



Life in the Christian Community

“The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all. There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need.”

(Acts 4:32-35)

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Best Practices for Pastoral Councils



Department of
Pastoral Services



The Centrality of Prayer in the Council's Time Together

- Beginning the year with a focused time of prayer for the parish—e.g. Mass, Adoration, Liturgy of the Hours
- Prayer at the beginning and end of meetings
- Stopping for individual prayer anytime the council is divided on a serious issue or is discerning the parish's future
- Evening or day of reflection for council members

Advance Planning for the Council's Time Together

- Including time for community building among council members as well as ensuring that the council is focused on setting and accomplishing its goals
- Developing an overall work plan for the year including orientation of new members, developing pastoral priorities for the parish, prayer, education (e.g. reading and discussing books or articles on parish ministry), community building, coordinating a process for selecting new members at the end of the year

Regular, Two-Way Communication With the Parish at Large

- Council members' names and photos at the back of churches and on the parish website
- Regular presence of pastoral council members at coffee hours
- A standard place on council meeting agendas for members to share what they have heard from parishioners—questions, concerns, ideas
- Open forum time at pastoral council meetings—with clear procedures—e.g. notification of the chair beforehand, time limits, how issues will be addressed and when
- Council agenda and key points from meetings in the bulletin
- Minutes available for parishioners and posted on the parish website
- Annual parishioner meeting to share parish accomplishments, challenges, and pastoral priorities as well as elicit input on particular issues facing the parish
- Surveys, focus groups, and other methods to involve parishioners in planning the parish's future



Good Meeting Practices

- Productive agendas focused on one or more areas of the Church's mission
- Starting and ending at an agreed upon time
- Timely dissemination of agendas and minutes



A Sample Pastoral Council Agenda

- Opening prayer and faith sharing
- Approval of agenda after any needed revisions
- Approval of previous meeting's minutes
- Items to be discussed (old and new)
- Planning for the next and future meetings
- Open forum time: for council members and parishioners
- Meeting evaluation
- Review of action items
- Closing prayer