

# **Parish Pastoral Councils**

**Where & How  
is  
God Calling?**

## **What are Parish Pastoral Councils?**

The Parish Pastoral Council is a faith filled leadership group through which priests and people work together as co-responsible partners in furthering the mission of Christ in their own parish.

### **Framework in which Parish Pastoral Councils Exist:**

A parish pastoral council (PPC) does not exist either in a vacuum or as an independent entity, free to make its own decisions. A PPC exists within the wider context of the universal church. Vatican II is considered the pastoral council which resulted in a reorganisation of how the Church fulfils its mission given to it by Christ. Key to this Council was to rediscover and initiate ways in which to activate the talents and gifts of members of the faith community to proclaim the Gospel. Fundamental to this reality is the role & contribution made by local faith communities at parish level. Parish communities are central to allowing people to encounter and develop their faith as well as offering support to the domestic church i.e. families. It is the parish that most effectively offers faith in the context of support, strength, nourishment, meaning as well as providing the opportunities which allow people to deepen their relationship with God. The parish is key to the reality of John 1:14, *'the Word became Flesh & lived among us'*.

Since the time of Christ, *'parishes'* existed in the form of communities. The role and function of these communities was to bring the Good News to the people through recounting the deeds of Jesus, with the 'breaking bread' as well as living out the way of Jesus through actions and deeds. Over time, as these communities became established, and as time passed where Christianity was no longer persecuted, these communities took on a more formal structure of diocese & parish. However, since the time of Christ up to now, the diocese & parish was always understood to be have been and remain a living community of believers.

The call to proclaim and be a witness to the Good News remains the same today as it was at the time of Christ, and just as previous generations since the time of Christ were called to proclaim & witness, reading the signs of the times, it is no different in the current age. The same missionary call that existed 2000 years ago, 1000 years ago, a 100 years ago is the missionary call that now is calling us. The diocese and parish as a living community of believers are tasked to be *'salt and light of the world'* Matthew 5:13-14 and a *'lamp on a lamp stand'* Mark 4:21. As culture and society radically change, the diocese and parish are challenged as believers to proclaim and witness the Gospel. But we are not alone in this, as Jesus promised us, *'I am with you always, until the end of the age'* Matthew 28:20.

Structure is essential for the Church even at parish level to carry out its mission. The structures of the Church divided into diocese and parish exist to support the mission of the Church to witness and proclaim the Good News. There exists within the Church positions of leadership & responsibility, namely Bishop and Parish Priest. However, mindful that by virtue of the Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation every person are called to *'actively responsibility in the life of the Church'* (Novo Millenio Ineute John Paul II) these positions of leadership and responsibility are not carried out in isolation. As St. Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, *'Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by the one Spirit so as to form one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink'*.

Parishes function within the wider believing community of a diocese. And while recognising the unique character of each parish, parishes do not exist independently. A Parish Pastoral Council is made up of representatives of the local faith community who nurture and encourage *'active responsibility'* of the local faith community. They support the work of the parish priest in proclaiming the Good News that fosters and cultivates Truth, Charity, Justice, Faith, Hope & Love. *'This demands a change in mindset, particularly concerning lay people. They must no longer be seen as 'collaborators' of the clergy but truly recognised as 'co-responsible' for the Church's being and action'* Pope Benedict XVI

*'By virtue of his office, the Parish Priest presides over and ratifies all Parish Pastoral Council processes, leading up to and including final choices and implementations'* (Living Communion 37). An important note is like other groups and organisations, those who are in positions of authority have the position of responsibility – the roles of authority and responsibility are not separated. In the structure of how the Church is organised, these positions are held by the Bishop and Parish Priest. Therefore a parish pastoral council holds a consultative position and only can give advice or recommendations regarding pastoral matters of the parish. This is not to be understood or mistaken as undermining the important missionary role and function of the PPE. But is so because the Parish Priest and not the parish pastoral council is held responsible for what occurs within a parish setting.

The parish pastoral council is a consultative body representative of the community they serve, providing a specific setting where the faith community exercise their right and duty to express, encourage & support in word and action matters regarding the good of the community. Mindful of the context in which the pastoral council ministers and serves the community, its proposals are not conclusive or authoritative. In order to avoid extremes; a parish priest ought to avoid presenting the council with decisions already made or convoking it only *'pro forma'*, and the council ought to avoid depriving the Parish Priest or his representative of their role as pastor and leader of the faith community.

The Church's call is to be missionary, *'Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News'* Mark 16:15. In order to carry out this mission, the Church is made up of diocese which in turn are composed of parishes. The Code of Canon Law does not define a parish as a building or a set of structures but rather a specific community of the faithful. *'The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God's word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration'*. Evangelii Gaudium n.28.

## **The Parish Finance Committee is not the same as the Parish Pastoral Council**

There is a clear distinction between the parish finance committee and a parish pastoral council. The parish finance committee is responsible, along with the Parish Priest for the management of the temporal goods of the parish. A parish pastoral council is responsible for supporting, facilitating, and developing the pastoral life of the parish.

Both are referenced in the Code of Canon Law:

**Canon 536:2** *“The Pastoral Council has only a consultative vote and it is regulated by norms laid down by the diocesan bishop.*

**Canon 536:3** *“In each parish, there is to be a finance committee to help the parish priest in the administration of the goods of the parish”.*

## **Suggested Ways to Form a Parish Pastoral Council**

Each parish, like every organisation, is made up of people with various talents, interests, and levels of involvement. It can occur where different organisations can have the same people involved. This can result not just in a small group of people being responsible for different organisations, leading to fatigue due to over demand & reliance. Every effort should be made to ensure that this does not occur within a parish faith setting.

In forming a pastoral council for the first time and/or forming a new pastoral council, the first step is to clearly communicate to the community what is a parish pastoral council & the essential role/function it has within a parish faith community.

### **Setting Up A Parish Pastoral Council:**

- Key to a parish pastoral council is to be representative of the parish. In this regard, one approach to forming a parish pastoral council is to divide the parish into areas & seek representatives for each area
- The role of the parish pastoral council is to support, encourage & develop ministries within the parish. Allowing representatives such as ministry coordinators to be on the parish pastoral council ensures parish ministries are represented on the council.
- Personal invitation to people. Most parishes have a parish registration of parishioners – this can help identify potential candidates.
- Publicly invite people to volunteer for the parish pastoral council.
- Members from the previous council willing to continue for another term. No member should exceed more than 2 terms in a row but can be eligible after take a 1 term absence from the pastoral council.

## **Criteria for Membership:**

The Parish Pastoral Council fulfils an important role within a parish faith community. Members ought to be conscious and aware of their mission both within the parish and wider Church community. It would be important therefore for any potential pastoral council member to meet the following criteria but not limited to:

- The person has received the Sacraments of Initiation
- The person is active in the life & worship of the parish.
- The person is willing to take an active part in the discussion & discernment of the pastoral council.
- The person is committed to attend meetings.
- The person expresses missionary zeal in proclaiming the Good News both in word & action in matters of Justice, Charity & Liturgical celebrations.
- The person recognises the importance of encounter with God both in personal & public prayer.
- The person acknowledges the wider framework in which parish pastoral councils function.
- The person demonstrates ability to learn & listen while empowering and supportive of others who express diverging thoughts and views.

## **Size & Composition**

This composition of the pastoral council can be any or a combination of the above. The size should not be too small as not to reflect the wider parish population or too large as to become unworkable – experience shows membership should be between 10 to 15 members.

## **Roles Within A Parish Pastoral Council**

### **1. President**

By virtue of his office, the Parish Priest has been entrusted with the care of the parish by the Bishop. The Parish Priest, or his representative convokes parish pastoral council meetings and is the President of the Pastoral Council by virtue of his office as Parish Priest.

- Meeting with chairperson and secretary to set the agenda for the meetings
- Give direction when necessary
- Ratify the decisions of the PPC
- Being accountable to the local bishop
- Ensure that on-going formation and training is made available for members

### **2. Chairperson:**

The chairperson is chosen by the parish pastoral council & approved by the President of the Council. The responsibilities of the chair are as follows but not limited to:

- Setting the agenda
- Facilitating each meeting – keeping the group focused
- Encourage the participation of all members during the meeting
- Facilitate decision making
- Resolve conflict as appropriate
- Ensuring that sufficient time is given to prayer and reflection
- Monitor the time
- Make sure that all agenda items are addressed
- Encouraging & enabling involvement of all members in meetings.

### **3. Secretary:**

The Secretary by virtue of their role, is a member of the parish pastoral council. The responsibilities of the Secretary are as follows but not limited:

- Prepares the agenda for meeting along with the President, Chair & other pastoral council members.
- Keeping a record of decisions taken



- Distribute the agenda and minutes of last meeting to members in advance of the meeting
- Receiving notification of absences
- Preparing agenda with priest and chairperson
- Keep a file of records of the PPC minutes and decisions

#### **4. Communications:**

The Communications officer by virtue of their role, is a member of the parish pastoral council. The responsibilities of the Communications Officer are as follows but not limited to:

- Establish a specific ministry email if not done so already.
- Establish a group email & phone for purpose of communication with all current members of the parish pastoral council.
- Ensures proper communication regarding pastoral council events via parish newsletter, parish Facebook page, parish webpage, various parish ministries.
- Ensures parish website remains current, if not already done by another group or individual.
- Ensuring the items discussed, including decisions reached at pastoral council meetings and reasons for same are communicated to the wider parish community as approved by the pastoral council & as appropriate

#### **5. Role of All Members:**

By virtue of how the pastoral council is formed, each member brings their experience – personal, professional as well as their experience as a member of the local faith community. As such, their responsibilities are as follows but not limited to:

- Offering items for pastoral council meetings
- Actively listening & attentive to the needs & concerns of the parishioners.
- Attending pastoral council meetings.
- Participating & offering input in the process of discernment in pastoral council discussions.
- Carrying out tasks & assignments.

## **Key Challenges in Parish Life**

- How clergy and church are understood within the context of the wider community has changed radically.
- Communities often have only a basic knowledge regarding faith & belief.
- Fatigue & lack of programs of renewal for liturgies & Sacraments especially with Sunday Eucharist.
- Traditional structures of parishes have collapsed.
- Lack of any faith programs that offer the opportunity of renewal for people to deepen their knowledge and faith at parish level.
- Rapid decline in vocations.

## **Attentive to the Parish Community**

Organising a get-together of representatives of all parish groups and organisations that contribute to the pastoral life of the parish at least once every three years with a view to nourishing them and gleaning their recommendations re: future pastoral planning and provision

## **What Does A Parish Pastoral Council Do?**

A parish pastoral council role and function is to advance the life & mission of the Church at a parish level by developing, supporting & facilitating various ministries and events that offer catechesis and a deepening of a person's faith with a culture of encounter, as well as offering people the potential of rediscover of faith. The following are some of the key objectives of a pastoral council.

- Encouraging fellow parishioners to participate in the Sunday Eucharist fully, actively & consciously.
- Praying for the well being of the parish community.
- Organising and promoting events that contribute to the prayer & faith life of the community.
- Developing & promoting adult religious & faith programs at parish & inter parish level

- Welcoming & supporting the marginalised.
- Utilising various forms of communication to inform, create awareness & educate people on areas of pastoral concern.
- Caring for the clergy of their parish.
- Promoting vocations to the priesthood & religious life.
- Affirming and supporting other parish groups that contribute to the life of the parish.
- Developing a pastoral program aimed at focusing on young people, people with disabilities, elderly & marginalised.
- Support & facilitating various sub committees that are responsible for specific areas & tasks of pastoral activity within the parish.
- Conveying to regular non-church going parishioners that they remain a valued & integral part of the community.

It is important when looking at the objectives not become overwhelmed. Many of these objectives are often formally or informally already occurring within a parish setting. The next section suggests ways how these objectives can be realised within a parish.

## **How to Achieve These Pastoral Council Objectives?**

The following is a list of some keyways in which a pastoral council can begin to achieve the objectives outline above.

### **A. Community**

- Maintaining & Updating Parish Census.
- Regular communication with wider community on activities.
- Regular communication with parish finance committee on activities.
- Organising feedback from parish groups and organisations that contribute to the pastoral life of the parish as well as the wider parish community

### **B. Liturgy:**

- Ministry of the Word
  - Training & Review
- Ministry of Holy Communion
  - Training & Review
    - Church
    - Homebound
- Ministry of Music
  - Support & Development
    - Cantors
    - Musicians
    - Choir & Congregation
- Ministry of Altar Servers
  - Training & Review
  - Implementation of Child Protection Policy.
- Ministry of Altar Society
  - Support & Review
- Ministry of Church Environment
  - Support & Review Altar Society, Church Cleaning & Church Grounds.
- Baptismal Teams.

- Visiting Homes before Baptism
  - Explaining what will happen at baptism
  - Completing necessary forms & assigning readings
  - Exploring what Sacrament of Baptism is
- Present at Baptism
  - Welcoming those who are to be baptised, family & friends
  - Ensuring church is prepared for Sacrament – lighting, heating etc
  - Ushering people during baptism
- Visiting Home after Baptism
  - Follow up with family & baptised
- Funeral Teams.
- First Communion Preparation Program.
  - Do This in Memory Program
  - Support school & parents with sacrament preparation
- Confirmation Preparation Program.
  - Pilgrimages to Local Religious Sites.
  - Help organise diocesan pilgrimage to Knock.
  - Organise a food drive for local charity.
- Sunday Mass Programs for Children.
  - Arrange room on church or school property.
  - Parents can drop child off there as they go to Mass.
  - Program for children based on Gospel etc.
- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.
- Cemetery Masses – Summertime.
- Mass to Welcome New Baptised of the Parish – Second Sunday of January.
- Mass for the Sick with the Sacrament of Anointing – February.
- Mass to Remember those who have Died – November.
- Penitential Services.

In this category, the parish pastoral council may decide to form a parish liturgy group as a sub committee of the pastoral council with responsibility for the above. The parish liturgy group would compromise of members from the

parish pastoral council, various ministries that exist within the parish as well as anyone who the group would consider. The parish liturgy group number should vary between 5 & 12 to be effective. Don't be afraid to ask for volunteers! Many are happy to be involved provided it is clear what is expected of them and it is not overdemanding.

*'Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, 'It is not desirable that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business, but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word'. Acts 6:1-4*

### **C. Faith Development & Education**

This category focuses areas where the parish pastoral council can take the lead.

- Catholic Schools Week – Last Week of January.
- National & Patron Saints Days
  - St. Bridget's Day
  - St. Patrick's Day
- Local Religious Sites Commemorations.
  - Holy Wells & Mass Rocks.
  - Local Monasteries.
- Presentations & Talk regarding Faith.
- Social Justice Programs.
- Pioneer Programs – Sunday Before Ash Wednesday.
- Vocations to Priesthood & Religious Life.
- Lenten & Advent Programs.

This is not an exhaustive list but demonstrates the potential, and important role a parish pastoral council plays in supporting, developing, and facilitating the mission of the church at parish level.

## **Where to Start?**

The position of the church in Ireland has drastically changed in the last number of decades, with various degrees of response found at parish and diocesan level. Some parishes have many of the above structures in place and functioning to a high degree, while other parishes are closing their doors.

**Step 1:** The first thing to remember is the church and the faith community are not alone nor are we abandoned. Prayer has an essential part to play in helping us both recognise this plus prayer helps raise our awareness and consciousness of this reality.

**Step 2:** If a pastoral council has recently been formed in the parish, the priority of the council is to assess what is the current reality that exists in the parish. It is important this assessment is as accurate as possible. Examples of areas to assess would be:

### **Ministries**

- Ministers of the Word
- Ministers of Holy Communion
- Ministry of Music
- Ministry of Ushers/Stewards

It would be important to assess them regarding volunteers, ministry coordinators; training; any support or resources needed

### **Church Environment**

- Church Building
- Church Grounds
- Church Cleaning

The environment of the church is as essential as the ministries as the church environment has a direct impact on people praying. Areas to assess would be is the church warm; in good condition, are the grounds well kept; is there a procedure in place where the church is cleaned regularly?

### **Faith Development & Programs**



- Parish Census
- Identify what if any faith programs exist
- Identify programs and/or celebrations that occurred in the past

**Step 3:** Step 3 involved following up on step 2 ensuring all the necessary structures are in place. It is important to formalise any activity that is taking place as this brings clarity not just what is already happening, but also who is involved. This means for example there is a coordinator and a clear outline of the responsibilities of the ministry coordinator, with group email and group text for the ministry volunteers.

**Step 4:** If a pastoral council already exists in the parish, it is important that there is a regular review carried out by the parish pastoral council. This can be done by checking with the various ministries and groups for updates and feedback and/or by creating a checklist that is particular to the parish.

**Step 5:** When step 4 is completed, then it is possible for the parish pastoral council to begin to follow up on other objectives. Ideally, the pastoral council would take up 1 project at a time, and when it has been established, move to the next project. Key to this method is establishing procedures, delegating responsibility so far as possible so the council is free to give attention to new projects.

Remember the parish pastoral council role is to support & facilitate as opposed to doing the work of the ministry or program. If a parish pastoral council finds itself not just developing but organising and responsible for the ministry or program, it would be important for the pastoral council to re-evaluate how it is functioning. Please refer to appendix for sample approaches and the pastoral council may also consider the formation of a 'Liturgy Group'.

## **The Challenge of Clericalism**

Pope St. John Paul II warned in his apostolic letter, *On Entering a New Millennium*, against setting up, *'meaningless external structures which are 'masks of communion' and give the false impression that real listening and dialogue are taking place. He called for a 'spirituality of communion' which "implies the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome and prize it as a gift from God ... [It] means to know how to make room for our brothers and sisters ... resisting the selfish temptation which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy". Novo Millennio Ineunte, no 43.*

Clericalism is the misuse and overextension of clergy's authority and is a challenge for both clergy and lay people. Vocations in the past meant there were an over abundant supply of clergy in Ireland not just for home diocese but also for missions as well as other countries like the USA and UK. Clergy abundant. Similar, clericalism existed among the laity where the closer the relationship was to the parish priest or senior curate, the more influence people within the parish setting would have. With the decline in vocations along with parishes losing clergy, the pattern of clericalism found within parish settings is rapidly changing with less clergy. Laity find themselves in a position where they no longer have the influence they once had. In such a reality both clergy and laity can find themselves in an insecure place, resistant to change, fearing their identity will be lost. Clergy fear if the laity becomes too involved, they will no longer feel needed or wanted. The laity fears if they become too involved, the clergy will become redundant, and they, the laity will lose their relevance. However, as can be seen from the quote from Acts, the leaders of the early church, the apostles themselves, sought help and assistance.

Responding to the challenge of clericalism requires understanding, clarity, and firmness. Understanding so people involved can be aware of the pattern and dynamic of clericalism. Clarity to reassure both clergy and laity they remain relevant and important in proclaiming the Gospel, now even more so. Firmness is required as no one group, or person has the right to prevent or hinder necessary change so both the diocese and parish can continue in their mission. Understanding is required in responding to such instances and every effort made to explain and offer reassurance. However, as a Church that exists within an established structure that goes back to the time of Christ, the common good as opposed to the individual group or parish is to be sought. every person and group have the right and privilege as baptised members of the Church to

offer insight and opinion. However, trusting that the Spirit is at work in the Church, visible in the presence of the bishop and his co-worker, the parish priest, ultimate decisions rest with them.

## **Appendix 1: Template for Pastoral Council Meeting**

The following is a suggested template for pastoral council meetings.

- Date & Time:
- Venue:
- Opening prayer led by:
- Apologies:
- Minutes & Matters Arising:
- Items for Discussion:
  - Item 1:
  - Item 2:
  - Item 3:
  - Item 4:
- Updates regarding Information & Notices:
- Date & Time of Next Meeting:

## **Appendix 2: Template for taking Minutes at Parish Pastoral Council**

Good minutes record concise information of the previous meeting on the following:

1. Date & time of Last Meeting.
2. Venue where meeting was held.
3. Name of person who lead the prayer at opening of meeting.
4. Attendance.
5. Apologies
6. Items discussed.
  - Item 1 brief outline of discussion points; conclusion & follow up.
  - Item 2 brief outline of discussion points; conclusion & follow up.
  - Item 3 brief outline of discussion points; conclusion & follow up.
  - Item 4 brief outline of discussion points; conclusion & follow up.
7. If any items were raised under AOB a brief outline of discussion points; conclusion & follow up necessary.
8. Date & Venue for next meeting.

After each meeting, the communications officer could prepare a short report on the meeting for the Parish Bulletin or other designated mechanism of informing the parish community of the PPC's discussions, considerations and outcomes.

### **Appendix 3: Draft Constitution for a Parish Pastoral Council**

The council shall be called ' \_\_\_\_\_ Parish Pastoral Council'

The parish pastoral council is a representative group of people of the parish community whose purpose is to promote the mission of the Church, instituted by Jesus Christ.

The parish pastoral council is a consultative group whose function is to work co-responsibly with the local Bishop and parish priest in supporting, developing, and facilitating ways in which the parish can fulfil the mission of Jesus Christ.

The Parish Priest, as well as those who have a position or role are by virtue of their office and role on the pastoral council, members of the parish pastoral council.

The Parish Priest can recommend and co-opt additional members from the parish community onto the council. The number of co-opted members should not exceed the number of elected members and area representatives combined.

The following offices are to be found in a parish pastoral council:

- President (Parish Priest)
- Chair
- Secretary
- Communications Officer

The positions of Chair, Secretary & Communications Officer can be filled either by volunteering for the position or by proposal from a pastoral council member.

The parish pastoral council shall have an agreed term of \_\_\_\_ years.

No area representative or elected or co-opted member shall serve more than TWO consecutive terms but is eligible for membership subsequently.

In scheduling meetings:

- The Parish Priest, Chair & Secretary of the Council are responsible for compiling the agenda.

- All members can contribute items to the agenda, including items of concern from the members of the parish community.
- Every effort is to be made to circulate the agenda, as well as effectively communicate any decisions of the council to the parish community.
- A quorum for a meeting shall be 1 more than half of the total membership of the council.
- No parish pastoral council meeting can be held without the approval and attendance of the Parish Priest, unless the parish is vacant.

In the event of change of Parish Priest, the parish pastoral council may continue with already established & agreed programs, until such time as

#### **Appendix 4: Plan to Support & Facilitate Volunteers of the Ministry of Word**

The following is offered as a template that can be done if no parish liturgy group exists. If such a group exists, this template would be for the parish liturgy group and not the parish pastoral council. At a Pastoral Council Meeting, identify a pastoral council member who will be responsible for the Ministry of the Word. It is important at this stage that the pastoral council is familiar the ministry coordinator is & what he or she does as ministry coordinator.

- The parish pastoral council representative familiarises herself /himself with the ministry coordinator to:
  - Explain to the ministry coordinator as a pastoral council member, that the role is to support the ministry coordinator & volunteers
  - Explain that if the coordinator or volunteer has any questions or concerns, he /she are to inform the pastoral council representative.

*This establishes a line of communication from volunteer to coordinator to parish liturgy group to pastoral council representative to pastoral council via agenda to parish priest.*

The following are some areas relevant to volunteers

1. Group email & phone text for ministry in place

2. Organisation of rota for volunteers
3. Training & Introduction to Public Reading of Scripture
4. Training in Procedures for Reading at Masses
5. Continuing Faith Development & Education

*The parish pastoral council and/or parish liturgy group's role is to offer any support or help it can to the ministry coordinator regarding 1 to 3, while it would work with the ministry coordinator regarding 4. For example, there may be several new readers, so the ministry coordinator would ask the pastoral council member via the parish liturgy group if it were possible to organise training & introduction to public reading of Scripture. This item is put on the pastoral council's agenda for the next meeting, as it would be pastoral council's responsibility to organise this. Similarly, it is good practice to have a yearly ministry meeting to allow for continuing faith development & education. This could be an evening of prayer or a talk/presentation. In organising this, the pastoral council can seek the input of the parish liturgy group as well as the volunteers via the ministry coordinator on what they would like to have. It is advisable that the pastoral council as well as the ministry coordinator would follow an already agreed policy & procedures in all the above areas.*



## **Appendix 5: Plan to Support & Facilitate Volunteers of the Ministry of Holy Communion**

At a Pastoral Council Meeting, identify a pastoral council member who will be responsible for Ministry of the Holy Communion. It is important at this stage that the pastoral council is familiar with the ministry coordinator and the duties of the ministry. .

- The parish pastoral council representative makes themselves know the ministry coordinator to:
  - Explain to the ministry coordinator as a pastoral council member that their role is to support the ministry coordinator & volunteers.
  - Explain that if the coordinator or volunteer has any questions or concerns, they are to inform the pastoral council representative.

*This establishes a line of communication from volunteer to coordinator to pastoral council representative to pastoral council via agenda.*

The following are some areas relevant to volunteers in this ministry

1. Group email & phone text for ministry in place
2. Training & Introduction to Distribution of Holy Communion
3. Training in Procedures for Reading at Masses
4. Continuing Faith Development & Education
5. Bringing Holy Communion to the Homebound

*The parish pastoral council role is to offer any support or help it can to the ministry coordinator regarding 1 to 3 and would work with the ministry coordinator regarding 4. For example, there may be several new volunteers, so the ministry coordinator would ask the pastoral council member if it is possible to organise training & introduction regarding distribution of Holy Communion at Mass. This item is put on the pastoral council's agenda for the next meeting, as it would be pastoral council's responsibility to organise this. Similarly, it is good practice to have a yearly ministry meeting to allow for continuing faith development & education. This could be an evening of prayer or a*

*talk/presentation. In organising this, the pastoral council can seek the input of volunteers via the ministry coordinator on what they would like to have. The pastoral council may wish to develop the ministry to include Holy Communion being brought to the homebound. The pastoral council would seek the advice of the ministry coordinator. It is advisable that the pastoral council as well as the ministry coordinator would follow an already agreed policy & procedures in all the above areas.*

## **Appendix 6: Welcome New Baptised Members to the Parish**

The second Sunday after Christmas is the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord and provides an ideal opportunity for the parish community to welcome those who were baptised the previous year. While baptism is the sacrament where a child/person becomes a member of God's family and a member of the parish, it is rare that the actual parish community is present. Godparents, as well as family and friends along with the priest are understood to represent the community. However, the community is rarely present, and the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord provides an opportunity for the wider parish community to welcome its new members. The pastoral council can play a key role in organising this event.

### **Step 1:**

The item is put on the agenda and discussed by the pastoral council. If the pastoral council agree that this would be an important way in which to welcome the newly baptised into the wider community, a member of the pastoral council is given the responsibility to establish a subgroup.

### **Step 2:**

The pastoral council member sets about the following tasks:

- Establishes what is the actual date on which the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord falls.
- Establishing a subgroup, preferable young couples.
- Establishing a list of names of those baptised during the past year.
- Sets about inviting the parents & godparents to the relevant Mass.
- Informs the music, readers, and EM coordinators.
- Create a liturgical planner especially for this Mass.
- Plans the liturgy with priest & pastoral council how the newly baptised will be welcomed during the liturgy.
  - Readings & prayers of the faithful can remain the same, but perhaps a parent or god parent can do them.
  - Relevant hymns to baptism are played throughout the Mass.
  - Parents or godparents can bring up gifts at the offertory.

- Call out the names of the newly baptised while at same time lighting their baptismal candles, while the parents & child come forward.
- Renewal of baptismal promise & Rite of Sprinkling which normally takes place on this day

### **Step 3:**

The subgroup along with the pastoral council are present on the day

- To help & assist in any way such as guiding parents, godparents & children.
- Informing parents & godparents where to go for readings & prayers of the faithful as well as the offertory gifts.
- Reading out names & lightening baptismal candles.
- To help & assist parents as they come forward with their child.
- Help with any social gathering that may take place after.

### **Step 4:**

The event to welcome the newly baptised is brought up at the next meeting for evaluation

- Assessing if it should be continued.
- Assessing what worked, what can be improved & what can be changed.
- Thank You note sent to subgroup members & newly baptised as well as their parents/guardians.