

Parish Pastoral Councils – Recommendations to Consider

“Purpose of Councils”

Two main ways to view the purpose of pastoral councils:

- Coordinating Councils – the council coordinates the parish’s volunteer programs
 - Promotes and directs volunteers participates to ensure cooperation among ministries and develops policy for ministries
 - Members are composed of ministry representatives
- Planning Councils – study pastoral issues, reflect on them, and recommend conclusions
 - Does not implement recommendations nor oversee administration of parish
 - Members selected for their ability to reflect and synthesize
- ✓ Councils are typically a blend of the two, but should focus on one over the other. Frustration can occur when the council’s purpose is not well defined or when it is expected to accomplish too much (both planning and coordinating).
- ✓ Spiritual and communicative purposes are also primary, but both fit broadly under either a coordinating or planning council

Taken from Chapter 3 of *Pastoral Councils in Today’s Catholic Parish* by Mark Fischer. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2001. Available in DOY Religious Education Resource Library.

“Recommendations for Parish Pastoral Councils”

- Leadership should be shared among all members
 - Dividing tasks of meeting and council so all have a role (agenda, minutes, chair of council, prayer, etc)
- Establish Groups Norms, such as Council Bylaws
 - Regulate expectations, behavior, attitudes and perceptions for members
- Provide Education and Formation Programs for Council members
 - Helps councils members achieve level of cohesion, trust, and open communication
- Include a member of the Parish Finance Council on the Parish Pastoral Council
- Communicate with the Parish at Large
 - Two way communication
- Match decision-making procedures with the situation
 - Use of discernment/consensus for complex situations, but voting for some situations
- Include prayer and faith sharing as part of the agenda at every meeting.
 - Sets the tone for the meeting
 - Can be helpful in the middle of a discussion to help refocus

Taken from Chapter 7 of *Best Practices of Catholic Pastoral and Finance Councils* by Charles E. Zech, Mary L. Gautier, Robert J. Miller, and Mary E. Bendyna, RSM. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2010. Available in DOY Religious Education Resource Library.

“Best Practices for Parish Excellence”

- Parish life centered around the Eucharistic Celebration
- Total ministering communities – empowering discipleship in laity
- Commitment to Formation of Lay Ministers
- Pastor - Agent of change using gifts of parishioners and giving a vision for the future
- Staff - collaborative leaders rather than expert ministers.
- Embrace the diversity of the parish
- Lifelong catechesis – integrated and long term approach
- Intentional and proactive outreach to individuals and households
- Regional Ministry to Youth and Young Adults
- Regional collaboration among Parishes – sharing resources, programs, and staff
- Commitment to a formal social justice ministry
- Accountability and transparency in Parish Administration

“Recommendations for Pastoral Planning”

- Conduct a parish self-assessment against established benchmarks or best practices
 - Survey parish, focus groups, committee study of parish
- Develop a 5 year strategy that integrates various ministries into a coherent plan
 - Setting priorities and direction for the future
 - Parish Vision – clear, concise, and consistent vision for the parish
 - Parish Mission – unique characteristics and contributions of the community
 - Core Ministry Area Strategies – 5-7 major priorities and direction.
 - Ministry objectives and initiatives – concrete priorities, initiatives, or outcomes to be achieved
 - Performance indicators – measurable, concrete, and meaningful
 - Annual action plan for each Core Ministry Area – description of decisions, actions, and timetables
- Align parish staff and lay volunteers with defined ministry strategies
 - Reviewing how to more effectively direct staff and volunteer personnel, including letting go of some programs so new ones can flourish
 - Calling forth and empowering new lay ministers
- Align resources based on ministry strategies
 - Include budget strategies in 5 year plan to reflect ministry strategies

Taken from Chapters 8 and 9 of *The Changing Face of Church: Emerging Models of Parish Leadership* by Marti R Jewell and David A. Ramey. *Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership* Series. Chicago: Loyola Press, 2010. Available in DOY Religious Education Resource Library.