

**Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines for the Archdiocese of San Antonio**

**Revised 2022**

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### **Overview of Parish Pastoral Councils**

1. In accord with the Second Vatican Council and Canon Law, the diocesan bishop has deemed it necessary to establish a parish pastoral council in every parish community throughout the Archdiocese of San Antonio. (c. 536)
2. Such councils offer an opportunity for the faithful, with their pastors, to share in the co-responsibility of the parish community, working together in a spirit of *synodality* and *pastoral de conjunto*.
3. Led by the grace of the Holy Spirit and rooted in prayer, a parish pastoral council offers their consultative voice to the pastor, for the pastoral planning and direction of the parish.

### **Methodology of Parish Pastoral Councils**

4. Parish pastoral councils offer their voice to pastors as representatives of the greater parish community. In order to effectively fulfill this duty, council members will utilize the SEE, JUDGE, ACT methodology, which is essential to proper pastoral planning. In the context of parish pastoral councils, this includes:
  - a. SEE: Consult regularly with parish leaders (staff, ministry, and committee leaders), host an annual parish hall/listening session, administer parish surveys, listen to parishioner grievances and suggestions, observe current events and trends, or other methods of collecting parish and community information as deemed necessary.
  - b. JUDGE: Evaluate findings, discerning parish Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT analysis).
  - c. ACT: Make recommendations and suggestions for parish priorities and areas of need/focus based on the above steps. The council should strive to reach consensus before making recommendations to the pastor. Recommendations should include sound reasoning and dissenting viewpoints should be shared.
5. Understand that this methodology is not linear, it may be necessary to repeat steps in the process, to gain a better understanding of the pastoral situation.
6. The parish pastoral council exists as a consultative body only. Once recommendations have been made, and the pastor has decided on a course of action, other constituent groups (specific staff, committees, and ministries) will be included in the planning and implementation of the pastoral plan as needed, developing goals and a proper evaluation process where appropriate.

### **Membership of Parish Pastoral Councils**

7. Council members must be registered parishioners in good standing with the Church, actively involved in ministry and the life of the parish and committed to spiritual growth.

8. Councils should consist of 6 to 12 members unless parish circumstances dictate otherwise.
9. When selecting members, the pastor is to ensure the council represents the parish community in terms of ministry involvement, ethnicity, gender, age, and other socio-economic demographics. However, this should not take priority over having members whose participation and perspective would be beneficial to the council.
10. Members shall consist of the non-ordained faithful who are not parish staff. Others who share in pastoral care by virtue of their office in the parish (parochial vicars and deacons), staff, and other parish leaders may attend pastoral council meetings at the pastor's discretion or by council invitation to offer relevant information to council members. (It was the opinion of the Presbyteral Council in January 2006 that it can be helpful to have parish staff in various support roles to the parish pastoral council, but that they should not be members of the council. (*Presbyteral Council*, January 9, 2006))
11. Members may be recommended by parishioners/council members and/or an election or discernment process. All members must be approved and appointed by the pastor. The pastor may also directly appoint members he deems appropriate for the council.
12. When first establishing a council, members should be assigned to 1-year, 2-year, and 3-year terms to create staggered transition of membership. Terms are not to exceed 3 years, with a maximum of 2 consecutive terms.
13. Membership terms shall be from July-June. This is consistent with general priest assignments.
14. Members may be replaced for failure to attend meetings or other just causes, at the discretion of the pastor.
15. Any vacancy shall be filled, at the discretion of the pastor.
16. Council members are members of the particular pastor's council. In the event a new pastor is assigned, or as deemed necessary by the current pastor, the current council members may be replaced at his discretion.
17. The pastor shall make known parish pastoral council members to the parish community through an installation Mass, parish communications, or other methods.
18. Council members are to receive training and formation offered by the Archdiocesan Pastoral Ministries Center, on a yearly basis.

### **Roles & Responsibilities of Parish Pastoral Council Members**

19. Parish pastoral councils have the following officers: Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary. Council members shall submit recommendations or vote on assigned officer roles which must then be approved by the pastor.

20. Officers shall serve 1-year terms, not exceeding 5 consecutive terms.

### **Pastor**

21. It belongs to the pastor alone to convoke the parish pastoral council and to preside over it; it also belongs to him alone to make public what has been done in the council meetings. The pastor may delegate the parochial vicar or deacon to preside in his absence.
22. The pastor discerns parish priorities, needs, potential solutions, and presents them to the council for consultation.
23. The pastor listens to the findings and recommendation of council members. In the event the pastor does not move forward with a recommendation made by the council, he should make his reasoning known to the council.

### **Chairman**

24. The chairman leads and guides the council meeting, communicating with the pastor beforehand to set the agenda.
25. Submits the agenda to pastoral council members at least three days prior to the meeting.
26. Is aware of the tasks and responsibilities of the pastoral council and communicates these to the pastoral council members, committees, and parish community.
27. Organizes/coordinates activities and processes of the pastoral council.
28. Develops and maintains an annual pastoral council calendar consistent with the parish calendar.
29. Ensures that a pastoral council budget is established and consistent with the parish budget.
30. Schedules formation/education for pastoral council members, utilizing parish leadership and offerings at the deanery and archdiocesan levels.
31. Performs duties consistent with the office as the pastor and Archdiocesan guidelines may direct.

### **Vice-Chairman**

32. Conducts meetings in the absence of the chairman.
33. Becomes chairman in the event of vacancy, with the approval of the pastor.
34. Performs duties consistent with the office as the chairman or the pastor may direct.

## **Secretary**

35. Oversees the accurate recording of the minutes of each meeting and sees to it that the minutes are made available to the pastoral council members, committee members, and the parish. The pastor may appoint a non-council member to be present at council meetings to record minutes.
36. May provide a condensed report of the meeting for publication in parish media, at the discretion of the pastor.
37. Takes attendance at meetings and records absences in meeting minutes.
38. Maintains the official list of all pastoral council standing and ad-hoc committees (officers, members, and their terms), and keeps these lists current with regard to addresses and phone numbers.
39. Reports all communication to the pastoral council. Handles correspondence for the pastoral council, including agendas, minutes, notification of regular and special meetings, notes of thanks, etc.
40. Performs such duties consistent with the office as the chairman or pastor may direct.

## **General Members**

41. Provide information and perspective on the parish and ministries (may be assigned specific ministries to consult with).
42. Provide recommendations to pastor and offer consultation on any matters brought forward to the parish pastoral council.
43. Performs such duties consistent with membership on the council, as the pastor may direct.

## **Committees**

44. Committees may be established, both standing and ad-hoc, to investigate specific matters as deemed necessary by the council and pastor.
45. Committee members will be recommended by the council and approved/appointed by the pastor to terms as needed.

## **Pastoral Council Meetings**

46. The parish pastoral council shall gather annually for a retreat in a time of prayer, fellowship, and communion.
47. The parish pastoral council shall gather annually for an in-depth parish analysis to evaluate the pastoral plan.

48. The pastoral council shall meet regularly as needed (**recommended**-monthly, **minimum-**quarterly)
49. Regular meetings consist of:
- a. Opening Prayer
  - b. Review and approval of previous meeting minutes
  - c. Pastor's Priorities (listed in detail with expectations)
  - d. Outside Consultation (from staff, ministry leaders, committees, etc.)
  - e. Council Discussion: Findings & Recommendations (listed in detail with expectations)
  - f. Closing Prayer
50. Meeting minutes shall be recorded by the secretary or pastor appointed individual and made available to all members, prior to the next meeting.

#### **Formation and Spiritual Growth**

51. The pastor will provide opportunities for formation and spiritual growth to pastoral council members.

#### **Parish Constitution and By-Laws**

52. Each parish shall draft pastoral council by-laws, in compliance with these Archdiocesan guidelines, to better address their parish reality. It may be necessary to address the specific methodology used, process for appointing members, additional officer roles, committees, amendment process, etc.
53. The parish constitution and by-laws are to be reviewed and updated each time a new pastor is installed.
54. The pastor will submit the parish constitution and by-laws for review to the Chancellor of the Archdiocese.