The Archdiocese of Los Angeles

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

FOR

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS

Prepared by the Standing Committee for
Synod Initiative II
for the
San Gabriel Pastoral Region
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## Pastoral Planning

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**Synod Prayer**

Father of Light, Life and Love,

We praise you and thank you

For gathering a people

From every race, land and language

To be the Body of Christ

in our own time and place.

Washed in the waters of baptism,

Summoned and sent by your Word,

Strengthened and renewed by the Eucharist,

We share in Christ's mission, becoming

A living sign of reconciliation and peace.

We are called to prepare

For the coming of your kingdom,

responding to the changing need of the people

in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles,

building a world of communion and justice.

By your spirit enlighten, enliven, and guide

us as we journey together through the Synod

to the fullness of life in Christ.

In the gift of the spirit, be with us and grant us we pray:

Firm faith, to walk in the light of Christ,

Abundant hope, to move forward on the face of every obstacle;

Love's flourishing, so that we might share in the divine life even now.

Amen
Letter from Cardinal Mahony Concluding the Synod

September 4, 2003
Solemnity of Our Lady of the Angels

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On Holy Thursday of the great Jubilee Year 2000, the priests of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, together with their Archbishop, published a Pastoral Letter on Ministry, As I Have Done for You, which expresses our hope for greater collaboration and mutuality in the exercise of ministry in the Church. At the close of the letter, I convoked a Synod, calling upon the whole People of God to join March 11, 2012March 11, 2012 with me in a process of prayer, dialogue, discernment, and decision for the purpose of finding more fruitful ways to live in the communion of the Holy Spirit, responding to the needs of the people in the Archdiocese.

In the many months since April 2000, the whole People of God—laity, clergy, and religious—have given themselves untiringly to the formulation of Pastoral Initiatives, Priorities, and Strategies to help us realize the vision of the Church expressed in As I Have Done for You. This vision is fully enlivened by the orientations of the Second Vatican Council, and given specific direction in the pastoral program delineated by our Holy Father Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte (“At the Beginning of the New Millennium”).

The Synod has provided many occasions for listening with the ear of the heart to the many concerns expressed throughout the Archdiocese. Some of these cannot be resolved at the level of the Local Church. But in the same spirit of open and respectful dialogue that has characterized our Synod I shall bring to the attention of those who have authority in these matters, those important concerns that are outside the competence of a Synod.

It is clear that the Holy Spirit has enlivened and enlightened the hearts of the people of the Archdiocese in shaping the direction we will take over the next ten years and more. We will continue to rely on the Spirit of Christ as we move forward now with the implementation of our Pastoral Initiatives, Priorities, and Strategies. May the Spirit guide us in being and becoming more authentic heralds of the Gospel in our own lives and, through our communal witness to the Reign of God, a more effective sign of reconciliation and peace to the world.

It is our sincere hope that the spirit of these Synod Documents, expressed in the words Gathered and Sent, will seize and saturate the hearts of all who read them, both in the Church of Los Angeles and beyond.

Together with all the people of the Archdiocese under the protection of Our Lady of the Angels, I entrust to her care all we have done and shall continue to do through the Synod toward the fullness of life in Christ.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

His Eminence Cardinal Roger M. Mahony
Archbishop of Los Angeles
Letter from Bishop Zavala introducing the Guide

September 17, 2010

Dear Friends,

Thanks to the efforts of our Regional Pastoral Council members, the implementation of the 2003 Synod initiatives is moving forward in the San Gabriel Region. The Committee for Initiative II has sponsored several workshops and training sessions for Parish Pastoral Councils over the last five years. In addition, they have collated some of the best practices for establishing and guiding the work of Parish Pastoral Councils and are presenting their work to you in this easy to use format (the binder with the hard copies or the CD). This manual is meant to supplement Communion and Consultation prepared by the Synod Implementation Office in 2007. Since our parishes are all in differing stages with regard to Parish Pastoral Councils, it is our hope that you will pick and choose the parts that are appropriate for your own council.

It is the Cardinal’s expressed wish that every parish have a Parish Pastoral Council to assist with envisioning the future of the parish, determining priorities, and establishing a plan to meet these goals. These guidelines offer you additional assistance in accomplishing these tasks. The programs, prayer services, and selections processes have all been tried in various parishes. I encourage you to use them as you see fit to establish and/or move your council forward in the area of parish pastoral planning.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Gabino Zavala, D.D., J.C.L.
INTRODUCTION

“I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing…”

John 15:5

The Implementation Guide for Parish Pastoral Councils for the San Gabriel Pastoral Region of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles relies and reflects on, but also expands the Parish Pastoral Guidelines of the archdiocese first created in 1991 under the guidance of Jaime Mendoza and the revised Guidelines drafted by committees chaired by Maria Elena Uribe and Mark Fischer, PhD., respectively. The Lord is inviting and challenging us to work together to assess the needs, trends, and movements in our archdiocese and parish communities, and to steward carefully the use of our priests, ministers, buildings, resources, parishes and schools, so that we can continue His saving mission in and through His Church.

Pastoral Planning is essential to the development of a parish. It encourages the fullest collaboration of clergy, religious and laity. Pastoral Planning enables a parish to become ever more fully a portion of the people of God sharing in the mission of Christ, and developing the structures necessary for supporting its community life and carrying out its mission.

Thank you to everyone who continues to generously give their time and talents to this process. In doing Christ’s work, we build on our universal call to holiness.

This Guide is meant to be used by priests, religious and laity alike to raise and answer questions raised by the Holy Spirit. Far be it for this committee to prescribe or limit its use.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Much research, discussion, and prayer went into the development of this Implementation Guide for Parish Pastoral Councils for the San Gabriel Pastoral Region of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. The Archdioceses of Boston, Cincinnati, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, and Santa Fe along with the Dioceses of Albany, Brooklyn, Oakland, and Scranton each have well planned, coherent and usable documents relating Parish Pastoral Councils, Mission Statements and Pastoral Planning. We have freely drawn from them and acknowledge their contributions to this Implementation Guide.

As much as we have drawn from each of the diocese mentioned, the major contribution comes from Mark Fischer, PhD. of St. John’s Seminary of our own Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Dr. Fischer is an acknowledged expert in the United States regarding Pastoral Planning and Parish Pastoral Councils. Through Dr. Fischer’s three books, numerous articles, and many national and local speaking engagements over the past two decades, he has provided guidance and insight for all of the documents we have cited. His footprint is on all of these documents.

However much we acknowledge the work of others, it is our Archbishop, Cardinal Mahony, whose insight, leadership and constant prayers we must thank for the Archdiocesan Synod which gave all members of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles a voice in its present and future direction. We thank you!

Standing Committee for Synod Initiative II
San Gabriel Pastoral Region of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles
Spring, 2009

Sr. Kathleen Callaway, Chairperson
Espie Barrios, member
Anita Ford, member
Jeff Hudson, member
George F. Rigney, member
Sherry L. Saldana, member
CHAPTER 1 Parish Pastoral Councils

RATIONALE FOR PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS

Through Baptism and Confirmation all are called to exercise both the right and the responsibility to participate fully in the life and mission of the Church. This mission of the Church is rooted in the mission of Christ who commanded all the Baptized to “Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation.” (Mark 16:15) This vocation of the community of believers in Jesus Christ, to promote the Reign of God on Earth, permeates the teachings and spirit of the documents of Vatican Council II. All members of the Church collaborate in the responsibility for fulfilling its mission according to their proper charisms and roles. The Second Vatican Council urged active involvement in the life of the Church by emphasizing the principles of collaborative responsibility, consultation, and lay participation.

...the laity has an active part to play in the life and activity of the Church. Their activity is so necessary within Church communities that without it the apostolate of the pastors is generally unable to achieve its full effectiveness.
Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, 10.

Pastors also know that they themselves were not meant to shoulder, alone, the entire saving mission of the Church toward the world. On the contrary, they understand that it is their noble duty so to shepherd the faithful and recognize their service and charismatic gifts that all according to their proper roles may cooperate in this common undertaking with one heart.
Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 30.

Pastors need to consult with the laity who in turn has the right to express their views and concerns to their Pastor. An important structure that fosters this collaboration in the mission of the church is the Parish Pastoral Council. The Parish Pastoral Council assists pastors to foster the cooperation of the parishioners and staff in the task of carrying out the mission of the Church on the parish level. While the Parish Pastoral Council is not explicitly mentioned in the documents of Vatican Council II, the theological principles which underlie it are clearly enunciated and a rationale for its development is given.

... by reason of the knowledge, competence or pre-eminence which they have, the laity are empowered, indeed sometimes obliged, to manifest their opinion in those things which pertain to the good of the Church. If the occasion should arise, this should be done through the institutions established by the Church for that purpose and always with truth, courage and prudence and with reverence and charity towards those who by reason of their office, represent the person of Christ.
Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 37.
CANON LAW REFERENCES

The 1983 Code of Canon Law elaborates on the second Vatican Council’s teaching on the vocation and mission of the people of God and provides structures to express and encourage collaborative responsibility on every level of ecclesial administration.

Canon 208 speaks of everyone’s responsibility to work together in the building up of the Body of Christ.

*Flowing from their rebirth in Christ, there is a genuine equality of dignity and action among all of Christ’s faithful. Because of this equality, they all contribute, each according to his or her own condition and office, to the building up of the Body of Christ.*

**Code of Canon Law, 208.**

Canon 519 calls for the Pastor to develop structures that incorporate the principles of responsibility and of consultation with the staff and parishioners.

*The parish priest is the proper pastor of the parish entrusted to him. He exercises the pastoral care of the community entrusted to him under the authority of the diocesan Bishop, whose ministry of Christ he is called to share, so that for this community, he may carry out the offices of teaching, sanctifying and ruling with the cooperation of other priests or deacons and with the assistance of lay members of Christ’s faithful, in accordance with the law.*

**Code of Canon Law, 519.**

This Canon emphasizes the role of Pastor and places him in the context of mutual cooperation with the staff and parishioners in promoting the mission of the Church. The Code of Canon Law in Canon 528.1 specifically uses the phrase “…With the collaboration of the faithful…”. Here, the Universal Church recognizes the Royal Priesthood each Baptized in Christ is obligated to aid the ordained in the mission of the Church.

*The parish priest has the obligation of ensuring that the word of God is proclaimed in its entirety to those living in the parish. He is therefore to see to it that the lay members of Christ’s faithful are instructed in the truths of faith, especially by means of the homily on Sundays and holydays of obligation and by catechetical formation. He is to foster works which promote the spirit of the Gospel, including its relevance to social justice. He is to have a special care for the Catholic education of children and young people. With the collaboration of the faithful, he is to make every effort to bring the gospel message to those also who have given up religious practice or who do not profess the true faith.*

**Code of Canon Law 528.1**
In Canon 529.2, the laity is singled out for its role in the mission of Christ.

*The parish priest is to recognize and promote the specific role which the lay members of Christ’s faithful have in the mission of the Church, fostering their associations which have religious purposes. He is to cooperate with his proper Bishop and with the presbyterium of the diocese. Moreover, he is to endeavor to ensure that the faithful are concerned for the community of the parish, that they feel themselves to be members both of the diocese and of the universal Church, and that they take part in and sustain works which promote this community.*

**Code of Canon Law 529.2**

Canon 536 specifically deals with Parish Pastoral Councils.

*If, after consulting the council of priests, the diocesan Bishop considers it opportune, a pastoral council is to be established in each parish. In this council, which is presided over by the parish priest, Christ’s faithful, together with those who by virtue of their office are engaged in pastoral care in the parish, give their help in fostering pastoral action.*

*The pastoral council has only a consultative vote, and it is regulated by the norms laid down by the diocesan Bishop.*

**Code of Canon Law, 536.**

The Parish Pastoral Council is called to lead the faith community in the discernment and expression of its own mission. This role challenges parishes to redefine the nature of their leadership and call forth those who are best gifted to serve in this capacity.

This role of the Parish Pastoral Council, as one of ongoing pastoral planning, is an evolution from the parish councils which have existed in the past. The purpose of the Parish Pastoral Council is primarily to develop mission-focused parishes. This does not deny the importance of activity and fiscal responsibility, but it does attempt to place at the heart of the parish a consciousness and zeal for the mission of Jesus Christ.

**PRINCIPLES**

In the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, every parish is to have one Parish Pastoral Council which is to foster full participation of the entire parish in the pastoral life and mission of the parish and of the Universal Church. The following principles guide the formation of Parish Pastoral Councils:

1. Every Parish Pastoral Council is to develop a **Mission Statement** which reflects the identity and mission of the parish in light of the Gospel, Church teachings and the specific realities of the parish.

2. The Parish Pastoral Council is a consultative body with the role of advising and assisting the Pastor in developing a parish pastoral plan and providing input on issues of pastoral concern.
3. The Parish Pastoral Council develops and recommends pastoral plans and directions through a consensus process and prayerful reflection.

4. Every Parish Pastoral Council should be representative of the entire parish, recognizing and reflecting the parish’s rich diversity.

5. The Parish Pastoral Council is to collaborate with parish committees that address specific areas of parish life such as worship, spirituality, evangelization, religious education, finance, and service.

6. It is the responsibility of the Pastor to convoké the Parish Pastoral Council and preside over it.

7. In the event that the Pastor of a parish dies, resigns or is transferred, the Parish Pastoral Council ceases to exist.

   a. It is the prerogative of the newly appointed Pastor or Administrator to either confirm the former Parish Pastoral Council or initiate a new selection process. The Pastor’s or Administrator’s final decision in this matter should occur within three to six months of his or her installation. However, this decision must be comfortable for the new Pastor or Administrator.

   b. During the transition period between Pastors, the newly appointed Pastor or Administrator may convene a meeting of the former Parish Pastoral Council to address any concerns surrounding the transition.

   c. When an Administrator is appointed, that Administrator will assume the rights and responsibilities of the Pastor in relation to the Parish Pastoral Council.

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Parish Pastoral Council is to foster the full participation of and consultation with the entire parish in the life and mission of the parish and of the Universal Church.

The essential areas of parish life that the Parish Pastoral Council considers are:

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FUNCTION

The function of the Parish Pastoral Council is to advise the Pastor in the essential areas of parish life found above. It carries out its function by:

1. Informing the Pastor of the needs, concerns, gifts and resources of the whole parish and its members;
2. Developing and reviewing a parish mission statement and periodically re-evaluating and revising it;
3. Developing a parish pastoral plan;
4. Participating in ongoing pastoral planning;
5. Recommending policies, procedures and programs which would assist in the implementation of the mission statement and the pastoral plan;
6. Reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of existing programs;
7. Reflecting on Archdiocesan pastoral priorities and recommending how they can be implemented in the parish;
8. Evaluating the parishes’ effectiveness in the implementation of the Six Synod Initiatives.

FREQUENCY OF MEETING

Parish Pastoral Council meetings are convened about eight times a year. A normal schedule for these meetings would be monthly with the exception of summer and December.

Extraordinary meetings can be held at the request of the Pastor. All meetings require a quorum of members consisting of a simple majority of members.

Other public meetings, including interviews with parish members, parish assemblies, and reflection groups may also be part of the Council’s agenda during the initial pastoral planning process.

SIZE OF COUNCIL

The Parish Pastoral Council should be composed of twelve to fifteen members.

MEMBERSHIP

Parish Pastoral Councils are composed of representative parish staff members and lay members of the parish. Since the Council is to be representative of the entire parish community, the members of the Council ought to reflect the diversity within the parish. Lay members of the Parish Pastoral Council are to be parishioners who are active in the life of the parish. Membership may be determined as follows:
1. **Ex Officio Members**
   The Council may include up to four ex officio members. It is recommended that these members be the Principal of the parish school, the Director of Religious Education, the Permanent Deacons of the parish, and/or Pastoral Associates or other professional staff members. A member of the Finance Council would be an excellent liaison to keep each council informed of the other’s activities.

2. **Selected Members**
   A process for selecting six to eight members should be conducted. It is recommended that the entire parish community be involved in a selection process rooted in prayer and discernment.

3. **Appointed Members**
   At the Pastor’s discretion, he may appoint up to three members to compliment the members chosen through the selection process and to be inclusive of the parish’s diversity.

**TERMS OF OFFICE FOR MEMBERS**

Selected members serve a three year term with the possibility of serving a second term of three years. Selected members may serve only two consecutive terms. Normally, not more than one third of the Council’s membership should be changed at one time. In a newly formed Council, all members serve an initial three year term. After this initial term, one third of the membership serves an additional year, one third serves an additional two years, and one third serves a full additional term of three years.

**ROLE OF THE PASTOR**

The pastor is the presider of the Parish Pastoral Council. The Pastor leads the process of discernment, expression, and fulfillment of the parish’s mission. He attends all meetings of the Council and participates in the discussion and decision making process. Prior to the group’s coming to a consensus, the Pastor should raise questions or objections relating to issues that could affect the outcome of the decision. When consensus occurs, the Pastor ratifies the decision. If it becomes impossible to reach a consensus (meaning a decision which everyone can live with) it is the responsibility of the Pastor to make the final decision after considering all input.

In his role as presider, the Pastor does not moderate the meetings but rather oversees and participates in all council deliberations. He sheds light on Church teaching and parish or archdiocesan guidelines. Because he is ultimately responsible for the care of the parish, the Pastor presides at the parish council in a way strikingly similar to his presidency at the Eucharist. He leads the community in its expression of the essential elements of parish life.
Tasks:

Sets the agenda with the agenda team (see role of agenda team) Sees that the Council performs its duties
Sees to the ongoing development of council members
Gives the council direction and assistance
Is accountable for the quality of the decisions of the Council

Techniques:

Helps the Council exercise its proper leadership
Becomes an active participant in the consensus process
Gives the Council feedback, support, and affirmation

**ROLE OF THE MODERATOR**

A person capable of serving in the role of moderator is selected from among the members of the Parish Pastoral Council. This individual designs and oversees the process for each Council meeting, assisting the group with planning, decision-making, and problem solving. The moderator is not a chairperson to whom comments are addressed, but rather someone who assists the group in fulfilling its tasks and responsibilities.

Tasks:

A  Prepares the agenda with the agenda team (see Role of Agenda Team
B  Focuses the group on the task at hand
C  Encourages all to participate in the life and work of the Council
D  Is neutral, not evaluating the ideas of others
E  Suggests alternatives, varies methods and procedures
F  Helps arrive at win/win solutions

Techniques:

A  Defines issues clearly
B  Does not have all the answers, but refers questions back to the Council members
C  Maintains a positive atmosphere, giving positive feedback and compliments
D  Does not dominate conversation

**ROLE OF THE VICE MODERATOR**

This person is also chosen from among the members of the Parish Pastoral Council. This individual assists in the formation of the agenda. The Vice Moderator performs the duties of the Moderator in the Moderator’s absence
ROLE OF RECORDER (or SECRETARY)

The recorder keeps track of the progress of each meeting and records official decisions for reference. The recorder is also responsible for any Council correspondence, including the dissemination of the agenda, publishing the record of each meeting, and meeting reminders in advance of each meeting.

Tasks:

A. Prepares the agenda with agenda team (see Role of Agenda Team)
B. Keeps a record of the basic information, decisions, and assignments of the Council (not a detailed set of “minutes”)
C. Remains neutral, contributes his/her ideas only after stepping aside from role
D. Provides copies of the record within one week of the Council meeting

Techniques:

A. Listens for key words, basic ideas, the essence of the record
B. Writes legibly and quickly when doing public recording
C. Uses abbreviations
D. Stops the group and asks for repetition if the ideas are coming too fast

ROLE OF AGENDA TEAM

The agenda team consists of the Pastor, Moderator, Vice Moderator and Recorder. These individuals meet ahead of time to formulate each meeting’s agenda. They also discuss practical arrangements for the meeting.

Tasks and Techniques:

A. Reviews previous meeting’s agenda for unfinished business
B. Consults the annual planning cycle to identify current items: evaluating the parish plan, planning an assembly, scheduling a retreat, etc.
C. Reviews Council skill development needs

Considers practical matters relating to Council meeting.

A. Seeks a speaker or other resource
B. Coordinates changes in time or place of meeting
C. Researches any topic to be discussed
D. Acquires any needed materials for upcoming meeting
ROLE OF SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT TEAM

The Parish Pastoral Council should select two or three of its members to serve as the Spiritual Enrichment Team for a period of one year. This responsibility should rotate yearly.

The spiritual formation team plans programs for spiritual enrichment for Council members. This team is also responsible for the preparation of the prayer/study segment of each meeting. It may also plan an annual retreat or periodic evening of reflection for the council as an important means of ongoing spiritual formation.

Tasks and Techniques:

Plans programs of spiritual enrichment

A. Gets input from the Council to determine direction for spiritual growth
B. Obtains prayer/reflection material for the Council
C. Seeks sources of input on spiritual formation topics
D. Plans for council attendance at archdiocesan sponsored enrichment programs

Prepares prayer/study portion of every meeting

A. Considers the parish situation, liturgical season, Council agenda, or other factors which would inform the prayer experience
B. Designs with the sensitivity to the need for song, silence, listening to God’s word, sharing reflections, and in general for the Council and parish needs
C. Prepares all the details of the prayer – music, texts, rituals, and roles
designs evenings of prayer and/or annual retreat
D. Reserves time for such events in Council planning calendar

RELATIONSHIP WITH PARISH ORGANIZATIONS

Each parish has a unique organizational structure which allows ministry to thrive within the faith community. Parish Pastoral Councils should not seek to suppress these existing structures, but to collaborate with existing committees and organizations.

Parish Pastoral Council members are encouraged to have a global view of parish life, a perspective that encompasses the entire mission of the parish. This view should encompass the hopes, concerns, needs and initiatives of parish organizations and should seek to view these as parts of the larger whole.

Therefore, it is recommended that members of the Parish Pastoral Council should come with the widest possible view of parish life and community, and in turn create and implement pastoral plans in collaboration with parish organizations.
RELATIONSHIP WITH PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL

The Parish Finance Council, mandated by the Code of Canon Law, is separate and distinct from the Parish Pastoral Council. Communication between the two Councils is, however, essential. In order to ensure this communication, a member of the Parish Finance Council should serve on the Parish Pastoral Council as an *ex officio* member. The Parish Finance Council shares with the Parish Pastoral Council information regarding parish finances and temporalities on a regular basis. The Parish Finance Council assists the Pastor in implementing the pastoral plans suggested by the Parish Pastoral Council by making fiscally responsible recommendations.
CHAPTER 2          The Discernment Process

DISCERNING NEW PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL MEMBERS

Included in this packet
   Explanation of Discernment Model
   Information Night agenda and presentation bullet points
   Discernment Night Information for Facilitator of Discernment
   Sample Documents for parish use:
       Checklist, Bulletin Inserts, Pulpit talk points, sample Nomination Form
       Commissioning Ceremony, Worship Aid for Night of Discernment
   (separate document in Appendix)

Discernment

While there are many ways to select new council members, such as election or appointment. Councils that work together most effectively, commonly employ a process of discernment, decision making rooted in prayer.

By using discernment, we acknowledge that God is at work in our lives, especially when making important decisions. Prayerful discernment helps people to free their minds from vested interests and distractions, focusing on the needs of the Parish Pastoral Council at that particular time and place, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit calls forth in ministry. The many benefits of a formal discernment process include:

   Encourages participation of the entire faith community
   Informs and educates the parish about pastoral planning and the role of the Parish Pastoral Council
   Focuses on the gifts of individuals and not their visibility or popularity
   Uses prayer, faith sharing, listening, and consensus-building consistent with Church Tradition
   Honors the reflection/decision-making process of the individual
   Allows the Parish Pastoral Council to reflect on the gifts that are needed on the council at that time
   Elicits names of potential leaders within the parish
   Affirms all candidates and minimizes the sense of a winner/loser dynamic
   Provides an open and transparent process
   Those who are not selected are invited to share their gifts in other ways.

A Model for Nominating and Discerning Council Members

To discern new members, a nominating committee of two or three people is formed from the existing Parish Pastoral Council. If no council exists, a steering committee is formed to accomplish these tasks.

The discernment of new members occurs in the following parts:

   1. Publicity – Bulletin and pulpit announcement or other means of
advertising to make the parish aware of the existing council and their role in it.

2. Nominations – All parishioners are encouraged to submit names (or self-nominate) at a Sunday liturgy.

3. Invitations – Invitations are sent to nominees inviting them to attend a Night of Information to learn more about Parish Pastoral Council and to ask questions.

4. Night of Information – A session to explain in detail the Parish Pastoral Council, including explanation of roles and duties of Parish Pastoral Council members and time for the nominees to ask questions. This night ends by encouraging nominees to consider and pray over what they have heard and, feel called, to come the following week to Discernment Night.

5. Discernment Night – Exactly one week after the Information session, the current Parish Pastoral Council members and returning nominees gather to discern new council members in the context of prayer. The nominees answer a series of questions and listen to everyone else as they offer their answers to the same questions. The participants then come to consensus on those they wish to be on the council.

6. Commissioning of New Members – This is usually conducted by the pastor at the following Sunday liturgy. This commissioning could also be a time to recognize those who are leaving the council.

Timeline for the Selection Process
(sample materials of all forms mentioned are located at the end)

Weeks 1 – 3: Publicity

Pastoral Planning and the Parish Pastoral Council is explained throughout the parish while publishing the discernment process. Use mediums such as:
- Pulpit description
- Bulletin announcements
- Posters, flyers, homily references and other means created by the council (such as prayer cards or general intercessions which pray for the success of the process)

Publicity is meant to clarify the role of the Parish Pastoral Council, particularly that they are the planners and visionaries, not the “do-ers”, and that council members are not chosen by virtue of their office (i.e. from among heads of parish organizations) but serve from willingness to serve in a visionary body. A list of qualities for a Parish Pastoral Council member is included on the nomination form and may be used in publicity materials.

Week 3-4: Nominations

At all Masses on one weekend, Nomination/Identification forms are distributed to
everyone present along with pencils or pens to be used in filling them out. Parishioners are encouraged fill out a form during the announcement period. They nominate a fellow parishioner or self nominate. Before the parishioners leave, the ushers or hospitality ministers collect the forms the way they would a second collection.

**Week 5: Invitation**

The nominating committee of the Parish Pastoral Council (or steering committee) collects the Nomination forms and reviews the results with the Pastor. Invitations and/or phone calls should be made as soon as possible after the nominations have been collected. The invitations should include the date and time of the Information session as well as a note of congratulations for being nominated. A nomination signifies that someone in the parish felt that this person has the gifts of leadership and they should be noted for that acclamation.

In addition, the use of a formal invitation allows the Pastor, if necessary, to remove any names based on his own pastoral insight. However, the removal of nominations must be used with great discretion to maintain the integrity of the discernment.

**Week 6: Information Night**

This presentation is a time for nominees to learn about the Parish Pastoral Council and ask questions regarding this ministry. It consists of:
- Faith sharing
- A presentation on the basics of parish pastoral councils
- Time for the Pastor, who is the Presider of the Parish Pastoral Council, to express his hope and vision for the Parish Pastoral Council,
- Logistical details – including the frequency and number of meetings and the needed commitment for the formation process.

The Night of Information is held at the parish and usually lasts 1 to 1½ hours. It is recommended that a member of the Parish Pastoral Council facilitate the session using the materials provided here.

**Week 7: Discernment Night**

The Night of Discernment is held one week after the Night of Information. Because this process seeks to narrow the number of nominees, those who were not able to attend the Night of Information are not usually invited to attend the Night of Discernment.

The evening includes a period of prayer and listening, followed by a group-wide consensus process in which participants become selectors, affirming those individuals whose gifts are needed at this time on the council. The candidates who emerge from the consensus process become the new Parish Pastoral Council members. The remaining candidates have been affirmed and are invited to participate in the life and mission of the parish in other ways. In addition to a worship aid, information is provided to assist the facilitator of the discernment.
**Week 8 or later: Commissioning of New Members**

The commissioning of the new members is conducted by the Pastor on the Sunday following the Night of Discernment. A sample commissioning service is included in the Appendix of this Guide. This commissioning could also be a time to recognize those who are leaving the council or to recognize a steering committee that has now completed its task.

**Sample Bullet Points for Pulpit talks on Parish Pastoral Councils**

The Cardinal Archbishop of Los Angeles has asked that every parish in the Archdiocese create a Parish Pastoral Council if they did not have one. This requirement is also a part of Synod Initiative II which now is in the implementation stage. This council consists of twelve to fifteen people: the pastor, some members of the parish staff, and lay parishioners.

The people on the council are chosen based on the gifts they have to offer. They are not the “do-ers” of the parish. They are members of the parish who are able to look at the whole parish, how all the pieces work together and how we fulfill the mission of the Church.

The council is a **visionary body** with a number of purposes: They develop, implement, and review the pastoral plan for the parish that addresses the needs of the parish over the next several years.

To do this:

They listen and discern the needs of the congregation and their deeply held values. They build relationships within the parish and increase participation in parish life. They reflect on the mission of the Church – they look at the big picture and ask questions such as “Where are we going as a church community and how do we get there?” They call forth new leaders and guide the implementation of the parish plan.

The council is consultative to the pastor and it is a way to assist the pastor in listening to the needs of the parish and addressing those needs.

Council members are not experts. They are people who are committed to the parish and want to see the parish live and thrive in the future.

This process ultimately involves everyone in the parish in some way through development and implementation of the parish plan.

**Information Night – Suggested Points**

A number of Parish Pastoral Councils in the San Gabriel Pastoral Region of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles have asked for information to help them facilitate the Information Night. It is important to make this night your own, specific to both the facilitator’s style and the parish needs. That being said, the next few pages include points of information relevant to Parish Pastoral Councils that can be incorporated into an Information session. A typical one and one
half hour Information Night session includes the following:

- Opening prayer
- Explanation of purpose
  - Why we are here?
  - What is discernment?
  - How many members are being discerned?

Background info: Brief history/Theology of Pastoral Planning. (adapt this to specific parish needs) (10 min.)

Planning process and Function of the Council.

Specific commitments involved and/or Parish Pastoral Council members giving witness to their experience of being on the Council.

Questions / Answers

Invitation to discernment

*Please note the following points are NOT intended to be read verbatim.*

Consider the needs of your council, the knowledge / experience of those present, and what information will assist those present in discerning their own involvement.

The intent of a very general overview is to keep the “Information Night” focused and not overwhelm councils or parishioners with information that they will receive at a later date. Very specific questions related to models of planning and forms of consultation can be gently set aside for another time, such as individually after the meeting.

**Introduction:**

We are undergoing a great amount of change and transition in the Archdiocese. It is vital that we, as a church community come together, talk about who we are as church, and how we work together as we move into the future.

Pastoral Councils are visionary bodies that take a broad view of the community. They are asked to look at the total picture of parish life, the total mission of the parish, and all the people in the parish. With this wide view, Parish Pastoral Councils create plans that help the parish live out the mission in their particular place. Council members are not experts, but people who are committed to the parish and want to see the parish live and thrive in the future.

The charge of the Parish Pastoral Council can be likened to standing on a balcony overlooking the parish. One image could be of overlooking a big dance. The Council looks upon the whole picture, noting who is dancing and who is not, the kind of music being played and all that is happening. They take in the big picture for a time and then go back down to the dance (because ultimately, dancing is fun) allowing others to come up for the overview.
While there are many ways to select new council members, such as election or appointment. Councils that work together most effectively use Discernment, decision making rooted in prayer. At the end of this Information session, you will be asked to spend time considering the commitment being asked, and praying over whether you are being called to this ministry. Those that feel called will return for the discernment evening in which together, we will pray and reflect on who God is calling to join the Parish Pastoral Council at this time.

**Brief Overview of the History of Councils**

The Church has a long tradition of councils throughout her history, the council of Jerusalem, the Council of Nicea, the Second Vatican Council. All of these councils were convened to discuss and plan the future of the Church. They were visioning bodies whose purpose was to create that vision and craft an ever emerging tradition.

The Second Vatican Council called first for the Diocesan Pastoral Councils (*Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*) and then, by extension, called for Parish Pastoral Councils.

For the most part early pastoral councils were composed of parishioners who had some expertise to share with the pastor regarding parish finances. Over time, councils became efficient in organizing existing ministries and developing new projects for the parish. Members were often chosen by virtue of their position in the parish. As heads of organizations, they brought the agenda of their group to the table, fostering collaboration in the parish and meeting the needs of their group members.

From “Parish Councils to Parish Pastoral Councils”, As we moved into the 1990’s, a new vision of councils was developing – pastoral planning. This re-visioning of the parish council is a large movement, a paradigm shift. Members changed from committee representatives to parishioners who make efforts to represent the entire parish. They are asked to look at the total picture of parish life, not just one ministry or one group of parishioners. With this wide view, parish pastoral councils create plans that help the parish live out their mission in their particular place.

> “Jesus must be the focus of parish life So that people experience God, Build genuine community, and share God’s redemptive and liberating love.”

Bishop Howard Hubbard
Structures & Function - These points must be edited to fit into a coherent ten to fifteen minute presentation. This would be a good opportunity for the Parish Pastoral Council to review the material and discuss what is most relevant to this Parish Pastoral Council at this time, and what would be most helpful to the community to understand.

PLANNING SUPPORTS MISSION WHICH EXTENDS OUTWARD TO VISION

Pastoral Planning exists to support and promote the mission of the Church. Much like a trampoline, the deeper we dive into the mission, to understand why the church exists and what we are about as Catholics, the more we bounce out again because the mission itself pushes you outward. This is how we develop a vision for the parish. We sink into mission and it calls to action, jumping out into vision, where we need to go as a parish.

Mission: The essential mission of each parish flows from the mission of Jesus Christ. We have inherited this mission and it connects us intimately with Jesus and with all Christians throughout history. This is evangelization, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19). The way each parish lives this out is determined by the gifts and charisms of the local church, the needs of the people of God, and the means by which the community can respond to those needs.

How this gets lived out in the church is a conversation that has been going on for 2,000 years. Each generation in each place in the world has had to answer the question for themselves. We are asked to take the Gospel mission, given to us by Jesus, and put it into conversation with the signs of the times (what is going on around us).

Every time we dare to engage in this conversation we are moved to a response, to an action. The Gospel makes demands on us as individuals and as communities. We are the ushers of the Reign of God; we are called to prepare the way for the Lord. This will call for different actions at different times, but it will always call for action. Thus, the primary role of the Parish Pastoral Council is:

To examine the parish mission, how evangelization gets lived out here in the parish (what is Jesus calling us to today), in the local community (how are we called to reach out to our neighbors), and to the entire world (how do we seek to bring about the Reign of God in our world).

From that mission, the Parish Pastoral Council creates and sustains a vision, which becomes the Pastoral Plan. This is done through planning models that help members build relationships within the parish, discern needs and values, identify potential leaders, and consult with the Pastor on where the parish needs to move.

Process of pastoral planning and the steps involved

Pastoral planning is not a program. It is a continual process in which the council identifies ways in which the parish is being called to live out its mission of evangelization. This is done through prayerful reflection, consideration of Church teachings, listening to the people, and discerning the situation together.
The pastoral council develops a plan that sets the goals and specific objectives based on those goals. In doing so they create the map which the parish will use to successfully carry out its mission.

To develop this plan, the parish pastoral council dialogues with the parishioners in an ongoing dynamic relationship, listening to the needs and concerns voiced by the people, then articulating the vision the council discerns, and communicating the plan that develops as they seek out those who will implement it.

There are many ways to gather information and dialogue with parishioners over specific needs. Parishes can easily adapt these methods to suit their unique situation. These include the following:

- One to – one conversations – Specific structured conversation between parishioners and council members (ongoing)
- Parish Assembly – Large structured events posing questions on goals and direction
- Theological Reflection on Goals – Allowing prayer to infuse the process as objectives are developed to meet goals.
- Surveys and questionnaires

These pieces of the pastoral planning puzzle help to clarify the mission of the council and specifying how to get there.

The Parish Pastoral Council engages the community to develop a plan for the parish. This plan has 3-5 year goals and 1 year objectives that are periodically reviewed, evaluated, and rewritten.

Council members are **planners- not, do-ers.** Implementing these goals and objectives is done by empowering other parishioners to accomplish the tasks laid out by the pastoral plan. The role of a council member is in planning, empowering others, and oversight over the plan.

Evaluation both completes the planning process and starts the next phase. The council evaluates the goals, objectives, needs, and resources in light of the mission. Each of these pieces changes over time as goals are accomplished, resources change and the parish lives and moves. The work of the council, therefore, is ongoing, and council members change periodically to allow others to engage in this important work. A typical appointment for a council member is three years.
Specifics

While the creation, evaluation and continuation of a parish plan is the most visible goal and one of the few absolute requirements of the Archbishop, the other goals are equally important when considering the vitality and sustainability of a parish.

- To create deeper relationships and encourage a community dialogue around mission.
- To educate the parish about the parish.
- To strengthen the leadership of the Pastor, pastoral staff, parish leaders, and the Parish Pastoral Council.
- To increase participation in parish life.
- To hold all activities of the parish accountable to the Gospel mission.

Qualities for Council Members

Potential Pastoral Council members do not need to have specific training in church or in planning. Members do need to be open to learning about church and engaging other people within the parish. Specific qualities include:

- A vision of the Church as the people of God.
- An ability to listen to the needs of the parishioners. A desire personal spiritual growth.
- An openness toward study and reflection.
- An eagerness to carry out the parish mission. An ease with working with and in groups.
- A willingness to empower others.
- A desire to work with consensus decision making.
- An availability of time and energy.

Time commitment

Most councils meet once a month with the exception of the summer and December, approximately 8 times a year. This will vary depending on what phase of planning a parish is entering. The council usually requires a three year commitment, with the willingness to attend an orientation and periodic formation opportunities.
Facilitating the Discernment Session

Environment

It should be clear as soon as people enter the room, that this is very different from the Information Night. The room should be very purposefully arranged. Participants should sit in chairs arranged in a circle. The facilitator also sits in the circle.

A small table sits in the center with a cloth that reflects the current liturgical season. The table contains a candle, a Bible, A crucifix or other symbols. Soft music could be playing in the background. The use of subdued lighting also is effective. The entire environment should contribute to an atmosphere of quiet. There should be nothing to interfere with reflection and sharing with all the participants.

Process

The enclosed worship aid incorporates all the steps of discernment. The reading is done by one of the nominees. The opening prayer is done by the facilitator or the Pastor and should invoke the Holy Spirit to be with the group. The faith sharing question is done in the large group. After the facilitator states the question and encourages sharing, there will be a time of silence. Not everyone needs to speak, but enough time must be allowed so that all who wish to share may do so. After each speak, there may again be a time of silence. This is normal. Do not hurry!

Participants must continually be reminded that we are looking for the Holy Spirit to guide the group in discerning the GIFTS (NOT THE PEOPLE) that are needed at the table at this time. This helps to depersonalize the process so that everyone is affirmed.

Faith sharing provides the opportunity for people to view this process in light of the Gospel, and begin to talk to each other in an open and honest fashion. It would be helpful to remind the group that while those being discerned will be asked to respond to questions later on, faith sharing is not mandatory and is open to all in the room who wish to respond.

Questions:

In Part 1, the questions are straightforward. Anyone can begin, but once someone begins, continue around the circle in order. As people answer, take note of their name. Then after each person speaks, the facilitator guides the group in the affirmation, so that each person is prayed for after speaking. The night should be done in a prayerful pace, but it also must be kept moving.

The questions in Part II and Part III form the heart of the discernment. The role of the facilitator is to ensure each person being discerned has a chance to respond. The facilitator should accept what was said and ensure that people do not respond or begin a dialogue over what someone has shared.
Discernment:

You will need a blackboard, a whiteboard, or newsprint for the consensus process.

First, ask if there is anyone who wishes not to continue in the process. Those who do not wish to be considered for selection should make themselves known; however, they are encouraged to participate in the selection by naming others.

It is important that the selection process be transparent. This means that while silent ballots may be more comfortable for those present, it is recommended that he affirmation of gifts be done aloud. Go around the room and ask each person to name three people whose gifts they feel are needed at this time on the council. Interestingly, transparency also helps ensure a compassionate discernment. As participants witness the process unfold, people’s gifts are affirmed that may not have been in a silent ballot, and participants who might have chosen themselves will rarely, if ever, choose themselves verbally. In a transparent process, peoples’ focus moves outward as they consider others.

Each selected name should be written once on the newsprint, when the name is repeated, place a mark next to it until you have a list of names with marks.

Once there is a list of names, step back and ask those present to state what they see emerging. If consensus is clear, circle those names that emerge, and ask for the group’s permission to move forward and pray over those discerned. If one person clearly emerges but others do not, circle the emerging names and continue to another round of affirmation.

The second round repeats the process. Begin with a blank newsprint sheet. Go around the circle in the opposite direction as the first round. Anyone can be named except those who have already been selected. Again, check for consensus. The caucus: While rare, in certain circumstances, a facilitator may be faced with no clear emergence between two or three names. It is often helpful for the facilitator to prearrange with the Pastor, flexibility on the number being discerned. Often, a pastor will be willing to accept an additional Parish Pastoral Council member if there is an impasse. However, if this is not the case, the facilitator may ask the two or three individuals to move to another room away from the group, asking those remaining to pray for guidance. Once outside the room, ask them to decide among themselves who will be discerned. They should affirm to each other those gifts they see in each other that could benefit the council and come to a determination. The facilitator should make sure they understand their task and leave them to do this. If the caucus lasts more than ten minutes, the facilitator should return to check in with them.

Once the council members are selected, announce the names and make sure someone has the list. The final prayer is included in the worship aid. The sign of peace ends the evening. Thank everyone for their participation.
Check list

Preliminary

_______ Determine how many Parish Pastoral Council members will be discerned.
_______ Decide methods of publicity and possible creative options.
_______ Determine who will facilitate Information Night and Discernment Night.
_______ Delegate tasks to council members or pastor as appropriate.
_______ Create bulletin announcements (which include dates and times for Information Night and Discernment Night)
_______ Make enough Nomination forms for all parishioners at each Mass.
_______ Make sure pencils or pens are available for Nomination forms.
_______ Create pulpit announcements to describe process.

Nomination Sunday

_______ Place nomination forms and pens/pencils in every pew for each Mass.
_______ Describe nomination process from pulpit.
_______ Provide time for parishioners to fill out nomination forms.
_______ Ushers collect forms (not unlike a second collection).

Post Nomination

_______ Review all nomination forms and select, with the pastor, those to be invited to the Information Night.
_______ Mail out invitations for Information Night (and/or phone calls).

Information Night

_______ Arrange chair set up (tables or assembly style).
_______ Hospitality (coffee, snacks)

Discernment Night

_______ Arrange for chair set up (enough chairs in a circle for participants and current council members who wish to be involved in the process plus one for the facilitator. A second row of chairs for non-participating council members, the pastor and associate pastors). **Family members as spectators or supporters are not to be encouraged.**

_______ Provide table, altar cloth, and symbols for sacred space.
_______ Provide easel / newsprint and markers.

Commissioning ceremony – Normally held during Mass after the homily on the Sunday following Discernment.
Sample Bulletin Announcements for Discernment Process

Sample # 1

Dear Parishioners,

In a few short weeks, the parish is going to hold nominations for additional membership on the Parish Pastoral Council. The Council is a visioning and planning body of parishioners who foster full participation of the entire parish in the life and mission of the church as lived out in _______ Parish. In consultation with the Pastor, the Parish Pastoral Council actively listens and identifies the needs and concerns of the people and reviews the parish pastoral plan to respond to these needs. The council also seeks to implement the plan by seeking the involvement of parishioners.

We are in need of ## parishioners who have these qualities: A desire for spiritual growth in themselves and in the parish, an enthusiasm about the future direction of the parish, a willingness to learn, to speak honestly and to work toward consensus, the ability to inspire and empower others, and to delegate.

Nominations will take place on the weekend of _____ at all masses. Those identified as nominees will be invited to attend an information night on ___. At this session all nominees will learn about the role of the Parish Pastoral Council. After this evening, all will be asked to reflect and pray on this information and discern whether or not they feel called to this ministry of service and leadership. The following week on __________________________, a formal discernment night will be held. Please pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Fr. ______________

Sample # 2

Last week at all the masses, nominations were held and individuals identified who might be potential candidates for the Parish Pastoral Council. These parishioners have been sent an invitation to come to the Information Night on _______. At this session all nominees will learn about the role of the Parish Pastoral Council. After this evening all will be asked to reflect and pray on this information and discern whether or not they feel called to this ministry of service and leadership. The following week a formal Discernment Night will be held. Let us all continue to pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance throughout this process.

Fr. ______________
Sample #3

Dear Parishioners,

Following the “Information Night” held this past _______night, all those who attended were asked to reflect and pray on the information they received regarding the role of the Parish Pastoral Council. They were also asked to prayerfully discern whether or not they feel called to this ministry of service and leadership on the pastoral council. This _________, a formal Discernment Night will be held. All those who feel called to this ministry will return. These individuals will be asked to address several questions regarding their gifts and their feelings about the life and future of the parish. The entire night is conducted in the context of prayer and reflection. By the end of the evening, the group will discern among themselves who would be best suited for membership on the Parish Pastoral Council. I ask you to keep all those involved in this process in your prayers throughout the week.

Fr. __________________

Sample #4

Dear Parishioners,

Last _______night, the final discernment process for the Parish Pastoral Council was held. Through this evening of prayer and reflection, those nominees who returned after the Information Night listened to one another and finally, using a process of consensus, chose ## from their own group who they felt had the gifts needed for membership on the Parish Pastoral Council. The names of the new Parish Pastoral Council members are:_________________.

Thank you to those members of the Parish Pastoral Council who will be leaving the council after _______. Their involvement and dedication to this important ministry of leadership has been a great asset to me and to our parish. Those members who will be leaving the council are::

________________________.Thank you for your commitment to this ministry and to our parish.

The newly discerned members of the Parish Pastoral Council will be commissioned at the ##:## mass on _________. Thank you for your consistent prayer during this discernment process. May the Holy Spirit continue to guide our Parish Pastoral Council.

Fr. __________________
Parish Pastoral Council Identification Form

Our parish is in need of Christian leadership to help make decisions about our pastoral life and growth. Please help identify persons in this faith community who could enable us to develop our sense of Evangelization, Worship, Education, Service, Community, Stewardship, and Leadership.

Leaders should have the following characteristics:

Desire for spiritual growth in themselves and in the parish
Enthusiasm about the future directions of our parish
Willingness to listen, to speak honestly, and to work toward consensus
The ability to inspire and empower others and to delegate
Flexibility and openness with people and ideas

In order to be considered for the ministry of parish leadership, a parishioner must:

Be a baptized Catholic
Have been a registered member of our parish for at least five years
Be a participant in the ongoing worship life of our parish, especially Sunday Eucharist.

We are in need of ## members for our council. Please list the names of parishioners whom you identify as having the gifts for Parish Pastoral Council leadership. These people will receive an invitation to participate in an Information Night during which they will learn about the role and function of the Parish Pastoral Council. Following the information session, each of these individuals will be asked to discern if they are being called to this ministry. They have the option to remain in the selection process or not.

__________________________________________________________________________

PLEASE FOLD BEFORE PLACING IN THE COLLECTION BASKET

I suggest the following individual(s) be invited to consider leadership ministry through service on our Parish Pastoral Council. I will continue to pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance during the selection process.

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

32
Pastoral Planning Begins With Parish Mission Statement
By Monsignor Vincent J. Grimalia
Vicar General, Diocese of Scranton

As we continue to discuss the formation and development of Parish Pastoral councils, we are reminded that they will have a key role in the Parish Pastoral Planning process. This process will begin with a series of workshops on developing a Parish Mission Statement.

Every organization or community has a purpose for its existence; the parish mission statement will give a succinct focus, direction and motivation to a parish community. In general, the parish – like the Church itself – has an evangelizing mission that finds expression in every aspect of pastoral care, and in the cultivation of an awareness of the vocational dimension of life as a response to the call of God.

In his encyclical Deus Caritas Est, Pope Benedict XVI noted, “The Church’s deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God…, celebrating the Sacraments…, and exercising the ministry of charity. These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable. For the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensible expression of her being.”

The Parish Mission Statement will provide a focus for the Parish Self Study and the development of a pastoral plan by the pastor and the Parish Pastoral Council that will lead to the possibilities of renewal and a more effective evangelizing mission. The Pastoral Council will help the pastor in drawing attention to the universal call to holiness, the Eucharist as the source and summit of parish life and its importance together with prayer in pastoral planning by the way it conducts its meetings.

Pope John Paul II in Novo Millennio Ineunte noted: “It is necessary therefore to rediscover the full practical significance of Chapter 5 of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium, dedicated to ‘the universal call to holiness.’ The Council Fathers laid such stress on this point, not just to embellish ecclesiology with a kind of spiritual veneer, but to make the call to holiness an intrinsic and essential aspect of their teaching on the Church…This as it were objective gift of holiness is offered to all the baptized. But the gift in turn becomes a task, which must shape the whole of Christian life: ‘This is the will of God, your sanctification (1 Th. 4:3). It is a duty which concerns not only certain Christians: ‘All the Christian faithful, of whatever state or rank, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity.’”

The late pontiff continued: “At first glance, it might seem almost impractical to recall this elementary truth as the foundation of the pastoral planning in which we
are involved at the start of the new millennium. Can holiness ever be 'planned'?
What might the word 'holiness' mean in the context of a pastoral plan?

"In fact, to place pastoral planning under the heading of holiness is a choice filled with consequences. It implies the conviction that, since Baptism is a true entry into the holiness of God through incorporation into Christ and the indwelling of his Spirit, it would be a contradiction to settle for a life of mediocrity, marked by a minimalist ethic and a shallow religiosity. To ask catechumens: 'Do you wish to receive Baptism?' It means at the same time to ask them: 'Do you wish to become holy?' It means to set before them the radical nature of the Sermon on the Mount: 'Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Mt 5:48)."

In his last encyclical on the Eucharist, **Ecclesia de Eucharistia**, the late pope also connected pastoral planning with the Eucharist: “Every commitment to holiness, every activity aimed at carrying out the Church’s mission, every work of pastoral planning, must draw the strength it needs from the Eucharistic mystery and in turn be directed to that mystery as its culmination. In the Eucharist we have Jesus, we have his redemptive sacrifice, we have his resurrection, we have the gift of the Holy Spirit, we have adoration, obedience and love of the Father. Were we to disregard the Eucharist, how could we overcome our own deficiency?”

In **Novo Millennio Ineunte**, Pope John Paul II also identified seven pastoral priorities. These need to be studied by each Parish Pastoral Council. He emphasized the importance of prayer in pastoral Planning in these words:

“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 in 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’ (cf. Jn 15:5)

John Paul II reminded Catholics that pastoral planning that is not rooted in the Eucharist and prayer, in a response to holiness, will lead to frustration and failure. In **Novo Millennio Ineunte**, he cautioned: “It is prayer which roots us in this truth. It constantly reminds us of the constancy of Christ and, in union with him, the primacy of the interior life of holiness. When this principle is not respected, is it any wonder that pastoral plans come to nothing and leave us with a disheartening sense of frustration?”

Both the parish mission statement and parish pastoral planning must begin from the perspective of the Diocese, the evangelizing mission of the church, and the spirituality of communion, and catholicity. The Diocesan Mission Statement and the passage from Acts2:42-47 that inspired it can help a parish develop a mission statement and guide parish pastoral planning.
Study is important in developing a Parish Mission Statement. Study can lead to prayer and prayer can lead to insights that can be expressed in Church structures, laws and activities. In the Vatican II document Christus Dominus, we read: “A diocese is a portion of the people of God which is entrusted to a bishop to be shepherded by him with the cooperation of the presbyterate. Thus by adhering to its pastor and gathered together by him through the Gospel and the Eucharist in the Holy Spirit, it constitutes a particular church in which the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and operative.

Study of this statement has led to prayer. It inspired an opening prayer in one of the Masses for the local diocesan Church. “God our Father, in all of the churches scattered throughout the world you show forth the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. Through the Gospel and Eucharist bring your people together in the Holy Spirit and guide us in your love. Make us a sign of your love for all people and help us to show forth the living presence of Christ in the world, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.”

Another example that shows how prayer can lead to an examination of structures, laws and activities is found in the new Code of Canon Law, where Canon 369 repeats the definition of a diocese given in the Vatican II document Christus Dominus, quoted earlier. These three examples are meant to demonstrate how prayer can lead to study and how study can lead to prayer and practical application to the structures and life of the parish.

If these gifts, qualities, or marks of the Church are to be present and operative in every diocese they must also in some fashion be present and operative in every parish of the diocese. How they are present and operative in their parish is an important question for every Parish Pastoral Council to consider. How are these gifts also responsibilities and tasks for every parish?

In a homily he preached as Archbishop of Munich, then Cardinal Ratzinger (now our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI) reflected on the prayer after communion for the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul: “Lord, renew the life of your Church with the power of this Sacrament. May the breaking of the bread and the teaching of the apostles keep us united in your love. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord. “This prayer was inspired by Acts 2:42-47 and is another example of how the praying Church expresses its faith and teaches what it believes. Prayerful study and reflection of the Scripture leads to prayer, and prayer leads to further insights and action. In his homily, then Cardinal Ratzinger reflected on this prayer: “It asks that the Church today, and ever anew, may be again the way she was in her beginning. This corresponds to the original intention of this passage, which was to draw an ideal picture of the Church for all time and to say at the same time that the church springs ever anew from prayer that she needs ever anew to be asked for in prayer from the Lord.”

In his homily, then Cardinal Ratzinger gave an example of how we are to proceed
when he shared his insights and gave us a model of prayerful reflection on the Scripture that can generate insights that lead to action: “Now, what is being said here about the Church? It says: ‘They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayers’ (Acts 2:42). We can see in this sketch of the primitive Christian service of worship, which starts with the teaching of the apostles, that is with the proclamation and hearing of the faith of the Church, of the word of God that is alive in her and that thus becomes the basis for liturgical and living fellowship: it reaches a climax in the Eucharistic encounter with the Lord, who gives himself to us as bread, and resounds in songs of praise.

People who don’t understand this, or don’t have time for prayer should not serve on Parish Pastoral Councils, nor should they get involved in pastoral planning. Pope John Paul II repeatedly cautioned that without prayer, the only thing to be expected is frustration and failure.

Our Diocesan Mission Statement can inspire a sense of a common diocesan mission and a common diocesan spirituality that will provide unity, focus and direction for spiritual renewal for all parishes and institutions of the Diocese.

In an *Ad Limina* address to bishops from the provinces of Detroit and Cincinnati in May of 2004, Pope John Paul II encouraged developing a diocesan spirituality: “A spirituality of communion will naturally bear fruit in the development of a diocesan spirituality grounded in the particular gifts and charisms bestowed by the Holy Spirit for the up-building of each local church. Every priest should find ‘precisely in his belonging to and dedication to the particular church a wealth of meaning, criteria for discernment and action which shape both his pastoral mission and his spiritual life’ (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*). At the same time, an authentic ‘diocesan spirit’ will also inspire and motivate the whole Christian community to greater sense of responsibility for the fruitful carrying out of the Church’s through its rich network of communities, institutions and apostolates (*cf. Apostolicam Actuostatem, 10*)

Pastoral planning must begin from the perspective of mission and communion, not from the perspective of the maintenance of present structures, facilities or activities. With an understanding of mission, communion and “the development of an authentic diocesan spirit,” parishes will be able to deepen the awareness of their evangelizing mission and see themselves as members of the diocesan Church. Hopefully, they will become more eager to cooperate and collaborate with other Catholic parishes, sharing their gifts and resources. In doing so, they will give practical expression to an important aspect of Catholicity, by acting for the purpose of the common diocesan mission in the spirit of the *Acts of the Apostles*. 

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CHAPTER 4  

Synod Initiatives

Synod Initiative I: Evangelization and "The New Evangelization"

Proclaiming the presence and power of God in the world, Every baptized Catholic is called to participate in the mission of Christ and the Spirit, the mission of the Church, proclaiming in word and deed the message at the heart of Jesus’ life and ministry: the Reign of God among us here and now, at this time and in this place. The whole life of the Church in all its dimensions is to serve this MISSION: announcing in what we say and do the Good News, the year of God’s favor, the transformation of the world, and the coming of the Reign of God, the reign of truth, holiness, justice, love, and peace.

Central to this mission is EVANGELIZATION. There are three levels of evangelization. First, evangelization entails allowing one’s own heart to be seized and saturated by the Gospel, responding to the call to lifelong conversion to Christ by the gift of the Spirit. Second, evangelization requires reaching out to others to proclaim in word and deed the Reign of God. Third, evangelization demands that the values of the Reign of God—a reign of truth, holiness, justice, love, and peace—permeate each and every culture, transforming every sphere of life.

Because we are called to holiness of life through the grace of our Baptism, we have a responsibility to proclaim to others the experience of Christ in our lives—to our families, in our places of work, in our neighborhoods, as well as in the public square. Every Catholic should be able to convey a personal knowledge of God’s love and salvation in the language of the Scriptures, by way of the experience of the Sacraments and through an appreciation of the tradition of the Church. Further, today there must be a “new evangelization” focused on evangelizing or re-evangelizing under-catechized, inactive, and alienated Catholics, as well as on reanimating those who have already discovered the presence of Christ in their lives. The “new evangelization” also means that those of us who already have faith in Jesus Christ allow Christ to touch the unconverted corners of our lives.

Pastoral Priority

A specific plan for the “new evangelization” of all Catholics (laity, clergy, and religious) is to be established on the level of the Archdiocese and implemented in each parish.

Pastoral Strategies

On all levels (parish, deanery, pastoral region, and Archdiocese), resources are to be prioritized and allocated to promote evangelization.
Synod Initiative II: Structures for Participation and Accountability

Toward greater participation in decision making and responsibility for mission. If all the baptized are to share in the Church’s mission, then the structures of Church life and governance must be renewed, and some new structures established, to allow for the greatest degree of participation on the part of the greatest number of the baptized. Participation in the mission of the Church is rooted in Baptism, strengthened in Confirmation, and nurtured by regular celebration of the Eucharist. All receive gifts from the Spirit that call them to build the Church and advance the Reign of God.

For effectiveness in mission, Catholics must be convinced that they are truly the Church, that they are an integral part of its mission, structure, and governance. To accomplish this, the Church must evaluate and revitalize present structures and devise new ones to provide for increased participation, collaboration, and accountability in mission and ministry. This demands greater inclusion of the enormous diversity of peoples in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, the many language and socioeconomic groups, the range of ethnic-cultural heritages, both male and female, the spectrum of age, the multiplicity of jobs and professions, persons with disabilities of various kinds, as well as the many who are marginalized in various ways in society and Church. All are called to be attentive to this rich diversity, to encourage active participation of all in the Church according to each one’s particular gifts and specific ecclesial calling, just as all are called to greater accountability.

Pastoral Priorities

The archbishop, regional bishops, and Archdiocesan leadership team are to guarantee the development of structures that provide for appropriate religious and lay participation in decision making and processes of accountability at Archdiocesan, regional, deanery, and parish levels.

Each regional bishop is to be given the authority, oversight, and resources (personnel and finances) to administer his pastoral region effectively. [Second Level Priority]

Pastoral Strategies

In view of the declining number of priests available to serve as pastors, a comprehensive study, including consultation with laity, regarding parish consolidation, clustering, the creation of new parishes, and staffing by combinations of clergy and lay ministers appropriate to each parish, is to be undertaken, and a plan developed and implemented.

A regional pastoral council is to be established in each region to address common goals, concerns, challenges, and the sharing of resources.
Synod Initiative III: Ongoing Education and Formation: Adults, Young Adults and Youth

Understanding the Catholic tradition; passing it on to the next generation. All the baptized are to be “well-formed in faith, enthusiastic, capable of leadership in the Church and in society, filled with compassion and working for justice” (United States Bishops’ pastoral plan for adult faith formation, Our Hearts Were Burning within Us, 1999, 30). In order to be more effective in the Church’s mission, both now and in the decades ahead, clearer focus and more concerted effort must be given to ongoing education and formation throughout each stage of life. Christians who have come to know Jesus the Christ have always sought ways of explaining their experience of him to others and of manifesting this experience through faith-filled action. In doing so, they have endowed us with a rich tradition.

We are now challenged to appreciate this heritage, to pass it on to a new generation, and to make it vital in an ever-changing world. But only those who are first evangelized themselves, those who experience the presence and power of the Spirit of Christ, can truly grasp this tradition and then hand it on to others. What is needed in our own time and place are enthusiastic leaders who can motivate the whole Church, especially youth and young adults, to be and to build the Body of Christ in the world.

Pastoral Priority

Effective religious education and faith formation programs are to be offered throughout the Archdiocese on all levels: children, youth, young adults, and adults.

Pastoral Strategies

The plan for the ongoing education and formation of adult Catholics is to include scripture study, social justice education, opportunities for theological understanding, and personal appreciation of all the sacraments, respect for diversity, spirituality, and spiritual direction.

Within each pastoral region, a sufficient number of young adult programs are to be established on an inter-parochial basis through the mutual cooperation of parishes, including the sharing of resources and personnel, to provide for the faith formation needs of young adults.
Synod Initiative IV: Ministry and Leadership: Lay, Consecrated Life and Ordained

Toward deeper commitment to witness, worship, and service. Baptism and Confirmation give each one a share in the Church’s witness, worship, and service for the good of its mission— the mission of Christ and of the Spirit—for the transformation of the world. Through Baptism all share in the witness, worship, and service of the Church. The call to ministry and leadership comes specifically from the grace of Baptism, and so there are many forms of ministry that pertain to the laity and are not restricted to clergy and religious. Indeed, “the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood. It is directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1547). This “baptismal grace of all” is the context within which all types of leadership in the Church—the vitally important priestly role of bishops and presbyters to build up and lead the Church as visible signs of its unity, the role of deacons ordained specifically for the service of charity, as well as the importance of the consecrated life as prophetic sign of the coming Reign of God, and committed lay leadership—are affirmed. What is called for in all exercises of ministry and leadership is collaboration with one another for the building of the one Body of Christ. With well trained and deeply committed ordained and lay ministers and leaders in the Church, the Word will be effectively preached to our own faith communities, and inactive Catholics and non-Catholics will hear the Good News proclaimed with vigor and joy. This Word of God “is not a concept, a doctrine, or a program subject to free interpretation, but is before all else a person with the face and name of Jesus of Nazareth” (Redemptoris Missio, 18).

Pastoral Priority

On the Archdiocesan level, processes are to be established to ensure better collaboration and cooperation among the laity, religious, and clergy so that the laity can more effectively assume their baptismal responsibility in the mission of the Church.

Pastoral Strategies

A plan for the joint training of ordained and lay leaders, especially in processes of collaboration and shared decision making, is to be implemented.

A “school of ministry for laity” or its equivalent is to be established in each pastoral region to train parishioners for participation in a variety of parochial ministries.

Women are to be included on an equal basis in all aspects of Church leadership, administration, and ministry not otherwise restricted by Church doctrine.

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Synod Initiative V: Eucharist and Sacramental Living

Becoming a holy people, rooted in prayer, living by the grace of the Eucharist and sacramental celebration. The Church’s sacramental life becomes fruitful as the whole People of God integrate the sacramental celebrations of the Paschal Mystery with their efforts to transform the world in and through God’s love. The Eucharist makes the gathered community, the assembly, what it is: We become what we receive; we receive the Body of Christ in the Eucharist to become the Body of Christ for the transformation of the world. “No Christian community can be built up unless it has its basis and center in the celebration of the most Holy Eucharist” (John Paul II, Ecclesia de Eucharistia, 33; cf. Presbyterorum ordinis, 6).

We live by a transforming grace that allows us to recognize and embrace the sacredness of human life and living in its various dimensions. Our whole lives become a living expression of the Paschal Mystery—the life, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—that we celebrate, primarily in the Eucharist.

Our participation in the Eucharist expresses our commitment to allow Jesus Christ to enter our lives, to nourish us with the Word, to sustain us with the sacrament of his Body and Blood, building us—member for member—into the Body of Christ. As the experience of the Risen Christ transformed the disciples, so our participation in the Paschal Mystery transforms us as well as the wider world. But this is only possible if we are steeped in the prayer that strengthens our commitment to a life of holiness.

Pastoral Priorities

Each parish is to give priority to the Sunday celebration of Mass as the primary occasion and opportunity for revitalizing the spiritual life of the community and, accordingly, make appropriate provision for the full, conscious, and active participation of the faithful.

As the availability of priests continues to decline within the Archdiocese, a comprehensive plan is to be developed on the archdiocesan, regional, and parish levels for providing for the liturgical and sacramental needs of the people.

Pastoral Strategies

Archdiocesan guidelines are to be developed and implemented to guarantee opportunities for Catholics to receive communion, gather for prayer, and celebrate those sacraments and liturgical rites that can be administered in the absence of a priest.

Ordained and lay ministers are to participate in ongoing, formal liturgical and homiletic studies.
Synod Initiative VI: Social Justice: Living at the Service of God's Reign

Becoming a People of Communion and Justice for the life of the world. Building a world of communion and justice is a foreshadowing of, and participation in, the Reign of God. “Communion” describes our relationship with God, others, ourselves, and all creation; a relationship rooted in the equality, mutuality, and interdependence at the heart of the divine life. Authentic communion calls for a willingness to share the resources of this Archdiocese across parish, deanery, and regional boundaries. “Justice” is the activity of creating a world in which all may grow— with particular attention given to the poor, the weak, and the wounded. The Gospel reminds us that we come to a deeper knowledge of Jesus Christ through our experience of the poor and all those who are in need (Matthew 25:31–46).

Those who are evangelized, who truly know the presence of Christ in their lives, reach out to the poor, to those who are last, littlest, and least in Church and society, seeking and promoting justice. In striving for justice in society and in the Church we continue a long tradition of ministering to the disadvantaged and striving to transform unjust structures.

We live out our baptismal call to service for the greater glory of God by giving witness to the grace of communion not only in the parish assembly but also in our neighborhoods, schools, town halls, and the wider political and economic order.

Pastoral Priorities

On all levels, active collaboration with civil and religious institutions to improve the quality of life in the local community is to be fostered.

A more equitable distribution of resources (finances and personnel) to assist poorer parishes and schools is to be implemented throughout the Archdiocese. [Second Level Priority]

Pastoral Strategies

Parishes are to provide a social justice ministry to raise the consciousness of parishioners by educating and informing them on various issues of social justice.

On the Archdiocesan level, salary structures are to be established that provide for a just living wage and benefits, including health, retirement, and unemployment for both part- time and full-time Church personnel.
Chapter 5  Mission Statements

Mission Statement of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles

We, the People of God of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, humbly accept our mission to continue the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

Baptized into the Body of Christ, confirmed in the Holy Spirit, and nourished by the Word and Eucharist, we share Christ’s mission of priest, prophet and servant.

We affirm our oneness with the Catholic Church throughout the world, in communion with the Holy Father.

With the pastoral leadership of our Archbishop, we collaborate in various ways to live and proclaim the gospel.

Christ announced the reign of God. As Church, we are the instrument of this reign in the world. We commit ourselves to build a community of faith and love.

With Christ, we bring good news to the poor. We commit ourselves to eliminate the many faces of poverty in our midst --, spiritual and moral.

With Christ, we uphold the dignity of human life. We commit ourselves to cherish each person and to be faithful stewards of all God’s creation.

With Christ, we affirm the bonds that unite us. We commit ourselves to remove the barriers that divide people in the large, complex, and multicultural society of Southern California.

We dedicate our parish communities and our schools, institutions, ministries, and organizations to fulfill this mission under the patronage of Mary, Queen of the Angels.

Writing a Parish Mission Statement

The mission statement of the parish is developed by the Parish Pastoral Council and the Pastor in conversation with the entire parish community.

The pastoral planning process recommends that questions be asked of parishioners in the context of a parish assembly or other parish consultation. These questions include:

If Jesus were here today, what words would He give us to direct our future? Why do you think the universal Catholic Church exists? What makes our parish unique and special?

When the Parish Pastoral Council convenes to draft a mission statement, these
three questions become the basis for their discernment.

After the parish assembly, the cards that were filled out during the assembly are transcribed by members of the Parish Pastoral Council onto summary sheets. These summary sheets are distributed to each Parish Pastoral Council member before the brainstorming session where the mission statement is drafted.

If separate assemblies have been conducted in different languages, these cards are translated into the common language used at Council meetings.

**Drafting the Mission Statement**

Mission statements are composed of four major areas. As the Parish Pastoral Council begins to draft their mission statement, these areas can provide a helpful framework.

- **Identity** – This part of the mission statement indicates the identifying elements of the parish -- name, location, unique character, and history.  
  *(Ex. We, the faith community of…)*

- **Purpose** – Focuses on the core values, beliefs, and the reason for the parish’s existence.  
  *(Ex. Rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we value…)*

- **Function** – Identifies the commitments of the parish. What the parish does in the broadest sense and to whom it is directed.  
  *(Ex. We are committed to…)*

- **Future** – Addresses areas of challenge and areas that need strengthening.  
  *(Ex. We seek to become…)*

As the Parish Pastoral Council considers each of these areas, they are encouraged to reflect on the input of parishioners and create statements which refer to each of the four areas of mission. When all statements are put together, they form the mission of the parish.

The mission statement in its draft form should be distributed to the parish for their consideration. Opportunities should be given for people to comment on the mission statement.

The mission statement is the first part of the parish pastoral plan.

**Parishes with Existing Mission Statements**

Many parishes in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles already have an existing mission statement. If this is the case, the Parish Pastoral Council may wish to use the existing mission statement in their planning.

When evaluating a mission statement, the following should be considered.
How old is the mission statement?
How was the community involved in the shaping of the mission statement? Does it reflect the four areas of Identity, Purpose, Function, and Future?
Does it emphasize the six Initiatives of the Archdiocesan Synod? Are our strengths and needs reflected in the statement?
Would our parish profit by revisiting the mission statement and allowing the Parish Pastoral Council to revise it to reflect the current reality of the parish?

If the Parish Pastoral Council decides that the existing mission statement is suitable for planning, then ways should be found to incorporate the mission statement into all planning efforts.
Chapter 6  Overview and Purpose of Parish Pastoral Planning

Parish Pastoral Planning is a prayerful participative process through which a parish characterizes itself as a particular community of faith by developing its own mission statement, assessing its current life, and dreaming about the possibilities of the future. Through Pastoral planning, parishioners provide consultation to the pastor answering the questions: Who are we as a parish? What are we called to do? How are we best going to do it?

All of us are called to participate fully in the life and mission of the Church. This mission of the Church is rooted in the mission of Christ who commanded everyone – clergy, religious, and laity – to “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature.” (Matt 16:15)

From its earliest days the Church has responded to this mission in various ways depending on the times and circumstances. During our current time, the challenges and opportunities which we face are great, making our reflection and planning all the more critical because:

The parish is for most Catholics the single most important part of the Church. This is where for them, the mission of Christ continues. This is where they publicly declare their faith and join with others to give proof of their communion with God and with one another…. It is in the parish that the most intimate concerns of individuals and the broadest reaches of the Church’s mission come together.  

Within each parish, the Parish Pastoral Council is the consultative body that fosters the full participation of the entire parish in the life and mission of the Church. One of the chief ways that a Parrish Pastoral Council functions is through pastoral planning.

Pastoral Planning is essential to the development of a parish. It encourages the fullest collaboration of clergy, religious, and laity. Pastoral Planning enables a parish to become ever more fully a portion of the People of God, sharing in the mission of Christ in a specific place. Pastoral Planning increases clarity about the mission and priorities of the parish, affects the ways in which resources are used, and encourages the participation and support of parishioners. Pastoral Planning is an ongoing part of parish life.

Because of our diversity, it is necessary for each Parish Pastoral Council to create a planning process that suited to their own parish. This Guide will present a model for planning and introduce component parts of any planning process. It will also elaborate on adaptations that can be made to accommodate the variety of pastoral experiences present within the San Gabriel Pastoral Region.

The first major task of the Parish Pastoral Council will be to create a “plan to plan” by
reviewing the model presented here and the adaptation recommendations. Because of the adaptive nature of this model, the *timeline for implementation of the planning process* may vary from parish to parish. This Guide will assist the Parish Pastoral Council in creating that timeline.

**Goals of Pastoral Planning**

Despite the Uniqueness of each parish planning process, the goals of pastoral planning are the same for each parish. These goals are the driving principles behind any planning process and should be considered when designing your unique process. The goals are as follows:

- Create a parish pastoral plan for each parish which designates three to five year goals
- Create deeper relationships by initiating a community dialogue around the mission of the parish
- Engage the entire faith community in the planning process
- Educate the parish about the parish
- Strengthen the leadership role of the Pastor, pastoral staff, parish leaders and Parish Pastoral Council
- Increase participation in parish life
- Hold all activities of the parish accountable to the Gospel mission

Pastoral planning is not a means to an end. The conversation and reflection, the dialogue and prayer which mark the process of pastoral planning are themselves an exercise in being Church.
DEVELOPING GOALS

What is a Goal?

Goals are brief, clear statements of outcomes to be reached within three to five years. Goals are broad, general descriptions that explain what is to be done and the desired result. The exact method of achieving the goal will come with the objectives.

In pastoral planning, goals are related to one of the areas of mission and must flow from the mission statement of the parish and/or the Six Synod Initiatives.

What are the parts of a Goal?

Goals are made up of three parts: an action verb, a description of what is to be done, and a quantity or quality.

Action Verb: A goal begins with an action. Something is done and this verb describes that action. Some good verbs are: establish, develop, create, institute, implement, expand, deepen, etc. Regardless of the verb you choose to use, be sure it clearly expresses what is to be done.

Description of What You Will Do: Be clear, yet succinct, about what you plan to do in three to five years. It is not necessary to go into great detail. Be brief.

Quantity or Quality: Expand the basic description enough so that you have some means of measuring its success either in quantity or quality.

What is a good goal?

- It is realistic.
- It addresses the challenges of the future.
- It clearly presents one central outcome.
- It directly relates to one area of mission.
- Some examples:
  
  To develop responsible lay leadership in the parish by encouraging all members to share their gifts.
  To develop a ministry of welcome and hospitality to new residents of the neighborhood.
  To promote Catholic Social Teaching in all religious education programs.

Goals are developed by the Parish Pastoral Council based upon questions from the parish assembly, responses from the one-to-one conversations, the results of the parish self-study, and relevant data regarding parish life.
The questions from the assembly relevant to goals and objectives are as follows:

• What do I as a member of the parish, expect of my parish?
• How should we reach out to the broader community from our parish?
• What do our demographics and data suggest that we do for the future?

When writing a goal, the Parish Pastoral Council should clearly identify the area of mission related to the goal. This will be important when it comes to developing reflection groups or the second assembly and demonstrates the relationship between the stated goals and the mission of the parish.

Once the mission statement is written or reaffirmed, the Parish Pastoral Council convenes to write goals for the parish.

The Parish Pastoral Council does not need to create a goal for each area of mission. A good pastoral plan has between three to five goals.

After drafting each goal, the council should review the goal and ask the questions found above to determine if the goal is realistic, relevant, challenging, clear and mission-focused.

Once the goals are developed, they are published along with the mission statement. These goals are then used as the basis for the Goal Sign-Up Sunday. During this weekend, parishioners are asked to sign-up for one goal that interests them. The next step is then to form reflection groups (or prepare a second assembly) and invite parishioners that signed up to brainstorm objectives for each goal.

(Reflection Group sheets are found in the appendix)
Goal Sign-up Sunday

Following the parish assembly and/or the writing of the mission statement and goals for the parish pastoral plan, parishioners are invited to be a part of a conversation to develop objectives, or specific strategies to accomplish the stated goals. This conversation could happen in several ways, which are explained later.

The aim of goal sign-up is to publicize the mission statement and goals and to seek the investment of parishioners in the planning process. The hope is to get commitments from parishioners in contributing to the development of objectives for the plan. Without this type of investment, implementation will be difficult.

Copies of the mission statement and goals are distributed to everyone at Mass, along with a card so that individuals can indicate if they will attend the following meeting. If they cannot attend, they are encouraged to note if they would be willing to help with a goal.

A sample sign-up card

PARISH NAME I am interested in contributing my ideas to Goal # __and will attend the reflection group on ____.

____ I am unable to attend a reflection group, but I am interested in working on Goal #__.

Name __________________________ Phone ____________________

During Sunday liturgy, the mission statement and goals are presented to the parish. All are invited to complete their cards. The cards are then collected during the liturgy.

Invitations

Once the cards are received, the Parish Pastoral Council ensures that all goals will be covered. In addition, the Council is asked to name other people, who they believe have the necessary gifts and talents for each goal, whose name does not appear in the cards. If the names of these people are not in the cards, PPC members are encouraged to personally invite these members to the following meeting. It is crucial to have the participation of community leaders and investment in the planning process as early as possible
Reflection Sessions on Parish Goals (see Group Reflections in Appendix)

After parishioners have signed-up for a goal they want to address and parish leaders have been contacted for support, it is time to bring people together to brainstorm objectives to accomplish the goals.

These pages outline a small group brainstorming process that incorporates prayer and catechesis as part of the process. These sessions are meant to stir the imagination of the participants as they come together to learn and envision.

There are seven processes to be found in the Appendix of this Guide. These correspond to the essential areas of parish life. However, the goals that each unique Parish Pastoral Council, the Mission Statement of a parish, which also, is unique, and the Six Synod Initiatives, may also foster the three to five year goals of your parish. It is assumed that the goals, which have already been created at this point, flow from these essential elements. By using these processes, parishioners have an opportunity to reflect together and come to a consensus on action steps which will assist the Parish Pastoral Council in finalizing and implementing the parish pastoral plan.

Writing Objectives

What is an Objective?

An objective is a brief, clear statement of an outcome to be reached within one year as a step toward each goal in the parish pastoral plan. An objective describes what is to be done, who will be affected and who will do it. The outcomes of an objective are stated in such a way that it is measurable. Each objective has a completion date as well.

What are the parts of an Objective?

Objectives are made up of four parts: an action verb, a task to be completed, a target group, and a completion date.

Action Verb: An objective is an action. Be sure that the verb you choose indicates a concrete action. Examples are to initiate, to design, to assess, to invite, to offer, to create, to use, etc.

A Task to be Completed: This is a statement of what is to be done in fulfilling the larger goal.

Target Group: This describes the people to be reached through the objective.

Completion Date: Name the date, within the next year, that the objective is to be completed.
Considerations

Objectives should be as practical as possible and may include the following:

**Major Tasks Involved:** List the steps to be taken and draw up a timeline for completion

**Costs:** Estimate the expenses and other resources needed to accomplish the objective

**Leaders:** Identify lead people, Implementers, who will be responsible for this specific objective. List all those who will need to be involved in carrying it out. One goal of the pastoral planning process is to get more people involved in the life of the parish. This is an opportunity to invite new people to take responsibility by asking them to be responsible for an objective. Objectives should not be designated to one person alone, but as a team. New leaders can be elicited from those who attended the reflection sessions or who were identified as leaders in the one-to-one conversation process.

**Example of Objectives**

**GOAL:** To establish neighborhood faith communities in at least one-third of the parish.

**OBJECTIVES:**

1. To create a parish map and census by / /.
2. To offer three information sessions on neighborhood faith communities for interested parishioners by / /.
3. To research available training materials on small Christian communities by / /.
4. To train 6 small faith community leaders by / /.

**GOAL:** To enrich our worship life through expanded prayer opportunities in the parish.

**OBJECTIVES:**

1. To begin Morning Prayer on days when there is no daily Mass during Advent.
2. To recruit and develop leaders for Liturgy of the Word with Children by / /.
3. To begin a Scripture reflection group each Thursday in anticipation of the Sunday Eucharist by / /.

Each of these objectives should be followed by:

- Major tasks involved
- Costs
- Persons most affected by the objective and leaders involved in carrying it out

When creating an objective be sure to ask:

- Is it action oriented?
- Is it specific?
Does it state a target group?
Does it have a completion date?
Does it identify leaders, costs, and those affected?
Chapter 7 Implementation of the Parish Pastoral Plan

The most critical and often overlooked moment in any planning endeavor is the transition from planning to implementation. The purpose of pastoral planning is to reflect on the mission of the parish, create pastoral plans for the future of the parish based on our Christian mission and implement those pastoral plans. Without implementation, pastoral planning does not achieve its end - action on behalf of mission.

The Parish Pastoral Plan is the parish’s plan. The Pastor and Parish Pastoral Council in collaboration with other parish leaders are certainly responsible for formulating the plan of action, but, for the pastoral plan to be effective, the plan must communicate a shared vision. Therefore, consultation which seeks to incorporate as many voices from the parish as possible is a crucial step in pastoral planning.

Now, as the energy moves from discernment to action, the voices of consultation must become the hands and hearts of action and transformation. Individuals that are asked to serve as implementers will be asked to steward their time and gifts in service to the parish, as they help make the proposed plan a lived plan.

This guide is meant to assist Parish Pastoral Councils in this transition from planning to action. The following pages move from the publication of the final plan to the calling of lead implementers as well as evaluation and celebration.

Finally, this guide is meant to point the council toward ongoing discernment and into a new cycle of planning. The journey always returns to the beginning, but we are changed in the process. Each consecutive cycle deepens our listening, sharpens our awareness increase our activity and helps us fulfill our call as Children of God to be reflections of the One who gave us life and sustains us. As baptized Catholics we are called to usher in the Reign of God, here and now. Through sincere discernment and faithful action, we move ever closer to God who first called us.
Outline for Implementation

1. Publishing the Plan
   a. Publishing to the Parish.
   b. Reporting to the Bishop

2. Selecting Implementers
   a. Rationale for implementers
   b. What kind of people are needed
   c. Relationship of Implementers to others. Pastor; PPC members, Parish Staff, and Parish Committees

3. Implementation Gathering and Reflection
   a. Overview and purpose of gathering
   b. Participants and roles
   c. Sample format for Implementation gathering

4. Evaluation
   a. Annual evaluation of parish pastoral plan
   b. Individual evaluations from implementers

5. Celebration

6. Annual Calendar for Parish Pastoral Planning

7. Beginning a New Cycle of Pastoral Planning
   a. Evaluation to Discernment
   b. Targeted listening campaigns

8. Ongoing Discernment of New Parish Pastoral Council members

9. Ongoing Formation for Parish Pastoral Council members

10. Publishing the Parish Pastoral Plan
Publishing the Plan to the Parish

Once the mission statement, goals and objectives have been created, the pastor and the Parish Pastoral Council publish the plan for the parish. The plan should be very well publicized so as to reach as many parishioners as possible. There are many methods of publicizing the plan. While methods of publication may differ across parishes, good publicity is important.

Here are a few ideas for publishing the plan:
- Create a tri-fold brochure with the mission, goals and objectives
- Insert brochures into bulletins
- Leave brochures in the pews
- Place brochures in the back of church
- Send out brochures with new envelopes
- Announce the publication of the plans before the close of liturgy and distribute it to parishioners as they leave.
- Ratify the new mission statement at liturgy and recite the mission statement at certain times during the year (feast days, Pentecost, etc.)
- Place plan on the parish website
- Print prayer cards with mission statement to generate interest
- Highlight one goal during a weekend at each Mass

There are many other ways to publish the plan. The pastoral plan is a tool for evangelization and an opportunity to invite parishioners to deeper stewardship of their gifts, and growing participation in the parish. The Parish Pastoral Plan clearly articulates the priorities and values of your parish and leads to a more vibrant and inviting community of faith.

Sending the Parish Pastoral Plan to the Bishop

The Parish Pastoral Plan is sent to the Bishop to assist him in organizing the San Gabriel Pastoral Region’s resources to serve the needs of each parish. Parish Pastoral Planning is designed to assist each parish name their priorities. The Bishop, having heard the priorities of the parishes, then creates and allocates resources to serve the needs of the Church. The standard reporting tool assists in the Bishop’s discernment for the future of the Church.

Once the plan is complete, each parish forwards a copy of the plan to the Bishop. A standard reporting tool has been developed by the San Gabriel Pastoral Region Pastoral Council Standing Committee for Synod Initiative II to submit your parish pastoral plan. The reporting tool is a template to create the plan itself. This reporting tool is found in the appendix of this guide.

As pastoral planning continues, each parish is asked to submit an evaluation of the pastoral plan on an annual basis. This annual submission includes an evaluation of the current plan and an update of goals and objectives. Each parish may have a different cycle and may complete the annual plan at different times. You are encouraged to submit your plan and/or evaluation at any time in a given year.
The pastoral planning reporting tool requests the following information:

- Mission Statement
- Goals based on the Mission Statement and/or Goals based on the six Synod Initiatives
- Objectives (action steps) for each goal
- Implementers (lead agents) for each Objective
- Financial cost of each objective (reviewed by finance council)

This format may be helpful as the PPC prepares to publish the plan to the parish.

Selecting Implementers

The role of the Parish Pastoral Council changes abruptly once the parish pastoral plan has been published. PPC members are not asked to “do” the plan as the Pastor must now call others to leadership and empower them to become involved in bringing the plan to life.

The hope is that the pastoral plan reflects not only the mission of the Church but also expresses the hopes and desires of the entire community of believers within the parish. Therefore, lending support and service to the action steps of the pastoral plan not only serves God, but also address the needs of other parishioners and the local community.

During this phase, the Pastor reaches out to others in the parish inviting them to take on roles as Implementers. Implementers are lead agents given the responsibility for accomplishing one of the objectives in the plan.

One or two individuals are selected for each objective in the pastoral plan. The Implementers are only responsible for the one action step or objective, not the entire goal. The pastor approves all Implementers.

Implementers may be chosen from the entire parish body. At the same time, these individuals should possess the qualities and strengths necessary to accomplish the objective. An Implementer may be the leader of an existing committee within the parish or may not be connected with any committee. Selecting Co-implementers is encouraged. Sometimes a given objective may be overwhelming for one person. Therefore, Co-implementers could support one another and hold each other accountable along the way. It is important to select and assign implementers based on their interest and ability to fulfill the specific objective. Hence awareness of individuals’ strengths, interests, and availability of time, is very important to this process of assignment. *Casual selection can lead to frustration for those invited as well as delay in the execution of the plan.*

Qualities of an Implementer

The Pastor considers each objective in the parish pastoral plan and begins to ask individuals to take on leadership by being Implementers. How does the Pastor select an effective Implementer? What are the qualities of a good Implementer?
**A good Implementer is:**

- A person of prayer
- Enthusiastic and committed to the parish
- Able to contribute time and effort
- A good communicator
- Able to work well with others
- Skilled, as needed for an objective
- Hopeful
- A good leader
- A responsible steward

Every individual in the parish has gifts to offer. When the Pastor begins the process of naming Implementers, it should be done with faith that the gifts needed to accomplish the plan already exist and need only be identified and called forth from the parish community.

Implementers are parishioners who have been interested in the parish throughout the planning process. The first place to look for Implementers would be:

- Nomination forms from a parish discernment for new PPC members
- Registration sheet for those attending an Information Night or Night of Discernment for New members
- Committee members
- Those attending reflection groups or one-to-one conversations
- Pastors and staff member’s recommendations
- Your Parish Stewardship Committee may be able to help identify individuals that possess the talents and strengths required to accomplish certain objectives
- Parishioners who have not been involved before, but have an interest in service that is time-limited
- An open call of parishioners
- Implementers can also be people who have been in the parish for decades or only a short time. Either way, they are in the parish and they are waiting to be called.

The Pastor could invite implementers to be part of the plan in many ways. Here are a few: Brainstorm at a council meeting. Look at all objectives and list individuals who might be good leaders for each. Council members should describe the reasons why the individual should be selected. Invitations from the pastor asking for interested individuals are very helpful. Bulletin inserts and name-drop boxes provide an easy way for people to volunteer. Clearly print the objectives in the bulletin and highlight those where leaders are needed.
Relationship of Implementers to:

Parish Pastoral Council

Implementers are responsible for one objective and are accountable to the Pastor. Parish Pastoral Council members support the Implementers without doing the work. PPC members may be selected to develop relationships with one or two Implementers and report back to the council on the progress of each objective. Parish Pastoral Council members act as coaches to the individual Implementers. To examine this relationship in more detail, imagine a coach of a team and the qualities and attributes of a coach. A coach does the following:

- Provides support, but does not do the work
- Gives advice and needed resources
- Cheers
- Brings the needs of the team back to the council
- Connects novices with experienced players
- (mentors) Keeps everyone focused on the goal

PPC members see the big picture. Council members have the large view of the entire parish and understand how the accomplishment of each objective serves the need of the wider mission. This view is important to share with Implementers so that all can come to learn how our individual actions are connected to a greater end.

Pastor

The pastor appoints each Implementer. The pastor acts as a guide and mentor to the Implementers as well. The pastor does not do the work of the Implementers, but offers guidance and provides resources as needed. The support of the pastor is invaluable to all parish leaders. It is helpful if the pastor is available to not only steer the work of the council, but also to listen to the progress and stories of the Implementers.

Parish Staff

Objectives within a pastoral plan may involve the ministry of professionals within the parish environment. Parish staff members may be called upon to be Implementers, but more often, parish staff members work in collaboration with parishioners. Parish staff members are leaders within the community who are called upon to encourage new leadership among parishioners. Parish Staff members are both coaches and Implementers, leaders and servants.

Negotiating the relationship between professional pastoral staff and active lay members in a vibrant faith community must be based on the principles of empowerment and leadership development of all parishioners. Parish staff members are called to the development of the parish community by fostering lay participation. Collaborative relationships between parish staff members and Implementers are crucial for the success of the plan and the vibrancy of the parish.
Parish Committees

An Implementer may be a leader of an existing parish committee, especially if that committee has a primary responsibility for achieving a given objective. If so, there is an assumption that the entire committee or organization would be devoted to the accomplishment of a given objective. This assumption must be clarified with the membership of the given committee or organization. Yet, Implementers may not necessarily be a member of an existing committee or organization. If so, they may need further assistance from others in accomplishing the objective. Groups can be established to accomplish a given objective, but are normally ad hoc in nature. The committee is established for the deliberate purpose of accomplishing a given objective under the leadership of a given Implementer. Once the objective is complete, the group is no longer constituted.

If objectives are assigned to certain ad hoc Implementers and committees, support and acknowledgement must still be given to existing committees who are accomplishing good work in the parish.

Each parish is unique in its organizational and leadership structure. The use of existing committees is important to consider as you select Implementers.

To prepare committees to adjust to the adoption of the pastoral plan, the PPC may consider asking each committee to review the pastoral plan and articulate ways in which they would like to contribute to the accomplishment of the plan. The responses received here may assist PPC members in selecting Implementers.

The success of the plan is directly related to the relationships between those implementing the plan and all other leaders in the parish. The relationship between leaders should be clarified before implementation begins. The Implementation Gathering and Reflection is meant to address these relationships by focusing on the plan itself.

Implementation Gathering and Reflection

Once the Implementers have been selected, the Parish Pastoral Council may find it helpful to schedule and prepare an Implementation Gathering and Reflection. This meeting is a time for the PPC and Pastor to gather with the Implementers and parish staff members to reflect on the parish pastoral plan, pray together for success and provide a real moment of support and gratitude for all those implementing the plan in any way.

Who?
The gathering includes:
- Pastor
- Parish Pastoral Council
- Parish Staff
- Parish Finance Council
- Implementers
When?

The gathering should be held as soon as possible after the Implementers have been selected. The gathering is a two to three hour meeting and could be held on a Saturday morning, Sunday afternoon or weekday evening.

Format

The Implementation Gathering is a two to three hour period of prayer, reflection and preparation in which the Implementers are commissioned and sent forth to accomplish their given objective.

The gathering includes

- Time for: Prayer
- Address by the Pastor on the Mission of the parish and the parish pastoral plan
- Review of the progress of pastoral planning that has led up to the gathering
- Review of the Parish Pastoral Plan
- Conversation on hopes and concerns moving forward
- Details of evaluation procedure and ongoing communication
- Blessing and commissioning of Implementers

A recommended outline for the gathering follows. It is meant as a guide and may certainly be changed and amended based on the uniqueness of the local parish.
Sample Outline for Implementation Gathering Saturday morning

9:00 am  PPC members arrive to set up for the meeting

9:30 am  Participants arrive, greet, and get coffee and snacks

10:00 am  Welcome by pastor and PPC Introductions

10:15 am  Morning prayer with song

10:30 am  Pastor gives talk on the Mission of the parish and the Parish Pastoral Plan, thanking everyone for participating and their willingness to serve

10:45 am  PPC member presents Parish Pastoral Plan and steps of planning process. Stress the connections between the Mission, the Goals and the Objectives. (Individual council members could be designated to discuss the reason for the selection of a given objective)

11:00 am  Small groups are formed. One group for each goal. Each group includes Implementers for the objectives in each goal and a number of PPC members and/or parish staff members

Hopes and concerns for each objective

Strategies for each objective

Anticipated hurdles and needed resources

11:30 am  Pastor and/or PPC member provide information on evaluation process, lines of communication and support (i.e. Connecting PPC mentor (coach) to each Implementer, passing out evaluation forms, etc.)

11:50 am  Prayer of Blessing and Commissioning

12 noon  Lunch and Evaluation of Gathering and Reflection session
Evaluation

Evaluation is an important and often overlooked step in any planning process. The Parish Pastoral Council is responsible for reviewing the activity taken to achieve the objectives of the pastoral plan. Significant learning and insight can come through a reflective evaluation process. Through evaluation, pastoral councils name the successes and identify the reasons for not achieving certain objectives.

Through evaluation, Parish Pastoral Councils fulfill one of their primary responsibilities – holding all activities of the parish accountable to the mission of the parish. Formal evaluation of all initiatives of the pastoral plan and activities of the parish provides the kin of accountability that is necessary for any worthwhile endeavor. A six month and one year evaluation of the plan is undertaken by the council to: Review the progress of all objectives Ensure that leaders and Implementers have adequate resources Determine if objectives and goals are still relevant to the local situation.

Verbal reports, given by the Implementers to members of the Parish Pastoral Council, are helpful, but a written evaluation is more beneficial to the entire council and the pastor. Implementers should be given the opportunity to share their experience, analyze what was effective and what was not, and make suggestions for next steps. In this way, the parish becomes a learning community, building upon its experience.

The evaluations are helpful to the PPC as they create new objectives for the following year. An annual evaluation of the parish pastoral plan is also submitted to the Bishop. An evaluation instrument, Parish Pastoral Plan Survey, is located in the Appendix of this Guide.

The final step in a pastoral planning process is a Celebration of Accomplishments. One thing we know how to do well is celebrate. Celebration not only recognizes the service of others, but also acknowledges the good work of the entire parish. Celebration allows the community to name their successes and give thanks for those individuals who have come forward to be part of the Implementation.

Annual Calendar for Parish Pastoral Planning

Once a pastoral planning cycle has begun within the parish, the most crucial next step is to coordinate a sustainable ongoing pattern of pastoral planning that becomes part of parish life. This is best accomplished through the creation of an annual planning calendar. The Parish Pastoral Council and the parish can greatly benefit from a regular calendar articulating a basic outline and rhythm of pastoral planning within the life of the parish.
The normative components of any pastoral planning process include:

Discernment: A period of prayer, study of issues, and a listening process.
Development of Articulating goals, objectives and action steps
Pastoral Plan Implementation
Identifying new leaders
Focusing the parish on the accomplishment of the plan Evaluation and Reviewing implementation process drawing conclusions for the future

The following is a sample planning calendar. Each parish may establish a unique calendar that is more suited to the life of the individual community. Based on this calendar, the PPC may see the need to meet more often during certain times of the year and less frequently at other times. This decision is made at the discretion of the pastor and the agenda team.

**January** - Evaluation of Objectives and Plan
- PPC decides on needed modifications to plan

**February - April** - PPC- hold listening campaign
- (one to one’s, parish assembly, reflection groups)

**May** - PPC develops new objectives for the plan
- Discernment of new members to PPC

**June** - Publish updated plan to parish
- Select Implementers

**July – August** - Prepare Implementation Gathering

**September** - Implementation Gathering and Reflection
- Begin implementation of new objectives

**October - December** - Oversight of Implementation
Chapter 8  The Ongoing Cycle – Discernment

Pastoral Planning is ongoing in the life of the parish. Once the Parish Pastoral Council has completed a cycle of planning, the world has changed and the parish has changed. The “signs of the times” are always in flux and must be interpreted again and again. Pastoral Planning is an intentional attempt to be pro-active in the face of change, to consistently provide for the needs of the faithful by being attentive to their experience and focused on the Gospel Mission.

A period of evaluation leads once again to a time of discernment. The Parish Pastoral Council is invited to once again pray, study and listen. Each time the PPC discerns in this way, the prayer becomes more meaningful, the study more intense and the listening deeper. Cycles of planning do not spin around a single wheel, but wind deeper and deeper with each turn leading us toward our source and moving us further out in action. Pastoral planning is a habit of being church in a complex and changing world.

New Listening campaign

Continuing cycles of parish pastoral planning involve ongoing consultation with parishioners and others in the community. The skills developed in the first round of pastoral planning (one to one conversations, parish assemblies and reflection groups) must be considered by the Parish Pastoral Council again. Each tool can be developed or modified to gather appropriate consultation. Several examples of modification include:

One to one conversation campaign with a specific ethnic or age group within the parish to elicit their concerns and ideas for the parish.

One to one conversations with members of other local faith communities to find common concerns that would foster ecumenical or inter-faith collaboration.

A parish assembly focused on specific questions for parishioners to consider. Reflection groups as part of a wider parish retreat or as part of a cluster event.

As consultation and pastoral planning continue to develop in the life of the parish, the PPC is encouraged to hold a parish assembly once every three years. The wide parish assembly assists the parish in creating goals for the future. Parish goals are usually 3 to 5 year goals. Therefore, an assembly to evaluate goals and create new goals is recommended every three years.

Reflection groups occur annually. Reflection groups focus on one area of parish life encouraging parishioners to brainstorm action steps based on a parish goal. Action steps (objectives) normally take one year to accomplish. Therefore, the PPC is encouraged to hold reflection groups each year in order to create objectives that move the parish closer to the accomplishment of the larger goal. Consultation or listening campaigns happen consistently in the life of the parish. Formal and informal practices of listening are part of the life of any faith community. The Parish Pastoral Council consistently shares the “sense of the faithful” with the pastor.
PPC members are encouraged to take time each meeting to share what they are hearing with the pastor. This is the primary role of the Parish Pastoral Council.

**Ongoing Discernment of New PPC Members**

The selection of new Parish Pastoral Council members is an annual process by which the parish chooses new leaders based on their gifts and desire to be of service to the parish. The Discernment Process for New PPC Members is meant to facilitate the selection process for new parish leaders. The Discernment Process begins with a parish-wide nomination process to identify gifted individuals in the parish. This is followed by an Information Night in which nominated parishioners learn about the ministry of the Parish Pastoral Council. Finally, a Night of Discernment gathers together nominated parishioners to learn about one another and select individuals that have the gifts for this ministry.

Several members of the existing council spearhead the nomination process by publicizing and conducting the parish-wide nominations and sending invitations to nominated parishioners. An information session is held in the parish facilitated either by a San Gabriel Pastoral Region facilitator or by a PPC member using material from this Guide.

The Night of Discernment is also conducted by PPC members. The pastor and all council members are encouraged to attend the Night of Discernment.

**For newly established Parish Pastoral Councils:**

Newly established Parish Pastoral Councils must create a sustainable process of selecting new members and establishing terms for existing members. The most crucial issue here is not to create a situation in which the entire PPC rotates off at one time. It is recommended that council members have staggered terms. This staggering is described more in this Guide. It is recommended that no more than 1/3 of the council rotate off in one year.

When selecting new members to the PPC it is important to note the status of each member. Some members are selected and others are appointed. Selected members are replaced through a selection process which includes the input and consultation of parishioners (such as a Discernment Process). Appointed members are replaced by new pastoral appointments made directly by the pastor.

When commissioning new members to the Parish Pastoral Council, pastors may also consider recognizing those that are leaving the Council.
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Discernment Night for Parish Pastoral Council

“An Invitation to Prayer”

Opening Prayer

Leader: Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful

All: And kindle in them the fire of your love.

Leader: Send forth your Holy Spirit and they shall be created

All: And you will renew the face of the earth.

Reading (Romans 12)

Now I urge you: do not conform yourself to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect. For by the grace given to me I tell all of you not to think of yourselves more highly than you ought to think, but to think soberly, each according to the measure of faith that God has apportioned. For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually

Since we have gifts that differ according to the gifts given to us, let us exercise them: if prophecy, in proportion to the faith; if ministry, in ministering; if one is a teacher, teaching; if one exhorts, in exhortation; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is a leader, with diligence, if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Let love be sincere, hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection, anticipate one another in showing honor. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality. Have the same regard for one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly, do not be wise in your own estimation. If possible, on your part, live at peace with all. The Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God.

Reflection (Faith sharing open to all attendees)

Of all the advice Paul gives in this reading, what line or phrase seems most significant to you.
Discernment Process

Those who are being considered to fill the role of council member are asked to address several questions, without judgment, interrogation, or interruption by other. Respectful listening and continuing prayer to the Holy Spirit marks this time.

Part I.
Each person introduces himself or herself. Candidates should include the following information:
- Name
- Length of time as a member of the parish
- Ways in which they have been involved in the parish over the years
- The church activity, ministry, or service they found most rewarding

After each person speaks, the group affirms and prays for him or her.

Leader: Let us pray in gratitude for the life of ____________________________
and all the gifts s/he has already shared with this faith community. May God continue lead him/her in discipleship and service of God’s people.
All Amen!

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.

Part II  Each person being discerned answers the question:
What gifts do you bring to the ministry of leadership and the Parish Pastoral Council?

Part III Each person chooses one of the following questions to answer.
- What one thing do you think would make the biggest difference in the spiritual life of our parish?
- What one thing do you think is the greatest need in the parish?
- If you could give all the people of our parish an injection of some spiritual gift, what would it be and why?

Now that all have spoken, this is the time for questions and answers, if there are any.

At this time, people may withdraw their names from consideration. However, if you do, you are invited to stay with the group and participate in the discernment.

Each person is asked to identify several individuals whose gifts would contribute to the council.

Reading (Hebrews 2:1)

Therefore, we must attend all the more to what we have heard, so that we may not be carried away. For if the word announced through angels proved firm, and every transgression and disobedience received its just recompense, how shall we escape if
we ignore so great a salvation? Announced originally through the Lord, it was confirmed for us by those who had heard. God added his testimony by signs, wonders, various acts of power, and distribution of the gifts of the holy Spirit according to his will.

Closing Prayer

Leader: Let us pray:

In gratitude for your presence with us, O Holy Spirit, we bring you thanks and praise. Now bless your servants, as they assume the ministry of leadership among our parishioners. Give them unity, vision, wisdom and a great love for you and your people. We pray this in the name of Jesus, our model and our shepherd, now and forever. Amen

Leader: We now pray in the words that Jesus gave us. Our Father…

May almighty God bless us, the Father + and the Son + and the Holy Spirit.+

All: Amen

Leader: Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord in one another.

All: Thanks be to God.

Let us conclude with a greeting of peace.
Reflection groups

Reflection Group One

A Community Responsive to Others
(Christian Service)

Opening Prayer

It is suggested that a prayer space be arranged for the meeting. This could consist of a cloth of the appropriate liturgical season, a candle, a Bible and symbols of service, charity and justice.

Leader: Gracious God, You call us to a new day. Just as Jesus called the people of Israel to a new covenant, you call us to a conversion of life.

All: May we embrace your wisdom: "Harden not your hearts."

Renew our hearts, O God, in the spirit of the Gospel for the service of the world and one another. We pray to be a truly humble people, a people who are willing to be transformed into the leaven needed to bring justice to our broken world. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Scripture Reading: (Matthew 25: 3 46)

Faith Sharing Question

All are asked to reflect on the following question with a partner. The leader then brings the group together and asks individuals to share with the entire group a thought which they were discussing.

How do you believe you are called to care for some segment of human need? How are you called and challenged to grow in love of neighbor?

This process is meant as a planning and brainstorming tool for Parish Pastoral Councils and parish members. If using this process to brainstorm objectives for a pastoral plan, it is suggested that you especially invite those members who are active leaders in the religious education life of the parish. Also, it is important to record substantial points of the conversation and/or insights by using newsprint or other means.

Reflecting on Church Teaching

Several individuals are asked to read the following statements for the group. After reading the quotes, discuss the reflection question in terms of the parish as a whole, making reference to the pastoral goals if possible.
“Because we have been sent into the world as a “people of life,” our proclamation must also become a genuine celebration of the Gospel of life...For this to happen, we need first of all to foster, in ourselves and in others, a contemplative outlook. Such an outlook arises from faith in the God of life, who has created each individual as a ‘wonder’ (cf.Ps.139:14). It is the outlook of those who see life in its deeper meaning, who grasp its utter gratuitousness, its beauty and its invitation to freedom and responsibility.”

(USCCB, On the Value and Inviolability of Human Life, 83)

“Our parish communities are measured by how they serve “the least of these” in our parish and beyond its boundaries - the hungry, the homeless, the sick, those in prison, the stranger (Mt 25:31). Our local families of faith are called to “hunger and thirst for justice” and to be “peacemakers” in our own communities (Mt 5:6-9). A parish cannot really proclaim the gospel if its message is not reflected in its own community life.”

(USCCB, Communities of Salt and Light, 3)

“Charity will never be true charity unless it takes justice into account...Let no one attempt with small gifts of charity to exempt oneself from the great duties imposed by justice” (John XXIII, Peace on Earth, 60-62)

Reflection Questions
Recall someone you have known in your life who has had the ability to see each person as a ‘wonder’ created by God. What shaped this ability in the person? What are the characteristics that you noticed in this person? In what ways is there a conscious effort in the parish to address both the works of charity and the works of justice?

Brainstorming Objectives
At this point, the facilitator reads the goal which has been established around Worship. The goal should also be clearly posted in the room somewhere so that all can reflect on it. The focus now is for all members to brainstorm ideas to accomplish the stated goal. This begins by all individuals stating ideas that they have to accomplish the goals. These can be very specific. All of these ideas are recorded on newsprint as people say them. To get the conversation going, you may wish to have individuals talk with a partner first for a few minutes and then come together as a large group.

Finding the Common Threads
Take a moment to read the following passages. Then based upon your conversation, answer the following focus questions and make a record of any consensus beginning to emerge among the group regarding future actions.

“Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets, so that one can read it readily. For the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint; if it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late.” (Habakkuk 2:2-3)

“It is not therefore a matter of inventing a ‘new program’. The program already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition, it is the same as ever. But it must be translated into pastoral initiatives adapted to the circumstances of each
community. It is in the local churches that the specific features of a detailed pastoral plan can be identified – goals and methods, formation and enrichment of the people involved, the search for necessary resources – which will enable the proclamation of Christ to reach people, mold communities, and have a deep and incisive influence in bringing Gospel values to bear in society and culture. What awaits us therefore is an exciting work of pastoral revitalization – a work involving all of us.” (Novo Millennio)

“Christ has no body now on earth but yours; yours are the only hands with which we can do his work, yours are the only feet with which he can go around the world, yours are the only eyes through which his compassion can shine forth upon a troubled world. Christ has no body on earth but yours.” (Attributed to St. Teresa of Avila)

**Focus Questions**

*Of all the ideas that have been mentioned here, choose three that would enable us to foster and nurture more vibrant efforts at charity and justice for all parishioners and accomplish our goal for the future. (This question is asked of all participants)*

*Are there specific ideas that are emerging as a clear consensus among the group? Which of the ideas are emerging as a consensus? Which part of these common ideas can be brought to life? What resources will the parish need to achieve these goals? Who are the individuals and groups within our parish, the San Gabriel Pastoral Region, and/or within the Archdiocese that need to be involved in making these goals a reality?*

**Closing Prayer: Prayer for Social Justice by Pope Pius XII**

Almighty and eternal God, may your grace enkindle in all persons a love of the many unfortunate people whom poverty and misery reduce to a condition of life unworthy of human beings. Arouse in the hearts of those who call you God a hunger and thirst for social justice and for fraternal charity in deeds and in truth. Grant, O Lord, peace in our days, peace to souls, peace to our community and peace among nations. Amen.
Reflection group two

A Formational Community  
(Word / Education)

It is suggested that a prayer space be arranged for the meeting. This could consist of a cloth of the appropriate liturgical season, a candle, a cross, and a Bible. Also, place small tea lights or other small candles on the perimeter of the prayer space. There should be as many candles as there are participants.

Opening Prayer:
Good and Gracious God, You enkindle in us the fire of your love
And call us to spread the message of your enduring love to all. Grant us strength each day to be bold proclaimers of your Word and faithful disciples to your call.

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:1-12

Ritual: All are asked to think of one individual who passed on the faith to them in their own life. Each person is invited to light a candle for that individual and to say their name aloud. Then place the candle on the perimeter of the prayer space.

Psalm Reading: I will open my mouth in story, drawing lessons from of old. We have heard them, we know them; our ancestors have recited them to us. We do not keep them from our children; we recite them to the next generation, the praiseworthy and mighty deeds of the Lord, the wonders He performed.

Faith-Sharing Question

All are invited to reflect on the following question and share their thoughts if they feel comfortable.

In what ways do you pass on faith to others?

This process is meant as a planning and brainstorming tool for Parish Pastoral Councils and parish members. If using this process to brainstorm objectives for a pastoral plan, it is suggested that you especially invite those members who are active leaders in the religious education life of the parish. Also, it is important to record substantial points of the conversation and/or insights by using newsprint or other means.

Reflecting on Church Teaching

Several individuals are asked to read the following statements for the group. After reading the quotes, discuss the reflection question in terms of the parish as a whole, making reference to the Pastoral Goals if possible.

“Continuing formation in the faith is directed not only to the individual Christian, to accompany them in their journey towards holiness, but also the Christian community as such so that it may mature also in its interior life of love of God and of the members as well as in its openness to the world as a missionary community. Approaching this
ideal, little by little, demands of the community a great fidelity to the action of the Holy Spirit, the constant nourishment of the Body and Blood of Christ and continuing education in the faith, listening all the time to the Word.” (General Directory of Catechesis, 70)

“Catechesis is a process of formation in faith, hope, and charity; it shapes the mind and touches the heart, leading the person to embrace Christ fully and completely. It introduces the believer more fully into the experience of the Christian life, which involves the liturgical celebration of the mystery of the Redemption and the Christian service of others.” (Ecclesia in America, 69)

“The parish is, without doubt, the most important locus in which the Christian community is formed and expressed. This is called to be a fraternal and welcoming family where Christians become aware of being the people of God. In the parish, all human differences melt away and are absorbed into the universality of the Church. The parish is also the usual place in which the faith is born and in which it grows. It constitutes, therefore, a very adequate community space for the realization of the ministry of the word at once as teaching, education and life experience.” (General Directory of Catechesis, 257)

“The Catholic school is a most important locus for human and Christian formation. It is the special function of the Catholic school to develop an atmosphere animated by a spirit of liberty and charity, to enable young people to grow in that new life which has been given them at baptism, and to orient the whole of human culture to the message of salvation.” (General Directory of Catechesis, 259)

**Reflection Questions**

Recall a time when you participated in an educational or spiritual growth opportunity at our parish that really made a difference in your relationship with God. Tell the story of this experience.

*In what ways does our parish provide continuing formation for all parishioners?*

**Brainstorming Objectives**

*At this point, the facilitator reads the goal which has been established around Word. The goal should also be clearly posted in the room somewhere so that all can reflect on it. The focus now is for all members to brainstorm ideas to accomplish the stated goal. This begins by all individuals stating ideas that they have to accomplish the goals. These can be very specific.*

*All of these ideas are recorded on newsprint as people say them.*

*To get the conversation going, you may wish to have individuals talk with a partner first for a few minutes and then come together as a large group.*
Finding the Common Threads

Take a moment to read the following passages. Then, based upon your conversation answer the following focus questions and make a record of any consensus beginning to emerge among the group regarding future actions.

“Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets, so that one can read it readily. For the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint; if it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late.” (Habakkuk 2:2-3)

“It is not therefore a matter of inventing a ‘new program’. The program already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition, it is the same as ever. But it must be translated into pastoral initiatives adapted to the circumstances of each community. It is in the local churches that the specific features of a detailed pastoral plan can be identified – goals and methods, formation and enrichment of the people involved, the search for necessary resources – which will enable the proclamation of Christ to reach people, mold communities, and have a deep and incisive influence in bringing Gospel values to bear in society and culture. What awaits us therefore is an exciting work of pastoral revitalization – a work involving all of us.” (Novo Millennio)

“Christ has no body now on earth but yours; yours are the only hands with which we can do his work, yours are the only feet with which he can go around the world, yours are the only eyes through which his compassion can shine forth upon a troubled world. Christ has no body on earth but yours.” (Attributed to St. Teresa of Avila) Focus Questions

Of all the ideas that have been mentioned here, choose three that would enable us to foster and nurture more formation for all parishioners and accomplish our goal for the future. (This question is asked of all participants)

Are there specific ideas that are emerging as a clear consensus among the group?

Which of the ideas are emerging as a consensus? Which part of these common ideas can be brought to life? What resources will the parish need to achieve these goals? Who are the individuals and groups within our parish, the San Gabriel Pastoral Region, and/or within the Archdiocese that need to be involved in making these goals a reality?

Closing Prayer

Leader: Loving Father, author of life and creator of all that is good, we praise you and than you for all your gifts. Today we give special thanks for one another. Touch all our efforts with your grace so that we may truly become gifts to one another. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

All: Amen.
Reflection Group Three

A Gifted Community, Living Responsibly (Stewardship)

Opening Prayer

It is suggested that a prayer space be arranged for the meeting. This could consist of a cloth of the appropriate liturgical season, a candle, a Bible as well as symbols of stewardship (ex. treasure box, clock, picture of open hands, etc.).

Leader: God is the source of all our gifts. Together let us praise our generous God for the bounty bestowed upon us.

Women: Come, let us sing joyfully to the Lord; cry out to the rock of our salvation.

Men: Let us greet Him with a song of praise; joyfully sing out our psalms.

Women: For the Lord is the great God, the great king over all gods

Men: Whose hand holds the depths of the earth; who owns the tops of the mountains.

Women: The sea and dry land belong to God, who made them, formed them by hand.

Men: Let us bow down in worship; let us kneel before the Lord who made us.

Women: For this is our God, whose people we are. God’s well-tended flock. (Psalm 95)

All: Glory be to the Father...

Scripture Reading: Romans 12:3-11

Faith-Sharing Question

All are asked to reflect on the following question with a partner. The leader then brings the group together and asks individuals to share with the entire group a thought which they were discussing.

In what ways do you use your gifts to serve God so that you yourself become a gift to others?

This process is meant as a planning and brainstorming tool for Parish Pastoral Councils and parish members. If using this process to brainstorm objectives for a pastoral plan, it is suggested that you especially invite those members who are active leaders in the religious education life of the parish. Also, it is important to record substantial points of the conversation and/or insights by using newsprint or other means.
Reflecting on Church Teaching

Several individuals are asked to read the following statements for the group. After reading the quotes, discuss the reflection question in terms of the parish as a whole, making reference to the Pastoral Goals if possible.

“In the various types and duties of life, one and the same holiness is cultivated by all who are moved by the Spirit of God, and who obey the voice of the Father, worshiping God and Father in spirit and truth. These souls follow the poor Christ, the humble and cross-bearing Christ, in order to be made worthy of being partakers in His glory. Every person should walk unhesitatingly according to his own personal gifts and duties in the path of a living faith which arouses hope and works through charity.” (Lumen Gentium, 41)

“Essentially [stewardship] means helping the Church’s mission with time, money, and personal resources of all kinds. This sharing is not an option for Catholics who understand what membership in the Church involves. It is a serious duty...God wishes human beings to be his collaborators in the work of creation, redemption, and sanctification; and such collaboration involves stewardship in its most profound sense...Stewardship in an ecclesial setting means cherishing and fostering the gifts of all, while using one’s own gifts to serve the community of faith.” (Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response 4, 25, 33)

Reflection Questions

What has our parish done that best conveys a positive and encouraging sense of stewardship among our parishioners? What ideas or images have most inspired you? In what ways do we as a parish community share within our parish, within the local community and globally our material and spiritual gifts? How is stewardship included in the curriculum for religious education and on-going faith formation?

Brainstorming Objectives

At this point, the facilitator reads the goal which has been established around Stewardship. The goal should also be clearly posted in the room somewhere so that all can reflect on it.

The focus now is for all members to brainstorm ideas to accomplish the stated goal. This begins with all individuals stating ideas that they have to accomplish these goals. They can be very specific. All of these ideas are recorded on newsprint as people say them. To get the conversation going, you may wish to have individuals talk with a partner first for a few minutes and then come together as a large group.
Finding the Common Threads

Take a moment to read the following passages. Then based upon your conversation, answer the following focus questions and make a record of any consensus beginning to emerge among the group regarding future actions.

“Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets, so that one can read it readily. For the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint; if it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late.” (Habakkuk 2:2-3)

“It is not therefore a matter of inventing a ‘new program’. The program already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition, it is the same as ever. But it must be translated into pastoral initiatives adapted to the circumstances of each community. It is in the local churches that the specific features of a detailed pastoral plan can be identified – goals and methods, formation and enrichment of the people involved, the search for necessary resources – which will enable the proclamation of Christ to reach people, mold communities, and have a deep and incisive influence in bringing Gospel values to bear in society and culture. What awaits us therefore is an exciting work of pastoral revitalization – a work involve of us.” (Novo Millennio)

“Christ has no body now on earth but yours; yours are the only hands with which we can do his work, yours are the only feet with which he can go around the world, yours are the only eyes through which his compassion can shine forth upon a troubled world. Christ has no body on earth but yours.” (Attributed to St. Teresa of Avila)

Focus Questions

Of all the ideas that have been mentioned here, choose three that would enable us to foster and nurture more vibrant stewardship among all parishioners and accomplish our goal for the future. (This question is asked of all participants)

Are there specific ideas that are emerging as a clear consensus among the group? Which of the ideas are emerging as a consensus? Which part of these common ideas can be brought to life? What resources will the parish need to achieve these goals? Who are the individuals and groups within our parish, the San Gabriel Pastoral Region, and/or within the Archdiocese that need to be involved in making these goals a reality?

Closing Prayer

Leader: Loving Father, author of life and creator of all that is good, we praise you and than you for all your gifts. Today we give special thanks for one another. Touch all our efforts with your grace so that we may truly become gifts to one another. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

All: Amen.
Reflection Group Four

A Welcoming and Caring Community

(Community)

Opening Prayer

It is suggested that a prayer space be arranged for the meeting. This could consist of a cloth of the appropriate liturgical season, a candle, a Bible as well as symbols of community.

Leader: Come, Spirit of God!

All: Come with your power to transform us. Come, Fire of Love! Come with your wisdom to enlighten us.

Leader: Let us take a moment to quiet ourselves and be aware of the gift of God’s Spirit dwelling within us and among our parish community as we gather to do God’s work.

Scripture Reading

Reader 1: “They devoted themselves to the teachings of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.” (Acts 2:42)

Reader 2: “As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ...God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. If (one) part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy. Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it.” (1 Cor. 12:12, 24-27)

Reader 3: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt 18:20)

Reader 4: “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.” (1 Cor. 12:13)

Faith-Sharing Question

All are asked to reflect on the following question with a partner. The leader then brings the group together and asks individuals to share with the entire group a thought which they were discussing.

In what ways do relationships among members of our parish show the active presence of Jesus Christ? How is this similar to, yet different from, relationships among people in other situations?
This process is meant as a planning and brainstorming tool for Parish Pastoral Councils and parish members. If using this process to brainstorm objectives for a pastoral plan, it is suggested that you especially invite those members who are active leaders in the religious education life of the parish. Also, it is important to record substantial points of the conversation and/or insights by using newsprint or other means.

Reflecting on Church Teaching

Several individuals are asked to read the following statements for the group. After reading the quotes, discuss the reflection question in terms of the parish as a whole, making reference to the Pastoral Goals if possible.

“Faced with a divided world which is in search of unity, we must proclaim with joy and firm faith that God is communion, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, unity in distinction, and that he calls all people to share in that same Trinitarian communion. We must proclaim that this communion is the magnificent plan of God the Father; that Jesus Christ, the incarnate Lord, is the heart of this communion, and that the Holy Spirit works ceaselessly to create communion and to restore it when it is broken. We must proclaim that the church is the sign and instrument of the communion willed by God, begun in time and destined for completion in the fullness of the kingdom.” (Lumen Gentium, 2)

“Before making practical plans, we need to promote a spirituality of communion, making it the guiding principle of education wherever individuals and Christians are formed. A spirituality of communion indicates above all the heart’s contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us. A spirituality of communion also means an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as “those who are part of me.” This makes us able to share their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine friendship.” (Novo Millennio Ineunte, 43)

Reflection Questions

Recall a time at our parish when you experienced an inspiring moment of welcoming, a time when you felt that much care was being expressed. What did people say or do that created this moment? In what ways does our parish foster an ongoing commitment to community and deeper relationships among parishioners?

Brainstorming Objectives

At this point, the facilitator reads the goal which has been established around Community. The goal should also be clearly posted in the room somewhere so that all can reflect on it. The focus now is for all members to brainstorm ideas to accomplish the stated goal. This begins with all individuals stating ideas that they have to accomplish these goals. These can be very specific all of these ideas are recorded on newsprint as people say them. To get the conversation going, you may wish to have individuals talk with a partner first for a few minutes and then come together as a large group.
Finding the Common Threads

Take a moment to read the following passages. Then, based upon your conversation answer the following focus questions and make a record of any consensus beginning to emerge among the group regarding future actions.

“Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets, so that one can read it readily. For the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint; if it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late.” (Habakkuk 2:2-3)

“It is not therefore a matter of inventing a ‘new program’. The program already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition, it is the same as ever. But it must be translated into pastoral initiatives adapted to the circumstances of each community. It is in the local churches that the specific features of a detailed pastoral plan can be identified - goals and methods, formation and enrichment of the people involved, the search for necessary resources – which will enable the proclamation of Christ to reach people, mold communities, and have a deep and incisive influence in bringing Gospel values to bear in society and culture. What awaits us therefore is an exciting work of pastoral revitalization – a work involving all of us.” (Novo Millennio)

“Christ has no body now on earth but yours; yours are the only hands with which we can do his work, yours are the only feet with which he can go around the world, yours are the only eyes through which his compassion can shine forth upon a troubled world. Christ has nobody on earth but yours.” (Attributed to St. Teresa of Avila)

Focus Questions

Of all the ideas that have been mentioned here, choose three that would enable us to foster and nurture more sense of community among all parishioners and accomplish our goal for the future. (This question is asked of all participants)

Are there specific ideas that are emerging as a clear consensus among the group?

Which of the ideas are emerging as a consensus? Which part of these common ideas can be brought to life? What resources will the parish need to achieve these goals? Who are the individuals and groups within our parish, the San Gabriel Pastoral Region, and/or within the Archdiocese that need to be involved in making these goals a reality?

Closing Prayer

Leader: Loving Father, author of life and creator of all that is good, we praise you and thank you for all your gifts. Today we give special thanks for one another. Touch all our efforts with your grace so that we may truly become gifts to one another. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

All: Amen.
Reflection Group Five

A Witnessing and Proclaiming Community
(Evangelization)

Opening Prayer
It is suggested that a prayer space be arranged for the meeting. This could consist of a cloth of the appropriate liturgical season, a candle, a Bible and a crucifix.

Leader: O God, Your love ignites our hearts, captures our imaginations, shapes our dreams, and awakens possibilities.

All: Make us disciples on fire with your love that we may bring good news to the afflicted, liberty to captives, sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed. Help us, God, to enkindle in others a sense of hope that transformation is possible. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 28:16-20

Faith-Sharing Question

All are asked to reflect on the following question with a partner. The leader then brings the group together and asks individuals to share with the entire group a thought which they were discussing.

Describe a time when you knew that your experience of God had to be shared - that you could not keep it inside or remain silent. Tell the story of your thoughts and feelings at that time, and how you shared that experience with others.

This process is meant as a planning and brainstorming tool for Parish Pastoral Councils and parish members. If using this process to brainstorm objectives for a pastoral plan, it is suggested that you especially invite those members who are active leaders in the religious education life of the parish. Also, it is important to record substantial points of the conversation and/or insights by using newsprint or other means.

Reflecting on Church Teaching

Several individuals are asked to read the following statements for the group. After reading the quotes, discuss the reflection question in terms of the parish as a whole, making reference to the Pastoral Goals if possible.

"We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church." It is a task and mission which the vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent. Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of His death and glorious resurrection." (Pope Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi)
“The community gathered together must itself be constantly evangelized: each believer always needs to let himself or herself be challenged by Christ and to be converted by listening to the Word which makes great demands but at the same time is a priceless gift, for it is the proclamation of salvation, reconciliation and victory of life over death.”  
(Pope John Paul II, The Vocation of the Parish)

“The fruit of evangelization is changed lives and a changed world - holiness and justice, spirituality and peace. The validity of our having accepted the Gospel does not only come from what we feel or what we know; it comes also from the way we serve others, especially the poorest, the most marginal, the most hurting, the most defenseless, the least loved. An evangelization that stays inside ourselves is not an evangelization into the Good News of Jesus Christ.”  
(USCCB, Go And Make Disciples)

“Evangelization will always contain as the foundation, center and, at the same time the summit of its dynamism– a clear proclamation that, in Jesus Christ Salvation is offered to all men, as a gift of God’s grace and mercy...The new evangelization is not a matter of merely passing on doctrine but rather of a personal and profound meeting with the Savior. ” (John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio, 44)

Reflection Questions

Describe a time when our parish has best strengthened your spiritual life and that of your family. What are the things we do that most deepen and inspire your relationship with God? In what ways are we already an evangelizing parish?

Brainstorming Objectives

At this point, the facilitator reads the goal which has been established around Evangelization. The goal should also be clearly posted in the room somewhere so that all can reflect on it. The focus now is for all members to brainstorm ideas to accomplish the stated goal. This begins by all individuals stating ideas that they have to accomplish the goals. These can be very specific. All of these ideas are recorded on newsprint as people say them. To get the conversation going, you may wish to have individuals talk with a partner first for a few minutes and then come together as a large group.

Finding the Common Threads

Take a moment to read the following passages. Then based upon your conversation, answer the following focus questions and make a record of any consensus beginning to emerge among the group regarding future actions. “Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets, so that one can read it readily. For the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint; if it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late.”(Habakkuk 2:2-3)

It is not therefore a matter of inventing a ‘new program’. The program already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition, it is the same as ever. But it must be translated into pastoral initiatives adapted to the circumstances of each community. It is in the local churches that the specific features of a detailed pastoral plan can be identified – goals and methods, formation and enrichment of the people involved, the search for necessary resources – which will enable the proclamation of Christ to reach people, mold
communities, and have a deep and incisive influence in bringing Gospel values to bear in society and culture. What awaits us therefore is an exciting work of pastoral revitalization – a work involving all of us.”  (*Novo Millennio*)

“Christ has no body now on earth but yours; yours are the only hands with which we can do his work, yours are the only feet with which he can go around the world, yours are the only eyes through which his compassion can shine forth upon a troubled world. Christ has no body on earth but yours.”  (*Attributed to St. Teresa of Avila*)

**Focus Questions**

*Of all the ideas that have been mentioned here, choose three that would enable us to foster and nurture more vibrant Evangelization efforts among all parishioners and accomplish our goal for the future. (This question is asked of all participants) Are there specific ideas that are emerging as a clear consensus among the group? Which of the ideas are emerging as a consensus? Which part of these common ideas can be brought to life? What resources will the parish need to achieve these goals? Who are the individuals and groups within our parish, the San Gabriel Pastoral Region, and/or within the Archdiocese that need to be involved in making these goals a reality?*

**Closing Prayer:**  (*Choose one individual from the group to read*)

May God the Father who made us bless us. May God the Son send his healing among us. May God the Holy Spirit move within us and give us eyes to see with, ears to hear with and hands that your work might be done. May we walk and preach the word of God to all. May the angel of peace watch over us and lead us at last by God’s grace to the Kingdom. Amen  (*St. Dominic*)
Reflection Group Six

A Worshiping Community
(Worship)

Opening prayer

*It is suggested that a prayer space be arranged for the meeting. This could consist of a cloth of the appropriate liturgical season, a candle, a Bible, a cup, a loaf of bread, chaffs of wheat or grapes, etc.*

**Leader:** We gather in the presence of our heavenly Father and ask that our prayer be pleasing to God.

**All:** May our prayer rise up like incense, our hands outstretched like an evening offering.

**Leader:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

**All:** Amen.

Scripture Reading

**Reader 1:** “The Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.” *(1Cor. 11:23-26)*

**Reader 2:** “And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him” *(Luke 24:30)*

**Reader 3:** “Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them” *(Matt 18:20)*

**Reader 4:** “The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.” *(1 Cor. 10:16-17)*

**Reader 5:** “As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.” *(1 Cor. 12:13)*
**Faith-Sharing Question**

All are asked to reflect on the following question with a partner. The leader then brings the group together and asks individuals to share with the entire group a thought which they were discussing.

*In what ways are you the Body of Christ in the world?*

This process is meant as a planning and brainstorming tool for Parish Pastoral Councils and parish members. In using this process to brainstorm objectives for a pastoral plan, it is suggested that you especially invite those members who are active leaders in the worship life of the parish. Also, it is important to record substantial points of the conversation and/or insights by using newsprint or other means.

**Reflecting on Church Teaching**

Several individuals are asked to read the following statements for the group. After reading the quotes, discuss the reflection question in terms of the parish as a whole, making reference to the pastoral goals if possible.

“The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the church is directed; it is also the source from which all its power flows. For the goal of the apostolic endeavor is that all who are made children of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of his church, to take part in the sacrifice and to eat the Lord’s Supper.” *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 10*

“The Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy, and to which the Christian people have a right and obligation by reason of their baptism. Full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else, for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit.” *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 14*

“In the celebration of Mass, the faithful form a holy people, a people whom God has made his own, a royal priesthood, so that they may give thanks to God and offer the spotless Victim not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him, and so that they may learn to offer themselves. They should, moreover, endeavor to make this clear by their deep religious sense and their charity toward brothers and sisters who participate with them in the same celebration.” *General Instruction on the Roman Missal, 95*
Reflection Question

Looking back at the Sunday celebrations of the Eucharist in our parish, remember a Sunday in which you felt most alive, most fulfilled, or most excited. Describe the liturgy in detail. What evoked that response in you? In what ways does the parish encourage full, active, and conscious participation in the liturgy?

Brainstorming Objectives

At this point, the facilitator reads the goal which has been established around Worship. The goal should also be clearly posted in the room somewhere so that all can reflect on it. The focus now is for all members to brainstorm ideas to accomplish the stated goal. This begins by all individuals stating ideas that they have to accomplish the goals. These can be very specific. All of these ideas are recorded on newsprint as people say them. To get the conversation going, you may wish to have individuals talk with a partner first for a few minutes and then come together as a large group.

Finding the Common Threads

Take a moment to read the following passages. Then based upon your conversation, answer the following focus questions and make a record of any consensus beginning to emerge among the group regarding future actions.

“Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets, so that one can read it readily. For the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint; if it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late.” (Habakkuk 2:2-3)

“It is not therefore a matter of inventing a ‘new program’. The program already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition, it is the same as ever. But it must be translated into pastoral initiatives adapted to the circumstances of each community. It is in the local churches that the specific features of a detailed pastoral plan can be identified – goals and methods, formation and enrichment of the people involved, the search for necessary resources – which will enable the proclamation of Christ to reach people, mold communities, and have a deep and incisive influence in bringing Gospel values to bear in society and culture. What awaits us therefore is an exciting work of pastoral revitalization – a work involving all of us.” (Novo Millennio)

“Christ has no body now on earth but yours; yours are the only hands with which we can do his work, yours are the only feet with which he can go around the world, yours are the only eyes through which his compassion can shine forth upon a troubled world. Christ has no body on earth but yours.” (Attributed to St. Teresa of Avila)
Focus Questions

Of all the ideas that have been mentioned here, choose three that would enable us to foster and nurture more vibrant liturgies and worship for all parishioners and accomplish our goal for the future. (This question is asked of all participants)

Are there specific ideas that are emerging as a clear consensus among the group? Which of the ideas are emerging as a consensus? Which part of these common ideas can be brought to life? What resources will the parish need to achieve these goals? Who are the individuals and groups within our parish, the San Gabriel Pastoral Region, and/or within the Archdiocese that need to be involved in making these goals a reality?

Closing Prayer: (Choose one individual from the group to read)

May God the Father who made us bless us. May God the Son send his healing among us. May God the Holy Spirit move within us and give us eyes to see with, ears to hear with and hands that your work might be done. May we walk and preach the word of God to all. May the angel of peace watch over us and lead us at last by God's grace to the Kingdom. Amen (St. Dominic)
Reflection Group Seven

A Formational Community
(Word / Education)

Opening Prayer

It is suggested that a prayer space be arranged for the meeting. This could consist of a cloth of the appropriate liturgical season, a candle, a cross, and a Bible. Also, place small tea lights or other small candles on the perimeter of the prayer space. There should be as many candles as there are participants.

Opening Prayer: Good and Gracious God
You enkindle in us the fire of your love
And call us to spread the message of your enduring love to all. Grant us strength each day
to be bold proclaimers of your Word and faithful disciples to your call.
Amen

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:1-12

Ritual: All are asked to think of one individual who passed on the faith to them in their own life. Each person is invited to light a candle for that individual and to say their name aloud. Then place the candle on the perimeter of the prayer space.

Psalm Reading: I will open my mouth in story, drawing lessons from of old. We have heard them, we know them; our ancestors have recited them to us. We do not keep them from our children; we recite them to the next generation, the praiseworthy and mighty deeds of the Lord, the wonders He performed.

Faith-Sharing Question

All are invited to reflect on the following question and share their thoughts if they feel comfortable.

In what ways do you pass on faith to others?

This process is meant as a planning and brainstorming tool for Parish Pastoral Councils and parish members. If using this process to brainstorm objectives for a pastoral plan, it is suggested that you especially invite those members who are active leaders in the religious education life of the parish. Also, it is important to record substantial points of the conversation and/or insights by using newsprint or other means.
Reflecting on Church Teaching

Several individuals are asked to read the following statements for the group. After reading the quotes, discuss the reflection question in terms of the parish as a whole, making reference to the Pastoral Goals if possible.

“Continuing formation in the faith is directed not only to the individual Christian, to accompany them in their journey towards holiness, but also the Christian community as such so that it may mature also in its interior life of love of God and of the members as well as in its openness to the world as a missionary community. Approaching this ideal, little by little, demands of the community a great fidelity to the action of the Holy Spirit, the constant nourishment of the Body and Blood of Christ and continuing education in the faith, listening all the time to the Word.” (General Directory of Catechesis, 70)

“Catechesis is a process of formation in faith, hope, and charity; it shapes the mind and touches the heart, leading the person to embrace Christ fully and completely. It introduces the believer more fully into the experience of the Christian life, which involves the liturgical celebration of the mystery of the Redemption and the Christian service of others.” (Ecclesia in America, 69) “The parish is, without doubt, the most important locus in which the Christian community is formed and expressed. This is called to be a fraternal and welcoming family where Christians become aware of being the people of God. In the parish, all human differences melt away and are absorbed into the universality of the Church. The parish is also the usual place in which the faith is born and in which it grows. It constitutes, therefore, a very adequate community space for the realization of the ministry of the word at once as teaching, education and life experience.” (General Directory of Catechesis, 257)

“The Catholic school is a most important locus for human and Christian formation. It is the special function of the Catholic school to develop an atmosphere animated by a spirit of liberty and charity, to enable young people to grow in that new life which has been given them at baptism, and to orient the whole of human culture to the message of salvation.” (General Directory of Catechesis, 259)

Reflection Questions

Recall a time when you participated in an educational or spiritual growth opportunity at our parish that really made a difference in your relationship with God. Tell the story of this experience.

In what ways does our parish provide continuing formation for all parishioners?

Brainstorming Objectives

At this point, the facilitator reads the goal which has been established around Word. The goal should also be clearly posted in the room somewhere so that all can reflect on it. The focus now is for all members to brainstorm ideas to accomplish the stated goal.
This begins by all individuals stating ideas that they have to accomplish the goals. These can be very specific. All of these ideas are recorded on newsprint as people say them. To get the conversation going, you may wish to have individuals talk with a partner first for a few minutes and then come together as a large group.

Finding the Common Threads

Take a moment to read the following passages. Then, based upon your conversation answer the following focus questions and make a record of any consensus beginning to emerge among the group regarding future actions.

“Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets, so that one can read it readily. For the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint; if it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late.” (Habakkuk 2:2-3) “It is not therefore a matter of inventing a ‘new program’. The program already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition, it is the same as ever. But it must be translated into pastoral initiatives adapted to the circumstances of each community. It is in the local churches that the specific features of a detailed pastoral plan can be identified – goals and methods, formation and enrichment of the people involved, the search for necessary resources – which will enable the proclamation of Christ to reach people, mold communities, and have a deep and incisive influence in bringing Gospel values to bear in society and culture. What awaits us therefore is an exciting work of pastoral revitalization – a work involving all of us.” (Novo Millennio)

“Christ has no body now on earth but yours; yours are the only hands with which we can do his work, yours are the only feet with which he can go around the world, yours are the only eyes through which his compassion can shine forth upon a troubled world. Christ has no body on earth but yours.” (Attributed to St. Teresa of Avila)

Focus Questions

Of all the ideas that have been mentioned here, choose three that would enable us to foster and nurture more formation for all parishioners and accomplish our goal for the future. (This question is asked of all participants)

Are there specific ideas that are emerging as a clear consensus among the group? Which of the ideas are emerging as a consensus? Which part of these common ideas can be brought to life? What resources will the parish need to achieve these goals? Who are the individuals and groups within our parish, the San Gabriel Pastoral Region and/or within the Archdiocese that need to be involved in making these goals a reality?

Closing Prayer: (Choose one individual from the group to read)

May God the Father who made us bless us. May God the Son send his healing among us. May God the Holy Spirit move within us and give us eyes to see with, ears to hear with and hands that your work might be done. May we walk and preach the word of God to all. May the angel of peace watch over us and lead us at last by God’s grace to the Kingdom. Amen (St. Dominic)
Parish Pastoral Plan Reporting Tool

Introduction

The following Parish Pastoral Plan Worksheets are the reporting tool which each parish is asked to use to submit the final Parish Pastoral Plan to the Regional Bishop. These worksheets are also helpful to organize and finalize the plans of the parish and ensure that the most pertinent components of any pastoral plan are addressed by the Pastoral Council. Parish Pastoral Councils are encouraged to begin implementation on the Parish Pastoral Plan immediately. To assist in implementation, the San Gabriel Region Pastoral Council will offer resources and assistance as needed.

The Pastoral Plan
Instructions

This Reporting Tool is divided into three sections:

A. Mission Statement
B. Worksheets for Goals and Objectives
C. Signature Sheet

The following instructions are provided to assist in completing each section of your Parish Pastoral Plan.

Mission Statement (Section A)

Fill in the name of your parish.
Insert the date that the plan is submitted. Insert your Parish Mission Statement.

Goal and Objective Worksheets (Section B)

One set of worksheets will be needed to articulate and craft each goal for the pastoral plan.
Copy the worksheets as needed for the number of goals in your plan.

On the Goal Worksheet write the number of the goal. Parishes are encouraged create between 3-5 goals based on the Parish Mission Statement and/or the Six Synod Initiatives.

Write in the Goal. The definition of a goal and information for creating goals can be found in this Guide. Goals are meant to be accomplished in 3-5 years.

Write in the first Objective for the Goal. It is recommended that each goal have between 1-3 objectives. The definition of an objective, its relationship to the goal, and information on creating objectives can be found in this Guide.

Insert deadline to complete this Objective. This date should be no more than one year from the date that the plan is completed. Normally each objective is completed
within one year. An Evaluation of the Parish Pastoral Plan will be disseminated to update the plan and record objectives for the next year. Only record objectives in this tool which will be accomplished in the first year.

Write in the names of the individuals responsible for accomplishing this Objective. Individuals should be asked and should accept their charge before inserting their name in the plan.

Write in the name of a PPC member(s) who will act as a liaison between individuals responsible for accomplishing this Objective and the Pastoral Council. It is recommended that a PPC member be designated to support each responsible individual (Implementer) and serve as an ongoing point of contact with the Pastoral Council.

Indicate the persons or groups within the parish or the neighborhood who will be served by the accomplishment of the objective.

Indicate the method that will be used by the Parish Pastoral Council to evaluate the effectiveness of the objective. Each objective should be measured along the way to assess the successful implementation. Parish Pastoral Councils are charged with this assessment.

Write in any estimated financial cost associated with objectives of the goal. The parish Finance Council is encouraged to review all costs before the plan is submitted.

Repeat the above steps to complete additional objectives for the goal.

Section A: Mission Statement
The following is the Pastoral Plan for ______________________Parish in the City of ______________________for the San Gabriel Pastoral Region.

It is submitted to the Bishop for his review and approval on _______/____/____.

Mission Statement (Please type the Parish Mission Statement below or include it as a separate sheet)
Section B: Goal Worksheet

Goal #  __________

This goal is related to the Mission Statement Component or Synod Initiative:
________________________________________.

Statement of 3 or 5 Year Goal:
________________________________________
________________________________________

Objectives for Goal

Statement of One Year Objective:
________________________________________
________________________________________

Deadline to complete Objective ___/___/___
(Not more than one year away)

Who is the individual responsible for insuring that the objective is reached?
(This should not be a Parish Pastoral Council member)

Who is the Parish Pastoral Council member that will act as a liaison between the PPC and the responsible individual for this objective? What persons or groups will be served by this objective?

How will progress toward completing the objective be evaluated? What are the anticipated costs for this objective? Continuation of 1 year objectives using the same format. (Duplicate this form as needed)

Section C: Signature Sheet

Signature of Pastor ____________________________________________

Signature of Parish Pastoral Council Members
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
Joint Meeting of the Parish Pastoral Council and the Finance Council

The relationship between the Parish Pastoral Council and the Parish Finance Council is crucial to the development of relevant and prudent Pastoral Plans. The Parish Pastoral Council is encouraged to meet with the Parish Finance Council to review the Parish Pastoral Plan before it is published to the parish and submitted to the Bishop.

The San Gabriel Region Pastoral Council has developed the following suggested agenda for a joint meeting of the Pastoral Council and the Finance Council.

In addition, it is encouraged that a permanent liaison member from the Finance Council sits on the Parish Pastoral Council.

Suggested Joint Meeting Agenda for Parish Pastoral Council and Parish Finance Council

Purpose of Meeting:
At least once per year, the entire Parish Pastoral Council and Parish Finance Council should come together with the pastor to discuss the financial resources of the parish in light of the parish pastoral plan. The purpose of this meeting is to:

Examine the financial status of the parish
Coordinate the Parish Pastoral Plan with the future financial plan of the parish
Identify financial concerns that may impact the parish in the near future
Allocate funds towards certain objectives of the Parish Pastoral Plan.

Participants
• Pastor
• Pastoral Staff members
• All Parish Pastoral Council members
• All Finance Council members

When
This joint meeting should occur before publishing the final Parish Pastoral Plan to the Parish and submitting the plan to the Bishop. The meeting should also occur after the Parish Pastoral Council has affirmed goals and objectives for the Parish Pastoral Plan and the Finance Council has prepared a financial statement for the PPC to review.

Anticipated Results of the Meeting
The result of this joint meeting should be:
• an agreement among the pastor, the PPC and the Parish Finance Council regarding the funding of the initiatives of the Parish Pastoral Plan and all other activities of the parish
• a sharing of the financial status of the parish and priorities for the future.
Opening Prayer:

Lord, God of Holiness,
You have called us to be the servants of Your servants – our brothers and sisters in the parish. We meet here as their representatives, and so we ask for the Grace of Your Guidance. Help us to truly represent them and not simply ourselves. May the true needs of our parish and the common good of all be our concern. And above all, may Your Will in these matters become our Will. Help us who serve in leadership remember that all of our concerns are aimed at the spiritual transformation of our parish community. May the material aspects we discuss not blind us to the primary work of our parish: the holiness of all its members. May the Holy Spirit, who inspired the Pentecost meeting of the Apostles, visit us and grant us the light of Divine Wisdom. We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

(Prayer from Prayers for the Servants of God by Edward Hays)

Before the Meeting

In anticipation of the meeting, the Parish Pastoral Council should have prepared copies of the Parish Pastoral Plan including both the Goals and Objectives decided upon by the PPC and ratified by the Pastor. The Pastor and members of the PPC should also have estimated the resources (especially financial resources) that will be needed to accomplish each objective.

The Parish Finance Council should have prepared the most recent annual financial statement of the parish including all revenue, expenses, debts and investments. The Guidelines for Parish Pastoral Councils recommends that a liaison member from the Parish Finance Council sits on the Parish Pastoral Council. This liaison member should consistently inform both Councils on the progress of the other. In anticipation of this meeting the liaison member should share the emerging objectives with the finance council and make recommendations back to the Parish Pastoral Council on the feasibility of funding each objective in light of the financial situation of the parish.

This liaison position is crucial to the success of this joint meeting. The liaison member and the pastor should inform the Pastoral Council on the financial situation of the parish even as they are creating the initial pastoral plan. The more complete this information sharing the more successful this joint meeting.

During the preparation for a parish assembly or other parish-wide consultation, the liaison member should share the parish finances with the Pastoral Council and decide upon a method for distributing a report to the wider parish on the financial status of the parish. Transparent information sharing is necessary to create a collaborative and effective pastoral and financial plan for the parish.
Sharing the Pastoral Plan and Parish Resources

1. After the prayer, the meeting begins by the Finance Council giving a presentation of the current financial statement of the parish. A copy of the parish financial statement is given to all members of the PPC. The Finance Council chairperson also makes clear any financial concerns that will have an impact on the future life of the parish.

2. Once the financial status of the parish is presented and clarification questions have been made, a member of the PPC provides a brief overview of the parish pastoral plan and distributes copies of the plan to the Finance Council. The PPC shares with the Finance Council the estimated cost of any objectives (action steps) within the plan.

3. All members then consider the costs associated with the pastoral objectives. The two councils consider any changes or adjustments to the objectives that may be necessary due to financial restrictions. Once a decision is made on the objectives and the financial resources allotted to each objective the costs should be added to the budget.

4. The ultimate goal of the conversation is to agree upon a fiscally sound budget which takes into consideration the priorities of the parish pastoral plan but also is balanced or, at the very least, seeks to reduce or eliminate debt steadily year to year. If necessary, both councils discuss the need for additional revenue to fund initiatives of the Parish Pastoral Plan.

5. The meeting should conclude with a consensus among the group regarding a financial plan that takes into account the pastoral priorities and initiative of the Parish Pastoral Plan, the activities of the parish as well as salaries, maintenance and all other financial obligations of the parish.

6. The pastor is finally responsible for approving any budget adjustments and the spending associated with the objectives of the Parish Pastoral Plan.

7. If agreement cannot be reached during this meeting, the pastor should schedule a follow up meeting with the chairperson of the finance council and the pastoral council to reach a decision.

Closing Prayer

Lord of Day and Night of beginning and endings
As we prepare to conclude this meeting, we once again lift up our hearts to You, the Divine Source of All Life.
We thank You for the gifts that have been present within this act of service to the community. For the gifts of fellowship and understanding, of mutual respect and shared vision, we are grateful for the gifts of perseverance and insight into the common concerns we share. For these and all other graces, we are thankful.
As You have blessed our coming together, now bless our departure and journeys homeward. May Your blessing be upon us, In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

(Prayer from Prayers for the Servants of God by Edward Hays)
Parish Assembly

Publicity through Pulpit talks

As the Parish Pastoral Council plans for the parish assembly, they also must consider ways to stir interest and communicate the basic concepts of pastoral planning to the wider parish community.

One way to accomplish this is through a series of pulpit talks, given before Mass or at announcement time, that explain the areas of essential parish life. Used in this manner, pulpit talks serve a number of purposes:

• Publicity for the process in totality and specifically for the parish assembly.

• By focusing on the elements, it provides a format for the speaker to work within that is consistent from week to week, ideally generating both a rhythm over time and interest from parishioners. “Oh, someone said something like this last week too. I wonder what’s going on…”

• It provides a context, ensuring the focus of the whole process remains on the mission of the church.

• It educates a parish about its mission. By the time of the assembly, parishioners will already be familiar with the terms and how it can apply concretely to life.

• Different council members witnessing at each week at liturgy communicates a number of things at once; this process is important enough to use time at liturgy, many people are not only involved but personally invested in pastoral planning, the involvement of the entire parish is crucial to its success, and the entire process is transparent- the council seeks to communicate with the parish at every stage of planning.

Recommendations:

• Choose a different essential element for each week. If you have a limited amount of weeks to publicize, have the council choose the most relevant elements at that time rather than trying to do more than one element in one day which may be confusing and time consuming.

• Pulpit talks should be two to five minutes in length. If two people work together on one essential area, the talks should total no more than five minutes. Be sure to time yourself beforehand and practice with other council members at a council meeting.

• Council members may find it helpful split the elements among themselves, pairing up in two’s. Pairs can then develop their talks together, supporting one another. Masses can then be split between the two on the day of that element, dividing the work for the day.
• The talk should include:
  o Who you are
  o A (very) brief explanation of the essential area
  o Why this area is essential to parish life
  o How this area has been significant for you in your life
  o Invitation to come to the assembly to discuss the future of parish life.

It might be helpful to take into account other talks you hear from the pulpit at various times. Think consciously of what attracts your interest and what you find dull. Consider what the person is saying as well as tone, gestures and other subtle elements of public speaking. No one is perfect, and if your talk is genuine, people will respond. However, taking a few cues from what you appreciate in others when you are in the pew will help you connect with listeners when it’s your turn to speak.

The Seven Essential Elements:

The Seven Essential elements find their basis in the Code of Canon Law in the advisement of pastors on the norms of parish life (canons 528-530). They can be identified as: Worship, Word, Community, Service, Leadership, Stewardship and Evangelization. These elements have at their core Eucharist, the very heart of our identity as Catholics, the center of parish life and of our faith in Jesus Christ.

“It is through the liturgy, especially the Eucharist, that the faithful are enabled to express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church.” (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy).

In its simplest form, we can describe the elements as follows:

**Worship**- The spiritual life of a parish animates its mission. Personal and communal prayer is essential to the building up of the body of Christ. Worship gives expression to the faith of our communities and our degree of commitment to furthering the Reign of God. Through our worship we are nourished and strengthened to engage in the work of ministry which seeks to transform the world.

**Word**- Our spiritual journey is an ongoing lifelong process. As individuals and as a community we are called to deepen our relationship with Christ and pass it on to others. “Word” indicates a number of ways in which we do this, both formally and informally. Through catechesis, sacramental preparation, family formation, Sunday homilies, or the RCIA process, we build communities of faith through preaching, teaching and living the Word of God.

**Community**- We do not worship in isolation for Catholics are a communal people. Church life draws people together in mutual support, activity, celebration, and growth. It is the unity that results from members becoming involved with one another in all other
elements of the pastoral mission. Community is the human dynamic through which the mission of the church is embodied and embraced.

*This explanation of the elements is intended to inform council members in creating a pulpit talk. It is written to help you understand and articulate in your own words, NOT for the purpose of being read verbatim at the pulpit! Consider what you would find interesting and relevant if you were listening in the pew.*

“The parish is where the Church lives. Parishes are communities of faith, of action, and of hope. They are where the gospel is proclaimed and celebrated, where believers are formed and sent to renew the Earth.” (*Communities of Salt and Light, NCCB*)

**Service** – The Church is called to serve the needs of others and eliminate the causes of injustice. “Service” therefore includes the elements of both charity and justice. Far from being a burden to parish life, social ministry is part of what keeps a parish alive, making it truly Catholic and reflecting the Gospel mission.

These elements are surrounded and supported by **Leadership** and **Stewardship**.

**Leadership** While the pastor bears ultimate responsibility and authority within a parish, effective councils require a shared leadership among clergy and laity which calls forth the gifts of visioning, planning empowering and evaluating. The council leads as servants of God, drawing forth the gifts of others through active Stewardship.

**Stewardship** – If the Church is to fulfill its mission, we must be deeply committed to sharing our gifts, talents, money, and material resources in the same spirit of generosity as the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave all that He had for our salvation. With an understanding of what membership in the Church involves, this sharing is not so much an option for Catholics but a serious duty that both keeps the church alive and honors those gifts we have been given through the grace of the Holy Spirit.

**Evangelization:** The term evangelization encompasses any way in which the Church continues to spread the Good News of Jesus. Evangelization is at the heart of the mission of the Church. We evangelize by sharing our enthusiasm for the faith, inviting others to join or recommit themselves to the faith, and fostering gospel values in our families and society so as to transform the world.

The seven elements with the Eucharist at its center provides a filter through all which all the activities of the parish can be sifted, each falling into place as the purpose of the parish.
PARISH PASTORAL PLAN SURVEY

Evangelization

“Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature.”
(Mark 16:15)

Evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new…” (On Evangelization in the Modern World, Pope Paul VI)

Descriptors are some of the common ways in which Evangelization is evident in a parish setting. Please place a check mark in the circle of those descriptors that in your opinion are currently happening in our parish in the area of Evangelization.

O 1. Adults and children are given opportunities for evangelization formation.
O 2. Newcomers are welcomed into our parish at a monthly “Welcoming Rite
O 3. Efforts are made to reach out to the alienated, the inactive, and the unchurched.
O 4. The public image of our parish is one of hospitality, invitation, and compassion, where no one is excluded.
O 5. Our parish takes steps to influence the values and decisions of the larger community through prophetic action and works of justice and outreach.
O 6. There is a sense of Christian joy about the Good News of Jesus Christ; it is evident in homilies, in worship, in parish activities, and in outreach efforts.
O 7. Programming for parish organizations consistently offers prayer, faith formation, entertainment, and hospitality.
O 8. There is a good spirit of working together among parish groups and organizations.
O 9. Mutuality and inclusivity are hallmarks of our parish community.
O 10. Our parishioners are given opportunities to be formed in an understanding of ecumenism.
Structures for Participation and Accountability

“To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some specific benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another mighty deeds; to another prophesy; to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes.” (Corinthians 12: 7-11)

Please place a check mark in the circle of those descriptors that in your opinion are currently happening in our parish in the area of Structures for Participation and accountability.

O 1. Our pastor, parish staff, and parish pastoral council, according to their appropriate roles, share responsibility for visioning, planning, empowering, and evaluating.

O 2. The pastoral concerns of our parish are assessed, evaluated, and responded to by the parish pastoral council in collaboration with the pastor and the parish staff.

O 3. The Parish Mission Statement is formulated, reviewed, and revised as needed, by the entire parish community. We all are consulted.

O 4. The Parish Mission Statement and the Six Synod Initiatives are the basis of the Parish Pastoral Plan.

O 5. Decisions of the Parish Pastoral Council are made by consensus after a process of discernment, study and discussion.

O 6. Ongoing formation and training of parish leaders is planned for and provided by the parish budget.

O 7. Parish leaders delegate responsibility for implementing pastoral activities to competent persons, offering them support, resources, and regular oversight.

O 8. Parish personnel are recruited and remunerated according to professional standards and formal job descriptions.

O 9. Members of the finance council are persons with interest and experience in budgeting, facilities management, and fundraising and development.
Ongoing Education and Formation: Adults; Young Adults; Youth

“Then Jesus approached and said to them, ‘All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And, behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.’” (Matthew 28:18-20)

Please place a check mark in the circle of those descriptors that in your opinion are currently happening in our parish in the area of Ongoing Education and Formation: Adults; Young Adults; Youth.

O 1. Our parish catechetical leadership has been provided with appropriate education, skill building, and training to provide catechist formation and effective administration of religious education efforts.

O 2. Skilled and Knowledgeable persons staff all aspects of parish formation efforts: catechesis, RCIA, and sacramental preparation. They are witness to the Gospel, active in parish life, and faithful to the teachings of the Church.

O 3. Adequate funds, resources, staff, and space are allocated to carry out the catechetical efforts of the parish, including Catholic schools.

O 4. Religious formation is planned and evaluated for all in the parish: adults, young adults, and children.

O 5. Strengthening marriages and nurturing the life of families are priorities for the parish.

O 6. Assistance is provided to help parents understand their roles as ministers to their children in the formation of Christian values.

O 7. Catechetical efforts present the essential message of Catholic Christianity using models and methodologies which speak to the total development of the believer and lead to faith commitment in action.

O 8. Sacramental preparation for baptism, confirmation, Eucharist/reconciliation is parish-based and intergenerational whenever possible.

O 9. Adult Bible Study, planned faith formation, and small group interaction are an integral part of adult faith formation. A staff professional directs these programs.
Ministry and Leadership: Lay; Consecrated Life; Ordained

Baptism and conformation give each one a share in the Church's witness, worship and service for the good of its mission - the mission of Christ and of the Spirit - for the transformation of the world. Through baptism all share in the witness, worship, and service of the Church. The call to ministry and leadership comes specifically from the grace of baptism, and so there are many forms of ministry that pertain to the laity, and are not restricted to clergy and religious. Indeed, “the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood. It is directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church # 1547).

Please place a check mark in the circle of those descriptors that in your opinion are currently happening in the area of Ministry and Leadership: Lay; Consecrated Life; Ordained.

O 1. Parish members are invited to evenings/days of reflection, retreats and/or informational talks that help foster an awareness of their particular vocation in life as single, married, avowed religious, or clergy (priest or deacon).

O 2. Parish members are asked to pray for their pastor and his associates regularly.

O 3. Parish leadership and clergy regularly participate in parish activities.

O 4. Our parish provides information to families regarding avowed religious life and the priesthood.

O 5. Our pastor or his associates regularly speak about their vocation and encourage young people to pursue a vocation to the priesthood and religious life.

O 6. Our parish is sensitive to the needs of single individuals.

O 7. Families are asked to encourage their youth to pursue avowed religious life or the priesthood.

O 8. Vocation awareness is part of our conformation program.
Eucharist and Sacramental Living

The Church’s sacramental life becomes fruitful as the whole People of God integrate the sacramental celebrations of the Paschal Mystery with their efforts to transform the world through God’s love. The Eucharist makes the gathered community, the assembly, what it is. We become what we receive; we receive the Body of Christ in the Eucharist to become the Body of Christ for the transformation of the world. We live by a transforming grace that allows us to recognize and embrace the sacredness of human life and living in its various dimensions. Our whole lives become a living expression of the Paschal Mystery – the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ – that we celebrate, primarily in the Eucharist. (From Initiative Five of Synod Initiatives)

Please place a check mark in the circle of those descriptors that in your opinion are currently happening in our parish in the areas of Eucharist and Sacramental Living.

O 1. The weekend Eucharist is a priority in the life of the parish and is celebrated with full and active participation of the parishioners.

O 2. Competent individuals are responsible for every aspect of liturgical celebrations.

O 3. Parishioners serve in many liturgical roles at liturgy.

O 4. Liturgical ministers are well trained and effective in their ministries.

O 5. Preaching is directly related to the scriptures and to the real life experiences of the people.

O 6. Our worship space is able to accommodate the rites of the Church in a dignified and liturgically suitable manner.

O 7. Liturgical art and environment are marked by noble simplicity.

O 8. Worship aids are contemporary and in good condition.

O 9. Quality in music, including instruments, musicians, and hymn selection, enables the assembly to participate in sung prayer.

O 10. All the sacraments are celebrated regularly, with attention given to making them true expressions of the life of the parish

O 11 Liturgy of the Word with Children is celebrated with young members of our parish.
Prayer and Spirituality in Parish Life

With Mary, who is our Mother and model, The Church ponders and lives the mystery of Christ. Prayer and Spirituality sustain us in our everyday lives and lead us to a deeper relationship with God. Prayer and Spirituality are embodied in our Sacramental celebrations, devotions and personal prayer that draw the community and each individual to life of holiness.

Please place a check mark in the circle of those descriptors that in your opinion are currently happening in our parish in the areas of Prayer and Spirituality.

☐ 1. Prayer is encouraged as a habit for life for all members of our parish community.

☐ 2. Our community’s activities are anchored in prayer.

☐ 3. Parish staff gathers regularly for prayer together and are encouraged to pursue prayer in difficult situations.

☐ 4. Activities and workshops are offered that invite parishioners to a greater awareness of their own Spirituality and Prayer style.

☐ 5. Parish renewals, evenings of Prayer and/or retreat days are planned that enliven and deepen the faith of the people.

☐ 6. Opportunities are provided for small groups to gather and share faith as it relates to everyday life.

☐ 7. Devotional prayer is encouraged, but does not interfere with the primary sacramental celebration of the parish, the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

☐ 8. As individuals and as a community of faith, all members are invited and encouraged to pursue an ever deepening relationship with Jesus Christ.
Social Justice: Living at the Service of God’s Reign

Building a world of Communion and justice is a foreshadowing of, and participation in, the Reign of God. “Communion” describes our relationship with God, others, ourselves and all creation; a relationship rooted in equality, mutuality and interdependence at the heart of divine life. Authentic communion calls for a willingness to share the resources of this Archdiocese across parish, deanery, and regional boundaries. “Justice” is the activity of creating a world in which all may grow – with particular attention given to the poor, the weak, and the wounded. The gospel reminds us that we come to a deeper knowledge of Jesus Christ through our experience of the poor and all those who are in need (Matthew 25:31-46).

Please place a check mark in the circle of those descriptors that in your opinion are currently happening in our parish in the areas of Social Justice: Living at the Service of God’s Reign.

O 1. Our parish focuses on the needs of the human community, beginning with its own members and extending to the poor and marginalized in the local areas, the nation, and the world.

O 2. Our parish Makes every effort to accommodate persons with special needs.

O 3. Organizations within the parish systematically address particular needs by sponsoring projects such as food pantries, shelters for the homeless and job assistance for the unemployed, or by supporting other parishes or agencies which have these services.

O 4. Programs that minister to the sick, the bereaved, and the homebound are ongoing.

O 5. Our parish participates in local, national, and international helping efforts.

O 6. An organized program of instruction dealing with current issues in light Catholic social teaching has been implemented.

O 7. Formation efforts at all levels integrate Catholic social teaching.

O 8. Participation in political action, voting in local and national elections, involvement in policy-making at local, state, and national levels is encouraged.

O 9. Respect for life at all stages, racial and ethnic harmony, peacemaking
Commissioning Ceremony for Parish Pastoral Councils

This usually takes place within Mass following the homily. If there is already a Parish Pastoral Council in existence, begin with A. If it is a brand new Parish Pastoral Council, go to B. and omit the words in square brackets.

A.

**Presider:** I invite those who have completed their term of office on our Parish Pastoral Council to come forward. *(Names of outgoing members are read out as they come forward)*

**Presider:** On behalf of our parish community, I would like to thank you for your contribution to the work of the Parish Pastoral Council. Please accept this token of our appreciation, and may you continue to respond to your baptismal call by being of service to others.

*Presider hands each person a gift (e.g. plaque or certificate) and invites the congregation to offer a round of applause. He then hands each member a lighted candle.*

B.

**Presider:** You have worked to bring the light of Christ to our parish. This work now passes to others. I [now] invite those who have been chosen to serve our community as [new] members of the Parish Pastoral Council to come forward.

*(Names of [new] members are read out as they move toward their places in the sanctuary facing the people. The Priest stands to one side.)*

**Presider:** Each of you has been called from this Parish community to serve as a member of the Parish Pastoral Council. Do you accept the responsibilities of parish leadership that we place on you?

**PCC members:** We do.

**Presider:** Will you strive to be more like Christ so that you will be better able to serve his people?

**PCC members:** We will.

**Presider:** May God bless and sustain you in the work you have taken on for this parish community. Be a beacon of light in the life of the Church.

Christ is the light of the world. Your task is to walk in the light of Christ and share it with others. *[omit if it is an all new Parish Pastoral Council]* The light that has been tended by these former members of the Parish Pastoral Council now passes to you.
May this candle remind you of our mission to let the light of Christ shine out for all to see. (The outgoing members of the PPC or the presider if it is a new PPC) present a lighted candle to each new member saying: **Let your light shine before all.**

*The outgoing members now return to their places in the congregation.*

**New members:** We are grateful for the trust you are placing in us and accept this ministry within our community. We pledge ourselves to serve with love, joy, and enthusiasm. We will work to help build the life of the Christian community in our Parish and in the Archdiocese. We will be conscious of the needs of all our parishioners and to make Christ present for everyone, following his example as one who served.

We ask your prayerful support, encouragement and insights as we commit ourselves to serve this community.

*The priest invites the congregation to show their support in a round of applause. the new members return to their places in the congregation.*

**Intercessions** – The Prayers of intercession might include a Prayer for the Parish Pastoral Council members, their families and the grace to lead with dignity and courage.

A prayer of thanks for the work of the outgoing members might also be included.
Consensus Decision Making

In simple terms, consensus refers to agreement on some decision by all members of a group, rather than a majority or a select group of representatives. The consensus process is what a group goes through to reach this agreement. The assumptions, methods, and results are very different from traditional parliamentary procedure or majority voting methods.

Consensus is based on the belief that each person has some part of the truth and that no one has all of it (no matter how tempting it is to believe that we ourselves really know best!) It is also based on a respect for all persons involved in the decision being considered.

Acting according to consensus guidelines enables a group to take advantage of all group members' ideas. By combining their thoughts, people can often create a higher-quality decision than a vote decision or a decision by a single individual. Further, consensus decisions can be better than vote decisions because voting can actively undermine the decision. People are more likely to implement decisions they accept, and consensus makes acceptance more likely.

What the consensus process requires

Consensus demands a high level of trust among the members of the group. People need to believe that each member is a fair and reasonable person of integrity who has the organization's best interests at heart. There are no perfect groups or perfect individuals, but for consensus to work the members must believe that everyone is honestly doing their best.

Another important element of the consensus process is a good facilitator. This person is responsible for seeing that everyone is heard, that all ideas are incorporated if they seem to be part of the truth, and that the final decision is agreed upon by all assembled. The facilitator is the servant of the group, not its leader. It is his/her job to draw out and focus the best thinking of the group, not to use his/her position to impose or elevate his/her own.

It's important that the facilitator never show signs of impatience or disfavor towards an idea or a member. Total objectivity may an unattainable ideal, but the facilitator should strive to remain as neutral as possible in the discussion. If he/she can't manage this, then someone else should be facilitating. For this reason, many groups rotate the facilitator role on some kind of regular schedule, or choose a facilitator for each discussion depending on who is willing to forgo taking a more active part.

A good facilitator needs to be patient, intuitive, articulate, able to think on his/her feet, and have a sense of humor. He/she should always be on the lookout for things that are missing--a person who wants to speak but has been too shy, an idea that was badly articulated or dismissed too quickly but has potential, or anything happening on the nonverbal level that might be significant. The facilitator should periodically state and restate the ideas on the table, the elements that have been agreed on, and the questions still being decided. This allows everyone to see that progress is being
made, and to focus on the work left to be done.

**Key guidelines for consensus decision-making**

1. Come to the discussion with an open mind. This doesn't mean not thinking about the issue beforehand, but it does mean being willing to consider any other perspectives and ideas that come up in the discussion.

2. Listen to other people's ideas and try to understand their reasoning.

3. Describe your reasoning briefly so other people can understand you. Avoid arguing for your own judgments and trying to make other people change their minds to agree with you.

4. Avoid changing your mind only to reach agreement and avoid conflict. Do not "go along" with decisions until you have resolved any reservations that you consider important.

5. View differences of opinion as helpful rather than harmful.

6. Avoid conflict-reducing techniques such as majority vote. Stick with the process a little longer and see if you can't reach consensus after all.

**Variations on basic consensus**

No matter how well the discussion is carried forward, how good the facilitator and how much integrity and trust exist in the group, there sometimes comes a point where all are in agreement but one or two. At this point there are a few possible courses of action. One is to ask if the individuals are willing to "step aside." This means that they do not agree with the decision but do not feel that it is wrong. They are willing to have the decision go forward, but do not want to take part in carrying it out.

Depending on the size and nature of the group, if more than one or two people want to step aside from a decision, the group should probably take another look at it. The facilitator might ask for a few minutes of silence to see if there is another decision or an amendment that should have been considered but has been overlooked, or something that would ease the situation.

Another possibility is to lay aside the issue for another time. Although this alternative may create some difficulties, the world will probably continue to turn with or without a decision being made right now. The need to make a decision promptly is often not as important as the need to ultimately come to unity around a decision that has been well-crafted, taking the time it needs to do it right.

A third possibility is that one or two people may stop the group from moving forward. At this time there are several key considerations. Most important, the group should see those who are withholding consensus as doing so out of their highest understanding and beliefs.
Next, the individual(s) who are preventing the group from making the decision should also examine themselves closely to assure that they are not withholding consensus out of self-interest, bias, vengeance, or any other such feeling. A refusal to enter consensus should be based on a very strong belief that the decision is wrong--and that the dissenter(s) would be doing the group a great disservice by allowing the decision to go forward.

This is always one of those times when feelings can run high, and it's important for the group not to put pressure on those who differ. It's hard enough to feel that you are stopping the group from going forward, without feeling coerced to go against your examined reasons and deeply felt understandings.

Some groups operate under a modified consensus approach called "Consensus-Minus-One." What this means is that it takes more than one dissenting member to block consensus. One voice at odds with the rest is considered a workable way to go forward, but more than one is a sign that the decision should be re-thought. Consensus-Minus-One can be a reassuring arrangement for people who are new to the process of consensus decision-making, or in groups where members aren't well acquainted enough to have the level of trust needed to commit to achieving full consensus. In practice, many groups have found that Consensus-Minus-One serves as a safety valve that rarely gets used. If even one member has strong reservations about a decision, it's often enough to keep the group searching for a better answer.

**Some difficulties with consensus**

1. Achieving consensus can take considerably longer than a simple majority vote.

2. People who don't actively try to find a decision that is acceptable to everyone (all-win) can dominate a group's discussion by trying to make everyone else go along with them (win-lose).

3. A group can coerce or manipulate individuals into saying they accept a decision, even when they don't. That is groupthink, not true consensus.

Consensus and groupthink are different. Groupthink occurs when everyone expresses agreement with a decision, but some people are just going along because they feel obligated to reach an agreement and avoid conflict. Thus although there appears to be a consensus, some people have not resolved disagreements they consider important. In consensus, all agree with the decision and all important disagreements are resolved.

The time required to reach consensus can't usually be avoided. Instead, look at it as an investment in better decisions and a healthier, more egalitarian, more participatory organization. The other pitfalls can best be dealt with through openness and continuous effort on everyone's part to do what is ethical and right for the group. A willingness to take risks and to give and receive honest feedback is key to developing the trust required to let the process work.
# Glossary of Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Administrative Decision</strong></th>
<th>A course of action determined to address or resolve a matter concerned with the daily operation of the parish.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accountability</strong></td>
<td>To account for one’s actions in regard to his/her participation on a committee, organization, ministry, or other designated function.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ad Hoc Committee</strong></td>
<td>A group of people selected to accomplish a particular task. This can be to consider, investigate, report and/or make a recommendation regarding a particular issue, project, or concern.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Archdiocesan Pastoral</strong></td>
<td>A consultative body to the Archbishop regarding the pastoral needs of the local Church.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Committee</strong></td>
<td>A group of people selected to examine, analyze, inform or carry out recommendations.</td>
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<td><strong>Standing Committee</strong></td>
<td>A committee which remains for a prolonged period of time.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Code of Canon Law</strong></td>
<td>A set of norms or laws, approved and adopted by the universal Church, intended to bring order into the life of the ecclesial community. It is articulated by those who are entrusted with the community’s care, and its purpose is to serve the common good.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Collaboration</strong></td>
<td>The process of working together for a common cause and for the benefit of many.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Consensus</strong></td>
<td>General agreement by the members of a group concerning an opinion, position, proposal or course of action.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Consultation</strong></td>
<td>A process in which people come together to seek the advice or opinion of one another. Through the process, they are called to listen, reflect, and through exploration and judgment, come to an understanding and hopefully to a wise decision.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Consultative Body</strong></td>
<td>A group of advisors who, through prayer, reflection, research, discussion, interaction and deliberation are able to give an opinion.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Councilor</strong></td>
<td>A member of the Council.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Discernment</strong></td>
<td>The process of arriving at a decision through prayer, deliberation and reflection.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluate</strong></td>
<td>The action taken to assess the positive and negative aspects of a plan, goal or concern of the Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function</strong></td>
<td>The intention or particular activity of anything.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Goal</strong></td>
<td>A desired achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guideline</strong></td>
<td>Predetermined principles, objectives and standards that direct the pertinent performance of a group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mission Statement</strong></td>
<td>A statement which expresses the vision of the future, it creates a clear, convincing purpose and reason for being, while defining the principles and values that sustains and guides a particular entity in setting future goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Moderator</strong></td>
<td>At the Parish Pastoral Council, a member of the PPC entrusted by the Pastor to help discussions stay productive and within the guidelines.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Norm</strong></td>
<td>A set pattern or method that must or should be followed; an authoritative standard, a principle of right action binding upon the members of a group and serving to guide, control, or regulate proper and acceptable behavior.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Objective</strong></td>
<td>A clear account of the course of action to be taken to achieve a goal.</td>
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</table>
Operational Guidelines  Roles, rights, and responsibilities by which members of a group will function. They reach agreement on these, and clearly communicate them to every member of the group.

Parish Finance Council  Mandated by Canon 537, it is a consultative group formed to assist the pastor in the proper administration of the parish’s resources.

Parish Life Director  A professional minister who is appointed by the Archbishop and entrusted with the spiritual welfare and leadership of a parish which does not have the benefit of a priest pastor.

Pastor  A priest in charge of a parish. He is responsible for administering the sacraments, instructing the congregation in the doctrine of the Church, and other services to the people of the parish.

Pastoral Planning  Method by which the parish community, through prayer, reflection and study, defines its identity, common purpose, vision, mission, goals and priorities. They then establish the means to accomplish them.

Pastoral Staff  Consists of pastors, associate pastors, pastoral associates, pastoral administrators, deacons, women and men religious, lay ministers, and other staff that collaborate with the pastor in carrying out the pastoral care ministries and programs within the parish.

Pastoral Team  The group composed of priests, deacons, men and women religious and lay pastoral ministers who make administrative and pastoral decisions judiciously and responsibly and are accountable for establishing these decisions.
Planning
A procedure by which the needs, goals, objectives, resources and the means to achieve the desired outcome are determined.

Preside
To lead, direct, officiate, chair or oversee a meeting, gathering or liturgical function.

Presider
The individual who leads, directs, officiates, and oversees a meeting, gathering or liturgical function. The Pastor is the Presider of the Parish Pastoral Council.

Priority
A matter, need or goal ranked a preferential: it therefore takes precedence over others.

Regional Pastoral Council
A consultative body to the Regional Bishop, an Auxiliary Bishop to the Archbishop of Los Angeles, for the pastoral needs of the local Church within a designated geographic area.