



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

November 1, 2007
Feast of All Saints

DECREE OF PROMULGATION
In Nomine Domini. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As your Bishop it is my privilege to oversee and foster the pastoral life of the Diocese of Charlotte. I share that responsibility with my brother priests by appointing them shepherds of the faithful in our parishes.

The faithful also share responsibility for the pastoral mission of the local Church in virtue of their baptism and full initiation into the Church. According to the *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* of the Second Vatican Council, "... the laity has an active part of their own in the life and action of the Church. Their action within the Church communities is so necessary that without it the apostolate of pastors will frequently be unable to obtain its full effect." (No. 10).

In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*, Pope John Paul II identified and encouraged the formation of pastoral councils: "The participation of the lay faithful in these Councils can broaden resources in consultation and the principle of collaboration – and in certain instances also in decision-making – if applied in a broad and determined manner." (Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation, Christifideles Laici*, n. 25.5)

Members of the pastoral council collaborate with the pastor in the building up of the Church and its sanctification. (*Lumen Gentium* No. 32c, 33a). We are called to serve the faithful and those who have not heard the Gospel message. We are called to be servants of Christ and of each other. We are called to do nothing less than help build Christ's kingdom on earth. To this end I officially promulgate these Guidelines for Pastoral Councils for use throughout the Diocese of Charlotte. This document replaces the 1991 Guidelines for Pastoral Councils.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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Most Reverend Peter J. Jugis, JCD
Bishop of Charlotte

Roman Catholic Diocese of Charlotte

Guidelines for Parish Pastoral Councils

NOVEMBER 1, 2007

INTRODUCTION

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.”¹”

1. These words from the Gospel of Saint John remind us of the wonderful and mysterious event of the Incarnation and how the Almighty God became one of us and dwelt among us. He chose to be here, to “pitch his tent” and be among the people he created. He ascended to heaven but remains with us in so many ways, through the Eucharist, through the Spirit, and within each one of us as a member of the body of Christ.

2. But do we still seek Christ among us? Do we see Christ in the faces of the many people we meet every day either at Mass or our everyday activities? When he was with us he showed us how to serve one another. Can we say as Catholics to our Lord at the last judgement “Yes” when he asks us “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.”²

3. Members of the pastoral council are to collaborate with the pastor in the building up of the Church and its sanctification.³ We are called to serve the faithful and those who have not heard the Gospel message. We are called to be servants of Christ and each other. We are called to do nothing less than help build Christ’s kingdom on earth.

THE NATURE OF PARISH

4. It is important in parish planning, and particularly parish ministry planning, to understand the nature and definition of parish. Many Catholics believe that the parish is only that group of people that attend church with them, their community of faith. But are we to be concerned with only those we know and not seek out those in need around us? And if we seek out those who are not Catholic how do we as “parish” go about ministries planning?

5. Pastoral councils and commissions need to understand the true meaning of “parish.” Within canon law we know: “As a general rule a parish is to be territorial, that it embraces all the Christian

¹John: 1: 14

²Matthew 25: 35-36

³*Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church)* No. 32c, 33a

faithful within a certain territory....⁴" In addition, the canons stipulate that the pastor's solicitude extends to all those living in the territory of the parish, through works of social justice,⁵ and sharing the message of the gospel.⁶

6. But our late Holy Father, John Paul II reminds the pastor, and his pastoral council, that the care of souls, extends to every person living in the territory of the parish. He wrote:

It is necessary that in light of faith all rediscover the true meaning of the parish, that is, the place where the very 'mystery' of the Church is present and at work, even if at times it is lacking persons and means, even if at other times it might be scattered over vast territories or almost not to be found in crowded and chaotic modern sections of cities. The parish is not principally a structure, a territory, or a building, but rather, "the family of God, a fellowship afire with a unifying spirit," a "familial and welcoming home," the "community of the faithful. Plainly and simply, the parish is founded on a theological reality because it is a *Eucharistic community*.⁷

Understanding the Eucharistic and territorial nature of parish is often an epiphany for council and commission members who, beforehand, had difficulty coming up with goals and focusing their efforts.

7. The Catholic faithful, clergy and laity, should not think that it is exclusively the pastor's mission to try to accomplish all that the canon suggests. The canon further stipulates "...in accord with the norm of law he carries out for his community the duties of teaching, sanctifying and governing, with the cooperation of other presbyters or deacons and the *assistance of lay members of the Christian faithful* (emphasis inserted)."⁸ While the Church recognizes the pastor as the head of the parish, it also states unequivocally that "...the laity have an active part of their own in the life and action of the Church. Their action within the Church communities is so necessary that without their active participation the apostolate of the pastors will frequently be unable to obtain its full effect."⁹

ROLE OF THE PASTOR

8. "...The pastor is the proper shepherd of the parish entrusted to him, exercising pastoral care in the community entrusted to him under the authority of the diocesan bishop in whose ministry of Christ

⁴Canon 518

⁵Canon 528 §1

⁶Canons 528 §1 and 771 §2

⁷*Christifideles Laici (The Participation of the Lay Faithful in the Life of the Church as Communion)*, 26.2

⁸Canon 519

⁹*Apostolicam Actuositatem (Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People)*, No. 10.

he has been called to share; ..."¹⁰ Pastoral councils also need to be aware of the demanding responsibilities of the pastor. The pastor is charged by the bishop with the responsibilities outlined in canon law, which are:

- ❖ teaching;
- ❖ sanctifying; and
- ❖ governing.¹¹

9. The Pastor's charge is for the entire territory (parish) under his care, Catholic and non-Catholic alike. The pastoral council advises the pastor concerning these pastoral matters just as the finance council advises the pastor concerning financial matters. But it is important for the faithful to recognize that it is the pastor's responsibility alone to make the final decision — to govern.

10. This may sound strange to democratic Americans who feel that a vote is required for every issue. It is not strange in either the Scriptures or the Tradition of the Church. But because it is the pastor's responsibility to make the final decision, that does not mean the laity have no voice and no role. These same Traditions and Scriptures hold that important decisions should not be made by one person in isolation. When we look in the Acts of the Apostles we can see that the Apostles never made an important decision without going to the community for advice and then praying as a community for guidance. The Apostles knew that they must also consult with the community of the faithful, since it is in the Church as a whole that we best come to an understanding of what the Spirit is trying to do within our lives and our Church.

11. The Second Vatican Council¹² and Pope Paul VI¹³ insisted on the importance of pastoral councils. Pope John Paul II repeatedly emphasized the same, expanding their scope and importance within the Church. Catholics today live in a time of unprecedented opportunities to be involved in the life of the Church and help guide the Church into this century. We as Catholics must now take seriously our role to assist the Pastor in his ministry of the entire parish for, as Christians, it is our ministry as well.

THE ROLE OF THE PASTORAL COUNCIL

12. In dioceses, as far as possible, councils should be set up to assist the Church's apostolic work, whether in the field of evangelization and sanctification or in the fields of charity, social relations and the rest; the clergy and religious working with the laity in whatever way proves satisfactory. These councils can take care of the mutual coordinating of the various lay associations and undertakings, the autonomy

¹⁰Canon 519

¹¹Canons 528 & 529

¹² *Christus Dominus (Decree Concerning The Pastoral Office of Bishops In the Church)* No. 27b

¹³ *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, No. 16

and particular nature of each remaining untouched. Such councils should be found too, if possible, at parochial, interparochial, interdiocesan level, and also on the national and international plane.¹⁴

13. In addition, the Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church states that the function of these councils "... will be to investigate and to weigh matters which bear on pastoral activity, and to formulate practical conclusions regarding them."¹⁵

14. The *Code of Canon Law* further explains the role of the pastoral council. "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."¹⁶

15. "According to F. Rodimer, the ministry of the parish council is coextensive with the total mission of the parish.

- ❖ The first thing a council must do is pray that with the grace of God they may discern the voice of the Holy Spirit and try to be one with Christ to acknowledge his presence in their midst.
- ❖ The second need of a parish is conversion to a sense of community.
- ❖ The third need of a parish is for growth, maturity, the need to change and to accept the importance of change.
- ❖ The fourth need is for planning, i.e., statements of its mission, vision, goal setting, objectives."¹⁷

16. This fourth need resonated with our late Holy Father, Pope John Paul II when he wrote:

"With its universal and indispensable provisions, the program of the Gospel must continue to take root, as it has always done, in the life of the Church everywhere. It is *in the local churches* that the specific features of a detailed pastoral plan can be identified — goals and methods, formation and enrichment of the people involved, the search for the necessary resources — which will enable the proclamation of Christ to reach people, mold communities, and have

¹⁴*Apostolicam Actuositatem (Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People)*, No. 26

¹⁵*Ecclesiae Sanctae Ia (Apostolic Letter on Implementing the Decrees, Christus Dominus, Presbyterorum Ordinis, Praefectae Caritatis. Norms for Implementing Christus Dominus Paul VI, Ecclesiae sanctae I*, No. 16 (1)

¹⁶Canon 536 §1

¹⁷*The Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, Coriden, James A. et al; eds. p. 432.

a deep and incisive influence in bringing Gospel values to bear in society and culture.”¹⁸

17. Each parish faces a multitude of issues over the next 20 years. Our late Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, in *Christifideles Laici* calls to the attention of the entire Church issues which affect the entire community, namely:

- ❖ the increase of religious indifference and secularism;
- ❖ the violations of the dignity of the human person; and
- ❖ the increasing number of conflicts in the world.¹⁹

18. In addition to these three, the need to evangelize a Catholic population that is currently multi-lingual and bring it together as a common community is a task that will not be accomplished by any single group. It is important that the pastor have at his disposal a group of individuals knowledgeable in the life of the Church but also familiar with the issues facing the parish that he may turn to for advice and counsel. It is also important that planning activities on the parish level be coordinated in such a manner that the Pastoral plan of the Diocese be implemented at both the local and diocesan level.

19. The role of the pastoral council is to bring concerns that affect the whole parish to the attention of the pastor. “Parish level concerns” are key to the council’s success. The only items that should be discussed at the council level are parish wide issues or those items that the pastor chooses to bring to the council. The pastoral council’s chief concern is the implementation of the Pastoral plan and its maintenance. In addition, other responsibilities can include:

- ❖ collaborating with the pastor in giving concrete direction in the implementation of his vision for the parish;
- ❖ providing a model of dialogue, collaboration, and shared decision making in its attempts to further the mission of the Church;
- ❖ calling the people of the parish to action in relation to the pastoral plan;
- ❖ insuring that the pastoral plan is properly updated in a routine and timely fashion;
- ❖ coordinating with the various lay associations recognized by the Church;
- ❖ facilitating the implementation of the pastoral plan in a cooperative and coordinated manner with the commissions, including:
 - recommending to the pastor a set of priorities and time lines for action for the plan;
 - mobilizing the support of the parish, school, and other organizations of the parish,
 - working with the pastor in introducing and coordinating new initiatives proposed by the pastoral plan;
 - advocating for funds with the finance council;
 - monitoring and evaluating progress in the implementation of the plan.

¹⁸*Novo millennio ineunte* (January 6, 2001). No. 29.

¹⁹*Christifideles Laici*, Nos. 4-6.

MEMBER SELECTION

20. Special emphasis should be placed on the selection of those who would serve on a pastoral council and their training. Those who are chosen to participate on the council should be individuals well respected in the community of the faithful for their knowledge and pastoral leadership. But they should also be people of prayer. It is essential for the health and well being of the parish that members who are selected be pastoral in focus.

21. Almost all parishes at one time used elections to select new members. *Elections are not required.* The pastoral council by-laws should outline the method of selection. Some form of discernment process, however, in selecting council members is encouraged to ensure that the gifts necessary for a collaborative and mission-oriented process are placed at the service of the church. Pastors should also use their authority to appoint members to the council to insure that the council is representative of the community as a whole.

22. One suggested method for the selection of new members:

- a. Educate the faithful as to the purpose and function of a parish pastoral council and the role of a council member. Ask the community to consider the role and gifts required when nominating new council members.
- b. Have the faithful nominate people as candidates for the council.
- c. Provide an opportunity for clarification where candidates can better understand the role of the pastoral council. People should then be given an opportunity to decide whether they wish to continue to participate in a discernment process.
- d. Have a day of discernment so participants can reflect on their gifts, the commitment that is being asked and the issues they will deal with in the months ahead.
- e. Final selection can be determined in the custom of the parish i.e.; lottery, further discernment, pastor, election.

Pastoral Councils and Pastoral Planning in the Diocese

23. The Diocese of Charlotte, since its beginning, has incorporated the conciliar process into its structures. In some parishes, the councils took on a model that imitated local civil government, while in other places consultation by the pastors was not taken seriously — or councils were not permitted to exist at all. Successes and mistakes in these experiences paved the way for an evolution into our consultative and collaborative model.

24. “The parish pastoral council is an institution that brings together lay people, religious, and the ordained, who, together with their pastors, work jointly to build the parish as a living Christian community.”²⁰

25. The Diocese of Charlotte has always encouraged the development of pastoral councils on the parish level. It was only after the Diocesan Synod of 1987 that the bishop *required* the establishment of a pastoral council in each parish.

²⁰ *Guidelines of the Diocese of Charlotte*, Oct. 16, 1987

26. Pastoral councils need to understand the importance of their role, a role so clearly established in church Tradition and Church law. In particular, the pastoral council needs to understand that one of its primary functions is to work closely with the pastor in his planning of the pastoral activity of the parish and building the Kingdom of God.²¹ Too often this responsibility has been shuffled off to a subcommittee to write and then present it to the council for their approval. Too often the pastoral planning process has been confused with capital development planning which often produces either a capital plan for the parish or, in worst case situations, simply a demographic report of the Catholics attending mass at the time. It is important to remember that *capital plans result from, and are rooted in, a well developed pastoral plan.*

27. The Synod had envisioned a pastoral planning cycle of three to five years. Parishes often do not anticipate ministerial needs in a timely fashion and that ministries often overlap. Parishes then cannot concentrate on common goals and needs. The parish can also be overwhelmed by growth, something less likely to happen if the pastoral plan is routinely updated. Sometimes a parish waits until a capital project is needed and then is faced with doing a pastoral plan that may delay moving on a capital project by 12 to 18 months. This can sometimes be a hardship making it difficult, if not impossible, to serve the needs of the parish. In addition, instead of thoughtfully budgeting the capital needs and balancing it against program and ministry needs, parishes end up cutting ministries to meet the capital project need. Each pastoral plan must contain a review of existing and projected budgets. These projected budgets must insure that adequate funds are available to carry out necessary ministries outlined within the pastoral plan.

28. Parishes are becoming more and more multi-cultural. Parishes need to take this into consideration when planning their ministries and analyze the needs of the various groups before submitting a final plan to the pastor.

29. Input from the parish commissions and other parish organizations is essential in pastoral planning. All must be involved in the planning, but it is the responsibility of the pastoral council to see that the planning is carried out and to approve all policy matters even when shaped by a committee or commission.

THE ROLE OF THE FINANCE COUNCIL

30. It is the role of the parish finance council, not of the pastoral council, to advise the pastor in matters pertaining to the financial affairs of the parish. However, the pastoral council must review all aspects of parish life including finance.

31. The various commissions should submit their budgets to the parish pastoral council for approval and recommendation and then to the parish finance council for a recommendation to the pastor. The pastoral council would not change any commission budget but would review and recommend.

²¹Cf. Canon 536, §1; *Apostolicam Actuositatem (Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity)*, 2.

The parish finance council would not be bound by the recommendation of the parish council but would have to give it weight. The pastoral and finance councils would then meet together for their final recommendation to the pastor.

PARISH COMMISSIONS

32. While the parish pastoral council is the thinking, planning, and reflection group for the parish, the commissions are made up of the people that actually help to make the plan a reality.

33. The commissions are made up of individuals of the parishes commissioned by the pastor to carry out a particular ministry in the parish. They are spiritually called to this ministry. It falls to the pastor, pastoral council, and the commissions to imitate the Apostles, prayerfully discerning those persons in the parish that may have a calling to a particular ministry. This same discernment should occur every time there is a need to fill positions in the parish faith community, including the pastoral council.

34. Existing organizations or committees relate to the pastoral council through the appropriate commissions. It is common in parishes across the Diocese to relegate commissions to the level of another committee. This is contrary to the intent of the Synod. Commission members are called and are the principal body responsible for overseeing the proper carrying out of the ministry in accord with the pastoral plan. This calling should be recognized by the pastor, pastoral council and the parish itself. Commission members should be installed in their ministry during Sunday mass.

35. The Synod recommended the development of commissions to carry out the various ministries of the parish. Commissions are established within every parish, with size and membership dependent upon the size of the parish. Each commission is responsible for establishing a working plan including mission statement, goals and objectives, the recommendation to the pastor of policies concerning matters pertaining to the commission, evaluating programs and policies, and approval of their budget.

36. The commissions are to become knowledgeable about the ministry, taking advantage of local and diocesan resources. For example, the Community Ministries (Community Life) Commission should be trained in all pertinent aspects of Social Justice. Commission members should take their obligation to be educated in the subject seriously. Canon Law specifically requires that individuals in a particular ministry be trained in that ministry.²² The pastor and pastoral council must also take seriously this obligation that all engaged in ministry must be trained and insure that opportunities are provided for proper formation. Money must be budgeted annually to insure that the laity are properly trained.

²²Canon 229 §1

The commission structure is:

<u>Synod</u>	<u>Today</u>
Liturgy	Liturgy and Worship
Community Life	Community Ministries
Family Life	Parish Life
Ecumenism/Evangelization	Ecumenism
	Evangelization/Communication
Education	Education and Formation
Administration/Communication	Buildings/Facilities

37. With the completion of the strategic plan of the Diocese it was recommended that Ecumenism be a separate commission with Communication being added to Evangelization. In this way the commissions better reflect the nature of Evangelization and Ecumenism as understood in the Church today.

38. Each commission has its own particular purpose and area of responsibility in the overall parish set-up. There are times when two or more commissions will need to work cooperatively in some program or activity, and it is the responsibility of the pastoral council to see that such coordination happens. Any number of special organizations or committees may exist under the commissions. Smaller parishes may combine functions. Commissions may appoint non-council members to committees in their responsibility areas.

39. The commissions must be involved with the pastoral council in planning for the parish, since it is the responsibility of the commissions to carry out the plans. In addition to carrying out the plans of the parish, each commission has its own particular duties to carry out which are ongoing and more or less regular. For example, the Liturgy Commission is responsible for ongoing planning of the weekly and seasonal Liturgies, and the Community Ministries Commission has ongoing concerns about the poor and the homeless.

40. Each commission shall have:

- ❖ its own mission statement that flows from the parish mission statement and is centered on that commission's areas of concern;
- ❖ a "job description" approved by the parish pastoral council;
- ❖ list of qualifications for membership;
- ❖ time commitment asked of members;
- ❖ a set time limit for membership on the commission;
- ❖ orientation for new members;
- ❖ a chairperson with initiative and enthusiasm who works well with others and can facilitate a meeting

41. *Organizational Structure at the Parish Level.* The table on the following page summarizes the roles and responsibilities of each of the major parish organizations. There are four principal organizations

within a parish. First there is the pastoral council, second the finance council, third the commissions and finally the parish staff which would include the parochial vicar and deacons. It is the pastor's responsibility, as shepherd of the parish, to lead these four groups toward a mutually decided vision for the parish. The commissions are coordinated through the pastoral council. Parish staff serves as support to the pastor, pastoral council, finance council and the commissions. At no time should the commissions work at the pleasure of the staff but rather in coordination with staff much as the pastoral council works with the pastor. Other organizations within the parish coordinate their activities in relation to the commissions.

	Pastoral Council	Finance Council	Commissions
Pastor	Presides over	Presides over	May presides over if he chooses
Chairperson	Chairs the meetings coordinating the agenda with the pastor	Chairs the meetings coordinating the agenda with the pastor	Chairs the meetings coordinating the agenda with the Pastoral Council Chair and Pastor
Membership	Selected through parish discernment process. The pastor has the right to appoint members to ensure the parish is properly represented.	Appointed by the pastor	Selected through commission and Pastoral Council discernment process.
Parish Staff	The relationship of the staff to the council should be through the direction and coordination of the pastor. Staff's role is to help implement the adopted pastoral plan and should never include responsibilities that diminish the role of the Pastoral Council.	The relationship of the staff to the council should be through the direction and coordination of the pastor. There should not be a direct relationship between the staff and the finance council.	Coordinated through the pastor and Pastoral Council. Staff is to serve in an advisory capacity at the direction of the pastor. Staff's role is to help implement the adopted pastoral plan and should never include responsibilities that diminishes the role of the commission.
Primary Focus	Long-range pastoral planning	Annual budget	Implementation of the pastoral plan
Relationship to Pastoral planning	Initiation of the planning process and coordination of commission activities in relation to overall plan. Prioritization of the commission goals and objectives	Long range financial planning in coordination with the parish pastoral plan	Development of long and short range goals and objectives for their ministry
Area of Responsibility	Matters pertaining to the life of the whole parish, both the community of the faithful and matters within the parish territory	Matters pertaining to finances including the annual budget and the development of financial resources needed to implement the pastoral plan	Implementation of the pastoral plan and the recruiting of volunteers to carry out the ministry.
Relationship to Pastor	Consultative	Consultative	Consultative
Method of Decision Making	By consensus	By consensus	By consensus

Appendix A: Ministerial Responsibilities of the Commissions

Liturgy and Worship Commission

“The liturgy is rightly seen as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ In it full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Christ, that is the Head and his members. Every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the Priest and his Body, which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others. No other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree.”²³

This commission is concerned with the liturgical functions that serve as the primary demonstrative expressions of faith and worship, viz., the sacraments, as well as programs explicitly involving spiritual growth and development.

Thus, this commission is concerned with discerning, training, developing, scheduling and the renewal of laity in their participation in liturgical celebrations, especially the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, lectors, servers, ushers, cantors, greeters and those involved in all areas of musical planning and participation.

The commission members must form themselves into a praying, learning, community of faith, educating and renewing themselves through prayer, study, and attendance at appropriate workshops, seminars, and similar learning opportunities.

The members must be knowledgeable of diocesan directives and resources, using each in the most effective and economical manner.

This commission assists the pastor with the liturgical and sacramental needs of the parish community, including those of shut-ins, care-givers, the ill, nursing home residents and all others in unusual situations or needing assistance.

It is to plan and assist in the coordination of all liturgical, para-liturgical or special celebrations and events; it must also work cooperatively with other commissions and parish organizations.

It must prepare, carry out, and evaluate a yearly action plan based on the long range goals set by the parish pastoral council (in conjunction with all the commissions) as part of the parish pastoral plan.

It is responsible to prepare and propose to the parish pastoral council an annual budget for liturgically related supplies, equipment and expenses. This budget must be based on goals resulting from the parish pastoral plan.

²³*Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), #7c-d)*

Education and Formation Commission

“All Christians--that is, all those who having been reborn in water and the Holy Spirit are called and in fact are children of God--have a right to a Christian education. Such an education not only develops the maturity of the human person...but is especially directed towards ensuring that those who have been baptized, as they are gradually introduced to a knowledge of the mystery of salvation, become daily more appreciative of the gift of faith which they have received.”²⁴

The needs of the parish community of faith "... must be the norm by which the religious education programs are established, financed, staffed and evaluated. The programs are to meet the needs of everyone in the parish, whether young or old, whether disadvantaged or privileged." (National Catechetical Directory) The commission shall establish and recommend goals and objectives annually to the parish pastoral council that flow from the pastoral plan of the parish. These goals and objectives are to address the educational and formational needs of the parish. The commission shall determine, under the direction of the pastor and in collaboration with the Director of Religious Education (DRE), programs that will promote and support total parish education and formational needs in all areas of the parish.

The members of the commission develop policies and support programs in religious education, catechesis, young adult ministry, youth ministry, and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) for the parish. Where there is a school under the authority of the pastor, the commission is responsible for the religious education policies in the school as well as coordinating those policies with the rest of the parish. The members of this commission need to study available resources on how adults learn. They are to supervise the parish library and literature racks with specific attention to literature concerning vocations for single, religious and married life.

The commission works with the pastor and the DRE to insure that the parish is providing quality religious education programs insuring that every child has access to the program.

The commission works with the DRE to insure that the parish will have an adequate number of certified catechists.

This commission must prepare, carry out, and evaluate a yearly action plan based on the long range goals set by the parish pastoral council (in conjunction with all the commissions) as part of the parish pastoral plan.

It is responsible to prepare and propose to the parish pastoral council an annual budget for those supplies, equipment and expenses necessary to carry out that plan.

²⁴*Gravissimum educationis (Declaration on Christian Education)*, No. 2

Community Ministries Commission

The temporal order is to be renewed in such a way that, while its own principles are fully respected, it is harmonized with the principles of the Christian life and adapted to the various conditions of times, places and peoples. Among the tasks of this Apostolate Christian social action is preeminent. The Council desires to see it extended today to every sector of life, not forgetting the cultural sphere.²⁵

This commission is to promote outreach programs with emphasis on social services, pro-life, social justice and community ministries, co-operating with other churches and civic organizations in projects aimed at community improvement.

It is to take such steps as are necessary to increase awareness within the parish of the extent of poverty in the local community, of the resources available to meet the needs of the poor, and of the spiritual responsibility of all to address those needs.

It is to identify and analyze the major social problems in the parish as well as in the larger civic community. It maintains working contact with resource people and pertinent agencies for problems such as drugs, delinquency, alcoholism, and abuse of family members.

It promotes suitable projects in the areas of economics, politics, and international life.

It must prepare, carry out, and evaluate a yearly action plan based on the long range goals set by the parish pastoral council (in conjunction with all the commissions) as part of the parish pastoral plan.

It is responsible to prepare and propose to the parish pastoral council an annual budget for those supplies, equipment, and expenses necessary to carry out that plan.

²⁵*Apostolicam Actuositatem (Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People)*, Chap. II, No. 7

Parish Life Commission

[The parish] ... adheres to its fundamental vocation and mission, that is, to be a "place" in the world for the community of believers to gather together as a "sign" and "instrument of the vocation of all to communion; in a word, to be a house of welcome to all and a place of service to all, or as Pope John XXIII was fond of saying, to be the village fountain to which all would have recourse in their thirst.²⁶

The family is...the principal school of the social virtues which are necessary to every society...it is therefore above all in the Christian family...that children should be taught to know and worship God and to love their neighbor....Parents should, therefore, appreciate how important a role the truly Christian family plays in the life and progress of the whole people of God.²⁷

This commission is concerned with those matters that build an internal parish family spirit and improve Christian life in the community of the faith.

It is to help the members of the parish family to develop a deeper understanding of, and commitment to, their respective roles. This includes programs of concern and support for single persons including the widowed, divorced and separated, as well as single parent families.

It is also concerned with those matters that help to build the parish community.

This commission identifies and coordinates the social and recreational needs of the parish, maintains an annual calendar of scheduled events to give to the Evangelization/Communications Commission, and suggests and institutes programs of welcome for new parishioners.

It must prepare, carry out, and evaluate a yearly action plan based on the long range goals set by the parish pastoral council (in conjunction with all the commissions) as part of the parish pastoral plan. It evaluates its activities especially social, ministerial, and recreational projects as to their effectiveness for community growth; it institutes procedures to increase involvement of parishioners in planned parish activities.

It is responsible to prepare and propose to the parish pastoral council an annual budget for those supplies, equipment, and expenses necessary to carry out its action plan.

²⁶ *Christifideles Laici*, Nos. 27.6.

²⁷ *Gravissimum educationis* (Declaration on Christian Education), No. 3

Evangelization/Communication Commission

“On all Christians, accordingly, rests the noble obligation of working to bring all...throughout the whole world to hear and accept the divine message of salvation”²⁸

“In achieving all this, the laity, that is Christians who have been incorporated into Christ and live in the world, are of primary importance and worthy of special care”²⁹

“...evangelizing means bringing the Good News of Jesus into every human situation and seeking to convert individuals and society by the divine power of the Gospel itself. At its essence are the proclamation of salvation in Jesus Christ and the response of a person in faith, which are both works of the Spirit of God.”³⁰

“All the members of the Church should make a concerted effort to ensure that the means of communication are put at the service of the multiple forms of the apostolate without delay and as energetically as possible, where and when they are needed.”³¹

The commission develops programs to help the parishioners share the Good News among members of the parish family and also with people of other faiths and with Catholics who no longer participate in church life.

This commission promotes and sponsors programs that will implement the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' vision for evangelization including the national plan *Go and Make Disciples*.

It sponsors parish events benefitting foreign and domestic missions. In conjunction with the Community Ministries Commission, it promotes, if possible, the adoption of another parish within the diocese, a foreign parish, or a poor inner city community.

The pastor and commission insure that training is provided in the nature of evangelization and in strategies and tactics of evangelizing. It will also provide information specific to the groups being evangelized or served.

The commission develops close communication with parish commissions and organizations to facilitate communication and participation. The commission will offer programs for spiritual renewal, education, and outreach support in evangelization efforts.

It works with the other ministries of the parish to discover special problems and factors accounting for the Catholics leaving the parish, for the lack of interest of the unchurched, and for lack of response from minorities. It will design programs to meet these needs.

It furnishes communication material to local and diocesan media.

It plans, coordinates, and distributes an annual parish calendar of activities.

²⁸*Apostolicam Actuositatem (Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People)*, Chap. I, #3

²⁹*Ad Gentes (Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity)*, Chap. II, #15

³⁰Go and Make Disciples, #10

³¹*Inter mirifica (Decree on the Means of Social Communication)*, Chap. II, #13

It develops and maintains the parish website.

It must prepare, carry out, and evaluate a yearly action plan based on the long range goals set by the parish pastoral council (in conjunction with all the commissions) as part of the parish pastoral plan.

It is responsible to prepare and propose to the parish pastoral council an annual budget for those supplies, equipment, and expenses necessary to carry out that plan.

Ecumenism Commission

“The concern for restoring unity involves the whole Church, faithful and clergy alike. It extends to everyone, according to the talent of each, whether it be exercised in daily Christian living or in theological and historical studies.”³²

When I say for me, Bishop of Rome, the ecumenical task is one of the pastoral priorities of my Pontificate, I think of the grave obstacle which the lack of unity represents for the proclamation of the gospel. A Christian Community which believes in Christ and desires with gospel fervour the salvation of people can hardly be closed to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, who leads all Christians towards full and visible unity.³³

The Second Vatican Council speaks of five ways of working towards Christian unity. These are:

- ❖ Making every effort to eliminate words, judgments and actions which do not respond to the condition of separated brothers and sisters with truth and fairness and so make mutual relations between them more difficult;
- ❖ Through dialogue between competent experts from different churches and communities explaining the teachings of each communion in greater depth and bringing out clearly its distinctive features. Through such dialogue, everyone gains a truer knowledge and more just appreciation of the teachings and religious life of each communion.
- ❖ Co-operating more closely in whatever projects a Christian conscience demands for the common good;
- ❖ Coming together for common prayer, where this is permitted;
- ❖ Examining our own faithfulness to Christ's will for the Church and, wherever necessary, undertaking the task of renewal and reform. (UR 4).

This commission develops within the parish a commitment to ecumenism/ interfaith dialogue as integral to its life and ministry. The commission will promote dialogue with other denominations, faith formation within the Catholic tradition, and a clear understanding of Catholic doctrine as it touches the lives of other Christians, Jews, other religions, and non-believers.

It will plan and coordinate efforts to heal divisions among Christians within the territory of the parish.

It reaches out to people of good will who seek one faith, one baptism in Christ Jesus.

³²*Unitatis redintegratio (Decree on Ecumenism)*, Chap. II, #5

³³*Ut Unum Sint (On commitment to Ecumenism)* 99

It invites and guides dialogue through study groups with other Christian and non-Christian groups.

It plans ecumenical programs and prayer experiences, especially during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity; it cooperates with other local churches in their programs and activities promoting ecumenism.

It must prepare, carry out, and evaluate a yearly action plan based on the long range goals set by the parish pastoral council (in conjunction with all the commissions) as part of the parish pastoral plan.

It is responsible to prepare and propose to the parish pastoral council an annual budget for those supplies, equipment, and expenses necessary to carry out that plan

Buildings/Facilities Commission

“Worthy of special respect and praise in the Church are the laity, single or married, who, in a definitive way or for a period, put their person and their professional competence at the service of institutions and their activities. It is a great joy to the Church to see growing day by day the number of lay people who are offering the personal service to associations and works of the apostolate, . . .”³⁴

This commission inspects and inventories all parish properties, equipment, furnishings and facilities; it reviews and recommends needed additions, repairs, replacements and servicing, to be actuated, if needed, under a schedule to be submitted with the recommendation for the work.

It discerns the use of parish talent where safety and performance do not require the use of professional services.

It prepares and recommends policies or guidelines to the parish pastoral council for the use of parish facilities, including security, utilities, services, and personnel. It is responsible to publish the approved guidelines.

It prepares and recommends, in coordination with the other commissions, facility plans and improvements.

It reviews parish insurance needs and makes suggestions with special reference to diocesan policies.

It must prepare, carry out, and evaluate a yearly action plan based on the long range goals set by the parish pastoral council (in conjunction with all the commissions) as part of the parish pastoral plan.

It is responsible to prepare and propose to the parish pastoral council an annual budget for those supplies, equipment, and expenses necessary to carry out that plan.

³⁴*Apostolicam Actuositatem (Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People, #22)*

Appendix B: Suggested By-laws for Pastoral Councils within the Diocese of Charlotte

Article I. NAME

The name of this body shall be: The Parish Pastoral Council of _____.

Article II. NATURE AND PURPOSES

The Pastoral Council shall be a consultative body whose policies and decisions require the authority of the pastor to become effective. Its function is established under the Pastoral Council guidelines of the Diocese of Charlotte.

In responding to the Lord who has called the parish to be a community of faithful disciples, council members are challenged to ongoing renewal through prayer, study, listening, and dialogue. In working with the pastor to develop priorities and directions for the parish, the council is to become the means of achieving full participation by the whole parish community in its mission by giving all a voice in assisting the pastor in his guidance and direction of parish life.

The goal of the Parish Pastoral Council is not simply to serve the members of the parish, but to work with the pastor to develop a common vision and purpose, actively advocate for the poor and the powerless, and extend Christian commitment to the surrounding neighborhoods and communities. Toward that end, a statement of mission for the parish community is orchestrated by this body and becomes the reference point for activity in the parish.

In addition the council's responsibilities will also include ways:

1. To provide a structured way for laity, religious, and priests to coordinate, encourage, promote, and participate in the apostolic and spiritual work of the parish.
2. To provide recommendations for parish priorities, directions, and policies through pastoral planning;
3. To promote communication, understanding, and collaboration among parish organizations and between the parish, the Diocese, and the universal Church.
4. To provide a continuous and integrated survey of the spiritual and temporal needs of the parish and the community. They should work closely with the pastor to develop and implement programs aimed at meeting these needs.
5. To serve as a permanent structure for constructive dialogue among priests, religious, and laity of the parish so that all can work in close cooperation as a truly Christian community, in fulfilling the mission of Christ.
6. To show by example how the total parish community, working together, can promote the Kingdom of Christ and proclaim His Gospel.

Article III. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. The members of the council shall be the pastor and the lay selected (or appointed) members of the parish. All are voting members except the pastor. Permanent deacons and commission chairs are ex-officio members and, as such, have no vote.

Section 2. Terms of Office

1. Each elected member shall serve a term of three years with the exception that the original members shall serve terms varying from one to three years as determined by lot. Of the original elected members, one third shall serve one-year terms, one third shall serve two-year terms and one third shall serve three-year terms.
2. Terms of all members shall begin with the next meeting following their selection.
3. Members may be selected to no more than two consecutive terms.

Section 3. Method of Selection and Eligibility. A primary value for membership of a Parish Pastoral Council is that the council be a true reflection of the parish community. Insofar as possible, the council should reflect parish membership. Members should be inclusive of the demographic realities of the community (e.g., minorities, the aged, persons with disabling or handicapping conditions, etc.) This does not mean that members represent a particular constituency, but rather that the council should reflect the diversity of the parish in terms of age, race, length of membership in the parish.

Individuals from the parish are eligible to serve on the Pastoral Council but must be:

1. Selected in accord with the norms outlined within the diocesan guidelines.
2. Baptized and confirmed Roman Catholics in good standing with the Church;
3. Registered and supporting members of the parish;
4. Participants in parish life;
5. In possession of an understanding of and commitment to the Church in accord with the principles of Vatican II;
6. Committed to prayer, study, listening, and dialogue; and
7. Committed to giving the time needed for participation.

Section 4. Vacancy.

A vacancy may occur by death, by resignation, by termination of membership in the parish, by absence from three consecutive regular meetings, or by incurrance of a penalty which renders a person ineligible for office by ecclesiastical law. The unexpired term shall be served out by an individual selected by the pastor after consultation with the council.

Article IV. OFFICERS

Section 1. The Pastor, in his appointed role by the Bishop, shall preside over the Council. The pastor shall:

- a. Preside at meetings of the Pastoral Council.
- b. Call special meetings of the Council.
- c. Place matters of concern on the agenda.
- d. Approve or veto recommendations of the Council.
- e. Officially promulgate decisions of the Council.
- f. Represent the parish at each meeting of the Vicariate.

Section 2. The Chairperson shall be selected by the lay membership of the Pastoral Council through a discernment process. The Chairperson's responsibilities shall include:

- a. Chair the meetings of the Pastoral Council.
- b. Organize and coordinate the activities and processes of the Council.
- c. Appoint members to committees.
- d. Motivate the various members/groups in the Council to fulfill their specific responsibilities.

Section 3. The Vice-chairperson shall be selected by the lay members of the Council through a discernment process. The duties of the vice-chair shall include:

- a. Assume the duties and responsibilities of the chairperson when the chairperson is absent or incapacitated.
- b. Perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Council or the chairperson.

Section 4. The secretary shall be selected from the lay members of the Council through a discernment process. Their duties shall include:

- a. Record the proceedings of all Council meetings.
- b. Notify the members of all meetings.
- c. Handle correspondence relevant to Council activities.
- d. File all records, reports, communications, etc.
- e. Send to the Diocesan Office of Planning the name of the Pastoral Council officers and their contact information immediately after selection.
- f. Perform such other duties as the Council or the chairperson shall prescribe.

Article V. MEETINGS

Section 1. Meetings shall be held as provided in the by-laws, usually monthly. Since the purpose of the council is to give advice to the pastor, the council will not meet in the pastor's absence except in extraordinary circumstances and with the approval of the pastor or duly appointed administrator appointed by the bishop of the diocese. "It is for the Parish Priest to preside at parochial councils. They are to be considered invalid, and hence null and void, any

deliberations entered into, (or decisions taken), by a parochial council which has not been presided over by the Parish Priest or which has assembled contrary to his wishes"³⁵

Section 2. The Council's ordinary manner of decision-making, whether as a committee of the whole or through its commission structure, is by consensus rather than by vote.

The Council conducts itself in a collaborative mode with individuals and groups in the parish. This collaboration is especially essential in the Pastoral Council's interaction with the finance council. For each council to fulfill its responsibilities effectively, mutual understanding and support is vital between the two.

Section 3. Council meetings shall be open to the parish as a whole with minutes published both electronically and on paper and made available to parishioners and the general public.

Article VI. COMMISSIONS

Section 1. Within the Diocese of Charlotte there shall be seven Commissions:

- ❖ Liturgy and Worship
- ❖ Education and Formation
- ❖ Community Ministries
- ❖ Parish Life
- ❖ Evangelization/Communication
- ❖ Ecumenism
- ❖ Buildings/Facilities

In smaller parishes where there are insufficient numbers of people to maintain commissions, the ministries of the commissions shall be divided among the various parish committees. The pastor should work with the Director of Planning of the Diocese to determine the best method to use to organize in support of the parish pastoral plan.

Section 2. Duties and Responsibilities. The duties and responsibilities of the commissions are outlined in the Pastoral Council guidelines of the Diocese of Charlotte.

Article VI. COMMITTEES

Section 1. Executive Committee. Councils should develop an executive committee to help coordinate and set the meeting agendas with the pastor. The committee should be made up of the officers of the Pastoral Council.

Section 2. Subcommittees of the council should not be encouraged since it is important that the council deliberate together. If they do occur they should be ad-hoc with a set time to do their work and report back to the council.

³⁵ 1997 Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priest (Article, 5, § 3).

Section 3. Stewardship. Each parish will establish a stewardship committee that is responsible to the pastor and Pastoral Council to promote stewardship as a way of life. This committee will have a coordinating role to help commissions and ministries in the parish to secure the necessary volunteer support to carry out the pastoral plan of the parish.

Article VII. QUORUM

A simple majority of the voting members of the Council shall constitute a quorum.

Article VIII. AMENDMENTS

The by-laws may be amended by a vote of two-thirds of the total voting membership of the Pastoral Council provided that such amendments have been presented to the members of the Council at the meeting prior to the meeting at which the vote is to be taken. All amendments need the approval of the pastor.