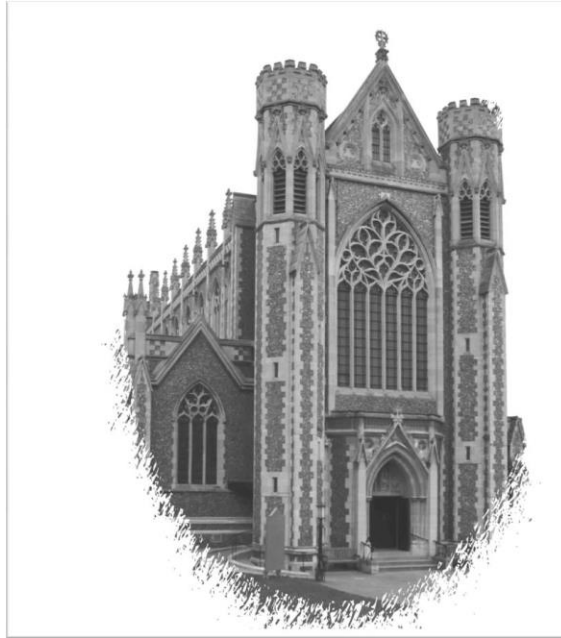


The Sacred Heart Church

Wimbledon



HANDBOOK FOR THE

PARISH PASTORAL

COUNCIL

GUIDELINES FOR THE WORKING OF THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL (PPC)

A Pastoral Council is one of the structures strongly recommended by the Second Vatican Council (Christus Dominus n 27 and Apostolicam Actuositatem n 26) and codified in the 1983 Code of Canon Law (canons 511 - 514 & 536).

1 Purpose of the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC)

The PPC seeks to work with the Parish Priest and parish team to enrich the quality of parish life by bringing alive the parish's vision for itself.

Its principal role is to assist the Parish Priest in the work of parish planning – investigating, discerning and proposing practical solutions about all things pastoral. The PPC is a means of promoting lay involvement whereby *all* members of the parish community work together collaboratively to bring the vision for the parish alive to the honour and greater glory of God.

Our parish vision is that we would like our parish to be:

- A community driven in all things through the love that God has for all people. A parish which reaches out into the wider community, encouraging dialogue and social action alongside other Christians in a spirit of ecumenism as well as people of other faiths and those of no faith.
- A spiritual and peaceful place of welcome and mutual support in which each person is valued for themselves. A community that actively celebrates its cultural diversity.
- A community rooted in a shared conviction that priests, religious and lay people should work together collaboratively, and as equals in service, to further the mission of Jesus Christ. A body of active members enabled and encouraged to contribute to the liturgy, and to the wider social mission of the church.
- A community that respects and responds to the varied needs of its members at different stages in their life journeys. A parish that supports all its members to grow in faith through diverse liturgy and a wide range of educational, social and cultural programmes.
- A parish which cares for the excluded and marginalised both within its own community and beyond. A parish which expresses that care through meaningful and practical action.

This is how the parish aims to promote its vision:

- Through collaborative ministry, valuing and promoting shared responsibility between clergy, religious and laity for formation, delivery and evaluation of all aspects of the work of the parish.
- Each ministry understanding its role within the parish mission.
- Adopting an inclusive approach which seeks to engage the skills and experience of the widest cross section of the parish community.
- Valuing the practical contribution that volunteers make to all aspects of parish life exemplified by a commitment to active recruitment, effective training and support for volunteers.
- Effective communication across the parish community using all the media resources available.
- Ultimately, enabling and empowering parishioners to proclaim the faith and to model Christian values in their homes, schools and workplaces by engagement in a varied range of activities in the wider community.

2 Role of PPC members

- Lead, with the parish team, the transmission of the parish vision and mission

PPC HANDBOOK

- Lead the ongoing development, review and evaluation of the parish plan
- Advise the parish priest and Finance Committee on the allocation of resources to ensure implementation of the parish plan
- Consider and develop initiatives which promote the translation of the parish vision into practice
- Represent views of the laity to the parish priest
- Advise the parish priest on any major decisions or changing circumstances within the parish or wider community which affect the life and well-being of the parish, leading consultation with the wider parish community where appropriate
- Support and help the various parish ministries to play their part in the translation of the parish vision into practice by:
 - Facilitating the provision of information about the breadth and purpose of each ministry to other ministries and the wider parish community
 - Promoting and fostering communication between the various ministries
 - Encouraging and supporting lay participation in the various ministries
 - Linking the parish ministries more explicitly with the PPC in order to effect dialogue and timely support when needed

In particular, each PPC member will be the contact person with 5-6 active ministries to connect the parish leadership with the heart of parish life and specifically to:

- Ensure that the PPC is really aware of the full range of active ministries in the parish
 - Provide parishioners involved in each ministry with a clear opportunity to talk about their aspirations to improve the quality of their work and to identify the support and/or resources they may need to deliver such improvements
 - Give active parishioners a channel to express their views on current issues and developments in the parish
 - Enable the PPC to communicate current developments in the parish which may have particular relevance to specific ministries
 - Help the PPC to identify potential to create links across ministries in order to improve the consistency and coherence of work in the parish
- Maintain accountability to the parish community for PPC work by giving high priority to ensuring regular, effective and timely two-way communication with the parish

The Parish Pastoral Plan lies at the heart of future activity within the parish and should be seen as the key document which informs all future changes/developments.

The PPC has overall responsibility for the oversight of plan review and development in order to ensure that the plan's ongoing development is fully integrated into the life of the parish.

3 Principles which underpin the PPC model

Rationale

- Prayer and theological formation are crucial
- Primary focus of PPC is mission and evangelisation based on pastoral planning
- Decision-making will be made through consensus

Accountabilities and Responsibilities

- PPC is accountable to the parish community for its work and must give high priority to ensuring regular, effective and timely communication with the parish
- PPC responsibility is to advise on parish priorities and resource allocation - it is not the body which implements parish initiatives or discusses the *detail* of parish finances
- PPC responsibility is to foster partnership and collaborative ministry, mindful that its role is to promote the well-being and success of the various parish ministries by honouring the principle of subsidiarity and recognising that the ministries have their source of being in the parish – PPC is not an administrative overseeing body

4 Membership of the Parish Pastoral Council

A maximum of 12 members. Of these, one will be the Parish Priest, one a member of the Parish Team and one a representative nominated by the Finance Committee. The other nine members will be drawn from the laity of the parish.

Six members constitute a quorum.

The PPC may decide to invite one or more individuals to attend a PPC meeting when additional or specialist advice and information is needed

5 Terms of membership

Each PPC member is elected for a two year period of office commencing at a March meeting. Membership of the PPC will remain constant for a 2 year period. After 2 years, at least one third of the lay members (i.e. 3 members) will retire.

Subject to the proviso about maximum length of service, the remaining 6 members are entitled to opt to serve for a further two year period of office without further election. **No member other than the Parish Priest and representatives from the Parish Team and Finance Committee should serve more than three consecutive terms (i.e. 6years).**

Annually in January, all lay PPC members will be asked to indicate either their willingness to continue to serve for a further year as a PPC member (subject to the maximum length of service proviso) or their intention to step down from membership. Executive Group members will similarly be asked to indicate their willingness or otherwise to continue, if eligible, in those roles. When required, elections to the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Secretary roles will take place at the March meeting.

If a member resigns before the end of her/his term of office, the PPC within no more than two months from the date of resignation, will invite the parish community to nominate parishioners to fill the vacancy. In the event of there being several nominations for the vacancy, an election will take place.

6 Qualities and skills needed by PPC members

All should be practising Catholics who participate regularly in the parish Sunday Mass. Members should seek to represent the parish as a whole, not act as representatives of particular parish groups/organisations

They must be able to contribute effectively to the work of the PPC and be willing to give the commitment required from a PPC member.

Essential requirements are:

- A commitment to attend and participate in PPC meetings
- A commitment to attend the PPC's annual half-day of reflection and annual meeting
- Capacity and willingness to engage and participate in tasks/activities led and organised by the PPC
- A willingness to act in an 'eyes and ears of the parish community' capacity

7 Selection Process for PPC members

The parish must be fully informed, prepared and involved in, the process of selecting the members drawn from the laity of the parish.

Nomination Process

The Parish Priest and PPC

- Draw up a timeline for the nomination and selection process
- invite the parish's involvement through prayer to nominate potential members (themselves or others)
- advertise the vacancies in the parish newsletter over two consecutive weekends including the provision of a nomination pro-forma and details of the essential person requirements

Selection Process

- The Parish Priest meets with prospective candidates prior to election to discuss the requirements of a role on the PPC and to ensure that candidates' expectations of the role are appropriately set
- If more nominations are received than there are vacancies, the parish is invited to elect members from the list of nominees using a pro-forma ballot paper. Each adult parishioner shall have one vote and the ballot will be secret and conducted at all Saturday Vigil and Sunday Masses over two consecutive weekends. The PPC Chair and Secretary will count the votes. In the event of a tie (irrespective of the number of people) the matter will be decided by putting each name on a separate piece of paper and placing the papers in a 'hat'. The first name drawn from the 'hat' will be the elected member. Names of those selected will be reported in the parish newsletter the following weekend.
- If insufficient nominations are received, the Parish Priest arranges for further prayer and discernment in order to fill the remaining vacancies, taking account of under-represented areas and the needs of the parish

Post-election

The Parish Priest invites the whole parish to support the group with prayers and encouragement at the Liturgy of Commissioning attended by all PPC members and held at a Sunday Mass as soon as possible after announcement of the election results.

8 Decision-making Process

PPC decisions will be made through working towards consensus, taking account of the views of each member of the Council and arriving at agreement. Majority voting should be used only as a last resort.

"Consensus is a group decision (which some members may not feel is the best decision, but which they can live with, support, and commit themselves to not undermine), arrived at without voting, through a process

whereby the issues are fully aired, all members feel they have been adequately heard, in which everyone has equal power and responsibility, and different degrees of influence by virtue of individual stubbornness or charisma are avoided so that all are satisfied with the process.”

A World Waiting to be Born : The Search for Civility
M. Scott Peck, Rider, London, 1993

9 PPC Communication with the Parish

Members of the PPC should be accessible and as well-known to their fellow parishioners as possible.

Ensuring effective, timely and regular communication with the wider parish community will also be a priority for the PPC. To achieve this the parish should be kept informed of the membership of the PPC, be advised of dates for meetings, and be given the opportunity of contributing to the agendas. Parishioners will be given a summary of the outcomes of the PPC meetings in the next edition of Edgeways, the parish magazine. Confirmed minutes will be published on the parish website.

10 Frequency of PPC Meetings

Meetings will be held monthly throughout the year, with the exception of the month of August when no meeting will be held.

11 Roles and Responsibilities within the Parish Pastoral Council

Parish Priest is both member and President

While he does not chair the PPC, the Parish Priest is the President. By presiding at the meetings of the PPC the Parish Priest brings the authority of the Bishop to the work of the Council.

As Parish Priest he bears the ultimate responsibility for decisions regarding pastoral ministry and the overall mission of the parish. In rare cases he may choose not to follow the advice of the PPC (*Code of Canon Law 536*) but as a member of the PPC he will not readily ignore their advice because he has participated in the prayerful process of making the decision.

He shares his understanding of the pastoral needs of the parish, including his hopes and aspirations for the future. He also enables the members of the Council to exercise and develop their own gifts and together, they recognise and affirm the many gifts and ministries within the parish community.

Appointment to the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Secretary roles is by election by the lay members of the PPC. In the event of a tie, the same procedure as for a tie for PPC membership will apply.

Chairperson

The role of Chairperson is key. He or she must be able to work with the parish priest, and also have the confidence of the whole pastoral council. The appointment of Chairperson should be for two years but if willing, and by agreement with the members of the PPC, he/she may be re-appointed for a further year thereafter.

The role of the Chairperson is to:

- Establish a relationship of mutual trust and respect with the parish priest and develop an understanding of his aspirations for the parish.
- Run the PPC meetings effectively, ensuring that everyone has a chance to contribute.
- Ensure significant time for prayer and formation is included at meetings to maintain the pastoral focus of the council.
- Provide encouragement and support for council members.

- Establish communications channels within the parish. These channels should ensure that the PPC is in two-way communication with parishioners and all groups within the parish.
- As outgoing Chair, oversee the election process for the Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary roles.

Vice-Chairperson

The role of the Vice-Chair is to support the Chairperson, and occasionally deputise for him or her – this is a good development role. The appointment of Vice-Chairperson should be for two years but if willing, and by agreement with the members of the PPC, he/she may be re-appointed for a further year thereafter.

Secretary

The appointment of Secretary should be for two years but if willing, and by agreement with the members of the PPC, he/she may be re-appointed for successive years thereafter as long as her/his maximum service as a PPC member (six years) is not exceeded.

The role of the Secretary is to:

- Produce and distribute agendas (plus any preparatory reading), at least one week prior to the meeting
- Organise meeting place and resources for the meeting, to include refreshments
- Ensure actions and decisions are recorded and circulated to the PPC members within ten days of the meeting, ensuring that a brief summary is made available to the parish.

Executive Group

There will be an executive group, consisting of the Parish Priest, Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Secretary. They will be responsible for:

- agreeing the agenda of each meeting including matters identified by:
 - individual PPC members
 - individual parishioners
 - parish groups and organisations
 - the deanery
 - the wider community (eg Churches Together)
- dealing with any urgent business matters which may arise between PPC meetings and ensuring that such matters are reported to the next PPC meeting
- the ongoing formation of the PPC

Sufficient time needs to be set aside for prayer and reflection, and its priority understood. Responsibility for leading prayer should be taken by different people through the life of the PPC, and a range of individual approaches encouraged.

12 Evaluation of Effectiveness and Accountability to the Parish

The members of the PPC will meet in a prayerful context at an annual Half-Day of Reflection.

The PPC will also account for its work annually by arranging an annual parish meeting to review and reflect on the working of the PPC in the life of the parish, and to explain their proposed plans for the future.

13 Change of Parish Priest

Normally, to ensure continuity in the life of the parish, the PPC will continue its work during the period of transition. The PPC will welcome, support and help the new Parish Priest as he settles into his new role; and be ready to adjust, adapt or review its work and membership in consultation with parishioners, to meet any change of emphasis or new direction.