

Archdiocese Parish Council Essential

Source: Archdiocese Of Galveston Houston Pastoral Plan

What is a Pastoral Council?

A parish pastoral council is the chief consultative body to the pastor. Consultation is a sharing of wisdom that enables the parish to carry out its mission. The pastoral council discerns issues that impact the lives of parishioners; prays, studies, and discusses those issues; and recommends practical ways of addressing them.

Why should a parish have a Pastoral Council?

By baptism and confirmation, the laity shares in the priestly mission of Christ and are empowered to participate in the decisions regarding the work of the church. As the “wisdom community” of the parish, the council listens to the spiritual needs and aspirations of the parishioners and exercises stewardship for the gifts of the parish. The parish pastoral council participates in the responsibility of the pastor for building up the faith community.

How does a Pastoral Council operate?

A council meets once a month with the pastor to consider pastoral issues. It listens carefully to the concerns of the pastor, the parish staff, and others involved in the life of the parish. Through prayer and discernment, it searches for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to make recommendations to the pastor through consensus. A council member position usually requires a couple of hours every week to follow up on meeting agreements. Also, the council may have an annual retreat for prayer and reflection. Regular attendance at meetings is critical.

Who should be a member of a parish Pastoral Council?

A council member should be at least 21 years of age, be in good standing with the Church, be prayerful, and care about the spiritual well-being of the entire community. The council member is willing to learn about the church, have a sense of mission: to bring Christ to people and people to Christ, and be involved in the life and activities of the parish. A council member must be able to attend meetings on a regular basis.

How is a Pastoral Council formed?

Generally, a four-step process is employed to form the parish Pastoral Council. These steps are prayer, education, discernment, and commitment.

Step 1: Prayer. Each meeting of the council begins and ends with a prayer experience as we focus on our baptismal call to build the kingdom of God. We ask everyone to pray for wisdom and openness for our parishioners and our pastor.

Step 2: Education. All parishioners learn more about the purpose and norms of the parish councils through materials provided by the pastor. All parishioners interested in the Pastoral Council are invited to an Information Meeting along with those who want to learn more about serving on the council. Anyone can come or recommend someone to go to this meeting.

Step 3: Discernment. A Discernment Meeting is held for those who attended the Information Meeting, are open to serving on the council and are invited by the pastor. The people in attendance consider the gifts and talents of each person and discern who is being called by the Holy Spirit to serve. Anyone wishing to be considered for discernment must attend the Information Meeting first.

Step 4: Commitment. The final step to the process is the commissioning of the new council members during the weekend masses. Then the work of the council begins with an orientation of new members, follow by listening and information gathering about the spiritual needs and aspirations of the parishioners so that the council can undertake the development of recommendations for short-term and long-term plans.

How will the Pastoral Council succeed?

The consultative body will succeed by assisting the pastor and the community in the development of a mission-focused parish, rather than a programmatic or finance-driven one. This does attempt to put at the heart of the parish a consciousness of the zeal of the mission of Jesus Christ. The following table illustrates the movement.

From	To
Parish Council	Pastoral Council
Group of leaders	Leadership body
Coordinating ministries	Articulating the mission
Crisis management	Pastoral planning
Doing activities	Empowerment & oversight
Business and politics	Prayer and discernment
Competition	Collaboration

Mary Queen Pastoral Council

Source: MQ website

Mission Statement

Our Mary Queen community, inspired by faith and love, will live, worship, teach, welcome and support one another in the imitation of Christ.

Ministry Description

The council is representative of the faithful, focusing on the whole community, uniting the whole community, and pursuing the mission of the Church. Lay persons commit themselves to providing the best possible counsel which is a result of prayer, reflection, and dialogue as well as study, research, and consultation with other parishioners.

Council Functions

1. Inform the Pastor of the needs and concerns, gifts and resources of the parish and its members.
2. Develop and review a parish mission statement and periodically re-evaluate and revise it.
3. Develop a parish pastoral plan.
4. Participate in ongoing pastoral planning.
5. Recommend policies, procedures, and programs which would assist in the implementation of the mission statement and the parish pastoral plan.
6. Review and evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs.

Contacts:

Steve Elsner (stephenelsner@comcast.net)

Meeting Time:

Monthly, the 3rd Thursday of each month starting at 7 pm

Meeting Location:

Mary Queen Church Main Hall

Membership

The council consists of ~10 parishioners who are nominated by other parishioners or who may be self-nominated. All nominees are required to attend a discernment meeting. The pastor appoints final nominees for a three (3) year term. Council members must:

1. Be registered in the parish.
2. Have demonstrated a commitment to the parish community.
3. Be in full communion with the Catholic Church.
4. Commit themselves to spiritual growth.
5. Commit themselves to skills development as part of the Christian leadership process.
6. Be willing to commit the necessary time and energy to offer effective consultation.
7. Be discerned by the parish community. In addition, the pastor may supplement the council by appointing other members for balanced representation of the parishioners.