

Diocesan Norms for Parish Pastoral Councils

Diocese of Covington, Kentucky

December 3, 2017

The Establishment of a Parish Pastoral Council

Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines for the Diocese of Covington were promulgated in 1985. These guidelines have not been updated or revised since that time. The Diocese of Covington Synod (2006) directed that each parish have a parish pastoral council (cf, Policy Admin 4). The Synod also directed that, “the Diocese will provide norms for the establishment and function of parish pastoral councils” (Policy Admin 4).

These guidelines replace the existing guidelines.

The 1983 Code of Canon Law states:

- “If the diocesan bishop judges it opportune after he has heard the presbyteral council, a pastoral council is to be established in each parish, over which the pastor presides and in which the Christian faithful, together with those who share in pastoral care by virtue of their office in the parish, assist in fostering pastoral activity” (c. 536 §1).
- “A pastoral council possesses a consultative vote only and is governed by the norms established by the diocesan bishop” (c. 536 §2).

Purpose of a Parish Pastoral Council

The parish pastoral council is to advise the pastor on practical matters of parish life and act as a steward of the mission of the Gospel. The council, with and under the direction of the pastor, develops goals and prioritizes them based on the needs of the parish, the Gospel, and the teachings of the Church.

Role of the Pastor

The pastor convenes the council and directs the agenda. He serves as the leader of the spiritual and temporal goods of the parish and is responsible for creating an environment of open communication among council members.

Role of the Members

Members participate fully in the prayer and deliberation of the council. They are willing to participate in ongoing formation. They advise and provide recommendations to the pastor regarding the pastoral needs of the parish, as well as general directions, priorities, goals and objectives, and short and long range plans.

Membership Qualifications

A fully initiated (has received the Sacraments of Baptism, Holy Eucharist, and Confirmation) Catholic sixteen (16) years or older who is an active, registered member of the parish and who participates in the sacramental life of the Church.

Members of the council are appointed by the pastor. Qualified candidates can self-nominate or be suggested by present council members, pastoral staff, or by the parish at large.

The council must have at least two *ex officio* members: the deanery pastoral council representative from the parish, and one member of the parish finance council chosen by the pastor. Assigned parochial vicars and assigned permanent deacons are considered administration.

Term of Office

The term of office for all appointed members is three years, with possibility of reappointment. Members may serve only two consecutive terms. A member who serves two consecutive terms may serve another three year term one year after the conclusion of the original second term.

Only one third of the council seats are to be open for reappointment at the same time.

Council Membership

The pastor determines the number of council members that will best suit the needs of the parish. There shall be no fewer than six (6) and no more than twelve (12) members of the council including any and all *ex officio* members.¹

Council Meetings

Only the pastor can call a meeting of the council. In the absence of the pastor the council cannot meet. If the pastor of the parish dies, resigns, or is transferred, the council is suspended until a new pastor or parochial administrator² has been appointed and reconvenes the council. Meetings should take place at least quarterly.

The pastor of the parish presides over the council.

The members may elect a chairperson and a secretary each year.

The chairperson may assist the pastor in the preparation of the agenda. At the pastor's discretion, the chairperson may moderate the council meeting.

The secretary records the minutes of the meeting.

The pastor is to review the parish pastoral council guidelines with the members of the council annually.

Recommendations made by the council to the pastor should involve consensus. Consensus is a process of deliberation that requires open dialogue, listening, prayer, and discernment. The pastor will consider the advice and recommendations of the council in his decision making. Whatever form this takes, the pastor always retains the responsibility for the final decision.

¹ Members of the parish administration are not included in the six (6) to twelve (12) membership limit.

² "A parochial administrator is a priest designated by the diocesan bishop to take the place of the pastor (c. 539). A parochial administrator has the same duties and rights as a pastor, unless determined otherwise by the diocesan bishop (c. 540 §1)."

Committees

Depending on the size of the parish, members of committees may work with the parish pastoral council. All committees are accountable to the pastor.

Relationship to Finance Council

The parish finance council is mandated by canon law. Canon 537 states, “Each parish is to have a finance council which is regulated by universal law as well as by norms issued by the diocesan bishop; in this council the Christian faithful, selected according to the same norms, aid the pastor in the administration of the parish goods with due regard for the prescription of Canon 532.”

The parish finance council is to provide counsel to the pastor concerning the administration of the parish finances and the budget.

While open communication between the parish pastoral council and the finance council is essential to ensure that the envisioned parish direction and priorities can be supported within the financial limits of the parish, any confusion between the roles belonging to each council is to be avoided.