



## **Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines St Paul The Apostle Parish, Winston Hills**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Parish Pastoral Council is a vital aspect of communion with the Church, being co-responsible in both the building up of the Body of Christ and in the participation of the Church's mission.

Considering the pastoral questions of our day and making appropriate recommendations to the Parish Priest, the members of the Parish Pastoral Council are imbued with a pastoral spirit to aid the Parish Priest with the pastoral governance of the parish.

The People of God, endowed with *sensus fidei*, "the sense of the faithful", are called to synodality, that is to practice continual discernment within the Body of Christ, united with the voice and action of the Holy Spirit. Such discernment includes listening to the Word of God, discerning the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel, and consulting with all the baptised through formative processes. The synodal task ensures both fidelity to our Catholic Church and creative engagement with our current context, leading to effective planning for mission.

St Paul VI states: "It is the function of the pastoral council to investigate everything pertaining to pastoral activities, to weigh them carefully and to set forth practical conclusions concerning them so as to promote conformity of the life and actions of the People of God with the Gospel", in the awareness that, as Pope Francis recalled, the purpose of such a Council "should not be ecclesiastical organisation but rather the missionary aspiration of reaching everyone".

The Diocese of Parramatta serves the mission of the church through the work of a number of pastoral councils. These include the Diocesan Pastoral Council, Deanery Pastoral Councils, and a Parish Pastoral Council in each parish, as mandated by the Bishop (see Canon 536).

#### **1.1. THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL RECOMMENDS THAT:**

In dioceses, as far as possible, councils should be set up to assist the Church's apostolic work, whether in the field of evangelisation and sanctification or in the fields of charity, social relations and the rest; the clergy and religious working with the laity in whatever way proves satisfactory. (Apostolate of the laity, n.26)

## **2. THE COUNCIL**

The Council will be known as:

“The St Paul the Apostle Parish Pastoral Council – Winston Hills.”

In local correspondence and discussions, the Council also will be known as: the “Parish Pastoral Council”, the “Council” or the “PPC.”

### **2.1. TERM OF COUNCIL**

The term of Council is ordinarily three (3) years, from July to June 36 months hence.

### **2.2. THE ROLE OF COUNCIL IS TO PARTICIPATE IN GOD’S MISSION THROUGH BEING:**

- i. A representative body which is a significant form of the synodal church, accompanying and guiding the community in their efforts to live as missionary disciples.
- ii. Advisory, in the sense that its proposals must be accepted favourably by the Parish Priest to become operative. The Parish Priest considers proposals attentively, especially if they express themselves unanimously, in a process of common discernment.
- iii. Discerning, that is, through shared formation and attentiveness to church and world, formulating pastoral goals to further the mission of Christ in their local context.

### **2.3. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF COUNCIL INCLUDE TO:**

- i. Offer the art of accompaniment both within the council and in its journey with the community.
- ii. Cultivate a discerning heart in all its work.
- iii. Listen to what the Spirit is saying through attentiveness to:
  - the hopes, ideas, needs and concerns of parishioners,
  - the deposit of faith, and
  - the signs of the times in their local neighbourhood.
- iv. Discern what the community is being called to be and do through:
  - Collaboratively shaping a shared vision faithful to the gospel and Church, and attentive to the pastoral context.
  - Identifying and supporting the good that is happening in alignment with that vision.
  - Ensuring compliance with safeguarding, work, health and safety and professional standards.
  - Identifying and calling forth the gifts of the community.
  - Developing pastoral goals to work towards the parish vision and aligned with the diocesan vision.
  - Coordinating the implementation of the pastoral goals; and
  - Reviewing these goals.

### **3. KEY RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER BODIES**

The Council provides and receives key information and advice on pastoral matters, in relationship with:

- i. Their parish, particularly through their Parish Priest and leadership team.
- ii. The Parish Team and Parish Finance Committee.
- iii. Ministry Teams.
- iv. Other local and diocesan bodies (e.g. chancery, local government council).
- v. The work of the Diocesan and Deanery Pastoral Councils.  
This includes good communication and collaboration with their own parish Deanery Pastoral Council representatives.

### **4. MEMBERSHIP**

#### **4.1. CANON LAW REQUIREMENTS**

- i. The members of Christ's faithful assigned to the pastoral council are to be selected in such a way that the council truly reflects the entire portion of the people of God ... (Can. 512 §2.).
- ii. Only those members of Christ's faithful who are outstanding in firm faith, high moral standards, and prudence are to be assigned to the pastoral council. (Can. 512 §3).

#### **4.2. QUALITIES REQUIRED FOR MEMBERSHIP**

Each member is expected to be:

- i. A Catholic person, 18 years or older, committed to growth in faith and sharing in the mission of Christ.
- ii. A good listener and an interested communicator who believes in the value of shared discernment.
- iii. Willing to grow in awareness of the pastoral needs of the parish and diocese to commit to examining and studying relevant issues.
- iv. Seeking to promote the Church's merciful, joyful engagement with the wider community.
- v. Keen to explore how the people and leadership at each level of the parish can grow in faith, awareness and skills for the mission of evangelisation in today's world.
- vi. Accepting of the mission and purpose of the council, including its role as a consultative body within the structure of the Catholic Church.
- vii. Open to study and reflection and willing to come prepared to meetings.
- viii. Strongly interested in the directions of the church locally, nationally and beyond; and
- ix. Willing to make a three-year commitment to the work of the council.

### **4.3. TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP**

Membership consists of:

- i. Appointed representatives; and
- ii. Ex-officio members.

### **4.4. APPOINTED REPRESENTATIVES**

Representatives will comprise approximately eight (8) to twelve (12) appointed parishioners, offering a diversity of age, gender, and ethnic origin, representative of the whole parish, not representing a ministry or sub-group.

### **4.5. EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS**

Ex-officio members will consist of:

- i. The Parish Priest as president of the Council.
- ii. The following possible members:
  - a. Member(s) of clergy
  - b. Member(s) of Parish Team
  - c. School Executive Member(s)
  - d. Other members of key local institutions/movements.
- iii. Generally maintaining a ratio of approximately 2:1 of appointed versus ex-officio members will enable the counsel of the parishioners to be more effectively heard.

With exception of the Parish Priest, ex-officio members may not stand as office bearers, recognising again the spirit of ensuring the voice and role of appointed parishioners is foremost.

### **4.6. INDUCTION, FORMATION AND COMMISSIONING**

- i. An induction, including welcome and initial orientation will be offered by Council executive in collaboration with Mission Enhancement Team.
- ii. Lay members of the Council are diocesan volunteers, and as such, should familiarise themselves with relevant diocesan policies and safeguarding requirements prior to commencement of their role.
- iii. All Council members should avail themselves of formation opportunities that arise within the parish and diocese.
- iv. Parish Commissioning of Council members is strongly encouraged.

#### **4.7. RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS**

In a spirit of prayerfulness each member of the Council will:

- i. Attend the regular meetings of the Council.
- ii. Provide input to deliberations of the Council.
- iii. Develop a spirit of discernment and the ability to listen and understand the issues affecting the lives of parishioners.
- iv. Provide support and encouragement for other members of the Council.
- v. Actively participate and empower other community members in the implementation of finalised plans of action.
- vi. Embrace opportunities for personal faith development and for gaining skills to assist with effective participation in the Council's operations.
- vii. Represent the Council when required e.g. other Parish meetings, deanery or diocesan meetings.

#### **4.8. THE EXECUTIVE**

- i. The Parish Priest, as president of the Council, plus office-bearers will form the Executive.
- ii. The office-bearers, chosen by the members, will be:
  - a. Chairperson;
  - b. Deputy Chairperson; and
  - c. Secretary.
- iii. Office-bearers may hold office for no more than three years. Office-bearers may be re-appointed. Council members discern the office-bearers;
- iv. Appointment of Office bearers will be determined at the first meeting of the Council;
- v. The Executive is responsible for the following:
  - a. Organising the agenda;
  - b. Coordinating the business of the Council between meetings;
  - c. Representing the Council, whether on a particular topic as noted in the minutes, or in ad hoc situations such as liaising with members of the Deanery Pastoral Council, clergy of the Deanery and other people in leadership positions;
  - d. Keeping a record of membership, correspondence, meeting attendance and projects;
  - e. Managing any finances and risk assessments as required;
  - f. Ensuring provision of timely minutes, agendas, and reports to members and relevant bodies;
  - g. Reviewing the effectiveness of the Council;
  - h. Conducting, at minimum, one meeting of all Executive members between each meeting of the Council to manage its responsibilities and business; and
  - i. Circulating outward correspondence from the Council.

#### **4.9. TERM OF MEMBERSHIP**

- i. The term of membership is ordinarily three (3) years.
- ii. It is anticipated that approximately half the Council members will continue for a second term, to facilitate continuity in Council business.
- iii. Any member who serves two terms consecutively will then stand down for a minimum period of one term.
- iv. Any member of the Council may resign by giving written notice of intention to the Executive. The resignation shall be effective from its acceptance by the Pastor.

#### **4.10. NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERSHIP**

- i. A nomination process for new members and members available for a second term will occur at the end of each term of Council.
  - a. All parishioners will be asked to recommend either their own self or other parish members for possible membership of the Council;
  - b. Each person recommended will be invited into a process both to receive current information about Parish Pastoral Councils and to indicate their willingness to nominate; and
  - c. If the number of acceptances of possible membership is more than required, the membership will be finalised by either negotiation or a discernment process.
- ii. Membership is determined through nomination endorsed by the Parish Priest.
- iii. Ex-officio appointments are determined by the Parish Priest in consultation with the Council.
- iv. Prior to joining the Council, new members will receive an induction on responsibilities and expectations as a member (c.f. 4.6.i, ii).
- v. At the discretion of the Parish Priest, a joint meeting of Council, comprised of new and immediately retired members, may be held as first meeting of a new council.

#### **4.11. CASUAL VACANCIES**

- i. The Council may fill any casual vacancy through appointment by the Parish Priest, in consultation with the Council members;
- ii. Prior to joining the Council, the proposed candidate will receive an induction on responsibilities and expectations as a member (c.f. 4.6.i, ii);
- iii. After completing the remainder of the current term of membership for a casual vacancy, the new member may nominate for a normal first term;
- iv. A position is considered vacant when confirmed in writing and occurs if a member:
  - a. resigns from the Council,
  - b. withdraws from active participation in their parish,
  - c. does not fulfil the main membership responsibilities (c.f. 4.7).

## **5. PROCEDURES**

### **5.1. GENERAL MEETINGS**

- i. The Council will meet monthly, when practical to do so.
- ii. There will be a minimum of eight (8) general meetings of the Council each year.
- iii. A quorum consists of fifty percent (50%) of Council members, excluding ex-officio members, and must include the Parish Priest or his delegate.
- iv. Guest speakers and / or those with special insights may be invited to attend meetings, at the discretion of the Parish Priest.
- v. Minutes will be taken at each general meeting and the minutes and action points will be circulated to members in the days soon after the meeting,
- vi. Minutes will be made available for review, correction and acceptance at the next general meeting.
- vii. Minutes of general meetings will be filed and maintained for future reference.

### **5.2. CONSENSUS DECISION-MAKING**

- i. The consensus approach to decision-making will be used in the process of contributing towards the making of Council decisions, with each member offering their conscience-derived input towards final outcomes.
- ii. At the discretion of the Parish Priest and in the spirit of synodality, non-binding votes may sometimes be taken to obtain indicative Council feeling on particular matters.
- iii. Lobbying, competition and domination should be avoided, so as to support a full burgeoning of synodality in the Council.

### **5.3. TASK GROUPS AND WORKING PARTIES**

Such groups:

- i. May be set up under the auspices of the Council;
- ii. May be established for specific purposes for a fixed duration;
- iii. Will report and be answerable to the Council;
- iv. Following review of their activities, may be extended for a further period by the Council to continue their task or project; and
- v. May include members of the Council and other persons from the parish and local area.

#### **5.4. COMMUNICATION WITH THE PARISH**

- i. The Parish Pastoral Council will report to the parish community regularly;
- ii. It will seek the input of parishioners through various means, e.g. parish consultations, focus meetings, conversations, suggestion boxes; and
- iii. A Parish Assembly may be held on a date determined by the Council.

#### **6. REVIEW OF PARISH PASTORAL GUIDELINES**

These Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines will be reviewed at the end of each Council term, or more frequently if the need arises.

Consultation with the Parish community and Diocese will occur regarding significant changes to these Guidelines.

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