

A **Parish** is an intentional community (one in which each person chooses to belong) of the Christian faithful entrusted to the pastoral care of a priest.

I. WHAT IS A PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL?

The **Parish Pastoral Council** is not a body of representatives but a representative body whose primary function is to set the vision and plan to make “the life and activity of the parish ever more closely conform to the gospel.”² Their focus is on the **pastoral** aspect of the parish.

The **Parish Pastoral Council** (PPC) consists of the Parish Priest and a team of parishioners chosen by the parish community. ***The Councillors work collaboratively³ to build a vital Christian community in which parishioners’ spiritual growth is fostered and their baptismal calls to mission are discerned and supported.***

The purpose of the PPC is to enrich the quality of parish life and provide opportunities for parishioners to:

- proclaim the good news of God’s love throughout the world
- invite more people into the community of disciples
- encourage the whole community to grow in holiness
- transform the world until the justice, peace and love of God’s reign prevail.

Pastoral: means considering the wellbeing of the community and the needs of parishioners. It also includes offering support for the Parish Priest and planning for matters that will need attention in the future.

The PPC is a consultative body convened by the Parish Priest, which:

- prayerfully discerns parish needs
- sets pastoral priorities
- empowers people to participate in the mission of Christ
- encourages and invites parishioners to take pastoral roles in the parish.

Collaborative ministry is term used to describe lay and clergy working together, using the baptismal gifts of all in the care of the parish and in the service of mission. The Holy Spirit lavishes diverse hierarchical and charismatic gifts on all the baptised, calling them to be, each in an individual way, active and co-responsible.

It is not intended to be a management team for the parish. It builds up the pastoral and spiritual vitality of the parish in a way that takes account of diocesan priorities.

² Paul VI, (1966), *Ecclesiae Sanctae* I, 16.1

³ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici On The Vocation and The Mission Of the Lay Faithful In The Church and in The World* p.21

*It will be the function of this council to investigate and consider matters relating to pastoral activity and to formulate practical conclusions regarding them.*⁴

The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) strongly recommended PPCs. Bishops of Auckland since Bishop Reginald Delargey (1970-74) **have required that each parish in this diocese have one**, regarding them as an effective means for sharing responsibility among the people of God (Canon 536).

The Māori Pastoral Care Plan sets out the ways in which ministries for Catholic Māori participate in the mission of Christ and the Church. The national plan can be found at <http://www.catholic.maori.nz/PastoralPlan.htm>.

The 1989 Auckland Diocesan Synod committed all Catholics and parishes in the Diocese 'to honour the Treaty of Waitangi as a covenant and, therefore, to a bicultural church and a bicultural society.'

PPCs have a duty of pastoral care for the *whole* parish community.

II. PURPOSE AND FUNCTION OF PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS: PASTORAL PLANNING

Whatever their structure and approach, PPCs are about **pastoral planning**. The PPC works collaboratively with the Parish Priest to plan the parish's pastoral programme. Pastoral issues that may be involved in planning include those which:

- impact upon the lives of parishioners and on the integration of their faith into everyday life – home, work, school and community;
- relate to initiatives that support and sustain people in their efforts to live and promote Christian values;
- relate to the ongoing development of a vital Christian community whose focus extends beyond itself to influence on and service to the wider community.

What are some of the ways we as a parish provide opportunities for people to grow their faith and integrate it into their everyday life?

How do we as a parish support people to live and promote their Christian values?

How do we promote the missionary activities of the Church?

⁴ Paul VI, (1968), *Christus Dominus*, Decree on The Pastoral Office of Bishops in The Church #27

While the Decree on Bishops speaks only about Diocesan Pastoral Councils, *Omnes Christifideles* a later Private Letter on Pastoral Councils endorses councils of a similar nature in parishes: 1973, # 12.

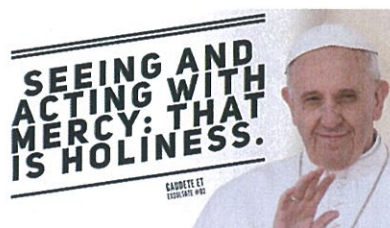
The PPC's main role is to plan for the whole parish, not to co-ordinate individual ministries. PPCs are responsible for the "big picture." A PPC therefore:

- states and clarifies the parish's mission;
- develops a vision for the parish's preferred future;
- identifies and prioritises the parish's needs;
- draws practical conclusions and makes recommendations, creating a **parish pastoral plan** prioritised according to the parish's human and financial resources.

Parish Pastoral Councils are about governance (rather than management), that is, planning, direction-setting, policy formulation, and evaluation of the overall vision for the parish.

In order to protect the dignity of all and to ensure the safety of the parish and its parishioners, volunteers and employees, an appropriate policy around risk management needs to be included among the tasks of a PPC. Parish Councillors need to be familiar with the "Diocesan Parish Council Guidelines," the "Code of Ethics for Church Volunteers" and the "National Standards for Volunteers and Employees in Ministry."⁵ A process to authorise vetting for ministers (volunteer or employed) who work with vulnerable people needs to be in place. (Appendix I) Parish Finance Committees take responsibility for ensuring all rooms and properties are safe for the activities being carried out on parish premises. The PPC is responsible for ensuring that people involved in ministry observe 'Safe Church' practices.

Management deals with the implementation of the pastoral plan – it involves the daily management of standard parish operations. Management is the implementation of PPC recommendations by **parish standing committees or parish staff**. **Management is not, strictly speaking, the work of the council.** Parish Priests sometimes ask PPC members to assist in this by assuming some responsibilities. Other parishioners need to be invited and encouraged to use their gifts and talents to become active and contributing members of the parish. PPCs need to turn their attention to discerning other needs, studying, considering and recommending.



⁵ Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines: Catholic Diocese of Auckland, revised edition 2014. Code of Ethics for Church Volunteers, NZCBC.

<http://www.catholic.org.nz/nzcbc/fx-view-article.cfm?ctype=BSART&loadref=83&id=47>

Standards for Volunteers and Employees in Ministry, National Professional Standards Committee of the New Zealand Catholic Church; 2011. <http://www.catholic.org.nz/nzcbc/dsp-default.cfm?loadref=196>