

Pastoral Council Update

Pastoral Planning & Pastoral Council Formation
Diocese of Rochester

Volume 2, Issue 1
May 2013

Preparing for Next Year's Pastoral Council



In the typical pastoral council's yearly cycle, the following tasks are ordinarily covered during the spring and summer months...

A Review of the Pastoral Council's Covenant or By-Laws

A best practice is to schedule time each year for council members to read through and discuss your written agreement for how you are organized, your purpose and how you work with one another. Otherwise the covenant ceases to be a living document and to guide your operation—it's not infrequent that a new pastoral leader or council member asks, "Do we have by-laws?" And the response is, "Of course we do...they're around here somewhere."

- Are there any practices described in the covenant that the council is not currently following? Should you change either your practice or the covenant?
- Based on this past year's experience, are there any sections you want to modify? add? delete?

Follow the amendment process agreed upon in your by-laws. Ordinarily it's not helpful to propose a change and accept it at the same meeting. Allow time for reflection and discussion before a decision is made.

Recruiting and Selecting New Council Members

Review your practice and make sure you follow your timeline for what needs to be done when.

Inviting prospective members —

- **Advertise broadly** (nomination forms in the pews, pulpit and bulletin announcements, social media)
- **Reach out and invite personally**—particularly pastoral council members and staff—who do you know in the parish who has the leadership skills to make a valuable contribution? Which parts of the parish are poorly represented (young adults? newer parishioners?) Does the council reflect the ethnic or racial diversity of the parish?
- **Help prospective members understand what council membership entails**—Provide a "job description," have your covenant or by-laws on the parish website and make it available; consider holding an informational or discernment evening; encourage prospective members to contact current ones; invite prospective members to sit in on a council meeting. (continued on p. 2)

The more your pastoral council has been visible and communicated with parishioners over the course of the year, the easier it will be to attract new members.

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Selecting Council Officers

Is this how your chairperson is typically chosen?

- “Who wants to be chair next year?” (All eyes down.) Finally, after an awkward pause, “Oh, I guess I can do it...”
- “Don isn’t here tonight—let’s make him the chair.”
- “Jane, you’ve done such a great job the past 10 years—can you do one more?”

Peace of Christ parish in Rochester has used a more effective method first developed by Ed Bell, a parishioner and former coordinator of pastoral council formation within the diocese.

Have the pastoral leader, a staff member, or the outgoing chair facilitate this process.

- 1) Review the officers’ responsibilities as described in your covenant/by-laws and ask the current officers to describe what they do, the time commitment, etc.
- 2) Ask council members to describe the qualities they believe the positions require.
- 3) Ask all council members (keeping these qualities in mind) to nominate one of their peers to serve as chairperson through a paper ballot. It is important to choose the chairperson first, then the vice chair, then the secretary.
- 4) The facilitator lists on a flipchart all those nominated.
- 5) All nominated are encouraged to stay in the running for chairperson. However, there is the opportunity to opt out depending on extenuating circumstances.
- 6) Council members elect a chair by paper ballot.
- 7) The process (#3-6) is repeated for vice-chair, then for secretary.

Year End Review



What did your pastoral council accomplish during the past year? Spend some time in May or June doing one of the following:

- 1) If you set goals at the beginning of the year (and hopefully you did), what progress did you make on each one? Which additional issues were brought to the council by your pastor or pastoral administrator? Have someone on council prepare a brief report to share with parishioners.
- 2) If you did not have any specific pastoral council goals this past year, review pastoral council minutes to identify what you accomplished. Ask your pastor or pastoral administrator how your consultative role in the parish made an impact. Are there any changes that would add value to your role in the parish?

Build Orientation of New Members and Council Formation into the Coming Year

Now is the time to “plant the seeds” that will ensure a well-functioning Pastoral Council for the fall.

How does your council orient new members?

Inviting them to the June meeting is a start. You may also want to designate one or two current council members to review with them key

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documents: e.g., the diocesan guidelines for pastoral councils, your council's covenant or by-laws, your council's most recent goals and objectives, copies of *Pastoral Council Update* — available on the diocesan website at <http://www.dor.org/index.cfm/ministries/office-of-pastoral-planning/pastoral-council-formation-and-resources/parish-council-update-newsletter1/>.

Does your Council gather for an annual retreat or an extended time of prayer? Some parishes like the Cathedral Community begin the year with a retreat morning or entire day to focus the coming year. Others combine skill development with prayer, community building, and an initial look at what they want to accomplish. Peace of Christ's pastoral council has developed the practice of meeting for three hours on a summer Saturday. The first hour is devoted to adoration and prayer on behalf of the parish. The second hour is lunch, and the third a look at some topic that will be important in the coming year.

Have you ever studied a book together or discussed how your parish is fulfilling the church's mission to preach the Good News? Read one of the books described in the sidebar and discuss its implication for your parish. How does it affirm what you are doing? What does it challenge you to consider?

What will your council do to prepare?

Suggested Books for your Council's Study and Discussion

Rebuilt: The Story of a Catholic Parish Awakening the Faithful, Reaching the Lost, Making Church Matter by Michael White and Tom Corcoran — “Drawing on the wisdom gleaned from thriving megachurches and innovative business leaders while anchoring their vision in the Eucharistic heart of Catholic faith, Fr. Michael White and lay associate Tom Corcoran present the compelling and inspiring story of how they brought their parish back to life.”

From Maintenance to Mission: Evangelization and the Revitalization of the Parish by Robert S. Rivers, CSP — “Sets before us the perennial challenge to become Catholic evangelizers and proposes concrete ways to move from maintenance— to mission-oriented parishes. The author makes the case that evangelization holds the key to the future of the church and was in fact the centerpiece of post-Vatican Council reform.”

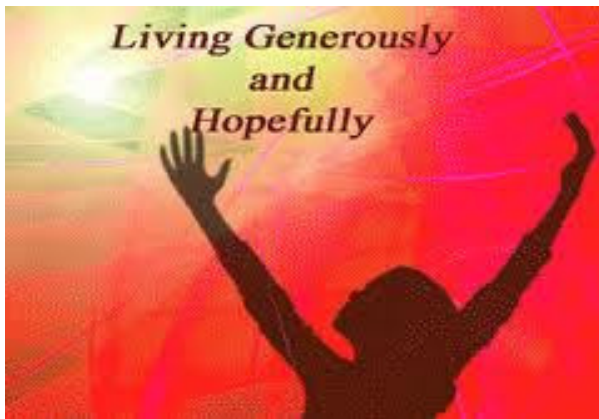
Growing an Engaged Church: How to Stop “Doing Church” and Start BEING the Church Again by Albert L. Winseman — “explores how churches and parishes can dramatically increase members' participation, service to the community, giving, and even life satisfaction. But the solutions Winseman offers are not the ‘magic pill’ many leaders have come to expect.”

Adequate time should be devoted to Council orientation, Council formation, (prayer, community building, etc.), as well as Council business. Some councils hold special meetings for internal planning (setting annual Council goals and objectives), formation, (retreats, opportunities to strengthen the ministerial identity and spirituality of the Council) and education (study of Church documents, skill developments relative to Council work).

(Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines, Diocese of Rochester)

New Resource for Stewardship Available

Whether your parish has been focused on stewardship for a few years or you are just beginning to think about creating a culture of stewardship among your parishioners, you will find valuable a new webinar by Deacon John McDermott entitled "Stewardship: Progress and Challenges." This one-hour webinar is available on the diocesan website: <http://www.dor.org/index.cfm/stewardship/the-joy-of-stewardship/>.



The Pastoral Council Update is prepared by Karen Rinefierd, Coordinator of Pastoral Planning and Pastoral Council Formation in the Diocese of Rochester, for the use of pastoral leaders and pastoral councils.

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Views from the Pews: Parishioner Evaluations of Parish life in US

As part of the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership project, 5 national organizations banded together to survey parishioners nationwide in 2011-2012. Below are some of their major findings:

- More than 6 in 10 parishioners say the following "very much" attract them to their parish: its open, welcoming spirit, the quality of the liturgy, the quality of the preaching, and the sense of belonging they feel there.
- Parishioners in consolidated parishes are less likely than those in other parishes to evaluate their parish as excellent for Masses and liturgies, the celebration of the sacraments, efforts to educate parishioners in the faith, and spreading the Gospel and evangelizing. Yet, they are among the most likely to say their parish is "excellent" in its hospitality and sense of welcome to all.
- 49% of parishioners "strongly agree" that they feel invited and encouraged to participate in parish ministry. 25% "strongly agree" that they are interested in being more involved in the ministry of the parish. Parishioners in parishes led by a Pastoral Administrator are among the most likely to "strongly agree" that they are interested in this.
- 48% of parishioners "strongly agree" that their parish has undergone significant changes in the last 5 years. Yet only 18% "strongly agree" that things were better in the parish 5 years ago.
- 15% of parishioners say the primary language they use at home is something other than English

For more information go to emergingmodels.org.