

# **Parish Pastoral Council**

## **Handbook**

**St Bartholomew's Church  
St Albans**

## HANDBOOK FOR ST BARTS PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

September 2020

### Parish mission and vision

The mission of the Church, the People of God, can be understood as the continuation of the work of Jesus, which will proceed until God's values of love, justice and peace reign in the hearts and lives of the people of all nations.

Four of the basic elements of the Church's mission may be described as:

- Proclaiming the good news of God's love throughout the world
- Inviting more and more people into the community of disciples
- Sanctifying by encouraging the whole community of faith to grow in holiness
- Transforming the world until justice, love and peace prevail.

### Introduction

*"In every parish of the diocese, a Pastoral Council shall be established, if the diocesan Bishop, after consulting with the Council of Presbyters, so decides. The pastor presides over the Pastoral Council. The Pastoral Council is composed of members of the congregation together with those of the parish staff who have pastoral care by reason of their office. The Pastoral Council assists in promoting pastoral action in the parish."*

*"The pastoral council has only a consultative vote, and it is regulated by the norms laid down by the diocesan bishop." (Canon 536 of the Code of Canon Law of the Catholic Church)*

Parish Pastoral Councils (PPC) are primarily charged to assist in the development of mission-focused parishes. They attempt to place at the heart of the parish a consciousness of a zeal for the mission of Jesus Christ. When there is a clear awareness of this larger vision proposed by the gospels and taught by the Church, a parish finds itself energized by a sense of purpose and directed to matters that foster the mission of the parish which is grounded in the teachings of Christ.

Important elements that form the essence of parish life include:

- Evangelisation
- Worship and word
- Community
- Service and stewardship
- Leadership

These elements constantly inter-relate in parish life, each nurturing and supporting the other.

Recognising these essential elements and understanding their inter-relationship are central to the functioning of the PPC. They are what make pastoral councils 'pastoral'. The Council's role is primarily to research, consider, and propose for action those matters considered to be truly 'pastoral'.

Pastoral issues are those that impact on the lives of parishioners in the areas of:

- Integration of their faith into everyday life – home, work, community
- Nourishment and support of their faith as they strive to live as faithful disciples of Jesus
- Outward focus for the development of a vital Christian community, actively engaged in Jesus' mission of service and influence in the wider world.

A key element of the work of a PPC is to consider ways to provide opportunities for parishioners to:

- Discover, or rediscover, the personal and community call to mission that derives from their baptism
- Sustain their efforts to live as Catholics who effectively transform society.

### **Role of the Parish Pastoral Council**

The PPC exists as a consultative body to help the clergy consider pastoral and other works and to propose and co-ordinate practical measures for implementing them.

The parish priest has the primary role of leadership in both the spiritual and temporal affairs of the parish. Ultimately, all decisions about the operation and direction of the parish need to carry his agreement and approval. The laity assists the parish priest in whatever way possible. The PPC serves in an advisory role and the priest takes into serious account their opinions and recommendations.

The PPC consists of the parish priest together with a group of parishioners chosen by the parish community. The PPC's role is to promote the Church's mission to live and communicate the love and values of Christ in our world. The PPC shares in the responsibility for the ongoing life and development of the faith community, working together with parishioners to provide support for their efforts to live as followers of Christ.

*"Christ's faithful are at liberty to make known their needs, especially their spiritual needs, and their wishes to the pastors of the Church" (Canon 212#2)*

*"They have the right...the duty, in keeping with their knowledge, competence and position, to manifest to the sacred pastors their views on matters which concern the good of the Church." (Canon 212#3)*

*"The Parish Pastoral Council does not have jurisdiction over liturgical matters." (Canon 528#2).*

*"The parish priest has the final decision over all matters the Parish Pastoral Council considers." (Canon 536#2).*

In order to fulfil its role, the PPC will:

- Search out and respond to the hopes, ideas, needs and concerns of parishioners
- Foster unity and a sense of community in the parish
- Grow in knowledge and awareness of what is already happening in the parish
- Encourage and support the good work of existing groups within the parish
- Evaluate carefully information gathered in order to contribute towards the making of decisions that reflect the values of the gospel and the teachings of the Church
- Set long-term and short-term pastoral goals for the parish
- Provide opportunities for parishioners to grow in their relationship with God and with each other
- Develop, implement and improve parish initiatives that assist parishioners in their continuing efforts to live as effective Christians in society.

Finance and property management are not within the role of the PPC.

### **Membership**

Members of the PPC should be:

- Baptized, practising Catholics
- Registered members of the parish (ideally for at least five years)
- Participate in the ongoing life of the parish, especially Sunday Eucharist
- Be at least 18 years old.

The PPC should reflect the diversity of the parish in terms of age, gender and ethnicity. Members should seek to represent the parish as a whole, not act as representatives of particular parish groups/organisations.

The PPC includes the parish priest and other parish clergy. Non-voting members could include a representative from the finance committee, the premises manager, the parish administrator and the safeguarding officer.

All parishioners will be asked to recommend other parish members for possible membership of the Council. Each person recommended will be invited either to a combined Information Meeting or to an individual meeting with a pastoral councillor, to receive current information about pastoral councils. At the conclusion of this meeting, participants will be asked to indicate whether they wish to accept or decline possible membership. If the number of acceptances of possible membership is more than required, the membership will be finalised by either negotiation or a prayerful selection process.

The parish priest, after consultation with the parish pastoral staff, determines the number of members of the PPC, and the number to be appointed. The total number of members depends on the size of the parish. Ordinarily, the minimum is ten.

The chair, vice-chair and secretary of the PPC are elected by the members.

#### Term of office

- The chair and secretary should serve for three years, with possibility of re-election or reappointment. Other members should serve for 1-2 years, with the option of reappointment. Members may serve only two consecutive terms.
- Only one-third of Council seats are to be open for selection/election or re-election at one time.

The Council may fill any casual vacancy by invitation. Before joining the Council, the proposed candidates will receive a short briefing on responsibilities and expectations as a member. After completing the remainder of the current term of membership for this casual vacancy, the new member will be eligible for recommendation for a second term.

#### **Responsibilities of members**

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

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

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One or more individuals may be invited to attend a PPC meeting when additional or specialist advice and information is needed.

## **Administration and communication**

### **Secretary**

It is the secretary's responsibility to:

- Agree meeting dates and advise the parish office of these dates for the newsletter
- Circulate agendas to PPC members in advance of each meeting
- Record the minutes of the PPC meetings
- Arrange the meeting place for the PPC
- Circulate meeting minutes for approval after each meeting.
- Attend to any correspondence
- Keep a file of records of PPC minutes, decisions, history, membership, development

### **Chairman**

It is the Chairman's responsibility to:

- Coordinate the business of the PPC between meetings
- Organise the agenda for each meeting in discussion with the parish priest and secretary
- Monitor timing for each agenda item
- Set realistic short-term and long-term goals for the PPC
- Ensure outcomes for each agenda item
- Encourage contributions from all PPC members
- After each meeting, to review the meeting with the parish priest and s
- ecretary

The agenda should include matters identified by individual PPC members and parishioners, parish groups and organisations, the Deanery, and the wider community, such as Churches Together.

Sufficient time should be set aside for prayer and reflection. Responsibility for leading prayer should be taken by different members through the life of the PPC, and a range of individual approaches encouraged.

The consensus approach will be used in the process of contributing towards the making of parish decisions, with each member offering input towards the final outcome. Majority voting, lobbying, competition and domination are to be avoided.

Meetings of the PPC will be held four to six times per year.

Members of the PPC should be accessible to their fellow parishioners. Effective, timely and regular communication with the parish community should be a priority: the parish should be kept informed of the membership of the Council, be advised of dates of meetings, and be given the opportunity to contribute to agendas.

Parishioners should be given a summary of the outcomes of parish council meetings in the parish magazine, on the parish website and noticeboard.

### **Review of Handbook**

This Handbook will be reviewed at the end of each Council's term, or more frequently if the need arises. The Parish community should be consulted about any changes to this Handbook.

## References

Code of Canon Law of the Catholic Church

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