Saint Patrick’s

Roman Catholic Church

Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle

St Patrick’s Presbytery

Goatbeck Terrace,

Langley Moor,

Co. Durham,

DH7 8JJ

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Parish Pastoral Council

Constitutions and Statutes

**The Mission of the Church**

The Church is the living body of Christ in which all share in various and diverse ways the responsibility for the mission given to the Church by the Lord to:

* Worship God in the celebration of the Mass and sacraments
* Proclaim the Word of God to all people
* Witness the love and redemptive healing of Christ
* Serve those in need in both Church and society

**The Parish**

"*A parish is a definite community of the Christian faithful established on a stable basis within a particular church; the pastoral care of the parish is entrusted to a parish priest as its own shepherd under the authority of the diocesan bishop*" (Canon 515).

Clergy and laity together form a parish, a portion of God's People whose pastoral care is entrusted to a priest so that all can continue the mission of Jesus here on earth.  The People of God have different gifts, roles and responsibilities, yet all are under one head, Jesus Christ.

**Duties of Parish Priest**

A Parish Priest has responsibilities, which are uniquely his arising from his ordination and appointment to the parish by the Bishop.

*The Parish Priest is the proper pastor of the parish entrusted to him, exercising the pastoral care of the community committed to him under the authority of the diocesan bishop in whose ministry of Christ he has been called to share, so that for that same community he carries out the functions of teaching, sanctifying, and governing, also with the cooperation of other presbyters or deacons and with the assistance of lay members of the Christian faithful, according to the norm of law.* (Can. 519)

When a priest accepts a parish, he becomes the appointed leader of the parish, the bond of communion, the designated head, and the father in the faith to this community of believers.  He is also called to be a servant of the people.  Moreover, he is to be the animator, motivating his people to work together, and at the same time to be the healer, bringing peace and unity to avert division and anger.  Consultation with parishioners, as individuals and as a community, is required for a Parish Priest to carry out his duties responsibly.

**Consultation**

The Code of Canon Law insists on consultation at every level of decision-making among all God's people. The Code also makes it clear that Parish Priests have certain responsibilities which are theirs alone.

On December 30, 1988, Pope John Paul II, referring to the ecclesiology of communion, said, "*The Council's mention of examining and solving pastoral problems 'by general discussion' ought to find its adequate and structured development through a more convinced, extensive and decided appreciation for 'Parish Pastoral Councils,' on which the Synod Fathers have rightly insisted*."

**Role of the Parish Pastoral Council**

Canon Law provides for the formation of Parish Pastoral Councils in Canon 536 #1.

"*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 Parish Priest 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 Parish Pastoral Council is a consultative body, pastoral in nature, because it strives to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit among God's people in the parish.  A Parish Pastoral Council gives its help to the Parish Priest in fostering pastoral activity and, under his authority, it deliberates and leads all those things which are pastoral by nature.  It is essential that Council meetings occur in the context of prayer and openness to the Holy Spirit, so that at all times the common good will prevail.

Specifically, the Parish Pastoral Council's purpose is to enhance the process of:

* pastoral planning
* developing pastoral programs
* improving pastoral services
* evaluating the pastoral effectiveness of various programs and services

Although the Council is not a body which makes binding decisions, the recommendations of the Pastoral Council are to be taken seriously when grounded in prayer, discernment and communal wisdom.

The Parish Priest presides over the Parish Pastoral Council and is responsible for the final approval of Council recommendations concerning pastoral planning, programs, and services for the parish, as well as for their implementation.  While the Parish Priest is not obliged to follow the recommendations of the Parish Pastoral Council, it is understood that he ought to do so unless there is a compelling reason to do otherwise.  If there is such a reason, the Parish Priest should, if he can, share this with the Council.

**Parish Pastoral Council Membership**

The process used for identifying new council members will vary from parish to parish but should include an opportunity for parishioners to participate.  The entire process needs to be permeated with private and public prayer to the Holy Spirit.  The intention should be included in the prayers of intercession at each Mass.

Ordinarily, the composition of the Council should be a balance between members:

* nominated and elected by the parish at large
* appointed by the Parish Priest

The number of council members should consist of not less than 6, or more than 15 members. Members are to be chosen so as to truly reflect the makeup and wisdom of the parish community.

Serving on the council is a ministry to the whole parish.  When considering membership on the council, the following criteria should be kept in mind.  Potential candidates should be:

* of proven faith,
* with sound morals,
* demonstrating the gifts of wisdom and prudence,
* willing to commit their time, talent and wisdom in a consultative and collaborative manner.

Council members should have the ability to study and reflect prayerfully, and to recognize and respect the viewpoints of others.

Official Church documents state that the Pastoral Councils are to represent the people of God in that they are a witness or a sign of the whole community. In accepting this office, members are committing to regularly attend meetings of the Parish Pastoral Council. Enduring non-attendance requires that the member be replaced. The following representatives are to make up the Parish Pastoral Council: -

* Parish Priest (By appointment and without whom the PPC cannot meet)
* Chairman (appointed by Parish Priest)
* Representatives of….

Liturgy

Music

Eucharistic Ministers

Readers

School (Representing Children of the Parish)

Youth (Representing Young People of the Parish)

Seniors (Representing Adults of the Parish)

Social (Representing the Social Committee)

Finance (Chair or Treasurer of Finance Committee)

Safeguarding (Parish Safeguarding Officer)

Health and Safety (Parish H&S Officer)

**Appointment**

Six members of the PPC are to be elected by the parish and six appointed by the Parish Priest to facilitate and ensure that the membership is representative of the whole parish as delineated above.

Prior to the election, a candidate must be nominated, seconded, and accept the nomination. Each candidate must fulfil a minimum of one of the listed representatives.

The election will take place one weekend at the Mass and all attending the Mass who have exceed the age of reason (7years) will be eligible to vote.

**Meetings/Agenda**

The Parish Priest is the primary selector of the Council's agenda, inasmuch as he is the presider.  However, any member of the Council may raise items for the agenda. Ordinarily, the Council meets quarterly.

Minutes should be recorded by the Parish Pastoral Council Secretary and archived as part of the parish permanent record.

**Term of Office**

Council members serve a three-year term, renewable once.

The Council does not deal with acts of administration which are particular to other bodies.  Acts of administration concern the daily operations of the parish, parish organisation, finance and personnel matters. The Parish Priest has the responsibility for these matters and for the staff.  Some elements of administration belong to other groups, such as the Parish Finance Committee.

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

* catechetical formation
* programs promoting gospel values / social justice
* Catholic education of children and young adults
* Engaging Catholics who do not practice
* evangelization
* promotion of Eucharistic devotion and prayer
* effective participation in the liturgy
* the welcoming of newcomers
* home visiting
* efforts at building community
* efforts of special care for the sick and dying
* tangible concern for the poor, afflicted, lonely, and exiled
* fostering of Christian family life
* outreach to and inclusion of youth and young adults

**Working Committees**

Working committees may be established to put into practice the initiatives of the Parish Pastoral Council. A working committee can comprise both Parish Pastoral Council members and non-members and is steered by a member of the Parish Pastoral Council. Working Committees may include : -

* Social Committee
* Liturgy Committee
* Pastoral Care Committee

**Resignation of a Member**

Should position on the Parish Pastoral Council become vacant mid-term due to death, relocation or resignation, the Parish Priest should appoint a replacement

**Vacancy of the Office of the Parish Priest**

When a parish becomes vacant due to death, resignation, or transfer of the Parish Priest, the Parish Pastoral Council ceases.   In the interest of continuity in the parish's work and mission, the new Parish Priest can either recall or establish the Parish Pastoral Council anew within two months of the date of installation.

*(Definition: When the term Parish Priest is employed in this document, it refers to the priest appointed by the Diocesan Bishop as the canonical Parish Priest or Parochial Administrator.)*