

## PARISH COUNCIL MISSION STATEMENT

The Parish Council  
is a faith-filled leadership body,  
guided by the Holy Spirit and the Gospel,  
that works in conjunction with the pastor and parish staff  
to discern the needs of the parish and,  
by setting goals and priorities, and acting by consensus,  
guides the parish in building a  
Christ-centered Christian community,  
for the honor and glory of God.

## LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

The Parish Council coordinates five working Commissions whose functions are outlined in this covenant booklet. All parish organizations and activities are included within one of these Commissions.

The five Commissions are: **Worship, Community Life, Faith Formation, Outreach, and Administration.** Two people from each Commission, along with the Pastor and a representative of the parish staff, make up the Parish Council. The Council, therefore, is made up of 12 members. The term of office on the parish council is two years, and three years on the commission. That means a person could serve on a commission for one year and then could be selected to serve on the parish council, while still remaining on the commission for the next two years.

As the members of the Parish Council and Commissions, we freely accept the call to serve as leaders of this faith community. We realize that we share this privilege and responsibility with the Pastor and Staff of this parish community. We understand that our Baptism call, which we share with every Christian, is to live out the Gospel. We accept the challenge to make this a priority, not only for ourselves and our family but to extend this effort to our larger parish community as well.

## **THE COVENANT COMMITMENT**

To ensure a well-functioning and responsive group, we agree to live by the following covenant:

We must strive to possess:

We have been chosen, recommended by other members of this faith community and confirmed by the Holy Spirit. We acknowledge our unique role as representatives of the many voices of the people of this parish. To effectively function in this role, we realize the need to come prepared to all meetings of the Parish Council and Commissions, to share honestly, accurately and freely, entering fully into all discussions.

- a willingness to listen
- a desire for spiritual growth
- an openness to study and reflection
- an eagerness to see a vision or direction
- an ease in working with groups
- an ability to animate others' gifts
- a freedom to delegate responsibilities
- a resolve to make needed decisions
- an excitement about parish
- a willingness to be a liaison to a given group

## *A Yearly Tradition Of Planning*

The tradition begins in late August with a review of all parish groups and ministries for the coming year. This is the first step towards making up job descriptions for each ministry. For example, in seeking communion ministers, what is required of a person who brings communion to the sick and homebound? How many hours each month will this involve and what time of the day or day of the week should it be done? How many people will need to be visited by this one person? What training will be required? Will the volunteer be expected to attend any meetings during the month? What skills are needed?

Each volunteer position should have a one page summary of what the job entails and what will be required of the person, both in time, preparation and skill. With these job descriptions in hand, the council, staff and commissions sponsor a **Parish Ministry Fair** sometime during September. This is a gala affair held on Saturday and Sunday following each of the Masses. The gathering space, gym or parish center is prepared with booths displaying all the various ministries, organizations and activities operating in the parish. Parishioners are encouraged to pick up display materials and description cards for each area of involvement.

A week or two after the Ministry Fair is **Commitment Weekend**. This is the time people are asked to share their gifts of time, talent and treasure for the coming year. They choose a ministry for volunteering their time and pledge a percentage of their income, bringing up their commitment cards to the front of the church during each one of the weekend liturgies. The commissions split up the commitments of time and talent, making sure that those who volunteered are contacted within a two-week's time frame.

People fulfill their commitments throughout the year, receiving training as needed and taking part in sharing groups of those involved in similar ministries. All are given frequent affirmation and support for their generosity. The commissions continue to meet on a regular basis, coming together on their common Leadership Nights each month.

In March, the Parish council and coordinating groups sponsor the **Gathering of Ministers**. This is the time when all those involved in groups and ministries have a chance to look at what has happened so far this year and to begin making choices about continuing in their present area of ministry or choosing another for the coming year. This is also the time people are selected for leadership positions on the commissions and eventually on the parish council. At the **April**

**Leadership Night**, new recruits are discerned for membership on the coordinating groups. Those who have fulfilled their term of office sit down with the new people and explain “how we do things around here,” using this Covenant Booklet as a training manual.

This special **training session** for new members is a key ingredient of this structure. All those who are going off the commissions and all the new members come together for a two-hour meeting. The veteran members each have a copy of this covenant booklet which has all that is needed for those in leadership positions in the parish. During this one-on-one interaction, the veteran member goes through the covenant booklet with the new person, handing it over to that person as a sign of passing on the authority to the new leader.

During the **May Leadership Night**, all the new and current members, as well as those leaving the commissions, participate in an evaluation session. They identify what worked in each area of ministry and what didn’t work. They also investigate the *reasons* things worked or didn’t work so as not to repeat the same mistakes next year.

The **June Leadership Night** is for setting goals for each aspect of the parish. Based on the evaluations from the previous month, this is when the coordinating groups decide what will be their focus for the coming year, while the Parish council maps out the direction for the parish as a whole or establishes a common theme for the coordinating groups to incorporate into their goals and action plans.

There is no Leadership Night during July. As the **August Leadership Night**, one person from each commission is discerned to serve on the Parish council for the coming year. The rhythm of the year includes not only planning but socializing among the leaders, as well as prayer and retreat time together. The rhythm of the year is as follows:

<u>July</u>	<u>Aug.</u>	<u>Sept.</u>	<u>Oct.</u>	<u>Nov.</u>	<u>Dec.</u>	<u>Jan.</u>	<u>Feb.</u>	<u>Mar.</u>	<u>Apr.</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>June</u>
	- Ministry Job Descriptions						- Gathering of Ministers				
	- Ministry Fair								- Evaluations		
	- Commitments to Ministry								- Goals		
	- New Council Members								- Train New Members		
	- Select Co-Chairs								- Commissioning Service		

## GUIDELINES FOR THE PARISH COUNCIL

### **A.     Criteria for membership to the Council**

1.     Be sixteen years of age or older
2.     Be a member of one of the five parish commissions
3.     Be a registered member of the parish
4.     Live up to and accept the “Mission Statement” of the Council and the parish
5.     Attend Council meetings regularly, with no more than two absences per year

### **B.     Membership**

1.     Each member of the Council will serve a two year term with half of the membership being elected each year
2.     A member of the Council may only serve two consecutive two year terms
3.     Pastor and Business Manager will serve as ex-officio members of the Parish Council

### **C.     Selection**

At the August Leadership Night, each Commission will discern from its members one person to serve on the Parish Council for a two-year term. At the following weekend liturgies, the new council members will be presented to the congregation and, along with the current members, will participate in a Commissioning Service as an affirmation of their commitment.

### **D.     Meeting Dates**

The Council will meet on the second Thursday of each month during the final hour of the Common Leadership Night that includes all the Commissions.

### **E.     Officers**

The Parish Council will be served by co-chairpersons who will be selected by a consensus of all members of the Parish Council in attendance at the September meeting.

**F.**     **Purpose**

The Council will implement the Council Mission Statement by developing yearly themes for the parish, doing visioning and long-range planning for the parish, establishing goals and action steps for the parish as a whole, coordinating and holding accountable the five parish Commissions, and working with the pastor in handling parish crises.

**G.**     **Executive Committee**

An executive committee, comprised of the two co-chairpersons and the Pastor, is to meet during the week before the Common Leadership Night and establish an agenda for the Parish Council meeting. The co-chairpersons initiate a phone chain of the council members so that each person is called before the meeting, reminding the person about the meeting and telling them what the agenda will contain.

**H.**     **Communication**

1.       Ordinarily, all Parish Council meetings will be open meetings
2.       The minutes of the Council meetings will be prepared by someone chosen by the membership, either a council member or some other person designated for this purpose. The minutes, which include a brief report from each commission, will be available to all Commissions either by mail or e-mail, to the parishioners by means of an insert to the bulletin and a posting at the main and side vestibules of the church.
3.       Members will have the responsibility to communicate to and from their Commission.
4.       The staff representative will communicate with the staff.

## GUIDELINES FOR THE COMMISSIONS

### A. Criteria or membership to the Commission

1. Be sixteen years of age or older
2. Have served for at least one year in some group or ministry associated with that particular commission
3. Be a registered member of the parish
4. Communicate regularly with the groups and ministries associated with the Commission
5. Live up to and accept the "Purpose Statement" of the Commission and the parish
6. Attend Commission meetings regularly, with no more than two absences per year

### B. Membership

1. Each member of the Commission will serve a three year term with one third of the membership being selected each year. The membership of each Commission will number from five to ten people, as determined by the needs of each Commission.
2. A member of the Commission should not serve consecutive terms, although a person may serve an extra year beyond the three years by way of an exception.

### C. Meeting Dates

1. The Commissions will meet on the second Thursday of each month during the first hour of the Common Leadership Night, following the general gathering for prayer and training session, when appropriate.
2. Each Commission will determine goals and action plans that are consistent with the theme and Mission Statement of the Parish Council.

### D. Selection to the Commission

During the Gathering of Ministries, to be held on the third Sunday of each March, the members of the constituent groups and ministries associated with each commission shall nominate people to serve on that Commission for a three-year term. At the April Common Leadership Night,

from among those nominated, enough new members for the commission will be discerned to make up one-third of the membership.

**E. Selection for the Council**

During the August Common Leadership Night, each Commission will choose, by discernment, one of its members to serve on the Parish Council.

**F. Selection of Co-Chairpersons**

During the September Leadership Night, every Commission will select, by discernment, its own co-chairpersons. Ordinarily, the co-chairpersons will not be members of the Parish Council.

**G. Selection for the Council**

During the August Common Leadership Night, each Commission will choose, by discernment, one of its members to serve on the Parish Council.

**H. Communication**

1. Ordinarily, all Commission meetings will be open meetings.
2. At the conclusion of the one-hour Commission on the Common Leadership Night, a representative from the Commission will give a “two-minute” verbal report to the gathering of all commission members. A brief written report will be prepared as well and brought to the Parish Council meeting at the conclusion of the evening by one of the Council members from each Commission. This written report will become part of the Minutes published as an insert in the parish bulletin and posted in the main and side vestibules of the Church.
3. The staff resource person on each Commission will have the responsibility of communicating information between the Commission and the staff
4. Two members of each Commission, not the co-chairpersons, will be members of the Parish Council.
5. Commission co-chairs will prepare an agenda prior to the meeting and inform the members of the meeting and agenda ahead of time.



## DECISION-MAKING ON THE COUNCIL AND COMMISSIONS

How the Parish Council of Ministries and Commissions will arrive at decisions is critically important. Many councils arrive at decisions by voting, a process in which the majority rules. Such a method is appropriate only for issues that are not divisive or will not cause hard feelings, especially for those losing the vote. Voting usually fosters a competitive approach to making decisions.

Consensus decision-making is the more appropriate mode for Christian communities. While a more involved process, it assures decisions that are agreed upon by the whole body and not just a majority of its members.

All important decisions by the Parish Council and Commissions shall be made by consensus of the members present at the meeting. Consensus is the process of arriving at a decision through thought, discussion and sharing of one's wisdom and insight. All members participate in the process, giving his/her wisdom.

The Parish Council and Commissions should also utilize the *C . D . I* process of decision-making. *C* stands for Consult *D* for Decide and *I* for Inform. When an issue is presented and needs a decision, the members first identify what group or individual, whether themselves or someone else, should be the decider. But before a decision is made, those making the decision should consult all the key people and groups *before* a decision is made. Once the decision is made, but before an action is taken, those making the decision should identify the individuals and groups that need to be informed about the decision and the reasons behind it. This process will alleviate much confusion in the decision-making process.

If an ambiguous situation arises, and it is unclear who should make the final decision, then it is the role of the Parish Council, working in conjunction with the pastor, to decide who should decide the issue.

C-D-I

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

1. *Define Problem – Clear to all*
2. *Determine the Decision-maker(s)*

WHAT	<u>WHO</u>	<u>WHEN</u>
<u>C</u> onsult	Who to ask?	Before Decision
<u>D</u> ecide	Who decides?	During Decision
<u>I</u> nform	Who to tell?	After Decision (With Reasons

## DESCRIPTION OF COMMISSIONS

### Administration Commission

The Administration Commission is responsible for coordinating the temporal affairs of the parish: how money is acquired, how it is spent, how the physical plant is maintained and how the parishioners are kept informed about what is happening in the parish. Each of these areas is handled by a subcommittee: The Administration Commission coordinates the following subcommittees: Finance Council, Buildings and Grounds Committee, Communication Committee, Stewardship of Treasure Committee.

Through these committees, the Administration Commission strives to achieve the following goals:

1. To assist the Finance Committee in consulting with the Pastor, staff and other commissions regarding expenditures and preparation of budgets.
2. To review the maintenance of existing properties and to make recommendations for the purchase or construction of additional properties.
3. To promote ongoing, two-way communication (aided by the Communication Committee) between parish groups and between parish Leaders and parishioners.
4. To oversee the work of the Stewardship of Treasure Committee in the coordination, direction and scheduling of appeals for financial contributions, as well as the scheduling of special collections and fund-raising events in the parish.

## Community Life Commission

The Community Life Commission is made up of various organizations in the parish. Its goal is to build a deeper sense of Christian community for all ages and interest groups in the parish. The scope of the Commission includes Hospitality and Welcoming, Parish Organizations and Clubs, Youth Ministry, Community-building and Socializing Events and the Stewardship of Time and Talent (Volunteer Coordination).

This Commission is responsible for the following:

1. Promote ongoing communication between all the organizations of the parish.
2. Promote ongoing communication between parish organizations and the Parish Council and staff especially the scheduling events and contributing to the yearly calendar.
3. Coordinating all activities and events of the parish organizations throughout the year that help promote friendship and good will between the organizations and all the people of the parish and surrounding community.

## Outreach Commission

The Outreach Commission coordinates the ministries of pastoral care, social services, peace and justice and evangelization. Its scope includes outreach to both the parish membership and the larger community, either in the neighborhood or beyond. The Outreach Commission coordinates the following subcommittees: Pastoral Care, Bereavement, Social Services, Peace and Justice and Evangelization.

The Commission is responsible for the following:

1. Funneling moneys to the Social Service committee and St. Vincent de Paul in order to fill requests for temporary aid and assistance.
2. Making sure the needs of the sick, homebound and handicapped are being met through the Pastoral Care Core Group and the network of pastoral ministers.
3. See to it that people's requests for spiritual aid through visitation in homes, hospitals and nursing centers are being met through pastoral ministries.
4. Fostering membership in a parish-wide community of prayer that responds to special intentions and prayer needs of parishioners.
5. Fostering an active evangelization program through the efforts of the Evangelization Team.
6. Communicating to the entire parish community the work and ministries of all the outreach groups and organizations, as well as fostering a parish-wide awareness of each parishioner's responsibility to recognize and serve those in need.
7. Promoting programs that emphasize respect for life, from the unborn to death.
8. Participating in special events that give witness to Christian love and challenge injustice and self-seeking behavior in the neighborhood and the world.
9. See to it that special task groups are formed to handle periodic service projects in the parish, such as blood drives, collections of food, clothing and/or money for the needy, Hunger Walk, Pro-Life, Habitat for Humanity.

## Faith Commission

The Faith Formation Commission coordinates all levels of educational programming in the parish, children through adults, Catholic and public school children alike. The Commission's role is to foster cooperation, coordination and communication among all groups and individuals involved in the formation ministries of the parish. The Faith Formation Commission coordinates the following committees and groups: Adult Formation Committee, Religious Education Core Group, Family Ministry, Faith Sharing Core Group, Youth Ministry, Scouting and RCIA Team.

Faith Formation involves such activities as children's religious education, youth formation, sacramental preparation, Christian Initiation, small group faith sharing, family ministry and marriage preparation.

The Faith Formation Commission is responsible for the following:

1. Try to involve and encourage all eligible parishioners to participate in the formational programs of the parish.
2. Encourage communication and coordination between the Religious Education Committee and the Adult Formation Committee, as well as whatever other educational committees may be formed.
3. To communicate to all the parishioners all that is happening in religious formation in the parish on all levels as a way of fostering greater awareness and participation.
4. The make-up of the Commission is to include at least one Religious Education member and one Adult Formation member, along with others involved in some aspect of parish religious education and formation.

## Worship Commission

The purpose of the Worship Commission is to give direction to the liturgical life of the parish, as well as to foster and promote the spiritual growth of all parishioners, enabling them to understand what it means to be a baptized Catholic Christian. It also seeks to provide opportunities for personal and communal prayer besides the celebration of Holy Eucharist. The Worship Commission coordinates the sub-committees and sub-groups inclusive to the commission.

The Worship Commission includes the, Liturgy Committee, liturgical ministers (mass coordinators, music ministers, Eucharistic ministers, lectors, alter servers, hospitality ministers, sacristan, and art and environment ministers), Eucharistic adoration committee, prayer line and retreat and spiritual formation programs.

The responsibilities of the Worship Commission are to:

1. Oversee and coordinate the liturgical ministries of the parish.
2. Promote regular communication/consultation with sub-committees and sub-groups listed above in order to ensure that liturgical and spiritual programs are reaching the needs and connecting with the every day lives of all parishioners.
3. Periodically evaluate the weekend liturgies (e.g. music, preaching, other ministries, etc.), drawing upon the insights and feedback of parishioners.
4. Promote spiritual enrichment through experiences such as parish missions, retreats, days of recollection, Eucharistic adoration, and seasonal programs.
5. Foster an annual evaluation of parish programs of spirituality in order to discover what is working well and what more might be needed in order to meet the diverse needs of the parishioners.
6. Ensure the current liturgical norms within the larger Church are implemented at the parish level.

## THE SHARED WISDOM MODEL OF INTERACTION<sup>1</sup>

The Parish Council and Commissions commit themselves to operate out of a Shared Wisdom model of interaction. This means that during their deliberations, they pay attention to the following aspects of the model.

### **Shared Wisdom Means That:**

- Each person has **a piece** of the wisdom
- Nobody has it all and we have **different** pieces
- We're not trying to convert others to our own views

### **The Implications Are:**

- The Wisdom needs to be **shared**
- The Wisdom needs to be **heard**
- We need to nourish a **holy climate**
- We must be willing to **let go** of the need  
.....to control  
.....to win  
.....to be right
- But instead we need to **risk the unfamiliar**

## THE SHARED WISDOM METHOD

1. Gather the data: Those to be affected by your decision have the right to share their wisdom with you before you make the decision.

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<sup>1</sup>Reference McKinney, OSB, Mary Benet, Sharing Wisdom: A Process of Group Decision Making, Allen



2. Reflect prayerfully on the data: Both analysis and synthesis take place in each persons understanding of the data.
3. Share the wisdom that results from the reflection: Hear the wisdom of the Spirit coming through the wisdom being shared within the group.

## RUNNING COUNCIL AND COMMISSION MEETINGS

### SAMPLE MEETING

1. An agenda has been prepared by the co-chairs and pastor or staff resource person and distributed to the entire council or commission by e-mail, letter or phone beforehand. The co-chairpersons initiate a reminder so that everyone is informed before the meeting to remind them to attend and making sure each person is aware of the agenda.
2. All the commissions and council members assemble on the common Leadership Night each month. The whole parish knows when this is happening and is invited to attend if they wish. The schedule for the Leadership Night is as follows:
  - 7:00 pm: Common Prayer -Each commission takes a turn leading prayer
  - 7:10 A short instruction on some aspect of leadership and planning
  - 7:20 Break into commissions to work on their agenda items
  - 8:20 Commission Reports followed by Socializing
    - Limit reports to two minutes per group
    - One person is appointed to keep track of time and limit the reports
    - Each commission takes a turn providing refreshments
    - Each commission hands in to the council a brief written summary after its verbal report
  - 8:40 Parish Council meets to work on its agenda items
    - No reports are needed from the commissions, only clarifications if necessary
  - 9:30 Parish Council Adjourns
    - Parish Council Minutes and Commission Reports are published in the parish bulletin or newsletter
3. The co-chairs prepare the meeting place so that the environment is conducive for a good meeting, with the table and chairs in a circle, extra chairs included for visitors, a warm, work-oriented setting with good lighting.

4. Everyone shows up on time and knows that the meeting will end on time, as usual.
5. During the one hour meeting of the commissions, a brief report is made about what happened in the last Parish council or any area associated with the commission since the last meeting. Keep reports to a minimum. If possible, let people read report materials beforehand. Nothing kills interest sooner than listening to long reports that waste valuable meeting time. This is true for the Parish council meeting as well.
6. The special issues for the meeting are now taken up in turn. These issues might include action plans that the group is working on to achieve a stated goal, or items left over from the last meeting or concerns about some area of ministry associated with the commission's ministries and groups.
7. After the agenda items have been handled, but no later than 5 minutes before quitting time, a summary of actions taken and decisions made is given by the person who will give the verbal report to the larger group and the results of the meeting are written down in a brief paragraph to be given to the Parish council by way of the council representative from the commission. All the participants also have a chance to evaluate the meeting to make sure that all were heard and there was good sharing and quality time together. A "buddy system" is set up so those who were not present are called and told about the meeting within a day or two.
8. At the end of the allotted hour, all regroup to hear reports from each commission and to enjoy one another's company over refreshments.
9. After a brief period for socializing, the members of the Parish council withdraw for their own meeting. In handling items that come up before the council, the following check might prove helpful:
  - a. Is this a big matter that the council has to handle or can it be funneled to one of the commissions or subgroups?
  - b. In funneling it to a commission, does the council need to hold it accountable, or empower it to make the decision, or it gather information for the council to act on at a later date, that is, consult it?
  - c. Whether the council funnels it or not, does it need to set a policy or give an overall direction for the parish on this issue?
  - d. Or is this a big enough issue that it has to go to the parishioners with a discernment process so the council can gain people's wisdom on this important matter?

## ROLE OF...

[These are descriptive words that help define what the role of each aspect of leadership may be. They are offered as a way to spark dialogue and discussion about the unique part each plays in the parish.]

### PASTOR

Spiritual model

Presides

Guides

Facilitates

Ratifies

Delegates

Sets tone

Liaison

Challenges

Upholds

Present

Listens

Convener

### STAFF

Faith/Gospel centered

Model

Committees

Professionals

Resource

Enables

Empowers

Carries out

Informed

Shaker

Techniques

Suggests

In touch

Share ministry

### COUNCIL

Prayerful

Set policy/goals/evaluate

Visioning/planning

Discerns

Discovers

Promotes

Model

Linkers

Works with

Approves

Convenes

Handles crises

Part of large church

Group skilled

## WHAT THEY ARE NOT...

Boss/sole owner	Autonomous	Doers
Doer	Permanent	In-group
Only decision-maker	Only expert	Rubber stamp
Laissez-faire	Jack/Jacqueline of all trades	Stifles
		In competition

## ROLE OF...

### COMMISSIONS

Meet with Ministers

Solve Problems

Coordinate

Link Ministries

Be Flexible

Create Vacuums

## WHAT THEY DON'T DO

Give Up Too Quickly

Act Independently

Take On Too Much

## CONSENSUS

Most of the important decisions arrived at by the Parish council and commissions will be by consensus. Some of the aspects of consensus are as follows:

- Each person has an equal opportunity to participate and influence the outcome.
- Going with the “sense of the group” does not necessarily mean total agreement, unanimity or complete satisfaction for all.
- In consensus, the decision arrived at is **acceptable** to all in the group and all agree to support the decision and support the group in choosing it. All **consent** to the final outcome. (Can you live with that?) There must be a willingness to live **positively** with the decision.

Some necessary **CONDITIONS** and **ASSUMPTIONS**:

- Both feelings and thinking are treated as important. The best results flow from a fusion of information, logic and emotion.
- Each member’s voices and viewpoints are important and encouraged so all concerns are heard.
- Group members are committed to both listening and speaking, hearing and being heard.
- Time is available to consider options, opinions and consequences and does not become a coercive element.
- Group members are aware of the process and are willing to challenge attitudes and attend to process as they continue to learn and practice decision making skills.
- There is a level of trust that allows honesty, directness, candor and the sharing of all necessary information.
- All consent to how the decision will be made.
- There is time for sharing information, listening, speaking, responding, reflection and silence.

Some **GUIDELINES**:

- All agree to voice views and express .silence blocks.

-Consensus will be blocked only on matters of conscience, not feelings or thoughts.

-A facilitator is helpful in guiding the agenda, clarifying and rephrasing, equalizing participation, summarizing, etc

## **RULES FOR CONSENSUS**

1. Avoid arguing -- Listen to others before pressing your own point.
2. Don't assume someone will "win" and someone will "lose."
3. Don't change your opinion just to avoid conflict.
4. Avoid voting or bargaining, but co-chairs may call for a vote.
5. Seek out differences of opinions to explore options.
6. Allow enough time for full discussion.
7. Don't come to a swift decision at the end of the allotted time. table it and come back to it if it's an important matter.
8. Commitment of a group to a best or good decision – not just a decision.

## THE ANNUAL GATHERING OF MINISTERS

The annual Gathering of Ministers occurs each March during Lent. The purpose of this Gathering is to call together all those ministering in any capacity in the parish so they can share stories, discover what the commissions have been working on, offer suggestions for the coming year and nominate those who would be good candidates to serve on the commissions. The process for this Gathering is as follows:

### AGENDA

- A. The parish is informed about the Gathering of Ministers. Everyone who is active in some ministry or organization or group is encouraged to attend. Heads of ministries and groups personally invite their members to attend. People are informed that the meeting will take less than three hours and is a key moment in the yearly traditions of the parish.
- B. The gathering space is set up to accommodate a large group of people, with chairs arranged in semi-circles facing the front where the initial prayer and presentation will begin. Five other gathering spaces are set up, one for each commission and area of ministry.
- C. The meeting begins with prayer (perhaps Scripture, music, petitions, etc.) and a description of the what will take place during the meeting.
- D. A few members of the Parish council describe the structure of the council and the commissions. This opening section of prayer and presentation should take less than 30 minutes, including time for questions.
- E. The participants are given a handout with the various ministries and groups and which commission they come under. Individuals are asked to choose the area of ministry they want to emphasize for the coming year. Although they may continue to minister in more than one area, the commission group they choose to attend at this time is the area that will be their major focus for the coming year. This process of choosing opens up areas of ministries for others to join.
- F. Members from the commissions act as leaders for each area of ministry. The leaders would begin by letting everyone introduce him/herself and talk about the ministry or group he/she is active in or represents.

- G. Participants would also have a chance to ask questions to clarify their understanding of the council and commissions. The leaders would then ask people to identify what all these ministries have in common, what links them together, what might be common goals or objectives.
- H. The leaders would then describe the operation of the commission which would serve as the coordinating group for all these ministries, providing direction, linkage, evaluation and support.
- I. Finally, the leaders would ask for nominations for people to serve on the commission for the next three-year term. People would suggest names of people who would be good nominees. All those nominated would be invited to the next common Leadership Night to participate in a discernment process for selection. The criteria for membership on the commission are passed out so that people know what would be expected of those nominated.
- J. After the commission groups have met for about an hour and a half, all are asked to regroup for general reactions and to identify the nominees for the commissions. The meeting ends with a prayer for guidance and a time for socializing.
- K. Sometime shortly after the Gathering of Ministers, the Parish council members meet to evaluate the meeting and see what was accomplished and what more needs to be done. They should clarify who will be the nominees for each commission and assist the commissions in the discernment process at the next Leadership Night.
- L. Once the new members of each commission are selected, they are presented to the parish as a whole at the weekend Masses and in the bulletin. They also participate in a special training session attended by all those whose term is finished and all the new commission members. This Covenant Booklet is used as a training manual. After an initial prayer and general description of the training session, the group splits into one-on-one sessions of old and new members so that those going off the commissions can explain to those coming on, "How we do things around here."



## THE ANNUAL EVALUATION AND GOAL-SETTING PROCESS

The following process of evaluation and goal-setting takes place either at the May or June common Leadership Night or a special “over-night” gathering of staff, council and commission members, that includes those going off the commissions, those continuing on for the coming year and the new members. This “over-night” gathering is both a community-building experience, as well as a time for evaluating the past year and setting goals and actions for the coming year. The process for the evaluation and goal-setting is as follows:

### PROCESS

- A. With all the commission, staff and council members gathered together, construct a history line of the last year, having people add events that have happened over the year. This is done as a joint effort.
- B. Each person is then given an index card and asked to write down three things that worked over the last year, whether or not they were included on the history line, along with all the reasons that each one of these events worked. On a second index card, each person writes down two things that did not work or still need some help, along with all the reasons each event did not work so well.
- C. People then count off so as to form random groups of five or six persons each. In each group, a list is prepared of all the things that work, along with the reasons, and another list of all that did not work, and the reasons. The two lists are shared with the entire assembly as a way of evaluating what worked and did not work over the last year. This leads into the goal-setting.
- D. Each commission then meets on its own, looking over the lists of what did or did not work to see which events were related to their ministry. They also consult the goals they had been working on over the last year to see if they still provide interest and energy for the commission. Are the stated goals, in other words, still worth working on for the coming year? If so, then these are affirmed or rewritten in order to give the goals new energy and vitality. If not, then one to three new goals are constructed by the commission as a way of focusing energies for the coming year.
- E. Once the goals are determined, then each goal is taken in turn and action plans are drawn up for that goal. It may be possible to deal with only one goal during the meeting and others saved for a future meeting. Taking one goal as a focus, the members individually think up as many concrete ways as possible for reaching that goal. A list is made of all these ideas. The commission members then determine which actions they want to commit themselves to over the next year.
- F. Using the “Parish Action Plans” worksheet as a tool, commission members take all the actions

they have chosen and determine which actions they want to work on over the next two months, adding in to whom it is directed, how often will it happen, where will it take place and who will be responsible for carrying out the action, along with a stated victory at the end of the designated time. They continue to fill out the action plans for the entire year that will bring the group closer to its goal.

## DISCERNMENT PROCESS FOR COMMISSION AND COUNCIL CO-CHAIRPERSONS

The following is a description of how the co-chairpersons are chosen to lead the commissions and Parish council each year. Ideally, only one co-chairperson is chosen each year and serves a two year term. A new co-chairperson is selected at the September Leadership Night each year.

### PROCESS

- A. The first step is to establish a prayerful atmosphere. This is accomplished with a short prayer service and the participants asking themselves, "What are we being called to as we discern our chairpersons?" Every effort is made to have all the members of the commission or council present for this discernment process.
- B. Each individual is asked to reflect personally on the reasons he or she would be a good co-chairperson and to think of all the talents he or she has to offer as a co-chairperson. Each person is also asked to reflect on any reasons why he or she would not be a good co-chairperson and to list the things that might get in the way or prevent the person from being a good chair.
- C. Everyone is then asked to share with the entire group all the reasons and qualities that would make the person a good co-chairperson. Once everyone has had a chance to share the positive aspects, then they are invited to share the negative aspects.
- D. Once everyone has listened to the reasons for and against, each person is to write down on an index card the names of two persons whom he or she feels would be a good co-chairperson. These names are collected and written on newsprint for all to see.
- E. Those listed on the newsprint are then asked if they would be willing to keep their names on the list as potential co-chairpersons for the coming year. People are encouraged to keep their names on the list and are affirmed for their positive qualities.
- F. For those names remaining on the list, everyone is asked to write on an index card his or her first and second choice for co-chairperson.
- G. The index cards are collected and the names are written on a new piece of newsprint, giving four points to all the first choices and two points to the second choices.
- H. If one co-chairperson is being selected for the coming year, then the one with the most points is asked to accept the position of co-chair and to join with the person who will continue as co-chair for the coming year. If two co-chairs are to be selected, then the two people with the most points

become the two new co-chairpersons for the coming year.

- I. All present give their acceptance and affirmation of the choice(s). The process is concluded with a brief prayer of thanksgiving.