



ARCHDIOCESE
of MILWAUKEE

PARISH COUNCILS *Manual* FOR PARISH AND PASTORAL COUNCILS

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Archdiocese of Milwaukee, 2016

Parish Councils Manual, Eighth Edition
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July 1, 2015

Dear Parish Leaders,

As of this date, all parishes in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee will be using the new norms for pastoral and finance councils which I approved in 2012. These norms call for a commitment and partnership of pastors, deacons, pastoral staffs, councils, commissions and committees to carry out the mission of the Church.

The Second Vatican Council, in *Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, article 33, reminds us that through Baptism all members of the Church are called to holiness and to share responsibility for the mission of the Church. All of the Popes since the Council have affirmed this call and responsibility.

The Parish Councils Manual is a key resource for all parish leaders and especially those serving on pastoral and finance councils. I pray that you will find in these pages the information and support you will need:

To deepen the understanding of your response to the call to serve as a council member;

- To guide the way for councils to work together effectively;
- To understand the mission of Jesus and the Church as well as to enthusiastically see that it is carried out;
- To invite others to become more involved in the mission activity of the Church; and
- To become a more committed and dedicated disciple of Christ.

Service on a council is both an honor and a challenge. You have been called and chosen to serve by people who have recognized your faithfulness and leadership skills. That is an honor not to be taken lightly. But with the honor comes responsibility and that is your challenge. Your challenge is to help your parish carry out the mission of Jesus Christ and the Church more effectively than before.

With assurance of prayers, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Jerome E. Listeski
Archbishop of Milwaukee

— ABOUT THIS MANUAL —

Each parish and cluster of parishes is unique. Yet all parishes, wherever they are, have the same mission. That mission is to continue the work of Christ within the local area. Parishes do this by calling people to holiness and supporting them in their Christian life through the proclamation of the Gospel, prayer and worship, reaching out to those who are hurting or in need, as well as building up the community and expanding the Reign of God.

The *Parish Councils Manual* is a resource manual for parish finance and pastoral councils. Its primary purpose is to promote effective ministry by those selected to serve on these councils and to strengthen their collaboration with the pastor, parishioners, commissions or committees, and the parish staff. This manual spells out the role and responsibilities of council members and helps them examine and sharpen their skills for leadership. The role and responsibilities of the pastor described throughout the book also apply to priests who serve as administrators and those assigned by the archbishop as parish directors.

The canon law quotations in the manual are used with permission from the *Code of Canon Law, Latin-English Edition* (Washington, Canon Law Society of America, 1998).

THE ROLE OF COMMISSIONS/COMMITTEES IN THE PARISH

- TO:** You, the Council member
- For listening and responding to a call to council ministry and saying, “Yes.”
 - For giving your time and talent so generously as a leader in your parish.
- TO:** Our Bishops
- Whose inspiring leadership has shepherded us in holiness
 - Who urge us to embrace the future with faith, hope and love
 - Who challenge us to live faith-fully
- TO:** Gerald M. Schaefer, Marilyn Bowman, Don Lozier, Marliss Rogers, Fr. Michael Hammer, Noreen Welte and all whose dedicated efforts since 1970 have led us to this edition.

Our hope is that you find the *Parish Councils Manual* to be a valuable and useful resource for you personally, for your council, and for the Church in Southeastern Wisconsin.

Mark Kemmeter, Director
Office for Planning and Councils

— HOW THE MANUAL IS ORGANIZED —

TABS 1 THRU 6 - PARISH DOCUMENTS AND MEETING MATERIALS

This section is to be used by council members at each meeting. This is where each parish's council documents should be inserted:

- Mission Statement and the Parish Organizational Chart
- Pastoral Plan and Master Site Plan
- Council Norms and Appendices
- Rosters of Members
- Finance Council Agendas and Notes
- Pastoral Council Agendas and Minutes

TABS 7 THRU 9 – COUNCIL MEMBER FORMATION

This section contains general formation for each council member on the purpose and organization of the parish as people, mission and structure.

TABS 10 AND 11 – UNDERSTANDING EACH COUNCIL AND THEIR ROLES

This section provides information about the finance and pastoral councils and their roles in assisting with the administration of goods and fostering pastoral activity.

TABS 12 THRU 15 – RESOURCES FOR BEST PRACTICES

This section focuses on the practicalities and essentials for effective council activity, meetings, and the selection of new members as well as resources for council and member use.

1

MISSION
STATEMENT/PARISH
ORGANIZATIONAL
CHART

ARCHDIOCESE *of* MILWAUKEE - MISSION STATEMENT

Proclaim Christ *and* Make Disciples
through the Sacramental Life *of the* Church.

2

PASTORAL
PLAN/MASTER SITE
PLAN

3

COUNCIL
NORMS/APPENDICES

4

ROSTER OF MEMBERS

5

FINANCE COUNCIL
AGENDAS/NOTES

6

PASTORAL COUNCIL
AGENDAS/MINUTES

7

PARISH AS PEOPLE:
A COMMUNITY OF
DISCIPLESHIP AND
EVANGELIZATION

Council nominees and members usually possess a good working knowledge of their parishes. They know what the parish does, how it operates, and who the key leaders are. Serving on a council also requires the member to understand what a parish can and should be. This **three-part formation section on parish is based** on the USCCB's (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) document, The Parish: A People, A Mission, A Structure, which was published in 1998.

In the document, the bishops propose a vision of parish life that encourages respect for diversity yet urges that each parish continually strive **“to become more fully a people of God, sharing the mission of Christ and developing the structure necessary for supporting its community life and carrying out its mission.”**

— A COMMUNITY OF DISCIPLESHIP AND EVANGELIZATION, CENTERED IN JESUS AND THE EUCHARIST —

The late Avery Cardinal Dulles may be best known for his book, Models of the Church (1974). For decades, council members in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and throughout the country became familiar with the Church models of “institution,” “herald,” “sacrament,” “servant,” and “community.” Dulles, though, continued looking for a model which could harmonize the differences of each model and become like an overarching model which included all. In 1986, he presented **“the Church as a community of disciples”** model. True discipleship leads to mission activity. All subsequent editions of Models of the Church include the additional material on “community of disciples.”

On the most basic level, a parish is a community of people who follow Jesus. A parish is a people who are centered in the Eucharist which Jesus established to make them one and to nourish them on their journey of discipleship. **As a people, we are sent to proclaim the Good News of Jesus to others and to live out our faith throughout the week.**

Let's take a look at the diagram on the next page which not only illustrates this model but shows how both councils and commissions are at the heart of Church activity.

— ORGANIZATION FOR MISSION —
COMMUNITY OF DISCIPLESHIP & EVANGELIZATION

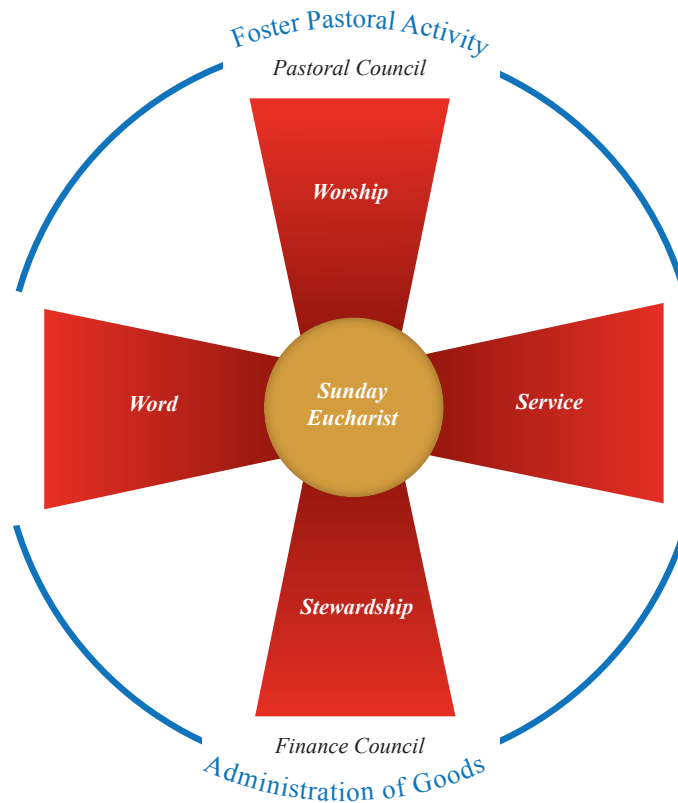


Figure A

In the center of the diagram is the Sunday Eucharist. **The Eucharist is at the center of our life in Christ.** The Sunday Eucharist is when most of the members of the parish gather together. The Eucharist sends us to carry out the mission of Jesus Christ and His Church. The four arms of the cross show us the four areas of mission: worship, formation and evangelization, human concerns and stewardship. This is what the parish does: carries out the mission.

There is a wider **circle around the cross which represents the roles of both the finance and pastoral councils.** The pastoral council's role is "to foster pastoral or mission activity." The finance council's role is "to administer or manage the parish goods." The goods of the parish are collected in order to carry out the mission. How well and to what extent the mission can be carried out relies on the goods of the parish. Both councils have distinct but interrelated roles.

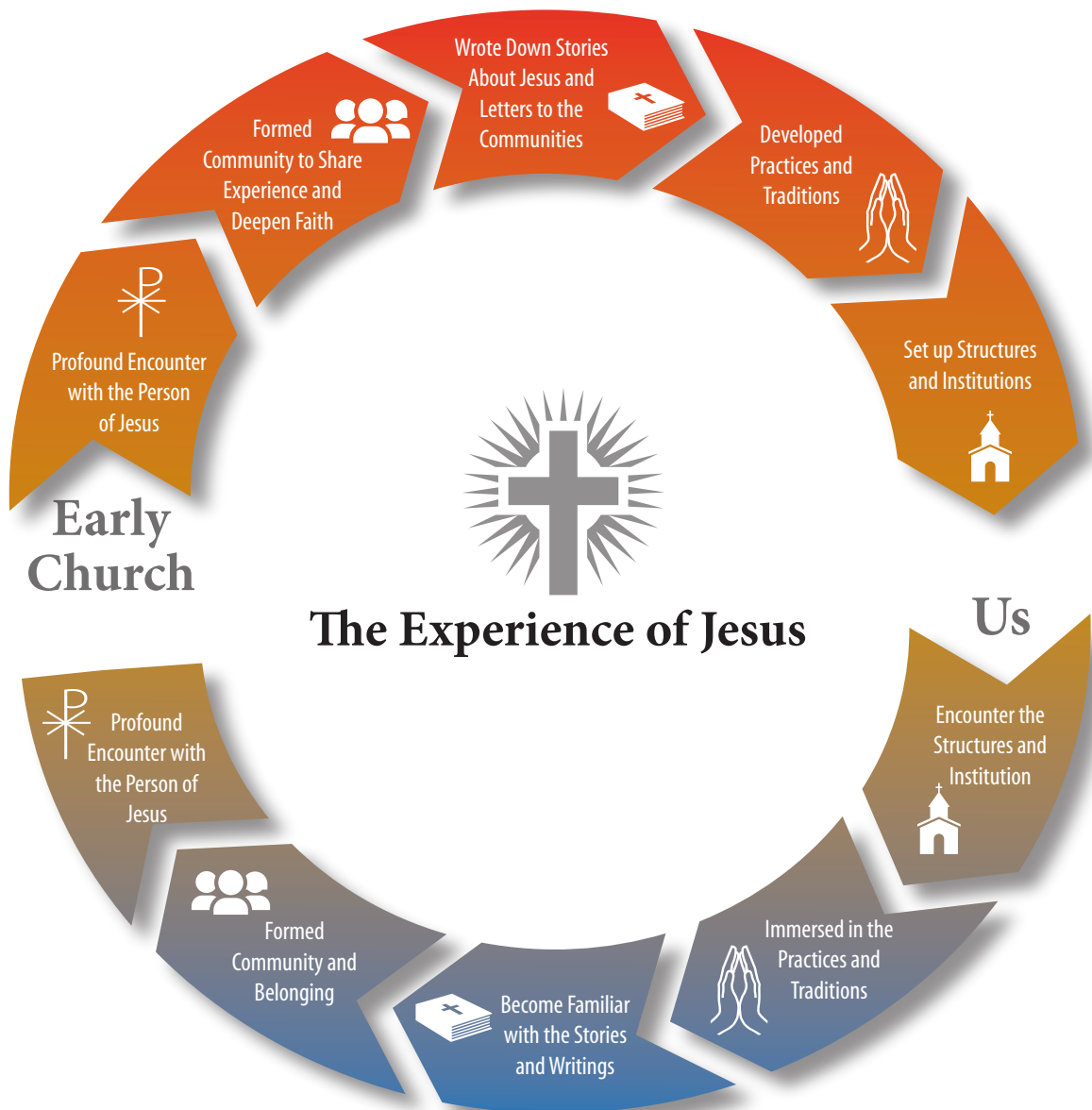
Both councils help to organize the community into one of discipleship and evangelization. Jesus calls people to follow him as His disciples. Discipleship means living a life of growth in faith, virtuous living, and service to others. Discipleship further means that we are called to invite others to be disciples just as we were invited. This means that a parish community cannot just be focused on its members. Our call includes reaching out to all people in the area which our parish serves and evangelize or proclaim the Good News of Jesus to them especially through our actions.

The councils are assisted in their roles to carry out and support the mission by commissions. These commissions serve as task groups which insure that the ministry activity in each of the four areas of mission is effective and properly supported. Without the work of these commissions, the councils would be unable to provide a full and effective range of ministry.

— “HOW THE CHURCH DEVELOPED AND HOW WE COME TO EXPERIENCE JESUS” —

Council members need to gain insight into the people who make up their communities. As you can see from the previous section, Jesus and the Eucharist are at the center of every parish. Every parish has to provide parishioners with opportunities to experience the person of Jesus Christ. Without this experience of profound faith, people may become members of the parish but not necessarily disciples.

In order to understand what happens when people are born into a parish, **we should understand how the Church developed.** This is a schema developed by the late Fr. Andrew Greeley, a priest sociologist, who was able to blend theology and the social sciences to give us a deeper insight into the challenges every parish faces.



We can look to the Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, letters, and Church history and read how the early church responded to the **profound encounter with the person of Jesus**. This was a faith experience so powerful and life-changing that it had to be shared with others.

The early Christians formed communities. **These communities provided others with whom they could share their faith experiences, understand them, and deepen their faith.** Faith is a relationship which draws us into deeper relationship with God and others. Faith by its very nature must be shared. The early Christians recognized this and further realized they were part of a universal community of believers.

As time went on, **the community came to realize that the stories and teachings which the apostles and others proclaimed needed to be written down and collected.** They realized that future generations of believers could come to encounter Jesus in these writings.

Over the centuries, **practices and traditions were adopted** which had served other generations of Christians on their journeys of faith. They were passed on as the wisdom of those who had gone before us.

As the Church spread throughout the world, **structures and institutions were developed to support and sustain** the mission of the Church. All were intended to support and lead future generations of believers to a personal encounter with Jesus.

Now that we have an understanding of how the Church developed, we need to understand how Christians today begin their experience of Jesus. **Most believers today begin the encounter with Jesus in reverse order.** We are born into families of believers and our experience begins not with the profound encounter with the person of Jesus but an encounter with the structure and institution of the Church. Many of our earliest memories are about the church building we attended, the stained glass we viewed, the flickering candles and vigil lights, perhaps the smell of flowers and incense.

The journey of faith for those baptized as infants or children **further involves learning the traditions, writings and teachings.** Some believers never move beyond these experiences of Jesus in His Church. They may view the church as a building or as a collection of traditions from the past or some writings and teachings which have a certain application to my life. Without a sense of community and especially without a personal experience of Jesus, these Catholics are vulnerable to stop practicing the faith or to seek other paths.

Parishes and councils, then, must be aware that **the parish should invite people into a deeper relationship with Jesus and the community of disciples as well as provide opportunities for this to happen.** As part of the annual evaluation of parish mission activity in a parish, this is one of the most important activities for councils to monitor and keep in focus.

— THE CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP AND HOLINESS —

Jesus calls all of us to follow Him. We respond by becoming disciples and living lives of witness and service. **The call to follow also includes a call to holiness.** The call to holiness means that being a disciple involves living a life which is in touch with how the Holy Spirit is leading and guiding us. The beliefs and practices which describe how this life in the Spirit is lived out make up what is called a “spirituality.” Most Catholics are familiar with this term as it is used with religious orders. For example, Franciscan spirituality is characterized by the charism or gift of poverty as practiced by St. Francis. Dominican spirituality is rooted in the gift of preaching and teaching. Every religious order and society has a particular spirituality.

The Second Vatican Council made it very clear that all the baptized are called to holiness. **All of us are called to develop a spiritual life which supports and sustains our life of discipleship.** How do we develop a spirituality? Some Catholics practice the spirituality of a particular religious order and society. Many Catholics either cobble various spiritual practices together or do not realize that they have a spiritual life or even need one.

Council members need to understand the spiritual or inner life of those in the community. As Christians and Catholics, we begin by realizing that **there is a shared spirituality which all members of the community can share and a personal spirituality which each person needs to develop.** The diagram box on the following page should help us with this understanding of a shared and a personal spirituality.

Area of Mission	Aspects of a Shared Spirituality with Other Followers of Jesus	Aspects of My Personal Spirituality
Word	Participate in faith sharing and enrichment opportunities to grow in faith	Read the scriptures and view other spiritual materials to deepen my faith and invite others to encounter Jesus
Worship	Attend Mass faithfully and participate in the sacramental life of the Church	Pray and reflect on my life as part of my daily routine
Service	Assist in local, national and world efforts to serve the poor and those in need	Witness to my faith at home, work, and play
Stewardship	Share time, talent and treasure in response to the call to discipleship	Live a life of gratitude, sharing and simplicity

Every spirituality contains certain basic elements. The basic elements are:

- Beliefs about God, Jesus, the Spirit, the Church, what the Church teaches – a spirituality is rooted in living out what we believe.
- Participation in the sacramental life of the Church, particularly the Eucharist – a spirituality is rooted in praise and thanks to God and in prayer with the community of believers.
- Living a life of service, motivated by love for others – a spirituality must include taking care of ourselves and all those we call our neighbors.
- Involvement in and commitment to the community of believers – a spirituality must include some connection to the faith community.

The left column describes the four areas of the Church's mission which will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. **Those four areas of mission correspond to the basic elements of every spirituality.** Moving to the middle column, "Shared Spirituality," you can readily see that every member of a vibrant parish has opportunities to participate in every aspect of the spirituality which is shared by all members of vibrant communities. Growth in faith and growth in spirituality are lifelong processes.

Making our shared spirituality our only spirituality can lead to the "Sunday only" school of thinking. There is much more to living out our faith than just on Sundays. **We need a personal spirituality which includes the shared spirituality but which guides us throughout the other days of the week and throughout our lives.** The last column, "Personal Spirituality," challenges us to personalize the Gospel and to live out on a daily basis what we believe and practice in the community.

The first thing to understand about parish and, for that matter, the Church, is it is PEOPLE. The Church and the parish are the people of God. Jesus came to bring life and salvation to people not buildings or a parking lot or the parish office. Everything we do in the parish should be for people.

8

PARISH AS MISSION:
TO TEACH, SANCTIFY,
SERVE, UNIFY

— THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH: TEACH, SANCTIFY, SERVE, UNIFY —

“Go, make disciples of all nations, baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

Jesus invited and called people to follow him. The response to following Jesus is to do as the verses above suggest: “carry out everything I have commanded you.” As the people of God, we have been given a mission. It is the mission of Jesus. We are to continue the work which Jesus began. To know what the mission is all about, we must look to “what Jesus did.”

WHAT DID JESUS DO?

The Gospels tell us in four different versions all about the activity of Jesus. The diagram below illustrates how this activity can be understood in four distinct ways.

THE MISSION OF JESUS

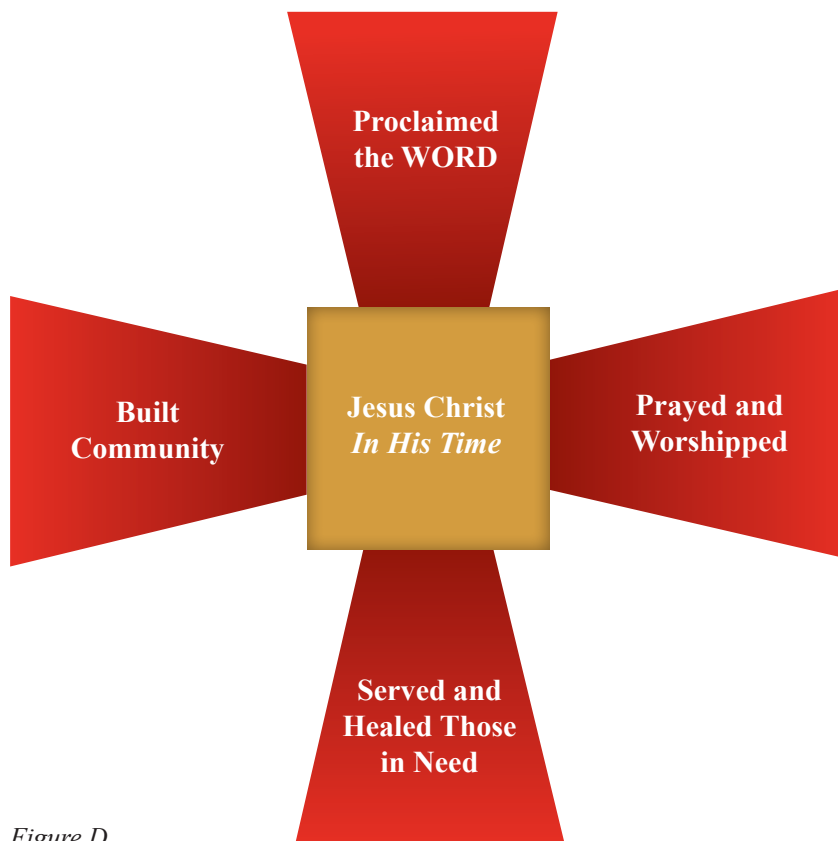


Figure D

Starting at the top, Jesus proclaimed the Word of God. Proceeding clockwise, Jesus prayed and worshipped, served and healed those in need, and built community. Each section below provides key passages from the Gospels which provide insight and understanding of what Jesus taught, how he prayed, healed, and built community.

“PROCLAIMED THE GOOD NEWS”

Jesus proclaimed a message of love and forgiveness through his teaching and use of parables. Look up these passages in the Gospels to gain deeper insight and understanding of his teaching mission.

o The Beatitudes	<i>Matthew 5 and Luke 4:18</i>
o Jesus’ authority is questioned	<i>Luke 20</i>
o The “Great Discourse”	<i>Luke 6:17</i>
o I am the way, the truth and the life	<i>John 14:6</i>
o Love one another as I have loved	<i>John 5:12</i>
o Woman at the well	<i>John 4:1-42</i>
o The Greatest Commandment	<i>Matthew 22:34-40</i>
o The ten lepers	<i>Luke 17:11</i>
o Sower and the seed	<i>Luke 8:4</i>
o Lamp under a basket	<i>Matthew 5:15; Mark 4:21; Luke 8:16</i>
o Good Samaritan	<i>Luke 10:25-37</i>
o Mustard Seed; leaven (yeast)	<i>Matthew 13:31; Mark 4:30; Luke 13:18</i>
o Widow’s Mite	<i>Luke 21:1</i>
o Lilies of the fields	<i>Matthew 6:25-33 and Luke 12:22</i>
o Suffered, died and rose from the dead	<i>Matthew 26-28; Mark 14-16; Luke 22-24; John 12-21</i>

“PRAYED AND RITUALLY CELEBRATED”

The Gospels show us that **Jesus was a person of prayer and ritual celebration**. Find and reflect upon these passages in the Gospels to gain insight about the importance of prayer and ritual in Jesus’ life.

o Jesus praying	<i>Matthew 14:23, 11:27-31, 26:36-46</i> <i>Luke 9:18, 6:12, 9:18, 9:29, 22:39-46</i> <i>Mark 1:37, 3:21, 6:41, 14:32-42</i> <i>John 17</i>
o Jesus teaching others to pray	<i>Luke 11:5-13, 11:2ff, 18:1;</i> <i>Matthew 6:9-15, 18:19-20</i> <i>John 14:13-14, 16:23, 26-27</i>
o Jesus praying in the garden	<i>Matthew 26:36-44; Mark 14:32-41;</i> <i>Luke 22:39-46</i>
o Wedding at Cana	<i>John 2:1-11</i>
o Multiplication of the Loaves	<i>Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44;</i> <i>Luke 9:10ff; John 6:1-13</i>
o Last Supper	<i>Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-25;</i> <i>Luke 22:19ff</i>
o The Emmaus travelers	<i>Luke 24:13ff</i>

“HEALED AND SERVED”

The message of Jesus was one of forgiveness and new life. It was evident in Jesus’ many cures, signs and actions. Read the passages below to see and come to know the many ways Jesus touched and transformed people’s lives.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| o Man with an unclean spirit | Luke 4:33ff |
| o The leper and the paralyzed man | Luke 5:12ff |
| o The Centurion’s servant | Luke 7 |
| o Calming of the sea | Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22ff |
| o The person possessed by a demon | Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26ff |
| o Jairus’ daughter | Mark 5:21-43; Matthew 9:18-26; Luke 8:40-56 |
| o The sinful woman | Luke 7:36-50 |
| o Washing of the Apostles’ feet | John 13:1-17 |

“CALLED INTO AND FORMED COMMUNITY”

The very nature of **following Jesus means to become part of a community of believers.** The followers are to continue his mission and it takes a community, a church to carry it out. Look at the passages below to gain insight about how Jesus called people into community and formed community.

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| o First disciples | Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11 |
| o Levi, the tax collector | Luke 5:27ff |
| o Selection of the twelve | Luke 6:12ff |
| o Mission of the twelve | Luke 9:1-6; Matthew 10:1-8, 14;
Mark 3:13-16, 6:7-13 |
| o The seventy-two | Luke 10:1-20 |

“THE MISSION OF JESUS IS THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH”

All that Jesus did has been entrusted to his followers – the Church. As you can see in the chart below, the activity of Jesus continued faithfully in the Acts of the Apostles, in the early Church, through the centuries right up to what is taking place in your parish now.

What Jesus Did	Acts of the Apostles 2:42-45	Early Church	What Your Parish Does
Proclaimed the Good News	<i>“devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles”</i>	<i>Kerygma</i> = message	Teaches
Prayed and Celebrated	<i>“to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers”</i>	<i>Leitourgia</i> = liturgy	Sanctifies

Healed and Served	<i>“sell their property and possessions and divide them among all”</i>	Diakonia = service	Serves
Built Community	<i>“communal life, had all things together”</i>	Koinonia = fellowship	Unifies

This chart shows clearly how the mission of the Church can be clearly linked through the ages back to Jesus, but we can also appreciate how **the understanding of mission is continually changing**. Look carefully at the section from the Acts of the Apostles which is an early description of community life. We have many teachers and teachings in addition to the apostles because of nearly two thousand years of apostolic activity. Many of us would balk at the idea of selling all our property and possessions and dividing them among all. How would we be cared for in retirement? Even if we are not prepared to sell everything we have, we are called to heal and serve those spiritually and physically in need.

Even the breaking of the bread has a certain element of change. Unknown peoples at the time of the early church are now “breaking bread” and praying in languages that were unheard then. Think of the music that we sing at Mass or the sound systems which enable us to hear the Word clearly proclaimed. The mission is constantly interacting with people and cultures. As the speed of cultural change increases, **our understanding of how to carry out mission effectively will also need to change**.

ARCHDIOCESE of MILWAUKEE - MISSION STATEMENT

To proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ
through his saving death and resurrection
by calling, forming and sending disciples
to go and make new disciples.

As a people, we are called
to encounter Jesus
through the Sacramental Life of the Church.

— PARISH MISSION STATEMENTS —

There was a time in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee when all parishes were required to develop a mission statement and to have the statement reviewed by the councils' office. The rationale was that for a parish to carry out the mission effectively the mission had to be articulated and written down. From a theological perspective, letting each parish define mission can lead to congregationalism – each parish doing its own thing. One parish may say, “we are primarily about good liturgy here.” Another parish may determine that “human concerns and social justice is our focus.” A careful look at the mission of Jesus and the mission of the Church indicates that all areas of mission are essential. None should be overlooked or minimized.

In organizing the Church around the world, canon or church law refers to “the local church.” Most readers will think that phrase is a reference to “parish.” In reality, the reference to “local church” is the diocese. Catholicism is not congregational. Catholicism is connected, united, and collaborative. It makes sense that, as part of the local church, **every parish and groupings of parishes should follow the mission statement of the diocese**. The diocese articulates this local vision in an understandable way so that all parishes work together on pastoral activity.

Some parishes and groupings of parishes have spent many hours developing a personalized statement of mission. If that statement is still providing inspiration and direction, then by all means continue to use it. **Councils are probably best served though by having a clear understanding of the common mission of Jesus and the Church** which we all share and direct their energies to carrying out that mission more effectively.

— ORGANIZING MISSION ACTIVITY —

The design of pastoral and finance councils is based on **fostering and supporting pastoral activity**. Everything that councils should be doing is all about mission. This is particularly evident in the structuring of standing commissions or committees of the pastoral council. Each of the five standing commissions correspond to areas of mission and are described below.

EVANGELIZATION AND FORMATION

Parishes must be about the evangelization of all people and the proclamation of the good news. Evangelization and formation go hand in hand and lead to one another. Pope Paul VI talked about **three types of evangelization**. The most commonly known type of evangelization is to reach out to those who have never heard about Jesus. This can be called “**external**” evangelization. There is a type of evangelization which realizes that evangelization is a lifelong process. Even those who are followers of Jesus need to be evangelized more fully and more profoundly. This can be called “**internal**” evangelization. The third type of evangelization is the realization that “I need to be evangelized” not just “those other people.” This can be called “**personal**” evangelization. Even those who may have spent years as Catholics or were educated in Catholic institutions may have gotten it wrong. It is possible to be “mis-evangelized” because of a misunderstanding of what was told or not liking what was heard.

A person who is evangelized seeks formation. Why? The person who is evangelized wants to understand faith better and wants to share the experience of faith with other believers. Formation is central to the life of a Christian. Good formation will strengthen a person's faith and help the person realize the call to evangelize others. Evangelization and formation go hand in hand.

SCHOOL ADVISORY

The sheer number of Catholic elementary schools, high schools, colleges and universities in the United States is matched by no other country in the universal Church. This **commitment to Catholic education** and formation is the reason why parishes with elementary schools have the option to establish a separate commission for the school. Another important reason is that the demands of operating a school require a different level of activity and financial support than other formation ministries. More parishes are experiencing the regionalization or consolidation of schools and so this function may be carried out on a broader level but still includes some form of parish representation and reporting to the parish councils.

WORSHIP

The Eucharist is at the center of the life of the community and every individual's spirituality. Worship is about public worship, communal and private prayer. In addition to preparing for the sacramental celebrations of the parish, this commission promotes communal and private prayer. Much of their effort is directed to preparing the liturgies for the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and the feast of Pentecost. Worship commissions focus on the readings of each Sunday, select appropriate music, and create environments in the worship space to enhance the celebration of each season and feast.

The commission **can promote personal and communal prayer** by preparing prayer services for certain times of the year or by encouraging cultural or spiritual groups to lead prayer experiences on certain days of the week. The commission may encourage the use of prayer resources or collaborate with the evangelization and formation commission to provide for workshops on prayer or to offer opportunities for retreats.

HUMAN CONCERNS

The call to follow Jesus includes the responsibility to care for one's neighbor. The human concerns commission is responsible for outreach to people in need locally, nationally and internationally. **This outreach can be characterized by the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.** This outreach can be conducted in collaboration with other agencies. Parishes are often involved in a wide range of activity in this area of mission which provides parishioners with various ways to become involved in helping and empowering others.

This area of mission includes the pastoral care of its parishioners. Parishes provide visitation and ministry to those who are in health care facilities as well as homebound. Parishes may provide support groups for those who are grieving the loss of a loved one or who have experienced separation or divorce. Some parishes offer support for those who are suffering from cancer, mental illness or struggling through unemployment. In all of these cases, the caring compassion and mercy of God should be extended to those who are suffering both mentally and physically.

STEWARDSHIP

No area of mission needs to be developed more than the building of community. So many parishes in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee were founded for specific immigrant populations. In addition to their Catholic faith, these people were bonded by their culture and family ties. These bonds are no longer a guarantee that people will continue to practice the Catholic faith. **Parishes must be more intentional about welcoming and inviting members** to become more involved in the life of the Church.

This area of mission **encompasses community building activity**. New parishioners need to be welcomed and oriented to the parish. All members need to be invited to know their gifts and to consider ways those can be shared within the community. Members should be formed to recognize their response as a disciple of Jesus to share what they have been given with the parish community and others. Some parishes have developed approaches to the sharing of assets, called planned giving. Parishes must be characterized by hospitality as well as promote and develop a sense of belonging

9

PARISH AS STRUCTURE:
FOSTER PASTORAL
ACTIVITY AND
ADMINISTER GOODS

— PARISH AS STRUCTURE: FOSTER PASTORAL ACTIVITY AND ADMINISTER GOODS —

WHAT IS A PARISH?

“A parish is a certain community of the Christian faithful, stably constituted in a particular church whose pastoral care is entrusted to a pastor as its own proper pastor under the authority of the diocesan bishop (c. 515.1)”

This definition of parish lists several aspects which describe **the essentials** of what it means to be a parish.

“A PARISH IS A CERTAIN COMMUNITY OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITHFUL . . .”

This implies that the community is intended to serve a certain geographical area or a particular cultural group of faithful Christians. Parishes with geographical boundaries serve not only the members of the parish community but all those in the identified area. Parishes set aside to serve cultural groups do not have boundaries and serve as a center for members throughout the diocese or in a particular part of the diocese. Every parish is unique because it is constituted by **unique** individuals.

“ . . . STABLY CONSTITUTED . . . ”

This means that parish communities are not formed for a short period of time. The community’s stability is one of its hallmarks as a parish. Only the diocesan bishop has the authority to establish, dissolve or notably alter parishes, and he does so only after consulting with the diocesan council of priests (c. 515.2). Parishes are not self-forming or self-dissolving groups.

“ . . . IN A PARTICULAR CHURCH . . . ”

The parish is part of the larger church through its connection with a particular church known as a diocese and shepherded by its bishop. The description of the parish includes the fact that the parish exists within a diocese “in which the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church of Christ is truly present and operative” (c. 369). Parishioners are to be conscious not only of their membership in a parish community, but also of the fact that they are members of the diocese and the universal church (c. 529).

“ . . . WHOSE PASTORAL CARE IS ENTRUSTED TO A PASTOR AS ITS OWN PROPER PASTOR . . . ”

The pastoral care of the parish community is “entrusted” to a pastor who acts as its shepherd. The diocesan bishop is authorized to appoint a pastor.

Within the parish community, the pastor carries out the duties of teaching, sanctifying, and governing in cooperation with other priests and/or deacons assigned to the parish and with the assistance of lay members of the community (*c. 519*). The pastoral care of the parish includes preaching and teaching the Word of God, catechetical formation and Catholic education, promoting social justice and evangelization. Pastoral care also includes visiting and caring for parish members, especially the sick, dying and those in special need (*cc. 528-529*). The ministry in a parish can be described as teaching, sanctifying, serving and building community or unifying.

“... UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE DIOCESAN BISHOP”

The bishop shepherds all pastoral activity within the diocese. This applies to all parishes whether they are served by diocesan or religious priests. The bishop appoints a pastor, administrator or parish director to lead each community. They are accountable to the bishop for their leadership.

In the State of Wisconsin, parishes are constituted as individual, separate corporations and each parish has a corporate board with the bishop as the president. In important financial matters, the bishop must give his approval before the parish can proceed.

— THE PARISH AND THE DIOCESE —

As stated earlier,

The local church is the building block of the universal Church. Typically, when the phrase, “the local church,” is used there is a tendency to think of the local parish. In reality, the local church is the diocese. Each diocese, under the leadership of the bishop, is organized to carry out the mission of Christ in that particular geographic area.

A clear understanding of the relationships between parish and diocese as well as between parishes is important. Parishes do not stand by themselves. They are connected to each other by the mission of Christ and by the authority of the bishop. There are three principal ways this connection can be viewed:

1. Follow Archdiocesan guidelines and policies

Over the years, the diocese has developed various guidelines and policies which impact the parish organization and ministries. Pastors, staff, and parish leaders are required to follow them. The purpose of these is not only to provide order but to insure that both the organization and the ministries are conducted in a consistent and faith-filled manner throughout the diocese.

2. Seek assistance from diocesan offices

The diocese focuses on mission and carrying out mission in various geographical locations. The bishop hires experts in the areas of mission not only to assist him but to support the parishes within the diocese. Parishes should feel free to consult with and cooperate with diocesan offices. These services are provided free of charge thanks to the Catholic Stewardship Appeal.

3. Participate in deanery assemblies and diocesan events

The Archbishop is required by church law to meet with a pastoral council to investigate, consider, and propose practical conclusions about those things which pertain to pastoral works in the diocese (Canon 511). Each parish in the diocese has representatives who select a deanery representative to the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council (APC). These deanery representatives meet during the year with representatives from each parish at deanery assemblies. Parishes should have representatives who regularly attend and participate in these meetings. It is the way for parishes to fully participate in the development of mission activity throughout the diocese.

— PARISH ORGANIZATIONAL CHART —

Whether a parish is free-standing or part of a multi-parish entity, the way the parish staff, consultative bodies and commissions or committees are organized is quite similar. The chart below provides a basic view of this organization.

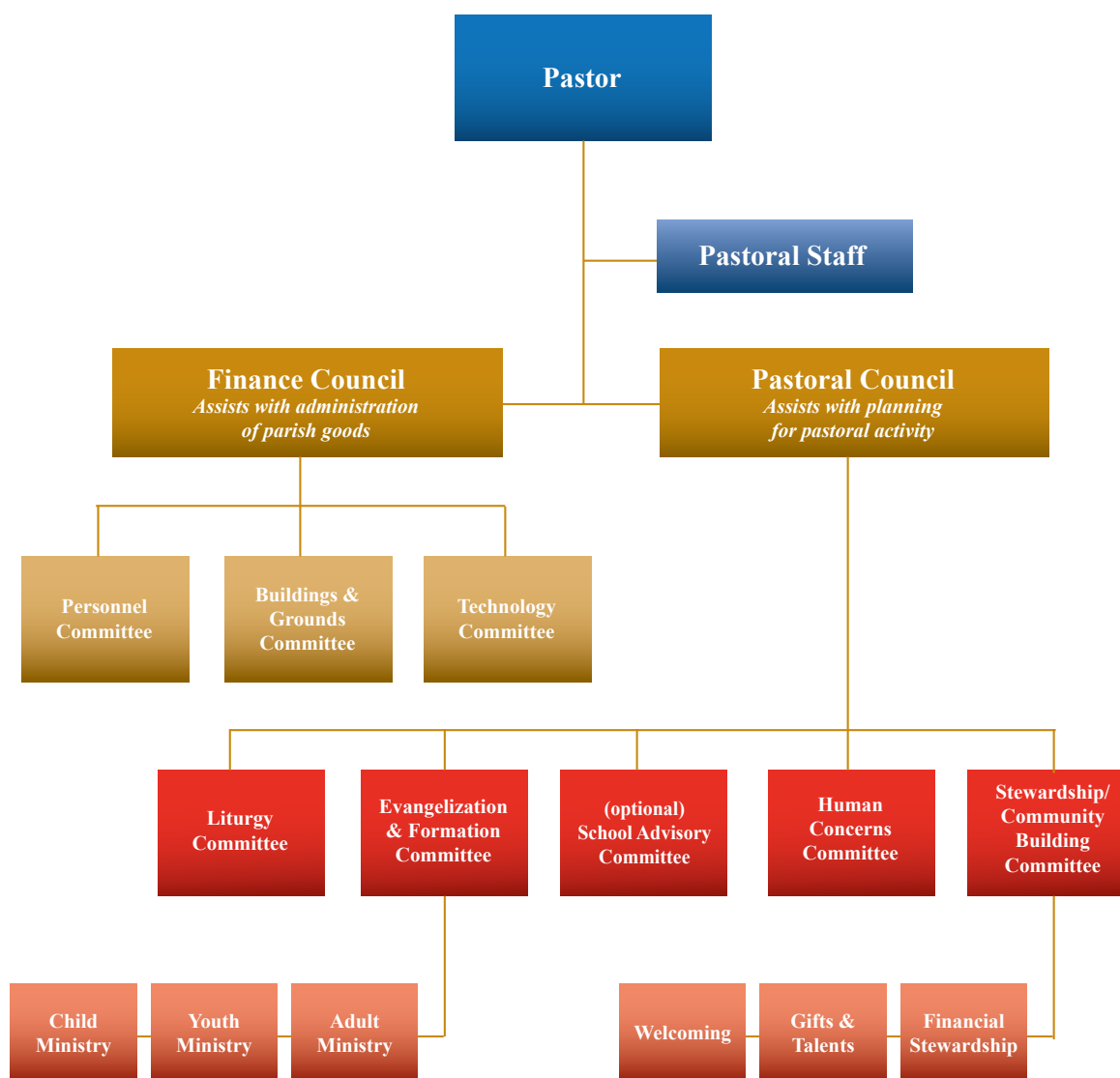


Figure C

The chart can be described moving from top to bottom.

1. **Pastor** – the pastor serves as the chief juridic officer of the parish and is appointed by the Archbishop.
2. **Pastoral Staff** – the pastoral staff is hired and supervised by the pastor to assist him with the mission of the parish and Church. Staff are appointed by the pastor to work with specific commissions or committees and function as *ex officio* members, functioning as representatives of the pastor.
3. **Consultative Bodies** – In the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, finance councils are mandated by church law and pastoral councils have been elected by the bishop after consultation with the Priests' Council. Both bodies follow norms established by the Archbishop and develop an appendix for local practice which further directs each council.
4. **Trustees** – Two trustees are elected in accordance with State of Wisconsin corporate law to function as officers of the parish corporation. Because of their office, they serve on the pastoral council and, in most parishes, serve on the finance council. This position is required by the State and has been incorporated into the function of the consultative bodies.
5. **Commissions and Committees** – Pastoral councils are required to operate with four standing commissions: evangelization and formation, worship, human concerns, and stewardship. These commissions may also establish or operate with committees or ministry teams. Finance councils can also establish committees to carry out specific administrative tasks. Other parish organizations should be seen as functioning under one of the standing commission areas.

This basic chart can be further adapted for specific use in free-standing parishes or in multi-parish entities. Parishes may also wish to develop a separate pastoral staff chart. Parishes with larger staffs are developing a “ministry-lead” or “department director” model. This allows for the pastor to have fewer people to supervise and for one person in a department to have greater responsibility as well as supervise the other people within the department. The model can include the connection of staff to the various commissions and committees within the parish.

— PASTOR —

The Archbishop can appoint priests as **pastor or administrator**. A pastor is appointed for a specific term, usually six years which is also renewable for another six years. A pastor may be assigned to serve more than one parish.

An administrator is **appointed without a term**. Often, the administrator will be appointed the pastor after a period of time. An administrator may serve in the capacity for a long period of time or in an interim capacity until a new pastor can be appointed.

When a priest is not available to fill an assignment, the Archbishop may appoint a **parish director** to serve as the pastor of the parish. The bishop can appoint a deacon, a religious brother, a woman religious or a lay person to this position. Terms are similar to priest terms.

According to Church law (canons 528-529), these are the **responsibilities of pastors and administrators**:

- Serving as chief administrator in the parish,
- Presiding at Mass, preach and teach the Gospel,
- Fostering works by which the spirit of the Gospel, including issues of social justice are promoted,

- Visiting the faithful, ministering to the sick and dying, seeking out the poor, supporting and strengthening marriage and family living,
- Calling forth leadership in others, and
- Working with the bishop(s) and their brother priests to model and promote concern and partnership with the diocesan and universal church.

— PERMANENT DEACONS —

Permanent deacons are ordained to be “like Christ, who made himself the ‘deacon’ or servant of all.” **Deacons assist the bishop and priests in a variety of ways.** They enter into a covenant with the pastor of the parish where they serve which identifies the ministries in which the deacon will be involved. In addition to ministry in the parish, most deacons work full-time in a business, profession or public service. Most deacons are married and have children.

— PASTORAL STAFF —

In order for all parish ministries to be carried out effectively, **a pastor collaborates with paid and volunteer laity who assist in different areas of ministry.** The pastor recruits and hires lay ministers with expertise in areas of ministry, such as liturgy, faith formation, stewardship, and finances, who have responsibility to administer one of these areas under the supervision of the pastor. They are often referred to as the “pastoral staff.” The pastor assigns them as *ex officio* members of one of the commissions or committees of the pastoral council. They represent him and his responsibility for that area of ministry. The pastoral staff members usually meet on a regular basis with the pastor as a group and on an individual basis.

There are other paid employees in the parish who may “support” the ministry area and the administrator of the programs in the ministry. These employees are referred to as “support staff” or “administrative assistants.” They also play an important role in ministries of the parish. These parish employees are supervised by the director of their particular area of ministry.

None of these employees – pastoral staff or administrative assistants – are supervised by or accountable to either councils or commissions/committees.

— PASTORAL COUNCIL —

“If the diocesan bishop judges it opportune after he has heard the presbyteral (priests) council, a pastoral council is to be established in each parish, over which the 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.” (c. 536.1)

WHO SERVES ON THE PASTORAL COUNCIL?

A pastoral council is a group of people, **chosen from and by the parish community**, which consults with the pastor(s) in order to foster and plan pastoral activity. The **trustees of the parish corporation** also serve on the pastoral council by virtue of their office.

WHAT DOES THE COUNCIL DO?

The parish pastoral council, **similar to the archdiocesan pastoral council**, is to “investigate all those things which pertain to pastoral works, weighing them and proposing practical conclusions about them” (cc. 511, 536).

In a broad sense, this main purpose of the council to serve as stewards of the mission of the church can be described as **pastoral planning**. This understanding is consistent with its nature as the wisdom group within the community. The pastor and the pastoral council collaboratively focus on the mission of the church.

The pastoral council has three principal purposes.

- To serve as a vehicle for **fulfilling the pastoral mission of Jesus and the Church** in a specific part of the Archdiocese;
- To strive to **build a community of disciples** who recognize their baptismal calls to lives of holiness, witness and service; and
- To engage in a **continuous process of pastoral planning** which takes into account the needs and priorities of its parishioners, the Archdiocese, the broader community, and the world.

WHY ARE THERE PASTORAL COUNCILS?

The pastoral council is an **elective body** which means it is put in place by the bishop, after consulting with the Priests' Council, to assist the pastor with fostering pastoral activity. All parishes or clusters of parishes must have a pastoral council. Clustered parishes may share a single pastoral council.

The council is a **consultative body** (c. 536.2). As such, it exists as a wisdom group commissioned to discern, proclaim, and make visible the presence and action of the Spirit within the community. Its very nature is to provide counsel. The prudent pastor should welcome the advice of the Council, especially when there is consensus, and act upon it.

Historically, the term “consultative” refers to the bringing together of appropriate, informed parties to identify the best possible resolution of issues and to set a direction for the future. This type of consultative process has been **evident throughout church history** and is traceable to the time of the apostles and the upper room. Beginning with the Council of Jerusalem in the Acts of the Apostles, there have been numerous regional, national, and universal gatherings of church leadership.

Today the **pastoral council continues this ancient tradition** by consulting on how best to carry out the mission of the church in a particular place. Council members need to be open to different viewpoints and be as effective at listening as at articulating one's own opinion.

The pastoral council is **governed by the norms determined by the bishop** (c. 536.2). Every parish and cluster follows the same norms. Some norms allow for choices and these are specified in the parish or cluster appendix to the norms. The norms themselves can only be changed by the bishop. The appendix can be revised as needed by the consensus of the pastoral council.

The pastor of a parish is appointed by the bishop to shepherd (Latin word for shepherd is "pastor") the faithful in that particular area of the diocese. The **pastor is responsible and accountable for all pastoral activity in the parish. Pastoral activity** is so great at all parishes that the pastor needs to hire staff to assist with specific areas of ministry. These staff members are accountable to and supervised by the pastor. They participate in the commissions or committees of the council as specified in their job descriptions and serve as ex officio members.

All the pastoral activity in a parish is **organized under the pastoral council structure**. The council serves as the wisdom group from the community which forms the parish. The council provides the means for the pastor to consult on important parish issues as well as set a direction for the community and have the capability to implement it. The most effective parishes have effective pastoral councils.

Council members have a **very important role**. To be effective in that role, members must be people of strong faith and committed to the Church's mission. They also need to be formed and trained as council members.

HOW DOES THE COUNCIL FUNCTION?

The pastoral council functions according to **norms issued by the Bishop** with the inclusion of local practices in an appendix to the norms. The pastoral council fulfills its purpose in four key ways:

- **study parish issues and propose practical conclusions** to the pastor;
- **assess and promote the pastoral activity** of the parish;
- **collaborate with parish commissions/committees and the Finance Council** to carry out the mission of the Church;
- **develop long-range strategies** for the future of the parish in collaboration with local leadership and parishioners as well as in conjunction with the Archbishop's pastoral priorities and initiatives.

The pastoral council is the parish structure which serves as the **hub for mission and ministerial activity** in the parish. Every pastoral staff member and parish volunteer is somehow connected through a council, commission, committee or ministry team. The council should also function in a way that incorporates the **essential elements of a good organization**:

- **Innovation** – the Church is *semper reformanda*, always changing. Pastoral councils must be dedicated to the evangelization of all people, aware of the changing nature of the parish population, and hopeful for the future.
- **Adaptation** – because the membership of the parish changes, pastoral councils must be able to deal with unexpected developments, conflict, and, at times, crisis.
- **Evaluation** – at the heart of Christianity is the call to conversion. Councils must lead the way in looking at what the parish does well and how the parish can improve.
- **Graduation** – just as council members have responded to the call to serve, they must also invite, support, as well as account for the preparation and training of others in the parish to assume ministry and leadership responsibilities in the Church.

The council should **meet regularly**, have a **well-prepared agenda** for each meeting, conduct meetings with **prayerful discernment** leading to **consensus decision-making**, and **develop planned outcomes** for the enhancement of pastoral activity in the parish.

— FINANCE COUNCIL —

“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 goods of the parish (c. 537).”

WHO SERVES ON THE FINANCE COUNCIL?

A Finance Council is a group of people, some **appointed by the pastor** and others **chosen from and by the pastoral council because of their financial expertise**, which consults with the pastor(s) in regard to the administration of parish assets. One or both **trustees may serve** on the Finance Council.

WHAT DOES THE COUNCIL DO?

The parish finance council, **similar to the archdiocesan finance council**, “prepares . . . a budget of the income and expenditures which are foreseen” and “at the end of the year examines an account of the revenues and expenses” (c. 493).

The finance council has five main purposes:

- To **provide advice and guidance** to the pastor in the administration of parish assets;
- To **prepare the budget** and **review financial statements**;
- To **monitor the financial condition of the parish**, including regular audits/reviews and internal financial controls;
- To **review any indebtedness** of the parish and assist the pastor in taking care of interest and capital payments; and
- To **provide an annual financial report** to the parish.

WHY ARE THERE FINANCE COUNCILS?

The finance council is **mandated** by canon law. Each parish is required to have a finance council. In the case of clustered parishes, the parishes may share a pastoral council but each must have a finance council. The finance councils are permitted to meet on the same evening at the same location.

The council is a **consultative body** which provides financial expertise and insight for the pastor regarding the administration of the financial and administrative assets of the parish. Because of the often confidential nature of the information which the council reviews, council meetings are closed and not open to the public. However, the council's activity is shared with the pastoral council at meetings which are open to parishioners and recorded in the pastoral council minutes. The finance council can and should invite staff members and parishioners who may have insight or expertise to address a certain agenda item. These people, like the Director of Administrative Services or Business Manager, are important resources to the council.

The finance council strives to account for parish finances with **transparency**. The council shares the financial condition of the parish regularly with the pastoral council. Regular reports should also be made available to the parishioners, at minimum, through a comprehensive annual report. Audits or parish reviews should be conducted and reviewed on an annual or biennial basis as determined by the Parish Finance Office. The council should support and monitor those financial controls which are required by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the Archdiocese. These controls and reporting methods assure parishioners that the parish adheres to sound financial management practices and is able to account for all gifts, contributions and expenditures.

HOW DOES THE COUNCIL FUNCTION?

The finance council fulfills its purpose by functioning in a number of key ways:

- **review and assist with the administration of the finances and assets** of the parish;
- **prepare a budget** which promotes pastoral activity in the parish;
- **collaborate with the pastoral council and commissions/committees** to provide the resources to carry out the mission of the Church;
- **develop financial forecasts and a master site plan** for the future growth of the parish and its missionary activity.

The finance council is the parish structure which **stewards the resources for mission and ministerial activity** in the parish. Every staff position, every program, any activity that takes place in the parish is funded through the budget which is developed, approved, and monitored by the finance council.

— CORPORATE BOARD —

Each archdiocesan parish in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee is an independent religious corporation established according to the civil statutes of the State of Wisconsin.

The parish corporation is a civil body created for legal purposes. The corporation, as such, has **authority and competence only in those civil and secular matters** for which it was created. The finance council is part of the decision-making process in these civil and secular matters and the pastoral council is consulted prior to the request for action by the corporate board.

WHO ARE THE OFFICERS OF THE PARISH CORPORATE BOARD?

The **directors of the parish corporation board** are as follows:

President	-	the archbishop
Vice-President	-	the pastor
Trustee Secretary	-	elected lay member of the parish
Trustee Treasurer	-	elected lay member of the parish
Member	-	a vicar general of the diocese

The **lay members of the board serve two-year terms**. They are elected by the general parish membership. The pastor may select a nominee and any parishioner can be placed on a ballot by securing ten signatures from registered parishioners. In many parishes, the pastor's nominee runs unopposed and is elected by acclamation. The number of terms a trustee may serve is not limited but many parishes encourage a balance between new and veteran trustees.

Full information about the trustee position is available from the **Parish Trustee Manual**.

HOW DOES THE CORPORATE BOARD FUNCTION?

The parish officers **convene as required** by actions of the corporation. There is no stipulated number of annual corporation meetings. Meetings are held at the discretion of the pastor. The trustee secretary maintains the minutes of corporate meetings and maintains copies of actions of the corporation.

The corporate board must administer all the **temporal matters that are affected by civil law**. Those matters which require official actions of the corporation are:

- the acquisition, lease or sale of property
- execution of construction or major remodeling contracts
- investment management
- lending or borrowing money
- establishment of endowed or restricted funds
- similar transactions

WHAT IS A PROXY?

A proxy is a **document signed by the archbishop and vicar general whereby they both waive their attendance** at the meeting of the parish corporate board **and ask the pastor as vice-president to vote on their behalf.**

In order to secure the vote of the archbishop and vicar general, a letter explaining the proposal is sent directly to the archbishop by the pastor. The letter includes the signatures of the two trustees and the chair of the pastoral council. **The signature by the pastoral council chair verifies that the council was consulted** on the matter and has reached consensus.

If the archbishop and vicar general support the proposal, they give their vote “by proxy” through the Archdiocesan Chancery Office to the pastor.

A **major construction or remodeling project at the parish requires a sequence of proxies** for the various stages of the effort. The Building Commission Guidelines at the archdiocesan website describe the four stages for which proxies are required.

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FINANCE COUNCIL: ADMINISTERING OF GOODS

The finance council assists the pastor with the administration of parish goods. Mission and resources go hand in hand. The way that the mission can be carried out is affected by the availability of resources. The finance council collaborates with the pastoral council by making certain that there are sufficient finances and adequate facilities to carry out the mission activity of the parish.

— PURPOSES —

The finance council is **mandated** by canon law to “aid the pastor in the administration of parish goods” (c. 537). This aid can be specifically described in five purposes. The finance council:

1. **Provides advice and guidance to the pastor in the administration of parish assets**
2. **Prepares the parish budget, budgets for extraordinary expenditures, and reviews financial statements**
3. **Monitors the financial condition of the parish, including regular financial reviews or audits as well as the internal financial controls**
4. **Reviews any indebtedness and assists the pastor in paying interest on loans or mortgages and taking care to repay capital debt in due time**
5. **Provides assistance in the formulation and communication of an annual financial report to the parish community as required under canon law**

These are the basic tasks of the finance council. All of them can be summed up in a brief statement – **the finance council “makes certain that there are funds available to carry out the mission of Christ effectively and that the assets of the parish are managed properly.”**

The role of the finance council is essential to the parish. Parishes which do not follow proper financial controls put the parish at risk for criminal activity. Parishes which do not regularly operate with balanced budgets or continually use parish reserves to do so can compromise the financial health and mission activity of the parish for years or, in some cases, decades. Finance councils should not become miserly or overly-suspicious but they must be conscious of the responsibility to wisely steward the parish’s resources as well as insist upon standard money-handling procedures.

Finance councils are **resourced by a DAS (Director of Administrative Services) or a Business Manager**. These pastoral staff members are hired and supervised by the pastor. They have the day-to-day responsibility to manage the parish assets. The pastor invites the DAS to the finance council meetings with the intention that the staff member and the finance council will work together on the common purpose of stewarding the parish assets. While the DAS attends and participates in the meetings, he or she is not a member and may not vote on any matters before the finance council.

The finance council **may invite other staff members or experts** to the meetings. A time should be clearly designated on the agenda and the guest should be prepared for whatever presentation or discussion is desired.

Because of the confidential nature of finance council matters, **most of the meeting is closed to parishioners**. However, in the interest of transparency, Archbishop ListECKI has given pastors the **discretion to open parts of the meeting to parishioners**. Those parts should be clearly indicated on the agenda. After the “open” part of the agenda is completed, parishioners should be invited to leave and the council meeting continues in closed session.

— RELATED TASKS —

Most finance councils should be able to complete the five purposes efficiently and effectively during the meeting year. There are other related tasks which are not specifically defined in the purposes. Vibrant finance councils are often seeking ways to serve their parishes more effectively and can look to these tasks as a potential “to do” list.

- o **Establish/work with committees**

Councils can be well served by establishing or working with committees. These committees can be made up of parishioners who are expert in specific administrative areas, such as buildings and grounds, personnel, and technology. These committees can save the council countless hours as well as provide the insight and specialized know-how which benefits each area.

- o **Financial projections**

Finance councils need to think not only of the current year but plan for the long-term of the parish. They need to study contribution or giving trends, expenses, salaries, and facilities maintenance. If the parish is undertaking a building or renovation project, the diocese will require a five-year financial projection to insure that the parish will be able to fund the project without affecting the mission activity in the parish.

- o **Management of parish funds and banking arrangements**

The council should be consulted on the proposed change of a bank or financial institution where the parish accounts are located as well as the management of reserves or investment funds. This should be done carefully and with thoughtful consideration. There are instances however when this may be advantageous for the parish to consider – higher interest rates, lower costs or better service. Councils should be sensitive to any potential conflicts of interest.

- o **Make certain individual ministry areas receive regular financial reports on year-to-date comparisons with the budget projection**

A parish budget is made up of many individual program budgets with various staff and perhaps even some volunteers who are responsible for monitoring and managing these budgets. In order for this to happen effectively, program or ministry financial statements on monthly activity should be provided to the person responsible for the management of the budget.

- o **Monitor the facilities of the parish/parish cemeteries**

The facilities and property of the parish are essential assets of the parish and need to be stewarded as intently as the finances. Councils monitor the facilities well when they ensure that proper maintenance and updating of facilities takes place as well as monitor facility use and changes in ministerial needs for adequate space.

- o **Building projects**

Parish memberships can increase or decrease and buildings sometimes need to be replaced or remodeled. Renovation and new construction projects are managed through a collaboration of the finance and pastoral councils. A joint building committee is established to study the feasibility of a project and to follow the project through its construction and financing. This committee will work with the Archdiocesan Building Commission and follow its guidelines.

o **Master site plan/maintenance plan**

Parishes need to develop a master plan which should also include a maintenance/replacement plan. The master site plan is essential in order to maximize the usage of all parish facilities as well as account for future changes to the campus. A maintenance/replacement – usually part of the master site plan – helps the parish to manage and budget for a systematic improvement of various building systems and components. Parishes that defer maintenance to their buildings end up increasing the expense rather than postponing it.

o **Technology**

Information and communication systems are essential to parish office productivity and to keeping parishioners informed and engaged. Parishes today need to manage the replacement and updating of their technology. Good management in this area will allow a parish to systematically keep its systems current without spending a large amount of money in any given year.

o **Personnel practices**

A well-administered parish has established hiring, supervision, and day-to-day policies and procedures for employees. Parish staff are the most important resource in the parish. They are the ones who organize, coordinate, and support the ministries in the parish. The Office for Human Resources can assist councils or personnel committees in this function.

o **Confidential Financial Statements**

Each year, the Archdiocesan Office for Parish Financial Services sends out forms for parishes to complete regarding their financial status. These reports are required by the President of the corporation – the Archbishop – so that he knows the financial condition of the parish. The report is also used to determine the assessment for the next fiscal year. These statements are usually prepared by the Director of Administrative Services but they should be reviewed and discussed by the council as well.

o **Understand the proxy process as it applies to parish assets/extraordinary acts of administration**

Under the corporate law structure in the State of Wisconsin, extraordinary acts of administration must have the approval of the corporate board. All of these actions will directly involve some members of the finance council, such as the pastor and trustees. Because proxies involve the assets of the parish, the finance council will be intimately involved in the decision-making process for buying or selling property or buildings, conducting a capital campaign or making repairs which exceed a minimum of approximately \$30,000.

— ROLE OF CHAIR —

The finance council has only one office, the chairperson. The role of the chair can be described in seven key ways:

- **Assists with planning the agendas**

Before each council meeting, the chair and the pastor (this meeting may include the Director of Administrative Services) should meet to discuss and set the agenda for the meeting. The agenda should include time allotments for each item so that all items can be completed.

- **Confidential nature of meetings but can be open portions**

When preparing the agenda, the chair should be aware that the earlier part of the meeting may be open to parishioners. This part may include the monthly financial statement, some committee reports or any other matter which the pastor determines to be public information. Parishioners will be asked to leave when the closed part of the agenda is discussed.

- **Facilitates the meetings**

The chair facilitates the meetings, allowing for all members to freely discuss, adhering as closely as possible to the time allotments, and completing the full agenda. The chair follows through on any “action” items by making certain that the action decided upon is or will be completed. Unresolved or tabled agenda items also need to be tracked by the chair.

- **Takes notes of important discussions/actions**

The finance council does not keep minutes of its proceedings. The council chair also serves as the recorder of council activity. During the meeting, the chair is noting actions and important developments in discussions. The notes of the council are a summary of actions and discussions. The notes should be no longer than a page or two in length.

- **Communication with pastoral council**

Good communication with the pastoral council is essential. Notes should be shared with the council which will be published in the minutes of the pastoral council. The agenda for the finance council should also be shared with the chair of the pastoral council and vice versa. Both councils should be well-informed about what the other council has under consideration.

- **Communication with committees of the finance council**

If the finance council has established committees or if they will be established, these committees should send a report of their meetings to the council. The committees are task groups. The chair should maintain good working relationships with the committee chairs.

- **Maintain a list of council members/council members trained**

Councils function best when members are well-trained. The chair should make certain that all council members have a copy of The Parish Councils Manual and that they have completed video training. The goal of 100% training for council and committees should be set. Finance councils are able to easily assemble committee “mini manuals” from The Commissions and Committees Manual. The chair should also maintain or provide for a contact list of council members and committee members.

— FINANCE COUNCIL BASICS CHECKLIST —

For review at the first or end-of-the-year Meeting

Check if
Completed

Item

-
- | | | |
|-------|-----|--|
| _____ | 1. | Council appendix to finance council norms is consistent with current practice. |
| _____ | 2. | The parish has a maintenance plan for facilities and a master site plan. |
| _____ | 3. | All council members have completed video training. |
| _____ | 4. | Regular meetings of the finance council follow an agenda prepared by the pastor and chair of the council. |
| _____ | 5. | Prayer is an important part of every meeting. |
| _____ | 6. | Each council member has a copy of <u>Parish Councils Manual</u> and is familiar with its contents. |
| _____ | 7. | Finance council notes are shared with the pastoral council and pastoral council minutes are made available to each finance council member. |
| _____ | 8. | The parish follows all financial controls required by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. |
| _____ | 9. | The parish conducts an annual/biennial audit or financial review as determined by the Archdiocesan Office for Parish Financial Services. |
| _____ | 10. | The finance council reports regularly to the parish regarding the financial standing and publishes an annual summary report of the parish financial condition. |

The area(s) we will improve/complete this year is/are:

11

PASTORAL COUNCIL: FOSTERING PASTORAL ACTIVITY

The pastoral council assists the pastor with fostering pastoral activity. Pastoral activity or mission will require resources. The way that the mission can be carried out is affected by the availability of resources. The pastoral council collaborates with the finance council in making certain that programs and activities work with the funds and the facilities which the parish has available.

— PURPOSES —

The pastoral council is **elected** by the bishop of the diocese after consultation with the Priests' Council to "assist in fostering pastoral activity" (c. 536.2). "Elected" means that the bishop can "choose" to have a pastoral council whereas he is "mandated" by canon law to have a finance council. Bishops of dioceses with large parish populations and well-educated parishioners see these councils as a way to more actively engage the faithful in the carrying out the mission of the Church. Council members know the people and the area. They have valuable wisdom and insight about pastoral activity from their connection to their parish and their own journey of faith. According to the norms for pastoral councils, a pastoral council does the following:

1. **Fulfills the pastoral mission of Jesus and the Church in a specific part of the Archdiocese.**
2. **Strives to build a community of disciples who recognize their baptismal calls to lives of holiness, witness and service.**
3. **Engages in a continuous process of pastoral planning, which takes into account the needs and priorities of its parishioners, the Archdiocese, the broader community, and the world.**

These are the basic tasks of the pastoral council. In short, the pastoral council's purpose is **to make certain that the mission of Christ is being carried out effectively and that the faith needs of the parishioners are being met.**

The pastoral council focuses on **pastoral activity**. What is pastoral activity? Pastoral activity has to do with mission and ministry to the people of the parish and to the people in the surrounding area. The council does not manage as much as it visions or looks to the future. The pastoral council asks questions like: How are our people being served in this area of ministry? Who are we not reaching? How can we serve better in this area? Have our neighborhoods changed? What should we be doing that we are not? A council discerns these questions, seeks responses, and then comes up with solutions.

The pastoral council relies heavily on the standing commissions or committees. **Committees are the task groups of the council.** These committees work with a staff member and together they provide a level of expertise in each area of mission. The council must develop a collaborative relationship with each committee. The pastoral council invites or recommends to the committees rather than orders or requires the committee to take some action. A council may have liaisons to each committee in order to provide a communication link and promote dialogue. Some councils meet with each committee annually and, in some cases, several times each year. Other councils have a common committee meeting night so that not only councils can communicate better with committees but committees can communicate better with each other.

Meetings of the pastoral council are **open to all parishioners**. All the baptized are charged to be missionaries. That is, they are charged to learn the mission of Jesus and to share it with others. Parishioners, therefore, are welcome to attend any meeting of the pastoral council and to observe. The chair may invite these parishioners to participate in a discussion or to share an insight regarding one of the agenda items. Parishioners are welcome to submit agenda items as well but these should be submitted to the executive or agenda committee where it can be determined if the discussion is appropriate to a council or one of the committees.

Councils can invite **guest presenters** to speak on various mission or ministry topics. This can include parish staff members, diocesan staff members or experts in some fields of pastoral ministry which may be under consideration by the council. Pastoral councils may also read and discuss papal encyclicals, Bishops' Conference documents, books or articles. In order to plan for pastoral activity, council members need to not only be well-informed but become aware of new developments and possibilities.

— RELATED TASKS —

Effective pastoral councils are continually trying “**to do more**” and “**to look to the future**.” In addition to the purposes of the council, there are other related tasks which are not specifically defined in the purposes. Vibrant pastoral councils can look to these tasks as a potential “to do” list.

- o **Identify and develop parish leaders who are called to serve**
The annual nomination process for new council members should be viewed as a way of identifying potential leaders in the parish. It is very easy for councils to look upon the nomination process as a step toward “filling vacant slots on the council membership.” In reality, this is the opportunity for councils to form future ministers and leaders for the parish community. The establishment and improvement of pastoral activity requires well-formed and dedicated ministers and leaders. Councils need to assist in the development of a leadership pool.
- o **Monitor the parish organization for mission and ministry**
It is very easy for pastoral councils to fall into a “maintenance” mode or to “keep things going as they are” mentality. The membership of parishes changes over time. In any given year, people are moving in and moving out of a parish. A parish can be focused on providing most of its ministries for families with children and not realize that the parish has become one of empty-nesters and seniors. It is the role of the council to be in touch with these changes and to discuss and recommend solutions.
- o **Review the Parish Summary Report which is taken from the annual *Status Animarum* report**
Every year, the parish submits an annual report about ministry activity in the parish. This report is collated into a 15-year summary of the parish activity. The report is available upon request from the Office for Planning and Councils. An annual review of this report by the council can provide rich insight and lead to some priorities which can be addressed during the council year. This data report is one of the metrics which councils can rely on to help them understand in what ways the parish is growing as well as those areas which need attention.

o **Collaborate with pastoral staff and committees**

The pastoral council is a collaborative entity. The council consults and helps organize mission efforts. Councils need to work collaboratively with parish staff and the committees who assist them in their ministerial efforts. Some councils meet regularly with the assigned staff person and committee of the council to discuss the ministry and to discern ways that the council may be able to assist the ministry. It is very easy for “silo” thinking to predominate in a parish. The pastoral council needs to promote collaboration among ministers and ministry.

o **Consult on proxy requests**

The pastoral council is a consultative body with a role to play in the mission of the Church. As legal corporations, there is also a civil structure to how the parish functions. The corporate activity is brought into the consultative and collaborative role of the council. Whenever the corporate officers of the parish – pastor and two trustees – are contemplating an official act of the corporation, they are to consult with the pastoral council before proceeding. The chair of the pastoral council is required to sign all proxy requests after this consultation.

o **Participate in priest placement consultations**

Whenever a pastor’s term ends or a vacancy occurs, a representative from Priest Placement will meet with the pastoral council to discuss the status of the parish and get their input about the renewal of a term or the skills and qualities which may be needed from a new pastor. The appointment of a new pastor is made with the recommendation of priest placement and the approval of the Archbishop.

o **Representation at deanery assemblies and other diocesan events**

Each parish is part of an interconnected organization of diocese, national conference of bishops, and universal Church. Parishes, therefore, need to stay connected with other parishes, the diocese, national and international developments in the Church. The most common way that this happens is through deanery assemblies. Each parish selects representatives who attend these meetings to share what is happening in the parish, participate in diocesan initiatives, and communicate with the bishop about important pastoral needs. There are often other diocesan events which parishes should also consider attending.

— ROLE OF OFFICERS —

The pastoral council has three officers: chair, vice-chair or chair-elect, and secretary. These officers and the pastor form a collaborative leadership team for the council. Their collective role can be described in eight important ways:

• **Assist with planning the agendas**

Good meetings happen when agendas are well-planned. Optimally, agendas are planned at a face-to-face meeting. However, technology allows for agendas to be planned via phone conference, skype or email. Setting time for shared discussion about the items on the agenda, designating the action or outcome for the item, and the amount of time dedicated to each item are essential in agenda planning.

- **Facilitate the meetings**

Each officer as well as the pastor plays an important role in facilitating the meetings. The pastor must be interested, engaged and participative. The chair's role is to insure that everyone has an opportunity to participate in the discussion, follow the agenda and the time allotments, and lead the council to consensus on action items. The vice-chair or chair elect is prepared to chair the meeting in the event of the chair's absence and is observing and learning from how the meeting is facilitated. The secretary is recording the meeting so that members and parishioners have a summary of what took place at the meeting.

- **Take minutes of meetings and use related communication media**

Meeting minutes serve two important purposes. First, they are a summary of what took place at the meeting for reference by those who attended. Secondly, they are a way of communicating the activity of the council with the entire parish. Minutes should be posted on a parish website and some printed copies made available in case parishioners do not have access to the website. Some parishes publish a short summary of both the council agenda and the meeting results in the bulletin for maximum communication. Communication is especially important with parish leadership. Parish staff and committee members can be part of an email network which keeps everyone informed about parish activity and plans.

- **Communicate with finance council**

There must be a good working relationship between the pastoral council and the finance council. A good relationship begins with communication, especially between the council chairs. The councils also have a number of shared members. They have a responsibility to keep each council informed about the other's activity. The notes from the finance council should be shared with all the members of the pastoral council and included within the packet of council minutes and committee reports. Good communication is essential during the preparation of the budget with a clear understanding that the final decision on the parish budget rests with the finance council.

- **Communicate with committees of the pastoral council**

Some councils rely on liaisons to maintain good communication with committees. Others will meet regularly with the committees during a council meeting. Still other councils may have a common meeting night which allows for council members to attend various committee meetings as well as get to know the members of a committee.

- **Maintain list of council members at the parish and with the Archdiocese**

Current membership rosters are very important in a parish. You cannot communicate with people when you are unable to contact them. Even though this is a responsibility of the secretary, all officers should be involved. These rosters of members are also important to communication with the diocese and on the deanery level. By the late summer, the parish secretary or the parish person designated to update the emailing lists should make any necessary changes. If outgoing council members receive mailings and new members do not, it is because the parish, not the diocese, has failed to update the lists.

- **Train members and distribute manuals**

The officers should set a goal to have all council members trained and in possession of a Parish Councils Manual. Most training is now available on the Archdiocesan website. Manuals can be downloaded from the website. Additional training will be made available for council officers. Staff from the Office for Planning and Councils is always available to assist parishes with special or individualized formation needs. Simply contact the office.

- **Promote “Parish Leader Update”**

Each month with the exception of July, a newsletter called, “The Parish Leader Update” is emailed to every council member in the diocese. The purpose of the newsletter is to keep leaders informed about news and opportunities which may be helpful to parish leaders. Council members will only receive the “Update” if the parish list of members is current. Councils may want to highlight certain articles in the “Update” and discuss them at a council meeting.

— PASTORAL COUNCIL BASICS CHECKLIST —

For review at the first or end-of-the-year Meeting

Check if
Completed

Item

-
- | | | |
|-------|-----|--|
| _____ | 1. | Council appendix to pastoral council norms is consistent with current practice. |
| _____ | 2. | The parish has a tactical (annual) plan or a strategic (long-term) plan in place for the coming year. |
| _____ | 3. | All council members have completed video training. |
| _____ | 4. | Regular meetings of the pastoral council follow an agenda prepared by the Executive Committee and the pastor. |
| _____ | 5. | Commissions and committees provide regular reports to the council and work with an assigned staff person. |
| _____ | 6. | Trustees are elected in a manner consistent with Wisconsin State Statutes. |
| _____ | 7. | Prayer is an important part of every meeting. |
| _____ | 8. | Each council member has a copy of <u>Parish Councils Manual</u> and is familiar with its contents. |
| _____ | 9. | Council minutes and a meeting summary are made public to the parish. |
| _____ | 10. | The parish representative(s) to the deanery assembly selected by the council attend(s) and participate(s) in the meetings. |

The area(s) we will improve/complete this year is/are:

12

PLANNING THE COUNCIL YEAR

Council officers and the pastor need to view council activity from an annual perspective. What do we hope to accomplish this year? If there is not an overall view of the council year, councils move from meeting to meeting and tend to miss or delay important activities or to overlook significant needs. Councils should be aware that there are regular items which will appear on their agendas as well as selected items which the council chooses. An “annual agenda planning” list should be put together at the beginning of the council year, used to plan agendas, and then reviewed and revised for the next council year. The types of potential council items are described in the next sections of this chapter.

— DATA-BASED INFORMATION —

Finance councils have easily established agenda items which flow from the **financial reporting** of the parish. Each meeting should be initially focused on the monthly and/or quarterly financial statement. The year-to-date statement is helpful in other agenda items, such as budget, confidential financial statement, and annual report to the parish.

Pastoral councils need to focus on their **parish summary report** which is compiled from the annual *Status Animarum* report. The report is submitted in February. The summary report is available in the spring. Councils can analyze this report in the spring or in the late summer. The summary report is to the pastoral council what the financial statements are to the finance council. The summary report describes membership, sacramental, Mass attendance, financial, and enrollment activity in the parish for the previous calendar year. Councils should become aware of the ways to use this report to improve ministerial effectiveness.

Both councils are also able to use the **demographic services** of the Office for Planning and Councils to understand the geographic and neighborhood areas which their parish serves. These studies provide information about the current reality and future projections for the area. Parishes most often use these services in conjunction with a strategic planning initiative.

— LITURGICAL/SEASONAL/EVENT CYCLES —

The councils function within the parish, Church, and calendar cycles in addition to the council cycle. These cycles need to be considered when looking at the **annual council calendar**.

It is very important to be aware of the **liturgical seasons** of Advent and Lent as well as the great feasts of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost when planning the council year. In addition, the summer months can be challenging for councils because of warm weather and vacation schedules. Some councils do not schedule a meeting in July for this reason. Others may not schedule a December meeting because of the holidays or host a holiday party instead.

There are **four event cycles** which directly impact the councils: officer selection, ministry program calendars, parish budget and council nominations.

- **Officer Selection**

Councils need to determine when officers are selected for the new council year. The choices seem to be between either the last meeting of a council year or the beginning of a new one.

- **Ministry Program Calendars**

A number of parish ministry calendars are based on the school year. Even though programs begin in the late summer, much activity surrounds the preparation of next year's budget with the end of the calendar year and the beginning of a new one. Changes in these programs will likely need to be made in advance of that time of year. Other parish ministry programs function on a year-round basis but they also have their cycles. Even human concerns ministry reaches a peak during the cold-weather and Christmas seasons.

- **Parish Budget**

In most parishes, budget time is filled with hopes, plans and dreams. This activity needs to be well-organized, coordinated and time-managed so that the budget is completed with a maximum of involvement and a minimum of time.

- **Council Nominations**

In addition to identifying candidates for pastoral council service, the nomination process is a way of identifying new leadership for the parish. The promotion, implementation and follow through of the nomination process should be carefully planned.

— TACTICAL/STRATEGIC EVENTS —

Every council member should be able to say: “**this is what our council is working on this year.**” At minimum, every council should have some annual priorities or tactical plans for what they want to accomplish during the council year.

For **one-year or tactical plans**, councils can determine at a meeting what are the two or three areas which they want to address during the course of the year. Some councils conduct a prioritizing event with all commission and committee members. There is even a variation where parishioners can be involved either in conjunction with the nomination process or at a separate time in the fall of the year.

More parishes are becoming interested in **strategic or 3 to 5-year plans** because of their ability to influence all the parish ministries rather than a few and with the intention of effecting significant change rather than small-scale change. A strategic plan allows a parish to accomplish major shifts in ministry, build or remodel buildings to carry out ministry more effectively or revitalize the parish. Whether the parish employs its own planning consultants or uses the services of the Office for Planning and Councils, the plan is only as effective as the implementation. There has to be a sound parish organization and effective leadership in place for a strategic plan to have a long-term impact.

Lastly, councils must strive to help parishes become **effective organizations** and should build into their annual calendars the opportunities to exercise the four characteristics of effective organizations: evaluation, adaptation, innovation, graduation. Here are some ideas about how this can be planned:

- **Evaluation**

Councils should regularly take the time to evaluate what is going on in the parish. Finance councils do this with finances and should also do this in regard to facilities, personnel, technology and any other administrative areas. Pastoral councils do this with the summary report and meeting regularly with Commissions to discuss and evaluate the effectiveness of the ministries.

- **Adaptation**

Remember the saying, “the best laid schemes of mice and men oft go astray?” Well, the saying is true. In the evaluation process, councils need to determine when some change or adaptation may be necessary to a program or an initiative. Excellent parishes are not the ones where everything goes completely as planned; on the contrary, excellent parishes are the ones that not only are willing to adapt but which constantly adapt to serve their people.

- **Innovation**

If councils evaluate properly, they will discover that some ministries, programs and activities may require more than adaptation. They may need to be “re-envisioned,” “re-built” or “renovated.” New ideas and new solutions are the products of study, discussion and a willingness to change, if necessary.

- **Graduation**

When a student graduates, it is not an end but a transition to something else. In other words, graduation identifies that a person has completed preparatory studies which can now be used for a next level of some kind. Parishes need to develop a strategy for how new leaders are identified and how these leaders can be invited and challenged to greater levels of leadership within the parish. One way this can be done is by making the nomination process for council members about the identification of those with leadership abilities who can use these gifts in service to the Church. Another way that councils practice graduation is by accepting nominees for the council only from those who have been involved in parish ministry for at least one year. Anyone can be nominated for council but they first must serve in a ministry or on a committee before seeking a council position. Two of the greatest laments heard in many parishes around the diocese are: “it is the same people who do everything in the parish” and “once you’re in a leadership position, it’s for life.” Graduation is all about succession planning.

In summary, before planning individual agendas for the councils, take the time to develop an annual calendar and list of possible items for consideration. The time officers and pastors spend on the annual calendar will save hours in the planning of each individual agenda not to mention how much more can be accomplished in less time.

13

PREPARING FOR EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Both finance and pastoral councils should strive to have the best possible meetings. This can be accomplished through attentiveness to all the parts of the agenda. What are some of the keys to effective meetings?

- **Having a well-planned agenda**
- **Providing the agenda and supporting materials in advance of the meeting**
- **Preparing prayer experiences**
- **Time-blocking for items on the agenda**
- **Promoting open and honest consultation/discussion**
- **Understanding and using consensus decision-making**
- **Concluding with a sense of accomplishment and new direction**

These keys to effective meetings are further described in this chapter. Additional resources for meetings can be found in [The Commissions and Committees Manual](#).

— AGENDAS —

A well-planned agenda usually results in an effective meeting. Agendas should be planned collaboratively. The word, “item,” is used in this section to refer to a topic or a proposal or proposed action. There are basic elements for every agenda:

1. **Prayer**
2. **Minutes and Agenda Approval**
3. **Pastor’s Remarks/Presenters**
4. **Council items**
5. **Continuing items**
6. **New items**
7. **Reports**
8. **Agenda Planning**
9. **Prayer**

Agenda planning **begins at the previous meeting of the council.** One of the last items on the agenda should allow for members to suggest items for the next meeting. This includes any items which need further discussion or action from the current agenda and new items which should be reviewed at the next meeting.

The sample agenda illustrates a typical agenda for a council.

— SAMPLE AGENDA —

Date, Location, and Time of Meeting

1. **Welcome/Introductions** - members and guests can self-introduce themselves
2. **Prayer** - members can sign up for prayer or a regular form of prayer is used at parish meetings
3. **Minutes and Agenda** – approval of minutes and agenda
4. **Pastor's/Guest Presenter Remarks** – pastor gives an update/guest presenters may leave
5. **Council Items** – finance or pastoral council meeting review, financial statement, items pertinent to council activity: nominations, terms ending, social
6. **Ongoing Items** – any carryover items from last meeting or items being monitored
7. **New Items** – items introduced by pastor, committee or executive committee
8. **Commission/Committee Reports** – review of the one-page summaries of activity
9. **Agenda Items for Next Meeting**- opportunity to identify any items for the next meeting agenda
10. **Thank You/Adjournment** – Thank members and guests for attending the meeting/adjourn
11. **Concluding Prayer/Blessing** – simpler prayer and blessing or sign of peace

Note A: The date, location, and time of the next meeting should be indicated on the bottom of the page

Note B: All items should be “time-blocked” on the agenda so that chair and members know the meeting flow.

Note C: Any agenda item should be described with the desired outcome of: *review, discussion, action or discussion/action*.

— PRAYER —

Prayer or communication with God is an important part of the life of a disciple. **Prayer should also be an important part of the council experience.** There are many different ways for councils to pray together at their meetings. Some councils see the prayer opportunities as a way for people to experience different forms of prayer. Each council member is asked to sign up for prayer and to prepare a shared experience of prayer. Other councils have established a prayer tradition, usually based around the Sunday Gospel or some other use of scripture. This approach includes a reading, shared responses to the reading and intercessions. It connects the council to the Sunday readings and allows for faith sharing and praying for the needs of the community. For closing prayer, many councils use a prayer which can be recited by all. The prayer may be from a prayer card for a particular theme, such as a “Year” designated by the Pope. Other possibilities are a prayer from a diocesan initiative or a prayer from the spiritual tradition of the Church, like the peace prayer of St. Francis. Traditional prayers such as “The Our Father,” which reminds council members that they will gather around the table of the Lord on Sunday, are also appropriate.

Whichever approach to prayer the council takes, it is important to have an understanding of **how to plan prayer.** These suggestions have been modified from those developed in the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York.

SELECTING THE PRAYER

There are many options for prayer at council meetings but they fall in these general categories:

- **Thematic prayer** based on the seasons, an experience in the parish or the choice of the prayer leader
- **Lectionary-based prayer** which is taken from the readings of the day or the Sunday readings
- **Liturgy of the Hours**, the daily prayer of the Church, can be prayed especially using evening prayer

Once the customary prayer practice is determined, the council can decide the format of the prayer.

FORMAT FOR THE PRAYER

The amount of time councils set aside for prayer is usually limited. Here are some possible elements of prayer which can be used in prayer services.

- **Call to prayer** – a song, a greeting, the sign of the cross, a time to help people become aware of the presence of God.
- **Scripture reading** – choose a passage which relates to the theme, the Sunday Gospel or the one of the readings of the day.
- **Response to the Reading** – a psalm, a song, a prayer with a refrain or verse, a time for silent reflection on the reading.
- **Faith Sharing** – a time to discuss one or two prepared questions or to have members share their reflections on the reading and its application to one’s life or the life of the parish. This sharing can be done as a council or in smaller groups.

- **Intercessions** – an invitation to pray for the needs of council members, the parish as well as the country, and the world.
- **Closing Prayer** – a song, a prayer, a blessing, even the sign of peace.

Because of time, these elements may be simplified. For example, the prayer may begin with a moment of silence, followed by the Gospel reading, silent reflection, faith sharing, intercessions, and The Our Father. The setting for prayer is also an aspect for which councils prepare.

SETTING FOR PRAYER

Catholics are well aware that prayer can happen anywhere. Yet, there is a realization that “**place**” or “**setting**” can **create a more prayerful sense or environment**. Most councils pray and meet in the same setting realizing that God is present not only in prayer but throughout the entire meeting. Consider some other possible settings for prayer which can be used during a liturgical season or for a special circumstance:

- **Meet in a chapel or in the church** for an opening prayer and then move to another nearby location for the meeting or gather in the meeting place and then move to the chapel or church.
- **Create an environment for prayer in the center of the meeting room** with a candle, open Bible, reduced lighting and other symbols.
- **Create a special prayer area in the meeting room** adjacent to the tables. This may be especially appropriate if there is faith-sharing in smaller groups or if some ritual is being shared like the sign of peace or a renewal in the waters of baptism.

Most importantly, prayer should not be looked upon as what we “have to do” so we can get to the agenda but as an essential part of the agenda. Faith-filled people are people of prayer.

— CONSULTATION AND DISCUSSION —

As a consultative body, the conversation and discussion about a topic is extremely important. Council members need to express their current view about a topic as well as the rationale behind the view. There are various approaches which can be used to encourage discussion as well as make it as productive as possible. Here are four approaches which can be incorporated into the agenda:

- **Discussion**
Many items on the typical agenda will call for a discussion. This means that any and every council member is free to comment in any way about the particular item. A discussion is more open-ended and allows for as many or as few council members to comment on the item.
- **Discussion question(s)**
Questions can be developed and added to the agenda if specific feedback is needed or desired. The simplest form of questioning about any topic or proposal is: what did you like? What should be changed? There are numerous variations on those questions. However, posing questions which allow members to express their views about “what is good” and “what is not as good” allows the council to easily summarize these views or even draw some conclusions.

- **Share one insight, highlight, key point**

A very quick and effective way to get the views of a council out in the open is to include a sharing of one insight, highlight or key point. This can be further refined by asking for the response in a “short phrase” or “one sentence.” This approach is very useful when reviewing a document, evaluating an event or considering a proposal. Unlike the two previous approaches, every council member is asked to share even if the response is similar or identical to another council member’s response.

- **Structured conversation**

This approach is most useful when there is a very important topic to be discussed. Each member is permitted to share a response before any general discussion takes place. There should be a question to which all members are asked to respond and the responses should be short. This approach is often used when councils need to know exactly where members stand on a particular item before moving into consensus.

The importance of the topic will determine which approach may be most productive and insightful as well as how much time should be allotted for discussion. Putting “discussion” next to an item on an agenda indicates an open-ended conversation about the topic or proposal. If the council wants a brief but insightful conversation, the agenda may indicate “be prepared to share one key point.” Identifying the type of conversation in the agenda helps members prepare better for the meeting.

— CONSENSUS DECISION-MAKING —

Consensus decision-making is important to the council because it is rooted in the theological notion of conversion. Consensus allows members to change their minds and to find common ground. Consensus decision-making is practiced in different ways in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. It is recommended that councils seek consensus on all matters before them. Please note that parishes are free to follow Robert’s Rules of Order at their meetings but it is preferable to be less formal in the proceedings of the councils as indicated by these examples:

1. **Asking for changes or additions**

This example can be used for the approval of the minutes, agenda, and reports. The chair can acknowledge after asking for changes and additions that consensus has been reached and the item is approved as is or as amended.

2. **Identifying consensus or agreement**

After discussion or some form of consultation, the chair may summarize the comments and suggest that there is agreement even if agreement may involve some minor change. In effect, the chair invites any disagreement which may exist. Hearing none, the chair indicates approval.

3. **Formal consensus process**

Formal consensus involves several movements: identification of each council member’s view, discernment prayer, further discussion to respond to concerns and/or to amend the item so it is acceptable, and statement of each council member’s new view. The process may need to be extended to another meeting if consensus cannot be reached. As a last resort, if the council is unable to reach consensus, a ballot may be taken to reach a decision.

Most councils will have very few instances where the formal process of consensus decision-making is used. New council members should be oriented and formed to clearly understand that the council's voice is a consultative one. Councils strive for consensus in order to provide "a sense of the faithful" for the pastor.

In summary about agenda planning, agendas should be prepared so that the meeting concludes with a sense of accomplishment and clarity about next steps and the next meeting. Adaptability should be considered when preparing the agenda. There should be thought given to what needs to be accomplished and what could be, if necessary, considered at the next meeting. Good agendas lead to good meetings.

14

DISCERNING NEW LEADERS

— SELECTION OF NEW MEMBERS —

NOMINATION AND SELECTION COMMITTEE

By February of the council year, the council chair should establish a temporary committee to call forth new leadership from the parish. The pastoral council appendix should outline the function and process for this committee. Membership on this committee is not restricted to council members. Past council members and interested parishioners can be added. This is a task which many councils assign to the vice-chair. The committee should be comprised of 3 or 4 members.

The responsibilities of this committee are:

- educate and form parishioners regarding the importance of parish leadership and the role of the pastoral and finance councils;
- conduct a nomination process for the pastoral council;
- conduct a nominee gathering for those interested in serving on the council;
- conduct an election or discernment process;
- announce the results of the election or discernment process; and
- invite new members of the council to the June meeting

CALENDAR FOR NOMINATION AND SELECTION

FEBRUARY

- Form an ad hoc nomination and selection committee (3 or 4 members)

MARCH

- Bulletin/pulpit announcement series to provide information about councils and nominations
- Conduct nominations process at all the Sunday Masses

APRIL

- Contact all nominees and invite to a nominee gathering
- Conduct the nominee gathering and identify those interested in council service. Invite to the council election or discernment process.

MAY

- Conduct an election or a discernment process

JUNE

- New members are invited to attend the council meeting

FORMATION OF PARISHIONERS

Every spring, the parish is called to pray, reflect and identify new leaders. Parishioners need to hear about the function and role of the pastoral and finance councils. They need to know about the various commissions, committees, and ministry teams. Above all, they need to know that effective parishes need parishioners who are willing to serve in leadership capacities.

The content of the formation can be very basic: What is the function and role of the council? How will new leaders be determined? How does the council impact you? Parishes usually use a combination of methods to form and inform parishioners. The most commonly used are the bulletin and pulpit announcements. Some parishes are effectively using websites and emails. Keep any information simple and straightforward. Whether a parishioner decides to become a nominee is not as important as the parishioner's active participation in the nomination and selection process.

NOMINATIONS

The nomination process is critical to the selection of new leaders whether there is an election by ballot or some type of discernment. If pastoral council leadership is open and accessible to every parishioner, then there must be a corresponding process for this to take place. Every parish should have a well-conducted nomination process each year.

The process should consist of the following: a brief presentation on the need for leadership in the parish; an opportunity for reflection and nomination; and, collection of names. The process is often conducted during the Sunday Masses usually during announcement time. Nomination forms and pencils are placed in pews and ushers/greeters are instructed to gather them as they would the regular collection. The entire process can be conducted in about 5 minutes.

The first task of the committee is to review the names of the nominees. The parish census is essential in this task to make certain the nominee is a parishioner and to provide accurate contact information. All parish nominees should be contacted and invited to a nominee gathering. Parishes may receive as many as 100 nominees. About 30% of that number will attend a nominee gathering. Of the 30 who attend the nominee gathering, only 5 or 6 will actually agree to be nominees for council.

The nominee gathering should consist of: prayer, a brief overview of council and committee ministry, questions and answers, and a decision about which nominees are interested in actively seeking a position on the council. This meeting is an opportunity for the council to tell its "story" to people who others view as leadership types. All council members should be invited to attend and participate in this gathering.

Once the actual list of nominees has been compiled, a round of scrutiny should take place between the nomination and selection committee and the pastor. This is done to insure that the final list of nominees is qualified and capable of fulfilling the role of a pastoral council member. A final look is taken at the list with several questions in mind: do all the nominees regularly attend Sunday Mass? Do any of the nominees have an "ax to grind" with the parish? Are there some personal reasons which may make serving on the council difficult at this time? Any nominees who will not continue are personally notified by the committee.

The names of all the nominees are shared with the pastoral council. The committee should review the list and indicate nominees who are already serving in parish ministry. Every effort should be made to reach out to those nominees who are currently not involved in the parish. The council may want to share the names with the stewardship commission so that these people can be personally invited to the parish ministry fair or a “called and gifted” presentation. The council may want to discuss and then develop other creative ways to grow the leadership pool within the parish.

Nomination Form for Parish Council Membership

(Printed on parish letterhead.)

[Date]

You are invited
to nominate yourself or another parishioner for membership on the Pastoral Council of

[Name of Parish]

for a three year term of service.

Eligibility:

- Baptized, practicing Catholic
- At least 18 years of age
- Registered member of our parish
- Participant in parish life, especially Mass and the sacraments
- Parish employees and their family members are ineligible to serve
- Husbands and wives, siblings or parent and child may not serve together on councils

Name of nominee: _____

I make this nomination for the following reasons: _____

Figure E

FOR NOMINEES: DISCERNING A CALL TO SERVE

Many parishioners who are nominated to serve on the council and who are discerning the call to serve ask: **“what qualities must I have to serve on the council?”** The descriptions below may be very helpful in the process of discerning the call. Read and reflect on them, then check the appropriate column whether you “have this quality” or you “need to develop” the quality. These qualities as well as an understanding of what it means to serve on the council develop over time.

Have this quality	Need to develop	Descriptions of Qualities for Council Members
		Ability to Collaborate Parishes function best when there is collaboration among priests, deacons, staff and laity. Council members need to have the ability to work with others, to respect others' views, and to trust the process of consensus decision-making.
		Deep Love for the Mission of Jesus and the Church The mission of Jesus and His Church is at the core of council ministry. Council members need to have a love for and be committed to seeing that the mission is carried out in its fullness within the parish and throughout the surrounding neighborhood.
		Willing to Grow in Holiness All Christians by virtue of their baptism are called to holiness. Council members should be people of prayer and reflection as well as open to the work of the Spirit in their own lives.
		Desire to Serve the Church All Christians are called to lives of service. Council members should be people who see their service as a responsibility of baptism and a call to be a servant leader like Jesus.
		Look to the Future One of the major roles of the council is to plan for mission activity in the future. Council members need to be people who are hopeful and able to identify strategies and approaches which will help the parish carry out the mission even more effectively.
		Interest in Ongoing Formation The liturgical year of the Church is designed to renew and deepen the faith of all who believe. Council members should be people who seek knowledge and truth, have an openness to new ideas and viewpoints, and are committed to deepening their own faith.
		Sense of Stewardship Stewardship is the disciple's response to faith. Council members need to understand that all we have comes from God and our response is to use the resources which God has given us wisely.

— ELECTION AND DISCERNMENT —

Some parishes continue to select council members by means of an election. Ballots are cast during Mass, after Mass or at an annual meeting. Those members who receive the highest number of votes fill any vacant positions on the council.

Other parishes, use some form of discernment of new members. Elections usually end up being popularity contests. The better known a candidate may be, the greater the prospect for election. In an election, people can choose candidates for the wrong reasons, such as serving as the loyal opposition or carrying the torch for a single issue. Council leadership is rooted in faithfulness and collaboration. These are qualities that may be better discerned than elected.

The process of discerning new council members involves prayer, identification of gifts that individuals bring to the parish community, and an understanding of the parish's needs at that time. The way that parishes discern varies greatly once the final list of nominees has been determined. One variation comes from whom is invited to attend the discernment: some parishes invite only the nominees and the committee; others invite the nominees and the standing pastoral council; still others extend an open invitation to the parish. There are countless possibilities.

The other variation involves how members will be determined: some parishes leave the determination to the nominees themselves; other parishes will cast private ballots at the conclusion of the process (this process mirrors the selection of a new twelfth apostle in the Acts of the Apostles). Which process is the best? The one that works best for your parish. Parishes should continually evaluate their nomination and selection process and be on the lookout for more effective practices.

The person facilitating the process is very influential in the experience and outcome. Most parishes have developed a roster of capable discernment facilitators from staff to former participants. Neighboring parishes can even be asked to provide a facilitator.

A well-planned discernment is also key to the experience and outcome. The prayer service should include the following elements:

- Scripture reading(s)
- Prayer response
- Opportunity for candidates to share information and intent
- Reflection
- Selection of candidates
- Blessing of new council members

— DISCERNMENT PRAYER —

(This prayer was submitted by St. Mary Parish, Waukesha and adapted for this document)

Welcome/introductions

Participants are welcomed and presented with an overview of the discernment. Each person is introduced.

Opening Prayer

*Lord, you have given each of us talents for our own good and for the service of others.
As you sent your Spirit to the apostles, let your Spirit descent on us tonight as we discern the call to serve.
Help us to prayerfully discern new members for our council.
Purify our motives so we learn and do your will.
Help us see with your eyes, hear with your ears, and love with your heart.
Lord, you have given each of us the gift of faith and a share in the mission of the church.
Help all of us gathered here to share in the shepherding of your people.
To you be all glory and honor forever. Amen.*

Reading

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Litany Response

*Lord, you guided the Israelites through the desert. Guide us tonight as we discern your call to serve the church and our parish . . . **Lord, Hear Our Prayer***

*Lord, you took on our human nature and you know us through and through. Take away any fear and anxiety during this process . . . **Lord, Hear Our Prayer***

*Lord, you bring us new life in Baptism. Help us to respond to our baptismal call to serve the church . . . **Lord, Hear Our Prayer***

Sharing and Listening

Each candidate is asked to answer the following questions:

- How are you currently involved in the parish?
- Why do you feel called to serve on the council?
- What skills, talents, expertise, life experience do you bring to the ministry?
- If you are not discerned, how will you serve the parish?

Questions

- Candidates are invited to ask questions of current council members
- Council members are invited to ask questions of the candidates

Reading

Acts of the Apostles 1:15-17, 21-26

Silent Response

Participants silently reflect on the reading.

Selection of New Council Members

Each person is provided with a slip of paper and upon it writes the names of those candidates he or she believes are called to serve on the council. Ballots are placed in a basket and tabulated. New council members are announced.

Blessing of New Members

Let us raise our hands over our new councils in gratitude and blessing

Lord, bless these new council members and give them

- *The gift of generosity to serve the good of all;*
- *The gift of wisdom to know your will;*
- *The gift of collaboration to strengthen your whole church;*
- *The gift of hope to serve with joy and confidence;*
- *The gift of clear vision to see and follow the path that leads to you.*

This we ask through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Sign of Peace

— COMMISSIONING CEREMONY —

Many parishes commission councils at the beginning of the new council year. This can be done at Mass or as part of the prayer of the council. The Book of Blessings contains several options for the preparation of this prayer. The parish liturgist or the worship commission should be consulted.

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TRAINING AND RESOURCES

Councils should recognize that the formation of council members is one of the best ways to improve their function. It makes sense that Councils who know how they are structured and what their role is will be more effective. Every council should strive to have 100% of its membership trained. This is easily achievable because training is completely accessible thanks to the internet. Trained council members should be encouraged to continue their formation. Beyond a basic formation, continuing formation for members helps not only the individual but the entire council. Resources are available in video, print and live formats.

— VIDEO TRAINING —

As technology has improved, the ability of the Office for Planning and Councils to provide training to council members without travel and at the participant's convenience has been enhanced. The following **training videos** are available on the Archdiocesan website:

- Councils overview
- Trustees
- Pastoral Councils
- Finance Councils
- Committees
- Officers

Each video is approximately fifteen minutes in length. When a video is completed, the viewer's completion is **verified and a certificate is available** for printing. Parishes are able to track the participation of nominees as well as council and committee members.

The videos are designed so that they can be **viewed in combinations**.

- Councils overview – viewed by nominees, council members, committees
- Trustees – viewed by all pastors and trustees
- Pastoral Councils – viewed by pastors, trustees, council members
- Finance Councils – viewed by pastors, trustees, council members
- Committees – viewed by all committee members
- Officers – viewed by chairs, vice-chairs, secretaries of all councils and committees

From time to time, the Office for Planning and Councils offers **videoconferences for councils**. This allows councils from all over the diocese to share information about important topics in the convenient surroundings of their own parishes and without travel.

— WEBSITE MATERIALS —

There are **three manuals** on the Archdiocesan website which parishes can download and print for their parish leaders. The manuals are:

- Trustee Manual – for pastors and trustees elected to serve in this capacity
- Parish Councils Manual – for pastors, finance and pastoral council members
- Commissions/Committees Manual – for pastors, council members, commission and committee members (this manual can be individualized for specific committee use)

Council members can also find other useful information on the **Archdiocesan website** under councils and planning.

The **Vatican website**, the **USCCB (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) website** and other diocesan websites can provide important resources. The first two sites are particularly important for council members to know. The Vatican website will make any papal or church documents available. The Bishops' site has previous and current publications of the Conference available for viewing and review.

Every month except for July, the Office for Planning and Councils sends a link to a newsletter, **Parish Leader Update**, to all council members throughout the diocese. This newsletter provides current information about council activity and opportunities in the diocese. Parishes maintain the local database so any address or roster changes must be made at the parish level.

— RETREATS/DAYS OF REFLECTION —

Many councils plan a retreat or day of reflection during the council year. This provides an opportunity for council members to spend time in extended prayer, to focus on a particular theme, to work on an issue together or do to all three. There are several suggestions for councils to follow when planning the retreat or day of reflection.

The starting point is to select a particular theme or a specific director. Once a theme has been selected, the planning team can identify a preferred director or search the John Paul II Center speakers' list for someone who is skilled in that area. The Office for Planning and Councils may offer specific options for council retreats. It is also possible that some retreat directors will only conduct retreats using the theme and materials which have been developed for that particular year.

Catholic colleges and universities in the area are also good sources for retreat directors. Parish staff members as well as staff from other parishes can be additional sources for capable and eager retreat directors.

— WORKSHOPS —

The Office for Planning and Councils may offer workshops for council leaders on various topics or as ongoing training. Any workshops will be promoted through the Parish Leader Update.