
Pastoral
Council
Constitution
for St. Mary
of the
Visitation
Catholic
Church

May 2010

Revision A

I. Mission of the Pastoral Council

A. The Mission of the Parish

We believe God calls us into a life of faith, hope, and charity. We accept this call to life through our baptism and we are graced to form a community to hear and witness the Good News, to celebrate our faith through prayer and sacrament, to sustain this community through friendship and service, and to encourage lifelong spiritual growth through Christian formation. We accept this call by sharing our material and spiritual blessings with all who need to hear God's invitation of love. We embrace the gospel charge to make disciples and strive to be more Christ-like. To live a life of love and justice, we commit our gifts of time, talent, and treasure. We, the people of St. Mary of the Visitation Catholic Church, strive to fulfill this mission through the guidance and grace of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

B. The Mission of the Pastoral Council

The Pastoral Council of St. Mary of the Visitation Catholic Church helps the pastor discern current and long term needs of the Parish in fulfilling its mission and identify the resources needed to meet these needs. The Pastoral Council strives to recognize the uniqueness of our Parish in regard to its vision, mission, needs, customs, history, capabilities, and experience; and to open our doors and hearts to welcome new parishioners and those seeking entrance to the church. The Pastoral Council supports our parishioners in meeting their needs and those of our neighbors for spiritual nourishment, Christian formation, and personal support. The Pastoral Council guides the Parish in becoming a Christ-centered community for the honor and glory of God.

II. Function of the Pastoral Council

A. The Function of Pastoral Council is to:

1. Prayerfully advise the Pastor on the prioritized needs of the community while considering those needs in light of the Parish Vision and Mission,
2. Coordinate the work of the Parish committees and ministries to meet those needs,
3. Perform short and long term strategic planning to assess the progress towards meeting these needs,
4. Establish new committees and ministries as needs arise, and
5. Encourage members to participate in the full life of the Parish.

III. Authority of the Pastoral Council

A. In consultation with the Pastor, the Pastoral Council shall:

1. Create and dissolve committees to perform the work of the Parish;
2. Appoint and remove committee heads;

3. Assign tasks to committees and resolve jurisdictional disputes;
 4. Coordinate inter-committee activities;
 5. Evaluate the performance of committees; and
 6. Provide advice and counsel to committees.
- B. The Pastoral Council shall accept committee reports as the official record of Parish activities, and return unacceptable reports to the committees.
- C. Except as specifically described in this constitution, each committee shall have autonomy in regard to their internal organization and the means they use to accomplish their assignments.
- D. If a situation requires an immediate response, the Pastor may take any necessary action and report the decision and rationale at the next Pastoral Council meeting for concurrence and recording in the minutes.

IV. Organization of the Ministries, Committees, and Finance Council in Relation to the Pastoral Council

- A. Ministries are led by Parish staff members and supported by volunteers whose activities they supervise. The ministries report solely to the Pastor.
1. Liturgy Ministry: Plans, prepares, and evaluates all aspects of the liturgy to engage our community fully, actively, and consciously in worship.
 2. Youth Ministry: Seeks to draw teenagers into a personal relationship with God, through social, spiritual, educational, and service opportunities.
 3. Catholic Christian Formation Ministry: Based on the Good News of Jesus Christ and taught to us through the Tradition of the Catholic Church, the Catholic Christian Formation program exists to aid children and adults grow in wholeness through worship, study, prayer, recreation, and service.
- B. Committees provide a means for parishioners to actively participate in the work of the Church and to meet the needs of the Parish as identified by the Pastoral Council and Pastor. Pastoral Council members are encouraged to attend committee meetings to increase their knowledge of how the Parish works. The pastor must approve all committee activities. The committees, and their responsibilities, may include but are not limited to:
1. Worship Committee: Under the direction of the Liturgy Director, supports the Liturgy Ministry in liturgical celebrations by serving as lectors, ushers, servers, music ministers, cantors, greeters, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

2. Buildings and Grounds Committee: Supports the maintenance, refurbishment, and appearance of the Parish buildings and grounds by providing counsel, moderate physical labor, and fundraising activities.
3. Community Outreach Committee: Works to encourage the growth and unity of the Parish community through acts of charity, outreach, and communication with emphasis on social justice, pro-life, social services (Christmas gifts and food baskets, etc.).
4. Parish Life Committee: Builds internal Parish family spirit and community by offering organization and events such as:
 - i. Special events (Super Bowl Party, World Marriage Day, Parish Picnic, Lenten Fish Fry, etc.)
 - ii. Regularly scheduled hospitality activities (Doughnut Sunday, Pancake Breakfast)
 - iii. Parish Directory
 - iv. Ladies Sodality
5. Communication Committee: Develops close communication with Parish committees and organizations to facilitate communication and participation via:
 - i. Parish Website
 - ii. One Voice Liaison
 - iii. Public Relations
 - iv. Annual Parish Calendar Events

C. The Parish Finance Council is independent of the Pastoral Council and the other Committees. The Parish Finance Council provides information on the Parish budget and fiscal status to enable the Pastoral Council to make informed judgments on the feasibility of possible courses of actions.

V. Process of the Council

A. The Pastoral Council meets monthly.

1. If necessary, a meeting may be added or cancelled.
2. Members must be notified four (4) calendar days prior to a change in meeting schedule.
3. In an emergency, a vote may be taken via telephone or e-mail.

4. Pastoral Council meetings are open to the entire Parish. Executive sessions may be called for when appropriate. These sessions are "closed" with only the Pastoral Council members and the Pastor in attendance.
 5. Committee action requests with rationale must be presented one month prior to being voted on by the Council.
- B. Quorum: A minimum of six (6) voting members are needed to conduct the business of the Pastoral Council.
 - C. Pastoral Council decisions shall be made by a simple majority vote. If any voting members feels strongly that an action would be harmful to the Parish, the item will be tabled for further prayerful reflection and consideration.
 - D. Pastoral Council minutes shall be made available to the Pastoral Council members by e-mail or postal mail and to Parish members upon request. Pastoral Council minutes should be available within five (5) days of the next Pastoral Council meeting.
 - E. Assignments and guidance may be communicated to committees by telephone or e-mail (if they are not represented at the meeting).
 - F. Committee status reports shall be provided in writing to the Pastoral Council. The status report should provide a brief overview of the prior month's activities, planned future activities for the next month, and any issues and concerns. Committee representatives, especially chairpersons, are encouraged to attend the Pastoral Council meetings and discuss their reports. However, such attendance is optional unless specifically requested by the Pastoral Council.
 - G. Ministry and committee reports shall be distributed via email to the Pastoral Council, along with the agenda, at least seven (7) days before each meeting to allow for careful consideration before the meeting. Hard copies of the reports will be available at the meeting but reading of the reports at the meeting is discouraged.
 - H. Amendments to this Constitution (and its initial adoption) shall not be officially approved until they have been published for at least three (3) weeks, i.e. in the minutes of the previous meeting, and published in the St. Mary of the Visitation Catholic Church Bulletin for two (2) consecutive weeks. They shall then take effect immediately.
 - I. Review of the Constitution will take place every three years or sooner if deemed appropriate. All council members shall show by their signature that they have reviewed and approved the Constitution. Any changes to the Constitution shall be voted on and signed by the members of the Pastoral Council with the pastor's signature as acceptance. Changes must be underlined with the revision date noted on the title page. The original document must be archived in the Parish office.

VI. Composition of the Pastoral Council

A. Voting Members: Nine (9) adults on rotating three (3) year terms (two replaced each year), one (1) youth (13-17 years old, one (1) year term), and the Pastor. All voting members of the Pastoral Council are responsible for prayerfully considering the minutes and information provided with the agenda before coming to the meeting, both to avoid wasting the time of others and to promote thoughtful and constructive discussion at the meeting.

B. Ex Officio Members: Non-voting representatives of ministries and committees, and their sub-committees:

1. Liturgy Ministry
2. Youth Ministry
3. Catholic Christian Formation Ministry
4. Worship Committee
5. Building and Grounds Committee
6. Community Outreach Committee
7. Parish Life Committee
8. Communications Committee
9. Parish Finance Council

C. Ad Hoc Members: Non-voting; Appointed for specified, time-limited task, i.e. new building construction, fund raising projects, etc.

D. Officers: Shall be voting members elected at the first meeting of the year (December); Responsibilities include:

1. Chairperson: Prepare and distribute meeting agenda to members prior to the meeting, conduct the meeting, assign tasks to members, and calling special meetings when required. The Chairperson shall have served on the Pastoral Council for at least one year prior to being elected. The Chairperson may ask for volunteers or assign specific tasks to individual Pastoral Council members. Such tasks may include leading the Pastoral Council in opening and closing prayers, assisting with the annual election process for new members, and meeting with committees.

2. Vice Chairperson: Perform the duties of the Chairperson when he/she is unavailable. Perform intra-council administrative tasks as they arise.
3. Secretary: Record the minutes of the meeting, distribute minutes, committee and staff reports, and assignments to members, committee chairs, and the Parish Office in a timely manner, maintain a permanent record of Pastoral Council proceedings, turn all records over to the Parish administrative staff for filing when requested or at the end of his/her term.

VII. Selection of Council Members and Terms of Service

A. Invitation and Nominations:

1. During October of each year.
2. All members of the Parish will be invited to nominate themselves or any other registered and confirmed member to serve on the Pastoral Council.
3. Members of the Pastoral Council will contact each nominee to verify their eligibility, ability, and willingness to serve.
4. All registered and confirmed members of the Parish shall be eligible for nomination as voting members except for the designated Ex Officio Members.
5. The youth voting member must have the permission of a parent or guardian, and must have received the sacrament of Confirmation. Notes on written or verbal permission must be kept on file with the Secretary of the Pastoral Council.

B. Selection:

1. Three (3) adult voting members and one (1) youth voting member shall be selected by the Biblical method of drawing lots.
2. Newly-elected members will be commissioned and introduced to the Parish at all weekend Masses on a weekend in November.
3. Newly-elected members will attend the November meeting.

C. Organization Meeting:

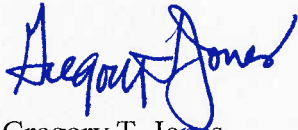
1. New members shall begin their service at the December Pastoral Council meeting.
2. Election of new officers shall be held during the December meeting.

3. The officers from the prior year shall issue the minutes from the previous meeting and the agenda for the December meeting. The prior year officers shall start the meeting, conduct elections, and then turn over their responsibilities (if replaced) to the new officers.
4. The election of officers shall be by consensus.

D. Terms:

1. Pastoral Council terms officially start in December and run through November of the following year. This is Pastoral Council's business year.
2. Normal terms of service will end after 3 years (one year for the youth voting member). Members may volunteer for the next lottery. There will be no fixed limit on the number of terms an individual may serve.
3. No reason need be given if a member decides they are no longer called to serve on the Pastoral Council.
4. Members may be asked to leave (removed for cause) the Pastoral Council if it is determined, in a closed session, after prayer and counseling, that the member is not making a positive contribution to the mission of the Pastoral Council. Some reasons for removal for cause are excessive absenteeism, disruptive or disgraceful behavior, heresy, refusal to participate, and election fraud.
5. If a Pastoral Council member leaves before the schedule end of his/her term, a consolation drawing will be held at the next Pastoral Council meeting from the list of previously qualified candidates. The electee shall serve the remainder of the vacated term.

As signed by the Saint Mary of the Visitation Pastoral Council,



Gregory T. Jones
Chairperson



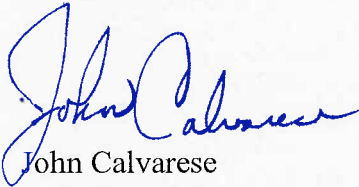
Johnny Ayala
Vice Chairperson



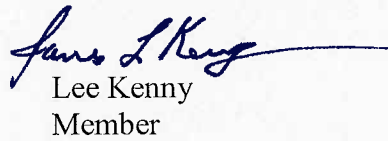
Mayra Short
Secretary



Jim Brocato
Member



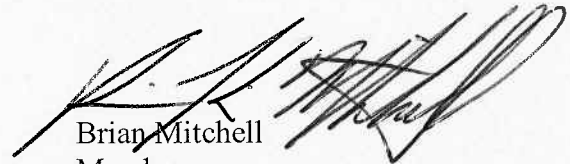
John Calvarese
Member



Lee Kenny
Member




Staci Miller
Youth Member



Brian Mitchell
Member

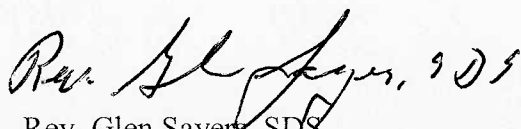


Kathy Smith
Member



Libby Webb
Member

Accepted by,



Rev. Glen Sayers, SDS
Pastor, Saint Mary of the Visitation