

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL GUIDELINES

Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

(see appendix one for a glossary of terms)

I. FORWARD

After the family, the parish is the most important form of community within the diocese. In the parish Christ's faithful are gathered together into one, under the direction of the pastoral leader, priest or pastoral administrator, who represents the bishop among them. Each parish, then, truly reflects, at the local level, the life and mission of the diocese and of the Catholic church throughout the world. Most fundamentally the parish reflects how Gospel values are lived out by individuals, by families, by the community. The parish exists to assist parishioners in their Christian mission as followers of Jesus, Prophet, Priest and Servant-King¹.

The concept of a Parish Pastoral Council emerged from the ecclesiological principles of the Second Vatican Council. Documents issued by the Council stressed the need for church structures consistent with the Council's emphasis on the church as the People of God. To ensure the expanding role of the laity within parishes, structures were needed to facilitate new levels of cooperation between the clergy and the laity in sharing responsibility for the mission of the church.

Pastoral Council structures began to emerge throughout the world in the 1970s. With the promulgation of the revised Code of Canon Law (the First Sunday of Advent, 1983) Councils received official recognition by the church. Canon 536² provided direction to diocesan bishops with regard to Council formation. Bishops were advised that after consulting with their Presbyteral Councils, they could mandate the establishment of Parish Pastoral Councils in all parishes.

The parameters for such consultative bodies were to be determined by each bishop, and guidelines reflecting the spirit of the Second Vatican Council were to be drafted for promulgation within each diocese.

¹ Chapter 2 of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Vatican Council II (*Lumen Gentium*) describes the understanding of the ancient designation of priest, prophet and king and its application to the role of the laity.

² Canon 536:

1. *After the diocesan bishop has listened to the presbyteral council and 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 in virtue of their office give their help in fostering pastoral activity.*
2. *This pastoral council possesses a consultative vote only and is governed by norms determined by the diocesan bishop.*

Bishop Anthony M. Milone recognized and approved the guidelines originally promulgated by then Bishop Thomas J. Murphy in 1985. With promulgation of this document Bishop Milone is renewing the diocesan commitment to Pastoral Councils. This revised text is based upon the experience of Councils throughout the diocese over the past ten years. In redrafting the guidelines the diocese acknowledges its indebtedness to the many parish leaders, lay and ordained, who have taken seriously the directive to establish effective Pastoral Councils within their faith communities.

Central to these guidelines is reaffirmation that the basic mission of each faith community, large or small, urban or rural, is to call its members to be followers of Jesus as Prophet, Priest and Servant-King.

II. PURPOSE OF THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

As Parish Pastoral Councils have evolved since Vatican II, the church has become better able to respond to questions regarding the reasons underlying formation of such Councils. While appreciating the fact that active Councils fulfill a wide range of purposes, the church gives primary consideration to the fact that the Parish Pastoral Council is a consultative body with which the pastoral leader interacts in order to identify and provide direction for the spiritual life, ministry priorities, broad goals, strategic planning and policy-making of a parish. In its origin the Pastoral Council is solidly based on theological principles for its existence and its activity. In serving on Councils, Catholic Christians are responding in a vital way to their Baptismal call.

Functioning as a consultative body the Parish Pastoral Council concerns itself with the following aspects of parish life:

- A. Promoting through parish life and through the action of the Council's Commissions the following of Jesus as Prophet, Priest and Servant-King;
- B. Building a community of faith able to make the church present and functioning within the parish's locale;
- C. Calling forth, enabling and empowering the charisms, gifts given by the Holy Spirit to individual members of the faith community for the good of all;
- D. Enhancing the quality of parish life and parish activity;
- E. Facilitating growth of a community united in faith and witnessing to gospel values within the parish and within the everyday world of parish members;
- F. Giving the pastoral leader access to the best counsel that can be provided within the parish on issues affecting its life and mission.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

At the very heart of the Council's service is the promotion of the pastoral life of the People of God within a given parish. Council members are called upon to form among themselves a unifying, loving, prayerful, mission-oriented community; a community which provides a model for the broader parish.

The Council exercises its responsibilities by making recommendations to the pastoral leader as it engages in such pastoral activities as these:

- A. Leading the parish in formulating, maintaining and evaluating its evolving expression of mission in response to the movement of the Spirit (Appendix Five);
 1. Consulting with others in recommending priorities which emerge from a periodic needs assessment (Appendix Six);
 2. Establishing short and long-range goals and objectives based upon these pastoral planning priorities;
- B. Working to achieve the active involvement of all in the faith community, including the marginal, the alienated, and the unevangelized;
- C. Seeking ways to assist parishioners in the exercise of their rights and responsibilities as recognized in the New Code of Canon Law (Canons 208, 221.3);
- D. Helping the parish to identify with the broader church, e.g., by strengthening the relationship of the parish with the diocese, the Catholic church in our nation and throughout the world;
- E. Furthering the ministerial efforts of the parish in worship, education, social service, evangelization, family life, communications, administration, ecumenism, stewardship and other important aspects of parish life (see section V, p.6);
- F. Acting as a stabilizing force in the parish at times when parish members are particularly affected by change and transition.

IV. MODE OF OPERATION

Basic to the operation of the Parish Pastoral Council is the willingness of Council members to inform themselves regarding church directives (e.g., canonical/diocesan policies, guidelines, communications) affecting their ministry within the parish faith community. This is an ongoing task.

The Pastoral Council typically functions in two ways: first, as a committee of the whole establishing mission statements, priorities, goals and objectives for the entire parish; and, second, through its commissions, promoting the following of Jesus as Prophet (Education Commission), Priest (Worship Commission) and Servant-King (Christian Service Commission). It functions in a variety of ways as is indicated below.

A. The Council demonstrates its respect for the Baptismal call of each parishioner and for the service roles fulfilled by individuals and groups with whom it maintains specific relationships:

1. Pastoral Leader (Pastor/Pastoral Administrator)

The Pastoral Council is a consultative body to the pastoral leader whose authority it recognizes and respects. A high level of cooperation between the pastoral leader and the Council benefits the parish which both are called to serve. As a full participant in all Council meetings, the pastoral leader has the opportunity and obligation to share with the members information that will affect recommendations they are considering. For this reason, the pastoral leader will rarely need to override a serious recommendation of the Council. If this is necessary, the pastoral leader shares with the Council the substantial reasons for his or her decision.

Ultimately, it is the pastoral leader who decides which recommendations suggested by the Council are accepted for implementation.

2. Parish Finance Council

The Parish Pastoral Council and the Parish Finance Council are distinct consultative bodies. Just as the Pastoral Council concerns itself with mission and the furthering of spiritual values within the faith community, the Finance Council concerns itself with placing the financial and other material resources of the parish at the service of its pastoral priorities. For each Council to fulfill its responsibilities effectively, mutual understanding and support between the two Councils is required. Therefore, good communication and close collaboration between the Councils are essential.

Respecting the specific responsibilities assigned to the Finance Council by Canon Law (Canon 537), the Pastoral Council works closely with the

Finance Council. The two are interdependent, sharing concern for the life and mission of the parish.

The Parish Pastoral Council must exercise its responsibility to set priorities and to set short and long range goals in order to enable the Finance Council fully to exercise its role.

3. Pastoral Staff (Paid/Volunteer)

As a consultative body the Parish Pastoral Council is responsible for establishing directions and strategies to promote the pastoral life of the parish. Staff members (paid/volunteer) fulfill an administrative function in implementing the directions and strategies indicated by the Pastoral Council. Collaboration between those who set direction and those who fulfill an administrative role is essential for the well-being of the parish. Staff members serve in a resource capacity to the Council and to any of its Commissions that relate to their respective areas of ministry. In fulfilling its role, however, the parish staff is responsible to the pastoral leader and not to the Pastoral Council.

4. Others: Committees, Organizations and Groups

As a way of informing itself and maintaining a high level of cooperation within the parish and diocese, the Council collaborates with committees, organizations and groups as appropriate and helpful (e.g., Diocesan Pastoral Council, Parish Council of Catholic Women, Knights of Columbus, civic organizations, project leaders and committees, etc.).

- B. The Council communicates both within the parish using all the various means available (e.g., announcements, letters, bulletins, surveys, minutes of meetings, gatherings, home/parish visiting, etc.), and beyond the parish (e.g., with others in the vicariate, with specific offices in the diocesan structure, etc.) to seek or to share information.
- C. The Council respects the proper roles and responsibilities of its commissions, recognizing the right of commission members to report directly to the parish leader when recommendations fall within the scope of the commission's work, when the impact on the parish is of a limited nature or when the recommendation suggested is already authorized in the parish goals and budget. When commission recommendations affect the whole parish either directly or indirectly they should be brought to the Parish Pastoral Council for review.
- D. Ordinarily, in deference to the life of the Holy Spirit animating its members the Council operates in a consensual manner. Council members are parish leaders who come together as baptized persons. As people of prayer, Council members exercise leadership not only because of their personal gifts, experiences, credibility and opinions but also because by listening to the voice of the Spirit

speaking through each member and at work in the group as a community of faith, their discussions and judgments represent far more than the ordinary pooling of talents and ideas. Whereas secular bodies may operate from the principle of one person-one vote, or in response to a constituency of electors, Council members are called upon to serve in a spirit of discipleship as followers of Jesus.

- E. The Council acts in an accountable manner. It carries out its role, discharging its responsibilities and exercising its authority in terms of its proper relationship with the diocese, the pastoral leader and members of the parish-at-large.
- F. The Council conducts an annual self-evaluation, reviewing its fidelity to the parish mission statement and to the fulfillment of its purposes (Appendices Four and Five).

V. PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL COMMISSIONS: An Overview of Structure & Tasks

Parish Pastoral Councils in the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings ordinarily have three commissions all of which are directed to ministry. The Worship Commission of the parish serves as a reminder that we are followers of Jesus who is High Priest and who calls us to be a priestly people. The Education Commission recalls the Prophetic ministry of Jesus and the prophetic role we are to play as disciples. The Christian Service Commission is devoted to the work of Jesus as Servant-King. Whether large or small, rural or urban, formally or informally structured, all viable faith communities of the diocese strive to reflect in life and in mission this three-fold character of those who follow Jesus, the Christ.

A. Purpose of Council Commissions

Each commission of the Pastoral Council addresses the community's priorities and goals within a particular area of parish life: worship, education or Christian service. Where a parish mission statement is in place the work of commissions is to facilitate and further that mission within each of the three key areas of parish life.

B. Scope of Commissions

All Council commissions are accountable to the Pastoral Council. Commissions make decisions in their respective areas of responsibility following the principle of subsidiarity (i.e., decisions are made at the most appropriate level of parish organization).

C. Membership

Commissions are usually made up of people already active in a specific area of ministry in the parish.

The size of a commission varies from parish to parish. Usually there are from three to ten members and, in parishes large enough to have paid or volunteer staffs, it is common for staff members to sit on commissions not as a member but as resource persons (e.g., a liturgist on the Worship Commission, a DRE on the Education Commission, etc.).

One member of the commission serves as the link or liaison person with the Parish Pastoral Council. This person is an elected or appointed Council member who sits on the commission, attending its meetings, becoming knowledgeable about its ministry to the parish and informing him/herself of ways the Council is living out the parish mission statement. This liaison between the Council and its commissions is *key* to harmonious and unified parish life.

D. Meetings

Commissions meet periodically (in some parishes every other month) including in their membership those in the parish primarily responsible for a particular aspect of parish life (worship, education, Christian service). Worship Commission meetings, for example, might include a parish sacristan, cantors and musicians, lectors and eucharistic ministers, ushers and ministers of hospitality, etc.

Care should be exercised in scheduling these, or any, parish meetings so that active parishioners will not become overextended. One solution might be to alternate between Council meetings (September, November, January and April) and commission meetings held on alternate months -- same weekday, same time, same place, same time-frame. Some parishes prefer to hold Council and commission meetings on the same night with a refreshment break or potluck between. Maintaining a parish calendar helps members schedule meetings that are frequent enough without being excessive, helps members avoid scheduling conflicts and helps members and their families plan for and anticipate parish meetings.

E. Tasks

Commissions are most effective when they keep their tasks “do-able,” concrete, focused. Some basic functions of commissions:

1. Identify needs of the parish within the commission’s area of responsibility and in keeping with the parish’s mission statement.
2. Prioritize among these and discern what can be addressed realistically within a given time-frame and where inter-commission collaboration might further a priority.
3. Formulate a few, well-chosen short and long-term goals/objectives.
4. Research and explore options to implement goals (seek assistance from diocesan offices and other resources that can guide implementation processes).
5. Communicate progress to the Pastoral Council through a contact person or liaison, through oral or written reports.
6. Maintain communication with the parish to further understanding, to educate, to elicit support and involvement.
7. Provide for on-going formation of commission members by planning in-service programs, reflection days, retreat experiences, attendance at workshops sponsored by the diocese, etc.
8. Propose a budget in keeping with the priorities of the commission and the mission statement of the parish faith community and make budget recommendations to the Pastoral Council.
9. Undertake a periodic evaluation of parish life from the perspective of the commission’s services and efforts.

F. Officers

Each commission is served by a chairperson who convenes and chairs meetings, gathers items for the agenda and collaborates closely with the Pastoral Council liaison in order to keep the Council informed regarding the ongoing work of the commission, and by a secretary who assists the chairperson in publishing and circulating the agenda and takes minutes at meetings. The person serving as Pastoral Council liaison may also serve as a commission chair if chosen by a commission to do so. Staff members, however, are ineligible to serve as commission officers.

G. Mode of Operation

Commissions accomplish their work by gathering information, by discernment and prayerful reflection, by sharing wisdom -- all within a consensual process.

Commissions are inclusive, strategizing to inform and involve others in the parish in commission ministry. They are strong on collaboration and communication, aiming always to be open, flexible, creative.

Agendas include:

- **PLANNING** prepare, think, gather information, anticipate questions, welcome options;
- **INSERVICE** learn, grow, attend workshops, read on commission topics, use diocesan and other resources and speakers;
- **INFORMATION** deal with informational reports briefly, keep folks informed, don't belabor points, communicate;
- **DECISIONS** gather facts, seek opinions, discuss, pray, postpone if necessary, seek consensus, keep the common good in mind;
- **FEEDBACK** listen, don't take offense, accept praise and blame, rejoice in strong points, address weaknesses.

H. Terms

There is great diversity among parishes regarding terms of office for commission members. In smaller parishes there may be a particular group that focuses on worship, for example, with a chairperson selected annually to report to the Pastoral Council. In larger or more highly-organized parishes the commission members might serve for three years, much as a Pastoral Council member would serve. A term may be renewed on a repeated basis.

VI. PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL COMMISSIONS: FUNCTIONS

EDUCATION COMMISSION

Typical Activities/Responsibilities

Following of Jesus as Prophet

- exercise servant leadership
- attend to Mission of parish
- assess parish needs for formation/catechesis in faith
- take steps to grow in familiarity with church teachings
- study and follow diocesan guidelines in education/catechesis
- oversee parish life as it pertains to:
 - catechesis youth ministry
 - adult ed sacramental prep
- oversee instruction for sacramental preparation
- subscribe to recommended publications
- utilize printed materials from recommended publishers

- take advantage of diocesan programs
for example:
CLI Youth Conferences summer camp
TEMPUS FORUM scripture study
lectionary Thielges grants renewal/retreat
- pursue opportunities for ongoing education/formation
- provide for periodic evaluation
- grow in familiarity with varying approaches to/methods of catechesis

WORSHIP COMMISSION

Typical Activities/Responsibilities

Following of Jesus as Priest

- exercise servant leadership
- attend to Mission of parish
- grow in familiarity with liturgy documents and diocesan guidelines for celebration of liturgy and the sacraments (including first celebration of the sacraments)
- utilize LTP materials and other recommended resources
- learn what is essential to liturgy preparation and oversee celebration of sacraments
- review how liturgies for RCIA are celebrated
- assess, attend to spiritual and renewal needs
- oversee liturgy preparation and scheduling: e.g.
lay leaders of prayer sacristans cantors
ministers of hospitality choirs lectors
proclaimers of the Word servers musicians
eucharistic ministers
- promote appropriate environment, art for worship
- encourage celebration of sacraments at Sunday Eucharist
- foster communication, collaboration, consultation
- seek opportunities for education and formation
- provide for periodic evaluation
- be mindful of the domestic church

CHRISTIAN SERVICE COMMISSION

Typical Activities/Responsibilities

Following of Jesus as Servant-King

- exercise servant leadership
- attend to Mission of parish
- grow in familiarity with Church social teachings
- study bishops' pastoral letters on action for justice
- foster a "spirituality of justice" through worship, prayer
- be sensitive to the community's experience of:
poverty alienation joblessness
hunger abuse isolation
housing crime farm and rural issues
gangs prejudice discrimination
ill health neglect powerlessness, etc.
- foster networking, communication, collaboration
- utilize adult formation and education processes

- set reasonable, measurable goals
- act, where possible, on behalf of justice
- seek to transform unjust structures
- provide for periodic evaluation

VII. APPLICATION OF THESE GUIDELINES

This document sets forth broad principles governing the working of Parish Pastoral Councils throughout the diocese. It is the task of every parish to adapt these principles to its particular circumstances and to reflect them in its Council Constitution.

Approved by Most Reverend Anthony M. Milone
Bishop of Great Falls-Billings

The Feast of Pentecost
May 26, 1996

1. APPENDIX ONE: Key Words
For Understanding Pastoral Council Ministry

ACCOUNTABILITY	The obligation to carry out responsibility and to exercise authority in terms of established standards or assigned tasks.
ADMINISTRATOR	A priest assigned by the bishop, on a temporary basis, to serve a parish or cluster of parishes, in the absence of a pastor.
CHAPEL	A designated place for occasional worship that is within the boundaries of a larger “home parish.”
CLERGY	Those who are ordained to the orders of deacon, priest or bishop, including ordained members of congregations of men religious.
COLLABORATION	Working together as a joint effort.
COMMISSION	A group which develops recommendations concerning such key areas of parish life as worship, education/catechesis, Christian service. Commissions address parish vision/goals within context of a specialized area of ministry.
COMMITTEE	Group involved in a parish ministry, project or program which flows from parish priorities and strategic planning. Committees are sometimes stable (<u>e.g.</u> , maintenance), sometimes temporary (<u>e.g.</u> , parish dinner).
CONSENSUS	Process of decision-making in which members of a group work to reach substantial, though not necessarily unanimous, commitment on an issue.
DEACON (Permanent)	A man who is ordained to the order of deacon and who will remain such. Unlike the transitional deacon (see below) church discipline permits a permanent deacon to be married if he is married before his ordination.
DEACON (Transitional)	A man who has been ordained to the diaconate but who, ultimately, will be ordained to the priesthood.
DISCERNMENT	Process which promotes a community’s ability to seek God’s will in the life of the community. Communal discernment is not distinct from consensus but adds prayerful reflection and study to the consensus process.
GOAL	A clear statement of a desired direction or end expressed in broad, general terms. A desired future condition defined as long term (five years) or short term (one-two years).

LAITY	(Lay People) Baptized members of the Christian faith community who are not ordained. As the People of God the laity are called to further the mission the Lord has entrusted to the church in the world. They also have the right to participate in appropriate ministries within faith communities. This term also applies to certain members of religious communities (see RELIGIOUS below).
MISSION	A faith community which, due to circumstances, is not a parish in its own right but is associated with a neighboring parish. A mission has the same goals and purposes as a parish (see PARISH below).
MISSION STATEMENT	Statement of the group's very reason for being; its purpose or philosophy clearly expressed, known to all. Every activity is tested against the Mission and evaluated as to its effectiveness in furthering the purpose for parish existence.
OBJECTIVE	A specific, time-oriented and realistic statement of what the group or individual is going to do, who will do it, for whom, when and how. The main intermediate results needed to obtain a goal. Furthers purpose of parish existence.
PARISH	A definite community of believers, established on a stable basis by the bishop of a diocese within his diocesan church. Care of a parish is entrusted to a pastor, administrator or pastoral administrator appointed by and responsible to the bishop. This community of the Christian faithful carries out the mission of the church in a given locale by forming and educating its members in the faith, proclaiming the Gospel and serving those in need. Parish structures promote the mission of the parish, diocese and universal church.
PAROCHIAL VICAR	A priest assigned by the bishop to minister in a parish as the pastor's co-worker and under the pastor's authority. Parochial Vicars are frequently assigned to parishes which serve multiple smaller faith communities. A parochial vicar is sometimes known as an "Assistant" or "Associate" pastor.
PARTICIPATION	Sharing in, taking part in through presence and supportive action. As applied to leadership, calls forth both involvement and ownership from those sharing responsibility as plans, issues, problems are addressed.
PASTOR	A priest designated by the bishop to assume pastoral responsibility for a parish community.
PASTORAL ADMINISTRATOR	Someone other than a priest who is appointed by the bishop to assume pastoral responsibility for a parish entrusted to him or her. Canon Law grants authority to the bishop of a diocese to assign such a person. The bishop designates, as well, priests who will serve as sacramental ministers (see SACRAMENTAL MINISTER below) to parishes led by pastoral administrators.
PASTORAL LEADER	The person(s) appointed by the bishop to exercise primary pastoral responsibility for a parish faith community or to a cluster of faith communities. This person may either be a priest or a pastoral administrator. Used in a broad sense, a team of pastoral leaders (priests, religious, lay) may serve together, collaborating in addressing the needs of multiple faith communities.

PASTORAL MINISTER

A layperson who is hired by a pastor or pastoral administrator, and responsible to him/her, to collaborate with all parish ministers in carrying out goals, programs and policies integral to the life and mission of the parish. Ordinarily this term refers to paid staff but, in a broad sense, it might also be used with reference to volunteers with special competencies.

PASTORAL STAFF

Those responsible for collaborating with the pastor or pastoral administrator in implementing goals/programs/policies of the parish. These may be paid staff or volunteer staff expected to implement the intent of the policy formulators.

POLICY

A guideline for action. Answers the question: "In what direction do we want to go?"

PRIORITY

A preferential ranking of specific pastoral goals.

RELIGIOUS (WOMEN/MEN)

This term applies to women and men (i.e., brothers, nuns, priests, sisters) who have chosen to live a vowed life in the context of a particular religious community. Each serves the church according to the charisms and ministries specific to his/her own congregation. If a member of the community is ordained he belongs to the clergy (see CLERGY on previous page). All other religious are members of the Laity (see LAITY on previous page).

SACRAMENTAL MINISTER

A priest appointed by the bishop to collaborate with a pastoral administrator (see PASTORAL ADMINISTRATOR on previous page) by providing, in a parish led by a pastoral administrator, those ministries reserved to a priest.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

The principle that each member of the parish has the right and duty to assist the faith community offering time and talent so that its mission will be effective. Involves a growing commitment to stewardship of parish resources and to sacrificial giving.

SUBSIDIARITY

A time-honored Catholic social principle which holds that nothing is to be done or decided by a higher group, agency, or level of authority which can be done or decided more appropriately by a lower group, agency, or level of authority.

VICARIATE

A vicariate is a geographical grouping of parishes brought together to facilitate communication and networking among member-parishes, to enable parish priests and pastoral administrators to collaborate more effectively regarding the needs and concerns of faith communities. The diocese has five vicariates (Billings, Great Falls, Havre, Miles City and Wolf Point). Each is headed by a priest-vicar appointed by the bishop to act in his name in certain situations.

Diocese of Great Falls-Billings
1996

2. APPENDIX TWO: Sample Parish Pastoral Council Constitution

ARTICLE I: NAME

This gathering of parishioners is called

(Name of Faith Community)

SAMPLE: Pastoral Council of St. Procopius Parish, or Pastoral Council for the Catholic Faith Communities of Muscrat County, or Pastoral Council of St. Bonaventure Parish and Associated Faith Communities.

ARTICLE II: PURPOSE

The Parish Pastoral Council is a consultative body acting in an advisory capacity to the pastoral leader.³ Together with the pastoral leader, the Council promotes the following of Jesus as Prophet, Priest and Servant-King.

- A. The Council provides a vehicle whereby the laity of the parish share with the pastoral leader⁴ the responsibility for shaping and guiding the mission of the parish through open and constructive communication.
- B. The Council seeks to build a community of faith to help make the church present and functioning within the parish's locale.
- C. The Council calls forth charisms, gifts given by the Holy Spirit to individual members of the faith community for the common good.
- D. The Council facilitates the formulation of a parish mission statement and promotes development of clear, concise policies, goals and objectives based on this statement.

³ Some small faith communities join with neighboring parishes to form a Pastoral Council. In other instances where this is not possible, very small communities, comprised of such a limited number of households that a full Parish Pastoral Council is unrealistic, convene in an informal way after Mass and involve all present. In such instances the small faith community gathers to address not only day to day practical issues but also to pursue the broader purposes indicated above and throughout this entire model constitution.

⁴ Throughout this sample constitution the term "parish" is used to describe any configuration of faith communities bound by the same constitution. "Pastoral leader" is used to designate either a priest pastor or a pastoral administrator.

- E. The Council explores the need for activities/programs which promote the spiritual, educational and temporal well-being of the parish.
- F. The Council helps the parish to identify with the broader church on the diocesan, national and universal levels.
- G. The Council acts as a stabilizing force in the parish at times when it is particularly affected by change and/or transition.
- H. The Council continues to serve unofficially during times of transition in pastoral leadership.
 - 1. Throughout such transitions the Pastoral Council collaborates with its commissions, the Finance Council and members of the parish staff to provide continuity until such time as a new pastoral leader is assigned.
 - 2. Once appointed the new pastoral leader either reconfirms the unofficial Council, or calls for creation of a new Council.

III. MANNER OF OPERATION

- A. The Council's ordinary manner of decision-making, whether as a committee of the whole or through its commission structure, is by consensus rather than by vote. (Appendix Three)
- B. The Council conducts itself in a collaborative mode with individuals and groups in the parish. This collaboration is especially essential in the Pastoral Council's interaction with the Finance Council⁵. For each Council to fulfill its responsibilities effectively, mutual understanding and support is vital between the two.

⁵ To this end, some Pastoral Councils designate a liaison who represents the Pastoral Council at meetings of the Finance Council. If both Councils meet on the same night, a brief meeting of the whole may help accomplish the purpose of assuring collaboration.

IV. COUNCIL STRUCTURES

- A. When considering matters which affect the entire parish, the Council operates as a committee of the whole.
- B. When dealing with matters specific to one of its commissions, the Council operates through that specific commission.
- C. Pastoral Councils of the diocese have three commissions⁶:
 - 1. The Education Commission is the structure of the Council through which the parish participates in the prophetic ministry of Jesus Christ. This commission assists the pastoral leader and pastoral team/staff in developing, promoting, coordinating and evaluating all parish activities relating to catechetical-education ministries of the parish. As it promotes the growth of an informed and vital faith life among the parish members, the commission affects the lives of all in the faith community, young and old alike, who are growing to maturity in faith. The commission facilitates catechesis within the parish as well as evangelization within and beyond the parish.⁷

⁶ It is possible, particularly in the case of a small parish, that the number of registered parishioners does not warrant the establishment of the three formal Council commissions. Should this be the case, the pastoral leader works in collaboration with the Pastoral Council to ensure that those areas of parish life ordinarily provided for by the commissions (worship, education, Christian service) become the direct responsibility of the Council and those parish members assisting the Council in the fulfillment of its mission.

⁷ If there is a Catholic school within the parish, the relationship between the school and the Pastoral Council may be structured in a variety of ways. Regardless of how the board is structured, the school board is the only body apart from the Pastoral and Finance Councils that operates under its own set of guidelines or bylaws. Like the Finance Council, the school board is not an autonomous but an interdependent body which operates in collaboration with the Parish Pastoral Council and within the context of the parish's mission and priorities.

Some recommended ways of structuring the relationship between a Pastoral Council and a school board are these:

- a) A school board may function as a sub-committee of the education commission of the parish, with a liaison to that commission elected to or appointed from members of the school board sub-committee.
- b) A school board may be directly responsible to the Pastoral Council, reporting to that Council according to a mutually-determined meeting schedule. Content of these meetings will be matters originating with the school board or parish and affecting the total parish: e.g., school calendars, parish subsidies, fund raising, etc.
- c) A school board may be established distinct from the Pastoral Council of the parish but reporting to the Council through memoranda at least quarterly and through meetings at least yearly to promote communication and address issues of mutual concern. This presumes ongoing communication about such matters as use of facilities, projects undertaken by each, etc.

2. The Worship Commission is the structure of the Council through which the parish participates in the priestly ministry of Jesus Christ. This commission assists the pastoral leader and pastoral team/staff in furthering full, conscious and active participation in the parish's liturgical, sacramental and prayer life. Commission responsibility includes developing, promoting, coordinating and evaluating all the activities by which the parish offers its members opportunities for spiritual growth as individuals and as a community of Catholic Christians.⁸
3. The Christian Service Commission is the structure of the Council through which the parish participates in the Servant-Kingly ministry of Jesus Christ. This commission assists the pastoral leader and pastoral team/staff in developing, promoting, coordinating and evaluating all parish activities which promote the social mission of the Church through direct service, ecumenical involvement, cooperation with civic and other groups which seek to further justice and peace. This commission promotes a deeper understanding of the baptismal call to service of the poor. Its ministry is concerned not only with the good of parish members but also extends to those in need beyond parish boundaries.

ARTICLE V: QUALIFICATIONS & TERM
COUNCIL, COMMISSIONS & COMMITTEES

A. Council Membership & Terms of Service

1. The Pastoral Council is comprised of _____ members⁹ who are baptized, confirmed, registered, participating and contributing Catholics at least 18 years of age. Members ordinarily are selected through a discernment process¹⁰. A pastoral leader may choose to appoint additional members to the Pastoral Council. The total number of appointees may not equal more than one-third of the total Council membership.
2. Since the Council is advisory to the pastoral leader, the leader is not a *member* of the Council. Because of the special nature of their work, staff

⁸ Even when the role of a commission is well-defined and understood, there is bound to be some overlapping of responsibilities. In such areas as RCIA, for example, the ministries of the worship and education commissions come together. The unity of faith within the parish is best served when there is a high level of cooperation between and among commissions. An overview of typical functions of commissions is available in section VI, p. 9 of these guidelines.

⁹ A large parish will typically choose to include a somewhat larger number of persons on the Council. Usually a good working relationship can be established by a group of 7-10 members. Too small a group may be unable to provide the diversity of perspective that enriches Council discussion and that leads to good decisions.

¹⁰ Parishes select Council members in a variety of ways. Appendix Seven of these guidelines provides one means. It is important to indicate in your document how your Council members are selected.

members do not serve as members on the Council but, within their specific areas of ministry, act as resource persons to the Council.

3. Service on the Council is a special ministry to the parish requiring an understanding of and commitment to the church in accord with the Second Vatican Council, willingness to stay current with developments in the diocesan and universal church and a capacity for consensual decision-making.
4. Council members serve a three-year term with each term beginning on _____(date). Members serve no more than two consecutive terms. Provision should be made for rotation of terms so that there are new members joining the Council each year with some experienced members remaining.

B. Commission Membership & Terms of Service

1. A commission has three or more members one of whom is a member of the Parish Pastoral Council and functions as liaison between the Council and the commission. The additional members are drawn from the parish-at-large.
2. Service on the commission is a special ministry to the parish. Requirements and restrictions for this ministry are generally the same as those listed for members of the Parish Pastoral Council (see Article V, A, 1, 2, 3 above).
3. Commissions are encouraged to establish their own terms of service. To ensure that commissions are able to benefit from new as well as continuing membership, a rotation process is suggested.

C. Committee Membership & Terms of Service

As needs arise Councils may appoint either ad hoc or standing committees. Such groups are usually informally organized as to membership and service.

ARTICLE VI: SELECTION, TERM, & DUTIES OF OFFICERS
COUNCIL & COMMISSIONS

A. Council Officers

1. A chair, a vice-chair and a secretary assist the pastoral leader in facilitating the work of the Council. They are selected by and from the Council at the first meeting of the new Council year when an officer's term has expired. These officers constitute the Council's Executive Committee. Ordinarily a Council officer will serve for at least two consecutive years.
2. The duties of the Pastoral Council chair include but are not limited to the following:
 - a) Assisting the pastoral leader and the Executive Committee in setting agendas for meetings;
 - b) Conducting the meetings in a consensual manner;
 - c) Facilitating communication between the Pastoral Council and the parish-at-large;
 - d) Assisting the pastoral leader in scheduling open forums when concerns about specific issues deeply affect the parish as a whole;
 - e) Discussing with the pastoral leader the continuing membership of any Council member with repeated absences;
 - f) Chairing Executive Committee meetings when the need for these is indicated.
3. The vice-chair conducts meetings in the absence of the chair and assists the chair in the performance of his/her duties.
4. The secretary is asked to:
 - a) Circulate the agenda to all participants prior to regularly scheduled meetings;¹¹
 - b) Take minutes, circulating them promptly following the meeting;

¹¹ Those serving on Councils frequently find it helpful to keep a notebook of pertinent materials. Typically, a Council notebook would include a copy of the Pastoral Council Constitution, the names of Council members currently serving and their terms, policies of the diocese or guidelines that pertain to Council activity, agendas and minutes of meetings, contact persons for various parish ministries (names and numbers), and resource materials (needs assessments, etc.). It may be a duty of the Council secretary to provide and update such notebooks.

- c) Maintain record of attendance and bring to the attention of the chair the name of any Council member with repeated absences;
- d) Keep a current record of the names, addresses, telephone numbers and terms of Council officers and members;
- e) Assist the Chair in attending to Council correspondence.

B. Commission Officers

1. Each commission will select its chairperson through a process agreed upon by the commission. The chairperson appoints a secretary.
2. These officers will ordinarily serve for three years and can be re-elected for more than one consecutive term.
3. In furthering the work of the commissions, officers are encouraged to share their ministry as broadly as possible among commission members and with other parishioners.¹²

ARTICLE VII: MEETINGS

A. Frequency

The Parish Pastoral Council will meet regularly. The Executive Committee assists the pastoral leader in determining meeting frequency, in setting the place, dates and times of meetings. Special meetings may be called as necessary.¹³

¹² For tasks of commission officers see section V, p. 8 of these diocesan guidelines.

¹³ Councils meet with varying degrees of frequency. Some schedule their meetings monthly on the same date/day, some establish a bimonthly calendar specifying days or dates, still others alternate full Council with commission meetings. It is important to indicate in your document how frequently *your* Council meets.

In some parishes Council meetings are open to everyone in the parish. When a topic on the agenda requires confidentiality the Council gives advance notice that the meeting is not open. Provision for both open and closed meetings is written into the Council constitution.

- B. Items ordinarily on a Pastoral Council agenda would include:
1. Communal prayer (place on the agenda may vary)¹⁴;
 2. Correction/approval of minutes of previous meeting;
 3. Items for information, discussion, action;
 4. Reception of written reports with opportunity for questions;
 5. Opportunity for proposal of future agenda items by members;
 6. Brief evaluation of meeting by members.

ARTICLE VIII: APPROVAL/AMENDMENTS

- A. Pastoral Council Constitutions are submitted to the pastoral leader and then to the bishop for approval.
- B. Suggested changes in an approved Constitution are submitted in writing to the Executive Committee of the Pastoral Council. Copies of the proposed changes are distributed to the Council prior to the first meeting at which the changes are to be discussed.
- C. When a second reading and discussion of proposed changes has taken place at the next regular meeting of the Council, action may follow.
- D. A proposed change requires a consensus or an acceptance by two-thirds of the Council members present. After receiving this endorsement, suggested changes are submitted to the pastoral leader and to the bishop for approval.

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¹⁴ Periodically a Council arranges for an in-service session for the continuing education/formation of its members, or for longer periods of prayer or retreat than an ordinary meeting time allows.

3. APPENDIX THREE: Building Consensus Making Decisions as a People of Faith

I. What Is Consensus?

Consensual decision-making processes are intended to help groups “think and feel together.” In the context of Pastoral Council meetings *consensus* describes how Council members work out a decision by thinking together as a group. It is a form of decision-making which enables a group to come to agreement without voting.

II. Why Not Vote?

Sometimes voting is fine. It can be useful when a group is making simple decisions, uncomplicated by strong feelings or opinions one way or another. Sometimes it's useful and time-saving simply to “take a straw vote” to get a sense of the group during a discussion.

At other times, however, voting results in “winners” and “losers.” When a great deal is riding on a decision, a great deal is at stake, or when the decision to be made is highly emotional for some or all Council members, a vote can polarize the group and result in tension/conflict. In such instances a vote can prevent a Council from witnessing to solidarity, harmony and unity.

III. What Are the Basic Guidelines for Consensual Decision-Making?

- A. Avoid blindly arguing for your own personal point of view.
- B. State your position as clearly and logically as you can.
- C. Listen closely to others' statements, observe their reactions carefully before pressing your point.
- D. Avoid changing your mind only to reach agreement or to avoid conflict with others. Support only solutions with which you are at least somewhat in agreement. Yield only to positions that have objective, logical-sounding foundations.
- E. Avoid resorting to “conflict reducing” measures like majority vote, coin toss, averaging, bargaining.
- F. Seek out differences of opinion (remember, it's natural to differ and differences should be expected and can be growth-inducing).
- G. Try to involve *everyone* in the process. Differences of opinion or disagreements reflecting a wide range of information and opinion can create a situation in which better solutions can be reached.

- H. Discuss underlying assumptions. Listen carefully to one another and encourage all to express themselves. If discussion reaches a stalemate, look for the next most acceptable alternative for all members.
- I. Don't confuse consensus with unanimity. Consensus doesn't necessarily mean that everyone agrees with every single point, or feels equally good about the final decision. It does mean that all agree this is the best decision for the faith community as a whole -- taking into account the wisdom of the group.

IV. How Can the Pastoral Council Chairperson Be a Good Facilitator?

- A. By testing out agreements ("Do we have agreement on . . .") as the discussion proceeds.
- B. By sending up "trial Balloons" ("Could we go with . . .").
- C. By suggesting a straw vote to determine where group feeling is when people are in doubt or are hard to read.
- D. By checking out non-verbals (body language can betray how uneasy or how comfortable people are with the direction of the discussion).
- E. By preventing railroading by more vocal or aggressive participants (advocating patience with those who are slower, quieter, more timid) and by promoting inclusiveness.
- F. By asking dissenters "What would you need to see, hear, feel, learn to allow you to think better of this decision?"
- G. By helping the group to deal effectively with situations or persons that block consensus.

4. APPENDIX FOUR: Pastoral Council Checklist



The following checklist was developed as an evaluation instrument for use by Pastoral Councils throughout the Diocese. Please feel free to adapt this year-end checklist to the particular needs of your Council and the faith community you serve as you plan for the future.

CIRCLE ONE (LOW) TO NINE (HIGH) THOSE ITEMS THAT PERTAIN TO THE MINISTRY OF YOUR PASTORAL COUNCIL.

PURPOSE

1. We have collaborated as a parish in developing a statement expressing what we're about; our "mission" as a faith community.
1.....3.....5.....7.....9
2. By its spirit, way of operating, manner of making decisions, our Council strives to reflect the mission of our parish.
1.....3.....5.....7.....9
3. In cooperation with the pastor/pastoral administrator, the Council recommends policy and establishes overall direction for the parish.
1.....3.....5.....7.....9
4. The Council has made a concerted effort to familiarize parishioners with its purpose and goals, i.e., with what it is about.
1.....3.....5.....7.....9
5. The Council is learning to delegate without getting entangled in details of implementation for which others are responsible.
1.....3.....5.....7.....9
6. Through the use of surveys, phone calls, suggestion boxes, conversations, town meetings, etc., the Council "taps the pulse" of the parish and grows in awareness of parishioners' needs and concerns.
1.....3.....5.....7.....9
7. The Council is growing in its ability to deal with conflicts, controversies, tensions and crises affecting the parish's well-being.
1.....3.....5.....7.....9
8. Working with the pastor/pastoral administrator, staff, and other parish leadership, the Council models both Christian community and collaborative leadership.
1.....3.....5.....7.....9
9. The Council measures the general provisions of the budget against the overall goals of the parish before approving the budget.
1.....3.....5.....7.....9
10. The Council understands and respects the principle of subsidiarity; the rights/responsibilities of other persons and groups are upheld by Council members.
1.....3.....5.....7.....9

MEMBERSHIP

1. Council members are baptized and confirmed Catholics, registered with, active in and contributing to the parish.
1.....3.....5.....7.....9
2. The Council members constitute a microcosm of the parish (newcomers, lifelong residents, young adults) and -- where possible -- reflect among themselves the racial, ethnic, and economic diversity of the parish.

- 1....3....5....7....9
3. Council members bring a record of prior service to the parish in some area of ministry.
1....3....5....7....9
4. Council members have a current list of those on the Council. The list includes information regarding members' dates of selection/appointment and end of terms.
1....3....5....7....9
5. Adequate orientation, in-service and training/updating is provided periodically for Council members to assist them in developing understanding of, and skills for leadership.
1....3....5....7....9
6. Lines of communication are open between Council members and parish staff, commission members, committees and other parish groups.
1....3....5....7....9
7. Members of the Council understand and are conscientiously fulfilling their responsibilities.
1....3....5....7....9
8. Steps are taken to prevent burnout among Council members and measures are taken to assist those who may be "spread too thin" or who carry more than a reasonable share of responsibility within the Council.
1....3....5....7....9
9. The Council continues to develop effective ways of interesting and attracting new membership.
1....3....5....7....9
10. Prayer is integral to all Council gatherings. Council members share responsibility for formal/informal prayer and renewal days are planned by and for members.

MEETINGS

1. Agendas are a collaborative effort worked out through the pastor or pastoral administrator and the Executive Committee.
1....3....5....7....9
2. Members receive agendas, proposals and other needed background material before meetings.
1....3....5....7....9
3. A summary of the agenda is published in the parish bulletin the Sunday before a meeting; clear and accurate Council minutes are printed in the bulletin as soon as possible after a meeting.
1....3....5....7....9
4. The atmosphere at Council meetings is hospitable, conducive to sharing, reflection and prayer.
1....3....5....7....9
5. The Council understands and uses processes helpful to consensus-building, especially where major or potentially divisive issues are involved.
1....3....5....7....9
6. Meetings begin and end on time.
1....3....5....7....9
7. If absenteeism becomes a problem, procedures are followed as outlined in Council Constitutions.
1....3....5....7....9
8. The chairperson keeps the agenda moving, tactfully returns to the point when discussion wanders, expedites sharing by all present and facilitates decision-making.
1....3....5....7....9
9. Records of Council minutes are kept in the parish file to build a sense of parish history, identity and accomplishment.
1....3....5....7....9
10. In its deliberations the Council demonstrates openness and flexibility regarding new approaches, commitment to the well-being of the parish, and appreciation for tradition as well as for the need to change.
1....3....5....7....9

SOME BONUS POINTS

1. The Council communicates well: bulletin announcements, newsletter, mailings to registered households, parish directories, seasonal (*Lent/Advent*) calendars, publicity in diocesan or area newspapers.
1....3.....5.....7.....9
2. Periodically the Council invites an “outside expert” (a member of a neighboring Pastoral Council, a staff person from the Diocesan Pastoral Center, etc.) to “sit in” on a meeting and offer a critique/suggestions.
1....3.....5.....7.....9
3. From time to time the Council evaluates its Constitutions, makes necessary changes, and resubmits the Constitutions for the approval of the Bishop.
1....3.....5.....7.....9
4. The Council is influenced by the values and faith life of the diocesan and broader Church and is guided by current pastoral directives from the diocese, the US Bishops and the universal Church.
1....3.....5.....7.....9
5. Strong, active commissions (Worship, Education, Christian Service) are in place in our parish.
1....3.....5.....7.....9
6. These commissions recognize their accountability to the Pastoral Council.
1....3.....5.....7.....9

WHAT’S THE SCORE?

90	-	139	Good Beginnings!
140	-	209	Real Progress
210	-	280+	WOW!
		324	Perfect Score

5. APPENDIX FIVE: Preparing A Parish Mission Statement

I. What is a Parish Mission Statement?

- A. A brief statement of the parish's very reason for existing, identifying clearly what the parish stands for and why it is worthy of support.
- B. It is a public statement describing in the simplest possible terms the identity of the parish, setting forth what specific contribution this group is trying to make within its membership and within the broader community.

II. What purpose does a Mission Statement serve?

- A. It helps keep a parish on track -- doing and being what it ought in furthering the mission of Jesus as prophet, priest and Servant-King.
- B. The statement embodies criteria against which activities, projects, expenditures proposed by the parish can be measured or judged, helping the parish to know what is in or out of character for this particular faith community.

III. Why is a Mission Statement of particular value today?

- A. It prevents a parish from taking itself for granted, assuming that it will *continue to be* simply because *it is* now.
- B. The process of writing a mission statement provides a forum in which parish members can address the difficult and challenging questions facing the (local, diocesan, broader) church today.
- C. There are certainly no guarantees available -- but the more clearly a parish can identify itself and express its mission the more likely it is to have what it takes to continue.

IV. What process can be used in writing a Parish Mission Statement?

- A. The task of drafting a mission statement belongs to the Pastoral Council.
- B. No Pastoral Council can draft such a statement in isolation, so a first step might be to circulate a needs assessment instrument throughout the parish. An alternate initial step might be to have the Council itself summarize what it sees as strengths and needs of the parish, and test the waters by circulating the summary for parish input. Once having secured this information, the Parish Pastoral Council can delegate the drafting process to a working group.
- C. An example of a process which could be used:

September 26	Meeting on mission statement and appointment of an <u>ad hoc</u> writing committee from among the Pastoral Council members. Committee asked to draft initial statement using input generated at a meeting of the full Council and incorporating input available from the parish needs assessment.
October 11	Deadline for the writing committee. Circulates first draft to full Council for comments and suggestions.
October 25	Participants at the October 11 meeting give feedback on the first draft to the writing committee for use in possible revision.
November 5	Writing committee provides revised draft to parish through November 6-7 parish bulletin. Asks for cooperation of parish in reviewing the statement, in providing written observations, and in participating in open forums (small groups, town hall meetings with all parishioners invited, whatever works for a given parish) during the week of November 14.
November 14-20	Open forums and other gatherings conducted for parish-wide input on draft statement, its meanings, its possible implications. Groups appoint recorders to capture content of these meetings for the benefit of the drafting committee.
November 20	All feedback from meetings/gatherings must be in to writing committee.
December 4-5	Final MISSION STATEMENT presented at each Mass for affirmation and celebration by

parishioners. The living out of this MISSION STATEMENT in specific goals and objectives should follow. This living out is a community enterprise involving Councils and commissions, school board, parish groups, all parishioners, staff and administrators.

At future date, schedule evaluation.

V. Give a couple of good examples of Mission Statements.

- A. St. Dorothy Parish: "We are brothers and sisters in the Lord and have discovered that we are unknown to and even alienated from each other, and we therefore pledge ourselves to come a friendlier, more hospitable community this coming year."
- B. St. Boniface Parish: "We, the parish of St. Boniface, are the People of God called to further the mission of Jesus. We see as our purpose bringing not only the active members of our parish but also the inactive and unchurched to a deeper union with God through the announcing of the Gospel of Jesus to all, in word and in action.

"We believe that today, more than at any other time in the recent past, we are called to let go of our rugged independence and begin forming a community based on interdependence. We need to quit competing and begin sharing and caring, developing our gifts and deepening our knowledge, skills and understanding of our faith....(We will accomplish this through the following plans...)"

- C. St. Ambrose Parish: "We who are members of the Parish of St. Ambrose have reflected on the many ways that God has touched our lives as a faith community throughout our 75 years. As we plan for the future we realize that in many ways we are being called to relinquish things that have been givens in our parish life up to now: a resident pastor, weekday Eucharistic liturgy, the status that goes with these and related benefits. WE are setting a new course, one that requires more involvement on our part. We can't pass the buck as we have so often in the past. This is *our time to prove we know how to be church*. As signs that we accept this challenge we will..."
- D. St. Eulalia Parish: "We are a faith community of people committed to addressing the needs of the marginalized people in our neighborhood. WE pledge ourselves to work in non-violent ways to achieve justice for those in our area who are homeless, unemployed and victims of abuse. Our commitment will be foremost in our prayer as we gather for Eucharist each week."

VI. Are Mission Statements written in stone?

Because change is a process and not a destination, mission statements require periodic reworking or refocusing. New experiences of conversion, new influences, new circumstances affecting the size or composition of our faith community can call for modification of our mission statement.

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6. APPENDIX SIX: Sample Needs Assessment

The following instrument includes many aspects of ministry essential to parish life. You are asked to consider each in terms of the needs of your own parish faith community. On the items marked other, please write what you believe is a need.

Mark each category with one of the following numbers: "1" (urgent need) "2" (moderate need) "3" (need is being addressed already) "4" (do not know).

I. THE WORD OF GOD

Evangelization	_____	RCIA:	
Catechesis/youth	_____	Adults	_____
Family Catechesis	_____	& children	_____
Scripture Study	_____	Catechesis:	
Study/Sacraments	_____	Adults	_____
Sacramental Prep:		Children	_____
General Process	_____	Liturgical Formation	_____
Infant Baptism	_____	Study of Church	_____
Confirmation	_____	Study of Ministries	_____
Eucharist	_____	Other	_____
Reconciliation	_____	Other	_____
Marriage Prep	_____	Other	_____

II. LITURGY & WORSHIP

Lay Leaders/Prayer	_____	Cantor Preparation	_____
Eucharistic Minister	_____	Musician/Training	_____
Cantors/Musicians	_____	Art & Environment	_____
Schedule Ministries	_____	Other	_____
Hospitality Ministry	_____	Other	_____
Proclaimers of Word	_____	Other	_____

III. OTHER ASPECTS OF PARISH MINISTRY & SERVICE

Outreach to Marginalized	_____	Outreach to Sick & Homebound	_____
Administration	_____	Bereavement	_____
Council Training	_____	Outreach to Elderly	_____
Advocate Training/Tribunal	_____	Church Social Teachings	_____
Outreach to Poor	_____	Diocesan Planning	_____
Outreach to Abused	_____	TEMPUS	_____
Youth Ministry	_____	Day Care/Children	_____
Divorced /Separated	_____	Other _____	_____
Ecumenical/Interfaith	_____	Other _____	_____
Transportation services	_____	Other _____	_____

IV. General Questions

What do you consider to be the most important things taking place within your parish at this time?

How would you describe this church community to others?

To what should the parish be devoting highest priority/greatest energy/most resources (human, financial, etc.) in the future?

7. APPENDIX SEVEN: Prospective Council Members

A

HELP IN ATTRACTING/SUPPORTING NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS

For Use By Pastoral Councils

Pastoral Councils throughout the diocese frequently express uncertainty as to how to attract and support new Council members. It sometimes seems that the same people are called on repeatedly. Steps can be taken to encourage and to support/retain new Council members. Some suggestions to help existing Councils with this two-fold process are listed below. All prospective Council members in a parish should be required to attend an orientation workshop which can be invaluable in attracting/retaining promising nominees.

I. ATTRACTING PROSPECTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS

- A. Clarify what it means to be a “consultative” body and the importance the Second Vatican Council gave to such advisory bodies.
- B. Have a mission statement for the parish that is a guideline for the activities of the Council.
- C. Share with prospective candidates that the Council has a sense of direction for the parish and has established goals and objectives for their activities in line with the parish mission statement.
- D. Explain how agendas of the Council are significant and forward the goals and objectives already in place, making meetings both significant and worth attending, well-chaired and purposeful.
- E. Assure prospective members that the Council is not a rubber stamp for predetermined actions on the part of the pastoral leader.
- F. Clarify the degree and kind of participation Council members may expect in decision-making situations.

Provide an in-service for prospective candidates to share information involved in the suggestions above so that they can make an informed decision whether or not to leave their names in nomination for Council membership. If the prayer service included with these guidelines will be used, please be sure to read and study the material so that you will know in advance what the process requires.

II. RETAINING COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

- A. When the Council includes new members, provide orientation for them with experienced Council members planning/providing the input (*Things you would have found helpful as you began Council work.*).
- B. Include meaningful prayer at every Council meeting and give opportunity for longer periods of prayer at annual retreat, prayer days, etc.
- C. Work at forming a genuine community among Council members to be a source of encouragement, challenge, acceptance, support to one another especially when the Council is facing hard decisions.
- D. Provide to Council members home subscriptions to magazines such as Today's Parish, U.S. Catholic, etc., that deal with issues affecting Councils. Council members can be urged to share briefly during meetings any article of interest.
- E. Provide inservice opportunities for the Council at least once a year.
- F. Encourage individual members to attend appropriate workshops (making use of applications to Thielges Grants in the year your parish qualifies for participation), attending diocesan sponsored workshops, etc.
- G. Arrange ways for parishioners to know and appreciate those serving the parish through membership on the Council:
 - 1. Feature Council members in parish bulletin;
 - 2. Put pictures on the bulletin board in the back of church;
 - 3. Introduce members after communion at Sunday liturgies;
 - 4. Have coffee and donuts occasionally after liturgy, inviting Council members to mingle with parishioners to sample their ideas and suggestions about the work of the Council;
 - 5. Make sure that in all of its activities the Council is not perceived as some kind of an "elite."
- H. Have a picnic, give a dinner, etc., for ALL volunteers at least once a year to encourage community and to recognize their generous service.

**APPENDIX SEVEN
B**

HELP IN IDENTIFYING PROSPECTIVE PASTORAL COUNCIL MEMBERS
For Use By Parishioners

It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of a good Pastoral Council to the ministry of a pastoral leader. Selecting Pastoral Council members is, therefore, a challenging responsibility for members of a faith community. To assist parishioners in meeting this challenge of identifying qualified prospective candidates for service on the Council, the following suggestions are offered for consideration.

1. Search out people who know the parish, who have served the parish in different capacities and have demonstrated throughout their service some understanding of how the church sees a post-Vatican II parish functioning.
2. Seek out people who have exercised leadership in other areas of life (e.g., as members of a public school board, as volunteer in civic efforts, etc.).
3. Notice who surfaces with natural leadership when new projects begin to emerge within the parish community, leadership that incorporates others rather than dominates others.
4. Be aware of people who are trusted and respected by many in the parish.
5. Look for people of various ages, occupations, ethnic backgrounds if your parish is blessed with a variety of ethnic groups.
6. Find someone who is at a point in their life when they have the necessary time to devote to Council meetings and activities.
7. Discern which parish members approach problems, projects, decisions from the perspective of mature faith.

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PASTORAL COUNCIL NOMINATION FORM

THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL IS A CONSULTATIVE BODY THAT ADVISES THE PASTOR OR PASTORAL ADMINISTRATOR ON MATTERS AFFECTING THE ENTIRE PARISH IN ITS MISSION OF FURTHERING THE REIGN OF GOD AS DISCIPLES OF JESUS WHO IS PROPHET, PRIEST AND SERVANT-KING.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP ON THE PASTORAL COUNCIL AS REQUIRED BY THE DIOCESE: baptised; confirmed; registered, practicing, contributing member of parish; committed to teachings of Second Vatican Council; willing to stay current on developments in diocesan and universal church; capacity for consensual decision-making; able to fulfill three-year term; at least 18 years of age; not a member of the parish staff.

ADDITIONAL QUALITIES YOU MAY WISH TO CONSIDER: able to attend the parish orientation workshop for all prospective Council members; communicates well; is articulate; concerned with life and mission of the parish; respectful of others even when views differ; humble; a bridge-builder; a healer; someone familiar with our parish history/tradition; approachable; a listener; able to maintain confidentiality as necessary; learning, growing in faith life; able to be "one's own person;" capable of taking initiative; able to delegate; can stand by decisions, takes criticism as necessary; sense of humor; balanced in views; represents continuity in the parish; a "new face" on the Council.

NOMINATION FORM

Dear Members of the Nominating Committee:

After giving this matter prayerful consideration I am placing the name of this parish member in nomination for our Pastoral Council:

Name: _____

This person has a number of gifts and abilities that would make him/her a valuable member of the Council during this time in the history of our parish faith community (please specify below):

Please share this information with my nominee.

Signature of Person Submitting Nomination: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX SEVEN
C

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

Suggested Prayer & Process for Selection of Members ¹⁵

(Those present are Council members whose term has not been completed and all those who have agreed to place their names on the nomination list.)

OPENING SONG: *(Select an appropriate and familiar opening song with a refrain or antiphon that can be repeated as required during this time of prayerful discernment.)*

Leader Loving God
you send your Spirit among us, your baptised people,
to open our minds and hearts, to enlighten and guide us,
to free us from prejudice and bias, to enable our faith community to benefit
from the best possible leadership in the days ahead.
We call upon you in a spirit of trust and humility.
You know our strengths and weaknesses and the complementarity of gifts
most needed in the building up of our parish.
In this brief time together may we be attentive to your inspiration
and responsive to the movement of your grace.
We ask all of this through Christ, our Lord.

All AMEN

Leader Let us bow our heads in prayer.
God of unity and strength, we enter into this meeting for a time of communion with you and
with one another.

All May the spirit of prayer not only begin our work here/ but also sustain it and bring it to a
grace-filled conclusion.

Leader The process we engage in may not be easy,
but may it be for us an opportunity for listening,
for mutual respect, for deepening self-knowledge,
and for increased appreciation of all who gather here.

All May we strive not only to express our own ideas and preferences/
but to open ourselves to the insights and values of one another.

Leader Though differences may divide, may our love for you and for one another
be an ultimate sources of unity.

We ask this through Jesus.

All AMEN

¹⁵ An alternative to this service is to include the following at a Sunday Eucharist: Place the names of all nominees in a basket. Pray over these names and ask a parishioner to draw sufficient names from the basket for the positions to be filled.

- Reader 1** I Cor 12: 27-31
(Silence)
- Questioner #1** Do I believe that the Lord is really present here among us who have gathered for this time for discernment?
(silent reflection)
- Questioner #2** Am I ready to share of myself, to learn, to grow, to change, to follow where the Spirit leads?
(silent reflection)
- Questioner #3** What am I clinging to that I need to let go of if I am to participate freely and fully in this period of discernment?
(silent reflection)
- REFRAIN** *(Sing the Refrain or Antiphon from the Opening Song)*
- Facilitator** In the spirit of prayer, let us brainstorm now on what the real needs of our parish are at this particular time in its history.

(Needs are recorded, without comment, for all to see. The Facilitator senses when the process is complete and allows for some quiet reflection by all.)
- Reader 2** Luke 6:12-16

(Silence)
- Questioner #1** What particular kind of a Council member does our parish need at this time in its history?
(silent reflection)
- Questioner #2** Do I possess any/many of the needed gifts and abilities myself?
(silent reflection)
- Questioner #3** What gifts do I see particularly manifested in the others with whom I share this time of discernment for parish leadership?
(silent reflection)
- REFRAIN** *(Sing the Refrain or Antiphon from the Opening Song)*
- Facilitator** In the spirit of prayer, let us brainstorm now on the gifts and abilities of those of us being considered for pastoral council leadership.
(The facilitator assists the group in associating qualities seen in individuals with specific parish needs vis a vis leadership at this time in the history of the faith community e.g., need for fresh viewpoint, need for bridge builders, need for organizational ability, need for good communications skills, etc. Gifts and needs are cross recorded without comment. The facilitator once again senses when the process is complete and allows for some quiet reflection by all.)

Reader 3 Your Spirit, Lord, is truth: may it liberate us in truth. We pray:

All **Come to us, Spirit of the Lord.**

Reader 3 Your Spirit, Lord is fire: Enkindle in us the fire of love. We pray: (R.)

Reader 3 Your Spirit, Lord, is gentleness: May it make of us a peaceful community.
We pray: (R.)

Reader 3 Your Spirit, Lord, renews the face of the earth: Renew us in a spirit of discipleship and
stewardship. We pray: (R.)

Reader 3 Your Spirit, Lord, is prayer: Open our minds and hearts to your voice within us.
We pray: (R.)

Reader 3 Your Spirit, Lord, inspires the building of the Kingdom: May God reign in our minds and
hearts as we minister
We pray: (R.)

Reader 3 Your Spirit, Lord, is life: Give us courage to promote the life of our parish.
We pray: (R.)

Leader Your Spirit, Lord, gives us strength to put aside our own motives and aims, to rise above our
fears and inadequacies, to choose humility and the good of our people within
_____ parish over our pride and personal advancement or gain.

REFRAIN *(Sing the Refrain or Antiphon from the Opening Song)*

Facilitator *(Facilitator determines whether any person present for the discernment has reason to withdraw his/her
name. Names are then drawn in accord with the number of new members needed on the Council. An alternate
process is to have all of those present vote a first, second and third choice on a weighted ballot.)*

FINAL BLESSING *(all extend hands over those chosen)*

Leader & All: Loving God, continue to send forth the blessings of your Spirit on these our brothers and
sisters called to the ministry of leadership in our parish pastoral council.

May they grow in their ministry with the help of the church, the diocese and the parish.

May they balance the confidential and public aspect of their ministry, the routine and
extraordinary responsibilities it entails, the prayerful and consultative roles they undertake
with the hope of God-given gifts and graces.

We pledge our support. Grant them wisdom, holiness, endurance for all that lies ahead. We
ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader Let us share with one another a sign of peace.

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL GUIDELINES

Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

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TO: Priests & Pastoral Administrators
FROM: Most Rev. Anthony M. Milone, D D
DATE: May 26, 1996 - the Feast of Pentecost

Since the Second Vatican Council the Church has made greater efforts to consult among its membership. In parishes, the establishment of pastoral councils has provided the means for the People of God to express their needs and concerns. The Diocese of Great Falls-Billings issued guidelines calling for parish pastoral councils in 1985 during the time of then Bishop Thomas Murphy. I reaffirmed these guidelines in 1990. After many years of experience with councils, these guidelines have been re-examined and evaluated.

Please find enclosed the revised policy on Parish Pastoral Councils. In the past months it has been carefully reviewed by the Priests Council. This is not an entirely new policy, but is a revision and updating of the policy of 1990.

As of this date, I am happy to promulgate this as the official diocesan policy that replaces the policy of 1990.

I encourage you to share these guidelines with your pastoral council members. Efforts to review and study them as a group will be very beneficial. Assistance in understanding and implementing them is available to you through the Pastoral Outreach Team and I encourage you to take advantage of this help.

Thank you for your continued encouragement and support which you provide to your parishioners. May these guidelines support you in your efforts to listen to their concerns and needs.