



**POLICY AND GUIDANCE
FOR**

**PASTORAL
COUNCILS**

Updated and Revised
2016

ARCHDIOCESE OF PORTLAND IN OREGON

How needed pastoral councils are!
A bishop cannot guide a diocese without pastoral councils.
A parish priest cannot guide the parish without the parish council. This is fundamental!

—Pope Francis, remarks at a diocesan gathering in Assisi, October 4, 2013

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Introduction

Parish priests have been directed to have functioning Parish Councils in the Archdiocese of Portland since 1969 when Archbishop Robert Dwyer promulgated Guidelines for Parish Councils. In 1983, after extensive study and consultation, new guidelines and a revised statement of policy were promulgated by Archbishop Cornelius Power.

At a meeting between Area Vicars and Archdiocesan Pastoral Council regional representatives in February of 2008, it was recommended that the Archdiocese of Portland develop resources to help strengthen parish pastoral councils. As part of a plan to aid pastoral councils, it was suggested that an updated diocesan policy statement be prepared and issued. A restatement of diocesan policy on pastoral councils was promulgated by Archbishop John G. Vlazny in August of 2009, and a new set of guidelines was published. In November of 2016, Archbishop Alexander K. Sample confirmed the diocesan policy on pastoral councils.

Since its original publication and distribution at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly in November of 2009, the current policy and guidelines booklet has served as a valuable resource and reference for pastors and pastoral councils throughout the Archdiocese of Portland. It was updated and revised in 2012, and this 2016 updated and revised booklet represents a continued effort to support and strengthen pastoral councils. It is intended to help parishes deepen their understanding of the nature and purpose of the pastoral council. It provides information to help with the formation and development of councils, and it offers reflections to assist them in their work of pastoral planning.

The booklet is organized around the Archdiocese of Portland's policy on pastoral councils. The policy presents eleven key elements which anchor the principles and guidelines for the formation and strengthening of pastoral councils. It is hoped that the material presented herein will encourage pastors and pastoral councils to renew their commitment to the work of the New Evangelization – bringing Christ to everyone and bringing everyone to Christ.

It is now our conviction that parish renewal must begin with a revitalized Parish Pastoral Council. The primary task of such a council will be to plan for parish renewal.

—Archbishop Cornelius Power, letter promulgating pastoral council policy, April 14, 1983

1. Pastoral Council in Every Parish

Every parish shall have a pastoral council. The pastor, administrator or moderator, and pastoral administrator of a parish collaborates with it to investigate, consider and propose practical conclusions about those things which pertain to pastoral works in the parish. This collaboration is called “pastoral planning”. Parishes served by the same pastor may have a joint pastoral council.

The Code of Canon Law gives the pastor who has been appointed by the bishop the overall responsibility for the pastoral care of a parish. It permits the bishop to require that parishes have pastoral councils to assist the pastor in planning for this pastoral care.

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 in virtue of their office give their help in fostering pastoral activity.

—Code of Canon Law, 536-1

Today, there is a greater appreciation of the pastoral council’s role in the parish. Pastoral councils evidence a more collaborative way to carry out the mission of the Church. The pastoral council works together with the pastor to do pastoral planning. In so doing, the council participates in and supports the leadership role of the pastor. Pastors should value and fully embrace pastoral councils and encourage a fruitful exchange with the members so that the parish may benefit fully from the work of pastoral planning.

Where a single pastor or administrator is called upon to serve two parishes, a joint council can help to minimize the strain on the pastor.

The primary task of pastoral councils is to aid in the process of pastoral planning.

❖ Pastoral Planning

Pastoral planning is the prayerful process which turns parish vision into reality. It takes place through measured steps and involves understanding the mission of the parish, identifying pastoral priorities, setting goals and specifying objectives. It culminates in the writing of a pastoral plan.

If in the planning that awaits us we commit ourselves more confidently to a pastoral activity that gives personal and communal prayer its proper place, we shall be observing an essential principle of the Christian view of life: the primacy of grace. There is a temptation which perennially besets every spiritual journey and pastoral work: that of thinking that the results depend on our ability to act and to plan. God of course asks us really to cooperate with his grace, and therefore invites us to invest all our resources of intelligence and energy in serving the cause of the Kingdom. But it is fatal to forget that “without Christ we can do nothing.”

— St. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 2001

Key Elements of Pastoral Planning: A Brief Outline

1. Understanding the Mission

The documents of the Second Vatican Council, and those produced after the council which relate to the nature and evangelizing mission of the Church, should be studied, reflected upon and discussed. The mission of a parish can be summarized using the concepts of word, worship, community, and service.

❖ Mission Statement

A brief, general statement which identifies and describes the purpose of the faith community.

2. Developing a Vision

The planning process involves discernment of God's will for the parish through prayer and broad consultation. It includes a prayerful assessment of previous efforts of the parish, a determination of current needs, and a consideration of ways in which ongoing efforts might deepen faith and better foster communion and further the evangelizing mission of the Church.

❖ Vision Statement

Describes what the future will be like if the mission is achieved.

3. Setting Goals

The process of pastoral planning entails the establishing of pastoral priorities and setting goals.

❖ Goal

A clearly defined statement of desired direction or activity that is stated in general terms.

4. Outlining Objectives

Once goals are set, strategies or objectives are developed to accomplish the goals.

❖ Objective

A planned action that directs efforts toward attaining a goal. In addition to describing a result, an objective also specifies what is to be done, who is to do it, and when it is to be accomplished.

5. Implementing the Plan

After the goals and objectives have been accepted, the work of inviting people to bring the pastoral plan to life begins.

❖ Implementation:

The work is undertaken to bring the plan to fruition. People give their time and expertise to a process of development that yields measurable progress towards the objectives of the plan.

2. Collaboration with the Pastor for Pastoral Planning

The pastoral council works together with the pastor and serves as the primary pastoral planning body for the parish. The pastoral council meets at least four times per year with the pastor/administrator. It shall always respect the requirements of civil, church and diocesan law as well as the Church norms for pastoring.

❖ Collaboration

The act of working together to achieve a common purpose is called collaboration. True collaboration requires mutual love and respect between those who are working together. Collaboration helps to build communion; it is at the same time an expression of communion. The pastoral council is called upon to support the pastor by working together with him to fulfill the evangelizing mission of the Church. By consulting with the pastoral council, the pastor exhibits a collaborative style of leadership which affirms the baptismal call of the laity to participate fully in the life of the Church.

A bishop, by virtue of his call by the Church, has what is called the *triplex munus*, or three-fold responsibility. A bishop is called to be a priest, a teacher, and a pastor (older models use the images of priest, prophet, and king). In each diocese, the bishop ordains priests to be his collaborators in giving a shepherd's care to the people of God. Priests exercise this function primarily as pastors of parishes. Pastoral councils are charged with helping the pastor to carry out these three primary areas of responsibility in his ministry.

1. As pertains to his sanctifying mission (priest), the pastoral council must help the pastor provide opportunities for the people of the parish to grow in holiness, especially through the sacraments, through devotions, and through prayer.
2. As pertains to his teaching mission (teacher), the pastoral council must make sure that all parishioners have age appropriate opportunities for catechesis and faith formation.
3. As pertains to his pastoral mission (pastor), the council provides input on the establishment and development of pastoral priorities and the allocation of resources.

[I]t is necessary to improve pastoral structures in such a way that the co-responsibility of all the members of the People of God in their entirety is gradually promoted....This demands a change in mindset, particularly concerning lay people. They must no longer be viewed as "collaborators" of the clergy but truly recognized as "co-responsible" for the Church's being and action, thereby fostering the consolidation of a mature and committed laity. This common awareness of being Church of all the baptized in no way diminishes the responsibility of parish priests.

—Pope Benedict XVI, opening remarks to "Church Membership and Pastoral Co-Responsibility", May 26, 2009

3. Consultative Body

The authority of the pastoral council is consultative or advisory. While a council chair normally runs the meeting, the pastor/administrator presides at the council in the sense that he discusses with and consults the council about pastoral matters. Authority to make pastoral decisions ultimately rests with the pastor/administrator who has been appointed by the bishop. A pastor shall carefully consider the deliberations and recommendations of the council. If the pastor ever acts contrary to the recommendations of the council, he shall offer a proper explanation to the members. In the absence of the pastor, a council may discuss matters, but it does not make final determinations.

❖ Consultation

Consultation is the act of conferring with others in order to make a decision or assess a situation. The relationship between the pastor and the pastoral council is one of consultation. The pastor respects and trusts the judgment of his councilors and so he confers with them about pastoral matters. Likewise, the councilors respect the unique role of the pastor as canonical head of the parish and strive to offer sound advice.

This pastoral council possesses a consultative vote only and is governed by norms determined by the diocesan bishop.

—Code of Canon Law, 536-2

4. Membership Reflects the Parish

The pastoral council includes people selected from the parish together with those who share in pastoral care of the people by virtue of their office. The method of selection rests with each parish. The membership of the pastoral council should reflect the overall membership of the parish. Members of the pastoral council should be baptized Catholics. Any member who may have a conflict of interest in a council matter under discussion would not normally participate in the discussion and recommendation. Such judgment is left to the pastor.

Council Membership

The purpose of the pastoral council is to collaborate with the pastor to do pastoral planning for the parish. Many factors contribute to successful pastoral planning, but perhaps no factor is more important than having good quality council members.

Canon law stipulates that pastoral council members should be Christians in full communion with the Catholic Church and that they be outstanding in faith, morals, and prudence. An effective pastoral council reflects the interests of the larger community, deliberating and advising on behalf of the whole community rather than on behalf of any constituency groups within it. An important council responsibility is leadership within the larger faith community. Council members must be willing to give time to prepare for and attend meetings of the council as well as to solicit ideas and provide constructive input.

Because the primary focus of a council's work is pastoral planning, certain skills and expertise can be especially helpful, such as competency in planning, information gathering and presentation, organizational development, group process, hospitality and outreach, and human relations. Skills geared to the particular priorities of the parish are also important considerations. A good mix of members will bring a range of personal and professional capabilities and the council will benefit from persons with different perspectives and disciplines.

Pastoral council members should have the ability to study matters deeply, reflect on them thoroughly, and draw sound conclusions. Detecting these talents in an individual considering council membership takes skill, whether the process is undertaken by the pastor, a screening committee, or through a process of self-evaluation by the candidates. Careful discernment should be a key part of any method that is chosen to select council members. One way to assist evaluating potential members is through assessments of the unique characteristics of current or recent council members, examining qualities that contribute to their effectiveness in fulfilling the council's mission.

Identifying and Selecting Quality Council Members

In addition to the canonical requirements stated above, a pastoral council member should be:

One who nourishes a deep prayer life and exhibits an active faith life; one who can discern, study, reflect and recommend practical conclusions; and one who is able to collaborate effectively with others, values consensus, is open to new ideas, and can set aside personal agendas to listen.

Normally, there is a process of nomination, discernment, selection and appointment that is determined by the pastor, usually in consultation with his pastoral council. Trusted colleagues of the pastor or parishioners at large can submit nominations, or a nominating committee can be formed to identify and nominate parishioners for council membership. Accepting nominations from the broadest base helps to ensure that capable candidates are not overlooked. The pastor can make appointments directly from a list of those nominated or the council itself can discern and recommend members to the pastor from a list of nominations.

The guidelines for many pastoral councils include a proviso that allows the pastor to directly appoint a limited number of members to the council. This ensures that the council membership is a balanced and representative voice for the entire parish. Direct appointments allow membership consideration for such factors as gender, race, age, apostolate, and even the time of Mass attendance.

Elections for pastoral council members are still sometimes used successfully by parishes, but there are certain disadvantages to this method. First and foremost, there are winners and losers in elections, and those who have lost an election may feel discouraged and be less inclined to run again. Elections can also run the risk of being less of a discernment process and more of a popularity contest.

Once selected, pastoral council members should be formally commissioned and prayed over during a parish Mass. Such a commissioning serves as a grace for council members and emphasizes the communal dimension of the pastoral council. It also raises awareness in the parish about the work of the pastoral council. The Book of Blessings (chapter 64) contains an *Order for the Blessing of a Parish Council*.

Best Practice – Selecting New Members for the Pastoral Council

One of the pastors in the Archdiocese of Portland uses a very thoughtful and deliberate process to select members for his parish pastoral council. First, he chooses a weekend to speak briefly at Masses about the work of the pastoral council and its important role in collaborating with the pastor to do pastoral planning for the parish. On this weekend, all parishioners are given a nominating envelope and are asked to pray and think about someone in the parish who might be a good member of the parish pastoral council. The next weekend is identified as nomination Sunday and everyone who wishes is asked to bring back their envelopes that week to submit their nominations in the collection baskets.

All those whose names are submitted on nomination Sunday, and who are eligible for service, then receive a letter from the pastor explaining that they have been nominated and that if they are interested, they should RSVP to attend a prayer, information and discernment session with the pastor on a designated Saturday morning. At the Saturday discernment session, the pastor explains in more detail about the role of the pastoral council and the commitment of serving on it for a specified term. The group prays together and reviews a scripture passage about being called to service. The pastor invites all to be open to the call of the Holy Spirit. Toward the end of the session, all present who are open to serving on the pastoral council are asked to put

their names in a basket. Then the pastor draws out the names of the number of council members needed. Those people become the new members of the pastoral council, and the group prays for them and the session concludes. In the event that there is not enough diversity in the council membership or there are other considerations, the pastor can subsequently and directly identify and appoint other members whose names were not drawn. All of the new members of the pastoral council are formally commissioned at one of the Sunday Masses.

The beauty and genius of this process is that it engages the whole parish and at the same time informs the people about the work of the pastoral council. There is never a difficulty surfacing enough names and willing people to serve on the council, and it includes prayer, discernment, and openness to the working of the Holy Spirit through the drawing of names (c.f. Acts 1:26). In addition, all who are nominated feel affirmed by their fellow parishioners, and those who go unselected can still feel good about the results of the process.

Recommendations for Council Members

Many council members ask “How can I be a good pastoral council member?” Here are some suggestions:

Pray

Remember the people of the parish and the pastor in your daily prayers. Ask for the Holy Spirit to guide the parish in living out the call of the Gospel. Invoke the patron saint or the namesake of the parish.

Witness

Grow in holiness through prayer and devotion to the Sunday Eucharist.

Participate regularly in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Go quarterly or even monthly.

Read the Sunday scriptures before attending Mass and focus on living out that word during the week. In general, be attentive to the Word of God and share it with others.

Develop a spirituality of communion by loving others and learning to see Christ in everyone.

Conform your life to Christ and help others to do the same.

Stay Active

Continue to be involved in the life and ministry of your parish.

Attend the council meetings. Your attendance at council meetings is the primary way to express your support and commitment to the pastor and the work of the pastoral council.

Be Informed

Read your parish bulletin weekly and visit your parish website regularly.

Talk to parishioners about their ongoing experience and involvement in the parish.

Read the Catholic Sentinel and the bishop’s column regularly.

Find and review Catholic news sources at the national and international levels. Start by visiting the website for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (www.usccb.org). Follow what the pope is saying and doing through the Vatican news network (www.news.va/en).

Learn

Study documents (e.g. *The Joy of the Gospel*) about the nature and mission of the Church.

Know the corporal and spiritual works of mercy and the seven key themes of Catholic Social Teaching as outlined by the U.S. Bishops.

Understand the three goals of *Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States*.

Share, Listen, and be Prepared

Don't be afraid to share your opinions, but be sure to listen and be open to the ideas of others.

Council members should spend more time preparing for the meeting than attending it. Pray through the agenda prior to the meeting.

Organizing the Pastoral Council

Roles

The Pastoral council is headed by the pastor. Other pastoral leaders of the church, including parochial vicars and deacons would, by virtue of their office, contribute to the deliberations of the council. In addition, parish pastoral staff members whose work is relevant to the council's considerations and activities are also commonly participants, though they are not usually members proper. The primary role of the pastoral staff is to implement the directives of the pastor in serving the people of God.

A substantial portion of the council, usually at least half, should be comprised of lay members of the parish. Strictly speaking, council members are not representatives of particular groups or constituencies. They are present simply and importantly as living and active members of the body of Christ. This group of council members is sometimes designated as the "consensus body," that is, they are the members who are being asked to come to a consensus about recommendations to the pastor – with the assistance of clergy and pastoral staff. Each pastoral council should have its own guidelines that define the membership and activities of the Council.

Size

The size of the pastoral council will be determined by the pastor in consultation with parish members. The size of the parish is an important factor in establishing the size of the pastoral council. There is no ideal number of members, but a council that is too small may struggle to provide adequate expertise, diversity of views, and wide representation of the parish community. A council that is too large may have inadequate time for its members to be heard and may have greater difficulty reaching consensus. The parish council guidelines should specify a minimum and maximum size. For smaller parishes, normally, there would be a minimum of five members. For larger parishes, normally, there would be a maximum of twelve members. Some councils find that nine members works well, along with a staggered, three year term. In this case, three members are replaced each year.

Terms

Parishioners on the council serve a term that is determined by the pastor in consultation with parish members. Although there is not an ideal length of term, most parishes opt for a three year term. One year terms are generally too short for consistency in pastoral planning. A term that is too long can lead to entrenchment of certain positions and inadequate input from new members who can bring fresh perspective and ideas. Normally, the members of the parish council serve staggered terms so that there will be continuity on the council from year to year. Sometimes, a single membership “seat” can be occupied by a married couple. Smaller parishes may sometimes lengthen the term of service (e.g., four years). Oftentimes, parishes set a limit of two or three consecutive terms of service, depending upon the length of the term.

Meetings of the Council

Councils are required to meet at least four times per year to allow adequate time for pastoral planning. Most pastoral councils meet monthly. Meetings are typically scheduled for an hour and a half to two hours. Councils that meet less frequently often schedule longer meetings. To minimize interruption by holidays, such as Thanksgiving and Christmas, scheduling meetings close to the beginning of each month is a useful practice. The monthly meetings of the entire pastoral council may allow insufficient time for dealing with the full range of pastoral planning activities, so groups are often formed to undertake deeper study and pursue further action outside of the normal meeting times. These groups would then report back to the council on their work during the regularly scheduled pastoral council meetings.

Normally, a chairperson or facilitator runs the meeting. A chair, or facilitator, can be voted on or otherwise selected by the councilors or may be appointed by the pastor. The term of a facilitator varies. It can be a one-year term that is renewable. A term of at least two years ensures some consistency in leadership.

Meeting Agenda

The agenda should include substantial time for prayer together. Consider including several minutes at the beginning of the meeting for socializing or allow time for a personal check-in amongst members. Growing in communion is one of the objectives of pastoral planning. As council members get to know each other better, they are building communion within the parish and are already achieving one of their goals as a council. It is also important to build time into the agenda for faith sharing. When individual council members share with one another how the Holy Spirit is at work in their own lives, it helps the council as a whole to recognize how the Spirit is at work in the larger parish community. When a council is growing in faith together, it serves as a leaven for the entire parish community.

In times past agendas often appeared as follows:

- Opening prayer
- Secretary's report
- Approval of minutes
- Old business
- New business
- Closing prayer
- Adjournment

Today, an agenda might look more like this:

- Prayer
- Faith sharing by council members
- Study and reflection
- Dialogue about long range goals
- Listening to the pastor's ideas
- Identifying next steps
- Sharing announcements
- Sending forth prayer

Any style of agenda which facilitates pastoral planning in the parish can be used.

Development of Pastoral Councils

An important aim of the materials presented here is to aid the development of pastoral councils. Since the first modern parish councils were formed after the Second Vatican Council, there has been a clear evolution. Earlier approaches have given way to newer approaches that reflect the wisdom and insights gained over the years.

The direction of change is depicted by the following list of movements:

MOVEMENTS

FROM:		TO:
<i>Parish Council</i>	▶	<i>Pastoral Council</i>
<i>Board of Directors</i>	▶	<i>Spiritual Collaborators</i>
<i>Representatives</i>	▶	<i>A Visioning Body</i>
<i>Coordinating Ministries</i>	▶	<i>Guiding the Mission</i>
<i>Crisis Management</i>	▶	<i>Pastoral Planning and Goals</i>
<i>Doing Activities</i>	▶	<i>Empowering Parishioners</i>
<i>Business and Politics</i>	▶	<i>Prayer and Discernment</i>
<i>Competition</i>	▶	<i>Collaboration</i>
<i>Voting on Issues</i>	▶	<i>Building Consensus</i>
<i>Committee Reporting</i>	▶	<i>Active Listening</i>
<i>Elected by Popularity</i>	▶	<i>Selecting by Gifts (Charisms)</i>
<i>Constitutions/By-laws</i>	▶	<i>Guidelines</i>

Increasing the Effectiveness of Pastoral Councils

Here are some tips for becoming a more effective pastoral council:

Make prayer together a priority

Quality prayer is foundational for pastoral councils. Move beyond bookend prayers. Avoid the attitude that “We pray on Sunday, we’ve got work to do tonight!” Councils should be steeped in prayer. The primary work of pastoral councils is to discern God’s will for the parish and engage in pastoral planning accordingly: true discernment cannot happen apart from prayer.

Practice faith sharing

One of the key criteria for effective pastoral councils, based on research, is the ability to do faith sharing. Does your council share faith? How is the Holy Spirit alive in your life and the life of others in the community of faith? Recognizing the work of the Spirit is critical to establishing pastoral priorities and developing a vision that will help the parish to grow and develop.

Engage in ongoing formation

Effective pastoral councils engage in ongoing pastoral formation. Read, reflect upon, and discuss some of the Church documents on the nature and mission of the Church. This will give insight into what the Holy Spirit may have in mind for the parish at this time in its history. We must understand the mission of the Church in order to put it into practice in our own communities.

Cultivate pastoral imagination

There is a critical need for councils to be able to see the hand of God and hear the voice of the Holy Spirit so that they can animate the hearts, minds and spirits of the people in the parish. This pastoral imagination and vision is cultivated through prayer and reading of scripture. But don’t forget, it is not our own vision that we are seeking to bring alive in the parish – it’s God’s promise of the kingdom.

Break out of maintenance mode and jump into planning mode

Pastoral councils that spend much of their time listening to finance and facilities reports are not able to accomplish much pastoral planning. Minimize or eliminate these types of reports. Focus on pastoral planning. What is the Holy Spirit calling your parish to do to deepen and share its faith and reach out in service to the wider community?

Be grounded, but keep moving forward

Keep one foot firmly planted in the church’s tradition, while the other foot is taking a step forward. One of our pastors described it this way: “We drive forward by looking through the windshield, not by gazing in the rearview mirror!”

Go on retreat

Effective pastoral councils engage in ongoing spiritual formation. It is recommended that pastoral councils make a yearly retreat. Spend some time away with the pastor in personal prayer and reflection. Reflect on the life and witness of the parish. How is God calling the parish to grow and develop? Overnight retreats are often best, but even a half day retreat can make a tremendous difference on the outlook and perspective of council members.

5. Foster Communion and Further Mission

The purpose of the pastoral council is to advise the pastor on practical matters; especially those matters which pertain to advancing the faith life of the parish and furthering the mission of the Church. To this end, the pastoral council develops and recommends pastoral plans. Whenever possible, pastoral plans take written form. The pastoral plan is shared with the entire parish and is made available to the diocese.

Pastoral council deliberations and activities should be pursued with awareness of the need for communion: bringing the entire parish into the planning process by keeping parishioners apprised of the council activities and also allowing for those not on the parish council to provide some input, so that there is a strong sense of shared responsibility and participation in the one body of Christ. Pope St. John Paul II's Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (At the Beginning of the New Millennium), points to this universal call to communion:

Communion must be cultivated and extended day by day and at every level in the structures of each Church's life. There, relations...must all be clearly characterized by communion. ...To this end...the Pastoral Council must be ever more highly valued. The theology and spirituality of communion encourage a fruitful dialogue between pastors and faithful.... While the wisdom of the law, by providing precise rules for participation, attests to the hierarchical structure of the Church...the spirituality of communion, by prompting a trust and openness wholly in accord with the dignity and responsibility of every member of the People of God, supplies institutional reality with a soul.

Fostering communion is essential for successfully carrying out the mission of evangelization. As part of building communion, the work of pastoral planning should seek to engage the entire parish. Parishioners should be informed about the ongoing work of the pastoral council through pulpit announcements, website postings, electronic newsletters, bulletin inserts and other means of communication. For the success of pastoral planning, it is important that the parish understand what the pastoral council is and what it does. A written pastoral plan should be provided to the parish when it is completed.

6. Understanding the Mission

All pastoral planning is done in light of the Scriptures – especially the Gospels, and in light of Church documents which expound the mission of the Church. Even those documents yet to be published, which restate or give renewed insight into the communion and mission of the Church can also be considered and consulted during the pastoral planning process.

In order to successfully accomplish its task of pastoral planning, the pastoral council must grow in its understanding of the nature and mission of the Church. Pastoral planning always takes into account scriptural imperatives, the teachings of the Church, and national, local, and regional pastoral initiatives. All of this provides a context for planning at the parish level.

Now is the time for each local Church to assess its fervor and find fresh enthusiasm for its spiritual and pastoral responsibilities, by reflecting on what the Spirit has been saying to the People of God.... I therefore earnestly exhort the Pastors of the particular Churches, with the help of all sectors of God's People, confidently to plan the stages of the journey ahead, harmonizing the choices of each diocesan community with those of neighboring Churches and of the universal Church.... What awaits us therefore is an exciting work of pastoral revitalization — a work involving all of us.

— St. John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 2001

Universal Pastoral Priorities

The New Evangelization

Pope Francis has made his own the call for a “new evangelization”, originally issued by Pope St. John Paul II and echoed by Pope Benedict XVI. The Holy Father is calling for the entire Church to engage in the New Evangelization for the transmission of the Christian Faith. The New Evangelization is grounded in a personal encounter with Christ. It compels us to bring the good news of Jesus to the whole world, especially to the margins of society. This missionary outreach is the overall goal and top pastoral priority for the entire Church.

Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love.

— Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*

The new evangelization applies to the whole of the Church's life. It applies, in the first instance, to the ordinary pastoral ministry that must be more animated by the fire of the Spirit, so as to inflame the hearts of the faithful who regularly take part in community worship and gather on the Lord's day to be nourished by his word and by the bread of eternal life.

— Pope Benedict XVI

The Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization highlighted some of the following themes:

- The principal agent of the New Evangelization is the Holy Spirit, who opens hearts to God.
- The Church is missionary by nature and is impelled to proclaim the Gospel.
- In a broken world, the Church must exercise her ministry of reconciliation.
- The dignity of the human person must be recognized in public policy and practice.
- Conversion and holiness is needed to be an effective agent of the New Evangelization.
- Education in the faith is a constitutive element of the New Evangelization.
- Concern for the poor and suffering is a critical element of the New Evangelization.
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation provides a deep encounter with Christ and the Church.
- The Eucharist is the source and summit of the New Evangelization.
- The Sacred Liturgy is the primary and most powerful expression of the New Evangelization.
- Popular piety, including devotion to Mary and the Saints, aids the New Evangelization.
- The parish should animate its members to become agents of the New Evangelization.
- The family is the place of and the first agent in the giving of life, love and faith.
- The youth are recipients and agents of evangelization, especially with their peers.
- The ecumenical dimension of the New Evangelization should be highlighted.
- Good stewardship of Creation serves evangelization and is a witness to our faith in God.
- Migrants should be helped to integrate themselves into the life of society and the Church.
- Mary is the Star of the New Evangelization and the model of faith, hope, and love.

Mercy

The Universal Church, especially under the leadership of Pope Francis, has sought to highlight mercy as the deepest expression of God's love. It is essential to the Church's mission.

Mercy is the very foundation of the Church's life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy. The Church's very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love. The Church 'has an endless desire to show mercy'.

— Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*

Corporal Works of Mercy

Feed the hungry
Give drink to the thirsty
Clothe the naked
Welcome the stranger/shelter the homeless
Heal the sick
Visit the imprisoned
Bury the dead

Spiritual Works of Mercy

Counsel the doubtful
Instruct the ignorant
Admonish sinners
Comfort the afflicted
Forgive offenses
Bear patiently those who do us ill
Pray for the living and the dead

Jesus introduces us to these works of mercy in his preaching so that we can know whether or not we are living as his disciples.

— Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*

Marriage and Family Life

Recognizing the fundamental importance of marriage and family in its life and mission, the Universal Church held two Synods on the Family (one in 2014 and another in 2015). In 2016, Pope Francis issued a post-synodal apostolic exhortation entitled *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love). It confirms that the evangelizing mission of the Church is rooted in the family.

No other school can teach the school of love if the family cannot.

— Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*

In addition to the foregoing pastoral priorities, the following Universal Church goals, outlined by Pope St. John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (At the Beginning of the New Millennium), continue to serve as guiding pastoral priorities for the Universal Church. Echoing some of the elements of the New Evangelization, these pastoral priorities are an excellent reference point for pastoral planning:

Growing in holiness

...I have no hesitation in saying that all pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to holiness. (No. 30)

Deepening the life of prayer

Yes, dear brothers and sisters, our Christian communities must become genuine “schools” of prayer... (No. 33)

It is therefore essential that education in prayer should become in some way a key point of all pastoral planning. (No. 34)

Being devoted to the Sunday Eucharist

...I therefore wish to insist that sharing in the Eucharist should really be the heart of Sunday for every baptized person. The Sunday Eucharist...is the privileged place where communion is ceaselessly proclaimed and nurtured. (No. 36)

Commitment to the Sacrament of Reconciliation

I am also asking for renewed pastoral courage in ensuring that the day-to-day teaching of Christian communities persuasively and effectively presents the practice of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. (No. 37)

Listening to the Word of God and Studying It

There is no doubt that this primacy of holiness and prayer is inconceivable without a renewed listening to the word of God. (No. 39)

Proclaiming the Word

To nourish ourselves with the word in order to be “servants of the word” in the work of evangelization; this is surely a priority for the Church at the dawn of the new millennium. ...Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves, they must proclaim him. (No. 40)

Youth and Young Adult Ministry

In making these recommendations, I am thinking especially of the pastoral care of young people. (No. 40)

Being Witnesses to Love

“By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35). If we have truly contemplated the face of Christ, dear Brothers and Sisters, our pastoral planning will necessarily be inspired by the “new commandment” which he gave us: “Love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 13:34). (No. 42)



ARCHDIOCESE OF PORTLAND PASTORAL COUNCIL POLICY

1. Pastoral Council in Every Parish

Every parish shall have a pastoral council. The pastor, administrator or moderator and pastoral administrator of a parish collaborates with it to investigate, consider and propose practical conclusions about those things which pertain to pastoral works in the parish. This collaboration is called “pastoral planning”. Parishes served by the same pastor are encouraged to have a joint pastoral council.

2. Collaboration with the Pastor for Pastoral Planning

The pastoral council works together with the pastor and serves as the primary pastoral planning body for the parish. The pastoral council meets at least four times per year with the pastor/administrator. It shall always respect the requirements of civil, church and diocesan law as well as the Church norms for pastoring.

3. Consultative Body

The authority of the pastoral council is consultative or advisory. While a council chair normally runs the meeting, the pastor/administrator presides at the council in the sense that he discusses with and consults the council about pastoral matters. Authority to make pastoral decisions ultimately rests with the pastor/administrator who has been appointed by the bishop. A pastor shall carefully consider the deliberations and recommendations of the council. If the pastor ever acts contrary to the recommendations of the council, he shall offer a proper explanation to the members. In the absence of the pastor, a council may discuss matters, but it does not make final determinations.

4. Membership Reflects the Parish

The pastoral council includes people selected from the parish together with those who share in pastoral care of the people by virtue of their office. The method of selection rests with each parish. The membership of the pastoral council should reflect the overall membership of the parish. Members of the pastoral council should be baptized Catholics. Any member who may have a conflict of interest in a council matter under discussion would not normally participate in the discussion and recommendation. Such judgment is left to the pastor.

5. Foster Communion and Further Mission

The purpose of the pastoral council is to advise the pastor on practical matters; especially those matters which pertain to advancing the faith life of the parish and furthering the mission of the Church. To this end, the pastoral council develops and recommends pastoral plans. Whenever possible, pastoral plans take written form. The pastoral plan is shared with the entire parish and is made available to the diocese.

6. Understanding the Mission

All pastoral planning is done in light of the Scriptures – especially the Gospels, and in light of Church documents which expound the mission of the Church. Even those documents yet to be published, which re-state or give renewed insight into the communion and mission of the Church can also be considered and consulted during the pastoral planning process. (See back cover of booklet for a list of recommended documents.)

7. Study, Reflection, Listening, Prayer & Discernment

Pastoral councils study and reflect on the life and mission of the Church. They also study and reflect on the circumstances of the members of the parish and the community in which the parish is located. Through prayer and discernment they determine how communion and mission can be lived more fully at this particular time in this particular parish. Special attention is paid to the poor. Pastoral planning flows as a result of this process. To the extent possible, reaching a consensus on recommendations for a pastoral plan is the goal.

8. Relationship to the Parish Finance Council.

Canon Law requires a finance council in every parish to advise the pastor and the parish on parish finances, property and other resources. The finance council is independent from the pastoral council, but the two councils should collaborate when necessary to insure that the pastoral plan is within the means of the parish and the budget reflects the pastoral priorities of the parish.

9. Relationship of the Council to other Pastoral Planning Bodies

There are three levels of pastoral planning in the Archdiocese of Portland: parish, vicariate and diocese. Pastoral planning on all three levels should take into account and influence the planning done at each of the other levels. Every year, the pastoral council chairpersons and the pastoral council members participate in an Annual Vicariate Meeting of Pastoral Councils. Every three years, the pastoral council chairperson and a delegate from each parish council attend an Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly. At the assembly, members are elected by vicariates to serve on the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council.

10. Implementing and Monitoring the Pastoral Plan

Once it has been developed and put in written form, the pastoral plan for the parish should be monitored and evaluated as it is administered and as it unfolds. It is the responsibility of the pastor, professional staff and volunteers to implement the pastoral plan. At the direction of the pastor, council members can assist in its implementation. Because unforeseen needs sometimes arise and times and situations change, the pastoral plan should be continually updated by the pastoral council.

11. Measuring the Pastoral Plan for Success

Although times and people change, the mission of the Church is always the same. It is the mission of Christ: to bring all people to know, love and serve God the Father and one another. Pastoral planning is successful to the extent that it encourages and helps us to grow in love for God and live our lives for others.

Communion

This is the other important area in which there has to be commitment and planning...the domain of communion. (No. 42) "Before making practical plans, we need to promote a spirituality of communion." (No. 43)

The Church is a communion of love. Pastoral planning is always faithful to the will of God when it seeks to make the Church a place of communion. To the extent that we recognize the face of God in each of our brothers and sisters, we are living out a spirituality of communion. When we truly understand and appreciate that every person is united together in a profound unity to form the mystical body of Christ, we participate more deeply in the spirituality of communion.

The Diversity of Vocations

The unity of the Church is not uniformity, but an organic blending of legitimate diversities. It is the reality of many members joined in a single body, the one Body of Christ. (No. 46)

All who are baptized and confirmed are called to understand their responsibility in the life of the Church. All have a part to play in fulfilling the ministries and charitable works that sustain and contribute to the building up of the community. Each person must be encouraged to listen and respond to God's unique call.

Ecumenism

Strengthening our relations with other faith communities:

...theological discussion on essential points of faith and Christian morality, cooperation in works of charity, and above all the great ecumenism of holiness will not fail, with God's help, to bring results. (No. 48)

Charity and Concern for the Poor

Beginning with intra-ecclesial communion, charity of its nature opens out into a service that is universal; it inspires in us a commitment to practical and concrete love for every human being. This too is an aspect which must clearly mark the Christian life, the Church's whole activity and her pastoral planning. The century and the millennium now beginning will need to see, and hopefully with still greater clarity, to what length of dedication the Christian community can go in charity towards the poorest. If we have truly started out anew from the contemplation of Christ, we must learn to see him especially in the faces of those with whom he himself wished to be identified: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me: (Mt. 25:35-37). This Gospel text is not a simple invitation to charity: it is a page of Christology which sheds a ray of light on the mystery of Christ. By these words, no less than by the orthodoxy of her doctrine, the Church measures her fidelity as the Bride of Christ. (No. 49)

Environmental Concerns

...how can we remain indifferent to the prospect of an ecological crisis...? (No. 51)

Respect for the Life of Every Human Being

A special commitment is needed with regard to certain aspects of the Gospel's radical message which are often less well understood, even to the point of making the Church's presence unpopular, but which nevertheless must be a part of her mission of charity. I am speaking of the duty to be committed to respect for the life of every human being, from conception until natural death. (No. 51)

National Pastoral Priorities

The New Evangelization

In union with the Universal Church, the U.S. Bishops have identified the New Evangelization as the top pastoral priority for the United States. The Church's essential task in the New Evangelization is to conform itself to Christ so that it may credibly proclaim the message of salvation to those who do not yet know Jesus.

Conversion

The New Evangelization begins with conversion. Jesus began his public ministry by calling hearers to "Repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mark 1:15). Followers of Jesus must recognize their own sinfulness and conform their lives to him before they can authentically invite others to do the same. The People of God themselves must be re-evangelized as the first step toward fulfillment of the New Evangelization. Authentic conversion will result in confident witness of the faith through living and sharing Gospel.

We cannot bring the world the joyful news that is the person of Christ if we ourselves are not profoundly united to Christ, if we do not know Him deeply and personally, if we do not live from His Word.

– Pope Benedict XVI

Sacrament of Reconciliation

The Sacrament of Reconciliation has the power to bring about the change and healing needed in the heart of each person and in a nation that is filled with brokenness. Catholics, especially pastoral leaders, should avail themselves of this sacrament and encourage others to return to the practice of regularly confessing their sins. The loving mercy of God that flows from the sacrament of forgiveness will be a source of life and renewal for the Church as it takes up the New Evangelization.

[T]he Sacrament of Reconciliation evangelizes the evangelizers, as it brings us sacramentally into contact with Jesus, who calls us to conversion of heart, and allows us to answer his invitation to repentance – a repentance from within that can then transform the world without.

–Cardinal Timothy Dolan, when he served as President of the USCCB

Faith

The national plan of the U.S. Bishops is to help Catholics deepen their relationship with Jesus, increase their knowledge and understanding of the faith, and strengthen their relationship with the Church. This focus on enhancing faith includes forming pastoral ministers, promoting vocations, valuing cultural diversity, attentiveness to the needs of migrants and refugees, respect for life at all stages of development, and concern for the poor and marginalized.

Worship

It is important to increase sacramental practice in parishes throughout the country. This includes the efforts to strengthen marriage and family life, increase Mass attendance, and encourage a return to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Encouraging a vibrant sacramental life will inspire confidence in the Gospel and the teachings of the faith.

Witness

Believers must be encouraged in their vocation to be witnesses who transform society through living and sharing their faith in Jesus Christ and giving recognition to the life and dignity of the human person.

Intent on gathering the signs of the times in the present of history, faith commits every one of us to become a living sign of the presence of the Risen Lord in the world. What the world is in particular need of today is the credible witness of people enlightened in mind and heart by the word of the Lord, and capable of opening the hearts and minds of many to the desire for God and for true life, life without end.

–Pope Benedict XVI, *Porta Fidei*, 15

The following, ongoing national initiatives are related to Faith, Worship, and Witness, and are seen as constitutive elements of the New Evangelization:

Faith Formation and Sacramental Practice

A deeper relationship with Jesus will result in renewed energy and confidence in the faith.

Strengthening Marriage and Family Life

In addition to supporting married couples and families, this includes defending the institution of marriage against threats to alter its definition in law and public policy. The family is the privileged place for transmission of the Christian Faith.

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

This includes advocating for policies that protect and value human life and promote the dignity of all persons, especially the poor and vulnerable.

Religious Liberty

The Church has a responsibility to engage society and culture in the public square and to speak out as a voice and an agent for the common good. Religious people and organizations should not be forced to engage in actions that are forbidden by conscience.

National Pastoral Resources

Many pastoral resources have resulted from the collaboration of the bishops in the United States. The two referenced here, *Go and Make Disciples* and *Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching*, are invaluable for understanding the nature and mission of the Church.

Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the U.S. Approved by the U.S. bishops in 1992, this document on evangelization presents three goals for the Catholic Church in the United States:

Goal 1: To bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others.

Goal 2: To invite all people in the United States, whatever their social or cultural background, to hear the message of salvation in Jesus Christ so they may come to join us in the fullness of the Catholic Faith.

Goal 3: To foster Gospel values in our society, promoting the dignity of the human person, the importance of the family, and the common good of our society, so that our nation may continue to be transformed by the saving power of Jesus Christ.

Catholic social teaching contains many principles which form the basis for Christian living in the world. These principles have been summarized by the U. S. bishops and serve as a starting point for better understanding and appreciating the rich tradition of Catholic social teaching.

Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

1. Life and Dignity of the Human Person
2. Call to Family, Community, and Participation
3. Rights and Responsibilities
4. Option for the poor and vulnerable
5. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers
6. Solidarity
7. Care for God's Creation

Local Pastoral Priorities

Many of the pastoral priorities outlined by the universal Church, as well as those emphasized on the national level, are reflected in the pastoral planning that has been done by the Archdiocese of Portland. The following list highlights some of our local pastoral priorities.

Evangelization

Evangelization is the essential mission of the Church, and it is the measure of all of our local pastoral activities and initiatives.

Evangelization! Sharing the Good News of God's love and mercy and the salvation offered us in Jesus Christ. We are called to be salt, light and leaven in western Oregon. This is our primary mission and direction, and it is under this banner that we will do all of our apostolic work.

–Archbishop Alexander K. Sample, memo to staff, 2014

Catechesis and Faith Formation

How can we love God if we do not know him? We who are already baptized must first deepen our own faith and relationship with the Lord before we are ready to reach out to those who do not yet know him. The Latin expression, *nemo dat quod non habet* (one cannot give what one does not have) applies. If we do not have a personal relationship with the Lord, and we do not know our faith, how can we share it?

Divine Worship

The sacred liturgy is the primary and most powerful expression of the New Evangelization. Vatican II emphasized that it is the “source and summit” of the Christian life. All other apostolic works of the Church flow from it and are directed toward the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist. It is the pastoral activity *par excellence*. The liturgy catechizes and forms us. It

is a unique and irreplaceable moment of evangelization. We must worship in spirit and in truth, recovering and rediscovering a sense of reverence, prayerfulness, beauty, nobility and appreciation of the awesome mystery that we celebrate in the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Mass. This will sanctify us and ready us for the works of evangelization.

Marriage and Family Life

God's plan for marriage and family life is an essential part of his plan for our salvation. It is in our families that we first learn how to love, how to forgive, and how to respect one another. Families are in desperate need of pastoral attention and care. We must provide catechesis on the meaning of marriage, assistance for couples preparing for marriage, and support for marriages and families. The family is ground zero for the New Evangelization.

Young Adult Ministry

We must reach out to young adults, helping them connect with the Church and with one another. When young adults develop an enthusiasm for their faith, they provide a profound energy and inspiring presence that can be a leaven for the entire community.

Cultural Diversity

We have an incredibly rich and diverse local Church. We face an important opportunity, not only to meet pastoral needs, but also to embrace the diverse gifts and heritages brought to us by peoples of different languages, cultures and regions. As a community of believers, we must develop a vision of what we can become together. In all of our pastoral work and activity, we must recognize and appreciate our cultural diversity.

Vocations

The Church is greatly enriched by vocations to the priesthood and religious life. It is also greatly enriched by vocations to marriage and generous single life. We must strive to create a culture which helps young people and others discern what is God's will for their lives.

Works of Mercy

If our faith is genuine, then we must reach out to those most in need, whether inside or outside the Church. Our service and accompaniment must extend powerfully, visibly and meaningfully to the poor, the homeless, the marginalized, the lost, the lonely, the abandoned, the desperate, the sick, the troubled and the vulnerable. In them, we must learn to see the face of Christ, and in serving them, we pray that they might see the loving and merciful face of Christ in us. Our love and care for those in need is the most powerful witness of our faith. All our efforts at the New Evangelization will fall flat unless this is a constitutive element.

Special Points of Emphasis

Every pastoral plan should be seen in the context of communion with the larger Church and in light of the Church's overall mission of evangelization. While adopting priorities does not exclude the many other pastoral needs which require ongoing attention, the process is intended to offer points of special focus, funding and unity for the life and mission of the local Church.

7. Study, Reflection, Listening, Prayer & Discernment

Pastoral councils study and reflect on the life and mission of the Church. They also study and reflect on the circumstances of the members of the parish and the community in which the parish is located. Through prayer and discernment they determine how communion and mission can be lived more fully at this particular time in this particular parish. Special attention is paid to the poor. Pastoral planning flows as a result of this process. To the extent possible, reaching a consensus on recommendations for a pastoral plan is the goal.

❖ Discernment

Discernment is a formal process permeated by prayer which seeks to discover what is the will of God in a particular situation or decision. Discernment always involves information gathering, study, listening to others, reflection and prayer.

❖ Consensus

In the work of pastoral planning, consensus plays a critical role. Consensus is a way of coming to agreement about pastoral planning efforts and decisions. It is understood to be derived from guidance by the Holy Spirit. The council strives to reach substantial, but not necessarily unanimous agreement on matters of overall direction.

In the pastoral planning process, it is important for the pastor to understand the sense of common good behind the discussions and recommendations of the council. The purpose of the council is to discern the pastoral needs of the community and communicate those needs to the pastor. While voting can be used as a tool during the discernment process, reaching a general consensus is the desired goal. Members should be open to hearing and responding to the various opinions expressed, with an intention to gradually narrow the considerations to a commonly accepted proposal. At times, reaching a consensus means that members will have to trust the judgment of the group or the pastor, even when it does not correspond with their own opinion on a matter. In such cases, the members who do not agree with the determination should still be willing to help make the pastoral initiative successful.

Take pains to reconcile your individual interests after careful consideration and a genuinely mutual agreement. If these interests seem for the moment to be divergent, why not weigh them again in the light of a strong and lively faith, keeping the supernatural motives of the unity and catholicity of the Church ever before your eyes?

—Pope Pius XII, *Fidei Donum*, 70

8. Relationship to the Parish Finance Council

Canon law requires a finance council in every parish to advise the pastor and the parish on parish finances, property and other resources. The finance council is independent from the pastoral council, but the two councils should collaborate when necessary to insure that the pastoral plan is within the means of the parish and the budget reflects the pastoral priorities of the parish.

In the process of pastoral planning, the pastoral council benefits by having knowledge and understanding of the financial status of the parish. The finance council, also referred to as the administrative council, keeps track of parish finances and maintains a record of parish resources and existing commitments of funds and resources. The finance council may give advice on availability of funds and potential resources for additional funds, but does not determine how monies will be spent or how resources will be allocated and utilized; those actions are decided by the pastor with the advice of the pastoral council. The pastoral plan and pastoral priorities of the parish should always be reflected in the budget.

9. Relationship of the Council to Other Pastoral Planning Bodies

There are three levels of pastoral planning in the Archdiocese of Portland: parish, vicariate and diocese. Pastoral planning on all three levels should take into account and influence the planning done at each of the other levels. Every year, the pastoral council chairpersons and the pastoral council members participate in an Annual Vicariate Meeting of Pastoral Councils. Every three years, the pastoral council chairperson and a delegate from each parish council attend an Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly. At the assembly, members are elected by vicariates to serve on the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council (APC).

Three Levels of Pastoral Planning

1. Diocesan

The diocese is considered the “local church”. It is served by a bishop who has been appointed by the Pope to provide for the pastoral care of the people. The Archdiocesan Pastoral Council (APC) assists the archbishop in this task. The archbishop meets at least four times per year with the APC. The APC is a microcosm of the Church: it is made up of lay regional representatives (currently, thirteen), two priests, a deacon, two religious and several appointed members. The archbishop and the vicar general participate by virtue of their office. The APC is served by diocesan staff. (See **Appendix A** for more information on the APC.)

2. Vicariate

The diocese is divided into regions called area vicariates, each comprising a grouping of parishes. Currently, there are eighteen area vicariates in the Archdiocese of Portland. The archbishop appoints an area vicar to serve each vicariate. The vicar convenes the priests and other pastoral leaders, including pastoral council members, from within the vicariate to do pastoral planning on a regional level. Some vicariates meet on a monthly basis; others meet quarterly. Each year, usually during springtime, the vicar works together with the APC representative for the vicariate to organize the Annual Vicariate Meeting of Pastoral Councils.

Pastoral planning on the regional level is important for many reasons. Sometimes the region is facing pastoral issues that are particular to it. In some cases, one parish alone may not be able to effectively meet some of the needs of its people, whereas working together can help address those areas. Such collaboration fosters greater communion. Ultimately, the evangelizing mission of the Church is more effectively served when parishes work together. (See **Appendix B** for a list of area vicariates and parishes, and see **Appendix C** for more information about area vicariates and vicars.)

We who are pastors and professional church workers need to learn how to work collaboratively with our parishioners in determining strategies for carrying out our evangelizing mission. But parishes themselves cannot operate in splendid isolation. In fact, when they do, many potential avenues of service are eliminated. But collaboration between parishes offers greater potential for serving the diverse needs of our people.

— Archbishop John Vlazny, *Growing in holiness – a priority?* Catholic Sentinel, July 1, 2005

3. Parish

The diocese is currently comprised of 124 parishes. The archbishop appoints a pastor or administrator to provide for the pastoral care of the people in the parish. Each parish is required by diocesan policy to have a pastoral council which assists the pastor and participates in the pastoral leadership of the parish through pastoral planning. The council recommends pastoral priorities to the pastor and helps in the development of a pastoral plan. The pastoral work of the parish serves as a foundational building block for fostering communion and furthering mission within the local church, or diocese.

The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. ...If the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be “the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters”. This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people, and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few. ...In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a center of constant missionary outreach. We must admit, though, that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented.

—Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*

Pastoral Planning Meetings

Regular Meetings of Pastoral Councils

Pastoral planning within the archdiocese occurs on a regular basis at parish pastoral council meetings, at vicariate meetings and at Archdiocesan Pastoral Council meetings.

Annual Vicariate Meetings of Pastoral Councils

The Annual Vicariate Meeting of Pastoral Councils gathers the priests, pastoral council members and other pastoral leaders from every parish within the vicariate, providing the opportunity to share their pastoral planning efforts with the APC representative. In turn, the APC representative shares the ongoing pastoral planning work of the archdiocese. The vicar and the APC representative from the vicariate work together to plan the agenda for the meeting. In addition to facilitating pastoral planning on a regional level, the Annual Vicariate Meeting allows the opportunity for true pastoral planning dialogue.

Triennial Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly

Every three years, there is an Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly. The assembly gathers together the pastor and two parish pastoral council delegates from each parish. The purpose of this gathering is to elect new members to the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council and to aid in pastoral planning on the diocesan level. Since delegates to the assembly are members of their own pastoral councils, those elected to the APC will be actively involved in pastoral planning at the parish level ensuring a direct connection between pastoral planning on these two levels.

10. Implementing and Monitoring the Pastoral Plan

Once it has been developed and put in written form, the pastoral plan for the parish should be monitored and evaluated as it is administered and as it unfolds. It is the responsibility of the pastor, professional staff and volunteers to implement the pastoral plan. At the direction of the pastor, council members can assist in its implementation. Because unforeseen needs sometimes arise and times and situations change, the pastoral plan should be continually updated by the pastoral council.

Once a pastoral plan has been adopted, the process of implementing it begins. As it is being implemented, it should be monitored to ensure its successful accomplishment over time. If issues develop or other priorities arise, the plan can be altered to meet the changing needs. One method for monitoring the progress of the pastoral plan is to establish a tracking team. This group will compare the plan details with what has been implemented to date and will inform the pastoral council of its findings. Communication with the whole parish is key. Apprise the people of the progress being made or the need for greater efforts to successfully implement the plan. Let them know if priorities have shifted or needs have changed. An annual parish report can be an excellent way to communicate this information.

11. Measuring the Pastoral Plan for Success

Although times and people change, the mission of the Church is always the same. It is the mission of Christ: to bring all people to know, love and serve God the Father and one another. Pastoral planning is successful to the extent that it encourages and helps us to grow in love for God and live our lives for others.

The plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition is the same as ever... But it must be translated into pastoral initiatives adapted to the circumstances of each community.

— St. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 2001

Let us go forward in hope! A new millennium is opening before the Church like a vast ocean upon which we shall venture, relying on the help of Christ. The Son of God, who became incarnate two thousand years ago out of love for humanity, is at work even today: we need discerning eyes to see this and, above all, a generous heart to become the instruments of his work. Did we not celebrate the Jubilee Year in order to refresh our contact with this living source of our hope? Now, the Christ whom we have contemplated and loved bids us to set out once more on our journey: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19). The missionary mandate accompanies us into the Third Millennium and urges us to share the enthusiasm of the very first Christians: we can count on the power of the same Spirit who was poured out at Pentecost and who impels us still today to start out anew, sustained by the hope "which does not disappoint" (Rom 5:5).

— St. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 2001

List of Resources to Aid Pastoral Councils

1. <http://www.pastoralcouncils.com/> Mark F. Fischer is one of the foremost experts on pastoral councils in the United States. His website on pastoral councils is practical resource.
En Español: Consejos <http://www.pastoralcouncils.com/consejos/>
2. <http://amazingparish.org/>
3. **The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic**, Mathew Kelly, Beacon Publishing, 2012.
Los Cuarto Signos de un Catolico Dinamico, Mathew Kelly, Beacon Publishing, 2015.
4. <http://dynamiccatholic.com/>
5. **Great Catholic Parishes**, William E. Simon Jr., Ave Maria Press, 2016.
<https://www.paritycatalyst.org/>
6. **Forming Intentional Disciples**, Sherry A. Weddell, Our Sunday Visitor, 2012.
Formación de Discípulos Intencionales, Sherry A. Weddell, OSV 2015.
7. **Becoming a Parish of Intentional Disciples**, Sherry A. Weddell, OSV, 2015.
8. **33 Days to Morning Glory**, Fr. Michael Gaitley, Marian Press, 2011.
Group retreat: <https://www.allheartsafterfire.org/33-days-to-morning-glory/overview.html>
9. **Divine Renovation**, Fr. James Mallon, Twenty-Third Publications, 2014.
10. <http://alphausa.org/catholic/>
11. **Rebuilt**, Michael White and Tom Corcoran, Ave Maria Press, 2013.

Appendix A

Archdiocesan Pastoral Council (APC)

APC Purpose

The purpose of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council is to assist the archbishop in the pastoral planning for the Archdiocese of Portland and to keep the lines of communication open with members of parish pastoral councils and vicariates. The APC Constitution states that *“The Archdiocesan Pastoral Council (APC) shall examine and consider all that relates to pastoral work and offer practical conclusions on these matters, so that the life and activity of the People of God may be brought into greater conformity with the Gospel.”*

APC Membership

Membership in the APC is made up of:

- 1 regional representative from each APC Region*, elected by the regions at the tri-annual Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly
- 2 priests from the Presbyteral Council
- 1 permanent deacon
- 2 women religious
- at large members appointed directly by the archbishop
- and *ex officio* members: The archbishop, auxiliary bishops and the vicar general

* The 13 APC Regions are made of one or more Archdiocesan Vicariates

Additional participation in APC meetings and activities is at the invitation of the archbishop and APC Executive Committee.

The term of office for elected members is three years, beginning with one Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly and ending after the next. Appointed members serve without term at the discretion of the archbishop.

APC Officers and Committees

The officers of the APC are:

- President (*ex officio* the Archbishop)
- Chair (an elected member of the APC)
- Vice Chair (an elected member of the APC)

An executive secretary from the Office of the Archbishop provides staff support for the APC and serves as the recording secretary.

Appendix A

There is an APC Executive Committee, made up of the APC officers and executive secretary, which sets the APC agenda, with input from the APC, area vicariate or archdiocesan pastoral assemblies, parishes, area vicariates, offices, or other advisory bodies. The Archbishop determines whether any matter falls under "pastoral planning" for the APC, or under "governance" for referral to the Presbyteral Council.

The APC works through standing or ad hoc groups, committees or task forces, as needed.

APC Meetings

The APC will ordinarily meet three to five times per year. Special meetings may be called by the archbishop on his own initiative or in response to a written request from at least 1/4 of the APC membership. The APC and its committees are guided by Robert's Rules of Order; and a quorum is half plus one of the entire APC membership.

Every three years, the APC hosts an Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly (APA). Each parish in the archdiocese is invited to send three delegates: the pastor and two delegates selected by the parish pastoral council. The APC determines the agenda, administers the assembly, reports to it, and takes recommendations from it for further study. Elections for regional representatives to the APC take place at the APA.

Once a year, in each vicariate, the vicar and APC representative collaborate to plan and organize an Annual Vicariate Meeting of Pastoral Councils (AVMPC). The pastor and parish pastoral council representatives from each parish in the vicariate attend the meeting. The agenda is set by the vicar and APC representative, with input from the parishes and in consideration of APC planning needs.

APC Vicariate/Region Representative Commitments

As a condition of membership in the APC, vicariate/region representatives commit to:

- Continue their service as a member of their parish pastoral council (their regular term or as an extension to their term, either as a regular or *ex officio* member);
- Serve their three-year term on the APC;
- Attend all APC meetings, communicating their parish and vicariate interests;
- Contribute to APC committee activities and working groups;
- Collaborate with the vicar(s) of their vicariate/region, especially in the planning and organizing of an Annual Vicariate Meeting of Pastoral Councils;
- And get to know their vicariate/region, attending vicariate or vicariate staff meetings when possible and periodically visiting parish pastoral councils.

Appendix B

AREA VICARIATES & PARISHES

ARCHDIOCESE OF PORTLAND IN OREGON

DOWNTOWN PORTLAND

1. Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception (St. Mary's Cathedral)
2. St. André Bessette (Downtown Chapel)
3. St. Michael the Archangel
4. St. Patrick
5. St. Thomas More

NORTHEAST PORTLAND

1. Holy Cross
2. Holy Redeemer
3. Holy Rosary
4. Immaculate Heart
5. The Madeleine (St. Mary Magdalene)
6. Our Lady of Lavang (Southeast Asian Ethnic Vicariate)
7. St. Andrew
8. St. Charles
9. St. Rose of Lima
10. St. Stanislaus

SOUTHEAST PORTLAND

1. All Saints
2. Ascension
3. Church of the Korean Martyrs
4. Holy Family
5. Our Lady of Sorrows
6. Sacred Heart
7. St. Agatha
8. St. Anthony
9. St. Francis of Assisi
10. St. Ignatius
11. St. Philip Neri
12. St. Stephen

EAST PORTLAND, SUBURBAN

1. St. Anne, Gresham
2. St. Henry, Gresham
3. St. Joseph the Worker
4. St. Michael, Sandy
5. St. Peter
6. St. Rita
7. St. Therese

SOUTH PORTLAND, SUBURBAN

1. Christ the King, Milwaukie
2. St. Aloysius, Estacada
3. St. John the Apostle, Oregon City
4. St. John the Baptist, Milwaukie
5. St. Philip Benizi, Redland

WEST PORTLAND, SUBURBAN

1. Our Lady of the Lake, Lake Oswego
2. Resurrection, Tualatin
3. St. Anthony, Tigard
4. St. Clare, Portland
5. St. Cyril, Wilsonville
6. St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Portland
7. St. Francis, Sherwood

BEAVERTON, SUBURBAN

1. Holy Trinity, Beaverton
2. St. Cecilia, Beaverton
3. St. John Fisher, Portland
4. St. Juan Diego
5. St. Pius X, Portland

YAMHILL COUNTY

1. Good Shepherd, Sheridan
2. St. James, McMinnville
3. St. John, Yamhill
4. St. Michael, Grande Ronde
5. St. Peter, Newberg

TUALATIN VALLEY

1. St. Alexander, Cornelius
2. St. Anthony, Forest Grove
3. St. Edward, North Plains
4. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Aloha
5. St. Francis, Roy
6. St. Matthew, Hillsboro
7. Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Verboort

COLUMBIA COUNTY

1. Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Rainier (Clatskanie Mission)
2. St. Birgitta, Portland
3. St. Frederic, St. Helens
4. St. Mary, Vernonia
5. St. Wenceslaus, Scappoose

Appendix B

AREA VICARIATES & PARISHES

ARCHDIOCESE OF PORTLAND IN OREGON

MARION COUNTY

1. Sacred Heart-St. Louis, Gervais
2. St. James, Molalla
3. St. Luke, Woodburn
(Hubbard Mission)
4. St. Mary, Mount Angel
(Scotts Mills Mission)
5. St. Paul, St. Paul
6. St. Paul, Silverton
7. St. Patrick, Canby

NORTH COAST

1. Our Lady of Victory, Seaside
(Arch Cape Mission)
2. Sacred Heart, Tillamook
(Cloverdale Mission)
3. St. Mary Star of the Sea, Astoria
(Hammond Mission)
4. St. Mary by the Sea, Rockaway

METROPOLITAN SALEM

1. Queen of Peace, Salem
2. St. Augustine, Lincoln City
3. St. Edward, Keizer
4. St. Joseph, Salem
5. St. Philip, Dallas
6. St. Vincent de Paul

SANTIAM

1. Immaculate Conception, Stayton
(Mill City Mission)
2. Our Lady of Lourdes, Jordan
3. St. Boniface, Sublimity
4. St. Mary, Shaw

ALBANY-CORVALLIS

1. Sacred Heart, Newport (Siletz Mission)
2. St. Anthony, Waldport
3. St. Bernard, Scio
(Jefferson Mission)
4. St. Edward, Lebanon
5. St. Helen, Sweet Home
(Brownsville Mission)
6. St. Patrick, Independence
7. St. Mary (Our Lady of Perpetual Help),
Albany
8. St. Mary, Corvallis

METROPOLITAN EUGENE

1. Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Cottage
Grove (Creswell Mission)
2. St. Alice, Springfield
3. St. Catherine of Siena, Veneta
4. St. Helen, Junction City
5. St. Jude, Eugene
6. St. Mark, Eugene
7. St. Mary, Eugene
8. St. Michael, Oakridge
(Dexter Mission)
9. St. Paul, Eugene
10. St. Peter, Eugene
11. St. Rose, Monroe-Harrisburg
12. St. Thomas More (Newman Center,
University of Oregon)

SOUTH COAST

1. Holy Trinity, Bandon
(Port Orford Mission)
2. Holy Name, Coquille
(Myrtle Point Mission)
3. Holy Redeemer, North Bend
4. St. John the Apostle, Reedsport
5. St. Mary Our Lady of the Dunes,
Florence
6. St. Monica, Coos Bay
7. Star of the Sea, Brookings
(Gold Beach Mission)

SOUTHERN OREGON

1. All Souls, Myrtle Creek
(Glendale Mission)
2. Our Lady of the Mountain, Ashland
3. Our Lady of Fatima, Shady Cove
4. Sacred Heart, Medford
(Jacksonville Mission)
5. St. Anne, Grants Pass (Cave Junction &
Rogue River Missions)
6. St. Francis, Sutherlin
7. St. Joseph, Roseburg
8. Shepherd of the Valley, Central Point

Appendix C

Area Vicariates, Area Vicars and Archdiocesan Pastoral Council Regional/Vicariate Representative

The Purpose of Area Vicariates

An area vicariate is a grouping of parishes established by the bishop after consultation with the Presbyteral Council to foster the best pastoral care through common action. The area vicariate is a means for parishes (pastors, pastoral staff, pastoral council members and lay leaders) to collaborate in planning, facilitating and coordinating common pastoral action.

The *Clergy Personnel Manual* for the Archdiocese of Portland says the following about area vicariates:

To provide for the best possible care of parishes and for common pastoral action, parishes in the Archdiocese are joined together in Area Vicariates which replace the former Deaneries. The Archbishop, after consulting the Presbyteral Council, may establish, modify, combine or suppress Area Vicariates according to the needs of pastoral activity. In accordance with the Second Vatican Council, the Area Vicariate is established to coordinate and facilitate common pastoral action in the same territory or social region. With the help of the Vicar, the clergy, religious men and women and lay ministers, Pastoral Council Representative and parish leaders in the Area can work together as a vital cell of the Archdiocese. Hence, the vicar with true apostolic solicitude shall animate the local presbytery and pastoral ministers; he shall be a priest who exercises the care of souls and by his learning and prudence, piety and apostolic work commands the highest respect of the clergy and people.

Relationship of the Area Vicariate with the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council (APC)

The area vicariate is related to the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council (APC) in two ways:

- 1) The regional members of the APC are chosen by and from the area vicariates (in some cases by a regional grouping of two area vicariates). Every three years at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly the parish pastoral council delegates of each region elect one of the delegates to be their regional member on the APC. That APC member remains an *ex officio* member of his/her parish pastoral council until the end of the APC term.
- 2) The APC regional member, together with the area vicar, convenes the pastoral councils of the vicariate once a year.

The area vicariate is connected with the APC in this manner to insure some correspondence between the three levels of pastoral planning and pastoral action in the archdiocese.

The Duties of the Area Vicar

The area vicar is appointed by the bishop. He is the vicar of the bishop for the area vicariate. He does not exercise the power of governance, but has a pastoral role as the bishop's vicar for the area. The area vicar assists the bishop in matters of planning, personnel, and problems, or areas of concern.

Appendix C

The area vicar's primary role derives from the purpose of the area vicariate—to facilitate common pastoral action. He accomplishes this mainly by convening pastors, pastoral staffs, parish pastoral council members and other lay ministers and leaders within the vicariate. Most commonly the vicar convenes regular meetings of the pastors and pastoral staffs to plan for and promote common pastoral action within the vicariate. Sometimes the vicar may convene the clergy or other groups within the vicariate to facilitate their collaboration. The area vicar should get to know the regional APC representative and the two should collaborate in the planning and convening of the pastoral councils of the vicariate at least once a year. The area vicar should be supportive of the APC representative.

In addition to promoting common pastoral action, the *Code of Canon Law* gives some additional responsibilities to the area vicar:

- 1) Care and concern for the welfare of the clergy of the vicariate and their ministerial work
- 2) Concern for liturgical celebration and temporal administration within the vicariate
- 3) Visitation of the parishes within the vicariate.

These responsibilities are delineated in the *Code of Canon Law* and the *Clergy Personnel Manual*. The diocesan bishop provides direction on how these responsibilities should be carried out.

The Duties of the to the APC Regional/Vicariate Representative

The APC regional representative is selected as described above. The APC regional representative is a member of the area vicariate leadership team and encouraged to attend vicariate leadership meetings and events. Like the vicar, the APC regional representative does not exercise a power of governance.

The APC regional representative's primary role derives from the purpose of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council—to “examine and consider all that relates to pastoral work and offer practical conclusions on these matters, so that the life and activity of the People of God may be brought into greater conformity with the Gospel”. This is accomplished mainly by:

- Understanding and reflecting on the pastoral needs of the vicariate;
- Participating in archdiocesan and vicariate pastoral planning;
- Bringing relevant experience from parish pastoral leadership to the vicariate and APC;
- Working with the vicar and regional parish pastoral council leaders to facilitate common pastoral action within the vicariate; and
- Communicating respective interests between the regional parishes and the APC.

The APC regional/vicariate representative should be supportive of the area vicar.

The APC regional/vicariate representative fulfills his/her role through the following activities:

- Active participation in vicariate leadership activities (e.g. vicariate meetings)
- Getting to know the parishes in the vicariate (e.g. attending parish pastoral council meetings and other events)
- Together with the area vicar, planning and convening an annual meeting of vicariate pastoral council leaders to exchange information and discuss common interests;
- Collaborating with the archbishop and archdiocesan staff, through active participation in all APC meeting and activities; and
- Continued participation in their parish pastoral council.

List of Resources to Help Pastoral Councils Develop a Deeper Understanding of the Nature and Mission of the Catholic Church

1. *Evangelii Gaudium – The Joy of the Gospel*

Apostolic Exhortation by Pope Francis on the Church's primary mission of evangelization in today's world.

2. *Novo Millennio Ineunte – At the Beginning of the New Millennium*

In this Apostolic Letter, Pope St. John Paul II outlines the pastoral priorities for the Catholic Church in the third millennium.

3. *Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States*

A powerful instrument for opening wide the doors of Christ, this document identifies three goals of evangelization.

4. *The Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching*

A summary of seven key themes at the heart of the Catholic social tradition.

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching.cfm>

5. *Lumen Gentium*

The dogmatic constitution on the Church is one of the principal documents of Vatican II. It describes the Church as the people of God and highlights the universal call to holiness.

6. *Communities of Salt and Light: Reflections on the Social Mission of the Parish*

A resource for parish leaders seeking to strengthen the social ministry of their local community.

7. *Amoris Laetitia – The Joy of Love*

Post-synodal apostolic exhortation by Pope Francis offering a rich reflection on the family. This work resulted from the synods on the family held in 2014 & 2015.

8. *A True and Living Icon*

Pastoral letter of Archbishop Alexander K. Sample on the reading of *Amoris Laetitia* in light of Church teaching.

9. *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*

This pastoral letter challenges the faithful to take up the twin mantles of discipleship and stewardship.

For assistance in obtaining resources, contact the Archdiocese of Portland's Pastoral Center at 503-234-5334.