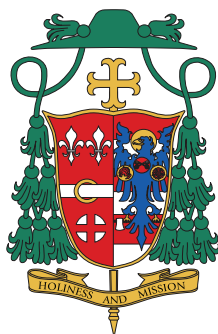


One in Mission

NORMS AND GUIDELINES
FOR
PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS





OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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October 15, 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Diocese of Allentown is committed to pastoral and strategic planning that cultivates vibrant parishes that are schools of prayer, holiness and the New Evangelization. Each parish has its own unique history, identity and approach to evangelization.

The Diocese is a champion of the parish and respects the individual identity and charism of each parish (principle of subsidiarity) while seeking to see the individual needs of each parish in the context of pastoral diocesan/regional planning, planning that makes the parish and the diocese together prophetic catalysts of prayer, holiness and the New Evangelization.

Vibrant parishes make a vibrant Diocese. A vibrant Diocese supports the mission of the parish.

Pope Francis states: "In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers." The parish supports the evangelizing mission of marriages and families. The parish supports and motivates parishioners in their Apostolate of the Laity in every secular context and work place. The parish helps to strengthen the Apostolate of the Laity in the World. The Apostolate of the Laity in the World enriches and deepens parish life.

Pope Francis states: "The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community." Together, we face the real situations and concerns of the marriages and families before us. We cultivate a "culture of encounter" that engages people at a deep level personally with the merciful gaze of Christ and his liberating teachings.

The parish is an oasis of the mercy and compassion of God expressed in its outreach to the poor family, the hurting family, the grieving family, the broken family, the family in crisis, the immigrant family often separated by distance, and the family simply struggling day-to-day, week-to-week with the daily stresses and problems of life.

We also realize the intense time constraints so many of our parishioners face, and so we engage in a creative and up-to-date application of Social Media that nourishes, forms, catechizes and inspires a wide range of people and families.

Parish Pastoral Councils are an essential element of parish life and an invaluable resource to pastors in providing good pastoral leadership for the overall life of the parish. The present document, *One in Mission* is provided to assist you in establishing, educating and strengthening an active Parish Pastoral Council. It also serves as an effective tool in the mission of evangelization.

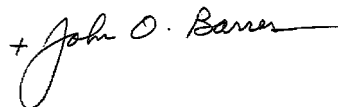
One in Mission will assist pastors and parishes in implementing the particular diocesan law requiring a Parish Pastoral Council in each parish. This manual reflects canonical standards, diocesan policies, and the call to direct our efforts toward a New Evangelization. After careful review, I present *One in Mission* for our use, and express my sincere gratitude to the Diocese of Harrisburg for granting permission to use their excellent work as a model for our own efforts.

As the Bishop of the Diocese of Allentown, I affirm these twelve norms as particular law for our diocese to ensure common pastoral practices among all Parish Pastoral Councils and mandate that each pastor or parish administrator establish and maintain a Parish Pastoral Council according to these diocesan norms by November 1, 2016. Please review this material and share it with your staff and Pastoral Council so they may function more cohesively and effectively.

The ministry of evangelization and the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is shared by all of us. May we continue to work together to strengthen parish life and our service to the people of God.

With my prayerful gratitude for all your pastoral efforts, I am

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John O. Barres" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Most Reverend John O. Barres
Bishop of Allentown

One in Mission

DIOCESE OF ALLENTOWN

DIOCESAN NORMS AND GUIDELINES FOR A PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

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For additional information contact:

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EFFECTIVE PARISH LEADERSHIP

The Parish Pastoral Council

We are the Eternal Church in the world: clergy, those in consecrated life and laity. Because we have been baptized into the one Body of Christ and confirmed by the Holy Spirit, we all share the responsibility to carry on the work of Christ both as individuals and as part of a community of believers. The laity have an important role to fulfill if they are to be "fellow workers for the truth." (3 John 8)

The Parish Pastoral Council provides an important framework through which this responsibility can be shared. Parish Pastoral Councils are an effective means of joining together the People of God to fulfill the Mission of the Church.

The Parish Pastoral Council is a community of service.

The Pastor

"In each local assembly of the faithful, they (the pastors) represent the bishop with whom they are associated in all trust and generosity; in part they take upon themselves his duties and solicitude and in their daily toils discharge them." (*Lumen Gentium* 28,2)

While the role of the Bishop is to be the chief shepherd of a portion of the Body of Christ called a diocese, it is the Pastor's role to accept his appointment to shepherd an even smaller segment within a defined community of the faithful called a parish. This appointment carries with it the responsibility of the sacramental life of that parish assigned to him, the pastoral care of the parishioners, and the administration of its facilities.

*"I have come among
You as one who serves".*

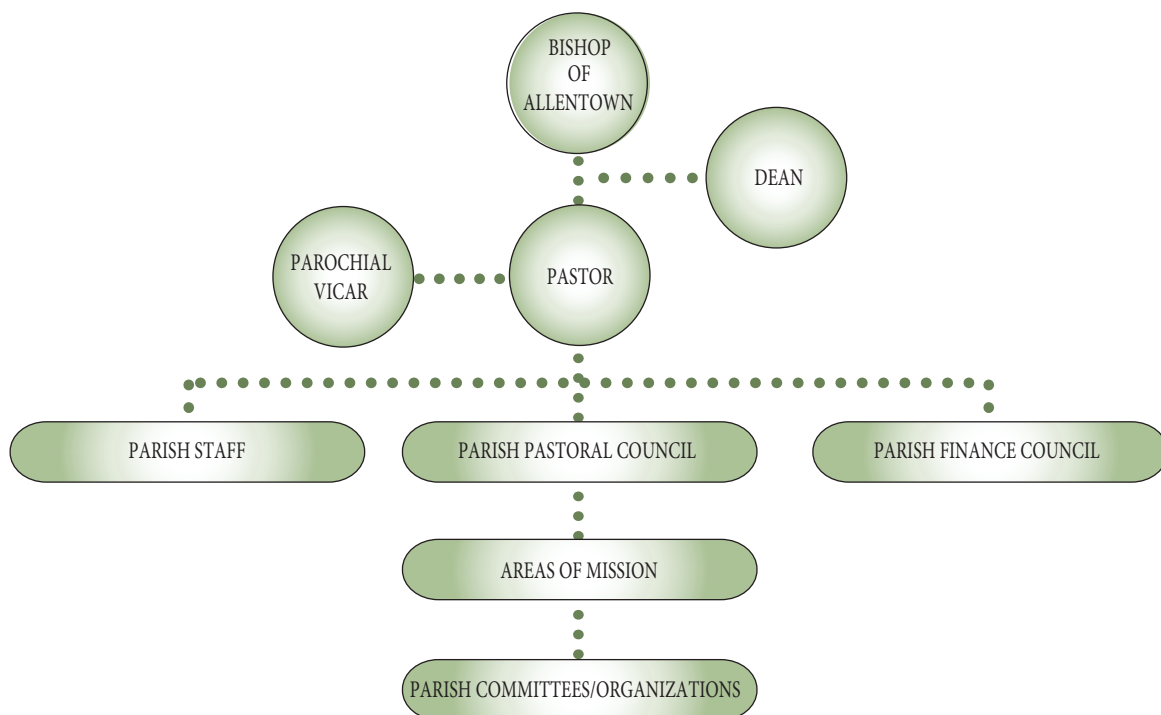
(Matthew 20:28)

The Parish Pastoral Staff

The pastor is a constitutive element of a parish and more than an administrator. Under the authority of the bishop, he is entrusted with the pastoral care of a parish. To assist the pastor to carry out his responsibilities, he relies on salaried or volunteer staff to assist him with the day-to-day administration of the parish. This staff

may include firstly parochial vicars and deacons who are appointed by the bishop. The pastor is also assisted by parish managers, women religious, business managers, pastoral associates, secretaries, maintenance personnel and directors of liturgy, music and religious education, to name a few. The pastor is the ultimate supervisor of all the parish staff.

Parish Communication: Who's talking to whom?



System of Communication

- Effective meetings
- Good use of meeting time
- Clear and organized agendas
- Inviting all groups into the discussion

DIOCESE OF ALLENTOWN

The Parish Pastoral Council

Diocesan Norms

The Diocese of Allentown has issued the following Norms for each parish to establish and maintain a Parish Pastoral Council. Council members should be familiar with these at the onset of their Council responsibilities.

I. EVERY PARISH IS TO HAVE A PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL THAT UNITES CLERGY, THOSE IN CONSECRATED LIFE AND LAITY IN A COMMUNITY OF LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE.

According to the **Code of Canon Law #536**, *"If the diocesan bishop judges it opportune, a parish 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... A pastoral council possesses a consultative vote only and is governed by the norms established by the diocesan bishop."*

In the

ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priest," Article 5, #2: *"Parochial Pastoral Councils and Parochial Finance Councils, of which non-ordained faithful are members, enjoy a consultative vote only and cannot in any way become deliberative structures."* #3: *"It is for the Parish Priest to preside at parochial councils. They are to be considered invalid, and hence null and void, any deliberation entered into, (or decisions taken), by a parochial council which has not been presided over by the Parish Priest or which*

has assembled contrary to his wishes." A parish is to have separate Pastoral and Finance Councils, respectively focused on providing counsel on the spiritual life and temporal affairs of the parish.

II: THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL IS TO HAVE A FORMAL AND VISIBLE STRUCTURE WITH ESTABLISHED BY-LAWS, REGULAR MEETINGS WITH AN ESTABLISHED AGENDA AND THE MAJORITY OF MEMBERS APPOINTED BY THE PASTOR. ONLY CATHOLICS IN GOOD STANDING ARE ELIGIBLE FOR MEMBERSHIP.

It is essential that the framework of the Parish Pastoral Council be established. The Constitution and By-laws will contain all the components that explain specifically how the Council will function. In addition to the parish mission Statement, the By-laws identify representation, frequency of meetings, nominations, elections, operating rules, officers and job descriptions. Detailed guidelines have been provided to assist a Parish Pastoral Council with this requirement. Review and update of the Constitution and By-laws is to be completed every three years.

III. THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL MUST BE CONCERNED WITH THE FULLNESS OF THE CHURCH'S MISSION, PARTICULARLY THE EVANGELIZATION AND SPIRITUAL RENEWAL OF THE COMMUNITIES OF WHICH THEY ARE A PART.

Parish renewal, through evangelization, must be the first and main goal of the Parish Pastoral Council. In his 1975 exhortation, **in the Modern World**, Pope Paul VI writes, *"We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church."*(#36) How this

is accomplished in each parish is expressed through the Parish Mission Statement. Before the members of the Council can begin to establish priorities for the parish, they must take the time to gain insights into the needs of the parish and articulate such a statement.

IV. THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL MUST UNDERSTAND AND SUPPORT THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE PARISH TO THE DIOCESAN CHURCH.

“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 proper pastor under the authority of the diocesan bishop.” (Canon #515) All parishioners belong to their diocesan church, as well as their parish. This relationship must be appreciated and understood by those who are part of the parish leadership.

Because of its resources, the diocese can be of service to the parish, offering expertise and guidance in every area of mission. The Parish Pastoral Council is also expected to cooperate fully with these offices in achieving diocesan goals. No parish may set norms that are in contradiction to the norms of the diocese.

V. THE PASTOR AND DIOCESAN RESOURCES MUST PROVIDE INFORMATION AND TRAINING TO PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERS.

Each member of the Parish Pastoral Council should have a clear understanding of the role and responsibilities of the Council.

Listed here are some resources that may be helpful:

- *One In Mission*, Diocese of Allentown – Diocesan Norms and Guidelines for Parish Pastoral Councils, 2015

- *Parish Administration Manual*, Diocese of Allentown, Information and Procedures for Parish Financial Administration, 2015
- *The Joy of the Gospel* (Evangelii Gaudium), Pope Francis, November 2013
- *Go and Make Disciples*, A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1992 & 2002
- *Disciples Called to Witness, The New Evangelization* – United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, 2012
- *The Lay Members of Christ’s Faithful People* (Christifideles Laici) Pope John Paul II, 1998
- *On the Coming of the Third Millennium* (Tertio Millennio Adveniente) Pope John Paul II, 2000
- *The Church in America* (Ecclesia in America) Pope John Paul II, 1999
- *The Apostolic Letter to the Lay Faithful at the Close of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000* (Novo Millennia Ineunte) Pope John Paul II, 2001
- *On Evangelization in the Modern World* (Evangelii Nuntiandi) Pope Paul VI, 1975
- *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* (Documents of Vatican II), 1965

Knowing the mind and heart of the Church will help Parish Pastoral Council members in responding to the needs of the parish. There should be periodic spiritual formation that may include days or evenings of prayer, shared prayer at meetings, celebration of the Eucharist and silent Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. All these elements contribute to building a community of faith within the Parish Pastoral Council that will

enable the members to better serve the parish. It is recommended that these opportunities for formation be scheduled on an annual basis.

VI: IN UNION WITH THE PASTOR, MEMBERS OF THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN THE LIFE AND WELFARE OF THE PARISH.

“The laity should accustom themselves to working in the parish in close union with their priests, bringing to the Church community their own and the world’s problems as well as questions concerning human salvation...”

(The Decree On The Apostolate Of The Laity)

The ***Decree On The Apostolate Of The Laity*** states, “*The laity, too, share in the priestly, prophetic and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own role to play in the mission of the whole People of God in the Church and in the world.*”

The pastor and the Council should strive for consensus in the Council’s advice to the pastor, recognizing their roles are mutually complementary in fulfilling the mission of the parish community. As a faith community, they will work together to discern the Holy Spirit. The Parish Pastoral Council will not act independent of the pastor, nor conduct a Council meeting without the pastor being present, ***since their role is not decision-making but advisory to the pastor.***

The process of consensus must ensure that any special interests of individual Council members do not supplant addressing the pastoral life of the parish as a whole. All members should have the opportunity for

for their voices to be heard and to influence the final decision of the pastor. Having accomplished this, they will agree to support the implementation of the decision that rests solely with the pastor.

VII: THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE PASTORAL MISSION OF THE PARISH.

Parish organizations and committees provide the impetus for the parish to achieve its mission and for parishioners to become involved in every aspect of parish life. However, they must communicate and cooperate with the Parish Pastoral Council, which is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of each organization and supporting each one as it carries out the parish mission.

The Parish Pastoral Council is to schedule regular opportunities to meet and dialogue with officers and members of parish organizations and committees; however, parish councils should not be in a supervisory role over organizations and ministries. This ongoing communication strengthens each ministry and gives the parishioners an opportunity to clarify the mission of the parish that they all share.

VIII: THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL MUST RESPECT THE DAY-TO-DAY OPERATION OF THE PARISH WHICH IS CLEARLY THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PASTOR AND STAFF.

The role of the Parish Pastoral Council is to set priorities in order to assist the parish in carrying out its Mission Statement. The parish staff may include women religious, business manager, pastoral associate, director of religious education, school principal, music

director and youth ministry coordinator, to name a few. They may be resources to the Council offering information and opinions for sound discussion, as needed. They may attend Council meetings and participate fully in the discussions, but have a non-voting status.

IX: THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL REACHES ITS CONCLUSIONS BY A PROCESS OF PRAYERFUL DISCERNMENT AND CONSENSUS SHARING WHILE RESPECTING THE CANONICAL AUTHORITY OF THE PASTOR.

The Parish Pastoral Council is not a democratic institution where majority rules. It is a Christian community where members discern through prayer, study, and the insights of all, the best course of action that should be taken. Because the pastor shares fully in this process, all Council priorities, therefore, are the result of a true sharing of responsibility by both the pastor and Council members. The Parish Pastoral Council may never meet independently of the pastor. If, by chance, the Council is unable to reach a consensus, then a vote can be taken. If, ***with the support of the pastor***, a two-thirds majority passes the resolution, then it is implemented.

Because the pastor is canonically responsible for the parish, all council conclusions must be understood as offering advice and consent to the pastor, who retains decision-making authority in all matters. If he cannot accept or implement an action or policy recommended by the council, the pastor may seek the counsel and assistance of his Dean for consultation or mediation in this matter.

X: AS THE CHIEF COORDINATING AND UNIFYING STRUCTURE, THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL MUST SEEK CONSTANTLY TO DRAW FORTH THE TALENTS, ENERGIES AND INSIGHTS OF THE PARISHIONERS AND CHANNEL

THIS "VARIETY OF GIFTS" FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE WHOLE BODY OF CHRIST.

The Second Vatican Council emphasized that the Church is an organized expression of the mission of Jesus Christ and not simply a large number of believers. Therefore, the parish must be a coordinated and unified witness to the total mission of Jesus Christ. The basis for all ministries is the gift of the Holy Spirit.

A person's call to share their time and talents is a direct response to the gifts God has bestowed on that person. A collaborative apostolate brings together various gifts to accomplish the mission of Jesus Christ. This sense of ministry must be integrated and woven into every activity or action that occurs in the parish community.

It is essential that, in developing and coordinating new ministries and outreach in a parish, a system of calling forth and discerning the gifts of the parishioners be developed. This initiative can be assigned to a member of the parish staff or a volunteer. Understanding the importance of ministry based on giftedness is essential and ensures a more effective experience.

The vibrant life of the parish is not limited to parish life itself, but is designed to strengthen marriages, families and individual laity in what the Second Vatican Council calls "the apostolate of the laity" to the secular world. Parish life should have a direct impact on how a Catholic lay person, married couple and family witnesses to holiness and virtue in the world and every secular circumstance. The lives and witness of Catholic laity in the world should raise, in the words of Blessed Paul VI, "irresistible questions" that lead people to Jesus Christ and the truth claims of the Catholic Church. This is essential to vibrant parish life.

**XI: THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL
MUST COMMUNICATE REGULARLY
WITH THE PARISH AT LARGE AND
THE CIVIC COMMUNITY OF WHICH
IT IS A PART.**

A Parish Pastoral Council cannot be effective if it is isolated from the rest of the parish. To communicate effectively, a Parish Pastoral Council must learn both to speak and to listen. Therefore, it is recommended that a system for communication be established, perhaps through a communications committee of the Council. Creating regular gatherings of parish committees and organizations to engage in communication ensures effective parish ministry and outreach. This may include parish websites and dynamic use of social media; special town hall meetings; surveys; personal contact at parish functions or by telephone; use of the parish newsletter or bulletin insert; a Parish Pastoral Council bulletin board; the local newspaper and other media.

**XII: THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL
MUST DISCERN THE NEEDS OF
THE PARISH AND COMMUNITY
AND ADVISE THE PASTOR ON
PARISH DIRECTION BY PRAYERFUL
REFLECTION AND A CONTINUOUS
PROCESS OF PASTORAL PLANNING.**

“The program of the Gospel must continue to take root, as it has always done, in the life of the Church everywhere. It is in the local churches that the specific features of a detailed pastoral plan can be identified – goals and methods,

formation and enrichment of the people involved, the search for the necessary resources – which will enable the proclamation of Christ to reach people, mold communities, and have a deep and incisive influence in bringing Gospel values to bear in society and culture.”

Pope John Paul II, *Novo Millennia Ineunte* #29, 2001

It is difficult to articulate a Mission Statement without making an effort to uncover parish needs. The goal is to become a strong, vibrant faith community with inspiring liturgies, and a center of service to those within the parish and community.

In order to determine what the future will be, a parish needs to plan. This planning needs to involve discerning the mission of the parish and its vision of the future, assessing its internal strengths, weaknesses, and exploring the opportunities that exist. This requires a commitment of resources including the time and skills of the parish community. The planning process should result in a plan that is clear and defines specific actions.

Although a parish’s plan for the future may remain relatively stable, the means for making it a reality may have to be changed given new sets of circumstances that could not be foreseen. The plan will need to be reviewed periodically to determine if changes need to be made.

Diocese of Allentown Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines

- Parish Vision
- Parish Mission Statement
- The Parish Pastoral Plan
- Steering Committee
- Membership Requirements
- Structure

THE PARISH VISION

In a parish setting, all of the parishioners collectively should have dreams about their parish or be encouraged to have them. The parish is a living entity, driven by the life-giving Holy Spirit. Hopes and dreams are part of the vitality of any parish for they help to identify what is important to the parish community.

It is up to the parish leadership to invite parishioners to dream. The pastor may choose to begin with his Parish Pastoral Council, a representative group of the parishioners. With the help of this Parish Pastoral Council, the pastor may want to create a parish profile. It is this profile that can provide useful data to help the council begin to develop a vision of where the parish should be heading. The Parish Pastoral Council, in turn, could share this profile with the various ministries of the parish and solicit ideas from them. The pastor may also encourage, through various ways, those not connected through ministries to express their own hopes for the parish. Everyone who comes to a Sunday Liturgy desires some connection, some spark, to make their weekly celebration of the Liturgy more than an obligation. Listening to and sharing ideas and hopes can kindle this spark and give new meaning to parish life.

Setting up a format to accomplish this is the real challenge. It is the same challenge that confronted Jesus early in his ministry. As a young man, he was aware of what he was all about when he said to his parents, *"Do you not know that I must be about my Father's affairs?"* As a young man he knew that Isaiah was referring to him when he wrote, *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord."* (Lk 4,4-18) Jesus reflected on what it meant to be "anointed"

and how to carry out the challenges of Isaiah. This is how Jesus created the foundation of His Church and identified its purpose.

The challenge of any parish is similar. A parish finds its identity and mission through its hopes and dreams, found in Sacred Tradition and the Sacred Scriptures. The Acts of the Apostles provides many facets as to what Church should look like as a community of believers. The Apostles and disciples provided many models of how to reach out to the unbelievers and nurture the believers. Adapting these scripture texts to a parish is where the dreaming begins. The vision of a parish should determine its direction, its goals and its priorities.

While such discernment takes much time, it provides the springboard for eventually developing a Parish Pastoral Plan. But first, a parish vision leads to the articulation of a Mission Statement that provides the parish identity.

OUR MISSION

Jesus' format to carry out his vision into a productive mission is apparent from the Gospel narratives. Along the way, as He preached the Good News and supported His preaching with signs and good works, He

HOLINESS AND MISSION

Every member of the
faithful is called to
holiness and to mission.

would remind those around Him what He was about. At the very beginning of His ministry, He began to articulate his **Mission Statement** based on that passage from Isaiah (Isaiah 61:1-2) He told his newly chosen Apostles, *"Let us go into the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come."* (Mk 1, 38.)

He had another part to his mission. Realizing His time on earth was limited, He prepared the twelve He personally chose and the people who chose to follow Him, to carry on His mission after He ascended to the Father. At one point, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, He said to Simon and his companions, *"Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."* (Lk 5, 10)

Church History, beginning with the Acts of the Apostles, relates in detail how the various churches founded by Peter, Paul and their successors in many different lands down through the ages, kept before them the vision of Jesus and articulated it into the mission of the Church as it spread across the world. As the faces of the people changed from country to country, so did the needs of the people and the methods of challenging the people to persevere in the Faith. From the very beginning, the small communities of Catholics had to continue dreaming and hoping, examining their situation and, if necessary, making adjustments and changes, setting new courses for their mission so that the mission of Jesus could take root in the hearts of anyone who heard His Good News.

Today, this challenge continues as each parish uses its talents to gather all of the parishioners' dreams and hopes together into a vision for the parish so that the pastoral leadership can begin to develop the Parish Mission Statement according to the vision of Jesus Christ. The Parish Mission Statement will articulate the dreams and hopes of the

parishioners. It establishes the boundaries within which the parish can successfully carry out realistic and achievable goals. It should be easy to read and understand, avoiding language that sounds pious, but adds little to what is really important. The answers to the following four questions should help form a Parish Mission Statement:

Creating The Parish Mission Statement

1. **Who are we as a parish community?** (e.g. called by God; led by the Holy Spirit)
2. **What functions do we have?** (e.g. form community; minister to peoples' needs; respond to changing situations; discern new directions; foster Gospel values; grow in faith)
3. **How do we accomplish these functions?** (e.g. supporting one another; challenging people to grow; prayerful discernment; outreach to others; adult education)
4. **For Whom?** (e.g. our parish community; those in need; ever-changing world; one another; all parishioners; the diocese; all who live within our parish boundaries)

An example Parish Mission Statement:

We are a Roman Catholic Family of Faith, centered in the Holy Eucharist, faithful to the Church's teachings, bringing the Light of Christ to each other and to our community.

Although a parish mission statement may articulate what makes its community distinctive, it should always include key words and concepts that reflect the authentic teaching of the Catholic Church.

THE PARISH PASTORAL PLAN

An articulated parish mission Statement calls for action. Who of us would spend a lot of time asking for directions and then not use them? So, on each leg of our “journey,” each of the four parts of the Mission Statement needs to be mapped out through goals and objectives. Simply put, goals express the important “to do” list that exists between the lines of the mission statement and are seen as being accomplished over the long-term. The objectives are the short-term ways and means to accomplish the Parish Pastoral Plan.

STEPS IN PARISH PASTORAL PLANNING

The planning process is usually described and illustrated as a cycle. This role of the Parish Pastoral Council, committees and staff is to foster that cycle and see that it continues to enable the parish to make its vision a reality and to accomplish the work of Jesus Christ.

Planning should involve the broadest possible participation from the parish. However, this task needs to be focused by a group of individuals identified as the Planning Committee. This can be a combination of the Parish Pastoral Council members and other parish leaders.

A Planning Process Involves:

- Developing or affirming the parish mission statement
- Knowing the history of the parish
- Assessing needs
- Visioning the future
- Establishing priorities
- Setting goals and objectives and developing action plans
- Implementing specific programs and services
- Evaluating and adjusting the plans as needed

Under the direction of the pastor and in collaboration with the pastoral staff, the Parish Pastoral Council and the Parish Finance Council, the parish should develop a long-range 3-5 year pastoral plan.

Formation of the Planning Group

This planning group can consist of the Parish Pastoral Council with the addition of pastoral staff as well as any other parish representatives deemed essential.

Assessment of the present situation of the parish

Information is gathered on the composition of the parish, activities, organizations and demographic make-up as well as on the larger community where the parish is located. There are three things that Pastoral Leadership should ask each parishioner:

- What do you like about the parish?
- What would you like to see happen in the parish?
- What can the parish do to help you?

Assessing the Needs

Based on demographics and other notable factors, the parish leadership should determine the areas of parish life needing attention. This would include parish facilities and finances required that might be affected by the ministry, outreach or educational programming under consideration.

Establishing Priorities

This aspect of planning requires the planning group to evaluate the resources available: financial, personnel and facility requirements. This will greatly affect the level of priority and the needs that drive it. It may assist the pastor in determining that a reallocation of funding and personnel may be necessary.

Developing the Action Plan

An essential aspect of developing the Parish Pastoral Plan is to assign responsibilities for implementation as well as follow-up on the effectiveness and desired outcome. The parish should be informed of the Pastoral Plan of the Parish and the connectedness of all the various ministries, activities and apostolates that support the plan.

THE PASTOR FORMS A STEERING COMMITTEE WHO THEN HELPS HIM DEVISE AND IMPLEMENT THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

The following *guidelines* may be helpful in identifying the necessary steps in establishing a Parish Pastoral Council if one does not currently exist, or the pastor wishes to dissolve a traditional "parish council" and transition to a pastoral council.

1. The pastor appoints a Steering Committee. He is careful to select members who represent the diversity present in the parish. The Steering Committee should be representative of the parish and reflective of the future composition of the Parish Pastoral Council. (As a guide 7-15 members are suggested for the Steering Committee; however, that can be lowered depending on the size of parish.) A Steering Committee can be convened when: a new pastor is appointed; the nature of the parish changes; re-structuring is needed; or there is a lack of organization and structure within an existing Parish Pastoral Council. The Steering Committee does not work apart from the pastor or without the pastor's clear approval.

2. The Steering Committee begins with prayer and incorporates prayer into the format of the working sessions.
3. The Steering Committee launches a program of self-education. The members should familiarize themselves with the following documents:
 - *One in Mission*, Diocese of Allentown – Diocesan Norms and Guidelines for Parish Pastoral Councils, 2015 (used with permission)
 - *Parish Administration Manual*, Diocese of Allentown, Information and Procedures for Parish Financial Administration, 2015
 - *The Joy of the Gospel* (Evangelii Gaudium), Pope Francis, November 2013
 - *Go and Make Disciples*, A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1992 & 2002
 - *Disciples Called to Witness, The New Evangelization* – United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, 2012
4. Initially, the Steering Committee should conduct discussions and brainstorming sessions to assimilate and understand the role of the Parish Pastoral Council as it relates to the Church, Diocese and parish. It is also important to understand clearly the relationship of the pastor and his administrative staff to the Parish Pastoral Council.

5. The Steering Committee launches an educational program for the parish. It may include the following:
 - Series of sermons on the new role/ministry of the Parish Pastoral Council in the parish
 - Bulletin inserts describing the Parish Pastoral Council
 - Open parish forums for parishioners conducted by the Steering Committee
 - Open discussion during meetings of all existing parish organizations
 - Invitations to outside speakers to provide resources and training
 - Parish survey of special talents, ministry, interests
 - Effectively use parish website and social media
6. The Steering Committee develops a Mission Statement for the parish, a set of guidelines for the Parish Pastoral Council, and establishes the areas of mission.
7. The Steering Committee sets up the procedures for the selection of the first slate of council members. It will also determine eligibility and qualifications of nominees.
8. It is suggested that the pastor appoints a representative number of Steering Committee members to the new Parish Pastoral Council to provide continuity and a smooth transition. The chairperson is selected from among this group through a process of discernment or is appointed directly by the pastor.

The pastor may utilize the steering committee as an ongoing nomination committee to perpetuate council membership, or he may create a nomination committee from council members.

ELIGIBILITY FOR A PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

The following are important issues to be observed:

1. Every effort should be made to achieve adequate representation of a cross section of the parish. It is desired that ethnic, age (16 years minimum), economic and geographic groups be reflected in the Council membership. However, no one is to be a representative of or answerable to a specific constituency.
2. It is recommended that the number of persons on the Council should range from 7 to 21 members.
3. The Council should consist of priests, deacons, and religious (if members of the parish staff), but primarily laity. There are 3 forms of membership selection which pastors may choose: nominated, ex-officio and appointed.
 - a) **NOMINATED:** A pool of nominees is proposed by a nomination committee. The pastor appoint any of these nominees via a process of discernment.
 - b) **APPOINTED:** The pastor directly appoints (without consultation) certain members to the Council at his discretion.
 - c) **EX-OFFICIO:** All Parochial Vicars and the Chair of the Parish Finance Council are ex-officio members.

If the parish has a permanent deacon assigned to it, he should be appointed to the pastoral council. If a parish has multiple permanent deacons assigned to it, at least one should be appointed to the pastoral council.

4. Each nominee must adhere to the following established diocesan guidelines for anyone who is asked or offers to run for the Council:

- a) be a practicing Catholic in good standing with the Church, demonstrating:
 - o fidelity to the teachings on faith, morals, and social justice;
 - o fidelity to the Sunday Mass;
 - o evidence of the presence of Christ in the world as a member of the Council
- b) be a parishioner of the parish (i.e., live within the parish boundaries or be registered in the parish).
- c) possess a willingness to grow in an understanding of the Church by taking advantage of opportunities for continuing education and formation in Church doctrine and documents.
- d) have the ability to work with others in a spirit of openness and trust.
- e) understand that membership in Parish Pastoral Council is one of service to the People of God.
- f) agree to uphold the teachings of the Church and the norms established by the Diocese for a Parish Pastoral Council.

The key factor in starting a Parish Pastoral Council is communication. Open and honest dialogue with everyone is crucial. Good communication makes the difference.

GUIDELINES FOR THE STRUCTURE OF A PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

The following elements should be included in the development of any Constitution or By-laws for the Parish Pastoral Council.

Every parish should design a structure that most effectively meets its specific needs while furthering the mission of Christ and upholding the diocesan statements of policy.

Every council must meet quarterly. If there is an immediate need, or an issue of great sensitivity arises, with the pastor's prior approval an additional meeting may be scheduled.

The following is offered for consideration in developing the structure for each Parish Pastoral Council.

Representation

Membership should not be forced on those who are not really enthusiastic about making the commitment called for by Council membership.

Nominations

A nominating committee, consisting of three to five persons depending on the size of the Council, should be established and will include the pastor and other Council members appointed by the Chairperson. The nominating committee's function is to develop the procedure for selecting candidates for positions to be filled.

The nominating committee's responsibilities are:

1. to publicize the role and importance of the Parish Pastoral Council and stimulate interest among the parishioners in service to the Council.
2. to arrange a training session for potential nominees, to explain further the role of the Council and the duties and responsibilities of its members.
3. to interview potential nominees, to ascertain their understanding of the Council's role, their commitment to service and the requirements for membership before their name is accepted for nomination.
4. to prepare a slate of nominees and make each individual's qualifications known to the pastor.

Appointments

Individuals are appointed to the Parish Pastoral Council by the pastor, not to a particular mission within the Council. This procedure provides latitude to the Council Chairperson in consultation with the pastor, to ask for volunteers or to appoint members to positions where they will be most effective.

Members shall serve for a term of three years. No member or their spouse may succeed him/herself to the Council. Spouses may not serve as members of the Council at the same time. A two term limit is recommended for each member. One year must elapse between terms of office, however, a pastor may reappoint a member immediately for the good of the

Council. In the first year of organization the elected members will draw lots to determine their tenure of one, two or three years. Individuals who serve a partial term of one or two years are eligible to be re-elected to one full term of three years. A turnover of one-third of the members will be affected each year.

The pastor decides if he will appoint the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson or if they will be elected by the membership of the Parish Pastoral Council each year. Eligibility for these two positions is limited to their terms of service.

In the event that a vacancy occurs among the membership, it is recommended that the pastor appoint a replacement from an existing pool of candidates. In the event that person declines, the remaining candidates will be similarly asked to complete that term of office. A vacancy should not place the number of Council members below the minimum seven (7) members.

Timeline for Annual Nominations

It is suggested that a nominating committee be appointed in January and present the nominees and their qualifications to the pastor in March. The Selection of the Council members should take place during April or May. New members will be installed in June and should take office in July. **This suggested time line could be adjusted to suit the needs of the individual parish.**



PRAYERFULLY LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

IMPLEMENTING A PASTORAL PLAN

Parish Pastoral Council Officers

The Code of Canon Law stipulates that the pastor, by virtue of his office, presides over any meetings of the Parish Pastoral Council. The Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson should be appointed or elected annually. The Secretary of the Council is appointed to provide secretarial functions to the Parish Pastoral Council. It may be the parish secretary or a member of the parish with the necessary skills. The secretary has a non-voting status.

The Pastor as President of Council

The pastor presides, not by “chairing” the meeting, but by using his pastoral authority:

1. to make certain that members have the proper formation for serving on the Council.
2. to clarify points of Church law or diocesan policy when necessary.
3. to build a community of faith and an atmosphere of trust among Council members.
4. to make certain that the scope of the Council’s concern reflects the entire pastoral mission of the Church.
5. to share in consensus for the formation of parish priorities.
6. to serve as chief administrative officer of the parish.
7. to assist in formulating the Council’s agenda.

Chairperson’s Major Functions

A. To facilitate the Parish Pastoral Council meetings:

1. providing time for prayer and reflection.
2. presenting the agenda items for discussion. The presentation is made without indicating what solution is to be reached or any personal bias the Chairperson may have with regard to the topic.

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3. maintaining order and attention, regulating who will speak, adhering to a time schedule.
 4. developing ideas and expressing the sentiments of the Council by restating, summarizing or contrasting them.
 5. acting as monitor, reminding members and guests of time limits and procedural rules by which the Council operates.
 6. making certain that everyone's input has been received in the consensus process.

Neither the pastor nor members of the parish professional staff should serve as the Parish Pastoral Council Chairperson.

B. To schedule open forums.

Since the Parish Pastoral Council should reflect the needs and desires of the total parish and act in the best interest of all parishioners, opportunities for Council members to meet with the parishioners should be made available. These meetings should be to inform parishioners about Council plans and programs at a time other than a regularly scheduled Council meeting.

C. To ensure communications between the Parish Pastoral Council and parishioners.

Meeting dates, agendas, Council minutes, and reports on the work of the Council committees serve to keep open the channels of communication between the Parish Pastoral Council and the parishioners and should be published and reported on a regular basis.

Council Vice-Chairperson

The Vice-Chairperson performs the duties of the Chairperson in the latter's absence and serves as an aide to the Chairperson in conducting the Council's work.

Council Secretary

The Secretary documents the business of the Council (minutes, reports, etc), supplies members with information, maintains attendance and other records and handles all Council correspondence. The Secretary is not a member of the Parish Pastoral Council and has a non-voting status. The Secretary is appointed by the pastor.

*In the parish we share **one mission** and together live out that mission through our worship, parish programs, ministries and activities. The parish helps to launch the*

Apostolate of the Laity in the World.

*The Apostolate of the Laity in the World
enriches and deepens parish life.*

SUGGESTED COMPONENTS OF THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

*Every Parish is to develop its own working constitution and by-laws.
A general outline follows, which is provided as a guide.*

PREAMBLE:

The basic identity, purpose and the Mission Statement of the parish that is establishing the Constitution and By-Laws.

PURPOSE:

The basic purpose and general goals of the Parish Pastoral Council as representative of the parish. In other words, it states what the parish wants to do through the efforts of the Council.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

How the Council may act on behalf of the parish. The limits of its responsibilities are stated as well as its role solely as advisory to the pastor.

MEMBERSHIP:

How many members the Council is to have and the eligibility requirements. It covers the removal of members for cause and the replacement of vacancies. It also includes the training requirements for potential members and makes provisions for continuous Parish Pastoral Council development.

TERMS:

It is suggested that a Council member be elected or appointed for a term of three years, with an intervening year between terms.

NOMINATIONS:

When, how and by whom (i.e., who is eligible to vote for members)

ELECTIONS:

At least 50 % of the members are nominated and elected.

OFFICERS:

What officers the Council has, and their respective job descriptions.

MEETINGS:

The dates and frequency of regular meetings; how special meetings may be called; and rules of procedure, (including consensus, gathering and quorum).

AREAS OF MISSION:

The names of all Missions and a description of each Mission's field of activity; also how the Missions are to be constituted and which parish committees, organizations and boards are subsumed under each Mission.

OPERATING RULES:

Meeting format; Chairperson's role; channels of communication with the parish at-large and other parish organizations.

AMENDMENTS:

Procedure for amending the Constitution and By-Laws of the Council.

The role of the Parish Pastoral Council is to invite everyone in the parish into a closer relationship with God and a deeper witness to Christ and the truths of our Catholic faith in the world



PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL MEETINGS

Frequency and Length of Meetings

The Parish Pastoral Council should meet at least quarterly, although monthly meetings are recommended until the council is established and functioning. The meeting should not exceed two hours in length.

Attendance

It is the responsibility of the Council Chairperson to contact any member who has been absent, without excuse from two consecutive meetings, to discuss the continued fulfillment of that member's commitment. A third unexcused absence could result in the pastor's dismissal of the member from the Council. This policy applies to all elected and appointed members.

If, in fact, a member was absent from 1/4 of the yearly meetings, the Pastor should consider his/her absenteeism an automatic resignation unless extenuating circumstances dictate otherwise.

Climate of Prayer

All meetings of the Parish Pastoral Council should open with prayer. Periodically, the Parish Pastoral Council should adore the Blessed Sacrament in silence together.

Maintaining a prayerful climate throughout the meeting will encourage the members to continuously renew, sustain, and increase their awareness of the faith and mission that brings them together as a Parish Pastoral Council.

Procedures for Conducting Meetings

It should be standard practice that each Council member has the opportunity to voice his/her opinion to each issue during the Parish Pastoral Council meetings. This practice will help insure participation and each member will know that his/her opinion is welcome and expected. To ensure that there will be adequate time for this communication, it is necessary to establish an agenda. Normally the Chairperson of the Council works with the pastor in establishing the agenda. Input may be obtained from other Council members or outside sources.

DIOCESE OF ALLENTOWN PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL GUIDELINES

Structure Format for Areas of Apostolate

THE AREAS OF MISSION OF THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

Each parish must be concerned with the totality of the pastoral mission given by Christ to His Church. A Council structure should give witness to the essential elements of that mission by establishing individual Areas of Mission. Areas of Mission are simply the categories used to group related activities together. These categories include every aspect of the overall mission of the Church. Each parish must establish Areas of Mission that encompass every goal and activity within the parish. Areas of Mission, then, divide the overall mission of the parish into more manageable sections. These divisions help the parish to organize its efforts and keep before it the diversity of specific ministries and activities. Through Areas of Mission, the parish can channel its efforts most efficiently and invite parishioners to live out their baptismal call.

The Basic Functions of Areas of the Mission are:

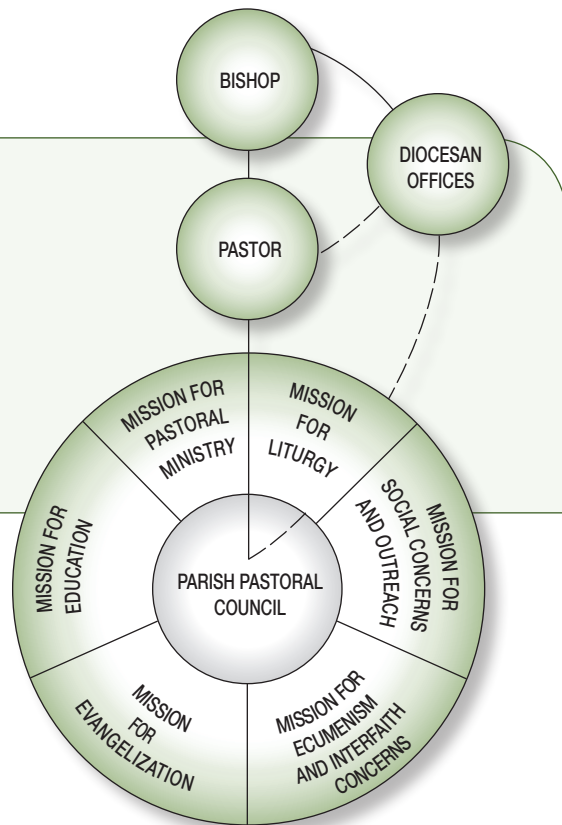
1. **To investigate** the needs of each Area of Mission in the parish and make recommendations to the Parish Pastoral Council on meeting those needs;
2. **To collaborate** with the priests and parish staff in their particular Area of Mission in implementing the priorities of the Council;
3. **To communicate** with the various standing committees, parish organizations and boards in their Areas of Mission and keep the Council updated on their activities;

4. **To ascertain and implement** the diocesan norms in all Areas of Mission.

The Areas of Mission of the Parish Pastoral Council function as part of a whole, and all are interdependent in fulfilling the mission of the parish. While areas of the Mission will be discussed separately, it is clear that not one of them can function in isolation from the others. There will always be some overlapping in both organization and performance. The full development of each Mission with its related parish organizations and standing committees will call for coordination and cooperation. Following are some examples of the variety of parish programs, ministries and activities that come under the various Areas of Mission.



**The following
SIX AREAS OF MISSION
are the norms for
PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS
in the Diocese of Allentown**



1. THE MISSION FOR EVANGELIZATION

This Area of Mission is constantly seeking new ways to reach out to others with the Message of God's love. Some examples of the ministry carried out under the area of Evangelization would be:

- Caring Communities
- Charismatic Renewal
- Cursillo
- Eucharistic Adoration
- Home Visitations
- Legion of Mary
- Outreach to Inactive Catholics
- Parish Missions
- Parish Retreats
- Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA)
- Support Groups
- Parish website and dynamic use of social media

Evangelization is the continuous process by which the Church strives to deepen the faith of

those who believe and bring the Good News to those who do not believe. Evangelization is the primary goal of the Parish Pastoral Council. It has two major thrusts:

1. spiritual renewal, by which those who profess faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ are drawn to more clearly reflect that belief in their actions, their relationships and their whole lives.
2. outreach, whereby individuals, parishes and organizations seek ways of sharing the faith with others including Catholics who do not practice their faith and those who do not practice any religion.

The entire parish and the diocese share the responsibility for evangelization. The Parish Pastoral Council should effectively assist the pastor in establishing the proper focus on evangelization as an vital area of mission in the parish.

The Mission for Evangelization must be filled with the creativity of the Spirit, constantly seeking new ways to reach out to others with the message of God's love. As Pope Francis states in *The Joy of the Gospel*, "the parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and community." (#28)

This Mission must work closely with the other Parish Pastoral Council Areas of Mission and parish organizations. It should provide the spark by which the entire faith community becomes a bearer of the Good News. It may find itself sponsoring parish retreats and renewal programs, information classes, home visitation of in

2. THE MISSION FOR EDUCATION

This Area of Mission includes all parish activities that are directed to the formation of its members, both children and adults.

The Catholic school, the parish faith formation program, youth ministry programs, and adult religious education programs, including the Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA) are all areas of concern for the Mission of Education.

Religious Education Programs for Children, such as:

- Catholic Schools
- Parish Programs of Religious Education
- Sacramental Preparation
- Summer Vacation Bible School Programs

Programs for Adult Faith Enrichment

- Bible Study Groups
- Sacramental Preparation
- Workshops, e.g., "Apologetics"
- Faith Formation

One of the most important tasks entrusted to the Church is to teach, to teach the nations and to form anew the disciples of our Lord. *"The one mediator, Christ, established and ever sustains here on earth his holy Church, the community of faith, hope, and charity, as a visible organization through which he communicates truth and grace to all men."* (Lumen Gentium, #8) This communication takes the form of the proclamation of the Gospel, the celebration of the sacraments and teaching the faithful.

Catholic education is a genuine priority of the Church. Where there is a parish or regional school, there should be an active relationship with the parish Board of Education. Where the parish is a cooperating member of a K-12 or consolidated school program, or has children attending a neighboring parish school, a sense of cooperation and support should be fostered.

The Mission for Education has a special concern for the needs of the parish religious education program. The program requires a dedicated director or coordinator, trained catechists, and volunteers as well as the necessary resources and facilities to operate effectively. This includes the parish program of catechesis for children and youth, parish youth groups and summer enrichment programs.

Adult religious education and formation is a vital component of parish life today. In all areas, from family life and the sacramental formation of their children to a deepening of personal prayer life, adults look for assistance in developing their own relationship to Christ. Since many adults have not had significant ongoing formation in their faith, programs of adult catechesis are needed. The parish can be very helpful in forming the adults of the parish to take on an active role in the life of our communities, bringing with them the light of the Gospel.

The Mission for Education ensures that all members are given opportunities to strengthen their faith and to express that faith through service.

3. THE MISSION FOR PASTORAL MINISTRY

This Area of Mission fosters a sense of belonging among the members of the parish.

strengthen and support the parish as a Community of Faith.

- Bereavement Committee and outreach
- Caring Community Activities
- Catholic Men's Fellowship (mens groups)
- CYO Activities
- Divorced and Separated Outreach/Support
- Employment Networking and Spiritual Support
- Family Life
- Hispanic Ministry
- Knights of Columbus
- Holy Name Society
- Marriage Preparation
- Marriage Enrichment
- Ministry to Persons with Disabilities Parish Archives
- Parish Communications
- Parish Nurse Program
- Parish website; dynamic use of social media
- Prayer Chain
- Prison Ministry
- Pro-Life/Respect Life Committee
- Senior Adult Ministry
- Service Projects
- Singles Group
- Social events, such as picnics, festivals, dances, etc.
- Stewardship
- Vocation Awareness Committee
- Welcoming Committee
- Women of Grace
- Youth and Young Adult Ministry
- Programs

The Mission for Pastoral Ministry encompasses all the programs and activities of a parish that strengthen the sense of being a Christian Community. Pastoral Ministry fosters a sense of belonging among the members of a parish. This mission would also include all those parish "special events," such as picnics, dances, covered dish socials, etc., which bring the parish together to "build community."

This Area of Mission should also include a component of Youth Ministry that reaches out to students who are in middle school and high school. Youth Ministry is a comprehensive approach to youth as described in the goals outlined in *Renewing the Vision*. In this document, the United States Catholic Bishops tell us that effective ministry with adolescents provides appropriate experiences, programs, activities, strategies, resources, content and processes to address the unique developmental and social needs of the young and older adolescents both as individuals and as members of families.

Youth Ministry strives to reach out to 100% of young people through gathered and non-gathered activities which may include CYO basketball, scouting, social events, retreats, community service, peer ministry, leadership training (for both adolescents and adults), planning and involvement in liturgy and religious education.

Ministry with Young Adults is another important aspect of the pastoral mission of the parish. Generally speaking, young adults are people in their late teens, twenties, and thirties; single, married, divorced, or widowed; and with or without children. As stated in the document *Sons and Daughters of the Light*, "The Church can offer them (young adults) a vision of life based on a faith that calls each of them to holiness, community, and service."

The document goes on to say that parishes need to be a “home” for young adults. This is where they experience life cycle events: birth, marriage, death and struggle with life challenges. The approach to Young Adult Ministry needs to have an awareness of the life patterns of young adults to connect them:

1. to Jesus Christ
2. with the Church
3. with the Mission of the Church in the world
4. with a peer community

The Parish needs to provide opportunities for involvement in current Church life, allowing them to be visible and active in liturgy as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, lectors, ministers of music and hospitality; leaders in the parish as members of the parish pastoral team and parish committees; and partake in specific opportunities for young adults to be with one another, i.e. social activities, service opportunities, educational programs, and prayer experiences.

Since the family or “domestic Church” is the core of parish ministry, family life is an essential component of the Mission for Pastoral Ministry. Supporting family life, as part of this Mission, does not simply mean encouraging programs and ministries. It also means nurturing attitudes that support the families of the parish in all their diverse forms.

The parish is an oasis of the mercy and compassion of God expressed in its outreach to the hurting family, the grieving family, the broken family, the family in crisis, the immigrant family often separated by distance, and the family simply struggling day-to-day, week-to-week with the daily stresses and problems of life.

The most important aspect of this support is family perspective. This family perspective views individuals in the context of their family relationships and uses family relationships as a criterion to assess the impact of the parish’s policies, programs, ministries and services.

Parishes with a family perspective recognize that:

- The family has a unique identity and mission that permeates its tasks and responsibilities.
- The family is not a collection of individuals, but a living and developing system whose members are essentially interconnected.
- Diversity in structure, economic status, special needs, and ethnic and religious heritages and the influence of societal trends affect the roles and activities of families today.
- Partnerships need to be formed between families and the institutions that share family responsibilities. With this in mind, the family life component of the Mission for Pastoral Ministry might include:
 - Marriage Enrichment
 - Retrouvaille for those in troubled marriages
 - Support groups for the Separated and Divorced
 - Senior Adult Ministry, including parish-based clubs for seniors
 - Parish-based teachers of Natural Family Planning
 - Ministry with Families of Children with Disabilities, (includes parent-to-parent outreach)
 - Outreach and support for parents, whether they are married, divorced, widowed or single
 - Support for families of deployed military personnel
 - Parish Vocation Committee

4. THE MISSION FOR LITURGY

This Area of Mission is to nourish and give

elements of the parish.

- Altar Servers
- Art and Architecture
- Cantors
- Children's Liturgy of the Word
- Choir
- Devotions
- Eucharistic Adoration
- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
- Extraordinary Ministers of the Homebound
- Hand Bell Ensemble
- Hospitality/Greeters
- Lectors
- Liturgy Planning Committee
- Ministry Hearing Impaired (signing Mass)
- Nursery
- Ushers
- Youth Choir
- 40 Hours Devotion
- Liturgy of the Hours
- Music (includes an organist and/or liturgy director)

“ . . .The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all the church's power flows. For the aim and object of apostolic works is that all who are made Children of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat the (and drink) the Lord's supper. The liturgy in its turn moves the faithful, filled with the paschal sacraments, to be one in holiness; it prays that they may hold fast in their lives to what they have grasped by their faith; the renewal in the Eucharist of the covenant between the Lord and his people draws the faithful into the compelling love of Christ and sets them on fire. From the liturgy, therefore, and especially from the Eucharist, grace is poured forth upon us as from a fountain; the liturgy is the source for achieving in the most effective way possible

human sanctification and God's glorification, the end to which all the Church's other activities are directed.”

(Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (CSL) # 10)

The Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations called for by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people” (1 Pt 2:9; see 2:4-5) is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.

In the reform and promotion of the liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else. For it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit and therefore pastors must zealously strive in all their pastoral work to achieve such participation by means of the necessary instruction.” (CSL #14)

Because the purpose of the Mission for Liturgy is to nourish and give direction to the liturgical and worship elements of the parish, a thorough study of the Vatican II document quoted above, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, is the natural starting place.

This mission must be constantly evaluating the parish liturgical celebrations. Have the norms for Liturgy, promulgated since Vatican II, been brought to reality? Have the Church's guidelines regarding environment, music, gesture and texture been respected? Do the liturgical roles exercised by people with those gifts and skills allow for the best possible experience of work, music, prayer? Is there continuing formation of liturgical ministers? Are the sacraments celebrated with joy, with community participation, with reverence? Are the sacraments scheduled conveniently for participation by the people? The pastor, or his delegate, must work very closely with the Mission for Liturgy offering input, suggesting resources, etc. He may meet

regularly with a Liturgy Planning Committee, to discuss the liturgical calendar, with its upcoming feasts and celebrations and to think about what may be done to enhance each celebration.

The Mission for Liturgy also coordinates the efforts of all those who contribute to the Liturgy such as ushers, lectors, choir, altar servers, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, etc., as well as those who prepare and celebrate the Rites of Christian Initiation.

The Mission for Liturgy works closely with the Mission for Evangelization in planning and promoting parish programs of spiritual renewal.

5. THE MISSION FOR SOCIAL CONCERNS AND OUTREACH

This Area of Mission considers those issues that demand our concern in order that the dignity and rights of each person may be preserved.

- Advocacy Programs for Housing Assistance, Employment and Discrimination
- Bereavement Ministry
- Caring Community Activities
- Clothing/Blanket Drives
- Counseling Referrals to Catholic Charities
- Drug and Alcohol Programs
- Food Pantries
- Health Care
- Legislation Advocacy
- Meals on Wheels
- Migrant Workers Assistance
- Operation Rice Bowl
- Prison Ministry
- Projects for World Hunger
- Shelters
- Soup Kitchens
- Saint Vincent de Paul Society
- Thrift Shops
- Urban Ministry
- Third World Missions

The Mission for Social Concerns and Outreach is a dynamic response to the Church's call to address the issues and social concerns of our times. This Mission must challenge the institutions in our society to change when necessary in order that the dignity and rights of each person may be preserved.

The United States Catholic Bishops issued a statement entitled, *Communities of Salt and Light: Reflections on the Social Mission of the Parish*. The bishops state that:

“The pursuit of justice and peace is a essential part of what makes a parish Catholic.” (#2)

The Church's social teaching is a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society. The following seven key themes are at the heart of our Catholic social tradition and should be an integral part of this Area of Mission:

- Life and Dignity of the Human Person
- Call to Family, Community and Participation
- Rights and Responsibilities
- Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
- The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers
- Solidarity
- Care for God's Creation

In an article entitled *Parish Ministry to the Poor*, Reverend David J. McBriar, OFM, identified five assumptions as the starting point to enable the parish to serve the poor. Father McBriar says that:

1. *Serving the poor is not an option for a parish.* A parish that turns in on itself sooner or later implodes. People soon discover that “nothing's going on” in such a parish and they are more likely to leave.

2. *The poor are not only those poor within one's parish.* Wealthy parishes are obliged to serve the poor outside their parishes if they are to fulfill the Gospel imperative.
3. *Each person in the parish can be convinced.* With proper catechesis and example, everyone can be shown that it's his or her responsibility to serve the poor, not a responsibility left to a committee, the diocese or the parish.
4. *Issues like poverty, homelessness, unemployment, drug abuse, domestic violence, human rights, are not paralyzing if they are confronted one step at a time, one person at a time.* Parishes must show the parishioners how to do something about these issues.
5. *A parish budget is a theological and spiritual statement.* Service to the poor should be reflected generously in the parish budget. Some parishes even choose to tithe their income.

It is essential for the Parish Pastoral Council to communicate, organize and invite their parishioners to speak out through word and actions to aid all those who require assistance so that they may live with respect and safety. This is the opportunity to live out the Corporal Works of Mercy in our everyday lives. In the encyclical letter, *The Gospel of Life*, St. John Paul II stated:

"By virtue of our sharing in Christ's royal mission, our support and promotion of human life must be accomplished through the service of charity, which finds expression in the personal witness, various forms of volunteer work, social activity and political commitment... In our service of charity we must be inspired and distinguished by a specific attitude: we must care for the other as a person for whom God has made us responsible...Where life is involved, the service of charity must be profoundly consistent."

(The Gospel of Life #87)

6. THE MISSION FOR ECUMENISM AND INTERFAITH CONCERNS

This Area of Mission encourages unity and

with us a belief in God.

- Providing opportunities for praying for and with others who share our faith in Jesus Christ
- Cooperative ventures with those of other religious traditions to address community problems
- Discussion groups and parish programs designed for Ecumenical and Interfaith Marriages

An understanding and appreciation for the beliefs of others can enrich our own faith and can be a privileged moment of sharing the Gospel as we share spiritual insights with those of other faith traditions. Therefore, the Mission for Ecumenism and Interfaith Concerns promotes unity and understanding within the Christian family and reaches out in a special way to non-Christians who share with us a belief in one God (Jews and Muslims), as well as, members of other religions.

The ecumenical aspects of this Mission are to be guided by the *Directory for Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* from the Holy See.

This Mission may sponsor ecumenical non-sacramental liturgical and prayer services and encourage both individual and common prayer for the unity Jesus wills for His Church as expressed in John 17:21.

Ecumenism on a parish level may also include educational programs. Formal theological dialogue between qualified theologians of different denominations has brought about major advances in ecumenism and Catholics should be informed of these breakthroughs, especially the agreed upon statements with Lutheran and Anglican (Episcopal) churches.

Ecumenical discussion groups on a parish level also encourage a spirit of unity and understanding. Although there are still many sources for disagreement, we who share one Baptism have much in common and this should be emphasized.

The Mission for Ecumenism and Inter-religious Concerns should also stimulate

cooperative ventures in charitable, emergency relief, social justice and community concerns. These joint service projects are a positive and productive way for the Christian communities to show both their essential unity of purpose and their love and concern for others.

Catholics participating in this mission must be truly knowledgeable about their own faith. To pass on misinformation to non-Catholics is a grave injustice.

By their words and actions, parishioners engaged in this mission witness to their faith in a gospel of love and their shared commitment to love one another as Christ has loved them, and to seek that unity for which He prayed.

“May they all be one. . . so that the world may believe.”

John 17:22

Advancing the Mission of Christ in the Parish

A structure or organization is only as effective as the people it draws together. These Areas of Mission will only further the mission of Christ if:

1. The Parish Pastoral Council sets its priorities in light of the Gospel; and the pastor, together with the Parish Finance Council, allocates its resources accordingly.
2. The Parish Pastoral Council members, regardless of which mission is their special area of concern, always place the overall good of the parish first.
3. The principles of the 12 diocesan norms put forth in this document are translated into action.

Standing committees, parish boards,

parish organizations, and other units of the parish are all to be subsumed organizationally under an Area of Mission.

Each Parish Pastoral Council member is assigned to an Area of Mission and should coordinate all activities through the Council. He or she should challenge, inspire and offer a sense of unity and common purpose to all involved in their particular Area of Mission.

Every Parish Pastoral Council may decide how many and which members should be involved directly with its areas of mission. Some areas may require more attention than others. Each parish should strive to balance its energies among all areas so that the overall mission of the Church may be advanced.

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