



Roman Catholic Diocese of Whitehorse

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL POLICY

April 6, 2022



BISHOP'S OFFICE
ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF WHITEHORSE

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April 6, 2022

Dear Pastors, Parish Administrators and Lay Pastoral Associates,

A Parish Pastoral Council is vital to the life and ministry of a parish or mission under the care of a pastor or parish administrator. It is my wish that this new policy will guide you and your parishioners in the discernment and creation of a parish council in your jurisdiction, or the revitalization of your existing council.

In the case of parishes and missions lead by lay pastoral associates, I encourage you to consider forming a Parish Advisory Committee, for which the guidelines included in this Parish Pastoral Council policy may inspire and guide your path.

This policy is effective immediately. If you already have a parish council in place, note that all existing governance documents, whether it is the mission statement, bylaws, etc., must be made obsolete, and a new mission statement and bylaws should be developed to reflect the content of this new policy. In some cases, it may be appropriate to adopt some of the text of this policy into your bylaws.

To further assist you, a list of proposed agenda items, and sample documents for an agenda, mission statement and bylaws are provided as appendices separate from the policy.

I thank you all for your pastoral care in this regard. May our Mother Mary Star of the New Evangelization guide us and protect us with her maternal love and care. I remain,

Yours in Christ,

+ Héctor Vila



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PURPOSE

a) Basic guidelines for Parish Pastoral Council are given in the Code of Canon Law:

Can. 536 §1. 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.

§2. A pastoral council possesses a consultative vote only and is governed by the norms established by the diocesan bishop.

b) A Parish Pastoral Council:

- exists to foster pastoral activity which is in accord with and expresses the mission of the parish;
- is a consultative body which serves and advises the pastor in his responsibility for the pastoral mission of the parish; and
- is the main body for lay leadership in the pastoral life of the parish and, therefore, aims to engage and enable the whole parish community for fuller participation in the mission of the parish.

A Parish Pastoral Council is not intended to deal with finances or administration. These are the responsibility of the Parish Finance Council. The two councils need to work closely together but maintain a clear separation of responsibility.

FOR PARISHES AND MISSIONS LEAD BY AN APPOINTED LAY PASTORAL ASSOCIATE

- With the aim to engage, support and enable parish community for a full participation in the mission of the parish or mission, a ***Parish Advisory Committee*** may be formed to advise the lay pastoral associate.
- The ***Parish Advisory Committee*** may be established according to the same guidelines included in this policy, as for a Parish Pastoral Council.
- The lay pastoral associate must notify the bishop of the establishment of a ***Parish Advisory Committee*** however, no mission statement or bylaws are necessary for its implementation.
- In the event of a change or leave of the appointed lay pastoral associate, the ***Parish Advisory Committee*** must cease its activities until a new lay pastoral associate is appointed.

FUNCTIONING OF A PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

The Parish Pastoral Council acts as a compass to help the parish maintain the course of its mission. In the context of 'communion' and evangelization, the proper functioning of a Parish Pastoral Council is understood to include any or all of the following at the pastor's discretion:

- **Community development, collaboration, and consensus.** One of the central goals of the council is to favor communion between parishioners, i.e. to develop a strong sense of community among them and in the entire parish. The key to building community is the collaborative manner in which the council functions, expressed by seeking to reach consensus in all decisions.
- **Prayer.** An effective council is rooted in prayer as it discerns and develops the parish's mission. Through prayer, the council seeks direction and empowerment from the Holy Spirit to take up the mission Jesus has given to the parish.
- **Enabling and calling forth participation.** Another vital goal of the Parish Pastoral Council is to engage the community as a whole in evangelization. This is done by calling all parishioners to witness to the Lord and participate more fully in the life of the parish in accord with their gifts and experience. It's also the role of the Parish Pastoral Council to recruit members for other parish ministries and see to their training.
- **Needs assessment.** One of its main tasks is to come to a fuller understanding of the pastoral needs of all people served by the parish. This involves understanding how the Gospel can be presented in a manner that speaks to the realities that people are living in a particular time and place.
- **Participating in the pastoral care of the parish and assuming responsibilities.** The pastor and the council should designate pastoral responsibilities to individual council members.
- **Pastoral planning, developing and evaluating pastoral activities.** To carry out the mission and respond to the real needs of the parish, the council must propose appropriate pastoral tasks. These tasks are often described simply as pastoral planning, developing pastoral programs and services, and evaluating the effectiveness of pastoral initiatives.
- **Investigate, reflect and recommend.** A council follows a practical course of action proposed for pastoral councils in Vatican II's Decree on Bishops (#27)
 - investigate the pastoral reality of their parish;
 - reflect upon / study it; and
 - recommend their conclusions to the pastor (or parish administrator)

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL MEMBERS

- **The pastor** (or parish administrator) is responsible for the pastoral mission of the parish by virtue of his appointment from the bishop. As the shepherd of the parish, he is the president of the pastoral council. However, his aim is to work in co-responsibility with other members of the parish and he therefore solicits the opinions and active collaboration of the council. He also endeavors to involve the whole parish in its mission.

Vacancy of the pastor position and appointment of a new pastor:

When the position of pastor becomes vacant, the activities of the Parish Pastoral Council cease and only resume in consultation with the bishop. In order to maintain continuity in the parish's work and mission, the newly-appointed pastor/parish administrator will establish the Parish Pastoral Council anew within three months of the date of installation.

- **Council members** represent the whole parish not in a legal or democratic sense, but in their ability to attend to the pastoral realities and needs of the whole parish. Their main responsibilities are:
 - to assist the pastor (or parish administrator) so he can better carry out his responsibility for the life and mission of the parish; and
 - to attend and actively participate in Parish Pastoral Council meetings; and
 - to call forth fuller participation of the whole parish community in the pastoral mission of the parish; and
 - to assume leadership roles on parish standing committees and parish ministry.

- **The executive committee** is made up of the pastor (or parish administrator) as **chairperson**, the treasurer, and the secretary. Their task is to prepare for and facilitate council meetings, and to maintain close links and good communication with the whole parish community. They decide the pastoral concerns which the council will consider, including:
 - a process for how the issue will be addressed;
 - a timeline for the discussion; and
 - a proposal for how the council's recommendation will be made (a resolution, report etc).

The treasurer

- may, if requested by the pastor (or parish administrator), facilitate meetings in a manner that allows for open dialogue and full participation to achieve consensus among council members;
- works with the pastor (or parish administrator) to prepare the agenda for council meetings;
- assists the pastor (or parish administrator) in coordinating tasks of the executive committee; and
- maintains two-way communications with the Parish Finance Council.

The secretary

- prepares material for meetings; and
- keeps an accurate record of council meetings.

The executive is usually selected by the council. In some cases, the secretary may not be a member of the council but a parishioner able to serve the council in this role.

MEETINGS

- The pastor (or parish administrator) is responsible to call meetings and, with the assistance of the treasurer, to prepare the agenda (*App. I & II*)
- The pastor (or parish administrator) is the chairperson of the council however, he may request that the treasurer or other council member facilitate the meetings.
- The council as a whole should meet at least four times a year between September and June inclusively.

- Council members who are leading standing committees or ministries should meet regularly, for example, once or twice a month.
- Significant time is given at each meeting for prayer and spiritual reflection.
- Whenever possible, council recommendations should be made by consensus i.e. each member of council is able to support it to some degree.
- The council does not usually “vote.” Since the Parish Pastoral Council serves as the pastor’s consultative body, he may accept or overrule a council recommendation, but with few exceptions, he would approve them. If he chooses to overrule their recommendation, he should give a clear account of his reasons to the council.
- The pastor (or parish administrator) may establish a quorum, which means a minimum number of council member that have to be in attendance in order to have a Parish Pastoral Council Meeting. It usually consists of the total number of council members divided by 2 plus 1.
- The pastor (or parish administrator) may choose to open Parish Pastoral Meetings to the entire parish community by providing all parishioners with notice of time and location of upcoming meetings. This can lead to a greater sense of ownership by parish members.
- The pastor (or parish administrator) may choose to have a member of different ministries, committees or parish groups in attendance at the Parish Pastoral Meeting if and when a report or feedback is required of them.

SELECTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

Qualifications of a Council Member

- Is an adult Catholic in full communion with the Church and is a parishioner who participates in the life of the parish;
- Understands the purpose and method of operation of a Parish Pastoral Council;
- Is committed to the mission of the whole parish, not just a particular group or interest;
- Works well with others;
- Has good communication skills; and
- Is able to represent the overall needs of the whole parish community and not a particular group or interest only.

Two persons from the same family may not be on the Parish Pastoral Council at the same time.

The council members should reflect the demographics of the parish, as well as a broad range of skill and experience.

If council members are associated with another parish group, they should understand that they do not represent that group on the council but rather the interest of the whole parish.

Methods of selection

The following process is recommended:

- Educate the parish on the purpose of a Parish Pastoral Council and role of council members.
- Prepare a process of discernment for proposed candidates to consider their gifts, availability, etc..
- Invite volunteers and/or nominations from the parish.
- Meet with the candidates to clarify the role of the Parish Pastoral Council.

- Decide on the method of selection if there are more candidates ready to serve on the council than the open positions: (appointment, election, etc.).

Size of council and length of terms

- The size of the Parish Pastoral Council usually consists of five to eight members, but more members can be added if their qualifications, skills and experience can help accomplish the mission of the parish.
- The term of office must be defined. For example, length of the term (usually three to five years), staggered, maximum number of consecutive terms (usually three).
- In the interest of providing better pastoral services, a single Parish Pastoral Council may serve a cluster of smaller parishes which are served by the same pastor. When so, it should be specified in the Parish Pastoral Council Mission Statement. (*App. III*)

Conflict of Interest

- A conflict of interest occurs when an individual's personal interests could compromise his or her judgment, decisions, or actions on the council.
- A conflict of interest is a serious matter which impacts upon the perception of honesty and trustworthiness of the Parish Pastoral Council.
- Parish Pastoral Council members are expected to openly declare any conflict of interest immediately when it arises.
- A Parish Pastoral Council member should exclude him or herself from discussions and resolutions in which a conflict of interest is likely to result or the perception or the potential of a conflict of interest exists.

Conflict Resolution in the council

- Conflict between Parish Pastoral Council members needs to be dealt with respectfully and fairly, seeking communion within the council.
- Direct communication along with the intention and goodwill to resolve conflicts in favour of the consensus and communion within the council are encouraged as promising practices to support conflict resolution.
- In the event of a procedural disagreement, the council members may express their concerns with the treasurer and the pastor as a first step towards conciliation. The pastor may choose to report the concern to the bishop and report back to the treasurer or council members if judged appropriate.
- A Parish Pastoral Council may, should all of the above fail to resolve the issue, request a meeting with the bishop.

THE RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER PARISH OR DIOCESAN GROUPS

- **Parish Finance Council** The Parish Finance Council has distinct responsibilities from those of the Parish Pastoral Council and functions independently of it. The two bodies need to work together closely and develop clear mechanisms for regular communication such as :
 - exchange of minutes of meetings and resolutions;
 - have at least one member who serves on both councils;
 - invite additional representatives of one council to attend the meeting of the other when needed;

- prepare an annual parish budget together, in particular that portion of the budget which pertains to pastoral activities.
- **Parish staff** The Parish Pastoral Council is not responsible to direct the work of parish staff. The work of parish personnel is to implement the plans and recommendations of the council but they are accountable to the pastor. There should be close collaboration with staff and they should be consulted when a pastoral activity for which they have responsibility is being discussed by the council. Normally, parish personnel are not members of the Parish Pastoral Council.
- **Ministry groups and parish organizations** These groups need to implement the recommendations of the Parish Pastoral Council but the ultimate responsibility lays with the pastor. Good communication between the Parish Pastoral Council and all other parish groups is essential. Parish groups and organizations should be consulted when the Parish Pastoral Council considers a pastoral issue that concerns them.
- **The diocesan Church** A Parish Pastoral Council needs to keep informed of pastoral priorities proposed by the diocesan church. It should maintain good two-way communication with the Diocesan Pastoral Council and other committees at the level of the diocese, and the region.

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL MISSION STATEMENT AND BYLAWS

- A newly established Parish Pastoral Council is encouraged to:
 - establish a Mission Statement (*App. III*) at the beginning of its term which reflects the Diocese’s mission statement; or
 - review the existing Mission Statement and propose amendments if necessary; and
 - develop or review bylaws (*App. IV*) of their parish.
- Amendments to an existing parish council’s mission statement, or bylaws must follow the procedures outlined in this policy and receive final approval from the bishop.
- New mission statement and bylaws are to be submitted to the bishop for his approval prior to implementation.
- Additional resources for developing Parish Pastoral Council bylaws are available through the Diocesan Pastoral Centre.

Bishop’s Approval: + Héctor Vila	Effective Date: April 6, 2022
	Review Date: April 6, 2027

APPENDIX I

POTENTIAL AGENDA ITEMS

*Following are some of the pastoral activities which could constitute agenda items for the **Parish Pastoral Council**:*

- Instruction in the full range of the faith, catechetical formation, sacramental life and preparation
- Responsibilities to people with special needs
- Evangelization
- Catholic education of children and young adults
- Outreach to alienated Catholics
- Enhancement of programs for the sacraments of penance and Eucharist
- Effective participation in the liturgy
- Methods of acquaintance with parishioners, welcoming of newcomers
- Inculcation of prayer life, especially within families
- Efforts at building community
- Efforts of special care for the sick and dying, home visiting
- Concern for the poor, the afflicted, the lonely, the exiled
- Social Justice
- Fostering of solid Christian family life
- Strengthening of extra-parochial relations with the bishop, diocesan-pastoral efforts and worldwide Catholic Identity
- Outreach to and inclusion of youth and young adults in the life of the parish

APPENDIX II

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA (TEMPLATE)

[NAME OF PARISH] COUNCIL
[DATE & TIME:]
[LOCATION]
AGENDA

MEMBERS PRESENT:

MEMBERS ABSENT (REGRETS):

Opening Prayer

Proclamation of Gospel of the Day

Pastor's review and sharing

Council Member's review and sharing

Ministries Review

A) Liturgy

B) Education and Formation

C) Youth

D) Outreach

Agenda Items:

I- Christmas Decor

II- New members for choir

III- Prayer initiative for families for Advent

IV- Catechesis for young adults

Items for future agendas:

Assignment of action items

Pastor's remarks

Date and location of next Parish Pastoral Council Meeting

Closing Prayer

Our Father

APPENDIX III

PARISH MISSION STATEMENT (EXAMPLE)

[NAME OF PARISH] COUNCIL

MISSION STATEMENT

Established in _____, the Parish of _____ serves the community (communities) of _____.

Our mission is to

_____.

Hereby signed by our Parish Pastoral Council Members:

Duly appointed by our pastor:

Date _____

Place _____

Mission Statement of Parish Pastoral Council should be aligned with our Diocese's Mission Statement:

“As a portion of the Universal Church in Northern Canada, rooted in Gospel values and united under the successor of St. Peter, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Whitehorse has a two-fold mission: to compassionately assist all people in need and to boldly proclaim the Good News of God’s saving grace to the ends of the world. By first encountering and celebrating Christ in His Word and Sacraments, and challenged then by His mandate and example, our Christian Community strives to go out and look for the lost sheep, reaching out to every existential situation one may be trapped in, whatever circumstances and perils the secular pastures of this world may have engendered. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the inspiration of the Blessed Virgin Mary’s zeal, we welcome families, lay and ordained witnesses, to share and strengthen our faith and faithfully witness God’s love, mercy, and compassion to all”.

APPENDIX IV

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL BYLAWS (EXAMPLE WITH GUIDE NOTES in grey)

[YOUR PARISH NAME] PASTORAL PARISH COUNCIL OF [PARISH NAME]

(Ex: St. Josephine Parish or St. Stephen's Mission and St. Mary's Parish)

[ADDRESS]

BYLAWS

Purpose/ Mission Statement

This Parish Pastoral Council will provide the pastor with consultation on matters affecting the Parish and its parishioners and help foster the mission of our Parish. The council should survey and assess the needs, the hopes, the life, and activity of the people of God so that the whole parish community can effectively carry out the mission of the parish. The Pastoral Parish Council should evaluate the parish in its conformity to the Gospel and those constitutive elements and values of the Gospel. In this sense, the Parish Pastoral Council assumes leadership, shows initiative and shares in the decision-making process which assists the pastor in carrying out the leadership role that is within the parish.

Membership

Our Parish Pastoral Council will consist of the pastor and _____ () appointed members*. Although not a voting member of the Parish Pastoral Council, the parish secretary will also attend meetings.

**Note: A pastor may choose to have his Parish Pastoral Council members elected. The process of nomination and election should be clearly stated in the Parish Pastoral Council Bylaws.*

By virtue of his appointment from the bishop, the pastor is responsible for the Parish Pastoral Council. With discernment, he may accept or overrule decisions or resolutions put forward by Parish Pastoral Council members.

Members of the Parish Pastoral Council are to be appointed by the pastor, according to the needs and representation of the parish. Members should reflect the demographics of the parish. All candidates who meet all specifications may meet with the pastor to put forward their nomination.

Interviews and appointments must be completed by July 31st of each calendar year.

A list of all Parish Pastoral Council members will be published in the parish bulletin.

Each Member of the Parish Pastoral Council must:

- be an adult Catholic in full communion with the Church and is a parishioner who participates in the life of the parish,
- understand the purpose and method of operation of a Parish Pastoral Council,
- be committed to the mission of the whole parish, not just a particular group or interest,
- work well with others,
- have good communication skills,
- be able to represent the overall needs of the whole parish community and not a particular group or interest only.

- openly and honestly declare any conflict of interest and agree to recuse him/herself from any discussions that could result in a conflict of interest.
- prepare for, attend, and actively participate to Parish Pastoral Council meetings OR;
- send his regrets to the Pastor in the event where he/she cannot attend the Parish Council Meeting

Members of the Parish Pastoral Council are appointed to serve a renewable term of _____ years.

Members may resign by submitting a written resignation to the pastor. The pastor has sole authority to remove a member from the Parish Pastoral Council for any reason.

Executive Committee

Parish Pastoral Council shall have two appointed positions: Treasurer and Secretary*, each to complete their ___ years term.

**Note: Parishes and Missions may choose to appoint someone outside of council as secretary, a parishioner or the parish staff secretary*

Role and duties of the Treasurer:

- Works with pastor to establish the yearly calendar
- Prepares the agenda with the pastor
- Distributes minutes and agenda to council members no later than 72 hours before each meeting
- Works in collaboration with council members and pastor
- Facilitates Parish Pastoral Council Meetings, when expressly requested by the pastor
- Leads conflict resolution meetings with the pastor
- Ensures motions taken by the Parish Pastoral Council are followed through and achieved by duly delegating action items

Role and duties of the Secretary:

- Prepares all documents needed for the council meetings
- Keeps an accurate record (minutes) of each council meeting

Meetings

Parish Pastoral Council shall meet every ___ month(s) between September 1st and June 30th. Additional meetings may be added.

Calendar dates and location of meetings shall be determined at the first meeting of the year in September.

Pastoral Council Meetings are open to all parishioners. Dates and location of all council meetings shall be published in the weekly parish bulletins.

Members of different ministries, parish committees and parish groups may be invited at Parish Pastoral Council Meetings when appropriate to address or report on specific agenda items.

A quorum of __ members including the pastor must be present at any one meeting before decisions can be made.

**Note: A quorum is usually the total of members divided by two plus one.*

All decisions are to be made by consensus. All decisions may be accepted or overruled by the pastor. Authority to act comes exclusively from the pastor. No decisions can be made in the absence of the pastor or without his specific approval.

Minutes

Accurate minutes of each council meeting shall be kept and archived.

Amendments

Amendments to these bylaws must be submitted to the Parish Pastoral Council prior to the next meeting. All the parish council members must be present and agree to any amendments to these bylaws as well the pastor's consent to said amendment.

All amendments must be approved by the bishop, or the member of the curia to which the bishop has granted authority.

This Parish Pastoral Council Bylaws were received and approved by the bishop or his designate on

_____ (date),

At _____ (location)