

**St. Joseph Catholic Church  
Parish Advisory Council Charter  
May 12, 2016**

**1. Introduction**

Recognizing that sound pastoral decisions are informed by the wisdom of the People of God, Father Tom Bourque established the Pastoral Advisory Council (PAC) of St. Joseph Catholic Church on March 17, 2016. The Second Vatican Council stated that Catholics have a right and duty to express their opinions pertaining to the good of the Church. By establishing the PAC, Father Tom acknowledged the wisdom of his parishioners and expressed his desire to receive input from them as he carries out his responsibility of governing the parish.

The St. Joseph Catholic Church PAC is constituted to offer advice to the Pastor, not govern the parish, which is the Pastor's responsibility. The PAC is the Parish's primary council; other committees and councils are secondary.

**2. Purpose**

The PAC is focused on the future of the parish and how to assist the Pastor in accomplishing the parish's mission statement. The PAC helps the Pastor to learn and prioritize the needs of the parish. The PAC helps the Pastor to discern God's will.

The PAC's purpose is to investigate and ponder Pastoral matters, to draw sound conclusions and to propose practical solutions to the Pastor. The Pastor directs the implementation of any recommendations he accepts from the PAC. Council members assist him in planning, but implementation is the responsibility of the Pastor. The Pastor may ask Council members to assume responsibility for implementing a decision, but when they do so, they act as volunteers under the Pastor's direction instead of PAC members.

**3. Scope**

The PAC considers all the practical matters of parish life including ministries of proclaiming God's Word, celebrating the sacraments, caring for the faithful, promoting the mission of the Church to the world, and being a good steward of parish resources. There is nothing about which the Pastor may not consult the Council, apart from faith, orthodoxy, moral principles or laws of the universal Church. The PAC cannot change Canon Law or church doctrine, but no major area of Pastoral concern should be segregated away from the PAC's right and obligation to overview it.

**4. Membership Criteria**

Serving on the PAC is a ministry. It requires certain gifts. PAC members are chosen for their ability to accomplish the main task of the Council - the work of investigating, considering, and recommending practical solutions. Members should have the specific gifts of a wise counselor,

including the ability to study, investigate, and examine pastoral matters thoroughly. Members should have the capacity to reflect widely and the patience to ponder deeply. Finally, members should be able to listen to differing opinions, integrate various points of view, and discern with others what is best for the parish.

PAC members must be registered parishioners, Catholics in good standing with the Church (Baptized, First Communion, Confirmation, attend Mass weekly, etc.), who reflect the parish's various neighborhoods, social and professional groups, and ministries. They are parishioners noted for their faith, good morals, and prudence. They must be committed to a life of prayer and to the mission and ministries of the parish. They must be willing to participate in continuing education and the PAC's group process.

PAC members must be willing and able to meet monthly for up to two hours at a time in the evenings and to perform other necessary work in between meetings as is necessary to accomplish the PAC's purpose.

The Pastor will describe the commitment he is asking of PAC members and any requirements for in-service training or retreats. He will explain to the parish what he hopes the PAC will accomplish, what the PAC's major planning focus will be, and the kinds of topics the PAC will explore.

## **5. PAC Composition and Member Selection**

The Pastor is not a member of the PAC, according to Canon Law, but presides over it. The PAC will consist of ten to twelve members selected by the Pastor from among nominees who are registered members of the parish. Members will normally serve two- or three-year terms, but may be extended by the Pastor as necessary. Some members will rotate off the PAC at the end of July each year in order to maintain a base of experience and continuity of operations on the Council. Members may resign their duties at any time; if this occurs, the Pastor will select a replacement. The Pastor may also remove members as necessary to promote the efficiency of the PAC and the parish.

The only parish committee or ministry that will always maintain a member on the PAC is the Finance Council. The only parish staff that will always be a member of the PAC is the St. Joseph School Principal or Vice Principal. The remaining seats are open to any registered parishioner who meets the criteria in paragraph 4. The PAC may create committees to complete tasks, but the committees will disband after their tasks are complete.

In early May each year, starting in 2017, the Pastor will request nominations for new PAC members and announce in the parish bulletin how many positions will open in August. Nominees for the PAC will complete a nomination form, and submit it to the Pastor by June 30. The Pastor will select and announce the new members in July, so that they may be prepared to attend the August PAC meeting.

## **6. PAC Officers**

The Pastor presides at every meeting of the PAC, accepting or rejecting recommendations, and developing the agenda with the PAC's officers. The Pastor will select three officers from among the PAC members, including a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Secretary. The Chairperson facilitates Council discussions and monitors the work of the councilors between regular meetings. The Vice Chairperson assists the Chairperson and facilitates meetings in the Chairperson's absence. The Secretary keeps the PAC's meeting minutes. The Chairperson or, in his/her absence, the Vice Chairperson develops the next PAC meeting's agenda with the Pastor and sends it to the PAC members at least one week before the next meeting. Officers will make arrangements to turn over all historical records, files, and notes to the Chairperson or Pastor before the end of the officer's term.

## **7. Relation of the PAC to the Parish Staff and Finance Council**

The Pastor consults others besides the PAC about parish governance. He relies upon the parish staff for their expertise and consults them daily about the management of parish operations. The Pastor relies on the Finance Council to develop, monitor, and report on the parish budget. Finance Council members are chosen for their technical skill in the realms of accounting and finance. The PAC, by contrast, offers practical wisdom in a general way on pastoral matters.

The Pastor will distinguish between technical questions that require expert opinion, such as parish staff or Finance Council members, and more general questions that do not require expert advice. If the Pastor wants to know what will unify the community, increase its momentum, and make best use of parish volunteers, he will consult the PAC.

## **9. PAC Meetings**

The PAC will normally meet monthly from August to May. Meetings are closed to nonmembers, unless invited by the Pastor, in order to facilitate frank discussions and efficiency. Meetings should not exceed two hours in length. Between the monthly meetings, PAC members will perform actions agreed on during the meeting and prepare for the next. This may entail work on ad hoc committees that undertake a special project, do research, take a survey, poll parishioners, or consult experts. Ad hoc committees enhance the main work of the Council, the work of investigating and pondering an issue.

The Pastor develops the PAC meeting agenda with the Council's officers. The agenda states the topics of discussion and goals for each meeting, and any materials or preparation needed to accomplish them. PAC members may request subjects be placed on the agenda.

Parishioners may ask the PAC to place subjects on its meeting agenda separate from the PAC's main work by emailing the PAC at [sjcherndon.org](mailto:sjcherndon.org) or by asking a PAC member who will contact the Pastor or PAC officers. The Pastor and officers may place the item on the agenda, either immediately or at some future time, or reply that the item does not belong on the PAC's agenda. The PAC may ask the Pastor, parish staff, or another parish organization to respond to the item. In either case, the PAC should explain its decision to the parishioner.

The Secretary will compile the meeting minutes, and submit them for review to the Chairpersons within one week of each PAC meeting. The Chairpersons will edit the minutes if necessary, develop an executive summary, and forward them to the Pastor for approval. Once the Pastor approves the minutes, the Secretary files them for future reference and sends them, along with supporting documents, to each councilor at least one week before the next PAC meeting. PAC meeting minutes should not be released outside the PAC without first consulting with the Pastor.

## **10. Communications with the Parish**

The PAC will maintain open and continuous communications with the Parish through multiple media. Some examples of media that may be used include the Parish bulletin, a PAC web page on the Parish website, periodic announcements at Mass, a PAC table at the Parish Barbecue, a Parish phone alert system, and a Parish app through which parishioners may receive updates.

The PAC Chairman will provide periodic reports to the Parish concerning the PAC's accomplishments and planning focus. At a minimum, an executive summary of the PAC's meeting minutes will be published in the Parish bulletin and on the PAC's web page.

As active parishioners representing a broad cross section of the Parish, PAC members will attempt to regularly attend a variety of Parish events in order to represent the PAC, to share the PAC's interest and concern about the Parish's well being, and to listen to ideas and concerns of parishioners at the events.