

# **PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL CHARTER**

## **ST. AUSTIN CATHOLIC PARISH**

### **Parish Mission Statement**

St. Austin Catholic Parish, guided and served by the Paulist Fathers, is a dynamic, urban, Roman Catholic faith community of the Diocese of Austin.

Empowered by the Word of God, formed and nourished by the Eucharist, and made bold by the Holy Spirit, we strive, through prayer, education, and service to others, to manifest God's transforming love in the world and to deepen our relationship with God, one another, and the universal Church.

Inspired by our patrons, St. Paul the Apostle and St. Augustine of Canterbury, we dedicate ourselves to Jesus Christ, and to His continuing mission to sanctify, teach, heal, reconcile and serve.

### **Introduction to the Charter**

The Parish Pastoral Council of St. Austin Catholic Parish functions in a manner consistent with the Parish Pastoral Council norms of the Diocese of Austin. If there are questions, the Parish Pastoral Council norms of the Diocese of Austin shall take precedence.

### **The Purpose and Scope of the Parish Pastoral Council**

The Parish Pastoral Council (hereafter referred to as the Council) is a distinct group because of its representative nature, consultative role, and consensus-seeking process. It is a representative body of the faithful whose focus is on the whole community, and has a consultative responsibility to the Pastor and parish pastoral staff. (The pastoral staff of the parish includes associate pastors, pastoral associates and other staff.) The Council is called upon to read and reflect both the "signs of the times" and "the wisdom of the past" to those planning or implementing pastoral activities in the parish. Further, the Council is called to unite the parish community by expressing its collective wisdom concerning pastoral plans and activities. The Council will strive to ensure that the parish operates in an open and ethically accountable manner in its business practices.

### **The Ministry of the Parish Pastoral Council**

The Council's ministry is to encourage and support the Pastor and pastoral staff, to respond to their call and questions, and offer the best consultation possible on pastoral issues, plans, and activities. The Council is also called to support the mission of the Paulist Fathers. It is to advise the Pastor and parish pastoral staff regarding the general policies that guide the programs and services of the parish. The Council, along with the parish pastoral staff, is responsible for preparing and periodically reviewing the parish mission statement; for developing and maintaining long-range plans to implement the mission; and for communicating such plans to the parish as a whole and to the Parish Finance Council, as appropriate for financial implementation. The Council is committed to the spiritual growth of the entire Council, its individual members, and the wider parish community.

### **Role of the Pastor**

The Pastor presides at Council meetings in much the same way he presides at the Mass—he is present and participates in the activity, but he does not perform every function. The

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Pastor is called to consultation by the teaching of the universal Church. In this call he should:

1. Seek counsel from the Council on pastoral matters affecting the life of the parish;
2. Experience and participate in the interaction that follows;
3. Be open, respectful and receptive to the voice or voices of parishioners;
4. Weigh seriously and respond appropriately to the collective wisdom or consensus of the Council;
5. Make every effort to insure that the membership of the Council is truly representative of the whole parish community;
6. Assist in the proper formation, training and orientation of all Council members;
7. Ensure that the Council's concerns reflect the whole Church and its mission;
8. Facilitate Council members building a community of faith, trust and respect;
9. Assist in the preparation of the Council agenda; and
10. Support, encourage, and work diligently toward implementation of any diocesan directives.

The Pastor should consider carefully the recommendations of the Council and provide proper explanation to the Council when acting contrary to its recommendations. The Pastor must withhold acceptance when Council recommendations are in conflict with church teachings, church discipline or matters contrary to diocesan policy.

### **MEMBERSHIP OF THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL:**

The membership of the Parish Pastoral Council should reflect the entire parish community and, mindful of the diversity of the parish, should act as the voice of that community.

#### **Eligibility:**

Membership on the Council is open to all registered baptized and confirmed members of St. Austin Catholic Parish. (In rare circumstances and with the approval of the Pastor, a Roman Catholic who is not yet confirmed or a baptized non-Catholic may serve in Council ministry).

#### **Qualifications:**

To be a member of the Council, a person must:

1. Regularly participate in the Sunday worship of the parish
2. Have demonstrated his or her commitment to the parish community.
3. Be willing to commit the necessary time and talent to the ministry of the Council, and to his or her own spiritual growth and formation.

#### **Responsibilities:**

Each Council member must be willing to participate in prayer and to strive for illumination. Members must be prepared to give time and attention to the work of the Council. Each Council member must also be willing to interact with the other members with an openness that promotes respectful dialogue and careful listening dedicated to advancing the common good of the parish.

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### **Composition:**

The Parish Pastoral Council shall include twelve (12) members of the parish. The parish body shall select nine (9) of the members by the method defined later in this document; the Pastor will appoint three (3) members. Ex-officio members of the Parish Pastoral Council shall include the Pastor, Associate Pastor and those members appointed by the Pastor with the advice of the Council.

### **Term of Office:**

Both elected and appointed Council members shall serve staggered, three-year terms. Each member may serve one additional consecutive term by again going through the selection process. Any Council member who has served two consecutive terms must spend at least one year off the Council before serving another term. Terms commence on September 1 and expire on August 31.

### **Removal of Council Members:**

Council members who fail to uphold their responsibilities as Council members may be asked to resign, or may be terminated from the Council by the joint action of the Pastor and the Council Leadership Team.

### **Selection Process**

Every year, a parish-wide nominating process will begin during Lent. Any parishioner who meets the qualifications outlined above and is interested in serving on the Council will be required to attend an information and discernment meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to provide prospective Council members with an understanding of the role, function and expected work of the Council. Additionally, it allows the prospective members an opportunity to prayerfully consider whether they are being called to serve in the ministry of the Council. All prospective members who conclude that they are being called to serve on the Council will have their names placed in the final pool of candidates. If the number of candidates in the final pool is equal to or less than the number of vacancies to be filled, those candidates will be considered selected by the parish. If the number of candidates in the final pool exceeds the number of vacancies on the Council, final selection will be made by the consensus of the existing Council at the next Pastoral Council meeting or, if necessary, at a special meeting called for by the Pastor or Council leadership. The Council will review and discuss the candidates' qualifications as well as how best to compose a Council that reflects the diverse membership of St. Austin Parish. After a review, Council will select candidates by consensus to fill vacant positions. All candidates will be contacted directly, either in person or by phone, to inform them of the results of the selection process. Remaining vacancies will be filled as discussed below. This final selection should be complete by the Solemnity of Pentecost.

The Council will appoint a selection committee from its current members. The selection committee is responsible for:

1. Developing a calendar for the selection process;
2. Determining the content of the information and discernment meeting;

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3. Ensuring that there are adequate notifications to the parish of the process; and
4. Developing any other activities necessary to implement the process outlined above.

**Vacancies**

If there is a vacancy in an elected position leaving a vacant term greater than one year, the Leadership Team along with the Pastor may select a new member from those not selected from the previous final pool of candidates. If no one is available from the previous pool then the Leadership Team and the Pastor may select a new member from the parish at large or may choose to leave the position vacant until the next selection process. If a member who was appointed by the Pastor withdraws, the Pastor has the right to appoint a new member. If the remainder of the term is less than one year, that seat will remain vacant until the next parish-wide regular selection process is held.

**Council Leadership**

The Council Leadership Team shall consist of the Chair, Vice-Chair, and Recorder.

**Gifts, Talents and Other Requirements for the Leadership Team:**

1. The Leadership Team must have time to:
  - meet with Pastor and Council leaders to plan future meetings; and
  - prepare background materials as needed for Council meetings or otherwise put in the effort to make sure Council meetings are productive.
2. The Leadership Team should have good facilitator/leadership skills. Desired facilitator/leadership qualities include:
  - Adhering to a schedule while maintaining flexibility to let a discussion come to fruition where appropriate;
  - Ensuring that everyone is heard and all points-of-view are given an adequate hearing;
  - Knowing when and how to delay action on an issue when appropriate to allow the Council to reflect more fully or to gather more information.
3. The Leadership Team should be people who, in consultation with the Pastor are willing and able to balance both short term and long term issues when planning the Council's agenda for the upcoming year.
4. The Leadership Team should be capable of collaborating with the Pastor. This requires the Leadership Team to understand the Council's proper role – to advise and support the Pastor. It also requires the Leadership Team to be able to reach consensus with the Pastor and Council on issues.

**Specific Duties of the Chair:**

1. Convenes and leads all Parish Pastoral Council meetings.
2. Prepares and sends correspondence as appropriate on behalf of St. Austin Catholic Parish.

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**Specific Duties of the Vice-Chair:**

3. Convenes and leads all Parish Pastoral Council meetings in the absence of the Chair.
4. Carries out requests of the Chair (i.e. specific correspondence, retreat planning, other tasks as assigned).
5. Serves as timekeeper for Council meetings.

**Specific Duties of the Recorder:**

6. The Recorder must be committed to maintaining complete, objective and accurate records of Council activities. Council actions, and recommendations made by the Council should be included in these records. Subjects discussed and conclusions reached by the Council should be recorded. The Recorder must be committed to maintaining intra-Council, Council-parish and Council-Pastor communications.
7. The Recorder, with the Chair and Vice-Chair is responsible for identifying materials the Council needs for meetings. They are jointly responsible for the timely distribution of these materials to Council members prior to meetings. (e.g. the minutes, agenda and background materials).
8. The Recorder may be charged with the following activities:
  - Putting appropriate notices in the parish bulletin to keep the parish apprised of Council activities,
  - Posting minutes and meeting notes to the parish Web site,
  - Contacting Council members to request information on selected activities,
  - Calling Council members to request participation in selected activities,
  - Performing tasks which facilitate Council communication and visibility with the parish.

**Selection of Council Leadership Team**

The Leadership Team of the Council shall be determined through a discernment process that includes the following elements:

- Individual reflection of members
- Group discussion
- Group consensus

The Leadership Team discernment process is conducted by the incoming Parish Pastoral Council and must be complete by the September meeting. At that time the Leadership Team will begin to serve a one-year term. When a leadership position becomes vacant, the Council will select a new leader to serve for the remainder of the term. The specific roles within the Leadership Team shall be determined through election by the entire Council.

**Council Meeting Schedule and Length**

All meetings of the Council are open to the parish. Meetings of the Council will usually begin at 6:30 p.m. on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month. Meetings will start and close with shared prayer. Meetings may be held on other occasions when called by the Pastor, or

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Council leadership, with reasonable notice to all Council members. Business portion of council meetings will, if at all possible, be limited to two hours in length.

### **Parish Pastoral Council Agenda**

Except in case of emergency, agendas and any accompanying papers will be sent out one week prior to the meeting so that Council members and the Pastor and parish pastoral team may have time to consider matters prior to the meeting.

### **Council Decision Making**

The main function of the Council is to provide consultation and advice to the Pastor. As a result, in reaching a recommendation, every effort should be made to have that recommendation reflect the collective wisdom and consensus of the Council members.

### **Appeals Process**

If any parishioner feels strongly that the Pastor and/or Council are not following the intent of the diocesan norms for Parish Pastoral Councils, they may appeal through the procedure listed in the diocesan norms.

### **Areas of Parish Life**

The effectiveness of the Council is enhanced by regular communications with parish pastoral staff and lay persons working in the following key areas of concern:

- **Worship** - area of concern: all committees, organizations and matters dealing with worship.
- **Education** - area of concern: all matters dealing with education and faith formation.
- **Social Justice** - area of concern: all matters dealing with service to and advocacy for others
- **Community Life**- area of concern: all matters dealing with community life—social, grief support, community outreach, etc.
- **Stewardship and Development**- area of concern: All matters dealing with time, talent and treasure with a special emphasis on financial stewardship.

The Council will develop and implement a plan that details the timing and content of communications it needs and desires from these areas. The Council will rely upon the parish pastoral staff in each area to generally conduct the following:

- Investigating the needs in their area of concern and make policy recommendations on meeting these needs to the Council for consideration.
- Implementing policies, goals, and objectives set by the Council in a ‘parish life’ area of concern.
- Keeping the Council advised regarding a ‘parish life’ area’s key decisions and major activities.

### **Other Parish Leadership Groups**

The Council recognizes that it must maintain a regular, ongoing dialogue with other leadership groups within the parish. These groups include:

- St. Austin Catholic School Advisory Board

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- Parish Building Committee and
- Parish Finance Council.
  - \* The Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) holds an ex-officio position on the Finance Council. A current PPC member is chosen to hold that position.

The Parish Pastoral Council will develop a regular schedule to receive information and reports from these leadership groups. Typically, each group will be expected to provide a bi-annual report to the Council.

The Council recognizes that there are times and circumstances when the Pastor, in consultation with the Council, will need to establish temporary ad-hoc groups for specific purposes.

The Council, other leadership groups and other parish entities are units of service, not authority.

**Amendments to the Parish Pastoral Council Charter**

Amendments to the Parish Pastoral Council Charter may be adopted by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Council members present at any duly held meeting, provided written notice has been given to the Council members two weeks prior to the meeting. The Council is encouraged to review its operating guidelines annually.

The Charter of the Parish Pastoral Council of St. Austin Catholic Parish takes effect immediately upon its approval by the Parish Pastoral Council and acceptance by the Pastor.