

Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon  
**Pastoral Council Policy**

1. Pastoral Council in Every Parish

Every parish shall have a pastoral council. The pastor, administrator or moderator and pastoral administrator of a parish collaborates with it to investigate, consider and propose practical conclusions about those things which pertain to pastoral works in the parish. This collaboration is called “pastoral planning”. Parishes served by the same pastor are encouraged to have a joint pastoral council.

2. Collaboration with the Pastor for Pastoral Planning

The pastoral council works together with the pastor and serves as the primary pastoral planning body for the parish. The pastoral council meets at least four times per year with the pastor/administrator. It shall always respect the requirements of civil, church and diocesan law as well as the Church norms for pastoring.

3. Consultative Body

The authority of the pastoral council is consultative or advisory. While a council chair normally runs the meeting, the pastor/administrator presides at the council in the sense that he discusses with and consults the council about pastoral matters. Authority to make pastoral decisions ultimately rests with the pastor/administrator who has been appointed by the bishop. A pastor shall carefully consider the deliberations and recommendations of the council. If the pastor ever acts contrary to the recommendations of the council, he shall offer a proper explanation to the members. In the absence of the pastor, a council may discuss matters, but it does not make final determinations.

4. Membership Reflects the Parish

The pastoral council includes people selected from the parish together with those who share in pastoral care of the people by virtue of their office. The method of selection rests with each parish. The membership of the pastoral council should reflect the overall membership of the parish. Members of the pastoral council should be baptized Catholics. Any member who may have a conflict of interest in a council matter under discussion would not normally participate in the discussion and recommendation. Such judgment is left to the pastor.

5. Foster Communion and Further Mission

The purpose of the pastoral council is to advise the pastor on practical matters; especially those matters which pertain to advancing the faith life of the parish and furthering the mission of the Church. To this end, the pastoral council develops and recommends pastoral plans. Whenever possible, pastoral plans take written form. The pastoral plan is shared with the entire parish and is made available to the diocese.

6. Understanding the Mission

All pastoral planning is done in light of the Scriptures – especially the Gospels, and in light of Church documents which expound the mission of the Church. Even those documents yet to be published, which re-state or give renewed insight into the communion and mission of the Church can also be considered and consulted during the pastoral planning process. (See the attached appendix for a list of recommended documents.)

#### 7. Study, Reflection, Listening, Prayer & Discernment

Pastoral councils study and reflect on the life and mission of the Church. They also study and reflect on the circumstances of the members of the parish and the community in which the parish is located. Through prayer and discernment they determine how communion and mission can be lived more fully at this particular time in this particular parish. Special attention is paid to the poor. Pastoral planning flows as a result of this process. To the extent possible, reaching a consensus on recommendations for a pastoral plan is the goal.

#### 8. Relationship to the Parish Finance Council.

Canon Law requires a finance council in every parish to advise the pastor and the parish on parish finances, property and other resources. The finance council is independent from the pastoral council, but the two councils should collaborate when necessary to insure that the pastoral plan is within the means of the parish and the budget reflects the pastoral priorities of the parish.

#### 9. Relationship of the Council to other Pastoral Planning Bodies

There are three levels of pastoral planning in the Archdiocese of Portland: parish, vicariate and diocese. Pastoral planning on all three levels should take into account and influence the planning done at each of the other levels. Every year, the pastoral council chairpersons and the pastoral council members participate in an Annual Vicariate Meeting of Pastoral Councils. Every three years, the pastoral council chairperson and a delegate from each parish council attend an Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly. At the assembly, members are elected by vicariates to serve on the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council.

#### 10. Implementing and Monitoring the Pastoral Plan

Once it has been developed and put in written form, the pastoral plan for the parish should be monitored and evaluated as it is administered and as it unfolds. It is the responsibility of the pastor, professional staff and volunteers to implement the pastoral plan. At the direction of the pastor, council members can assist in its implementation. Because unforeseen needs sometimes arise and times and situations change, the pastoral plan should be continually updated by the pastoral council.

#### 11. Measuring the Pastoral Plan for Success

Although times and people change, the mission of the Church is always the same. It is the mission of Christ: to bring all people to know, love and serve God the Father and one another. Pastoral planning is successful to the extent that it encourages and helps us to grow in love for God and live our lives for others.