

ARCHDIOCESE OF HALIFAX-YARMOUTH

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

November 7, 2020

Preamble

The Church calls for the establishment of a parish pastoral council to assist the parish priest and other parish leadership in directing the parish's growth in mission, formation and as a community. This must be understood within the context of the mission of the Church.

Article 1: The Mission of the Church

A parish pastoral council is to function according to the following regulations and with the understanding of the missionary nature of the parish.

The very nature of the parish is to be missionary. The life of the parish does not rest on the shoulders of a few volunteers, but on all the baptized, whose gifts are essential to the parish's mission. When people are able to share their God-given gifts and respond to their baptismal vocation, they offer themselves more fully to the task at hand. In this regard, the faithful of the parish community should as much as possible be involved in creating a missionary plan for their parish....

The pastor of the parish as a representative of Christ, who is the head and shepherd of the church has as his principle mission the proclamation of the word of God, the sanctification of men and women through the celebration of the sacraments. To support this the pastor should delegate appropriate temporal and administrative tasks to qualified and faithful laypersons, thereby fostering a broader participation of the laity in the parish's affairs. This is all the more important when a pastor is responsible for more than one [community].¹

All of this can best be accomplished through pastoral and financial councils working in collaboration with the pastor and the parish leadership team.

Article 2: Role, Function and Constitution of the Parish Pastoral Councils

The Parish Pastoral Council is a consultative body, a fully initiated practicing members of the parish whose task is to assist the pastor and other parish leadership for the parish's growth in mission, formation and as a community of faith. It strives to discern in a co-responsible manner

¹ CCCB Episcopal Commission for Doctrine, *The Missionary Dynamic of the Parish Today*, 2014, no. 22.

the movement of the Holy Spirit among God's people in the parish. A Parish Pastoral Council is concerned with fostering pastoral activity; it investigates all those things which pertain to the pastoral life and works of the parish; ponders them, and proposes strategies to address them. It is essential that Council meetings occur in the context of prayer and openness to the Holy Spirit, so that at all times the common good will prevail. The process for the Pastoral Council to arrive at conclusions is one of discerning where the Holy Spirit is calling the faith community to achieve the Great Commission.

Specifically, the Parish Pastoral Council's purpose is to enhance the process of:

- strategic, longer term pastoral planning focused on formation, mission and building the community of faith (3-5 years out)
- propose pastoral programs that support the planning objectives
- improving pastoral services
- evaluating the pastoral effectiveness of various programs and services

The recommendations of the Pastoral Council are to be taken seriously when grounded in prayer, discernment, and communal wisdom. "The counsels and suggestions of the faithful which they propose within the confines of their ecclesiastical communion and in the spirit of true unity are of great value for the formation of decisions" (Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, letter on Pastoral Councils, January 25, 1973).

Article 3: Leadership and Structure of Pastoral Council

The pastor presides at the Parish Pastoral Council, and is responsible for the final approval of Council recommendations concerning pastoral planning, programs, and services for the parish, as well as for their implementation. The parish priest ought to follow the recommendations of the Parish Pastoral Council unless there is a compelling reason to do otherwise. If there is such a reason, the pastor must share this with the Council and is to advise the Archbishop of Halifax-Yarmouth of the situation and his reasons for not abiding by the recommendations of the Parish Pastoral Council.

The Code of Canon Law provides for the formation of Parish Pastoral Councils in Canon 536, §1.

In every parish of the diocese, a Pastoral Council shall be established, if the diocesan Bishop, after consulting with the Council of Priests, so decides. The pastor presides over the Pastoral Council. The Pastoral Council is composed of members of the congregation together with those of the parish staff who have pastoral care by reason of their office. The Pastoral Council assists in promoting pastoral action in the parish.

Article 4: Parish Pastoral Council Membership

1. The process used for identifying new council members will vary from parish to parish,

but is to include some opportunity for parishioners to participate. The entire process needs to be permeated with private and public prayer to the Holy Spirit. The intention should be included in the prayers of intercession at each Mass.

2. The Council should include:
 - a. Some recommended by parishioners
 - b. Some appointed by the pastor
 - c. Some from the leadership teamAll members shall be confirmed by the pastor.

3. The number of council members should consist of not less than 7, or more than 15 members. Councilors are to be chosen so as to truly reflect the wisdom of the parish community. When parishioners understand the work and ministry of the Pastoral Council and have an opportunity to discern which parishioners are suited for it, they can contribute enormously to the selection of councilors.

4. Serving on the council is a ministry to the whole parish. When considering membership on the council, the following criteria should be kept in mind. Potential candidates should be:
 - of proven faith,
 - living in fidelity to the norms of the Church,
 - demonstrating the gifts of wisdom and prudence,
 - willing to commit their time, talent and wisdom in a consultative and collaborative manner,
 - committed to the vision of the archdiocese as communicated by the Archbishop,
 - committed to the archdiocesan/parish pastoral plan,
 - able to study and reflect prayerfully, and to recognize and respect the viewpoints of others.

5. Official Church documents state that the Pastoral Councils are to represent the people of God, but not in the sense that is common in civil society. Rather, council members are representative in that they are a witness or a sign of the whole community. They make its wisdom present. This Pastoral Council is a representative body rather than a body of representatives. A council member is not a representative for a particular neighborhood, age bracket, special interest group, ministry or organization.

6. Considering the responsibility entrusted to them, Parish Pastoral Council members are expected to attend the meetings of the council and to ensure that all discussions and recommendations take place respectfully and in a spirit of confidentiality. The members of the council are expected to participate in any ongoing formation process, which at the parish level may include an annual evening of recollection, a formation gathering of key leaders, and other prayer experiences. In addition, the diocese will also offer regular presentations on pastoral planning, goal-setting, visioning, conflict resolution and

discernment.

7. Due to the diverse situations and personnel of parishes, there may be a variety of people, both paid and volunteer, involved in ministry leadership at the parish. These ministry team members may be invited to attend some Pastoral Council meetings when their expertise or training may be of assistance to the council. However, their presence should not dominate council meetings or stifle the voice of the general membership. Pastoral Council Members must take the formation provided at the beginning of the new term (new members must complete the pastoral training module within 3 months of being appointed and existing members must also complete the module every 3 years).

Article 5: Meetings/Agenda

1. The Parish Pastoral Council needs to develop procedures on how items may be proposed and placed on the agenda. The pastor ordinarily proposes items for the Council's agenda, in collaboration with the executive of the Council. However, any member of the Council may raise items for discussion.
2. Ordinarily, the Council meets at least four times a year.
3. Minutes should be recorded by the Parish Pastoral Council Secretary and archived as part of the parish permanent record.

Article 6: Terms of Service

1. It is recommended that Council members serve a two-year term, renewable once; or one three-year term. Further details regarding operation of the Council should be specified in the Parish Pastoral Council procedures.
2. The Pastoral Council does not deal with acts of administration which are distinct from pastoral policies and planning. Acts of administration concerning the daily operations of the parish, which includes the implementation of the pastoral plan and policies, parish programming, budgeting and parish personnel matters, would be the concern of the pastor in conjunction with his leadership team and the parish finance council.
3. When the parish becomes vacant, it is recommended that the Parish Pastoral Council remain in place as a consultative body to assist the incoming pastor or administrator, thus providing some continuity in a time of transition. However, keeping in mind that without a pastor in place, no decision or recommendations made by the Pastoral Council are valid. After a suitable period of transition, the new pastor can ask the council members if they are willing to complete their respective terms or whether he would like some or all of the members to resign so that new members can be recruited to the Parish Pastoral Council.

4. On at least an annual basis the members of the Finance Council, the Parish Pastoral Council, the parish leadership team with the clergy and lay staff of the parish, and parishioners who are ministry leaders will gather together to appreciate the perspectives of each body, to share common concerns, to coordinate efforts to achieve the vision for the parish identified by the parish priest, to help identify outcomes for the parish that will determine its success in achieving the vision.

Article 7: Areas of Concern for the Pastoral Council

The following are some of the areas of pastoral concern that the Pastoral Council should address on an on-going basis. Deliberations on the following and any other related matter are to be consistent with the archdiocesan priorities of mission, formation and community.

Mission:

- a. Proclaim Christ to Others by having a tool for evangelization designed to reach out and invite those outside of our church including alienated Catholics, youth, and young families.
- b. Minister to Those in Need by providing dedicated service to the most vulnerable in the local area, such as: the poor, the homeless, the sick, and the dying
- c. Rely on the Holy Spirit in all pastoral ministries, vision, mission, though the discernment of the charisms and gifts of parishioners and by putting prayer at the centre of all decision-making processes

Community:

- a. Foster Sacramental Life by celebrating reverent liturgies with excellent music, hospitality, and homilies and providing opportunities to prepare for and deepen sacramental life and devotion.
- b. Foster Community Life by promoting and supporting small communities so that the majority of our parishioners may share faith and life together on a regular basis
- c. Create Systems & Structures that allow leading through a team approach that follows a consistent vision for the parish

Formation:

- a. Make disciples through an ongoing process to help people, of all ages, grow in the life of Christ and develop skills in evangelization
- b. Call to Service by identifying areas of strength and giving people opportunities to serve in those areas through their respective vocation.
- c. Promote Leadership by identifying and forming leaders at every level of parish life