

## **PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL GUIDELINES FOR THE DIOCESE OF CHARLOTTETOWN**

*Just as each of our bodies has several parts and each part has a separate function, so all of us, in union with Christ, form one body, and as parts of it we belong to each other.*

Romans 12:4-5

### **THE NATURE OF PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS**

A Pastoral Council is a consultative and guiding body within a parish that enables lay people to work closely with their pastor in carrying out the mission of Christ in the Church. The purpose of the Pastoral Council is to discern, plan, coordinate and guide the pastoral mission of the parish.

The Pastoral Council is essentially pastoral in nature. As such, the Pastoral Council must carefully consider the needs of the people and assess the gifts and talents needed to respond to those needs and for the growth of the parish community (See addendum #1).

It is highly recommended that ongoing education and formation be an integral part of pastoral council activities. A part of each meeting is to be devoted to prayer, scripture reading and reflection, and study of pertinent literature.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

#### **A. Selection**

Several options are possible:

*Discernment:* a process that would involve parish and prospective candidates in prayerful discernment of God's call to this particular ministry.

*Elections:* candidates would be proposed by parishioners, by the Council, or by parish organizations.

*Appointment:* by joint consultation of the pastor and the pastoral council. To be used only when the council is not adequately representative.

No two members of the same household sit on the council during the same term.

If members belong to specific interest groups, they are present on the council as members of the parish community and not as representatives of any particular group.

A Pastoral Council ought not to exceed 10 members.

### **B. Formation of New members**

The Council is to provide a session of formation for new members within one month of their becoming part of the Council. All members are to be encouraged to attend this formation session.

### **C. Absenteeism**

Members who miss more than three consecutive meetings without explanation or reason for their absence, shall be considered for replacement on the Council after consultation between the pastor, the chairperson, and the person in question.

### **D. Length of Mandate**

Mandate is for three years, renewable once.

So as to maintain stability and efficiency, no more than one-third of the members should be replaced in any given year.

### **E. Roles**

*President:* The person who has been mandated by the bishop to provide pastoral care for the parish: the pastor/administrator/pastoral associate.

*Chairperson:* It is recommended that a person have one full year of service on the Council before assuming the position of chairperson.

*Secretary:* This person need not be a member of the Council, but can be someone asked to fulfill the tasks required. This would allow each member of the Council to participate fully in Council discussion – a task which is more difficult if involved in secretarial duties.

### **PROCEDURES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Pastoral Council meets at regular intervals during the year, usually monthly, from September to June. Several parishes served by the same pastor may discover alternate ways to respond to the pastoral needs of their people.

The president, chair, and secretary are responsible for drawing up the agenda which will be made available to members at least 48 hours before the meeting.

At the end of each year, no later than mid-June, the Council will give a full account of its activities to the parish.

The Council, as a faith community, is encouraged to strive for consensus in decision-making.

The Council will advise the Parish Finance Committee of its pastoral priorities and request financial support for these initiatives.

The Council will foster communication between committees and parishioners (see addendum #2).

### **MEETINGS**

The regularly scheduled meeting should not exceed two hours. (See addendum #3 for a suggested format.)

## ADDENDUM

### 1. SOME ELEMENTS THAT DESCRIBE "PASTORAL"

The following are some of the functions within the domain of the Pastoral Council. The list is by no means exhaustive.

- To give leadership in building a dynamic Christian Community.
- To assure a continuous assessment of the pastoral needs of the parish and to set priorities in the implementation of programs aimed at meeting those needs.
- To identify, support, and enable the gifts and talents of all the members of the parish and to provide needed training for lay ministries.
- To set up whatever committees are needed to ensure that required projects are carried out.
- To provide direction in enabling parishioners to share responsibility for parish life.
- To involve families/parishioners in planning for parish ministry.
- To make available programs in faith development and spiritual formation.

### 2. COMMITTEES

The work of the Pastoral Council is one of animation rather than implementation. The specific "action" of the pastoral council is to find the means that will answer the community's need.

Through reflection, planning, coordination, animation and action, pastoral councils must see to it that all the different aspects of parish life are considered and integrated into the overall pastoral development of the parish. If need be, the pastoral council will establish committees, according to the needs of the parish, to ensure that required projects are carried out. Pastoral councils are to assure that its committees embrace the vision and goals of the council.

Some recommended committees are: Liturgical, Community Life (Family), Youth Ministry, Religious Education, Social Action. Possible criteria for setting up such committees are:

- Purpose: How does the task of this committee relate to the overall parish mission?
- Scope: What will be its liaison and accountability to the pastoral council?
- Structure: How will membership be chosen? How will the chair be chosen?

- Operation: Long-term and short-term goals to be in line with Council vision.

### 3. SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR MEETINGS OF PASTORAL COUNCIL

- Prayer/formation/faith-sharing (30 min)
- Committee reports or ongoing assessment of activities previously undertaken (30-40 min)
- Ongoing planning and visioning (40 min)
- Discussion of reports or assessment
- Evaluation of present programs and ministries
- Review of goals
- Future issues evolving from this ongoing review of goals
- Broader issues: Diocese/Justice
- Agenda for next meeting