

OFFICE OF PASTORAL PLANNING



**WELCOMING ► BELONGING ► OWNERSHIP**

OFFICE OF PASTORAL PLANNING

DIOCESE OF SAN BERNARDINO

1201 E. HIGHLAND AVE. SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92404

(909) 475-5146

[www.planningministry.com](http://www.planningministry.com)

Pastoral Planning  
is the process of praying and thinking  
together about the actions  
of the Body of Christ in a particular  
time and place.

Dr. William Pickett  
*A Concise Guide to Pastoral Planning*

**Ministry of Pastoral Planning**  
**Diocese of San Bernardino**

Dear Pastors, Pastoral Coordinators/ Parish Administrators and Members of the Pastoral Council:

The local parish continues to be the place where most Catholics live their lives of faith in the Lord Jesus. All of our parishes are being challenged to be communities where people's lives are filled with hope.

The pastoral councils are the ministries chosen by the church to provide consultation and assistance to the pastor or appointed leadership. Through pastoral planning and wise consultation, the councils will contribute to the carrying of the mission of Jesus Christ.

We are pleased to share with you this copy of *Understanding Pastoral Council*. While the development of consultative bodies will always be a work in progress, we hope that it will assist you in envisioning the role of the consultative bodies that support the work of the Parish.

For additional information, or additional copies, please contact our office at 909-475-5146.

Thank you,  
Aaron G. Colin, Director

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pastoral Council Ministry.....	2
Diocesan Policy and Reference to Canon Law.....	3
Membership .....	3
Meetings .....	5
Role of Parish Pastoral Council .....	6
Relationship of Pastoral Council with Others.....	8
Finance Council .....	9
Glossary.....	12

## **MINISTRY OF PASTORAL COUNCIL**

### ***US Bishops' Statement on the Parish (1980)***

Para. 31: “The structures for participation [in the parish] can take many forms, but the Parish [Pastoral] Council Ministry remains the most promising way to make sure such participation occurs. The Council will be fruitful as long as the proper steps are taken. It must be grounded in faith and worship; it must be formed and trained for its responsibility; and its works will be enhanced if its members include those carrying out the actual ministry of the parish. The Council has very clear functions: to develop the correct understanding of the parish’s mission and to formulate policies so that the necessary directions are taken if the ministry is to be carried out.”

### **DESCRIPTION OF MINISTRY**

The Ministry of Pastoral Council is to assist the pastor or the appointed leadership, in discerning the will of God for the parish at this time through the wisdom of the graced community. As a consultative body, the Pastoral Council helps:

1. to articulate the mission and direction of the parish in the context of the vision of the diocese and the teachings of the universal church
2. to ponder and set priorities in light of the parish mission and direction
3. to promote the spiritual growth of the entire parish so that each persons gifts may be exercised for the benefit of all
4. to provide practical wisdom to the pastor or the appointed leadership concerning pastoral issues and concerns

## **DIOCESAN POLICY:**

Each parish is to have a pastoral council which is regulated by universal law as well as by norms issued by the diocesan bishop; in this council the Christian faithful, selected according to the same norms, aid the pastor in the pastoral care of the parish.

“Each parish in the diocese of San Bernardino shall have an active Pastoral Council”

### ***Code of Canon Law***

**Canon 129 §2:** “Lay members of the Christian faithful can cooperate in the exercise of this power (of governance) in accord with the norm of law.”

**Canon 536 §1:** “After the diocesan bishop has listened to the Presbyteral Council, and if he judges it opportune, a pastoral council is to be established in each parish; the pastor presides over it, and through it, the Christian faithful along with those who share in the pastoral care of the parish, in virtue of their office, give their help in fostering pastoral activity.”

**Canon 536 §2:** “This pastoral council possesses a consultative (role) only and is (regulated) by norms determined by the diocesan bishop.”

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Membership of the Pastoral Council should reflect the make-up of the parish it serves: men and women, young people and the elderly, ethnic groups, minorities and the marginalized, persons with a variety of viewpoints and experiences. The pastoral council is not to be simply the liaisons from the various ministries active in the parish nor consist of only representatives of various ethnic or age groups.

The aim instead is to gather a group whose gifts (life experiences, qualities and skills) make them receptive to the “joy and the hope, the grief and anguish” of the entire parish and community, “especially those who are poor or afflicted in any way” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1).

**Members of the Pastoral Council should be:**

- Baptized and Confirmed Catholics
  - Registered and participating members of the parish
  - Living in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council
  - Comfortable with personal and communal prayer
  - Willing to serve through prayerful study, reflection, and interaction with all decision making consensus
  - Good listeners that understand the issues and needs
  - Enthusiastically committed to the mission and ministry of Jesus in the church
  - Able to make participation in the work of the Council a priority
  - Possessing good moral character
1. Appointed or elected members are selected to ensure adequate representation of all segments in the parish.
  2. Parish staff members are not part of the pastoral council; they serve as resource people and will work with the council to support their efforts.
  3. Members of the Council are to be attuned to the members of the community to be able to communicate the needs of the parish.
  4. Members of the Council strive for unity of the parish.

**Number of Members**

Since the pastoral council should be neither too large, nor too small, the ideal number of members is 8 to 12.



This number includes the selected members and/or appointed members.

- selected members are chosen by the community through a discernment process and make up the majority of the council
- appointed members are chosen by the pastor or the appointed leadership

### **Terms of Membership**

Members normally serve two or three year terms and, after prayerful discernment, may be re-appointed for one additional term. Overlapping terms is one way to ensure both continuity and fresh input. This can be accomplished by selecting one-third of the council annually.

### **Selection**

There are two models for selecting council members, that of appointment or nomination. In the nomination process, the parish community nominates candidates. After a qualification process the community votes. Though the final selection of qualified candidates is made by the pastoral leadership.

*For assistance in the process contact the office of Pastoral Planning*

### **MEETINGS**

The council's work will be done at its regular meetings. The frequency of the council meetings is determined by the pastor or pastoral leadership. Because the pastoral council is the primary consultative group in the parish, monthly meetings are the usual format chosen in order to accomplish the work of the council.

1. Meetings of the Parish Pastoral Council are presided over by the pastor, pastoral coordinator or parish administrator.
2. No meetings of the Council are to be held without the pastor the appointed leadership being present.
3. Pastoral Council meetings are to be held at least quarterly.

**Record keeping**

Meeting discussions must be recorded in minute format, by the secretary or designee and be archived . Records should be distributed to council members with sufficient time to study and come prepared to the next meeting.

**Agenda**

Meetings should always have a timed and itemized agenda which includes faith sharing and prayer. The members should be provided a copy of the agenda prior to the meeting. Non-listed issues should not be discussed, unless they are urgent and the membership agrees to discuss them.

**Chairperson:** Is the pastor or the appointed leadership.

**Facilitator:** The facilitator is the person who keeps the meeting moving, and is elected from the members of the council with the approval of the pastor or the appointed leadership. Terms of service can be determined by the pastoral council.

**Recording Secretary:** Is the person responsible for taking, publishing and distributing the minutes and the agenda.

**Multilingual needs**

In a diverse diocese such as San Bernardino, the issue of language may arise at a council meeting. The most common languages are English and Spanish. It is important to respect the primary language of a council member, and at the same time facilitate the work of a council meeting. The first choice is to seek bilingual members.

In the event that the pastoral council members are not fluent in the majority language, provisions must be made to translate the meeting discussions and minutes.

**ROLE OF PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL**

The Pastoral Council is to be first of all, a consultative body, which discerns through prayer. Council deliberations, gathering input, weighing strengths and needs, listing pros and cons, offering insights from other life experiences all take place in an atmosphere and attitude of humble prayer, reflection, listening and genuine willingness to learn from those who may disagree with us.

Thus the council empowers each of its own members to use his and her gifts even as it strives to discern and enable the sharing of God's gifts in the rest of the parish.

### **Planning Role**

The Pastoral Council promotes the pastoral planning effort in the parish.

### **Consultative Role**

The pastoral council is to provide consultation to the pastor or appointed leadership in the area of pastoral ministry.

1. The Council does not perform administrative duties which are reserved for the pastor, staff or appointed leadership.
2. The Parish Pastoral Council is a consultative body only. It has no independent authority.
3. The Pastoral Council is to promote parish life and encourage the involvement of the laity of the parish faith community. As parish leaders, Council members reflect and encourage the parishioners to participate in Pastoral activities.
4. The Council is to assist the pastor or appointed leadership in developing and fostering the pastoral plan of the parish: the pastoral vision, mission, goals and action plans, and master plan of the parish. Council members promote the vision of the parish rather than their personal visions.
5. Pastoral Council members are chosen to represent the whole community, not as representatives of a single ministry, or single community group. The council's singular role and responsibility is as an advisor and consultant to the parish leader.
6. The Pastoral Council ceases upon the departure of the previous Pastor, appointed leadership when a change of leadership occurs. Because the Council exists to advise a particular leader, when he/she is no longer the leader, the council's duties and advisory responsibilities cease to exist.

## **RELATIONSHIP OF COUNCILS WITH OTHERS**

### **Pastoral Council with Pastor**

The quality of the relationship that develops between the pastor and council must be rooted in prayer, and be open and respectful of their different, but complementary roles.

The Pastoral Council assists the pastor with this responsibility as a consultative body. Its members offer their *hearts, minds, eyes and ears* in an advisory discernment process. However, the pastor is always responsible for the decisions that are made. The wisdom of the council members is needed to create a strong pastoral decision

The pastor is the official representative and sacramental link to the diocesan church. According to Canon Law, he bears the ultimate responsibility for decisions regarding pastoral ministry, properties, and the overall good of the parish. But the entire parish, including the Council members, shares a responsibility for the mission of the church (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church #31).

1. The pastor, pastoral coordinator, or parish administrator is the authority in the parish by virtue of his or her appointment by the Bishop.[c.526 §2]
2. The pastor, pastoral coordinator, or parish administrator is the president of the Council and must be present at every meeting.

### **Pastoral Council with the Appointed Leadership** *(see glossary)*

In parishes without a resident pastor, the Diocesan Bishop may appoint a pastoral coordinator/ parish administrator. This person is the primary leader in the parish responsible for the pastoral life of the parish. The pastoral council will work with the pastoral coordinator/ parish administrator as the council would work with a resident pastor, except as may be further provided in the letter appointing the pastoral coordinator/ parish administrator.

## **Pastoral Council with Finance Council**

The Finance Council provides consultation to the pastor or appointed leadership in the areas of income, expenses, development, insurance, capital projects and legal issues. This special leadership role calls for a unique relationship between the pastoral and finance council. The two groups should have regular interaction during the year. They both have significant roles in all parish planning efforts.

## **FINANCE COUNCIL**

### **Canon 537**

In each parish there is to be a finance council which is governed, in addition to universal law, by norms issued by the diocesan bishop and in which the Christian faithful, selected according to these same norms, are to assist the pastor in the administration of the goods of the parish, without prejudice to the prescript of Canon 532.

**Canon 532** In all juridic affairs the pastor represents the parish according to the norm of law. He is to take care that the goods of the parish are administered according to the norm of Canon 1281-1288

*The parish is a juridic person by law (c. 515, § 3). Canon 532 is universal law identifying the pastor as the legal representative of the parish.*

### **DIOCESAN POLICY:**

Each Parish is to have a finance council which is regulated by universal law as well as by norms issued by the diocesan Bishop (Canon 537); in this council the Christian faithful, selected according to the same norms, aid the Pastor in the administration of parish goods with due regard to the prescription of Canon 532.

I. An essential part of every parish organization is the parish finance council. The purpose of the parish finance council is to:

A. Assist the pastor or appointed leadership in the administration of the goods of the parish. The administration of Church goods consists of taking care that those goods (property {assets}, etc) that have been lawfully acquire are preserved and used for the purpose for which they are given. Offerings given by the faithful for a specific purpose may be used only for that purpose.

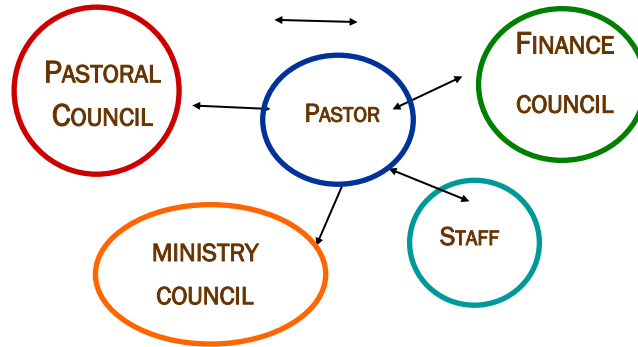
Absolute respect is to be given to the mention and wishes of the donor (cc. 122, 123, 616.1, 1284.2,3 1299,2) of specific goods. Goods given to the administrator are presumed given to the juridic person except when the contrary is clear (c1267). If the recipient is simultaneously administrator of two juridic persons, e.g. a parish and a religious house or more than one parish, it is essential that the administrator clearly understand to which juridic person the offering is being made.

B. Assist the pastor or appointed leadership to keep the financial administration of the Parish in harmony with the mission of the church. All parish decisions affecting the financial status of the Church, the budgeting and expenditures are to be done by the pastor following consultation of the Finance Council. The finance council members need to be fully informed ahead of time so that they can digest, reflect on, and develop a proper un-derstanding of the facts and a clear sense of options available. Only then will the wisdom resident in the community help discern when the Spirit of God is leading them. This also gives rise to a greater sense of ownership and sense that the work is collaborative.

The finance council must work in an atmosphere where open and honest discussions are encouraged.

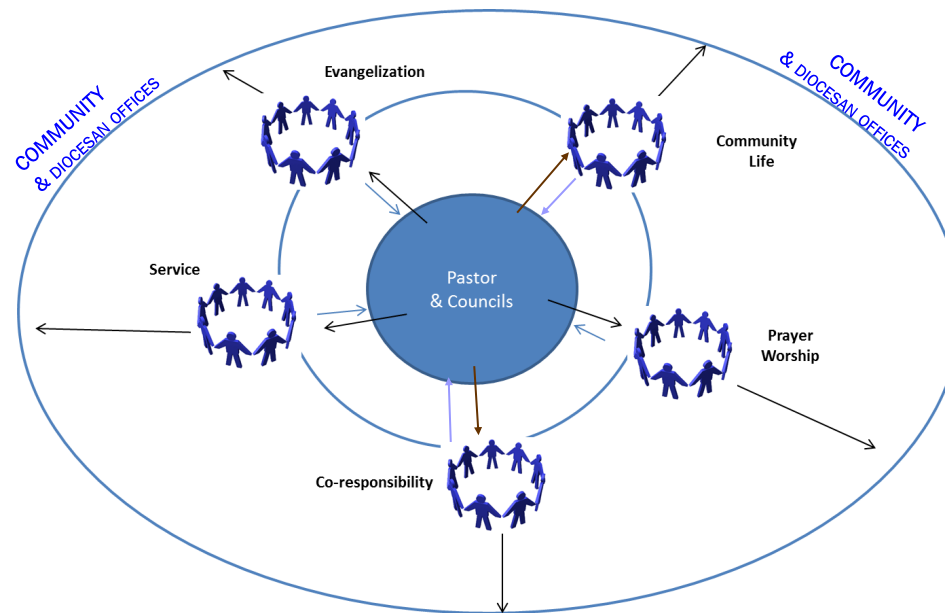
# Models of Structures for Consultative Bodies

## Organizational Chart by CONSULTATIVE BODIES:



## Organizational Chart in ECCLESIAL INTEGRATION:

Organizational Chart based on the Five Qualities of Parish Life: Members of the councils, parish leaders, staff & ministry coordinators are part of the five commissions.



## GLOSSARY

**Appointed leadership** – is a non-priest personnel in charge of the administrative duties of a parish; may be a religious sister, deacon or laity. Other titles used in the Diocese of San Bernardino are pastoral coordinator or parish administrator.

**Finance Council** – A group of the Christian faithful at the parish or diocesan level who assist the pastor or bishop by providing council in regards to financial matters, including assisting in the administration of temporal goods. The revised *Code of Canon Law* requires that each diocese (c. 492) and each parish (c. 537) have a finance council. Universal law as well as local diocesan legislation sets limits for significant financial and administrative decisions that require the bishop or pastor to consult with and receive the concurrence of the financial council. Each diocese should have available the local legislation pertaining to parish finance councils.

**Ministry Council** – Comprised of ministry heads, meets monthly to coordinate, organize and calendar parish events.

**Pastoral Council** – is a group of the faithful, broadly representative of the faith community, who advise the pastoral leader on important pastoral issues. The proper work of a pastoral council is to identify and ponder pastoral issues and to recommend creative and effective responses. These recommendations are made to the pastor or appointed leadership at the parish level or to the bishop at the diocesan level. Canon Law permits and encourages diocesan bishops to establish a diocesan pastoral council “to the extent that pastoral circumstances recommend it” (c. 511). Canon Law also allows the diocesan bishop to require parish pastoral councils, after listening to his Presbyteral Council. Both diocesan and parish pastoral councils are consultative bodies without deliberative power to make decisions.



# PARISH COUNCILS ~ CONCILIOS PARROQUIALES

A cross comparison of different types of parish councils

Comparación de diferentes tipos de concilios parroquiales

Qualities	Pastoral Council	Finance Council	School Board	Ministry Council
<b>Purpose</b> <b>Propósito</b>	CONSULTATIVE (Pastoral Issues) EVALUATIVE (Well-being of parish) KNOWLEDGEABLE (Diocesan Policy) VISIONARY (Pastoral Planning) (Planificación Pastoral) (GRUPO DE CONSULTA)	CONSULTATIVE (Financial/Legal Issues) EVALUATIVE (Finances-Parish) KNOWLEDGEABLE (Diocesan Policy) REVIEW (Financial Planning; short and long term) (GRUPO DE CONSULTA)	CONSULTATIVE (Educational Issues) EVALUATIVE (Programming/Finance) KNOWLEDGEABLE (Diocesan Policy/EW Corp) VISIONARY (Policy Form/Planning) (GRUPO DE CONSULTA)	CONSULTATIVE (Pastoral Issues) EVALUATIVE (Well-being of parish) KNOWLEDGEABLE (Diocesan Policy/Vision) VISIONARY (Pastoral Planning) (Planificación Pastoral) (GRUPO DE CONSULTA)
<b>Function</b> <b>Función</b>	Pastoral Planning based on the Five Qualities of Authentic Parish Life. (Planificación basada en las cinco cualidades de la vida parroquial)	Financial Planning/ Administration Finanzas/administración	School Operational Policy, Not Administration	Pastoral Planning (Planificación Pastoral)
<b>Necessity</b> <b>Necesidad</b>	Diocesan policy (Políticas diocesanas)	Canon Law (Ley canónica)	Diocesan policy (Políticas diocesanas)	Diocesan Pastoral Plan (Plan Pastoral Diocesano)
<b>Interrelationship</b> <b>Interrelación</b>	Sets vision for parish With Ministry Leaders (Desarrollar la Visión)	Funds vision for parish (Visión sobre finanzas)	Sets policy for school, in conjunction with parish vision	With Pastoral Council, sets vision, develop pastoral planning and implementation (Implementación de la Visión)