



Diocese of Gallup Guidelines for Parish Councils

I. Establishment of Parish Pastoral Councils

- A. Each parish shall establish a council according to its special circumstances within the parish/mission.
- B. Each mission may have representatives appointed or elected to the council of its parish. The mission may have its own council depending upon circumstances.
- C. The council shall be called "Parish Pastoral Council."

II. Definitions

The following definitions are included to enable all to understand the intent of each part of this document:

Parish- "A parish is a certain community of Christ's faithful stably established within a particular Church, whose pastoral care, under the authority of the diocesan Bishop, is entrusted to a parish priest as its proper pastor."(Canon #515)

Pastor- "The parish priest is the proper pastor of the parish entrusted to him. He exercises the pastoral care of the community entrusted to him under the authority of the diocesan Bishop, whose ministry of Christ he is called to share, so that for this community he may carry out the offices of teaching, sanctifying and ruling with the cooperation of others priests or deacons and with the assistance of lay members of Christ's faithful, in accordance with the law."(Canon #519)(See also Vat II, Lumen Gentium, "The Church," Art. 39)

Staff members- Individuals who are paid or receive a stipend to perform work within the parish under the direction of the pastor.

Consultative- As used in this document: the process or activity in which the members of the council give their analysis, ideas and recommendations to the pastor, after proper discernment, on issues or matters which the parish community at large bring forward directly to the council or to the pastor.

Policy- A general guideline or plan of action.

Administration- The managing of activities within a parish which are under the direction and responsibility of the pastor or his designee.

III. Purpose of the Parish Pastoral Council

- A. In accord with Canon #536 our Bishop, Donald Pelotte, has mandated a pastoral council in each parish. “In this council, which is presided² over by the parish priest, Christ's faithful, together with those who by virtue of their office are engaged in pastoral care in the parish, give their help in fostering pastoral action.” Hence the purpose of the council is to:
- Achieve a fuller participation of the whole parish in extending Christ's mission of making the Gospel known and the people holy.
 - Provide a vehicle for shared responsibility on a parish level so that the movement of the Holy Spirit may be discerned among the people.
 - Work toward a unified spiritual vision among members of the parish.
 - Help the parish to meet the challenge of being truly Church in the modern world.
- B. The council serves as a consultative body to the pastor for various pastoral needs, activities and the general well-being of the parish.

IV. Role of the Pastor

The role of a Pastor in relationship to the Pastoral Council can best be summed up in this way:

“The pastor is to acknowledge and promote the proper role which the lay members of the Christian faithful have in the Church's mission by fostering their associations for religious purposes; he is to cooperate with his own bishop and with the presbyterate of the diocese in working hard so that the faithful be concerned for parochial communion and that they realize that they are members both of the diocese and of the universal Church and participate in and support efforts to promote such communion.” (Canon #529, A. 14, N.2)

V. Membership of the Parish Pastoral Council

- A. Membership on the council may be by appointment, discernment or election as local circumstances dictate. Associates, Deacons, Religious and/or members of the staff are ex-officio members. The number of members on the council may vary, depending on the size and nature of the parish.
- B. Terms of office. Parish/mission organization representatives serve a fixed term. Appointed and elected representatives serve a fixed term. If circumstances dictate, members may serve additional terms.
- C. Selection for membership on the council, Parish/mission organization representatives are selected by those serving within the organization. Members from the community-at-large; may be selected by the parishioners. To be considered for membership on the Pastoral Council, an individual should be a practicing Catholic.

VI. Structure of the Council

- A. Officers
 - President; the pastor/administrator presides.
 - Chairperson: conducts the meeting.
 - Secretary; maintains records.
- B. Each Pastoral Council formed shall meet on a regular basis, not less than quarterly.
- C. Each Pastoral Council may develop its own by-laws or rules as deemed necessary to conduct its affairs in an orderly, prayerful, and open manner.
- D. Member who do not fulfill their duties may be removed from the council at the discretion of the President after consulting the members of the Pastoral Council.

VII. Education and Formation of Council members

- A. Each Parish Pastoral Council member must understand the following fundamental concepts:
 - B. A personal and communal discipleship to Jesus Christ.
 - C. A family perspective in parish and community life.
 - D. How to use the outpouring of the Holy Spirit's charisms within the parish community.
 - E. The meaning of shared responsibility for the work of the Church.
 - F. The various models of Church and how they apply to our diocese.
 - G. How the parish can respond to the mission of the diocese.
 - H. Under the guidance of the Pastor, The Pastoral Council, individually and collectively, should develop a deeper spirituality of service.
 - I. New members of the Pastoral Council shall participate in Diocesan training in order to understand the role of Parish Pastoral Councils in the Diocese of Gallup. Continuing members should attend the sessions as a review.
 - J. An annual day of recollection or retreat as a Pastoral Council is strongly recommended. This activity shall enable council members to develop a deeper commitment to Christ in the service of their parish community and the Church.