



PARISH  
PASTORAL  
COUNCIL  
HANDBOOK

*A spirit of prayer at the heart of our thinking and planning  
Conversion of heart  
Collaboration at every level of Church life being essential to the  
future of the Church  
Planning as a way of developing life in the archdiocese  
Witnessing in the world to Jesus Christ*

Lord Jesus Christ

you have gathered us together

to put our gifts at the service of your Kingdom.

May we answer your call to discipleship by

listening to each other with respect and reverence

discerning the needs of our parish

fostering a sense of mission

enabling participation in our parish community

reviewing our lives and ministry

promoting dialogue and good communication

opening our hearts and minds more fully to the

action of your Spirit in our lives.

St. Andrew PRAY FOR US

St. (parish patron) PRAY FOR US

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# 1. Responsibility of PPC Members

*The church of the third millennium will need to encourage all the baptized and confirmed to be aware of their active responsibility in the church's life.*

John Paul II: Novo Millennio Inuente 46

In general members of the PPC will be required to:

- Attend PPC meetings on a regular basis
- Participate in the deliberations of the PPC
- Assist in the implementation of parish policies
- Grow in knowledge and awareness of what is happening in the parishes and deaneries of the Archdiocese
- Take part in any initial formation or training as new PPC members and be committed to regular on-going formation

As lay leaders in the Archdiocese PPC members are called to discern, promote, initiate and evaluate parish pastoral activity with the Parish Priest.

PPC members need to possess the following qualities:

- ❖ PPC members are people of prayer, when they gather they know that prayerful meetings are fruitful meetings.
- ❖ PPC members have missionary zeal, they continually reach out to others inviting them to participate in the life of the parish.
- ❖ PPC members are willing to learn, they recognize the need to listen, learn and adapt in a changing Church which is part of a changing world.
- ❖ PPC members are collaborative, they are not lone rangers but are able to work with each other, with groups and other individuals in the parish.
- ❖ PPC members know how to delegate, they recognize the gifts of others, encourage, enthuse and share their responsibility

## 2. Office Bearers

The office bearers are chosen by members of the PPC to serve for a fixed period of time, these are: chairperson, vice-chairperson and secretary.

The role of the chairperson is to:

- Facilitate the effective running of the meeting
- Monitor the time frame of the meeting
- Encourage active participation of all PPC members
- Liaise between the PPC and parishioners through the parish priest
- Set the agenda in consultation with the secretary and the parish priest

The role of the secretary is to:

- Provide timely minutes of the meetings
- Attend to correspondence
- Distribute minutes and agendas
- Set the agenda with the chairperson and parish priest

The role of the vice-chairperson is to:

- Substitute in the absence of the chairperson
- Liaise with PPC members about preparation of the meeting space
- Organise light refreshments when required

### 3. The Tasks of the PPC

*Pastoral Councils exist to continue the mission of the Church, the PPC fulfills its mission through:*

- ❖ Reflecting and Planning
- ❖ Animation to action
- ❖ Evaluation
- ❖ Communicating well with the parishes and deaneries of the Archdiocese
- ❖ Facilitating on-going formation and training for PPC members and other ministry groups in the parish

#### REFLECTING & PLANNING

The PPC helps to clarify the focus and priorities for the parish. It provides a forum for reflection on pastoral concerns. This discernment together involves a process of:

- ❖ Listening to the reflection of the parish community
- ❖ Identifying goals
- ❖ Setting objectives
- ❖ Formulating practical proposals
- ❖ Naming action steps
- ❖ Evaluating the process

#### LISTENING to the PARISH COMMUNITY

Listening to the parish community provides the basis for the development of the parish. PPC members need to have an overall awareness of the concerns and ideas for pastoral development in the parish. Consultation of the parish provides an opportunity for everyone to feel involved. Consultation can take different forms such as providing resources for parish assemblies, surveys,

questionnaires, discussion/ reflection groups. What works well for a rural parish may not work as well in the city.

### IDENTIFYING GOALS

Goals are broad statements of intent describing what a parish desires to achieve.

They are general in their direction but outline specific end points that can be realized within a set period of time.

### SETTING OBJECTIVES

As goals are broad they need to be made attainable by breaking them down to manageable portions. So the PPC would enable the parish to set objectives. These objectives should be SMART:

Specific: Detailed and focused

Measurable: The end result is clear and easy to evaluate

Actioned: Describes activity that will take place

Realistic: Achievable in light of resources available

Timed: Deadlines are in place for a beginning, middle and end

### FORMULATING PRACTICAL PROPOSALS

Proposals for actioning need to be formally written with all of the above being taken into consideration. When the PPC reaches a consensus about a particular proposal, it is then presented to the parish priest. If this proposal is to move towards action it becomes a Recommendation from the Parish Priest and the PPC members.

## NAMING ACTION STEPS

Once the parish priest and his PPC are agreed on clear recommendations, the PPC should outline the basic action steps. These steps involve: what is to be done, how it is going to be done, who will do it, when it will happen and where it will take place. This ensures that goals do not remain in the realm of dreams.

## EVALUATING THE PROCESS

This is not about judgment or criticism but rather is an essential tool in noticing if goals and objectives are being achieved. Evaluation gives the PPC an opportunity to learn from efforts and also to celebrate success.



## 4. Be-attitudes of an PPC

The following principles should be kept in mind when PPC are seeking to respond to God's call to serve the parish:

**INCLUSIVITY** The PPC should be mindful of Jesus' indiscriminate welcome to all people. Particular welcome should be given to insights from those with disabilities, children and young people, the frail and the elderly, those on the margins.

**EMPOWERMENT** The PPC needs to be mindful of the danger of relying on a small handful of competent and trusted people in the parish. In a vibrant parish the giftedness of all is recognized, developed and utilized.

**PRAYERFULNESS** This is not about saying a prayer at the beginning and end of a meeting, but about realizing that everything is done in a spirit of prayer. As the PPC struggles with difficult and challenging issues it is good to acknowledge that the future of the parish is in God's care.

**OPENNESS** No one PPC member has all the answers or all the resources. PPC members need to be open to actively learning from the successes and mistakes of parishes and deaneries.

**REALISM** Initial enthusiasm and the desire to meet every need and take up every issue can lead to despondency and burn out. The PPC needs to use its God-given common sense to set realistic goals for themselves and for the parish.

**SENSITIVITY** The PPC should model good patterns of care for each other, this includes providing adequate formation for tasks as well as support for each other and affirmation.

**VISIBILITY** The PPC needs to be visibly present to the parish, otherwise its significance will be undermined. Regular communication of the PPC's activities and issues to the parish will promote a willingness to work together

**ECUMENISM** The PPC should be open to learning from the best practice in other Christian churches. It can also foster relationships of collaboration by developing common projects of interest that can be shared beyond the parish.

## 5. COMMUNICATION

Communication skills enable a PPC to share and receive information more effectively. PPC members need the following key communication skills:

- ❖ Active Listening
- ❖ Clear Articulation
- ❖ Positive Attitudes

What does ACTIVE LISTENING look like?

- ❖ An active listener pays attention to the person talking and is not preoccupied by what they want to say
- ❖ An active listener shows interest by keeping eye contact and turning towards the speaker
- ❖ An active listener checks out they have understood the message correctly
- ❖ An active listener paraphrases what the other has shared
- ❖ An active listener listens before contributing ideas

What does CLEAR ARTICULATION look like?

Clearly expressing your thoughts takes time and practice

- ❖ Be sure you are clear about what you want to say before you begin to speak
- ❖ Explain where you are coming from
- ❖ Use simple terms that everyone will understand

What does a POSITIVE ATTITUDE look like?

This brings out the best in people and encourages them to participate. A PPC member with a positive attitude will:

- ❖ Express ideas in a positive rather than a critical way
- ❖ Be confident about their contribution
- ❖ Be confident about the contribution of others, identifying what is good in what the other person is saying
- ❖ Value silence as a way of gathering thoughts and taking more time for reflection

## FACILITATION

The task of facilitating the meeting is led by the chairperson, however every member of the PPC is responsible for encouraging participation, focusing the group, coming to consensus and resolving conflict.

## 6. KEY SKILLS for PPC Members

### SHARING RESPONSIBILILTY & ACTION STEPS

The PPC should model good collaboration by drawing the parish into initiatives. Encouraging the parish to take responsibility is key.

The PPC should formulate action plans, naming the practical steps which need to be taken to achieve an objective, often this work is done in a sub-group.

An ACTION PLAN should name What, Where, When, Who and How an initiative can be carried forward.

What?	Skills, knowledge, resources, information is needed
Where?	Do we need to go to get these
When?	Do we need each part of the plan to be completed
Who?	Will take responsibility for what part of the plan
How?	Can we obtain the resources required

## CALENDARING

This reflects the life and activities of the PPC.  
Calendarng well ahead enables the PPC to achieve success and maximize participation of members. The following should be kept in minds when setting dates:

- ❖ Significant Diocesan and Deanery dates, e.g., Priests Deanery Meetings, Episcopal Council Meetings
- ❖ Parish Dates, e.g., Confirmation, first communions
- ❖ Other Council Meetings, e.g., Council of Priests, DPC meetings
- ❖ Liturgical Dates, e.g., seasons and feast days
- ❖ Holidays, e.g., school breaks
- ❖ Key agenda items, e.g., annual review

## 7. WORKING WELL TOGETHER

The elements that enable the PPC to work well together are:

- ❖ **Facilitating Environment** - arranging the meeting space so that it enables the active participation of the whole group. All members should be able to see and hear each other.
- ❖ **Good Agenda** - this is planned and distributed ahead of time with any reading material that is required. There should be an allocated time for each item. Focusing on a limited number of pastoral issues prevents frustration. Indicate the group member who is responsible for the agenda item
- ❖ **Succinct Minutes** - PPC minutes should record the issues addressed and the agreed outcomes. This includes agreed actions, who will carry them out and by when.
- ❖ **Accountability** - the PPC should support each other in their ministry particularly by holding each other accountable to commitments that are made, calling those who have missed meetings, undertaking to work with each other rather than alone. The PPC is also accountable to the Archdiocese, Deanery and Parish communities.

## ALL MEMBERS

In between PPC meetings all members are responsible for:

- ❖ Reading assigned material
- ❖ Submitting agenda items on an agreed date
- ❖ Reading over previous minutes and subgroup reports
- ❖ Praying for the PPC members and the parish
- ❖ Preparing agenda items they are responsible for
- ❖ Organise a personal contribution to agenda items
- ❖ Listen to the needs of their deanery/parish
- ❖ Let the secretary know if they are unable to participate in a meeting
- ❖ Carry out agreed actions
- ❖ Pass on relevant information to deanery and parish

During the PPC meetings all members are responsible for:

- ❖ Arriving before the meeting starts
- ❖ Sitting in a different place at each meeting to network with each other
- ❖ Keeping to the agenda and keeping to the point
- ❖ Participating in discussion
- ❖ Actively listening to the views of others
- ❖ Speaking and listening in a charitable manner
- ❖ Avoiding side conversations and sarcastic remarks
- ❖ Noting agreed actions and following them through



## SAMPLE PPC AGENDA:

### TEMPLATE for MINUTES of COUNCIL MEETINGS

Date, Time and Place of Meeting

Present:

Apologies:

ITEMS/HEADINGS to be included on the AGENDA:

PRAYER

*A minimum of 15 minutes reflection using a piece of scripture from the forthcoming Sunday. End by praying the PPC prayer.*

FORMATION TIME

*This is devoted to PPC on-going formation. It could be discussion on a document, skills training or input on an agreed subject*

MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING

*A brief look at previous minutes ensuring that nothing is forgotten or left unfinished.*

PASTORAL SHARING – On written Reports

*Feedback and dialogue on various parish initiatives*

PASTORAL SUB GROUPS

*Subgroups report back on the progress of their work*

NEXT STEPS

*Future needs for the parish arising from meeting, items for the next agenda, check date of next meeting, decide who will lead the prayer for next meeting.*

DECISIONS

*Secretary lists decisions made during the meeting and alerts the group*

EVALUATION

*An opportunity for PPC members to say how they felt the meeting went and make possible suggestions for future meetings*

*AOB items that came up at the last minute. Should be kept brief.*

SAMPLE PRAYER FORMAT:

The Prayer Leader chooses two readers before the meeting

*The Leader provides everyone with a copy of one of the Scripture readings for the following Sunday.*

*The passage is read out loud slowly by the first reader.*

*There is a minute of silence while everyone reflects.*

*The passage is read out loud again by another reader.*

*Then the leader asks the group to share with the person beside them what word or phrase stays with them.*

*After a couple of minutes, the leader passes a candle which can be held by each person and invites the group to share their phrase out loud as they hold the candle.*

*Once everyone has shared the candle is placed in the centre of the gathering.*

*We finish by praying the PPC prayer together*

**SAMPLE EVALUATION of a PPC MEETING:**

*At the end of the meeting it is good practice to ask the following or similar questions of the people present:*

1. *What went well at the meeting?*
  
  2. *What went less well?*
  
  3. *Have we achieved what we set out to do on the agenda?*
  
  4. *How might we improve future meetings?*
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- ❖ *It is better to give these questions out in written form as people sometimes feel freer to write things down*
  - ❖ *You can then ask the group to share this with the person beside them*
  - ❖ *Then ask them in pairs to share what is significant with the whole group*

KEY QUOTES:

*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full*  
John 10:10

*The Kingdom of God is among you*  
Luke 17:21

*Feed my sheep*  
John 21:15

*Let us listen to what the faithful have to say  
because in every one of them  
the Spirit of God breathes*  
St. Paulinus of Nola

*Pastoral planning, in the context of prayer,  
observes the essential primacy of grace.*  
John Paul II: NMI 38

*The Church is a communion of persons and eucharistic communities  
this is why the Church's practice of communication should be  
exemplary*  
Pontifical Council for Social Communication, Feb 2002

*Go on growing in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and  
Saviour, Jesus Christ*  
2 Peter 3:18

*Where there is no vision the people perish*  
Proverbs 29:18