

St. Barbara Pastoral Council By-Laws
January 3, 2025

AUTHORITY

Each parish must have a pastoral council as recommended in the Code of Canon Law (CIC), Canon (c.) 536. The pastoral council is a consultative body and is governed by norms determined by the Archbishop. Reflecting on the call of Vatican II, the Code of Canon Law and the tradition of the Archdiocese of Seattle, the parish pastoral council collaborates with the pastor to discern through consultation how to address the challenges and opportunities encountered by the parish in its particular time and place. Archbishop Connolly first mandated parish councils in 1972. Archbishop Hunthausen, after consultation with the Presbyteral Council, reaffirmed this mandate in 1978 in his pastoral letter “Shared Gifts, Shared Responsibility, Shared Spirit.” Continuing this tradition, Archbishop Brunett has also affirmed this mandate and enhanced its challenge.

MISSION

The mission of the Parish Pastoral Council is to carry out the mission of the Church by supporting the pastor in his proper role, representing the parish community, and offering counsel on pastoral vision and ministry.

PURPOSE

1. The pastoral council is a consultative body to the pastor and is governed by norms determined by the Archbishop. Its purpose is to examine, consider, and draw conclusions concerning matters under discussion in order to address the challenges and opportunities of the parish and recommend a course of action to the pastor. Furthermore, through pastoral planning, the council assists the pastor in:
 - a. Developing and living out the mission of the parish;
 - b. Forming community as a sign and witness of unity for the larger parish community;
 - c. Providing recommendations for parish priorities, directions, and policies;
 - d. Promoting communication and understanding among parish organizations and between the parish, the Archdiocese, and the universal Church (CIC, c. 536 §1).

While the Parish Pastoral Council does not have decision-making authority, consultation is at the heart of the decision making process for the administration and stewardship of the mission of the parish. Therefore, the pastor, trustees, and members of the Parish Pastoral Council must be oriented to sharing-information, listening, contributing to the discussion, and promoting consensus among the faithful.

OBJECTIVES

1. Assess and respond to the spiritual and communal needs of parishioners to support their growth in faith and connection with Christ.
2. Develop a pastoral plan that strengthens family relationships and promotes the presence of Christ in homes and the wider community.
3. Foster a strong sense of unity and ensure all parish activities and ministries serve the mission of spiritual growth and community building.
4. Implement programs and initiatives recommended by the pastoral council, Bishop, or diocesan offices, ensuring alignment with the parish's mission.
5. Promote open communication and active participation, encouraging parishioners to contribute to the life and mission of the parish.

SIZE OF THE COUNCIL AND TERMS OF OFFICE

The council shall be composed of nine members. Terms of office are three years. At the pastor's request and if that member accepts, that member may serve a fourth year. One-third of the council will be replaced by three new members by July 1st every year.

MEMBER SELECTION PROCESS

1. **March:** The vice-chairperson will collect recommendations from existing council members and vet potential pastoral council candidates to ensure that all meet the basic criteria (see below).
2. **May:** the vice-chairperson will present prospective candidates to the council. Members will confidentially provide their rankings to the vice-chairperson.
3. **June:** The ranked list will be submitted to the pastor for final decision. The vice-chairperson will invite selected individuals to the council. If that individual turns down the request, the next person on the list will be invited, and so on.
4. **June:** Newly appointed member(s) will be announced from the pulpit.
5. **July:** Newly appointed members will start attending pastoral council meetings.

CHAIRPERSON AND VICE-CHAIRPERSON SELECTION PROCESS

Council members are eligible for chair after 1 year on the council. Each July, any member interested in either position will submit their names to the council. Council members will confidentially provide their rankings to the current chair, who will forward the results to the pastor for final decision. The new chair and vice-chair will lead their first meeting in August. Note: The vice-chair is not required to serve as chair the following year.

MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA

The council should be a true reflection of the parish community. It should reflect the diversity of the parish in terms such as age, race, and length of membership in the parish. Staff members appointed by the pastor to the council are "ex officio" members of the council. Members of the pastoral council must be:

- Baptized and confirmed, practicing Catholic;
- Registered member of the parish;
- Committed to prayer, study, listening, and dialogue;
- Committed to stewardship of time, talent and treasure;
- Not currently employed by the parish or parish school or a close relative or in-law of or living in the same household as a parish or school employee;
- Not simultaneously a member of the parish finance council;
- Has not served on the pastoral council within the last 3 years.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. **Pastor:** The pastor presides at all pastoral council meetings and actively listens to the council's deliberations. The pastor assists the council in developing consensus around a particular issue by sharing information and providing his own perspectives. The pastor authorizes any final course of action. He should set the context for the council's discussion by sharing Church teaching and/or setting the parameters for acceptable alternatives. He is ultimately responsible for ensuring the council's effective operations.
2. **Chairperson:** The chairperson, selected by the council membership, is central to the effectiveness of the pastoral council. The chairperson is responsible for:
 - a. Organizing and coordinating the agenda and processes of the council;
 - b. Chairing and facilitating the meetings of the council (the chairperson may delegate facilitation of portions of the meeting to other members);
 - c. Encouraging members and committees of the council to fulfill their specific responsibilities and delegations;
 - d. Establishing an ongoing process of evaluation of the council's effectiveness. The chairperson must be a servant leader of the group. He or she should be the facilitator of the council, encourage inclusion and participation, keep the meeting on track, be sensitive to conflict, and help resolve conflicts positively;
3. **Vice-Chairperson:** The vice-chairperson serves on the executive committee (see below), assists the chairperson, and assumes the duties of the chair in her or his absence. The vice-chairperson may also facilitate designated agenda items during the meeting.
4. **Secretary:** The secretary prepares summaries of the meetings of the council, maintains the membership roster, and ensures the preparation and dissemination of correspondence.
5. **Council Members:**
 - a. Adequately prepare to be an active participant in monthly meetings;
 - b. May be asked to be part of a sub-committee as a liaison between parish ministries and the Council;
 - c. Exhibit initiative and a willingness to take on certain roles and responsibilities within the Council and greater parish. Members must understand that this may often require a larger time commitment, in addition to monthly meetings;
 - d. Consistently and affirmatively work towards the pastoral council's purpose and objectives.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Every council should have an executive committee composed of the pastor, chairperson, vice-chairperson, and administrative secretary. The task of this group is to develop an overall working plan for the year, which identifies the issues facing the council and plans when the council will be dealing with the issue. The executive committee may meet before each council meeting to prepare the agenda and design processes (e.g., small group work, individual work, reflection sheets) for each meeting. The executive committee needs to be sure that prayer and study are a significant and regular part of the council's agenda.

MEETINGS

1. Meetings will be held once a month, and more frequently as required. Additional meetings may be called by the pastor, chairperson, or upon request of the majority of members.
2. The pastor, in consultation with the chairperson, may determine that parish trustees or employees may attend meetings, but always in a consultative, non-voting capacity.
3. Adequate time should be devoted to council orientation, council formation (prayer, community building, etc.), as well as council business. Special meetings may be held 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 development relative to council work).
4. All meetings will be closed to the public unless otherwise deemed by the pastor.
5. All meetings are presumed to be open information to the greater parish unless otherwise stated. In *exceptional circumstances*, the pastor may designate a particular matter to be confidential. Materials such as agendas, meeting minutes, and review materials should not be disclosed to others if designated as confidential.
6. The council shall meet with the finance council *at least* twice yearly:
 - a. Prior to the development of the next fiscal year budget
 - b. After the implementation of the fiscal year budget, to review the state of the budget
7. Components of a meeting should include:
 - a. Prayer
 - b. Faith-sharing
 - c. Clear meeting objectives or outcomes
 - d. Realistic agenda and timeframe
 - e. Consideration of how agenda items will be handled
 - f. Adequate preparatory material made available in advance
 - g. Periodic evaluation of meetings
8. Meeting documentation:
 - a. The administrative secretary shall keep minutes for each meeting.

- b. The chairperson will review the minutes provided by the secretary and distribute them to the council as soon as possible following the meeting.
- c. A summary of the pastoral council's announcements shall be published in an accessible location for members of the parish to view.

RESOLUTIONS

The council will formally advise the pastor by way of resolutions. A resolution is a written position on a particular topic. The resolution procedure is:

- 1. The council member requesting a resolution will provide a written request to the chair and vice-chair.
- 2. The chair and vice-chair will refine requests for resolutions into the council meeting agenda as necessary.
- 3. A sub-committee may be appointed to appropriately research and present a formal request for resolution.
- 4. The council will consider requests for resolutions with appropriate prayer and discernment at the assigned meeting.
- 5. The council will adopt resolutions by simple majority and present to the pastor.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

To foster the spirit of community and development of mutual trust among its members, the council will establish at least one non-business event per year, such as a retreat or social gathering.

ADOPTION AND AMENDMENTS

- 1. Adoption and amendments of the by-laws shall require a two-thirds majority vote of council and approval by the pastor.
- 2. The by-laws shall be appropriately posted and available to the greater parish.

Pastor (print and sign)

Date

James Northrop

01/08/2025

Fr. James Northrop

Chair of Parish Pastoral Council (print and sign)

Date

Rizalina Miller

01/09/2025

Rizalina Miller