



Parish Pastoral Council Charter

St. John XXIII Parish
Evanston, IL

A. Introduction

St. John XXIII Parish is a newly formed parish, bringing together the legacy parishes of St. Mary and St. Nicholas in Evanston, IL. as part of Renew My Church. On October 13, 2022, the Archdiocese of Chicago issued the official decree of our new parish, under the pastoral leadership of the Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus.

B. Nature and Function of the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC)

The PPC forms with the pastor a leadership body, representing the parish community; its members, ministries, and laity. The PPC is an energizing, coordinating, and unifying body with these primary focuses: a) fostering trust and understanding between the pastor and laity, b) building and strengthening relationships as the two communities come together as one parish, and c) being vision keepers for the pastoral plan.

The pastor serves the parish community entrusted to him by the Bishop of the Archdiocese of Chicago. The pastor fully participates in the deliberations of the PPC, is involved in listening and learning what is brought forth from the community, and carries out his role through teaching, sanctifying, and shepherding. He provides spiritual leadership to the Christian faithful and pastoral care to his flock.

The PPC is a consultative body that unites laity and clergy in a community of prayer, leadership, service, and pastoral planning. The PPC prayerfully reflects on the needs of the parish and the larger community. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Council advises and consults with the pastor, recommends policies [vision] for the mission and faith growth of the parish, and monitors and evaluates the processes and programs that implement these policies [this vision]. The Council is the pastoral planning body of the parish.

The Pastoral Planning Model is the model that the St. John XXIII Parish Pastoral Council has adopted. Rather than coordinating a system of standing committees, the PPC is a planning body that follows the overarching principles of Renew My Church. The deliberations during planning should reflect these principles:

1. Making disciples (evangelization and pastoral engagement in faith)
2. Building communities (parish's capacity to foster belonging, celebrate faith, and form future generations of Catholics)
3. Inspiring witness (exercise charity and a heart for those on the margins of society)

The pastor invites the Council to examine issues raised by the parishioners to enable the community to grow in vitality, faith, and love. The Council members are asked to be active researchers of best pastoral practices and facilitators of parish discernment.

C. Council Members as Disciples of Jesus Christ

A "disciple" is a learner and follower, and members of the PPC are disciples of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Discipleship is a way of life grounded in Catholic identity and belief. Catholics believe Jesus Christ is the true head of His Church on earth. PPC members must at all times give good public witness to the kerygma, the saving message of Jesus Christ, by offering works of charity in words, actions, and goodwill. A Council member needs to be grounded in prayer, seeking God's will for the life of the Church and specifically within the faith community of St. John XXIII Parish.

D. Membership

- a. Membership on the PPC is open to registered, confirmed, and practicing Catholic members of St. John XXIII Parish.
- b. At the annual election time in the month of May interested parishioners are invited to write a letter to the pastor, stating why they would like to serve on the Council and what qualifies them. Parishioners may nominate themselves or be nominated by others.
- c. The pastor prayerfully considers each nomination and will select new Council members based on the current vacancies. The pastor will consider a balanced Council representing both legacy parishes and representing various interest and demographic groups (including age, gender, Hispanic and Haitian communities, LGBTQ, and others).
- d. If there is a current vacancy outside of the annual cycle, the pastor can invite a parishioner to consider joining the council. The pastor and individual will meet so there is a clear understanding of the council expectations, roles, and responsibilities.
- e. The individual will have an orientation meeting with the PPC executive committee to fully understand the council's relationship to the pastor and their role as liaison to the parishioners. The PPC charter is reviewed, and questions answered.
- f. Once the candidate accepts the invitation to be a part of the council, a formal announcement will be made to the PPC and the parish at large.
- g. There will be a minimum of 12 and maximum of 15 on the PPC.
- h. Voting members include PPC members.
- i. Non-voting members include the pastor and associate pastor.

E. Officers of the PPC and the Executive Committee

The PPC will elect a Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary through a nomination voting process. They will also elect a non-officer to sit on the Executive Committee. The election is held when one or more officers have completed their terms and there are vacancies to fill. The election is by nomination, and all ballots will confidentially be given to the pastor to tally. The pastor will announce the results and the new officer(s).

The Executive Committee creates the agenda for the PPC meetings, upholds the charter and bylaws of the PPC, ensures that the PPC stays focused on the pastoral plan, parish mission and vision, and brings concerns of the Council to the pastor. The Executive Committee works closely with the pastor and provides counsel as needed to further the mission of St. John XXIII Parish. The three officers can interchange the duties of facilitating the Council meetings as needed. The Secretary is responsible for recording meeting minutes.

F. Terms

- a. A PPC member commits to a three-year term to serve on the Council.
- b. A Council member may renew for another three-year term, upon prayerful discernment and consultation with the pastor.
- c. There must be a three-year break before a former member can consider nominating themselves back on the Council.
- d. If at any time the pastor does not see evidence of a Council member upholding, supporting, and adhering to the principles outlined in this PPC charter, or a Council member has fostered an environment of distrust, breach of confidence, or division within the parish community, the pastor has the authority to terminate the Council member's term on the PPC.

G. PPC Meetings and Agenda

The PPC meetings are held monthly on the second Tuesday evening of the month and are a minimum of 90 minutes and a maximum of 2 hours in length, with the exception of a majority agreement to change the timing. The agenda and any supporting documents are sent out at least four days in advance of the meeting so Council members may have time to read and prepare.

The agenda will always include a welcome and prayer, with a short formation activity or a brief word from the PPC Chair or Vice-Chair. There will be approval of minutes of the prior meeting, and a review of the current agenda for the meeting.

The pastor's updates will come at the beginning of the meeting unless otherwise planned. The updates will include information or issues on which he would like to seek Council advice to move forward on a decision or action. The pastor's updates are shared in a spirit of trust, and the Council must agree to hold these topics with sensitivity, confidentiality, and prayerful discernment.

Adding Agenda Items: Should a Council member want to add an agenda item, the following should be considered:

- Does the entire Council need to be informed, or can this be brought to the Executive Committee to discuss?
- How long will this agenda topic take?
- Can this information be communicated in other ways before adding it to the PPC meeting agenda (e.g. email, a phone conversation, a virtual meeting)
- Does this agenda item require action from the PPC (e.g. a decision, time commitment, involvement, feedback, etc.)?

A Council member should submit an agenda item to the Executive Committee a week before the upcoming meeting.

Accountability: Any actionable items should have a measurable outcome and clear ownership.

Meeting Evaluation: Did the meeting accomplish its goals? Was there movement on the agenda? Did the Council members truly listen to each other? Did the Council members bring forth the needs of the parish in a supportive and constructive way?

H. Prayer

The work of the Council is carried out best with an awareness of God's presence. The Holy Spirit needs room to work, and allowing time for prayer and discernment will provide the space to hear God's voice. Bookend prayers performed perfunctorily at the beginning and end of meetings is not adequate. *Let the Spirit come through.*

I. Consensus Decision Making

Consensus decision making is not a "majority vote decides" process. Rather it is a prayerful and thoughtful process of discussion and agreement that leads to a decision or course of action that everyone can live with. In the case of complex, contested, and/or consequential issues, one of four positions should be formally solicited by the PPC Chair.

1. Active agreement (I endorse the proposal in its entirety)
2. Agreement with reservations (I generally endorse the proposal but have reservations or concerns)
3. Non-support (I do not support the proposal, but I do not want to block it. I can live with it)
4. Block (I cannot live with the proposal for the following reasons...")

While this kind of polling may sound like voting, its intent is to solicit further deliberations or discernment until there is a general consensus that everyone can support the decision and/or live with it, and no one is blocking it. The pastor will have the final decision after carefully listening and thoughtfully considering the recommendation of his Parish Pastoral Council.

ADDENDUM

[Placeholder for the proposed succession plan for the original PPC council of 2023]

This draft amended on July 21, 2025
Shelley Benson, PPC chairperson