of the Word of God. To help form community and bring new councilors into the group gracefully, plan simple refreshments to follow the liturgy for councilors, committee personnel, and parishioners.

Note: Symbolic gestures may be used (with explanation to community): Retiring council members lay hands on the heads of new members, or pass on to them a lighted candle, to show that we are to be light for one another. The gifts of bread and wine, as well as other symbolic gifts, can be brought up by the new members of the council, representing the congregation. A special council banner may be designed and used.

(See Appendix F for Ceremony of Gratitude for Out Going Members.)

Meetings of the Parish Pastoral Council

Parish Pastoral Council meetings are generally held monthly. Each meeting lasts approximately two hours. A thoughtfully prepared agenda will maximize the use of time. The agenda is sent to all council members well in advance of the meeting to allow thought on each point to be discussed. (Parish Pastoral Council guidelines determine when the agenda is prepared and sent to council members.)

Planning An Agenda

An agenda-planning meeting is held at least two weeks in advance of the parish pastoral council monthly meeting.

Who plans the agenda? It is required that the pastor be present. The chairperson and co-chairperson, along with the secretary and one other alternating person from the council make up the committee.

All of the commissions of the parish send in their reports before the agenda-planning meeting. These reports, along with the thoughts and plans of the agenda planning committee, help make up the completed agenda.

This agenda is sent to all members of the council one-week before the scheduled meeting along with any pertinent information needed for the meeting.

Parish Pastoral Council Agenda Meeting

What makes a parish pastoral council meeting effective?

1. Know our *mission*
2. A well thought out *agenda*
3. A *chairperson* who will lead us

The chairperson facilitates the meetings, striving for consensus.

The order of business for regular meetings includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Gathering
- Prayer
- Formation
- Decision Items
- Discussion Items
- Pastor's Time
- Social Time

Components of a Parish Pastoral Council Meeting

Gathering – At the beginning of the meeting, taking time to catch up with one another is one tool for building a faith community.

Section IV – Practical Helps – Meetings

Prayer –Prayer can be more meaningful when we know one another’s needs, family, joys, and sorrows.

Formation – Time is spent in some kind of formation for all the council members: community building; faith sharing (scripture); and learning more about our religion. A study of the *Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines*, books, tapes, videos are sources that can be used for this portion of the meeting. Speakers are excellent for topics pertinent to Parish Councils. Reading and reflecting on the following Sunday’s readings or reading a section from a spiritual book (e.g. Ronald Rolheiser’s The Holy Longing) and reflecting on what is read is one way of offering formation.

All and any item placed on the agenda will be placed in the **Discussion** section first. It can stay in that section several months. When ready, the item moves to the **Decision** section.

Decision Items – Items ready for a decision (e.g. items previously discussed, minutes to be approved or changed). All decisions are done by consensus.

Discussion Items – All items that require discussion are placed in this time slot first. These items are moved to the decision time slot after the council has discussed and received as much information as necessary.

Pastor’s Time – Numerous administrative tasks have taken place since the last council meeting and may need to be addressed at this time.

Social Time – Allowance for socializing and light refreshment

Members of the council take turns preparing Prayer, Formation and Social Time.

Principles of an Effective Parish Pastoral Council Meeting

Creating an Atmosphere of Community

- Begin and end on time
- Comfortable seating conducive to good sharing
- An opening question designed to encourage each member to participate (example, “What has happened with you since the last time we were together that you would like us to know about?”)
- Prayer—a scripture reading, meditation, or spontaneous prayer that incorporates the needs, joys, and sorrows of those present
- Formation experience—provided through excerpts from books, tapes, or videos that focus on faith development
- A break with refreshments available
- Summary of Meeting
- Time for each member to reflect on meeting. Allowing members time to express feelings and resolve them, reduces occurrence of parking lot meetings where the agenda will be continued to the detriment of the council.

Environment

- Some councils set aside a special room for their meetings.
- Good lighting and ventilation

Full Participation

- Each member comes prepared to discuss items on agenda
- Ability to listen and understand one another’s opinions
- Development of consensus rather than win-lose.

Accurate Reporting

- Minutes of each meeting recorded
- Each member is provided a copy of previous month’s minutes with the agenda for the next meeting.

Ongoing Assessment

- Review past year’s agenda
- Which items were the responsibility of the council
- Which items were extras and did not relate to council responsibility
- Did meetings create more rules and regulations?
- Did they help council members and members of parish to achieve the mission of the parish?
- Did council members communicate all pertinent council information to the commissions?

Building a Faith Community

With Council Members

Parish pastoral council members, in developing a faith community, realize that communication within a parish begins with them – the core of the parish. God looks to those who serve in the ministry of the parish pastoral council to lead the way. As the members of the parish pastoral council develop into a faith community, they become more effective as a core group.

Potluck Dinner

Some councils arrange a simple informal dinner at the beginning of each council year, welcoming the new members and their spouses and thanking those who have completed their service on the council. The dinner can be held at the home of a council member or at the parish, and spouses are invited, along with the pastor, associates, etc. The main purpose is to get to know one another better. This serves to break the ice and helps to create a foundation for easy discussion in future council meetings.

Agenda Planning Meeting

Agenda planning is another opportunity to build community. If possible, meeting for a meal before planning an agenda provides the opening for visiting and reconnecting with one another. Doing this allows the business portion of the meeting to be more efficient.

Retreat or Day of Recollection

A retreat day or day of reflection for all council members (newly elected and those retiring) is a good beginning for new members. The most meaningful ones are planned by the council members themselves or a committee appointed by the council. The planning committee chooses the format, discussion leaders, spiritual moderators and any other items pertinent to the day.

Spouses usually join the council members for Mass at the end of the day. This is an excellent time for those serving on a council to step back and take a good look at what it means to work in the ministry of the parish pastoral council, to ask God to guide the council in determining the needs of the parish, and to enrich one another in group prayer.

Parish pastoral councils that take the time and make the effort to spend a day in prayer and reflection early in the council year find that they establish a rapport with one another that helps in creating openness at council meetings.

Orientation

New members elected to the council receive instruction concerning the purpose and function of a parish pastoral council. This can be done during a day of discernment or as continuing formation during council meetings. All new members receive a *Guidelines for the Ministry of Parish Pastoral Councils* before the orientation. Guidelines are available online (see page 75).

Section IV – Practical Helps – Building Faith Community

Email

Committee reports to parish council can be emailed to each council member. Almost everyone has email; for the few who do not, a printed copy of the email can be mailed to them. Council members read the reports before the meeting and are prepared to discuss or accept the reports. This facilitates the report process.

With Parishioners

The parish pastoral council meets monthly, formulating plans, setting goals and evaluating projects. The results of these meetings can be communicated to the parishioners in several ways.

Sunday Bulletin

Publish major issues discussed at the last meeting and announce the upcoming meeting in the Sunday bulletin. This information could also be posted on your website.

Blessing for Parish Pastoral Council

A formal ceremony for all members of the parish pastoral council is one way of connecting the council and the parish community. Many parishes have developed very beautiful ceremonies, which are usually held during a weekend liturgy shortly after the parish pastoral council selection process.

Bulletin Board

Develop a parish pastoral council bulletin board somewhere accessible in the church, vestibule, etc. It does not have to be elaborate. It can be a section of an existing board with the caption *Your Parish Pastoral Council* (or something similar) across the top. Include names and possibly photographs of council members, areas of responsibility, financial statements, annual budget, minutes. A bulletin board with this basic information lets the parishioners know that the council is present, alive, and interested in sharing information with the parish. Publish on your website.

Parish Letters

Creating a parish newsletter focused on parish activities and highlighting a particular aspect of the Parish Pastoral Council is a good way of unifying the parish into a community of faith. Publish on your website.

General Assembly/Town Hall

General parish assembly meetings, held at a time determined by the parish pastoral council, contribute to the development of community with parishioners. All members of the parish are encouraged to attend and to participate in these meetings.

A Model for Parish Planning

The parish, as a community of believers, comes together to worship, to witness to their faith in Jesus, and to serve others. Each parish chooses a planning method that is best for its own needs. The following is one option:

- **Research and Data Gathering**

Through a regular survey/census process, identify the needs and concerns of people in the parish and neighborhood and the situations that give rise to those needs. Interview key community representatives and parish leaders. (This will also help to reveal resources present in the community.)

- **Mission (or Covenant) Statement**

Using what is learned about the parish community, the parish pastoral council develops a draft of a mission or covenant statement – a statement of broad direction that expresses the spiritual purpose of the community and its commitment to meet the needs and concerns of its people. The parish mission statement is derived from the Archdiocesan mission statement. **(See Appendix A.)** Since the parish is a part of the larger Church the goals and vision of the Archdiocese are taken into consideration. (Such a statement is best developed in the prayerful context of a day of spiritual renewal for parish leaders.) In this statement, a consensus on the functions of the parish is expressed, and relationships between the various groups and individuals in the parish are clarified. The draft of the mission statement is presented to the parish as a whole at a town hall meeting, and their input solicited.

(See Appendix G for Developing a Parish Mission Statement.)

- **Determining Priorities**

The council meets for a day or evening of planning. After prayer and reflection on the mission statement, council members may utilize the brainstorming method, stating their ideas for the parish for the coming year as succinctly as possible. The ideas are listed in full view of the total group. They are all accepted and recorded without judgment or discussion (a good supply of newsprint is necessary). Everyone offers insights without fear of intimidation.

- **Action Plan**

After a break, the group is then broken into discussion groups and asked to list ideas in order of priority and restate them as goals. Under each goal, objectives are set which can feasibly be accomplished in a year's time. All available resources (committees, organizations, staff, parish volunteers, etc.) are considered, and responsibilities for the implementation of each objective are assigned.

When the large group reassembles, the goals and objectives of the smaller groups are presented (many will probably coincide) and the council prayerfully reflects on them. The council then works toward consensus on an appropriate number of goals (not too

Section IV – Practical Helps – Model for Parish Planning

many) and objectives for the coming year (or develops a three to five year plan, with yearly objectives). Responsibilities for the implementation of each objective are determined, based on the available resources.

The action plan is then publicized to the parish as a whole, and presented to the council committees and/or organizations for implementation.

- **Evaluation**

Feedback on the action plan is gathered and evaluated (at least once a year; perhaps more often). Some questions to assist in the evaluation process: What were the strengths and weaknesses in the plan? Did everyone carry out his/her responsibilities – if not, why not? What groups/organizations/committees were important in implementing the objectives? Would parish renewal be better served if a group reduced its activities/programs, combined with another group, or even phased itself out altogether?

All of the steps outlined above are important in parish planning; all who participate are partners in the decision-making process for the parish.

Consensus

Parish pastoral council decisions are made by prayerful consensus. The process of consensus promotes good decisions and builds community. Prayer is a very real way of effectively preparing for meeting and sharing together. The addition of prayer to consensus seeking deepens our commitment to the group and God's will.

The Consensus Method consists of four steps:

Preparation

Each member receives the agenda and any other pertinent information in advance of the meeting. Council members read this information and come to the meeting prepared to discuss the materials.

Input

The item that the group wishes to put through consensus (not all items need be) is presented by the chairperson. All opinions are surveyed. Each member is asked to briefly speak indicating if they are for or against the issue. At this time, they may ask for clarification or add information. It is the responsibility of the chairperson to disallow discussion at this stage, to prevent a member from speaking too long and to keep the speakers on the topic of discussion.

Discussion

At this stage open debate takes place. A time limit may be predetermined. During the discussion members may speak more than once, but must be concise and should not just reiterate points for emphasis.

Synthesis

The chairperson concludes the discussion phase and offers what is perceived to be a reasonable solution that flows from the foregoing process. If there is agreement among the members that the synthesis is representative and is one that they can live with, consensus is reached. If there is no consensus, then the chairperson may refer the item to the appropriate commission for further study.

(See Appendix B for Sample of Consensus process.)

Glossary

Glossary of Terms

Ad hoc Committee

A committee established for a specific purpose to be completed in a designated period of time.

Commission

A group of persons appointed by the parish pastoral council or elected by parishioners to carry out specific objectives in keeping with parish policies.

Committee

A subgroup of a commission, charged with the responsibility for a specific area within the commission's mandate.

Consensus

A decision made after all aspects of the issue and possible alternatives have been heard and dealt with. As a result, all members feel that the group choice made is acceptable under the circumstances. Group decisions made by consensus tend to have higher group commitment and longevity than other types.

Diocese

A geographic area of the Church, governed by a bishop and embracing a number of parishes.

Evangelization

The activity whereby the Church proclaims the Gospel in the world today so that the faith of all persons may be aroused, may unfold, and may grow. A parish activity that serves to instill or strengthen faith among members and non-members.

Goal

The desired result to be obtained when planning is completed. It can be a desired state, a desired future condition, or a desired norm.

Mission Statement

A broad statement, which is applicable in our time, of overall direction and purpose. A unifying statement of why we, as a unique group, exist; it presents an ideal. Goal setting flows from the statement of mission.

Objective

The main intermediate result needed to obtain a goal. Besides describing a result, an objective should also specify *what* is to be done, *who* is to do it, and *when* it is to be completed.

Parish

That unit of God's family which fulfills within its community the universal mission of the Church: proclaiming the Word, celebrating the liturgy, serving God's people and building the community.

Parish Pastoral Council

A group of people representing all facets of the parish, elected, called forth and commissioned to join together in striving to be a community of faith and to serve the parish in the ministry of leadership. The parish pastoral council works in cooperation with the pastor and the total parish in setting policy and establishing goals, objectives and action plans.

Pastoral Team

That group of persons in parish ministry on a day-to-day basis, who form themselves into a community of prayer, openness, and trust in order to serve the parish in cooperation with the parish pastoral council.

Policy

A definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in the light of given circumstances. The purpose of the policy is to guide and determine present and future decisions. Policymaking is primarily the responsibility of the parish pastoral council.

Priority

A preferential ranking of specific pastoral needs. Giving a certain need high priority usually means that it will get swift and decisive action.

Religious

Term used to designate those men and women who have committed themselves by vow to the service of the Church.

Shared Responsibility

The principle that each member of the Church has the right and duty to assist the Church, offering time and talent, so that its mission among men will become more effective. The principle of shared responsibility received great emphasis during the Second Vatican Council. In our time, the parish pastoral council is the primary structure in the American Church for making shared responsibility a practical reality.

Subsidiarity

A principle of authority whereby decisions are entrusted to the appropriate body and not assumed by a higher authority. A corollary to this principle would be that before making the final decision, a policy-making body would generally consult those who will implement the policy. Thus, in practice, a parish pastoral council will not make decisions that properly belong to its commissions, and a commission will not make decisions that properly belong to its committees. In all cases, however, the parish pastoral council retains and exercises the right to review decisions made by commissions or committees. It must be understood that set policies and procedures cannot be bypassed at any level. Decisions on all levels must be in line with diocesan policies and guidelines.

Resources

Books (specifically for parish council formation and development)

Eimer, Robert D., and O'Malley, Sarah A. *Prayer Services for Parish Councils*. Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1995.

Fischer, Mark F. *Four Ways to Build More Effective Parish Councils*. Twenty-Third Publications, PO Box 180, Mystic, CT 06355. 2002. ISBN: 1-58595-194-3 *

Whether you have a council now or are starting from scratch, *Four Ways to Build More Effective Parish Councils* is full of practical ideas to help you build and strengthen your council and get the most benefit from your pastoral planning efforts. It will help you set a strong purpose for your council, choose councilors wisely, foster a rich council spirituality, develop a meaningful pastoral plan, get the whole parish involved in the planning process, use councils effectively in cluster situations, build strong councils in a multicultural parish, and strengthen relationships between pastor and council members.

Fischer, Mark F. *Pastoral Councils in Today's Catholic Parish*. Twenty-Third Publications, PO Box 180, Mystic, CT 06355, 2001. ISBN: 1-58595-168-4 *

This is a perfect book for thoughtful members of parish councils and for the pastors who work with them. Mark Fischer knows more about parish pastoral councils than anyone else in the United States, and he has written an excellent and very readable book about them. His book is rich in both practice and in theory, It combines careful theology and history with practical wisdom.

Fritz, Patricia, OSF. *We Praise You, O Lord*. Paulist Press, 545 Island Rd., Ramsey, NJ 07446, 1982. ISBN: 0-8091-2518-8 *

An excellent collection of fifteen prayer services. This is an enabling tool; it provides models for creating effective group prayer services. Prepared to help parish councils, these services offer help to all parish groups to pray spontaneously, aloud and together when they meet. Also included is a section on the preparation of the environment and ways to plan for praying together.

Gordon, Dr. Thomas. *Leader Effectiveness Training*. (L.E.T. Revised) Perigee Book, published by Berkley Publishing Group. A division of Penguin Putnam Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014, 2001. ISBN-13: 978-0399527135

Offers problem-solving techniques and communication skills helpful in getting people to work with you and not just for you; resolving conflicts between individuals and the

organization; making meetings more productive and enjoyable; evaluating others without damaging their self-esteem. These are a few of the areas covered in this practical book that is centered on the concept of tapping hidden talent in your group.

Gubish, Mary Ann. *Revisioning the Parish Pastoral Council: A Workbook*. Paulist Press, 545 Island Rd., Ramsey, NY 07446, www.paulistpress.com, 2001.
ISBN: 0-8091-3957-X

Hermann, MSBT, ACSW, Sr. Brenda And Gaston, MA, STL, Msgr. James T. *Build a Life-Giving Parish: The Gift of Counsel in the Modern World*. Ligouri Publications, Ligouri, MO 63057, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-7648-1891-2 *

Hintz, Debra. *Prayer Service for Parish Meetings*. Twenty-third Publications, P.O. Box 180, West Mystic, CT 06355, 1983.

Another excellent resource for preparing prayer services for parish councils. A different format from *We Praise You, O Lord*, but also designed to enable parish councilors and others to make these forty prayer services more appropriate and meaningful for their specific gatherings.

Leas, Speed B. *Discover Your Conflict Management Style*. Alban Institute, Mt. St. Alban, Washington, D.C. 20016, 1998. ISBN-13: 978-1566991841

This is an instrument that could be used by individuals on councils, committees or in other groups for giving and receiving feedback on how members handle conflict. It is a learning instrument, not a resource to use in a conflict. Covers two main areas: 1) to help people become aware of the range of appropriate conflict strategies available to them and when it's fitting to use each; and 2) to help people become aware of their own preferred styles and to reflect on other possible styles they might choose to use more frequently. The section on persuasion is most helpful.

* **This book is available in the Office of Laity and Family Life to borrow.**

Books (background reading pertaining to the ministry of the Church and of the parish)

Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity. From the Vatican II Documents, Pauline Books & Media. 1998, ISBN: 1-55586-005-2 *

Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States, United States Council of Catholic Bishops, 800-235-8722, www.catholicevangelization.org, 2002, ISBN: 0-0631517-9-7 *

The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community. A Vatican Document – Congregation for the Clergy, Pauline Books & Media, 2002. ISBN: 0-8198-5942-7 *

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults. USCCB Publishing, 2006.*

Each chapter in the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults includes stories, doctrine, reflection, quotations, discussion questions, and prayer to lead the reader to a deepening faith. The United States Catholic Catechism for Adults is an excellent resource for preparation of catechumens in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and for ongoing catechesis

Clark, Stephen B. *Building Christian Communities: Strategy for Renewing the Church.* Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, IN 46556, 1975.

This book takes seriously the needs of the Church in an increasingly un-Christian society. It sees the Church suffering in the midst of change because of no overall plan of renewal. It sets up principles of action, gives overall direction, and in general terms, tells how to achieve the goal, ideal and vision that Christ himself has set before the Church. Special emphasis is placed on the intelligent use and respiritualization of social movements already existing within the Church organizational structure. The main theme is the building of Christ-centered communities by an “environmental” approach that permits the development of a fully Christian life in all its members, and fosters the growth of a naturally emergent leadership from within.

Covey, Stephen R. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.* Free Press, 1989.

Downs, Thomas. *The Parish as Learning Community: Modeling for Parish & Adult Growth.* Paulist Press, 545 Island Road, Ramsey, NJ 07446, 1979.

Dr. Downs examines the local church as the place where life-long learning takes place. He demonstrates the interdependence of the learning adult and the growing parish. Throughout the book, Dr. Downs emphasizes the parish as a role model for the adults that form that community. He presents several “models” for parishes to consider – based on their needs and personalities. He stresses that in order to live and worship in a

modern age and culture we need an understanding of human skills so that we can adapt to the human and spiritual changes that are occurring. He shows that “change is to learn, as to learn is to change.”

Dulles, Avery. *Models of the Church*. Image Books, 2002. ISBN: 0-385-13368-5*

Drummey, James J. *Catholic Replies: Answers to Over 800 of the Most Often Asked Questions about Religious and Moral Issues*. C. R. Publications, 1995.

Selections from Drummey’s column, Catholic Replies, which appeared in the Catholic weekly, the Wanderer since 1991 on such topics as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Sacred Scripture, Church and Papacy, Salvation and Ecumenism, Catholic Prayers and Practices, Mary, Angels, and the Saints, The Last Things, The Sacraments, The Holy Eucharist, The Sacred Liturgy, Christian Marriage, On Human Life, and Christian Morality.

Fenhagen, James C. *Mutual Ministry: New Vitality for the Local Church*. Harper Collins Publishers, 1986.

Presents an altogether new approach to the problems of ministry in the local church and some insights into the changing needs of both clergy and laity today. It invites us to take time to look at the vision and the promise of the Church from inside out rather than from outside in. The insistent emergence of the laity, for example, is not regarded as revolutionary opposition to time-honored tradition, but as a genuine return to early Christianity—to the first “harmonious community” of Christians.

Fischer, Mark F. *I Like Being in Parish Ministry: Pastoral Council*. Twenty-Third Publications, PO Box 180, Mystic, CT 06355, 2001. ISBN: 1-58595-176-5*

Flannery, Austin, OP, Editor. *Vatican Council II; The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, 1991 and *Vatican Council II: More Post Conciliar Documents*, 1999. Costello Publishing Co., Inc., P.O. Box 9, Northport, NY 11768.*

The Forward in the second volume summarizes the importance of both of these books: “It is our estimation that these works are major reference works for our time and that they are deserving of a place in the libraries of all who labor for the Lord with fidelity and love.” (Timothy Cardinal Manning, Archbishop of Los Angeles). The implementation of the documents and directives of the Second Vatican Council depends to a large extent on the direction given to us by official, post conciliar documents. The first volume begins this function by presenting the sixteen documents of the Council and the most important documents of the following decade in an easy-referenced, understandable translation. Volume II continues to offer direction with an extensive collection of official documents that carries up to the present time.

Howes, Robert G. *Parish Planning: A Practical Guide to Shared Responsibility*. Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1994. ISBN: 0-8146-2165-1

Huebsch, Bill, *Dreams and Visions: Pastoral Planning for Lifelong Faith Formation*. Twenty-Third Publications, P O Box 180, Mystic, CT 06355, 2007, ISBN: 978-1-58595-638-8 *

Dreams and Visions offers a strong plan of formation for the whole community with the goal of helping all parishioners turn their hearts so fully toward Christ that a fire is lit in the heart of the parish itself. Highly recommended for all pastors, parish teams, DREs, and parish ministers.

Olsen, Charles M. *Transforming Church Boards into Communities of Spiritual Leaders*, Alban Institute, 1995. ISBN: 1-56699-148-X

Papesh, Michael L., *Good News Parish Leadership : Trust Building Guidelines, Tools, and Ideas*, Twenty - Third Publications, P O Box 180, Mystic, CT 06355, 2008
ISBN: 978-1-58595-705-7

Roberto, John with Martineau, Mariette. *Generations of Faith: Lifelong Faith Formation for the Whole Parish Community*. (with CD-ROM) Twenty-Third Publications, PO Box 180, Mystic, CT 06355, 2005.

This book provides the practical tools to implement the process of lifelong faith formation for parish staff and faith formation leaders. It also offers the means necessary for designing intergenerational learning experiences, ideas for household faith formation, and much more.

Shaw, Russell. *Our Sunday Visitor's Encyclopedia of Catholic Doctrine*. Our Sunday Visitor, 1998.

This carefully researched compendium covers virtually every aspect of the Catholic Faith contained in the Catechism, providing important historical background and pastoral insights on nearly four hundred topics.

Smith, Jim, *Welcome the People! Ways to Gather and Nourish Adult Catholics*, Twenty-Third Publications, P O Box 180, Mystic, CT 06355, 2008. ISBN: 978-1-58595-707-1 *

Author Jim Smith offers what parishes need to breath new life into parish faith formation gatherings for adults. It offers an uncomplicated process for action and renewed faith. Each chapter includes exercises to keep parish leaders, ministers, and staffs fired up about faith formation. They invite the leaders to imagine, to dream to attend to their own souls, in addition to coming up with practical ideas for practical action.

Whitehead, Evelyn, Editor. *The Parish in Community and Ministry*. Paulist Press, Island Road, Ramsey, NJ 07446, 1978.

Bishop Ottenweller, at the 1975 meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, urged that renewed energy be focused on issues of parish life and ministry. "I see the parish as the key to renewal in the Church—both the crisis and the challenge lie in the parish," he declared. This volume takes up the invitation, the challenge, of Bishop Ottenweller. It examines several background issues that must be faced as we move toward a clearer understanding of the possibility of the parish in the context of the Christian life in the future. It focuses on three themes, discussing these from several points of view – the mission, the community and the ministry of the parish.

Wiest, Jeanne. *Rooted in Christ: 12 Faith Formation Sessions for Adults*. Twenty-Third Publications, PO Box 180, Mystic, CT 06355, 2005. ISBN: 1-58595-330-X *

Here Jeanne Wiest equates growing in faith with being rooted in Christ. Each of the twelve sessions in this book is grounded in the firm belief that all Catholic adults are called to discipleship to follow Christ in all of life's big and little challenges. A great resource for lifelong learning.

Wilkes, Paul. *Excellent Catholic Parishes: The Guide to Best Places & Practices*. Paulist Press, 545 Island Rd., Ramsey, NY 07446, www.paulistpress.com, 2001. ISBN: 0-8091-3992-8 *

* This book is available in the Office of Laity and Family Life to borrow.

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Online Publication

Today's Parish. www.todaysparish.com

Directed toward those involved in full time and part time ministries and direct service roles in the parish. Provides practical ideas, information and motivation concerning all areas of parish life. A timeless, basic resource and learning tool for all members of parish pastoral councils.

Video

The Business of Paradigms. Chart House, 1990. Video available from the Media Center, Catalogue number VC218. Contact your local DRE or call the Media Center at 314-792-7360.

Joel Barker, one of the world's most influential speakers on organizational processes and the future, shows what paradigms are and explains their effects. He makes people aware that we view and understand the world through our paradigms. Understanding the power of paradigms can be a crucial step towards breaking through barriers to innovation and unlocking our resistance to change.

Power of Vision. Chart House, 1990. Video available from the Media Center, Catalogue number VC219. Contact your local DRE or call the Media Center at 314-792-7360.

Joel Barker, one of the world's most influential speakers on organizational processes and the future, shows how a positive vision of the future is essential for providing meaning and direction to the present. He also demonstrates how a meaningful vision empowers us to solve problems and accomplish goals.

| Archdiocesan Resources for Required Commissions | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|------------------------------------|
| Worship (Liturgy) | Christian Formation (Education) | Christian Service (Social Justice Concerns) | Stewardship | Administration/ Finance |
| Office of Worship | Catholic Education Office | St. Vincent de Paul Society | Office of Stewardship and the Annual Catholic Appeal | Building and Real Estate |
| Commissions for Sacred Liturgy and Sacred Music | Catholic Youth Apostolate | Respect Life Apostolate | Finance Office | Finance Office |
| Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs Office | Department of Special Education | Catholic Charities | Catholic Charities | |
| Catholic Deaf Ministry | Office of Laity & Family Life | Mission Office | Office of Laity & Family Life | |
| | Office of Vocations | Office of Hispanic Ministry | | |
| | Catholic Renewal Center | Catholic Deaf Ministry | | |
| | Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs Office | Criminal Justice Ministry | | |
| | Safe Environment Program | | | |
| Resources for Optional Commissions | | | | |
| Family Life | Youth | | Athletic | |
| Office of Laity & Family Life | Catholic Youth Apostolate | | Catholic Youth Council | |

Appendix

- A. Archdiocesan Mission Statement**
- B. Sample of Consensus Process**
- C. Sample Pew Card**
- D. Discernment Process**
- E. Sample Guidelines**
- F. Ceremony of Gratitude**
- G. Developing a Parish Mission Statement**

Archdiocesan Mission Statement

As Catholics in the Archdiocese of St. Louis, in communion with the Bishop of Rome, we are called by our Lord Jesus Christ to be His Church and live His Gospel. With joy, we strive to fulfill our baptismal calling by prayer and worship, teaching and sharing our faith, serving others, and fostering unity in diversity. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to the responsible stewardship of all God's gifts.

Sample of Consensus Process

Consensus is a process of arriving at a decision through compromise. The process is designed to provide a forum where creative input and discernment is required by all participants, therefore producing more options toward reaching a better decision.

In order to insure the maximum from the consensus process, the group should adhere as much as possible to the suggested procedure.

- Chairperson states the agenda item for decision.
- Chairperson then opens the floor for input (no lobbying or dialoguing may take place at this time).
- All participants are required to contribute their ideas, positions, or possible solutions concerning the issue.
- After everyone has given his or her input, the chairperson then opens the floor for discussion in hopes of moving toward a general consensus.
- When the process is opened for discussion it is required that:
 - An individual may state the consensus that he/she can live with only once. They may not continually lobby and reinforce the same position.
 - All participants are asked to refrain from digressions not relevant to the issue.
 - The purpose of the discussion is to integrate the thinking of the group, to assess all possible options and to combine, modify, or enhance the total group thinking through compromise.
 - **The basic condition of decision-making through consensus is the attitude of the decision-makers. When a group accepts this type of procedure, they are accepting the responsibility of working in an optimistic, supportive, and informed atmosphere. Each member is expected to have done his or her homework in regard to any item put on the floor for decision.**
 - The chairperson's major responsibility at this point is to listen carefully as the discussion begins to move toward a general feeling of agreement.

When the chairperson feels that a consensus has been reached through integrating the participants ideas and solutions, he/she will state: "Do we have a consensus that [consensus statement]? Is there anyone who cannot live with this

consensus?" As soon as the chairperson moves toward a consensus, no further discussion is allowed.

- If there are no objections, the consensus has been reached and should be restated. "We have a consensus decision then that [state the consensus statement]."
- If most of the group cannot live with the consensus statement, you have not reached a consensus, and the chairperson needs to: 1) form a committee to research the item under discussion and bring the results to the next meeting; 2) use the discernment process; 3) re-open the floor for more input from council members.
- When a group has agreed to work under a consensus decision-making process, they are agreeing to add their own ideas and thoughts with those of other members of the council. It is important that each council member feels that they can live with the result. It is equally important that once the consensus is stated and agreed upon, each council member can completely support and promote the consensus.
- **It is essential that persons involved in a consensus decision-making process understand their relationship as individuals to the group and the process.**
- No person could or should block a consensus decision. What is felt by the group to be the best and most workable decision should be upheld. This process is difficult to initiate, but extremely beneficial when understood and utilized. It promotes a greater degree of participation and commitment by all involved and hopefully better decisions.

The most important element of the consensus decision-making process is that those participating fully understand the concept, as well as the system and how it operates.

Parish Pastoral Council

Nominations for Selection

Is God Calling you to the ministry of Parish Pastoral council?

Name _____

Is there someone in the parish that you feel would be a good Parish Pastoral Council member?

Suggested Name _____

Parish Pastoral Council

Nominations for Selection

Is God Calling you to the ministry of Parish Pastoral council?

Name _____

Is there someone in the parish that you feel would be a good Parish Pastoral Council member?

Suggested Name _____

Parish Pastoral Council

Nominations for Selection

Is God Calling you to the ministry of Parish Pastoral council?

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Suggested Name _____

Parish Pastoral Council

Nominations for Selection

Is God Calling you to the ministry of Parish Pastoral council?

Name _____

Is there someone in the parish that you feel would be a good Parish Pastoral Council member?

Suggested Name _____

Discernment Process — An Exercise to Help Discover God’s Call

Place yourself in the presence of God. Find someplace that is comfortable and quiet. Just sit for a while and pray. Relax.

Ask the Lord to help you find His will for you in this decision that you are trying to make. Knowing you want to serve God, what is the best way to do that in this day and time?

After you have prayed, take one of the alternatives (for example—I should accept the nomination for Parish Pastoral Council), and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, write out the reasons and advantages for accepting. Then do the same for disadvantages. And follow through with the reasons and advantages for not accepting at this time.

You may do this at one sitting, but there is an advantage to doing it over a period of days. Consciously open yourself to God’s grace in bringing to mind new ideas.

| Accept Parish Council Nomination | | Do Not Accept Parish Council Nomination | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|---|---------------------|
| Advantages to me | Disadvantages to me | Advantages to me | Disadvantages to me |
| | | | |

After you have completed your exercise, study all the data, and ask the Lord for guidance in this matter. Remember, your attitude plays a big part in this exercise. Again, placing yourself with the Lord, look for the following:

1. Be honest.
2. What would serve God best at this time?
3. Remembering your present commitments.

In the end, after confirmation with the Holy Spirit, the result will be peace of mind.

Signature _____

I am interested in placing my name in nomination.

Sample Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines

The Purpose and Functions

The parish pastoral council shall be the apostolic vehicle through which a representative body of the people of God in _____ Parish, in communion with one another, meet to deliberate and decide, in common agreement, those matters for which they are responsible, as a pastoral team, and which affect the good of the total church as witnessed through this parish.

Suggested Examples

- To coordinate, encourage, and promote every apostolic activity within the parish through which the parish community follows its baptismal call.
- To assure through its commissions a continuous survey of both spiritual and temporal needs of the individual, the family, the parish, the community, and the world and, after setting priorities, to develop and implement programs aimed at meeting these needs.
- To serve as a permanent flexible structure for constructive dialogue among the priests, religious and laity of the parish so that they can work in close cooperation as a truly Christian community in fulfilling Christ's saving mission.
- To provide leadership, direction, education, resources, and encouragement in accordance with the constant and continuing goals of the parish, the Archdiocese, and the Universal Church.
- To cooperate with and to effectively carry out the guidelines and directions given by the Ordinary of the Archdiocese of St. Louis.
- To determine and attempt to utilize the talents of all members of the parish.

Membership

- The parish pastoral council shall consist of members of the parish at large.
- The pastor is a member of the council.
- All adult members (nineteen years and over) registered with the parish will be eligible for membership on the council and to nominate fellow parishioners to the council.

Selection and Terms of Office

- The parish selection process will be held every three years on the first weekend of Advent.

- The term of office of all members to the parish pastoral council shall be three (3) years.
- Vacancies of positions on the parish pastoral council can be filled by persons nominated but not selected in the last selection process. This person shall complete the unexpired term of the member(s).

Officers

- At the fourth meeting of the parish pastoral council following the selection process, the members of the council shall select a chairperson, vice-chairperson, and secretary from their own membership.
- Vacancies in council offices will be filled at the first scheduled meeting after the vacancy occurs, by the consensus of the remaining council members.
- The chairperson shall preside at all council meetings for three years and for the first three meetings of the next parish pastoral council.
- The vice-chairperson shall a) preside in the absence of the chairperson, b) be responsible for all parish pastoral council publicity and public relations.

The secretary shall record and report the minutes of each meeting. At the end of the three-year term, the secretary will distribute the *Guidelines for the Ministry of Parish Pastoral Councils* to all new members. The *Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines* can be downloaded from www.archstl.org/laityandfamilylife. Choose **Parish Pastoral Council** from menu on the left. Click on **Download the Parish Council Guidelines** (at bottom of page).

- All members of the new parish pastoral council shall attend the Archdiocesan Parish Pastoral Council Workshop.

Commissions

- The parish pastoral council shall form the following standing advisory commissions to assist the council in its duties:
 - Worship Commission
 - Christian Formation and Education Commission
 - Social Justice Commission
 - Stewardship/Development
 - Administration and Finance Commission
- Special ad hoc advisory committees may be established from time to time to meet specific objectives. Such ad hoc advisory committees may be established as defined.

- The committee chairpersons are selected from among their own committee members.
- The parish pastoral council shall set out the duties and areas of responsibility for the operation of each parish commission.
- Each commission may establish subcommittees to assist in accomplishing its stated objectives. Participation by the entire parish community is encouraged in accomplishing the work of each commission.
- Each commission head will submit a written report one week prior to the agenda-planning meeting on the activities and proposals of that commission.

Meetings

- The parish pastoral council shall meet a minimum of one (1) time each month during the year, commencing in January, following the general parish selection process.
- Special meetings of the parish pastoral council may be called with forty-eight (48) hours notice to each member by the chairperson and/or the pastor.
- The decision making process of the parish pastoral council will be by consensus.
- Two-thirds members of the parish pastoral council present shall be sufficient to transact business at any meeting, regular or special.
- The chairperson and one rotating member of the council, in consultation with the pastor shall propose an agenda for each regular meeting. The secretary shall forward a copy to each member at least five days prior to the meeting.
- Any member of the parish pastoral council may submit to the chairperson a matter to be included on the agenda. Parishioners may submit matters for the agenda to related parish commission.

Nominations

On a given weekend at all Liturgies, cards are placed in the pews with pencils. Parishioners are asked to write the names of those in the parish they feel would be good parish council members. The pastor gives direction and allows time after Communion for everyone to fill out the cards. The cards are collected and given to the parish secretary.

The pastor writes a letter to each person whose name was suggested on the cards, inviting them to attend an orientation session. The orientation lasts for no more than an hour. They hear the purpose of Parish Pastoral Council, and the Spirituality, and practical elements of Councils. Time is given for questions and answers. At the end of the meeting, prospective council members are given a Discernment Process to take home to help them decide whether

God is calling them to this ministry. They return the bottom portion of the paper with their signature one to two weeks after the meeting.

At a Sunday liturgy (example, the first Sunday of Advent) the names are chosen by lot (twelve is a good number for a Parish Pastoral Council). The pastor has the privilege of appointing members. If the pastor chooses to appoint members, ten are chosen and two appointed. The new members, along with the pastor, are encouraged to attend a full day workshop as soon as possible.

Additions and Revisions

Additions or revisions to these guidelines may be adopted at the meeting following their initial presentation in writing to the parish pastoral council membership.

Annual Report

An annual written report on the business of the parish pastoral council, including but not limited to the reports of each commission, will be made available to the parish community.

Other reports may also be made as deemed necessary by the parish pastoral council.

Ceremony of Gratitude for Out Going Members

Too often the parish community forgets to thank members who have served faithfully on the parish pastoral council for a number of years. The ceremony of gratitude could be a special occasion or could be the first part of the commissioning ceremony.

Sample of an Expression of Gratitude

Parish Pastoral Council Chairperson or Priest We now ask our outgoing parish pastoral council members to come before our parish community for a ceremony of appreciation. (Calls each member by name. As the name is called the person comes forward. When all are assembled the priest says:)

Priest N., N., N., and N., (says each name as he stands before each person) our parish is deeply grateful to you for your dedication during your term of office on the parish pastoral council. We have all benefited from your devotion to duty, to Jesus Christ our Savior, and to this parish. We publicly want to thank you and ask you to accept these _____ (some small article – pin, cross, certificate) as tokens of our thankfulness to you. May you continue to grow in your faith. We ask your prayers, continued support and participation in other ministries within our parish community. (Gives the token gift to each with a word of personal thanks.)

Developing a Parish Mission Statement

A mission statement can be developed during a Day of Reflection or in a series of weekly sessions. If a council decides to develop the statement over a series of meetings a prayer service for each meeting should be prepared. A facilitator is important to the smooth running of the process.

Session I

Read and reflect on the Archdiocesan Mission Statement. (See Appendix A.)

- Our parish mission flows from the Archdiocesan Mission.

Overview of Purpose and Components of Entire Process

- The purpose is to clearly state:
- What the parish is like now
- What people feel they are called by the Lord to become
- The gap between

Questions to be considered

- What are our assumptions?
- What is our history?
- What does scripture say about forming a people?
- What does the universal Church say about itself?
- How do we summarize our vision of the parish?

Faith Experience: Who is my God?

Our understanding of whom God is and the way we relate to Him have much to do with our views of everything else.

- On a sheet of paper, the facilitator writes as many names for God as the group can think of.
- When this is completed, each person selects one name for God - the one he or she relates to best.
- Each person writes a short prayer expressing his/her relationship with God, using the name picked to begin the prayer.
- Using Mt.16: 13-18, have a short prayer service using the prayers of each person.

Brainstorming: What are our assumptions?

As quickly as possible, each person writes three conclusions to each of these sentences:

Our parish is...

The people in our parish are...

Our parish strives to become...

Under the above headings, the facilitator collates all answers on large sheets of paper. Post all papers for general discussion of similarities, areas of agreement and disagreement. Keep papers for later session.

The next session will explore the spirit and tradition of your parish history. Bring material that may be helpful for this – Jubilee Books, photographs, etc. If written history is not available, facilitator must see that someone familiar with the history is available for the next session.

Session II

The purpose of this session is to reflect on the history of the parish as a whole and our own personal history of being in any parish. This will give us a sense of continuity with the traditions that help make the parish what it is and what God is calling it to be.

What is our History as a Parish?

- **Personal Parish History** (to be shared one question at a time)
 - What were your first impressions of this parish?
 - When did you really begin to feel a part of the parish? Was there a particular occasion?
 - Has the parish helped in your formation? How? If not, why do you feel it has not?

- **Story of the Parish**

Use the written history of the parish from the pastor or the person most familiar with it, to tell the story of the parish. Or, on a large paper, work together on a time line that shows significant events and milestones. Try to determine the following and list on a large sheet of paper.

 - What was the early spirit of the parish?
 - What was the mission of the parish? Did that change through its history?

- **Vision of the Future**

Looking at the personal history of the parish and the parish story, what elements from the past do we want to include in our vision of the future? What do we want to hold on to or restore?

Bring Bible to next session.

Session III

The purpose of this session is to reflect prayerfully on God's call to us to form a people. Old and New Testament passages are used to focus in on the ideal parish community.

What does scripture say about forming a people?

- Give as much quiet time as necessary to reflect on the following passages from scripture. Find a place where you will be least distracted or disturbed (may want to go into Church), be aware and acknowledge the presence of God and ask for His guidance. Read slowly and reflectively.

Exodus 24:1-9 Leaders of the Israelites seal a covenant with God.

John 15 Jesus is the vine – no slave is greater than his master.

Acts 2 Spirit comes to inspire apostles – birthday of the Church.

Acts 6:1-7 Choosing deacons – administration and division of community work.

Acts 9:1-31 the conversion of Paul and his early trials.

1 Corinthians 12 Call to community – one Body of Christ.

1 James 2:14-18 Faith and actions – service of others.

- On paper, write what these passages say about your parish and decide on elements that you would like to see reflected in parish vision.
- In general session, share these elements of vision with the entire group. Keep papers for later session.

Session IV

The purpose of this session is to broaden understanding of possible ways to look at Church. This is done through exploring Dulles' models of Church.

What does the Universal Church say about itself?

Presentation

Short simple presentation on the models of Church, using The Models of the Church by Avery Dulles or use the following shortened version.

Parish as Institution

This model stresses the organization of the Church. It concentrates on buildings, emphasizes rules and regulations and the roles of pope, bishop, pastor and priest. It cherishes a tradition dating back to the original apostles and places a high regard on rituals, dogma and codes. This institutional concept, with its historic roots, is an

important link between the past, the present and the future of our Church because it guards the treasures of truth and life that God has given us in Christ.

Parish as Community

This model projects the parish as a family or community of people bound by ties of faith, grace and love. The essence of parish as a community is the union of people who care about one another, who think of themselves as the Body of Christ, as the people of God.

Parish as Sacrament

This model views the Church as the visible sign (the sacrament) of Christ's presence in our midst. It views the parish as the place where Christ's love appears "most clearly" and "reconciles men to God and to one another." Christ is the sacrament of God's saving love, and this Church's system of signs and symbols is in turn what makes Christ's presence manifest.

Parish as Herald

The mission of the Church, according to the herald model, is to proclaim the Word of God and salvation in Christ. In effect, a community happens wherever the Word is proclaimed and accepted in faith.

Parish as Servant

In this final model, the Church sees itself as imitating the example of Jesus by serving, healing, reconciling, and binding up wounds. This concept of the parish leads members to sponsor social action programs, which reflect the life and teaching of Christ.

Answer these questions about each model:

What would the parish be trying hardest to accomplish if this were the predominant model? What attitudes, activities, programs or ways of doing things that are characteristic of your parish right now show the presence of this model?

If this model were the predominant view of this parish, how would the sacraments, liturgies, weddings, and funerals be celebrated? What would the parish pastoral council be like?

If this model were predominant, what would the people expect the pastor and staff to be and to do?

What from this model would you most like to see included in your vision?

Put the answers to the last question on large sheets for last session.

Final preparation for vision forming and discernment session – be sure everyone knows that he or she will be asked to think of descriptions of the parish and what it is called to be. A form listing the following questions should be completed by each person for the next session.

This same form should be prepared as a handout for the Sunday liturgy in order to receive input from the entire parish.

-Describe your present experience of parish in relation to attitudes, people, community, prayer, programs – anything that tells about your parish – good, bad, or indifferent.

What are your hopes and dreams? What would you like your parish to be?

Session V

The purpose of this meeting is to summarize our understanding of who we are as parish and who we are called to become.

How do we summarize our vision of the Parish?

- Post and read the material from first four sessions a second time.
- Using these as references and the answers from questions given out at the last session, list present experience of parish and future dreams for it.
- Write the vision with the information gathered.
- Prepare timeline on when statement should be presented.
- Explain what comes next: Writers come back to group for approval of statement; parish pastoral council approves statement and the statement is presented to parish for approval; Mission Statement is proclaimed to parish at large and installed in a prominent place in Church.