

PASTORAL PLANNING: A GUIDE FOR PARISHES



Mission of the Parish

The parish is a community of people, who are inspired by Jesus and committed to proclaiming God's dream for our world through word and action.

The mission of the parish is the continuation of Jesus' work of love, peace, justice, and freedom in this specific community, in this corner of the world.

The parish is where people publicly express and celebrate their faith.

Parish Pastoral Council

The Parish Pastoral Council is a faith-filled leadership group through which priests and people work together as co-responsible partners in furthering the mission of Christ in their own parish.

A key task of the Parish Pastoral Council

Pastoral Planning

Three stages of planning

1. Investigate – *naming the reality*
2. Reflect – *explore possibilities*
3. Recommend - *plan*

Areas of Concern for a Parish Pastoral Council

1. Church community
2. Faith formation
3. Worshipping God
4. Reaching out

Pastoral Planning Process

1. Identify Area of Concern
2. Investigate – *what is the present reality?*
3. Reflect – *what are the possibilities?*
4. Recommend – *identify priority?*
5. Outline action or actions to achieve this
6. Name who will be responsible for the action
7. Agree a timeframe



Area of Concern 1: Church Community

This refers to the way in which we create a sense of welcome and belonging in our church community. It is about including people and connecting people in our parish. It is about giving people the chance to become involved in the life of our church community and to share their gifts for the good of all.

Step 1 - Investigate:

1. Is our church community welcoming? If so, in what ways?
2. Are there new people in the area to be welcomed and included in our church community?

Step 2 - Reflect:

1. What can we do to improve a sense of belonging in our church community?
2. Who do we need to make an effort to reach out to and include in our church community at this time?
3. How do we offer people opportunities to be involved in our church community?

Step 3 - Recommend:

- Identify 1 key priority:

- Identify 1 action that could make a difference:

- Who will oversee the carrying out of that action?

- Who else will we engage with?



Area of Concern 2: Faith Formation

All the activities that happen in our parish which give people opportunities to understand and live their faith. These include faith formation programmes for adults, scripture groups, religious education in the schools, pre-sacramental preparation and preaching.

Step 1 - Investigate:

1. What do we do as a parish to support people to grow in their understanding of the Christian life?
2. What parish activities, event or programmes have you found helpful in nourishing the faith of adults in your parish?

Step 2 - Reflect:

1. What are some of the things that the parish could do to help young people grow in their faith and living of the Christian life?
2. How can the parish support the preparation of the children for the sacraments?
3. How can the parish support the faith formation of adults?

Step 3 - Recommend:

- Identify 1 key priority:
- Identify 1 action that could make a difference:
- Who will oversee the carrying out of that action?
- Who else will we engage with?



Area of Concern 3: Worshipping God in our parish

This refers to the way in which we celebrate our relationship with Jesus Christ and with one another through our Sunday Masses, weekdays Masses, the celebrations of the sacraments, and the various ways we pray e.g. prayer groups, retreats, parish missions.

Step 1 - Investigate:

1. What is enriching about the way in which we celebrate Mass in our parish?
2. What are the other opportunities in our parish to worship God?

Step 2 - Reflect:

1. How could the celebration of the Mass be enhanced?
2. How could we improve the celebration of the sacraments e.g. baptism, penance, communion, Confirmation, Marriage, Sacrament of the Sick?
3. How could we enhance the experience and opportunities for prayer in our parish?

Step 3 - Recommend:

- Identify 1 key priority:
- Identify 1 action that could make a difference:
- Who will oversee the carrying out of that action?
- Who else will we engage with?



Area of Concern 4: Reaching out

This refers to the ways in which the church community proclaims God's dream for our world through word and action...caring for those in need, including the sick, the suffering, and the poor. It is also about working for peace and justice locally and globally.

Step 1 - Investigate:

1. In what way is your parish reaching out to those in need?
2. What local organisations serve the needs of others?

Step 2 - Reflect:

1. What are the practical ways in which our parish could witness to the Good News at this time?
2. What are the greatest welfare, justice and peace issues at home and abroad that need to be addressed by our parish at this time?

Step 3 – Recommend:

- Identify 1 key priority:

- Identify 1 action that could make a difference:

- Who will oversee the carrying out of that action?

- Who else will we engage with?

Parish Pastoral Council Meetings – Roles

President

The parish priest is the official representative of the bishop and is ultimately responsible for all decisions made regarding the parish. This role includes:

- Meeting with chairperson and secretary to set the agenda for the meetings
- Give direction when necessary
- Ratify the decisions of the PPC
- Being accountable to the local bishop
- Ensure that on-going formation and training is made available for members

Chairperson

The chairperson is primarily responsible for setting the agenda with the parish priest and secretary and facilitation of the meetings in order to ensure that the tasks of the council are fulfilled. These tasks include:

- Setting the agenda
- Facilitating each meeting – keeping the group focused
- Encourage the participation of all members during the meeting
- Facilitate decision making
- Resolve conflict as appropriate
- Ensuring that sufficient time is given to prayer and reflection
- Monitor the time
- Make sure that all agenda items are addressed

Secretary

The secretary is responsible for keeping a record of the progress of the PPC and for circulating relevant material to the council members. The tasks of secretary include:

- Keeping a record of decisions taken
- Distribute the agenda and minutes of last meeting to members in advance of the meeting
- Receiving notification of absences
- Preparing agenda with priest and chairperson
- Keep a file of records of the PPC minutes and decisions

Members

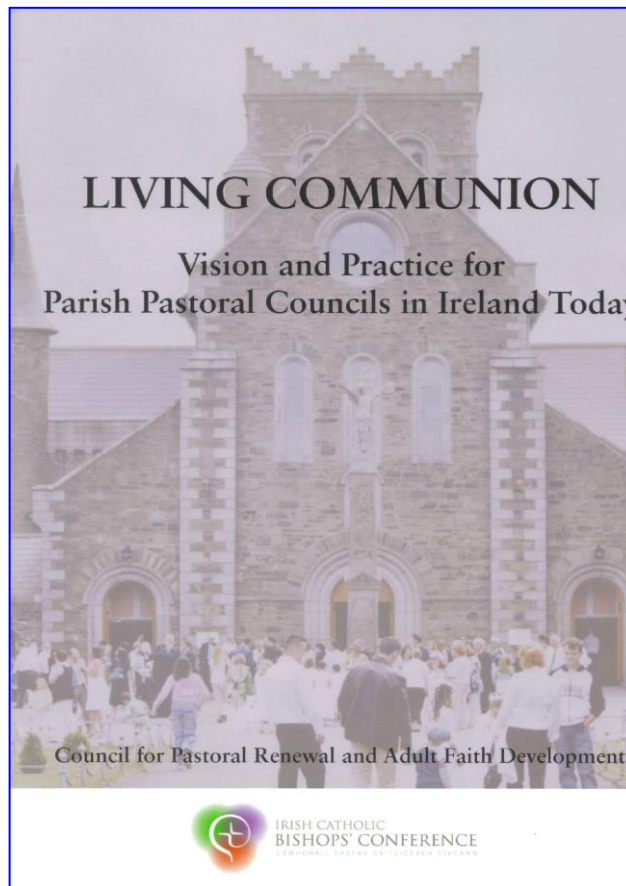
All members, not just office holders have a responsibility to ensure that the council makes a significant contribution in the parish. The efficiency of the PPC will be undermined if members do not fully participate in the life and action of the council. Members have a responsibility to:

- Read materials circulated
- Submit agenda items on an agreed date before meeting
- Prepare agenda items, have points ready especially if responsible for a particular item
- Listen to the needs of parishioners
- Participate in discussion but do not force personal opinions
- Actively listen to the views of others in a non-judgemental manner
- Carry out actions agreed at meeting
- Notify secretary in advance if unable to attend a meeting

Review of Parish Pastoral Council Meetings

Please tick appropriate box

Preparation before the meeting			
	<i>never</i>	<i>occasionally</i>	<i>Regularly</i>
Parish Priest, Chairperson and Secretary meet to prepare the agenda			
Members of PPC contribute items for the agenda			
Agenda is circulated in advance			
Venue is prepared in advance			
Members review materials circulated in advance of meeting			
Process during the meeting			
Time is allocated for prayer during the meeting			
Chairperson facilitates the group in working through the agenda			
All members have an opportunity to contribute to the meeting			
Meeting begins and ends on time			
Priorities for the next meeting are identified			
Set date for the next meeting			
Actions after the meeting			
Minutes of the meeting are circulated. Contents include decisions taken, actions to be carried out, by whom and when, preparations required for the next meeting			
Agreed actions are carried out			
Communicate with the wider community i.e. newsletter etc.			
Links are maintained with the Area Pastoral council and the diocesan Pastoral Council			



Originally published by the (then) Commission for Pastoral Renewal and Adult Faith Development in October 2007, *Parish Pastoral Councils, a Framework for Developing Diocesan Norms and Parish Guidelines* was welcomed widely.

With our rapidly changing context and the reality that practice continually generates further learning, a growing interest was shown in a revised version.

Following wide consultation and reflection, *Living Communion: Vision and Practice for Parish Pastoral Councils in Ireland Today*, has now been published. This new document offers encouragement and guidance to all those concerned with the development and sustainability of parish pastoral councils, and, with God's grace, will also lead to continued exchanges and conversations as we journey, learning together, into the future.

Living Communion: Vision and Practice for Parish Pastoral Councils in Ireland Today is available from Veritas at €7.99