

*Parish Pastoral
Council
Guidelines*

2012

Diocese of Lexington

Table of Contents

Bishop's Letter

Mission Statement..... 2

Preface..... 3

Part I: Purpose and Guidelines..... 4

Part II: Basics..... 5

Part III: Committees..... 7

Part IV: Town Hall Meetings.....11

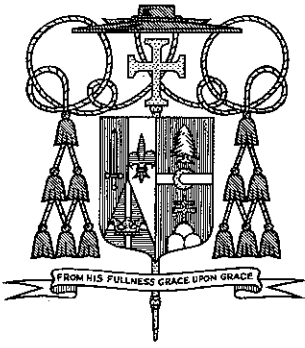
Part V: Relationship to other Councils.....12

Appendix

A. Sample Constitution

B. Sample Bylaws

C. Parish Leadership Definitions



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF LEXINGTON

THE CATHOLIC CENTER

Office of the Bishop

August 2012

Dear Friends in Christ,

"The parish is where the Church lives. Parishes are communities of faith, of action and of hope. They are where the Gospel is proclaimed and celebrated, where believers are formed and sent to renew the earth." In this passage from *Communities of Salt and Light*, the Catholic bishops of the United States describe a place we call home, our parish.

Central to our parish is the Parish Pastoral Council. Since the founding of our Diocese in 1988, councils have played a critical role in prayer, dialogue and decision-making. With these revised guidelines, we build on the work of the past twenty-four years and look to the ongoing challenge of visioning, planning and goal setting.

As councils engage in these activities, these revised guidelines along with the book, *Revisioning the Parish Pastoral Council* by Mary Ann Gubish and Susan Jenny, S.C. and published by Paulist Press, are essential resources. They are intended as aids for councils as they take their steps in striving to be "communities of faith, of action and of hope." I thank you for your commitment to this endeavor.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend Ronald W. Gainer, D.D., J.C.L.
Bishop of Lexington

Roman Catholic Diocese of Lexington Mission Statement

*Guided by the Holy Spirit,
we witness to Christ's saving love
as disciples and missionaries in the
fifty counties of our mission Diocese.*

*As a Eucharistic people,
we celebrate the sacraments,
promote justice in word and deed,
minister to the spiritual and material needs of all,
and evangelize by living and sharing
the Word of God and the teachings
of the Catholic Church.*

Preface

Since the founding of our Diocese in 1988, Parish Pastoral Councils have helped to shape the life of the parish and the life of the Diocese. There have been gratifying times when councils have made clear decisions, which moved parishes into a promising future. There have been difficult times when councils have grappled with issues of administration and policy, consensus and voting. These struggles are natural in a living body.

During this period, Parish Pastoral Councils in our Diocese and in dioceses throughout the country learned from experience and grew in their ability to share faith, to communicate and to set direction.

The *Guidelines for Parish Pastoral Councils* include the specific norms for the Diocese of Lexington. Original principles, such as consensus, consultation, direction setting and prayer continue to be emphasized. Some newer ideas are the integration of faith sharing as an essential component of the prayer at council meetings.

All council members need to become familiar with the contents of the *Guidelines for Parish Pastoral Councils* before they begin their terms in order to have a basic understanding of the role of the Parish Pastoral Council. Each parish should make available *Revisioning the Parish Pastoral Council* to members, especially council leaders, as it provides a roadmap for leading the Parish Pastoral Council in visioning and setting goals, which is the essential responsibility of this important body within the parish.

We thank you for your commitment to the life of your Parish Pastoral Council and to the future of your parish.

The Diocesan Pastoral Council

Part I: Purpose and Guidelines

Purpose

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

Code of Canon Law, 536

The Parish Pastoral Council seeks to achieve this purpose through:

- Building a community through faith sharing
- Learning more about the Church
- Creating or renewing a mission statement
- Developing and monitoring a pastoral plan with its goals, objectives and action steps

NOTE: In small parishes the Town Hall Meeting may serve as the council (See Part V).

Guidelines

There are two major resources which provide guidelines for the Council:

- this document, hereafter referred to as “Guidelines,” which describes the “what” of the council and indicates the specific norms of the council for the Diocese of Lexington
- *Revisioning the Parish Pastoral Council*, a nationally recognized authority on councils, describes the “how,” of the council. Your parish should have copies available for your use as a council member or leader

Part II: Basics

Constitution and Bylaws

The work of the council is outlined in its Constitution and Bylaws. The principles are to be in conformity with Church teachings, Canon Law, diocesan policy and these Guidelines. Essential elements to be addressed in a council's Constitution and Bylaws are the purpose as described above and the basic elements described below. (Refer to Appendix A and B of these Guidelines for a sample of a council Constitution and Bylaws.)

Member Selection

Members are to be registered practicing members of the parish they wish to serve. The size of a council depends on the size of the parish and its particular bylaws establishing membership. Membership selection should begin with a process of discernment. Once identified, members can be either appointed or elected. The process to be used by a parish is to be articulated in a council's Constitution and Bylaws.

- Discernment is a prayerful process for identifying new council members. This process involves the parish at large having the opportunity to reflect on the vacancies on the council and to suggest candidates for consideration or to submit their own name for consideration. The Pastor or Parish Life Director will initiate this process in the parish and be responsible for the facilitation of needs to bring about the best results in the process.
- Appointment to the council is accomplished by the Pastor or Parish Life Director once candidates have been identified and have agreed to serve.
- Election is the most traditional process for selecting new council members. Typically, an ad hoc nomination committee plans the election and is responsible for preparing a slate of nominees, informing nominees of the responsibilities involved in serving on the council, acquainting the parish with the nominees, conducting the election according to the rules and publishing the names of new members.

NOTE: The pastor or parish life director may still appoint members when necessary to fill unexpected vacancies or for pastoral reasons to assure full representation of the parish community.

Term of Membership

The length of the term is to be defined in the Constitution and Bylaws. Terms may be served either simultaneously or with staggered beginnings so that some members rotate off the council each year and a core of seasoned members remain.

Each council must decide what seems best for its parish.

Officers and Responsibilities

The essential officers for a council are the presider, the leadership role filled by the pastor or parish life director; the chair who serves as facilitator, and the secretary or recorder. A vice-chair may also be provided for in the constitution and bylaws. The qualifications for office, with the exception of the presider, are to be delineated in the constitution and bylaws.

Meetings

Meetings are open except when personnel matters or other sensitive issues are discussed whereupon the council should adjourn to an Executive Session. The chair and pastor or parish life director will make this decision if necessary.

Decision Making

Consensus is the mode of decision making for major issues and remains the preferred method in a council setting. Consensus does not mean “majority rule.” Instead, consensus is reached when all council members present can agree upon and support the decisions of the council. It is built on prayer, seeks the will of God and not the individual will of the council members, is based on mutual trust among the persons making the decision and honors the teachings of the Church and Scriptures.

Part III: Committees

Purpose

Seven elements form the essence of parish life: Evangelization, Worship, Word, Community, Service, Stewardship and Leadership. The council provides leadership by creating the long-term vision and overall plan encompassing all these elements. It is through committees that the vision and overall plan are brought to life. The council communicates the plan and provides direction for the committees. It delegates responsibility for specific planning and implementation to the committees.

Functions

The Diocese of Lexington defines a minimum of three committees, which are essential for every Parish Pastoral Council: Formation, Christian Service and Liturgy. These committees are responsible to oversee activities that fall within the scope of the respective committee. They fulfill this responsibility by performing the following functions:

- Praying together
- Setting goals in light of the council plan
- Communicating goals to parish groups performing activities within their scope and reviewing their objectives and accomplishments
- Delegating or implementing actions to accomplish goals
- Developing a plan of work consistent with an approved budget

Membership and Relationship to the Council

Membership selection begins with the process of discernment and is determined according to the Constitution and Bylaws of the council through such methods as election or appointment by the pastor, parish life director or council.

There should always be a liaison between the council and each committee. Also, parish staff, such as the Director of Religious Education or the music director, serving on a committee should not chair that committee. Parish staff are to be considered *ex officio* members, or members who serve by virtue of their position.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee of the council is composed of the presider, the chair, the secretary and others, such as the vice-chair, as provided for in the Constitution and Bylaws. One of the designated responsibilities for this committee is to set an agenda. It also deals with issues requiring attention between meetings.

Formation/Education Committee

The Committee on Formation/Education is responsible for identifying and meeting the educational and formational needs of the entire parish community—families, adults, young persons, children, single divorced and widowed—and to meet those needs by working collaboratively with parish staff and volunteers with the goal of continually improving the effectiveness of the religious formation program. Specific responsibilities are as follows:

- Planning—Looks ahead to the parish's educational needs and to how they will be addressed.
- Policy—Plans and recommends policies to help the parish respond to the formation and educational needs of all parishioners.
- Finances—Reviews formation ministry requests for funding, submits a budget to the Finance Council for approval and monitors how funds are being spent.
- Evaluation and Assessment—Assesses the quality and effectiveness of parish educational programs.

Christian Service/Social Concerns Committee

The mission to which Christ calls the Church clearly includes works of charity and justice. The Committee on Christian Service/Social Concerns makes efforts to provide service to others. It also works to change the social conditions that create needs both within the parish and in the larger community. Jesus' own mission was characterized from the beginning by what the Church has come to call social ministry—outreach and service to others. (Luke 4: 16-22)

In our own time, the U. S. Bishops have issued a clear reminder to the Church of this essential element of service. In their 1993 statement, *Communities of Salt and Light: Reflections on the Social Ministry of the Parish*, they said: "The central message is simple; our faith is profoundly social. We cannot be truly 'Catholic' unless we hear and heed the Church's call to serve those in need and work for justice and peace." Specific responsibilities include the following:

- Identification of the needs to be addressed
- Provision of educational resources for Faithful Citizenship in the parish
- Establishment of short-range and long-range goals that are measurable
- Provision of opportunities for parishioners to become involved
- Submission of a budget to the Finance Council for approval
- Assessment of the accomplishments of the committee through evaluation of established goals

Liturgy Committee

The Liturgy Committee plans and provides for the spiritual development of the parish community through meaningful liturgies and other forms of parish worship. This committee should include individuals who represent all aspects of the parish in terms of age, gender, race, education, etc., as well as the pastor or parish life director, parochial vicars, parish priest, deacons, music director and worship coordinator. Specific responsibilities are as follows:

- Establishing short-range and long-range goals for the liturgical life of the parish based on the vision of the Church shaped by the documents of Vatican II, the Bishop and the council
- Planning and preparing for the actual celebrations of worship in the parish
- Coordinating and overseeing the recruiting, training and renewal of liturgical ministers
- Providing for the ongoing liturgical formation of the parish assembly (as well as the committee itself) in order to promote full, conscious and active participation of the faithful
- Communicating and collaborating with the pastor or parish life director, the parish priest and other staff members to establish parish policies concerning various rites and liturgical matters. (e.g. weddings, funerals, baptisms, first communion, and confirmation in accordance with diocesan norms)
- Providing for a regular process of evaluation in all of the above areas
- Submitting a budget to the Finance Council for approval

Part IV: Town Hall Meetings

Purpose

The purpose of the Town Hall Meeting is the same as the purpose of the Parish Pastoral Council – to further the mission of the parish by seeking the will of God for the parish through discernment. It achieves this purpose by:

- Building a community through faith sharing
- Learning more about the Church
- Creating or renewing a mission statement
- Developing and monitoring a pastoral plan with its goals, objectives and action steps
- Serving an advisory role to the pastor or parish life director

Method

The Town Hall Meeting is designed specifically for small parishes or missions. It is characterized by the participation of all parishioners at meetings which are held on a regular basis. Between meetings, a designated group (core committee or designated officers) collaborates with the pastor or parish life director to implement the decisions of the Town Hall Meeting. Core Committee members might be elected by the parishioners, appointed by the pastor or parish life director or be combination of elected and appointed members. Worship, service and formation receive strong emphasis at Town Hall Meetings.

Other

One resource for planning and conducting the Town Hall Meeting is *Revisoning the Parish Pastoral Council* which should be available through your parish offices.

NOTE: Canon Law requires that a Finance Council be established. It is important that the Finance Council make regular reports to the Town Hall Meeting for knowledge and transparency of the financial status of the community.

Part V: Relationship to Other Councils and Consultative Bodies

- A. The Constitution and Bylaws of the Parish Pastoral Council should articulate the council's relationship to the Parish Finance Council and the Parish School Council. Reporting requirements and decision-making protocol should be clearly delineated.
- B. The Parish Finance Council is the only council required by the Code of Canon Law. An explanation of the council's responsibilities and function is contained in the Parish Finance Council Guidelines for the Diocese of Lexington.
- C. The Parish School Council exists to advise the school's principal and pastor on matters affecting the parish school. An explanation of the council's responsibilities and function is contained in the Parish School Council Guidelines for the Diocese of Lexington.

Appendix A

Sample Constitution:

Constitution: St. Mary's Parish Pastoral Council

Article I: Name

The name of this organization is the St. Mary's Parish Pastoral Council.

Article II: Mission Statement

We are Catholic Christians of St. Mary's Parish.
We are called by God to community,
To grow in faith, hope and love,
And as disciples, to advance the reign of God here in our midst.

*"Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in their midst."
Matthew 18:20*

We will live this community by gathering often to pray, to learn and to serve.

Article III: Purpose

The purpose of the Parish Pastoral Council is to further the mission of the parish by seeking God's will for the parish through discernment. It achieves this purpose by:

1. Building a community through faith sharing,
2. Learning more about the Church,
3. Creating or renewing a mission statement,
4. Developing and monitoring a pastoral plan with its goals, objectives and action steps.

The Council is advisory to the pastor or parish life director.

Article IV: Membership

1. Members are registered practicing members of the parish:
2. The Council is composed of 10 – 12 members. The pastor or parish life director is an ex officio non-voting member of the Council and may appoint 2 – 3 members.
3. The absence of a member from two consecutive meetings, without notification to the Parish Pastoral Council, shall constitute grounds for removal.

Article V: Committees

The committees include the Formation Committee, the Liturgy Committee and the Christian Service Committee.

Article VI: Decision Making

1. The Council is advisory to the pastor or parish life director.
2. Decisions require a quorum. A quorum consists of one more than half of the voting members.
3. Consensus is the usual method of decision –making.
4. If consensus is not possible for an issue, there is a vote. In this case a decision requires one more than half of the voting members present.

Article VII: Amendments

1. Notice of a proposed amendment to the Constitutions and accompanying Bylaws must be given in writing prior to the meeting.
2. Consensus is the usual method for decisions on Constitutions and Bylaws. If consensus cannot be achieved a two-thirds vote of the Council is required.

DATE

Appendix B

Sample Bylaws:

Bylaws: St. Mary's Parish Pastoral Council

I. Membership

A. Membership is determined by a process of discernment.

OR

Membership is determined by election.

B. Decisions on membership are made in May.

C. A member of the Finance Council is a member of the Parish Pastoral Council.

II. Terms

A. Members shall serve a term of (three, four years) and are not eligible for a consecutive term.

B. Members serve simultaneous terms; all members begin terms and end term at the same time.

OR

There are staggered terms with approximately (one third, one fourth) of the Council rotating on and off each year.

C. Terms begin on August 1.

D. Vacancies in membership shall be filled if more than a year of the term remains. The pastor or parish life director, after consulting with the council, will appoint a replacement. The person appointed shall fill the unexpired term and shall be available for consecutive reappointment.

III. Officers and Executive Committee

A. Officers

1. The pastor or parish life director is the official presider at each meeting. The pastor or parish life director may delegate this responsibility to the chair.
2. The Council elects one of its members as chair, one of its members as vice-chair and one of its members as secretary. They will serve for a term of (one, two) years.

B. Executive Committee

The Executive Committee consists of the pastor or parish life director, the chair, the vice-chair, and the secretary. A major function of the committee is the development of the agenda for the meetings.

IV. Meetings

A. The Council will meet monthly.

B. Meetings are open except where personnel matters or other sensitive issues are discussed whereupon the Council will adjourn to Executive Session. The chair and pastor or parish life director will make this decision.

V. Committees

The Council in consultation with the pastor or parish life director appoints committees. They serve for a term of (three, four years) and can be reappointed. A member of the Council is liaison to each committee and attends its meetings.

A. Formation Committee

The Committee on Formation/Education is responsible for identifying the educational and formational needs of the entire parish community – families, adults, young persons, children, single, divorced and widowed – and to meet those needs by working collaboratively with parish staff and volunteers with the goals of continually improving the effectiveness of the religious formation program.

B. Liturgy Committee

The Liturgy Committee plans and provides for the spiritual development of the parish community through meaningful liturgies and other forms of parish worship. This committee should include individuals who represent all aspects of the parish in terms of age, gender, race, education, etc., as well as the pastor or parish life director, parochial vicars, deacons, music director and worship coordinator.

C. Christian Service or Social Concerns Committee

The Committee on Christian Service or Social Concerns Committee makes efforts to provide service to others. It also works to change the social conditions that create needs both within the parish and in the larger community.

Appendix C

Parish Leadership Definitions

The responsibility of each parish leadership position is described as follows:

- The pastor is a priest who has the overall responsibility for the pastoral and administrative care of a parish or mission.
- The parochial vicar is a priest who assists the pastor with the overall responsibility for the pastoral and administrative care of a parish or mission.
- The parish life director is the person responsible for the ordinary pastoral and administrative care of a parish or mission in collaboration with the *parish priest*. This position may be staffed by a deacon, lay person, or religious.
- The parish priest serves the Sacramental needs of the community and also serves as the Canonical pastor of the parish or parishes being served.
- The pastoral associate is a person who assists the pastor or pastoral life director with the overall responsibility for the pastoral and administrative care of a parish.
- The presider is the pastor or the parish life director who oversees the Council meetings.
- The Chair or President is the person appointed or named by consensus to sit in leadership over the meetings.