



## THE CHURCH OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

West 16th Street, NYC ✉ Phone: 212-627-2100 ✉ Fax: 212-675-6997

Mailing Address: 55 West 15th Street, New York, NY 10011-6801

(Wheelchair Accessible 55 West 15th Street – All Masses are Handicapped Accessible)

E-Mail Address: [StFrancisXavier@sfxavier.org](mailto:StFrancisXavier@sfxavier.org) ✉ Website: [www.sfxavier.org](http://www.sfxavier.org)

# GUIDELINES FOR LEADERSHIP

A Pastoral Council Handbook  
(Revised May 2020)

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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 (PC) 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 the completion of a Member's service on the Pastoral Council, such Member shall be eligible for Membership again after three years.

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 need 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.

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

**Vice Chair:** Selected by the Pastoral Council members, the vice chair assists the chair as needed and functions as acting chair should the chair be absent. The vice chair also serves as a member of the executive committee. [See APPENDIX II for vice chair 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.

**Secretary:** Keeping track of the progress of the meeting by taking notes, the secretary 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. The yearly cycle of pastoral planning commences with the PC's annual retreat, typically held in late September.

**Setting Goals:** Pastoral goals are formulated in response to the question "What will our priorities be for the next few years?" and are 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.

One way in which the Pastoral Council engages the parish community in planning, goal setting, developing objectives, and implementation is by holding an annual retreat with leaders and other representatives of the parish's ministries along with parish staff (the "Ministries Retreat"), typically in February.

**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

The selection of new Pastoral Council members is an ongoing effort. The various parish events that PC members attend and sponsor provide opportunities for members to raise the community's awareness of the Council and encourage parishioners to consider engaging in the communal discernment process by which new members of the Council are selected. In addition, the PC website page should include the PC's priorities set at its annual retreat, the PC's monthly meeting minutes and updates about PC-sponsored events. Also toward this end, when a vacancy is anticipated on the Council, the parish bulletin beginning in January should regularly include an information box describing the discernment process for new members that will take place over the upcoming year.

The twin goals of the discernment process are to maximize the parish community's participation while sustaining the deliberative and prayerful nature of communal apostolic discernment that guides all the Pastoral Council's actions.

The parish community formally begins the process of discernment for new members for the Pastoral Council at the Ministries Retreat, which typically takes place in February. The process concludes with the communal selection of new members around the time of Pentecost.

### Prospective Candidate Qualifications, Gifts, and Qualities

- 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 Tuesday meeting from 6:30 to 8:30pm
- Ability to attend the PC's annual three-day retreat on a weekend in September
- Available for periodic ad hoc committee assignments
- An ability to respect and participate actively in the Communal Apostolic Discernment (CAD) process
- An understanding and effort to embody what it means to be a servant-leader

### Pastoral Council Requirement

To avoid a conflict of interest, a parishioner selected to be a member of the Pastoral Council must withdraw from, and not assume, a leadership role in any parish ministry during her tenure on the Council. A member of the PC may participate as a non-leader in any parish ministry.

### Beginning the Selection Process

The PC will undertake the following steps whenever a vacancy is foreseen in PC membership.

- At the January PC meeting, assess the success of the efforts made to encourage parishioners to consider becoming a member of the Council. Based upon the calendar, select the Sundays for the two discernment meeting dates so that the selection process concludes around the time of Pentecost.
- At the February Ministries Retreat, include the upcoming selection of new PC members as an agenda item, and interact with the leaders and attendees of the various ministries with the objective of encouraging them to identify potential candidates for the PC among their members and consider putting themselves forward as a candidate for the Council.
- At the March PC meeting, include as an agenda item preparations for the upcoming discernment process. Form a working group to coordinate the effort, which will take place throughout March and April. In addition to making the preparations below, this group should plan how it can mentor potential candidates for the discernment process as they become known to the PC.
- Preparations should include having:
  - PC members speak at each mass;
  - Notices for the cantor and/or presider to announce at the weekend masses;
  - Posts for the website and the parish's social media outlets soliciting new members;
  - Posts for the website and release over several weeks on social media featuring brief statements from PC members about their experiences on the PC; and
  - Holding information sessions in connection with weekend masses.
- In addition, PC members may identify potential candidates and solicit their interest in discerning.
- During this period PC members should attend the weekend masses with the intent of engaging with parishioners and answering questions about service on the Council. Wearing the PC nametag can be helpful in this effort.

### Discernment Process for New Members

This will occur every Pentecost if there are vacancies on the PC. The discernment process is conducted over two sessions on Sundays the PC identifies as likely engaging the greatest number of participants.

## Session One

- Goals:
  - To provide a brief overview of the PC's work and the principles of communal apostolic discernment that guide the PC's work and this PC member selection process.
  - For current PC members to describe their personal discernment experience and explain how that has informed their work on the Council. Address the qualities and skills that contribute to the way the PC proceeds in doing its work.
  - Set the discernment process in a prayerful context. Specifically bless and hold in our individual and communal hearts the prospective candidates who are considering offering their gifts to the parish community as PC members. Make special note that candidates are offering their gifts – not their very selves – and each year the community may select different gifts.
  - Offer the prospective candidates the opportunity to introduce themselves by offering an overview of their backgrounds.
  - Answer questions from the candidates and other participants.
- Meeting Leaders: Chair, Vice Chair and Working Group members
- Meeting Participants:
  - All current PC members
  - All prospective candidates. Attendance at Session One is mandatory in order to be eligible for selection at Session Two.
  - Members of the parish community. Attendance at Session One is mandatory in order to vote at Session Two.
- Meeting Agenda:
  - The meeting opens with a welcome and prayer.
  - A PC member presents an overview of the Pastoral Council and the communal apostolic discernment process as we use it to inform all PC actions in general and the member discernment process in particular.
  - A PC member describes the skills and characteristics that facilitate the PC's work.
  - Call upon the community to bless and hold in our individual and collective hearts the prospective candidates for PC membership who are offering their gifts for the benefit of the Church of St. Francis Xavier parish.
  - Each PC member briefly describes his own discernment journey and experience as a PC member.
  - Each prospective candidate offers a brief statement of her background.
  - Prospective candidates' questions are answered.
  - Prospective candidates are given the questions that will guide the discernment process at Session Two. [See Appendix IV for Questions]
  - A PC member presents an overview of Session Two.
  - The meeting closes with a prayer of thanksgiving for the prospective candidates and a solicitation of guidance according to the Ignatian way of proceeding.

## Session Two

- Goal:
  - Parish community's prayerful selection of new Pastoral Council members according to the applicable principles of communal apostolic discernment.
- Meeting Leaders:
  - PC Chair and Vice Chair
- Participants:
  - Pastoral Council members
  - Members of the parish, as voters, if they attended Session One.
  - Members of the parish, registered for a minimum of two years and who attended Session One if they are proposing themselves as candidates for the Council.
- Agenda:
  - The meeting opens with a welcome and prayer.
  - A PC member recaps the overview of the PC and the communal apostolic discernment process as explained in Session One.
  - The Chair explains the candidate proposal, introduction and voting processes.
- Candidate Proposals:
  - Candidates identify themselves as discerning for selection as a PC member. For the selection process to proceed, there must be at least one candidate more than there are vacancies available on the Council. If this is not attained, the vacancies will remain unfilled pending further recruitment by PC members and establishment of new dates to hold the process again.
- Candidate Introductions:
  - Within a one-minute limit (more if there are few candidates) each candidate introduces themselves and describes his or her background.
  - Each candidate, in a rotating order, provides a one-minute response to each of the questions provided to them in Session One.
- Prayerful Reflection and Conversation:
  - The participants spend a few minutes in private prayer, conversation and communal prayer.
- Voting:
  - The group reconvenes, papers are distributed and the participants are invited to indicate their choice to fill the first vacancy privately on paper.
  - Papers are collected, and the Chair and Vice Chair tally the votes without announcing the number of votes.
  - To be selected, a candidate needs to receive a 2/3 majority. In the absence of a 2/3 majority after two full rounds of voting (i.e. on the 3rd round), the names of the three candidates with the most votes from the first two rounds (or in case of a tie for third place, the top 4) are announced in rank order, but without announcing the number of votes attained by each. For the 3rd round of voting the field is narrowed to these candidates. If

one candidate does not receive a 2/3 majority in that 3rd round, rounds of voting continue in the same fashion until one candidate achieves a simple majority.

- When the first vacancy is filled, voting for any additional vacancies begins anew in the same fashion, with all remaining candidates eligible for selection.
- Conclusion of Voting:
  - At the conclusion of all voting, the participants first bless and hold in their individual and communal hearts those brothers and sisters whose selection will be deferred.
  - The meeting closes with a prayer of thanksgiving.
- Post-Meeting Actions:
  - The Chair, Vice Chair and Working Group call and send notes signed by all PC members 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 vacancies.
  - 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 chair 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 July, 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**

##### **May PC 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 PC Meeting**

- PC members review what took place at the May meeting, bring up any additional

concerns or questions they might have about the Chair role, and potentially remove themselves from consideration

- PC members take a few minutes to discern which of the members then under consideration they think would best serve as Chair. The use of *Murmuratio* among PC members is encouraged in making their selection. A voting round is then completed selecting from among the remaining nominees. Each PC member indicates their selection privately on paper. They are also encouraged to indicate the reason(s) for their selection, although this is optional. The Vice Chair collects the papers, determines the nominee(s) selected, and announces them along with the number of votes attained by each. A 2/3 majority is necessary to be selected. If not attained in the first round, a second round is completed. If a 2/3 majority is still not attained, rounds of voting continue until a simple majority is attained by one of the nominees. Qualifying questions may 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 Process 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 and functions 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: 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 PC's Annual 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, concerns that they might have, and potentially remove themselves from consideration
- PC members take a few minutes to discern which of the members then under consideration they think would best serve as Vice Chair. The use of *Murmuratio* among PC members off-line is encouraged in making their selection. A voting round is then completed selecting from among the nominees. Each PC member 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 along with the number of votes attained by each. A 2/3 majority is necessary to be selected. If not attained in the first round, a second round is completed. If a 2/3 majority is still not attained, rounds of voting continue until a simple majority is attained by one of the nominees. Qualifying questions may 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 Prospective Candidates to Join the PC**

These are the questions to be posed at the end of Session One of the discernment process to those considering whether to become PC members. With the exception of the question for personal reflection, 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 relevant gifts could you bring to the PC?

Question for Personal Reflection (for personal, not public, consideration)

*In the event this year's discernment process for new PC members does not lead to your selection, will you be able to see this as a simple deferment – and perhaps redirection – of your envisioned role as a servant leader in the St. Francis Xavier parish community?*

## **APPENDIX V**

### **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.

## **APPENDIX VI**

### **PC Member Selection Process Talk At Mass**

**Principal points to be covered in the talk by a PC member given at each Mass describing the Pastoral Council member selection process:**

- Share your name and amount of time on the Council
- Describe the makeup of the Council
- Indicate the number of PC members rotating off and seats to be filled
- Note the dates that the process takes place
- Note that the criteria for consideration is listed in the church bulletin
- Note that all parishioners are encouraged to participate in the process
- Describe how to make nominations

**Sample Talk by PC member at Mass (may be tailored as appropriate):**

“My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a member of your Pastoral Council, now in my \_\_\_\_\_ term. The Pastoral Council is the primary leadership body of the church, and its principal role is ensuring faithfulness to the mission of our parish community, as embodied in our Mission Statement, which is published in the bulletin.

The Council is made up of the pastor and ten members of the parish, who are selected by the parish community through a prayerful process of discernment. Members are chosen to serve for a three-year term, and may also at their discretion serve for a second consecutive term.

Some of our current members are rotating off the Council at the end of August leaving \_\_\_\_\_ openings. So we are seeking \_\_\_\_\_ members of our parish to fill those Council seats.

The criteria for who can be considered for this ministry are listed in the bulletin. We ask you to please look at it and give consideration to serving our parish community by bringing your gifts to this ministry. I will be in the back of the church at the end of mass to address questions and accept nominations. Nominations may also be made over the next week. Just talk to any current Council member.

In addition to parishioners willing to consider becoming a member of the Pastoral Council, all parishioners are encouraged to participate in the selection process. You can do so by attending the selection process meetings on \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. You must attend both of the meetings to participate in the selection process.

As I said at the beginning, the Council is the primary leadership body in our parish. As servant-leaders, its members provide pastoral planning and direction for the parish community. In so doing,

we have to focus on the overall greater good of the entire parish, and not just on any one group or position.

Coming to church to worship and find spiritual fulfillment is of course important, but I find it to be a deeper and more satisfying experience to also be actively involved in the church community. I recommend it to you, whether as a member of the Pastoral Council, or possibly one of the other parish ministries, some of which I am also involved in. The important thing is to be actively involved in the life of our church community. I invite you to do so.

Thank you for worshipping with us, and for all that you contribute – each of you in your own way – to the life of our parishioner-driven community.

I wish you a great week. Thank you.”