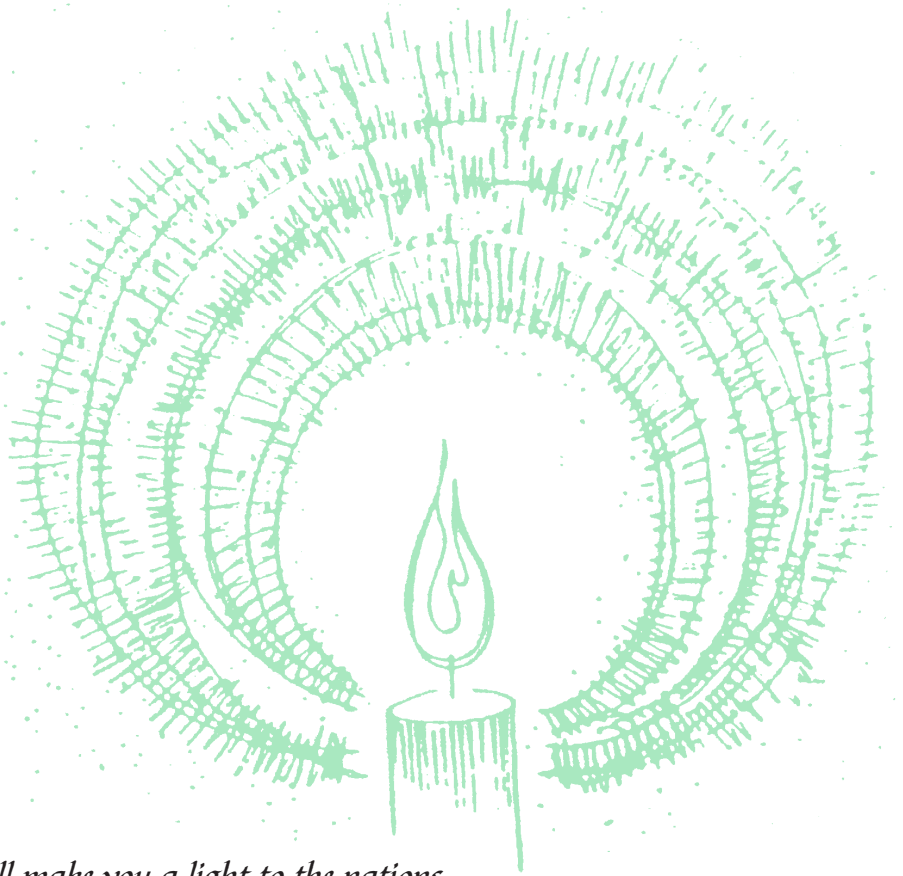


Pastoral Council Manual



*"I will make you a light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth." Isaiah 49*

Catholic Diocese of Gary, Indiana

Revised - June 2012

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Bishop of Gary

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June 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am pleased to share with you this newly revised Parish Pastoral Council manual. When I arrived in the Diocese of Gary in 1992, one of my first actions was to mandate that every parish establish a Parish Pastoral Council and an RCIA program. Since that time, nearly all of our parishes have established active and working Parish Pastoral Councils.

This revised manual is based upon our belief that we are all called through our Baptism to be collaborators and co-workers in carrying out the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. We have been gifted with God's Spirit and called to serve the Church and society according to the gifts given to each of us. This understanding of our Baptism reflects not only the vision of Vatican II, but the spirituality of stewardship as well.

The Parish Pastoral Council is a key leadership group in the parish. Through prayer, study, and open dialogue, the devout and faith-filled members of the Council, in collaboration with the pastor, (who is himself an integral member), form the vision and goals to meet the pastoral and spiritual needs of all of the parishioners. Through the work of the Commissions, these goals are refined and implemented with a variety of programs and structures that are essential to a welcoming, prayerful, and vibrant parish.

For parishes which have effective Parish Pastoral Councils in place, this new manual will provide a basis for renewal of your Councils and for orientation of new members. For those parishes without active Parish Pastoral Councils, the manual will help in the formation of the Council. The Coordinator of the Office of Pastoral Councils is available to provide further assistance and resources to the parishes.

With blessings and all best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours in the Lord Jesus,

**Most Reverend Dale J. Melczek
Bishop of Gary**

Introduction

“Following Jesus is the work of a lifetime. At every step forward, one is challenged to go further in accepting and living God’s will.”

Pastoral Letter on Stewardship, NCCB

As baptized Christians, we are obliged to be stewards of the Church - collaborators and cooperators in continuing the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, which is the Church’s essential mission. This mission - proclaiming, teaching, serving and sanctifying - is our task. It is the personal responsibility of each of us as disciples of Jesus Christ to participate in this mission.

Being a good disciple, a follower of Jesus, is the work of a lifetime. With every step we are challenged to go further in accepting and living God’s will. Being a disciple is not just something else to do alongside many other things suitable for Christians, it is a total way of life that requires constant conversion. This conversion is the result of our total self being focused on God as the Creator and giver of all good gifts, the greatest of which is Jesus Christ. The invitation that Christ gave to his first disciples to “come follow me” is the same invitation given to each person who says “I believe.”

We are called individually and by name. Each one of us has a vocation and God intends each one of us to play a unique role in carrying out the divine plan. Our challenge is to understand our role and respond generously to this call. Christ calls each of us to be stewards of our personal vocations, which we receive from God. Serving on the Parish Pastoral Council or on a Commission is one way in which we can respond to this call.

Church & Parish

“The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common.”

Acts 4:32-33

In the Acts of the Apostles Luke writes that it is the Spirit that guides this new church to be one of heart and mind, to be unified. Luke’s account of the Church still retains its importance two thousand years after it was written. The same Spirit which guided the Church of the first century guides the Church today; it is the same Spirit that calls all who are believers to be “one of heart and mind.” **Acts 4:32**

In the first chapter of the Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium* (**Dogmatic Constitution on the Church**) we learn that the Church is a “mystery”, recognizing the hidden presence of God, and always open to new and greater exploration. It also states that the Church is, in Christ, as a sacrament - a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race.” The second chapter of *Lumen Gentium* is titled “The People of God”. The Council pointed out that the Church has a visible and an invisible side. The invisible side is the presence of the triune God. The visible side is primarily the baptized persons who make up the Church - the People of God.

The Church is not something apart from the baptized to which they belong as recipients only of the sacraments. The People of God are the Church, and the structures that exist within the Church are to assist the People of God in fulfilling their mission and ministries. One of those structures is the parish. It is in the parish where Church is experienced and where the mission of Christ continues. It is where the people of God publicly express their faith, joining with others to give proof of their union with God and one another. It is in the parish where the Church lives, where God gives the gift of himself in Christ; a gift that he invites us to receive, and give in turn to others. It is in the Eucharistic liturgy that the parish expresses its deepest “communion” with one another. The Eucharist is the “source and summit” of Christian life. The assembly gathers at the Eucharist, to be nourished by God’s Word and the Bread of Life. The People of God go forth from the Eucharistic celebration to bring Christ’s message to the world in which they live and work. **(The Parish: A People, A Mission, A Structure).**

The Pastoral Council

The History

Councils have been part of the Church throughout its history. The impact of these Councils on the Church varied depending on what was happening in the Church at the time. The Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) began a major shift involving the renewed interest in the structure of the early Church as a model for responding to the needs of the Church in the modern age.

The bishops at the Second Vatican Council stressed the reality of the early Church as a “communion of faith” where all the baptized bear responsibility for placing their individual gifts at the service of all. This deliberate choice by the Vatican II Council to refer to the “Church” as a “communion” rather than simply “community” is significant. While “community” refers to independent persons working toward a common goal, “communion” conveys a deeper reality - persons sharing their gifts as brothers and sisters of the same Jesus Christ, whose Spirit brings us into unity with God and one another.

Through our Baptism we are all called to holiness, to ministry and to communion - to serve in the mission of Jesus Christ. Each of us, who make up the Church, the People of God, must reflect on how we can best use our gifts in responding to our baptismal call. While all are not called to the ministry of the ordained, “all of the faithful are called in various ways to share in the Church’s mission of announcing the reign of God and transforming the world in the light of Christ.” **(Co-Workers in the Vineyard, USCCB).**

After the diocesan Bishop has listened to the presbyteral council and if he judges it opportune, a Pastoral Council is to be established in each parish; The Pastor presides over it, and through it the Christian faithful along with those who share in the pastoral care of the Parish by virtue of their office give their help in fostering pastoral activity. The Pastoral Council possesses a consultative vote only and is governed by norms determined by the diocesan Bishop. (Canon 535)

In 1992, Bishop Dale J. Melczek, Bishop of Gary, mandated that every parish would begin the process of establishing a Parish Pastoral Council. The members of the Parish Pastoral Council - laity, and clergy - would collaborate together in making decisions that would impact the pastoral and spiritual life of the parish.

The Pastoral Council

The Structure

The Mission of Jesus

As Council:

- How well do we proclaim and live the message of love and forgiveness?
- Are we building a faith community where all are welcomed?
- How do we serve the poor and the oppressed?
- How does our liturgy call people to thankfulness and praise?

As Pastoral Councils continued to define themselves, the theology of shared responsibility and collaboration that flows from the Vatican II documents began to take hold in the 90s. The focus shifted from the temporal activities to the pastoral and spiritual activities of the parish. The Pastoral Council is an effective structure for promoting and supporting, the mission and ministry of the Church, and to help accomplish the mission of the parish.

The membership of the Parish Pastoral Council includes 12 lay men and women, and the pastor. The Pastoral Council is not just an **advisory** group that advises the pastor, who then makes his own decision. Nor is it a **decision making** body that makes decisions for the pastor, with the expectation that they will be implemented. The Pastoral Council is a **consultative body**, whose members enter into an open dialogue with one another. The members are expected to work collaboratively with one another in order to reach a decision by consensus. The Pastoral Council is the principal form of collaborative leadership on the parish level. It enables the clergy and laity to work together in a collaborative manner to bring about the pastoral and spiritual renewal of the parish. The Pastoral Council's value to their parish is their "shared wisdom" in understanding the parish needs and their ability to convey them to the pastor.

The pastor presides over the parish by nature of the fact that the parish has been entrusted to him by the bishop. (**Canon 536**). Recognizing and understanding that members of the Council have different roles is important. Conflict is often the result of the confusion of roles. The role of the pastor as presider could take on many forms in terms of the Pastoral Council. However, since the pastor is a member of the Council, his most effective role would be to listen and participate in the Council deliberations. The pastor needs to communicate his vision to the Council and actively seek the Council's wisdom in defining problems and exploring solutions.

The Pastoral Council

The Membership and Roles

Membership on the Pastoral Council should reflect the cultural and racial make up of the parish. It should also reflect gender and age diversity. Parishes are encouraged to have at least one youth member, age 16-18 on the Council. An associate pastor or deacon may serve only at the discretion of the pastor. Staff members should not serve on the Pastoral Council, nor should the pastor appoint members to the Council. Appointing an individual who may be representative of an important parish group, or is well known, does not necessarily follow that he or she will make an effective Council member. If a Council member resigns or moves, the position would be filled at the next discernment of new members. In the absence of the pastor, unless he delegates a replacement, the Council cannot meet. The Pastoral Council that is functioning properly should meet monthly, or minimally 10 times a year (**Diocesan Standard for Excellence, Priests Approved 2006**). The term of a Pastoral Council member is three years, with two terms being the maximum. Each year four members should rotate off the Council. A member whose first term has expired would be eligible to serve a second term, however, they must participate in the parish selection process. The Council Facilitator/Chair is discerned by the members of the Council. It is suggested that the Secretary position be given to a non-Council member.

Role of the Pastor

- The pastor is a member of the Pastoral Council. He is not apart from the Council, but one with the Council. He shares in the dialogue, and works with all the Council members to reach consensus in making decisions for the parish.
- The pastor is always the final voice on matters pertaining to theology or church teachings.
- The pastor reviews the agenda with the Facilitator/Chair 10 days prior to the meeting.

Role of the Facilitator/Chair

- The Facilitator/Chair facilitates the Pastoral Council meetings and insures that all the members participate in the discussions.
- The Facilitator/Chair will serve no more than 2 years.
- The Facilitator/Chair reviews the agenda with the pastor 10 days prior to the meeting.

Role of the Secretary

- The secretary takes the minutes and prepares them for distribution to the Council.
- The secretary also prepares a monthly summary of the minutes for the bulletin.
- The secretary provides the Council and the Diocesan Pastoral Council office with an updated membership list on a regular basis.
- The secretary does not participate in the Council meeting.

The Pastoral Council

The Function

Since the institution of the Pastoral Councils in 1992, the Diocese of Gary has made pastoral planning and the monitoring of the plan, the primary function of the Councils. The Diocesan publication, *Future Full of Hope: A Parish Guide to Renewal*, provides an excellent starting point for planning. The Pastoral Council is responsible for creating the Mission and Vision statements, and setting and monitoring the parish goals. The Commissions are responsible for setting the objectives for the goals. The steps provided below are meant to assist the Pastoral Councils in evaluating their current parish plan, or for developing a parish plan.

Steps for a Parish Plan

I. The Mission Statement.

Every planning process begins with a mission statement. The mission statement gives a description of a parish's reason for being - the work it does, how it is done, and why it is important. A mission statement should be distinctive, compelling, and a passionate statement of why this particular faith community exists. Specifically, the mission statement should:

1. Define the purpose of the faith community, what it does, how it works, and what difference it makes.
2. Be relatively stable over many years. If there is a current mission statement is it vital for the community? Do members know it and use it? A parish should have only one mission statement, developed by the Parish Council and accepted by the faith community.

II. The Vision Statement.

A vision statement is where the parish sees itself in the future. In order to have a clear idea about the future, it is necessary to have a clear view of the present. When asked to think about the future, we typically extend how we think things are now, into the future. It is very difficult for most of us to predict the future, because we can imagine only versions of what we already know. True paradigm shifts - radically different ways of seeing reality - typically come as a surprise. A vision is by definition a picture of the future that is different from the present.

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The Pastoral Council

The Function, con't

Specifically, the vision statement tells us:

1. What the future will be like if the mission is fully or more fully achieved; stated in the present.
2. Is it likely to be change in a ten-year period, and certainly with any change in leadership.
3. Is it compelling for members? Does it speak to both head and heart?
There is only one vision statement for the parish.
4. "Where there is no vision the people perish." (**Proverbs 29**)

III. Goals

Mission and vision statements help members focus on the uniqueness of their parish. A goal is a statement of a future state to be achieved through a set of action statements. Goals typically extend over a three to five year period. Goals articulate the changes that are necessary to achieve the mission statement. The number of goals in a pastoral plan should be limited to about five over a five years period. The issue is to identify the critical few goals that will make the most progress toward achieving the mission and moving toward the vision. Specifically the goals should reflect:

1. The major initiatives required to move toward the vision; and the investment of discretionary resources.
2. Five year goals. Do the goals point toward the vision? Number of goals set - no more than five.

V. Objectives

Objectives are activities or programs that are required to achieve the goals of the pastoral plan. Objectives have definite time frames, expected results, and defined responsibilities. Care should be taken not to develop too many objectives for any goal. Realistic appraisal of costs of all types is essential along with realistic time frames and expectations. Specifically the objectives should reflect:

1. The major activities required to meet the goals; more than one year, but no longer than five years to achieve.
2. Are these efficient and effective means to achieve the goal; three to five objectives per goal. **The Council sets and monitors the goals. The Commissions set the objectives for each of the goals.**

(A Concise Guide to: Pastoral Planning, Pickett, Wm., Ave Maria Press).
"Future Full of Hope", A Tool for Parish Planning, Diocese of Gary, 2006

The Pastoral Council

Collaborative Ministry

Loughlan Sofield, ST and Carroll Juliano, SHCJ in their book, *Using Our Gifts in Ministry*, define collaboration “as the identification, release, and union of all the gifts in ministry for the sake of the mission.” This definition has three key elements. First, the essence of collaborative ministry is gift. Second, collaboration is never an end in itself; it is a vehicle for ministry. Third, the goal of collaborative ministry is always the mission of Jesus Christ.

The Pastoral Council provides the collaborative leadership at the parish level, in order to enable the clergy and laity to cooperate effectively in the spiritual and pastoral renewal of the parish. Collaborative ministry is based on the belief that all baptized persons are gifted and called to mission. It reflects the notion that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. No one person has all of the wisdom. Sofield and Juliano state in their book above that failure to develop a more collaborative approach to ministry condemns the Church to mere survival. A non-collaborative Church is a Church of maintenance rather than a Church of mission.

If the baptized are to make inroads in the critical issues that affect the lives of their families, their community, and the world in which they live, then it will require the utilization of the gifts of all the people - people of diverse cultures and race, lay and ordained, women and men, working together collaboratively to proclaim the Good News and extending the kingdom.

Effective collaboration requires work, not just thinking about it. It involves breaking down barriers and boundaries, and finding creative solutions to meet the spiritual and pastoral needs of the people. Collaboration is more than just a nice idea, it is the vision of the Church articulated in the Second Vatican Council.

Levels of Collaboration (Sofield & Juliano)

- Level I: Co-Existence** - at this level the Pastoral Council members identify with one another in a general way. They share a common mission or ministry.
- Level II: Communication** - when there is an explicit decision to enter into some mutual interaction or dialogue. This level calls for more interaction among the members and sharing information. Bonding can begin at this level.
- Level III: Cooperation** - through cooperation comes a growing awareness that individuals and programs do not exist in isolation, but impact each other either negatively or positively. This dynamic is a movement toward independence.
- Level IV: True Collaboration** - ownership of the common mission; a desire to work together; to collaborate rather than compete; to unite all the gifts. Collaboration occurs when all the gifts are freely joined for the purpose of furthering the mission of Jesus Christ.

The Pastoral Council

Characteristics of the Pastoral Council

- A Pastoral Council is **prayerful**. Its members are to be persons of prayer, who are open to personal growth in holiness. The Council must spend time in prayer and reflection.
- A Pastoral Council in collaboration with the pastor, strives to discern the **pastoral and spiritual** needs of the parish.
- The Pastoral Council is **visionary**. As a result of hearing and experiencing God's Word, it brings a broader, more challenging vision to parish life.
- A Pastoral Council is **representative**. It represents the whole parish not one group.
- The Pastoral Council makes decisions through **consensus**. Through prayerful discernment of their gifts, the Council members are called upon to provide the vision, and planning for the parish.
- The Pastoral Council is **collaborative**. The Council collaborates with the pastor, the Commissions, and the parishioners. In addition the Council is to collaborate with other parishes and with Diocesan Program Offices and Councils.
- The Pastoral Council is **consultative** group working with the pastor. The pastor seeks the wisdom and guidance of those gathered.
- A Pastoral Council is **enabling**. It strives to be a Stewardship Parish by inviting the gifts of all to serve in the mission of Christ and the parish.

A Profile of a Pastoral Council Member

- A person who practices their faith and is a good example to the community.
- A person who is willing to pray personally and with others.
- A person who offers their gifts for the good of the parish and not for power.
- A person who is a good listener and can be an agent of change.
- A person who is approachable and able to empower others.
- A person who invites the gifts of all the parishioners for the good of the parish.
- A person who can collaborate with the pastor, the council members, commission members and the parishioners.

The Pastoral Council

The Selection of Members

The process by which a parish selects members for its Pastoral Council should be one that is inspired by the Holy Spirit. The common practice of the parishes in the Gary Diocese is to use a discernment process with open nominations. The discernment of Pastoral Council membership is a process of formation, prayer, and reflection by the individual on the gifts they would bring to the Pastoral Council.

The Discernment Process

- The Pastoral Council will appoint a Nominating Committee from its membership to conduct the selection process. A series of articles focused on the purpose of the Pastoral Council and Commissions should be placed in the parish bulletin three to four weeks prior to nominations. The Diocesan Office for Pastoral Councils will provide the articles.
- One week prior to nomination Sunday, Council members should speak at all the Masses encouraging the parishioners to consider discerning for the Council, and be available to talk with them after Mass to answer questions and give clarification.
- On nomination Sunday, parishioners are invited to nominate a person or persons who they believe have the appropriate gifts for serving on the Pastoral Council. A person may also nominate themselves for the Pastoral Council. After receiving the nominations, the Nominating Committee personally contacts all of the nominees. Those who accept the nomination are required to attend two orientation sessions and an evening of discernment. It is suggested that any digression from the three evenings be granted only for sickness or work.
- Those who have attended the three evenings, and believe they are called to serve on the Council give their names to the person leading the discernment. These names will be brought to a Sunday liturgy, and in the presence of the assembly the biblical drawing of "lots" will take place. The assembly is asked to pray over the candidates and those who are selected are commissioned in the presence of the assembly.

Benefits of the Discernment Process

- **There are no winners or losers. Participants experience affirmation, support and unity, rather than defeat.**
- **The total parish is involved through prayer.**
- **The process allows new people to offer their gifts.**
- **Those not selected are invited to share their gifts by serving on a Commission or committee.**

Nomination Ballot

The role of the baptized is to work together by sharing their gifts of time, talent and treasure in order to continue the work of Jesus Christ. Serving on the Pastoral Council is one way in which we can share our gifts. Pastoral Council members and the pastor must work together in a cooperative and collaborative manner to fulfill the Church's mission, which is to proclaim, teach, serve and sanctify.

Nominees must be:

- A registered parishioner.
- A person who practices their faith by attending Mass and receiving the sacraments.
- A person who is willing to pray and participate in ongoing formation.
- A person who has a sense of the mission of the Church.
- A person willing to listen and to invite the gifts of others.
- A person willing to make a commitment of time and talent.
- A person who can collaborate and build consensus.

Below list your name or the names of parishioners you would like to nominate to serve on the Pastoral Council.

1. _____ Phone _____

2. _____ Phone _____

3. _____ Phone _____

Nominees will receive a phone call this week to inform them of their nomination. If they accept they will be given the time and dates of the three orientation meetings that they must attend.

The Pastoral Council

Related Councils

The Finance Council

Each parish is to have a finance council which is regulated by universal law as well as by norms issued by the diocesan bishop; in this council the Christian faithful, selected according to the same norms, aid the pastor in the administration of parish good with due regard for the prescription of Canon 537. Its counterpart on the diocesan level is seen in Canons 492-493.

The Parish Finance Council is a consultative body to the pastor for matters of financial concern. The council is composed of men and women of faith and integrity, skilled in financial and business matters, who are committed to the mission of the Church. Six to eight members are appointed by the pastor for a three year term. The Finance Council meets quarterly to conduct a regular review of parish income and expenditures. They relate to the Parish Pastoral Council through the pastor. A cooperative relationship will include respect for the responsibilities of each respective Council, and open communications between them. A member of the Finance Council should not serve on the Pastoral Council - it is a conflict of roles. It is recommended however, that the chair of the Finance Council review the budget quarterly with the Pastoral Council, and provide assistance to the Pastoral Council and Commissions in developing their part of the annual budget. Resource: Parish Finance Council: Diocesan Guidelines.

Deanery Lay Pastoral Council

The Deanery Pastoral Council provides an opportunity for the laity to meet with the Dean of their deanery, and representatives from the parishes in the deanery. The purpose of the Council is three-fold:

- It provides the opportunity for the members to share the successes and challenges experienced in their parishes.
- It gives the Dean the opportunity to share and discuss with the Deanery Council issues relevant to the deanery.
- It allows the Deanery Council to consider and propose practical recommendations to the Dean.

The parish Pastoral Council shall appoint from their parish two lay persons to serve on the Deanery Law Pastoral Council. The membership should reflect the age, gender, culture and race of the entire deanery. The appointees should be currently serving on the Parish Pastoral Council. The Deanery Pastoral Council meets twice a year in March and September, following the Diocesan Pastoral Council meeting.

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The Pastoral Council

Related Councils

The Diocesan Pastoral Council

“It is highly desirable that in every diocese a special pastoral council be established, over which the diocesan bishop himself presides and in which clergy, religious and laity specially chosen for the purpose will have a part. It will belong to this council to investigate, to consider and to formulate practical conclusions about those things which pertain to pastoral works.” (Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church, Christus Dominus CD 27, October 1965)

The Diocesan Pastoral Council has 24 members: 20 lay men and women, representing the five deaneries, 2 priests, a woman religious, and a youth. The Council reflects the age, gender, culture and race of the entire diocese. The Diocesan Pastoral Council is a consultative group that meets with the Bishop to prayerfully discern matters pertaining to the pastoral activity of the diocese and to make recommendations that pertain to these matters. Nominations come from the parishes in each deanery, and the final selection is made by the Bishop. The nominations should be current or past members of the Parish Pastoral Council. The Diocesan Council meets twice a year in March and September.

Diocesan Commissions

Diocesan Stewardship Commission - meets bi-monthly. Open membership.

Diocesan Peace/Social Justice Commission - meets bi-monthly. Open membership.

Diocesan Education/Formation Commission - meets bi-annually.

Mission Statement Diocese of Gary

As members of the Body of Christ, the people of the Roman Catholic community of the Diocese of Gary, diverse but united through Baptism and empowered by the Holy Spirit, nourished by Word and Sacrament, are called to continue the mission of Jesus by being a Sign and instrument of God’s kingdom of truth, peace, justice, and love.

The Commissions

The Purpose

The Five Commissions

- Education & Formation
- Spirituality & Worship
- Parish Life
- Peace and Social Justice
- Stewardship

There are five Commissions that make up the Pastoral Council structure: **Education/Formation, Spirituality/Worship, Parish Life, Peace/Social Justice and Stewardship.** The role of the Commissions is to establish objectives that respond to the Pastoral Council goals and parish Mission Statement.

Like the Council, the Commission members are to be a prayer filled group open to ongoing formation. If the Commission members are to be effective evangelizers and help in meeting the spiritual and pastoral needs of the parishioners, then they must spend time studying the Vatican II documents and pastorals, and participate in diocesan formation programs. It is only through ongoing formation and study that a Commission can envision the possibilities for creating a vibrant parish.

The Pastoral Council selects only one Liaison for each Commission. When all of the Council members are assigned to a Commission, the Council tends to move toward being task oriented rather than being visionaries and planners.

Summary of the Role of Commission

- Commission members should identify what is working. What are the existing committees and organizations currently in place that relate to their specific Commission. What are the future needs?
- Set annual objectives that respond to the parish mission and goals, and needs of the parish. (*See Steps for a Parish Plan p. 7*).
- Establish committees to implement the objectives, such as, Adult Formation or a Parish Retreat Committee.
- Provide support and be a resource for existing parish committees and organizations.
- Collaborate with the Pastoral Council, parish organizations, committees and other Commissions.

The Commissions

Commission Membership

Each Commission should have a membership of 6 to 10 members. The membership includes a liaison from the Pastoral Council and a staff member assigned by the pastor. The Commissions, as much as possible, should reflect the culture, age, gender and racial diversity of the parish. The Commissions provide an excellent opportunity for the involvement of the parish youth. Commission membership should be recruited from the existing organizations and the parish-at-large. As good stewards the Commission leadership needs to seek out the gifts of all the parishioners, adults and youth, to serve either on the Commission or on a committee. The invitation needs to be open to everyone. If we block the gifts of the faithful we are in fact blocking the presence of Christ in the community.

It is recommended that the term of membership on a Commission be for two years, with the option to renew for an additional two years. A person should not simultaneously serve on two Commissions. This limitation, as well as, the term limitation, allows for more people to be involved and for new input. The liaison, who is selected by the Pastoral Council, is to be a communication link between the Council and the Commission, and to provide resources and support to the Commission. Neither the liaison or the assigned staff, should serve as the facilitator/chair. Only one person is needed to serve as the liaison. The liaisons provide a monthly report to the Council on the work and progress of the Commission they serve.

Commissions should meet once a month at a regularly scheduled time and place. Like the Pastoral Council, the meetings should not exceed one hour and a half, and should have a planned agenda for their meeting. Many parishes have *Commission Night* in which all of the Commissions meet on the same evening.

Commission Night allows time for the pastor, staff and Commission members to pray together, collaborate together, and to learn and be informed. It also allows the pastor to be present to all of the five Commissions.

Commission Night Agenda

- All of the Commissions members come together initially for prayer.
- Following prayer each Commission conducts its own meeting.
- At the end of the evening the Commissions share highlights of their meeting, followed by fellowship and refreshments.

The Commissions

Roles and Relationships

The Pastor

The Pastor or his delegate guides and assists the Commission members in their work. He strives to unify them, to bring them in union with Christ and one another through formation and support.

The Pastoral Council

The Pastoral Council has the responsibility to give the Commissions direction, encouragement and affirmation through the goals they set. When the Pastoral Council fails to establish parish goals then the Commissions lack direction.

The Parish Staff

The Pastor can appoint a staff member to each Commission. Staff and Commissions work together in a prayerful, respectful and collaborative manner making the best decisions possible for the parish. The Commissions do not interfere with the day-to-day work of the Staff Person. Staff members should not serve as the Facilitator/Chair of the Commissions.

Parish Organizations and Committees

Commissions do not interfere with the work of the organizations or the committees that already exist, but rather provide resources and support, and seek their wisdom.

Diocesan Program Coordinators

Diocesan Program Coordinators provide support, program information and assistance to the Commissions. Commission members should attend the Diocesan Commission Nights in order to share ideas with other parishes, and to stay current on diocesan events and programs.

With One Another and The Parish

The Commissions collaborate, and work together in responding to the parish goals, and they regularly invite the gifts of all the parishioners to participate in the parish programs.

The Education/Foundation Commission

Mission and Purpose

The education and formation efforts in the parish are intended to provide formation for a Catholic Christian life. Education and formation ministry takes on many forms in the parish, such as, the school, the religious education program, adult formation, and opportunities for faith sharing, to name a few. Whatever form education and formation takes, it is always guided by the needs of the people. In working to meet these spiritual needs through formational and educational programs, the Commission is helping people grow in their faith and to deepen their relationship with God. The Commission fosters communication and collaboration among the various educational and formational entities. In developing and implementing programs the Commission consults and collaborates with the Pastor, Parish Staff, the School, the Religious Education and the Youth Ministry Staffs and Boards, as well as the other Parish Commissions, and the Diocesan Education/Formation Commission.

Responsibilities of the Commission

- Commission members should study and discuss the documents from Vatican II and the Bishop's pastorals on formation and education. The Commission must share these documents and the purpose of the Commission with the parish through ongoing formation and education.
- Set annual objectives that respond to the parish mission and the goals established by the Pastoral Council.
- Identify existing programs and prioritize what more is needed.
- Establish committees to implement the Commission's objectives and new programs. The Commission should invite the parishioners to share their gifts of time talent, and treasure by serving on the committees and in leadership roles.
- Prepare an annual budget.

Membership on the Commission 6-10 Members

- The Pastor or his designee
- The School Principal
- The Director of Religious Education
- Youth Representative
- Members from the parish-at-large
- Liaison from the Pastoral Council

The Spirituality and Worship Commission

Mission and Purpose

“The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the font from which all her power flows.” It is therefore the privileged place for catechizing the People of God. Catechesis is intrinsically linked with the whole of liturgical and sacramental activity, for it is in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, that Christ Jesus works in fullness for the transformation of all. The sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire teachings of the Church; it must be preceded by evangelization, faith and conversion. It can produce its fruits in the lives of the faithful; new life in the Spirit, involvement in the mission of the Church, and service to her unity. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Constitution of Sacred Liturgy, Catechesi Tradendae, John Paul II). The mission and purpose of the Spirituality and Worship Commission is the development of liturgical and devotional celebrations that will call the entire community to “full, conscious, and active participation” (CSL n. 14) in the heart of the liturgy: the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ. The commission collaborates with other Commissions whenever possible for programming.

Responsibilities of the Commission

- Commission members should study and discuss the Church’s Liturgical documents. The Commission must share these documents, as well as, the purpose of the Commission with the parish through ongoing formation and education.
- Set annual objectives that respond to the parish mission and the goals established by the Pastoral Council.
- Identify existing programs and structures and prioritize what more is needed.
- Establish committees to implement the Commission’s objectives and new programs. Commission members should invite the parishioners to share their gifts of time and talent by serving on the committees as members and in leadership roles.
- Foster vocations to priesthood, religious life, permanent diaconate and lay ministry.
- Prepare an annual budget.

Membership on the Commission 6-10 Members

- The Pastor or his designee
- The Liturgy Director
- The Music Director
- RCIA Director
- Youth Representative
- Members from the parish-at-large
- Liaison from the Pastoral Council

The Parish Life Commission

The Mission and Purpose

The mission and purpose of the Parish Life Commission is to promote family life, to help build community in the parish, and to work with and support the Youth Ministry. This Commission identifies the needs for social and communal activities and programs that will strengthen the faith community and give people a sense of belonging. The Commission collaborates with the other Commissions whenever possible in implementing programs.

Responsibilities of the Commission

- Commission members should study and discuss the Church documents that pertain to family, youth and the laity. The Commission must share these documents, as well as, the purpose of the Commission with the parish through ongoing formation and education.
- Set annual objectives that respond to the parish mission and the goals established by the Pastoral Council.
- Identify existing programs that support youth, family and the laity and prioritize what more is needed.
- Establish committees to implement the Commission's objectives and new programs. Commission members should invite the parishioners to share their gifts of time and talent by serving on the committees as members and in leadership roles.
- Explore methods and strategies that will build up a sense of unity within the parish community. Collaborate with the Stewardship Commission in developing a file of parishioners willing to share their gifts of time and talent.
- Prepare an annual budget.

Membership on the Commission 6-10 Members

- The Pastor or his designee
- Pastoral Associate
- Youth Minister
- Youth Representative
- Members from the parish-at-large
- Liaison from the Pastoral Council

The Peace and Social Justice Commission

The Mission and Purpose

Our baptism calls us to hear and proclaim the Gospels; to celebrate the sacraments and deepen the life of grace within ourselves and to serve the needs of others in the Church, in the community and throughout the world. In a special way this vocation calls us to promote and define the dignity of each human person. The Peace and Social Justice Commission has a threefold purpose.

1. To help people understand and act upon the conviction that justice is an essential element of the Gospel that flows from the meaning of the Eucharist.
2. To help parishioners see that the work of peace and social justice is the work of the whole parish.
3. To help parishioners see that the actions of peace and social justice must take place locally, nationally, and world wide.

The Commission collaborates with the other parish Commissions whenever possible in implementing programs. The parish Commission also collaborates with the Diocesan Peace/Social Justice Commission.

Responsibilities of the Commission

- Commission members should study and discuss the Church documents on peace and social justice. The Commission must share these documents, as well as the purpose of the Commission with the parish through ongoing formation and education.
- Set annual objectives that respond to the parish mission and the goals established by the Pastoral Council.
- Identify existing programs and prioritize what more is needed.
- Establish committees to implement the Commission's objectives and new programs. Commission members should invite the parishioners to share their gifts of time and talent by serving on the committees as members and in leadership roles.
- Work with the Diocesan Commission and other agencies and offices, such as, Indiana Catholic Conference, Catholic Charities.
- Prepare an annual budget.

Membership on the Commission 6-10 Members

- The Pastor or his designee
- Youth Representative
- Representatives from other Organizations & Committees
- Liaison from the Pastoral Council

The Stewardship Commission

The Mission and Purpose

Stewardship is a call to discipleship, a call to conversion of every baptized person. Stewardship is rooted in an understanding of who we are in relationship with God. All that we are and all that we have by way of time on this earth, and talent and material resources are gifts from God. We are only stewards of these gifts. The mission and purpose of the Stewardship Commission is to create a Stewardship Parish through ongoing formation that will lead the people to a true conversion - to discipleship. The Commission collaborates with the other Commissions and with the Diocesan Stewardship Commission whenever possible in implementing programs.

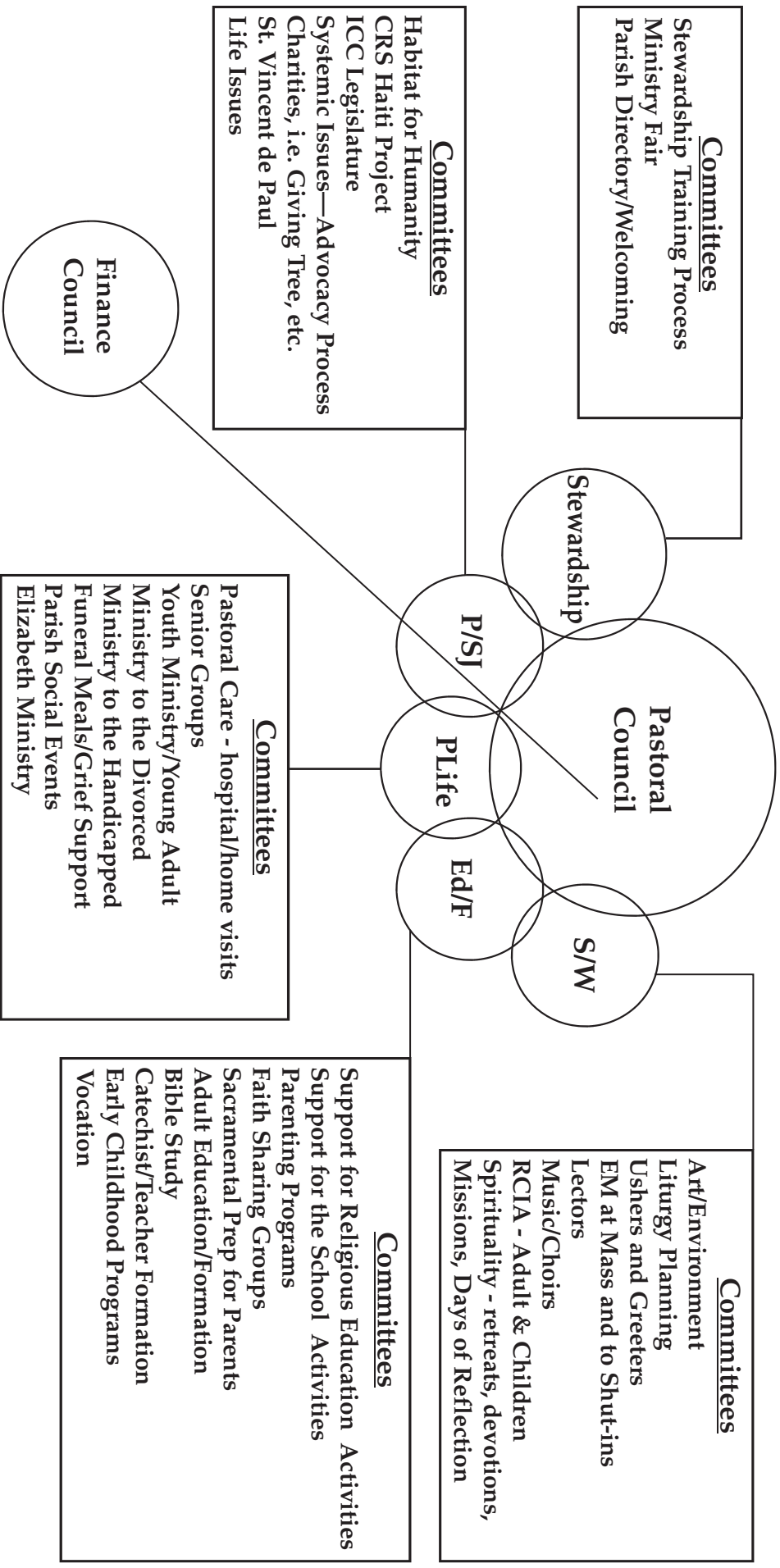
Responsibilities of the Commission

- Commission members should study and discuss the Bishop's Pastoral on Stewardship. The Commission must share this pastoral and other stewardship documents, as well as the purpose of the Commission with the parish through ongoing formation and education.
- Set annual objectives that respond to the parish mission and the goals established by the Pastoral Council.
- Identify existing programs and prioritize what more is needed.
- Establish committees to implement the Commission's objectives and new programs. Commission members should invite the parishioners to share their gifts of time and talent and treasure by inviting them to serve on the committees as members and in leadership roles.
- Collaborate with the Finance Council when it is appropriate. The Finance Council is a separate Council appointed by the Pastor. Collaborate also with the Diocesan Stewardship Commission and the Catholic Foundation.
- Prepare an annual budget.

Membership on the Commission 6-10 Members

- The Pastor or his designee
- Youth Representative
- Members from the parish-at-large
- Liaison from the Pastoral Council

BENCHMARK: A Viable and Vibrant Parish



THE FOCUS OF THE PASTORAL COUNCIL: To collaborate with the pastor in a vision and plan that will empower the people to create a viable and vibrant parish in which the mission of Christ continues. The plan is achieved through the pastoral and spiritual programs developed by the Commissions and their Committees in order to meet the Pastoral Council goals.

Resources

Fischer, Mark *Pastoral Councils in Today's Catholic Church*
Twenty-Third Publications, Mystic CT, 2001

Fischer, Mark *I Like Being in Parish Ministry: Pastoral Council*
Twenty-Third Publications, Mystic, CT, 2001

Pickett, Dr. William L, *A Concise Guide to Pastoral Planning*
Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, IN 2007

Sofield, Loughlan, ST, *Collaboration: Uniting Our Gifts in Ministry*
Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, IN 2000

Sofield, Loughlan, ST, *Principled Ministry: Catholic Church Leaders*
Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, IN 2007

Zech, Charles, *Best Practices of Catholic Pastoral & Finance Councils*
Our Sunday Visitor Publishing, 2010

Pastorals - Bishop Dale J. Melczek, Diocese of Gary

Many Faces of Our Church: A letter to our Catholic Faithful Regarding Cultural Diversity
Created in God's Image: A letter on the Sin of Racism & a Call to Conversion

Pastorals - United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Stewardship: A Disciples Response

The Hispanic Presence: Challenge and Commitment

Go and Make Disciples: National Plan and Strategy for Evangelization

Here I Am, Send Me: Response to Evangelization in the Black Community

Economic Justice for All: Catholic Social Teaching

Communities of Salt & Light: Reflections on the Social Mission of the Parish

The Parish: A People, A Mission, A Structure

Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: Adult Formation Plan

Diocesan Resources

Future Full of Hope: A Parish Guide to Renewal, Diocese of Gary

Standards for Excellence: An Ethics & Accountability Code for Catholic Parishes

Diocesan Website:

www.dcgary.org

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