



Our Lady of Fatima Parish Council Foundation Document

I. Introduction

- a. Recognizing that sound pastoral decisions are informed by the wisdom of the People of God, Bishop Thanh Nguyen established the pastoral council of Our Lady of Fatima Church on January 09, 2022.
- b. The documents of the Second Vatican Council recommend the establishment of such councils. They state that Catholics have a right and duty to express their opinion on what pertains to the good of the Church.
- c. Pastors should willingly consult their people and use their prudent advice. By establishing a pastoral council, the pastor acknowledges the wisdom of his parishioners and expresses his desire to share with them his responsibility for the governance of the parish.

II. Purpose

- a. The purpose of the parish pastoral council is to investigate pastoral matters, to consider them thoroughly, and to propose practical conclusions about them.
- b. The council's task is:
- c. To study those matters brought to its attention and shed light on them.
- d. To reflect on them thoroughly, to discern their true nature, to evaluate and to ponder them.
- e. To draw sound conclusions.
- f. The council presents these conclusions to the pastor in the form of recommendations. This threefold task of the council-investigating, considering, and recommending conclusions-is called pastoral planning.
- g. After the pastor has accepted the recommendations of the council, he directs their implementation.
- h. Council members may assist him, but strictly speaking, implementation is the responsibility of the pastor, not the council.

III. Scope

- a. The scope of the council is pastoral matters. These may include everything that pertains to the pastor's ministries of proclaiming

God's word, celebrating the sacraments, caring for the faithful, promoting the mission of the Church to the world, and being a good steward of parish resources. The scope includes all the practical matters of parish life. There is, in short, nothing about which the pastor may not consult the council, apart from faith, orthodoxy, moral principles or laws of the universal Church.

IV. Criteria for Membership

- a. Pastoral council members are chosen, above all, for their ability to accomplish the main task of the council-the work of investigating, considering, and recommending practical conclusions. They are baptized Catholics, in good standing with the Church, who reflect the parish's various neighborhoods, social and professional groups, and apostolates. Finally, they are parishioners noted for their faith, good morals, and prudence.

V. Selection of Members

- a. The pastoral council is composed of eight (8) members. Six (6) of these members are elected by parishioners. The remaining two (2) members are appointed by the Pastor. The term of all members is three (3) years. Elections of the members occurs in December, and they are sworn in on Epiphany Sunday weekend.

VI. Officers

- a. The pastor presides at every meeting of the council. He consults, he accepts or rejects recommendations, and he develops the agenda with the council officers.
- b. The pastor and councilors select three officers from among their number. They are the chairperson, vice-chairperson, and secretary. With the pastor they develop the council agenda.
- c. The chairperson facilitates council discussions, making sure that everyone speaks and is heard. The chairperson also monitors the work of the councilors between regular meetings.
- d. The vice-chairperson assists the chairperson and facilitates meetings in the chairperson's absence.
- e. The secretary keeps the minutes. He or she ensures that they are sent, along with the agenda and supporting documents, to each councilor at least one week before every meeting.

VII. Operation

- a. The pastoral council has a three-year planning cycle, and members are selected for a three-year term. The pastor defines the theme of the planning cycle during the September assembly at which the council is selected. In the beginning of the council's second and third year, the members facilitate a parish assembly to report on the council's progress and to elicit the advice of parishioners. At the end of the third year, the council completes its work. Then a new council is selected, and a new planning cycle begins.

VIII. Agenda

- a. The pastor develops the agenda with the council officers. It states the goals for each meeting, the means and group process for reaching the goals, and the materials needed to accomplish them. The agenda guides the meeting. It begins with a review of the minutes of the previous meeting and concludes with a brief evaluation. If the pastor is dissatisfied with the consultation, he expresses his reservations and asks the council to clarify whatever remains obscure. When he is satisfied with the consultation, he formally accepts the council's recommendations. He may then ask the parish staff or other parishioners to implement them.

IX. Relation to the Staff and Finance Council

- a. The pastor consults others besides the pastoral council about parish governance. He relies upon the parish staff for their expertise and consults them daily about the management of parish operations. Indeed, he may occasionally ask parish staff members to attend council meetings in order to put their knowledge at the service of the pastoral council. Moreover, the pastor relies on the finance council to develop, monitor, and report on the parish budget. Finance council members are chosen for their technical skill in realms of accounting and finance. The pastoral council, by contrast, offers practical wisdom. That is the ability to investigate pastoral matters in a general way, to reflect on them deeply in dialogue, and to propose conclusions appropriate to the parish.

X. Meetings

- a. The pastoral council meets once a month from September to May. Meetings are two hours in length. Between the monthly meetings, council members are expected to follow up the previous meeting and prepare for the next. This usually entails work on ad hoc committees. The first meeting of the new pastoral council is dedicated to the call and mission of the newly chosen members. The council's second and third year begin with a parish assembly. After each assembly, the council assimilates the assembly results.
- b. During the final meeting of each year, the councilors reflect on the progress of the three-year planning cycle. The pastor thanks them for their service and reflects on the progress made by the council toward reaching its goals.