

## Roles and Responsibilities

**PASTOR** The pastor presides at (but does not usually chair) 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, providing his own perspectives and identifying common elements or areas of agreement that seem present in the council's discussion. As minister of governance in the parish, 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. The pastor is the convener of the executive committee and is ultimately responsible for ensuring the council's effective operations.

**CHAIRPERSON** The chairperson, selected by the council membership, is central to the effectiveness of the pastoral council.

The chairperson is responsible for:

- Organizing and coordinating the agenda and processes of the council;
- Chairing and facilitating the meetings of the council (the chairperson may delegate facilitation of portions of the meeting to other members);
- Encouraging members and committees of the council to fulfill their specific responsibilities and delegations; and
- 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. CLPM 20 Many Gifts: Consultative Leadership Revised edition, 1008

## VICE-CHAIRPERSON

The **vice-chairperson** serves on the executive committee, assisting the chairperson and assuming the duties of the chair in her or his absence. The vice-chairperson may also facilitate designated agenda items during the meeting. The council may choose to have two or more vice-chairpersons depending on the size of the council and the complexity of its agenda. Expanding the executive committee in this way allows for more participation in the leadership of the council.

## ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY

The **administrative secretary** prepares summaries of the meetings of the council, maintains the membership roster, and ensures the preparation and dissemination of correspondence. Many parishes have chosen to have a non-member volunteer to serve in this capacity, which allows all members of the council to participate fully in council proceedings.



## MEETINGS:

The pastoral council should determine its annual meeting calendar prior to the fall of each year, being sure to schedule enough meetings throughout the year to achieve the purpose of adequate consultation.

Adequate time should be devoted to council orientation, council formation (prayer, community building, etc.), as well as council business. Some councils hold special meetings 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).

The pastor must decide whether all meetings or only some of them will be open or closed. For the council's operations to be effective and satisfying, it is important for council members to develop an understanding of the components of a successful meeting. Components include: prayer, faith sharing, listening, clear meeting objectives or outcomes, a realistic agenda and timeframe, consideration of how agenda items will be handled, adequate preparatory material made available in advance, and periodic evaluation of meetings.

## COMMUNITY BUILDING

To foster the spirit of community and the development of mutual trust among its members, a parish pastoral council should establish one or two occasions each year for non-business events. Revised edition, 1008 Many Gifts: Consultative Leadership CLPM 21 such as retreats and social gatherings. Through active participation in these events, council members learn to know, value, and trust one another as they serve the common good of all.

## St Thomas More Parish Pastoral Council



The Mission of the St. Thomas More Parish community is to become the real presence of Christ through prayer, education, worship and service.

6511 176TH St SW  
Lynnwood, WA 98037  
Phone 425-743-2929  
[www.stmp.org](http://www.stmp.org)

*There are different gifts but the same Spirit; there are different ministries but the same lord. 1 CORINTHIANS 12:4*

## PURPOSE

The parish pastoral council is a consultative body to the pastor. The purpose of the pastoral council is to examine, consider, and draw conclusions concerning matters under discussion in order to recommend a course of action to the pastor. Through pastoral planning, the pastoral council assists the pastor in

- Developing and living out of the mission of the parish;
- Forming community as a sign and witness of unity for the larger parish community;
- Providing recommendations for parish priorities, directions, and policies;
- Promoting communication and understanding among parish organizations and between the parish, the Archdiocese, and the
- In forming community, council members are challenged to undertake ongoing renewal through prayer, study, listening, and dialogue. In developing priorities and directions for the parish, the council is to become the means of achieving full participation by the whole parish in its mission by giving all a voice in guiding and directing parish life. In fostering communication, the council encourages and initiates dialogue among parish leadership and organizations and brings to them the concerns of the universal Church.

## CRITERIA OF MEMBERSHIP

A primary value for selecting membership of a parish pastoral council is that **the council should be a true reflection of the parish community.** For example, members should be inclusive of the demographic realities of the community. **Members do not represent a particular constituency but 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.

CL 8. Members of the pastoral council must be:

- Baptized and confirmed Roman Catholics in good standing with the Church;
- Registered and supporting members of the parish;
- Grounded in and committed to an understanding of the Church in accord with the principles of Vatican II;
- 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.

## TERMS OF OFFICE

CL 9. Terms of office should be three years, renewable once and either

- Staggered so that council membership can rotate; or
- Concurrent so that all members discern onto the council together: thus members learn together, develop into a small faith community, build trust, discern leadership and serve for three years.

### SELECTION :

Whatever method(s) a pastor uses to choose pastoral council members, the council’s selection should reflect the theology underlying Church governance.

That is, the process of selection should promote a sense of ownership throughout the parish without creating a sense that the parish has adopted a merely democratic model of governance.

In appointing members to the pastoral council, the pastor may adopt a variety and combination of methods including:

- communal discernment process coordinated by a facilitator, which is the preferred method;
- Appointments from recommendations made by the existing pastoral council;
- Parish wide nominations and elections, which is not recommended.

SIZE : The size of the council can range from five to twelve members. The size should be small enough to promote a sense of community among the members and yet large enough to reflect the diversity of the parish. The complexity of the council’s agenda should also be a factor in determining its size.

## EXECUTIVE STRUCTURE

Every council should have an executive committee composed of the pastor, chairperson, vice chairperson(s), and where applicable, 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 should 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.

The executive committee also appoints chairpersons of task forces.

The important responsibilities of this committee may require additional training and resources, which are provided by the Office of the Vicar for Clergy.

As Catholic Christians we are all called through our Baptism to be good stewards of ourselves, our families, our community, our environment, and the Church. St. Thomas More Parish offers a wide range of opportunities to help us be faithful stewards. This Ministry Guide provides examples of many of these ministries. We invite you to discern how to use your special gifts and talents through service as disciples of