



## THE CHURCH OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

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# GUIDELINES FOR LEADERSHIP

A Pastoral Council Handbook  
(Revised January 2015)

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# Mission Statement

**The church of St. Francis Xavier, a Roman Catholic parish in the Jesuit tradition, strives to be a prophetic, welcoming community, and an inclusive witness to the presence of Christ Jesus in our midst. Mindful of our utter reliance on God, and need for God's grace, we rejoice together in our celebration of the sacraments and proclamation of the Gospel.**

**As a people of hope, we commit ourselves through prayerful and creative discernment to respond to God in our time by:**

**Being a respectful community**

**Where seekers and their questions are welcomed,**

**Where injustice is challenged,**

**Where the poor, the alienated and the marginalized find a home,**

**And where people are refreshed, reconciled and renewed.**

## Vision of Leadership

The Pastoral Council is the primary leadership body in the church, and its principal role is ensuring faithfulness to the mission of our parish community, as embodied in our Mission Statement. Serving as a leadership body with the pastor, the PC members represent always, and in every instance and circumstance, the good of the entire parish; not just one group or one position. The members provide servant leadership through a commitment to the workings of the Holy Spirit. The Council is empowered to provide pastoral planning for the parish community by setting goals, developing objectives, empowering parishioners to implement pastoral plans, and evaluating them in light of fulfillment of the parish's overall mission. Service as a member of the PC is accomplished through prayer, study, listening, openness, and an ongoing commitment to the parish. In keeping with the spirit of our Mission Statement adopted by the parish, and in accordance with the principles of Ignatian spirituality, the parish community, through a process of discernment, selects new members for its pastoral council. By gathering in prayerful ritual, and seeking the Spirit's guidance, the parish community endeavors thoughtfully to choose pastoral council members having the most appropriate gifts and charisms suitable for pastoral service at this time in its history.

## Composition of the Pastoral Council

The pastoral council is usually made up of the pastor and ten members as selected by the parish community through a prayerful process of discernment. Members serve for a period of three years.

Pastoral council members may also serve for a second, consecutive term. Discerning to serve a second term is left to the individual member alone. It need not be brought back to the community for subsequent discernment and selection. Upon completion of two consecutive terms, however, a minimum period of one year must elapse before a rotated member may again come forward during the parish-wide discernment process for consideration for council membership.

Should a member of the pastoral council be unable to fulfill his or her service commitment, the council may choose to select a member of the parish community to complete the three-year term.

## Unique Role of the Pastor

The pastor bears ultimate responsibility for the care of the parish. His primary role is one of leadership, accountable to his ecclesiastical superiors for the spiritual and temporal well-being of the parish. He leads the council through the processes involved in discerning, expressing, nurturing and fulfilling the seven essential elements of parish life; these are evangelization, worship, word,

community, service, stewardship and leadership. The pastor attends all council meetings, overseeing and participating in deliberations and pastoral planning, in light of church teaching and diocesan guidelines. Ultimately, all decisions regarding the operation and direction of the parish needs the pastor's approval.

## Role of the Members

Serving as a leadership body with the pastor, the pastoral council members represent always, and in every instance and circumstance, the good of the entire parish; not just one group or one position. The members provide servant leadership through a commitment to the workings of the Holy Spirit in all matters that come before them. They are involved in pastoral planning: setting goals; developing objectives; empowering parishioners to implement pastoral plans; and overseeing and evaluating them in light of fulfillment of the parish mission. Service as a member of the pastoral council is accomplished through prayer, study, listening, openness, and an ongoing commitment to the parish mission.

## Roles within the Council

**Presider (Pastor):** Involved in all of the processes of discernment, expression and fulfillment of the parish's mission, the pastor attends all meetings. Prior to the council coming to a discerned consensus, the pastor is obligated to raise questions or objections relating to issues that could affect the outcome of the decision. When consensus is reached, the pastor ratifies the decision.

**Chairperson:** Selected by the pastoral council members, the chairperson duties include calling the meeting to order, as well as overseeing, facilitating and participating in all items under discussion; assisting the council in problem-solving and consensus building through discernment. The chairperson also serves as a member of the executive committee. [See APPENDIX I for selection process.]

**Vice-Chairperson:** Selected by the pastoral council members, the vice-chairperson assists the chairperson as needed, as well as functioning as acting chairperson, should the chairperson be absent. The vice-chairperson also serves as a member of the executive committee. [See APPENDIX II for selection process.]

**Prayer Leader:** Rotating among the members, the prayer leader calls the council to prayer at the opening and close of each meeting. Attentiveness to prayer throughout the meeting is how the council expresses its commitment to the graced awareness that prayer is the heartbeat of this servant-leader ministry.

**Recorder:** Keeping track of the progress of the meeting by taking notes, the recorder also prepares meeting minutes for the council, and summary minutes for the bulletin and website.

Executive Committee: Consisting of the pastor, chairperson and vice-chairperson, the executive committee is charged with developing an agenda for each meeting, and discussing all practical arrangements for each meeting.

Ad Hoc Task Force: From time to time, the pastoral council may establish an ad hoc task force consisting of members of the council or parishioners – or both -- to assist the council in accomplishing pastoral plan objectives. Members of the parish community who serve on an ad hoc task force are not made members of the council through their temporary service.

## Reaching Consensus within Council Meetings

Rooted in prayer, the process of consensus entails each member of the council developing a progressive awareness of the movements of the Holy Spirit or its opposing influences, and interpreting these movements in order to make decisions through a loving discernment of God's will. Pointers for reaching consensus through discernment include praying for the grace to know the difference between virtue and its counterfeits. Charitableness versus codependency; gentleness versus an unwillingness to take a stand; humility versus timidity; and the willingness to accept the creative tension between light and darkness, drawing from that interplay a sense of God's presence or absence in one's own responses. The stages in reaching consensus through discernment may include the following:

1. Understanding the Issue or Proposal: A council member, parish organization or parishioner presents an issue or proposal to the council (in writing and ahead of time if lengthy or complex) that develops a realistic focus and zeros in on the matter. Members establish if it is an issue or proposal for the council to address, then seek any further clarification, so as to gain a thorough understanding of the matter. Following discussion, the issue or proposal is reviewed in light of the parish mission and ongoing pastoral goals.
2. Prayerfully Formulating Possible Responses: The chair invites each member to respond to the issue or proposal by indicating whether they are moving toward acceptance, modification, or withdrawal of the issue or proposal. This sharing is followed by a time of individual reflective prayer, as each member seeks Spirit guidance for weighing the advantages and disadvantages of the issue or proposal, so as to discern the best solution – the ultimate norm of God's will. Members then regroup and each expresses his or her own view, and the key reason for it. The council will then prayerfully consider whether: a) an issue presented merits development as a proposal; b) identify an individual or group within the community who can address the issue or proposal; or c) decide that no further action is appropriate at this time.
3. Reaching Consensus through Discernment: The chair sums up the direction that has surfaced, and if there is a sense of substantial unanimity and harmony among the members, a decision is made. If not, the members dialogue further, if need be at a subsequent meeting, re-examining the proposal in light of the parish

mission, as well as considering alternatives, all to help arrive at a consensus reached through discernment.

4. Prayerful Confirmation of a Decision: Before moving ahead, council members join together in seeking prayerful confirmation of the decision made. This confirmation involves the felt experience of everyone on the council -- including those not for the proposal -- that all can now support the discernment process taken, and accept the decision made.

## Achieving Pastoral Goals

**Pastoral Planning:** Rooted in the mission of Christ Jesus, pastoral planning becomes a sign of wholeness in a fragmented world, and challenges the pastoral council members to lead the parish in the discernment, expression and fulfillment of its mission.

**Setting Goals:** Pastoral goals are formulated in response to the question “What will our priorities be for the next few years?”; and set through an ongoing, mission-motivated process involving a prayerful discernment and consensus.

**Developing Objectives:** Goal setting is followed by developing descriptions of what is to be accomplished within a one-year time frame, in working toward a particular goal. At the end of this time frame, objectives are evaluated, and those that have been successfully implemented are replaced with new objectives for the year ahead. If they have not been successfully implemented, they are repeated -- or revised -- for the next year. Objectives are reviewed annually until goals are achieved.

**Implementation:** Once goals and objectives are ratified, the council invites the parish community to bring the plan to life -- motivating parishioners to offer their time and talents to implement the plan. While tempting to assign tasks to council members, the effort to find parishioners or parish committees with a gift or interest in a particular goal and objective is essential.

**Empowerment and Oversight:** Through ongoing oversight, the pastoral council directs the resources and gifts of the community toward fulfillment of goals and objectives. Providing the parish community members responsible with the resources and support they need, the council also stays abreast of progress made and any difficulties encountered through regular evaluation sessions.

**Evaluation:** The evaluation process involves asking such questions as “Have we accomplished our objectives?” “What now is being asked of the parish community in response to the call of God?” “What adjustments, if any, need to be made?” “What are the current challenges?” “In keeping with our parish mission, to what does the parish need turn its attention?” These and all other such inquiries are part of the ongoing pastoral planning cycle.

## Selection of New Pastoral Council Members

Each June, the parish community, through a process of discernment, selects new members for the Pastoral Council. In conjunction with this process, to help the PC better serve the parish, and to encourage members to consider joining the Council, it is important to create an awareness of the Council: who they are, what they do, and the qualities that are needed to be an effective PC member.

### Prior to Selection Process:

- At the annual May Gathering Of Ministries meeting, interact with the leaders and attendees of the various ministries, with the objective of identifying potential candidates for the PC
- At the May PC meeting, each member should discuss people they feel would be potential candidates and how they plan to mentor them prior to the June discernment
- Each Spring, create a PC “corner” in the church bulletin to include actions taken and issues being reviewed by the council to increase awareness of the PC for those that do not read the minutes on the Internet
- On several weekends starting in early May, announce from the pulpit that the parish community is seeking new members for the PC
- Throughout April – June include in the bulletin a template of questions and answers provided by each member of the Pastoral Council, along with their pictures (See Appendix III for Guidelines)
- On the third weekend in May, a designated Pastoral Council member talks at each Mass for a few minutes describing the selection process, as well as qualities and requirements needed to become a PC member. Each presentation should follow a script with specific mutually agreed upon points to ensure that a consistent message is given at each Mass. During the talk, parishioners should be encouraged to enter potential candidates on a nomination list available in the back of the church at the end of Mass. Later that week a Council member should call each potential nominee to discuss joining the PC.
- During the first two weekends in June, one or more PC representatives should be present at each Mass wearing name tags to identify themselves as PC members.

### Selecting New Members

This will occur every June if there are vacancies on the PC.  
It involves two sessions on the day the PC typically meets (Mondays).

### Pastoral Council Requirements

All PC members should plan to participate in both sessions:



### Session One

- to give an overview of their backgrounds, following CAD
- to answer any questions from the candidates

### Session Two

- to discern new members from among the candidate(s)

### Parishioner Requirements

- All non-candidate parishioners are invited to be part of the process, including discernment for new members, but must agree to attend both sessions.

### Candidate Gifts, Qualities and Requirements

- Be a baptized Catholic
- Have been a registered member of our parish for at least 2 years
- Be a participant in the ongoing worship life of our parish, especially Sunday Eucharist
- Be at least 20 years old
- An informed consciousness and zeal for the mission of Jesus
- A desire for spiritual growth within oneself and throughout the parish
- The ability to interpret and maintain the integrity of the parish mission
- A flexibility and openness to other people and other ideas
- A capacity to listen that outweighs the need to speak
- An integrity in articulating what one has heard and what one believes
- An eagerness to facilitate parish decisions about its direction
- The ability to inspire, empower and delegate willingly to others
- An enthusiasm about the future of the parish
- Ability to listen to the needs of the parishioners
- An ease in working with groups
- Ability to work with consensus decision-making
- Ability to attend a monthly Monday meeting from 6:30 to 8:30pm
- Ability to attend a three-day business meeting/retreat on a weekend in February
- Available for periodic ad hoc committee assignments
- An ability to respect and participate actively in the Communal Apostolic Discernment (CAD) process
- Understands and tries to embody what it means to be a servant-leader
- A willingness to discontinue and not assume a leadership role in any ministry during tenure on the PC to avoid a potential conflict of interest. Any leadership role must be suspended while a member of the PC, although membership in any ministry may be assumed or continued.

### June Discernment Process

#### Session One

- Opens with prayer

- A PC member presents an overview of Parish Councils.
- PC members and potential candidates give an overview of their backgrounds, using CAD
- A designated PC member explains the skills and characteristics needed on the PC
- Candidates are given an opportunity to ask questions about the workings of the Council
- Prior to leaving session one, candidates are given five questions created by the PC, each of which is to be answered with a one minute response at session two. [See Appendix IV for Questions]
- An overview of what takes place in Session Two is presented
- Closes with prayer

### Session Two – The Discernment Process

- Opens with prayer
- CAD process explained.
- For the selection process to proceed, at least one candidate more than there are openings available on the Council is needed. If this is not attained, openings will remain unfilled pending further recruitment by PC members and future planning for new dates to hold the process again.
- Within specified time limits candidates introduce themselves and talk about their background.
- Each candidate provides a one minute response to each of the five questions. (To ensure equity, the order in which the candidates respond first to each of the questions varies among them.)
- The PC members, candidates, and other qualifying participating parishioners are asked after a few minutes of prayer to indicate their selection privately on paper. They are also encouraged to indicate the reason(s) for their selection, although this is optional.
- Papers are collected and the PC Chair and Vice Chair tally the votes without announcing the number of notes
- To be selected a candidate needs to receive a 2/3<sup>rds</sup> majority. In the absence of a 2/3<sup>rds</sup> majority after two full rounds (i.e. on the 3<sup>rd</sup> round) the names of the three with the most votes from the first two rounds (or in case of a tie – top 4) are announced with the number of votes attained. Selection from among them is made in the next round of voting. In that round, if a 2/3<sup>rds</sup> majority is still not achieved, an other round is completed in which the candidate receiving the most votes is selected. [Additional qualifying questions may be presented to the candidates between rounds.]
- Closes with a prayer
- Follow up calls are made by Chair and Vice Chair and a follow up note signed by all PC members sent, to those candidates who were not selected, thanking them for their participation, asking them for any feedback they might have about the process, and encouraging them to remain open to future PC openings.
- PC members follow up with anyone who had shown interest in becoming a PC candidate, but did not follow through and attend the discernment process.

## Removing a Pastoral Council Member

In keeping with the spirit of our Mission Statement, adopted by the parish, and in accordance with the principles of Ignatian spirituality, these guidelines for servant leadership make clear that pastoral council members need have a fidelity to prayer, an ability and willingness to attend all meetings, except as determined by extenuating circumstances, and a firm commitment to the process of collaborative consensus through Ignatian discernment regarding all issues and proposals.

In the event that a member is unable or unwilling to cooperate with these standards, the chairperson or a delegated member will speak privately to the member in an effort to try and solve the particular problem or problems. Should the difficulties persist, however, the executive committee may come to a consensus to remove the member from the pastoral council.

## **APPENDIX I**

### **Selection Process for PC Chair**

#### **Overview**

The Pastoral Council is the primary leadership body in the church, and its principal role is ensuring faithfulness to the mission of our parish community, as embodied in our Mission Statement. Members must be individuals capable of leading the parish in the discernment, expression, and fulfillment of its mission.

The Council annually, through a process of discernment, selects one of its members for the lead position of Chair, which may be the incumbent or a different PC member. The Chair term runs from September thru August. The selection process for the Chair takes place in June, several months before the expiration of the current term, with the objective of having a Chair-designate in place for the next term.

The duties of the Chair include calling the meeting to order, as well as overseeing, facilitating and participating in all items under discussion; assisting the council in problem-solving and consensus building through discernment. The Chair also serves as a member of the executive committee.

#### **Chair Gifts, Qualities and Requirements**

In addition to the gifts, qualities, and requirements applicable to becoming a member of the Parish Council, the following apply to the position of Chair:

- Minimum of one year remaining on PC
- Ability to commit the necessary time
- Ability to formulate, define, and communicate issues
- Ability to organize and gently keep the PC on task and utilize the CAD process
- Ability to respectfully steer conversation so that all members and thoughts may be heard
- Ability to maintain a high level of confidentiality
- Ability to maintain a good rapport with the pastor and other PC members
- Available for monthly executive conference call to set agenda
- Available to meet with each new member individually to orient them to the work and process of the PC, addressing any questions and concerns

#### **Selection Process**

##### **June Meeting**

- The Council meets and the current Chair talks about his/her experiences as Chair, including past and future challenges.
- Using CAD, PC members may ask questions about the Chair's role, comment as to what gifts they might bring to the role, and concerns that they might have.

## **July Meeting**

- PC members review what took place at the June meeting and bring up any additional concerns or questions they might have about the Chair role
- PC members take a few minutes to discern which member they think would best serve as Chair. The use of *Murmuratio* among PC members off-line beforehand is encouraged in making their selection. Each then indicates their selection privately on paper. They are also encouraged to indicate the reason(s) for their selection, although this is optional. The current Vice- Chair collects the papers, determines the nominee(s) selected, and announces them without announcing the number of votes. At this point those selected are given an opportunity to discuss reservations they might have about serving as Chair and potentially remove themselves from consideration. A voting round is then completed selecting from among the remaining nominees, with the number of votes announced. A 2/3d majority is necessary to be selected. If not attained in the first round, a second round is completed. If a 2/3d majority is still not attained, a third round is completed in which the nominee receiving the most votes is selected. Qualifying questions might be presented to the nominees between rounds.
- The process is closed with a prayer for the Holy Spirit to give the Chair-designate guidance

## **APPENDIX II**

### **Selection for PC Vice-Chair**

#### **Overview**

The Pastoral Council is the primary leadership body in the church, and its principal role is ensuring faithfulness to the mission of our parish community, as embodied in our Mission Statement. Members must be individuals capable of leading the parish in the discernment, expression, and fulfillment of its mission.

Annually, through a process of discernment, the Council selects one of its members for the position of Vice- Chair, which may be the incumbent or a different PC member. The Vice-Chair term runs from mid October to mid October. The selection process takes place during the yearly PC retreat which takes place in October.

The Vice-Chair assists the Chair as needed, as well as functioning as acting Chair, should the Chair be absent. The Vice-Chair also serves as a member of the executive committee.

#### **Vice-Chair Gifts, Qualities and Requirements**

In addition to the gifts, qualities, and requirements applicable to becoming a member of the Parish Council, the following apply to the position of Vice-Chair:

- Ability to commit the necessary time
- Ability to formulate, define, and communicate issues
- Ability to chair meetings in the absence of the Chair

- Organizational skills: takes or edits minutes, distributes minutes to Council members in a timely manner, keeps track of PC documents, etc
- Ability to organize and gently keep the PC on task and utilize the CAD process
- Ability to respectfully steer conversation so that all members and thoughts may be heard
- Ability to maintain a high level of confidentiality
- Ability to maintain a good rapport with the pastor and other PC members
- Available for monthly executive conference call to set agenda

## **Selection Process**

### **Sunday of the Retreat Weekend**

- The Council meets and the current Vice-Chair talks about his/her experiences as Vice-Chair, including past and future challenges
- Using CAD, PC members may ask questions about the Vice-Chair role, comment as to what gifts they might bring to the role, and concerns that they might have
- PC members take a few minutes to discern which member they think would best serve as Vice-Chair. The use of Murmuratio among PC members off-line is encouraged in making their selection. Each then indicates their selection privately on paper. They are also encouraged to indicate the reason(s) for their selection, although this is optional. The Chair collects the papers, determines the nominee(s) selected, and announces them without announcing the number of votes. At this point those selected are given an opportunity to discuss reservations they might have about serving as Vice-Chair and potentially remove themselves from consideration. A voting round is then completed selecting from among the remaining nominees, with the number of notes announced. A 2/3d majority is necessary to be selected. If not attained in the first round, a second round is completed. If a 2/3d majority is still not attained, a third round is completed in which the nominee receiving the most votes is selected. Qualifying questions might be presented to the nominees between rounds.
- The process is closed with a prayer for the Holy Spirit to give the Vice-Chair designate guidance

## **APPENDIX III**

### **Template for Bulletin Corner**

- Name:
- NYC Neighborhood & Borough (or city, state if outside NYC):
- Year started attending / first encountered St. Francis Xavier Parish:
- Parishioners can often find me at this Mass: [SAT 5PM | SUN 9AM | SUN 11:30AM | SUN 5PM]
- What initially brought me to St. Francis Xavier Church:
- I am also involved (or have been involved) in the following St. Francis Xavier ministries:
- Year joined Pastoral Council:
- Currently serving: 1st or 2nd term on the Pastoral Council?

- Why did you join the Pastoral Council – or rather: in your discernment, how did you feel you and your gifts were “called”?
- In your experience or observation, what qualities, traits, and gifts have you found particularly helpful in servant-leadership?
- Our parish’s Mission Statement describes our community as “a people of hope.” In what ways does the Church of St. Francis Xavier give you hope?

Note: Bulletin Corner to include Photo of PC member

## **APPENDIX IV**

### **Questions for PC Selection Process**

Questions to be presented at the end of Session One of the November discernment process to those discerning to become PC members. The questions are to be answered at Session Two.

1. What drew you to become involved at St. Francis Xavier Church?
2. What do you see as the challenges and strengths of St. Francis Xavier Church?
3. What hopes do you have for the future of our parish?
4. What do you believe to be the greatest asset of our parish?
5. What relevant gifts could you bring to the PC?

## **RESPONDING TO COMMENTS, QUESTIONS, AND COMPLAINTS**

### **Purpose**

To provide guidelines for Pastoral Council members and Ministry leaders to use when responding to unsolicited electronic or in-person communications involving issues related to the parish of Saint Francis Xavier Church that may be potentially controversial

### **Overview**

Pastoral council members may periodically receive unsolicited comments, questions and/or complaints from both parishioners and non-parishioners. These may be received in various ways, including spoken directly, e-mailed, or in writing. Regardless of how received, it is important that they be taken seriously, kept in the proper context, and handled appropriately, avoiding over or under reactions that can easily lead to unintended actions and consequences.

### **Considerations**

1. Always be respectful, patient, and listen carefully to comments, questions, and complaints. Hear the person out. Respect confidentiality.
2. Read e-mails and written notes carefully to avoid over reacting or becoming emotional about an issue.
3. Manage the person's expectations, and recognize that soliciting you may have made the author more comfortable than going to the Pastor. Consider what kind of reaction the author might be expecting. A judgment has to be made as to how to react based on the facts and the person's expectations (e.g., refer issue to appropriate ministry leader).
4. Determine whether it is a simple situation, requiring little or no reaction, or a larger situation, possibly requiring research before responding.
5. If a comment or question has broad implications involving the parish, bring it to the attention of the Pastor and/or the PC chair
6. Be cautious when replying by email; keep replies brief, concise and unemotional.
7. Do not respond to anonymous or personally unknown emails or letters, but forward them to the Pastor and/or PC Chair.
8. Bring issues relating to SFX staff to the attention of the Pastor.