

CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION
GUIDELINES FOR PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

PREPARED BY:

THE PARISH PASTORAL GUIDELINES COMMITTEE
CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION

APRIL 3, 2003
REVISED MARCH 23, 2004

**GUIDELINES FOR PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL
CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION
VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA**

**Revised 23 March 2004
(Previously revised 3 April 2003)**

MISSION

The Parish Pastoral Council fully supports the Mission of Ascension Parish, as an open assembly of Catholic believers of the Diocese of Richmond, to proclaim the Word of God, celebrate the Eucharist, and serve the local community.

VISION

The Parish Pastoral Council seeks God's vision rather than their own for their community. Visionary people grow through knowledge of Scripture, and reflection on the Word helps them discern what God calls them to be and what God calls them to do.

The Parish Pastoral Council should be prophetic, calling the community, with its leaders, to grow in faith together and to respond to the needs of the Parish. To this end, the Council should foster the spiritual growth of the Ascension community by encouraging active participation in Ascension ministries by the laity. Trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit, Council members set aside their individual opinions and prejudices and listen to one another and to other parishioners.

The Parish Pastoral Council is expected to model living and working as followers of Jesus, and as prayerful people who share faith and strive to develop mutually supportive relationships. The Council can be a model of prayer, ministry, sharing of faith and building of close relationships, both within the Ascension community and with other faith communities.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Parish Council is to aid the Pastor in setting the overall direction of the Parish Community. As the elected representatives of the Church of the Ascension, the Parish Council shall act as the entity that provides the strategic oversight for the spiritual and operational functions of the Parish. The Parish Council will work closely with and advise the Pastor, members of the Parish staff, various ministry leaders, and members from the community at large, on matters related to the overall mission of the Parish.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Parish Council's responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Jointly sharing in the Parish financial decision-making process with the Pastor, staff and Finance Council. The Pastoral Council will share approval authority with the Finance Council for the parish financial plan that includes large expenditures, capital improvements, new construction and maintenance, as well as staffing and administration requirements.

2. Acting as a formal review board for input and approval on major changes to parish activities, programs, policies, and ministries, prior to their implementation. These activities, programs, policies, and ministries should be outlined in an annual Parish Operations Plan developed for the year by the Parish staff in conjunction with the Finance Council prior to the approval of the FY Budget- with the Parish Council approving the Parish Operations Plan.
3. Providing ministerial oversight and coordination, including annual review and report to the Pastor and Parish.
4. Monitoring, reviewing and, when necessary, making recommendations to leaders or ministry heads in a manner that satisfies the mission of the Parish.

The intention of these guidelines is to further define the Council's responsibilities for setting the Pastoral direction of the Parish community by:

- a. establishing priorities, objectives and goals for the Parish
- b. advising, formulating and communicating visionary pastoral planning in new ways
- c. supporting, coordinating and participating in parish activities and ministries
- d. sharing with our region and the diocese as a witness to the larger church
- e. encouraging the laity to actively participate in Ascension ministries

The Parish Pastoral Council is further called to be:

- a. a small faith community
- b. spiritually alive
- c. prophetic in the spiritual sense
- d. a witness to the Gospel
- e. unified in Jesus in its diversity
- f. an initiating and enabling source that aids God in transforming a parish

CHARACTERISTICS

The Parish Pastoral Council will be defined as the twelve (12) elected members from the Parish. Eligibility for membership on the Parish Pastoral Council requires that each elected member be from a registered member family of the parish. Eligibility further requires that each Council member responsibly acquire full knowledge of council materials, plus participate in the process workshops.

Council members will have reached their eighteenth birthday by the start of their term (waived for Youth of Ascension).

ELECTIONS

During May or June of each calendar year new members will be elected to the Council from the at-large community. Members will be elected to serve a four (4) year term. The Chairperson shall preserve the total recorded vote for future use.

Chairperson and Vice Chairperson will be elected by members of the Elected Pastoral Council at the last meeting of the fiscal year. Election will be for a one (1) year term with the option to serve for an additional one (1) year term by majority vote of the elected Council and with approval of the Pastor.

Chairperson is usually Vice Chairperson of the previous year.

TENURE

Elected members will hold four-year terms. Terms may be extended up to one year for the purpose of assuming the Chairperson position on the Council.

Elected members may be re-elected for an additional four-year term following normal election guidelines. After completing the second full term, a one-year mandatory hiatus is required prior to being eligible for re-nomination as an elected member.

Vacancies will be filled from the descending vote tally from the previous at-large election. If no tally is available from the election, the member shall be chosen by vote within the Council. The replacement member will serve the remaining term of the departed member. The replacement member will then be eligible to run for one additional full term.

ORGANIZATION

CHAIRPERSON:

The Chairperson shall:

Convene and facilitate all Council and Executive Committee meetings.

Appoint two (2) members of Council to serve on Executive Committee.

Act as Parish Pastoral Council representative to our region and report back to Council.

Provide information packet and appoint a Council member to familiarize each new member regarding Council activities and processes.

Be required to privately request the resignation of a Council member, this being done with the consensus of the Executive Committee.

Perform other tasks assigned by the Pastor.

VICE –CHAIRPERSON

The Vice Chairperson shall:

Act in the absence of the Chairperson.

Monitor the progress of the current Five-Year Plan and periodically brief the Parish Pastoral Council.

Perform any other tasks assigned by the Chairperson.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

The purpose of the Executive Committee is to oversee and provide direction to the parish, and Pastoral Council.

The Executive Committee will meet as needed and in any emergency situation that must be attended to immediately.

Membership of the Executive Committee shall consist of:

Pastor

Pastoral Council Chairperson

Pastoral Council Vice Chairperson

At least two (2) appointed members of elected Council

Immediate past Chairperson.

COMMITTEES:

Parish Pastoral Council may authorize committees in addition to those mandated by Diocesan rule in the current "Called to Serve".

SECRETARY:

The Parish Pastoral Council will appoint a secretary who is not a member of the Council. He/ She will record the notes of Council meetings, Executive Committee meetings, and perform other duties as directed by the Parish Council Chairperson.

The secretary shall provide a copy of the minutes for any recorded meeting to the Council Chairperson within seven (7) calendar days.

MEETINGS:

Parish Pastoral Council meetings convene on the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 PM at specified locations, except for the month of July.

Staff members and Ministry Chairs are invited to attend every meeting to seek its guidance and report on the progress of their responsibilities.

These meetings are open to the entire community of Ascension.

Because the Pastoral Council gathers as a faith community, each meeting will begin and end with prayer and reflection, with all members personally assuming responsibility with these prayers.

Attendance at all council meetings is mandatory. Failure to attend three consecutive meetings, or a total of four in the current year without sufficient reason, will result in removal *ipso facto*.

The monthly agenda will be provided to all council members prior to the regular meeting and notice of a council meeting will appear in the Sunday Bulletin preceding the meeting.

Minutes of each council meeting will be taken by the Council Secretary and distributed to council members each month. A summary of the minutes shall be placed on the council bulletin board and on the church's website in a timely fashion.

The Parish Pastoral Council Secretary will send a copy of the minutes of each pastoral council meeting to the Executive Secretary of the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

An annual evaluation/ education gathering shall be held to educate the members and review, with the entire Pastoral Council, the purpose and function of the council, its priorities, goals, and objectives, the process of consensus decision making and review of the parish mission.

An annual spiritual retreat shall be held for all Parish Council members.

Quorum for any meeting of the Parish Pastoral Council shall be a simple majority of its elected members.

Items to be voted on will be adopted by a majority vote of the elected Council and with approval of the Pastor.

A special meeting of the Parish Pastoral Council may be convened by the Bishop, the Pastor, the Chairperson, the Executive Committee, or by a recorded two-thirds vote of Council members. Each council member must be notified in advance of a special meeting by telephone, email, or by regular mail.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the following elected members of the Pastoral Council have approved these PASTORAL COUNCIL GUIDELINES as of the day and year written below.

Approved this _____ day of _____, 2004.

GARY BALL

ED BUGEJA

ERNIE D'ANTONIO

MARY KAY DEMOREST

AUDREY FRITSCHMANN

JOHN SOKOLOWSKI

SUSAN COPELAND

JOHN ROONEY

PAUL SHEEHAN

MIKE WALLACE

RICK STANFORD
VICE CHAIRMAN

MYLES A. POCTA
CHAIRMAN

FATHER JAMES PARKE
PASTOR