

A Guide for the

Implementation

Of the Parish Pastoral Plan

The most critical and often overlooked moment in any planning endeavor is the transition from planning to implementation. The purpose of pastoral planning is to reflect on the mission of the parish, create pastoral plans for the future of the parish based on our Christian mission and implement those pastoral plans. Without implementation, pastoral planning does not achieve its end - action on behalf of mission.

The Parish Pastoral Plan is the *parish's* plan. The Pastor and Parish Pastoral Council in collaboration with other parish leaders are certainly responsible for formulating the plan of action, but, for the pastoral plan to be effective, the plan must communicate a shared vision. Therefore, consultation which seeks to incorporate as many voices from the parish as possible is a crucial step in pastoral planning.

Now, as the energy moves from discernment to action, the voices of consultation must become the hands and hearts of action and transformation. The Parish Pastoral Council takes on a new role at this time, acting as leaders calling forth the gifts of others, while remaining in service to the entire parish. Individuals that are asked to serve as implementers will be asked to steward their time and gifts in service to the parish, as they help make the proposed plan a *lived* plan.

This guide is meant to assist Parish Pastoral Councils in this transition from planning to action. The following pages move from the publication of the final plan to the calling of lead implementers as well as evaluation and celebration.

Finally, this guide is meant to point the council toward ongoing discernment and into a new cycle of planning. The journey always returns to the beginning, but we are changed in the process. Each consecutive cycle deepens our listening, sharpens our awareness, increases our activity and helps us fulfill our call as Children of God to be reflections of the One who gave us life and sustains us. As baptized Catholics we are called to usher in the Reign of God, here and now. Through sincere discernment and faithful action, we move ever closer to God who first called us.

Outline for Implementation Guide

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Publishing the Parish Pastoral Plan

Publishing the Plan to the Parish

Once the mission statement, goals and objectives have been created, the pastor and the Parish Pastoral Council publish the plan for the parish. The plan should be very well publicized so as to reach as many parishioners as possible.

There are many methods of publicizing the plan. While methods of publication may differ across parishes, good publicity is important. Here are a few ideas for publishing the plan:

- Create a tri-fold brochure with the mission, goals and objectives
 - Insert brochures into bulletins
 - Leave brochures in the pews
 - Place in the back of church
 - Send out with new envelopes
 - Announce the publication of the plans before the close of liturgy and distribute it to parishioners as they leave.
- Ratify the new mission statement at liturgy and recite the mission statement at certain times during the year (feast days, Pentecost, etc.)
- Place plan on the parish website
- Print prayer cards with mission statement to generate interest
- Highlight one goal during a weekend

There are many other ways to publish the plan. The pastoral plan is a tool for evangelization and an opportunity to invite parishioners to deeper stewardship of their gifts, and growing participation in the parish. The Parish Pastoral Plan clearly articulates the priorities and values of your parish and leads to a more vibrant and inviting.

Sending the Parish Pastoral Plan to the Bishop

The Parish Pastoral Plan is sent to the Bishop to assist him in organizing Diocesan resources to serve the needs of each parish. Parish Pastoral Planning is designed to assist each parish name their priorities. The Bishop, having heard the priorities of the parishes then creates and allocates resources to serve the needs of the Church. The standard reporting tool assists in the Bishop's discernment for the future of the Church.

Once the plan is complete, each parish forwards a copy of the plan to the Bishop. A standard reporting tool has been developed to submit your parish pastoral plan. This tool is available on First Class. The reporting tool is a template to create the plan itself. The reporting tool should be sent to the Office of Pastoral Planning before November 30, 2007.

As pastoral planning continues each parish is asked to submit an evaluation of the pastoral plan on an annual basis. This annual submission includes an evaluation of the current plan and an update of goals and objectives. Each parish may have a different cycle and may complete the annual plan at different times. You are encouraged to submit your plan and/or evaluation at any time in a given year, but it is due no later than November 30 of each year.

The pastoral planning reporting tool requests the following information:

- Mission Statement
- Goals based on the elements of parish life
- Objectives (action steps) for each goal
- Implementers (lead agents) for each Objective
- Financial cost of each objective (reviewed by finance council)
- Review sheet for any element not included in the goals

This format may be helpful as the PPC prepares to publish the plan to the parish.

Selecting Implementers

The role of the Parish Pastoral Council changes abruptly once the parish pastoral plan has been published. **PPC members are not asked to “do” the plan**, but PPC members must call others to leadership and empower other parishioners to become involved in bringing the plan to life.

The hope is that the pastoral plan reflects not only the mission of the Church but also expresses the hopes and desires of the entire community of believers within the parish. Therefore, lending support and service to the action steps of the pastoral plan not only serves God, but also address the needs of other parishioners and the local community.

During this phase the Parish Pastoral Council members reach out to others in the parish inviting them to take on roles as Implementers. Implementers are lead agents given the responsibility for accomplishing one of the objectives in the plan.

One or two individuals are selected for each objective in the pastoral plan. The Implementers are only responsible for the one action step or objective, not the entire goal. Once these individuals have been identified the Parish Pastoral Council members submit recommendations to the pastor. The pastor approves all Implementers. PPC members then invite these parishioners to take responsibility and leadership for the objective.

Implementers may be chosen from the entire parish body. At the same time, these individuals should possess the qualities and strengths necessary to accomplish the objective. An Implementer may be the leader of an existing committee within the parish or may not be connected with any committee. Selecting Co-implementers is encouraged. Sometimes a given objective may be overwhelming for one person. Therefore, Co-implementers could support one another and hold each other accountable along the way.

It is important to select and assign implementers based on their interest and *ability* to fulfill the specific objective. Hence awareness of individuals' strengths, interests and availability of time, is very important to this process of assignment. Casual selection can lead to frustration for those invited as well as delay in the execution of the plan.

Parish Pastoral Council members, in their role as empowering leaders, are asked to be mentors or liaisons to Implementers. As liaisons, Council members report on the progress of each Implementer at the council meeting. As mentors, Council members encourage, support and “coach” Implementers throughout the implementation. The arrangement of council members could vary in each parish. For example, a pair of council members could mentor all the Implementers for one goal or individual Council members could be matched with individual Implementers.

Qualities of an Implementer

The Parish Pastoral Council considers each objective in the parish pastoral plan and begins to ask individuals to take on leadership by being Implementers. How does the PPC select an effective Implementer? What are the qualities of a good Implementer?

A good Implementer is:

- A person of prayer
- Enthusiastic and committed to the parish
- Able to contribute time and effort
- A good communicator
- Able to work well with others
- Skilled, as needed for an objective
- Hopeful
- A good leader
- A responsible steward

Where to find Implementers?

Every individual in the parish has gifts to offer. When the PPC begins the process of naming Implementers it should be done with faith that the gifts needed to accomplish the plan already exist, and need only be identified and called forth from the parish community.

Implementers are parishioners who have been interested in the parish throughout the planning process. The first place to look for Implementers would be:

- Nomination forms from a parish discernment for new PPC members
- Registration sheet for those attending an Information Night or Night of Discernment for New members
- Committee members
- Those attending reflection groups or one-to-one conversations
- Pastors and staff members recommendations
- Your Parish Stewardship Committee may be able to help identify individuals that possess the talents and strengths required to accomplish certain objectives
- Parishioners who have not been involved before, but have an interest in service that is time-limited
- An open call of parishioners

Implementers can also be people who have been in the parish for decades or only a short time. Either way, they are in the parish and they are waiting to be called.

How to invite Implementers?

The PPC could invite implementers to be part of the plan in many ways. Here are a few:

- Brainstorm at a council meeting. Look at all objectives and list individuals who may be good leaders for each. Council members should describe the reasons why they are selecting the individual.
- Invitations from the pastor asking for interested individuals are very helpful.
- Bulletin inserts and name-drop boxes. Provide an easy way for people to volunteer.
- Clearly print the objectives in the bulletin and highlight those where leaders are needed.
- The diocesan Stewardship Office is able to assist by hosting a gift discovery or strengths finder session, where individuals would have the opportunity to identify their own strengths. This ongoing process is very inclusive and encourages the participation of many in the parish. This may also help identify individuals that would be able to support future planning objectives.

Does the PPC select Implementers before or after publishing the plan to the parish?

Two schools of thought exist around this question.

	Pros	Cons
Publishing the Plan without Implementers	More open selection and inquiry process by parishioners Objectives not driven by certain personalities	Difficult to find a leader for a given objective which may delay or inhibit implementation
Publishing the plan with Implementers	Gives immediate exposure to the Implementers Creates immediate contact person	May limit pool of Implementers

The Bishop's reporting tool asks for the names of Implementers, so these individuals must be named before the plan is submitted. Therefore, if the PPC decides to publish the plan to the parish without Implementers in the hopes of gathering interested individuals, this selection process will need to be timed according to the November 30th submission deadline.

Relationship of Implementers to:

Parish Pastoral Council

Implementers are responsible for one objective and are accountable to the Parish Pastoral Council. Parish Pastoral Council members support the Implementers without doing the work. PPC members may be selected to develop relationships with one or two Implementers and report back to the council on the progress of each objective.

Parish Pastoral Council members act as coaches to the individual Implementers. To examine this relationship in more detail, imagine a coach of a team and the qualities and attributes of a coach. A coach does the following:

- Provides support, but does not do the work
- Gives advice and needed resources
- Cheers
- Brings the needs of the team back to management
- Connects novices with experienced players (mentors)
- Keeps everyone focused on the goal

PPC members see the big picture. Council members have the large view of the entire parish and understand how the accomplishment of each objective serves the need of the wider mission. This view is important to share with Implementers so that all can come to learn how our individual actions are connected to a greater end.

Pastor

The pastor approves the appointment of each Implementer. The pastor acts as a guide and mentor to the Implementers as well. The pastor does not do the work of the Implementers but offers guidance and provides resources as needed. The support of the pastor is invaluable to all parish leaders. It is helpful if the pastor is available to not only steer the work of the council, but also to listen to the progress and stories of the Implementers.

Parish Staff

Objectives within a pastoral plan may involve the ministry of professionals within the parish environment. Parish staff members may be called upon to be Implementers, but more often parish staff members work in collaboration with parishioners. Parish staff members are leaders within the community who are called upon to encourage new leadership among parishioners. Parish Staff members are both coaches and Implementers, leaders and servants.

Negotiating the relationship between professional pastoral staff and active lay members in a vibrant faith community must be based on the principles of empowerment and leadership development of all parishioners. Parish staff members are called to the development of the parish community by fostering lay participation. Collaborative

relationships between parish staff members and Implementers are crucial for the success of the plan and the vibrancy of the parish.

Parish Committees

Implementers may be leaders of existing parish committees especially if that committee has a primary responsibility for achieving a given objective. If so, there is an assumption that the entire committee or organization would be devoted to the accomplishment of a given objective. This assumption must be clarified with the membership of the given committee or organization.

Yet, Implementers may not necessarily be a member of an existing committee or organization. If so, they may need further assistance from others in accomplishing the objective. Groups can be established to accomplish a given objective, but are normally ad hoc in nature. The committee is established for the deliberate purpose of accomplishing a given objective under the leadership of a given Implementer. Once the objective is complete the group is no longer constituted.

If objectives are assigned to certain ad hoc Implementers and committees, support and acknowledgement must still be given to existing committees who are accomplishing good work in the parish.

Each parish is unique in its organizational and leadership structure. The use of existing committees is important to consider as you select Implementers.

To prepare committees to adjust to the adoption of the pastoral plan, the PPC may consider asking each committee to review the pastoral plan and articulate ways in which they would like to contribute to the accomplishment of the plan. The responses received here may assist PPC members in selecting Implementers.

The success of the plan is directly related to the relationships between those implementing the plan and all other leaders in the parish. The relationship between leaders should be clarified before implementation begins. The Implementation Gathering is meant to address these relationships by focusing on the plan itself.

Implementation Gathering and Reflection

Once the Implementers have been selected, the Parish Pastoral Council may find it helpful schedule and prepare an Implementation Gathering and Reflection. This meeting is a time for the PPC and Pastor to gather with the Implementers and parish staff members to reflect on the parish pastoral plan, pray together for success and provide a real moment of support and gratitude for all those implementing the plan in any way.

Who?

The gathering includes:

- Pastor
- Parish Pastoral Council
- Parish Staff
- Parish Finance Council
- Implementers

When?

The gathering should be held as soon as possible after the Implementers have been selected. The gathering is a 2-3 hour meeting and could be held on a Saturday morning, Sunday afternoon or weekday evening.

Format

The Implementation Gathering is a 2-hour period of prayer, reflection and preparation in which the Implementers are commissioned and sent forth to accomplish their given objective.

The gathering includes time for:

- Prayer
- Address by the Pastor on the Mission of the parish and the parish pastoral plan
- Review of the progress of pastoral planning that has led up to the gathering
- Review of the Parish Pastoral Plan
- Conversation on hopes and concerns moving forward
- Details of evaluation procedure and ongoing communication
- Blessing and commissioning of Implementers

A recommended outline for the gathering follows. It is meant as a guide and may certainly be changed and amended based on the uniqueness of the local parish.

Sample Outline for Implementation Gathering – Saturday morning

- 9:00 am PPC members arrive to set up for the meeting
- 9:30 am Participants arrive, greet, get coffee
- 10:00 am Welcome by pastor and PPC
Introductions
- 10:15 am Morning prayer with song
- 10:30 am Pastor gives talk on the mission of the parish and the parish pastoral plan, thanking everyone for participating and their willingness to serve
- 10:45am PPC member presents parish pastoral plan and steps of planning process. Stress the connections between the mission, the goals and the objectives. *(Individual council members could be designated to discuss the reason for the selection of a given objective)*
- 11:00 am Small groups are formed. One group for each goal. Each group includes Implementers for the objectives in each goal and a number of PPC members and/or parish staff members
Small groups discuss using newsprint to record discussion
- Hopes and concerns for each objective
 - Strategies for each objective
 - Anticipated hurdles and needed resources
- 11:30 am Pastor and/or PPC member provide information on evaluation process, lines of communication and support (i.e. Connecting PPC mentor (coach) to each Implementer, passing out evaluation forms, etc.)
- 11:50 am Prayer of Blessing and commissioning (attached)
- 12 noon Lunch

Evaluation

Evaluation is an important and often overlooked step in any planning process. The Parish Pastoral Council is responsible for reviewing the activity taken to achieve the objectives of the pastoral plan. Significant learning and insight can come through a reflective evaluation process. Through evaluation pastoral councils name the successes and identify the reasons for not achieving certain objectives.

Through evaluation, Parish Pastoral Councils fulfill one of their primary responsibilities – holding all activities of the parish accountable to the mission of the parish. Formal evaluation of all initiatives of the pastoral plan and activities of the parish provides the kind of accountability that is necessary for any worthwhile endeavor.

A 6-month and one year evaluation of the plan is undertaken by the council to:

- Review the progress of all objectives
- Ensure that leaders and Implementers have adequate resources
- Determine if objectives and goals are still relevant to the local situation.

Verbal reports, given by the Implementers to members of the Parish Pastoral Council, are helpful, but a written evaluation is more beneficial to the entire council and the pastor. Implementers should be given the opportunity to share their experience, analyze what was effective and what was not, and make suggestions for next steps. In this way, the parish becomes a learning community, building upon its experience.

The evaluations are helpful to the PPC as they create new objectives for the following year. An annual evaluation of the parish pastoral plan is also submitted to the Bishop.

Celebration

The final step in a pastoral planning process is a celebration of accomplishments. One thing we know how to do well is celebrate. Celebration not only recognizes the service of others, but also acknowledges the good work of the entire parish. Celebration allows the community to name their successes and give thanks for those individuals who have stepped forward to be part of the Implementation.

Annual Calendar for Parish Pastoral Planning

Once a pastoral planning cycle has begun within the parish, the most crucial next step is to coordinate a sustainable ongoing pattern of pastoral planning that becomes part of parish life. This is best accomplished through the creation of an annual planning calendar. The Parish Pastoral Council and the parish can greatly benefit from a regular calendar articulating a basic outline and rhythm of pastoral planning within the life of the parish.

The normative components of any pastoral planning process include:

Discernment	A period of prayer, study of issues, and a listening process
Development of Pastoral Plan	Articulating goals, objectives and action steps
Implementation	Identifying new leaders Focusing the parish on the accomplishment of the plan
Evaluation	Reviewing implementation process Drawing conclusions for the future

The following is a sample planning calendar. Each parish may establish a unique calendar that is more suited to the life of the individual community. Based on this calendar, the PPC may see the need to meet more often during certain times of the year and less frequently at other times. This decision is made at the discretion of the pastor and the agenda team.

January	Evaluation of Objectives and Plan PPC decides on needed modifications to plan
February – April	PPC hold listening campaign (1:1s, parish assembly, reflection groups)
May	PPC develops new objectives for the plan Discernment of new members to PPC
June	Publish updated plan to parish Select Implementers
July – August	Prepare Implementation Gathering
September	Implementation Gathering and Reflection Begin implementation of new objectives
October - December	Oversight of Implementation Ongoing work with clusters Formation of new members Implement targeted listening process

Beginning a New Cycle – Discernment

Pastoral Planning is ongoing in the life of the parish. Once the Parish Pastoral Council has completed a cycle of planning, the world has changed and the parish has changed. The “signs of the times” are always in flux and must be interpreted again and again. Pastoral Planning is an intentional attempt to be pro-active in the face of change, to consistently provide for the needs of the faithful by being attentive to their experience and focused on the Gospel Mission.

A period of evaluation leads once again to a time of discernment. The Parish Pastoral Council is invited to once again pray, study and listen. Each time the PPC discerns in this way, the prayer becomes more meaningful, the study more intense and the listening deeper. Cycles of planning do not spin around a single wheel, but wind deeper and deeper with each turn leading us toward our source and moving us further out in action. Pastoral planning is a habit of being church in a complex and changing world.

New Listening campaign

Continuing cycles of parish pastoral planning involve ongoing consultation with parishioners and others in the community. The skills developed in the first round of pastoral planning (1:1 conversations, parish assemblies and reflection groups) must be considered by the Parish Pastoral Council again. Each tool can be developed or modified to gather appropriate consultation. Several examples of modification include:

- 1:1 conversation campaign with a specific ethnic or age group within the parish to elicit their concerns and ideas for the parish.
- 1:1 conversations with members of other local faith communities to find common concerns that would foster ecumenical or inter-faith collaboration
- A parish assembly focused on specific questions for parishioners to consider
- Reflection groups as part of a wider parish retreat or as part of a cluster event

As consultation and pastoral planning continues to develop in the life of the parish, the PPC is encouraged to hold a parish assembly once every **three** years. The wide parish assembly assists the parish in creating goals for the future. Parish goals are usually 3 year goals. Therefore, an assembly to evaluate goals and create new goals is recommended every three years.

Reflection groups occur **annually**. Reflection groups focus on one area of parish life encouraging parishioners to brainstorm action steps based on a parish goal. Action steps (objectives) normally take one year to accomplish. Therefore, the PPC is encouraged to hold reflection groups each year in order to create objectives that move the parish closer to the accomplishment of the larger goal.

Consultation or listening campaigns happen consistently in the life of the parish. Formal and informal practices of listening are part of the life of any faith community. The Parish Pastoral Council consistently shares the “sense of the faithful” with the pastor. PPC members are encouraged to take time each meeting to share what they are hearing with the pastor. This is the primary role of the Parish Pastoral Council.

Ongoing Discernment of New PPC Member

The selection of new Parish Pastoral Council members is an annual process by which the parish chooses new leaders based on their gifts and desire to be of service to the parish. The Discernment Process for New PPC Members, used in many parishes throughout the Diocese, is meant to facilitate the selection process for new parish leaders. The Discernment Process begins with a parish-wide nomination process to identify gifted individuals in the parish. This is followed by an Information Night in which nominated parishioners learn about the ministry of the Parish Pastoral Council. Finally, a Night of Discernment gathers together nominated parishioners to learn about one another and select individuals that have the gifts for this ministry.

The Discernment Process can be used on an annual basis to discern new members. Several members of the existing council spearhead the nomination process by publicizing and conducting the parish-wide nominations and sending invitations to nominated parishioners. An information session is held in the parish facilitated either by a Diocesan facilitator or by a PPC member using material from the Diocese. The Night of Discernment is also conducted by PPC members. The pastor and all council members are encouraged to attend the Night of Discernment. Additional information regarding this process is available through the Office of Pastoral Planning.

For newly established Parish Pastoral Councils:

Newly established Parish Pastoral Councils must create a sustainable process of selecting new members and establishing terms for existing members. The most crucial issue here is not to create a situation in which the entire PPC rotates off at one time. It is recommended that council members have staggered terms. This staggering is described more in the Guidelines for Parish Pastoral Councils. It is recommended that no more than 1/3 of the council rotate off in one year.

When selecting new members to the PPC it is important to note the status of each member. Some members are selected and others are appointed. Selected members are replaced through a selection process which includes the input and consultation of parishioners (such as a Discernment Process). Appointed members are replaced by new pastoral appointments made directly by the pastor.

When commissioning new members to the Parish Pastoral Council, pastors may also consider recognizing those that are leaving council. The Office of Pastoral Planning has sample commissioning rituals available...