NORMS FOR THE
Parish Pastoral Council

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau
HIS EXCELLENCY
MOST REVEREND EDWARD M. RICE, D.D.
By the Grace of God and the Authority of the Apostolic See
BISHOP OF SPRINGFIELD-CAPE GIRARDEAU

DECREE PROMULGATING NORMS FOR THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

The Norms for The Parish Pastoral Council for the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau was first promulgated on March 25, 1988. Following several revisions, the policy was updated and repromulgated on October 1, 1997. In 2018, the directors of the various ministries in The Catholic Center were tasked with renewal of Norms for The Parish Pastoral Council to bring it in line with the pastoral needs and practices of the current day. Following the comprehensive process of consultation with all the presbyters during the last two years, a final draft has been presented to me for my approval and promulgation.

Whereas, in consultation with the Presbyteral Council, I approved the renewal of the Norms for The Parish Pastoral Council for the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau; and

Whereas I have followed closely the process of consultation which was carried out at the Clergy Institute and through the Presbyteral Council; and

Whereas I have heard the comments and concerns expressed by members of the presbyterate during the formulation of these norms; and

Whereas I have amended and finalized these norms based on my evaluation of those comments;

Ergo, I, The Most Reverend Bishop Edward M. Rice, D.D. the undersigned Bishop of Springfield-Cape Girardeau, do hereby promulgate the Norms for The Parish Pastoral Council for the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau in accord with the Canon 536 and order it to be sent to all Pastors, published in The Mirror and posted on the Diocesan Website.

This Policy is to take effect on May 31, 2021, The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, six months and thirteen days from the date of promulgation.

Given at the Curia of the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau, on this eighteenth day of November, in the year of our Lord two thousand twenty, the feast of Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne, the Co-patron of the Diocese.

Ms. Janet L. Smith
Chancellor

Most Reverend Edward M. Rice, D.D.
Bishop of Springfield-Cape Girardeau
Dear Friends in Christ,

In 2013, Pope Francis issued an Apostolic Exhortation to the Church, “The Joy of the Gospel.” With his opening words quoted above, Pope Francis reminds us that the purpose of every parish and mission of the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau is to facilitate an encounter with Jesus: in his word, in his sacraments, and in his people.

Our parishes are not museums or fossils from a bygone era, and in them is no place for pessimism, selfishness, or cliques. Everyone, especially those in positions of service on the Parish Pastoral Council, should be on a journey of “renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ.” Only then can we be “missionary disciples” who embody our baptismal call to share the faith with others.

With these updated “Norms for the Parish Pastoral Council,” it is my hope that the members of the Parish Pastoral Council lead the way in ongoing spiritual renewal. While maintenance issues and finances require regular oversight, other competent parishioners can be tasked for these duties. (As my predecessor, the Fifth Bishop of the Diocese, John J. Leibrecht, so wisely stated, “Day-to-day operation of the parish belongs to others than the Parish Pastoral Council.”)

Parish Pastoral Council members should expend their energy on strategies that assist in spiritual growth and formation. As is stated in our diocesan “Mutually Shared Vision,” let us focus on growing in Holiness, forming Intentional Disciples, and being Sent to Witness. May every parish and mission of our diocese become a place of joyful “encounter,” where the baptized fulfill their call to be true Missionary Disciples.

May God bless you for your willingness to be a member of the Parish Pastoral Council. May your time of service be one of enrichment and spiritual growth, leading to your own invigorated encounter with Jesus. Having gratefully received the advice of the Presbyteral Council, the diocesan clergy, and the chancery staff, I present these norms to be distributed to all parishes of the diocese. May they offer guidance as you lead the parish into Missionary Discipleship.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend Edward M. Rice
Bishop of Springfield-Cape Girardeau

“The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus,”

- Pope Francis, “Evangelii Gaudium”
  (“The Joy of the Gospel”)
Prayer to Our Lady of Evangelization

BY POPE ST. JOHN PAUL II

O Mary, Mother of Jesus and Mother of his Church, we are mindful of the role you play in the evangelization of souls who do not yet know Him. We are mindful of how missionaries came with the power of Christ’s Gospel and committed the success of their work to you.

As the Mother of Divine Grace, you were with the missionaries in all their efforts. And as Mother of the Church, you presided over all the activities of evangelization and over the implantation of the Gospel in the hearts of the faithful. You sustained the missionaries in hope and you gave joy to every new community that was born of the Church’s evangelizing activity. You were there with your intercession and your prayers, as the first grace of baptism developed, and as those who had new life in Christ, your Son, came to a full appreciation of their Christian calling.

We ask you, Mary, to help us to fulfill this mission of evangelization which your Son has given to his Church and which falls to us. Mindful of your role as Help of Christians, we entrust ourselves to you in the work of carrying the Gospel ever deeper into the hearts and lives of all the people. We entrust to you our missionary mandate and commit our cause totally to your prayers.

To Jesus Christ your Son, with the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit be praise and thanksgiving forever and ever.
Amen.

The SACRED PURPOSE
of the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau is to joyfully live our Catholic faith as Intentional Disciples, leading all to a full life in Jesus Christ.

One Church, East to West:
Loving Jesus, Serving Jesus, Sharing Jesus

PRIORITIES:
1) Grow in Holiness
2) Form Intentional Disciples
3) Sent to Witness

OUR CORE VALUES:

PRAYER
Through intimacy with Jesus and inspired by the Holy Spirit, we enter into union with the Father—in solitude and when gathered—offering our blessing, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise.

GENEROUS SERVICE
The love of Christ impels us to charitably serve as instruments of hope, comfort, and peace.

ENTHUSIASM
Rejoicing in our relationship with God, we passionately live our faith in word and action.
God so loved the world that he sent his Son among us as a man. The Son loved us and gave his life that we might have newness of life in him. In order that we may continue to celebrate this newness of life in the Spirit, the Son established the Church which is one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic. Today, this Church is experienced in a worldwide communion of local churches or dioceses. Each diocese lives out its life in small communities known as parishes and/or mission churches.

THE SON OF GOD SENDS HIS CHURCH TO PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION AND THE GOOD NEWS OF NEW LIFE IN HIM.

Leadership for this task is provided by the Bishop. The Bishop assigns pastors to local communities in order to provide leadership for them in accomplishing this task. Pastors are assisted by their Parish Pastoral Councils. Thus, the Parish Pastoral Council should be concerned with the total mission of the Church: its spiritual needs, its educational needs, its physical needs. The educational and physical needs will be determined in service to the main priority, which is the spiritual needs of the Church.

In his 2013 Apostolic Exhortation, “The Joy of the Gospel” ("Evangelii Gaudium"), Pope Francis called us to a different mindset, a different focus, a shift from maintenance of structures and serving those who show up, to one of bringing in the lost, the fallen away, and the separated. To accomplish this, he called for a “renewal of structures demanded by pastoral conversion … as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented” (p. 27).

Because we are the Church, God calls us to continue his work in this world. The “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church” ("Lumen Gentium" ["Light of the Nations"]) from the Second Vatican Council makes it clear: “The apostolate of the laity is sharing in the salvific mission of the Church. Through Baptism and Confirmation, all are appointed to this apostolate by the Lord himself.” (PAR. 33)
Article I
ESTABLISHMENT OF A PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

The Parish Pastoral Council carries the name of the parish or, where a parish and its mission(s) so desire, a name that reflects its inter-parochial character. It should strive to foster greater participation of the entire parish in the pastoral life and mission of the parish and the Diocese.

Article II
PURPOSE AND FUNCTION

ARTICLE II: SECTION 1
The basic characteristic of leadership in a Christian community is service, not power. The goal of leadership is not limited to providing service for the people of the parish, but also seeks to enable them to minister to one another, to become part of a people and to extend their Christian commitment to everything they do. Thus, the Parish Pastoral Council exists for the good of the entire parish and serves to illuminate the light of Christ for the community in which it ministers.

The Parish Pastoral Council is a consultative body responsible to the pastor who is the administrator of the parish and, as such, is responsible to the Bishop. The Council assists the pastor by its vision of what the parish is called to become in its life (Canon 536, §2).

The Parish Pastoral Council should be representative of the entire parish, recognizing and reflecting the parish’s rich diversity. It should collaborate with parish committees and ministries that address specific areas of parish life such as worship, spirituality, evangelization, religious education, finance, and service.

ARTICLE II: SECTION 2
EMPHASIS ON ‘MISSION’

1. The Parish Pastoral Council is called to work in a consultative role with the pastor in the mission of evangelization. They will work together to develop a pastoral plan which:

   a) Embraces the diocesan Mutually Shared Vision, and
   b) Promotes, implements, and evaluates the three diocesan priorities: Holiness, Discipleship, and Witness

The mission of the parish is the furthering of the salvific work of Christ. Pope Francis instructed us, using language from The Aparecida Document, “Mere administration can no longer be enough. Throughout the World, let us permanently be in a state of mission.” ("EVANGELII GAUDIUM," #25)

The Parish Pastoral Council’s role is to join the pastor in “dreaming” what the parish is called to become and developing a plan to make that dream a reality. The pastoral plan will reflect what Pope Francis refers to as a “missionary option, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation.” ("EVANGELII GAUDIUM," #27)

The process of implementing the pastoral plan is done by parish committees or ministries under the guidance of the pastor.
c) While integrating the “Seven Signs of a Vibrant Parish:"
   1. Encountering the Person of Jesus Christ
   2. Noble simplicity in celebrating the Sacraments
   3. Welcoming
   4. On-Going Faith Formation and Catechesis
   5. Personal Discipleship
   6. Outreach to the Marginalized
   7. Stewardship

(*see Appendix C for the Seven Signs of a Vibrant Parish)

2. The parish pastoral plan will include objectives, strategies, and a means of evaluation. The pastoral plan is to be updated annually to fit the changing needs of the parish.

ARTICLE II: SECTION 3
The Parish Pastoral Council shall further assist the pastor in the mission of evangelization by assessing the spiritual and temporal needs of the parish. In doing this, the Parish Pastoral Council must be mindful of the relationship of the parish with the Diocese and particularly attentive to the diocesan goals of Holiness, Discipleship, and Witness. The Council must also be conscious of the parish’s responsibility to the local civic community.

ARTICLE II: SECTION 4
Consensus through dialogue is the desired process for decision-making within a Parish Pastoral Council. To be most effective, the process requires that:
   a) the consensus process should be accepted by all participants,
   b) the dialogue involves listening as well as speaking on the part of all,
   c) the pastoral staff and other ex-officio members present at the meeting, may actively participate in the discussion process leading to consensus.

Council members must be good listeners to hear people and to delve beneath statements to underlying needs, so as to discern the authentic spirit of Christ speaking through his people.

The day-to-day life of the parish is administered by the pastor. However, in today’s complex society, members of the laity are often more skilled in secular areas than the pastor. Thus, the pastor will frequently find it beneficial to consult with his Council concerning temporal matters affecting the parish and its day-to-day operation. However, this should not be the primary role of the Parish Pastoral Council.

ORIGIN OF CONSENSUS
1850–55; < Latin, equivalent to consent(īre) to be in agreement, harmony (con- con- + sentīre to feel; cf. sense) + -tus suffix of v. action

USAGE NOTE FOR CONSENSUS
The consensus process involves listening as well as encouraging free and open exchange of ideas. When everyone contributes, the issue under discussion is refined and molded into a result that is supported by everyone. A member opposed to a decision that was reached by the group as a whole, should seriously reconsider his/her position and acknowledge the power inherent in the decision-making process. Consensus has been achieved by the Council when everyone can accept the decision.
Since one of the missions of the Parish Pastoral Council is to be a group of loving people, the Council’s decision-making process ought to be a sign of unity to the rest of the parish community. The technique of consensus demonstrates such harmony. To achieve consensus:

a) encourage group discussion whereby all Council members can express their individual concerns;

b) develop a general attitude of appreciation for each other’s feelings and judgments as a basis for understanding each other’s viewpoints;

c) focus on areas of agreement rather than disagreement; and,

d) seek through prayer and continued discussion a fair resolution knowing that all have seriously considered what each person has said.

The president must have the skills needed to achieve consensus, knowing when to allow further discussion and when to conclude it, how to involve all and not permit one or two members to dominate.

It should be noted that not all Council issues invite the use of consensus. Normally, for questions or issues of major importance to the parish community, it is advisable to strive for a true consensus within the Council.

The pastoral staff includes the pastor, and where present, associate pastor, deacon(s), parish minister(s), principal, director of religious education. During the dialogic process preceding consensus, members of the staff should be invited by the president into the discussion in order to give needed information.

**ARTICLE II: SECTION 5**

Once the dialogue has been completed and consensus on the issue has been formed, it then becomes a recommendation to the pastor. Experience indicates that in the majority of cases, the pastor accepts the Parish Pastoral Council recommendations. When a pastor does not accept a particular recommendation, he should give his reason(s) to the Council.

Should the relationship between a pastor and the Parish Pastoral Council become strained, either may appeal to the Dean of the Deanery. Subsequently, and only when truly necessary, an appeal in writing may be made to the Vicar General or the Bishop. The reasons for such an appeal should be noted in the minutes of the Parish Pastoral Council.

**In matters of major importance, the pastor would be well advised to take the recommendation of the Parish Pastoral Council, pray over it for a period of time, and then make a final determination concerning the issue. It is not necessary that the pastor makes his final determination at the same meeting in which he receives the recommendation.**
Article III
MEMBERSHIP

ARTICLE III: SECTION 1
The number of members on a Parish Pastoral Council will vary according to the following guidelines:

- Parishes with fewer than 50 households, usually three to six members;
- Parishes with between 50-100 households, six to nine members;
- Parishes with over 100 households, six to 12 members.

ARTICLE III: SECTION 2
Two-thirds of the Parish Pastoral Council membership shall be “at-large” (elected from the general membership). The remaining positions should be filled by pastoral appointment. The pastor does not vote in the election for council members because the Council is consultative to him. Diverse representation on the Council of all communities and groups is encouraged, (i.e., language, age, ethnicity, etc.).

The associate pastor, deacon(s), school principal, parish ministry coordinators, and director of religious education shall be ex-officio members in addition to the elected and appointed Council members. Other parish staff can be members of the Parish Pastoral Council upon determination of the pastor.

ARTICLE III: SECTION 3
Parish Pastoral Councils have the option of electing members on the basis of either two-year or three-year terms. Members shall be eligible to serve for two terms but no more than two consecutive terms. Parishioners may serve again after a lapse of at least one term.

Terms of all Council members should be staggered so that no more than half of the memberships will be replaced in any one year.

Members who have served less than one-half of the term may be eligible for re-election or re-appointment in accord with the provisions above.

These numbers do not include ex-officio members.

Ex-officio member are those who may participate in Parish Pastoral Council meetings and enter freely into discussion as part of the consensus seeking process, but they are not included in the final consensus and agreed upon recommendations of the Council (parish employees, ministry coordinators, principals, for Council members, etc.).

Ex-officio members shall not be counted as part of the quorum necessary for transacting business.

Appointments by the pastor should ensure representation from all segments of the parish.

Every effort should be made to involve as many people as possible in the role of Parish Pastoral Council member.
ARTICLE III: SECTION 4
In the event of a vacancy of an elected member, the parishioner with the next highest number of votes at the last election may fill the vacancy. Voting records should be kept on file in the parish office.

Vacancies of appointed members shall be filled by appointment of the pastor.

A vacancy occurs automatically when there are two consecutive unexcused absences or three unexcused absences in a 12-month period.

Article IV
NOMINATIONS and ELECTION PROCESS

ARTICLE IV: SECTION 1
The current and former Parish Pastoral Council members share the responsibility for the process of nominating and electing new Council members: The search for new Council members is an on-going activity of the entire Council. All new members should be responsible for seeking potential candidates through the years, particularly taking note of those in the parish who are mission-minded, those who shine with the joy of the Gospel, those who are on fire for Christ, and are eager to bring more people into full communion with the Church.

ARTICLE IV: SECTION 2
To be eligible for election to the Council, one must be:

a) An active Catholic, registered in the parish, and in good standing with the Church;

b) Age 18 or older;

c) Council members should be familiar and compliant with the Diocesan Safe Environment Policies and Procedures. The annual Code of Conduct and Background Check is highly recommended.

ARTICLE IV: SECTION 3
The election process shall include:

a) Educating the parish about the role and responsibilities of Parish Pastoral Council members;

Regular attendance by all members of the Council is necessary for the Council to operate effectively and efficiently. Only for serious reasons should a Council member miss a meeting.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCE means the failure to personally notify either the Chairperson of the Council or the Pastor regarding the necessary absence.

Nominations and election procedures shall be conducted in such a way as to reflect true representation of all segments and viewpoints of the parish.

Membership on the Parish Pastoral Council should be seen as service to the Church. Therefore, the election process should be conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the parishioners are given ample time to make their selections in a responsible way.
b) Educating the parish on the election process, through publications as well as from the pulpit;
c) Nominating suitable candidates;
d) Publishing information about the nominees;
e) Electing new members of the Council; and,
f) Public installation of the new members.

**ARTICLE IV: SECTION 4**
The election of new Council members shall be concluded by June 30.

The new Council members and Officers should be installed by the last weekend of August. Please report the name of the President of the Parish Pastoral Council to the Vicar General as soon as possible, including their contact information and preferred method of contact.

**Article V**
**OFFICERS: TERMS AND DUTIES**

**ARTICLE V: SECTION 1**
The Council shall select from among its *officio* members, a president and vice-president. A secret ballot may be helpful in this process. A secretary may be selected in the same manner or, if preferred, may be a non-member of the Council; (in the case of the latter, the secretary shall not be eligible to participate in the discussions unless invited).

**ARTICLE V: SECTION 2**
Officers shall be elected annually. No officer shall serve more than two consecutive, full years in the same position.

The term “president” is used to more clearly describe the office, i.e., to preside over meetings and to encourage participation of all members.

If a parish has a salaried or volunteer secretary, the Council may wish to ask him/her to take the minutes of the meeting.

Recognizing that every Christian has unique gifts, it is believed that sharing in the leadership roles of the Parish Pastoral Council is not only a way to develop these gifts, but also a means of strengthening the Body of Christ.
ARTICLE V: SECTION 3

The President shall:

a) Work with the pastor in preparing the agenda for each meeting;
b) Ensure that the Council functions in accordance with the Norms for the Parish Pastoral Council;
c) See that the goals established in previous Council meetings are carried out in a way that provides continuity from one Council meeting to the next;
d) Be eligible to participate as an *ex-officio* member of any subcommittee of the parish.

The Vice-President shall perform the duties of the President when the President is absent and as delegated by the President.

ARTICLE V: SECTION 4

The Secretary is responsible for:

a) Keeping accurate and detailed minutes of all meetings;
b) Print and distribute copies of the minutes to all Parish Pastoral Council members within 10 days of the meeting, to be reviewed and approved by the Council at the beginning of the next meeting;
c) Publishing a summary of the final recommendations made by the Parish Pastoral Council and approved by the pastor, for viewing by all parishioners;
d) Maintaining and preserving the official minutes of the Parish Pastoral Council as part of the permanent records of the parish.

The minutes of the meetings should become part of the permanent records of the parish. The master copy should be kept and filed in the parish archives.
Article VI
MEETINGS

ARTICLE VI: SECTION 1
The Parish Pastoral Council shall meet on a regular basis; monthly is preferred.

In addition to regular meetings, a minimum of one meeting per year should be held for the sole purpose of spiritual growth of Council members.

- Meetings shall be carefully and intentionally planned and executed.
- Meetings should begin and conclude on time (it is recommended that meetings should not extend beyond two hours).
- An agenda should be sent to all Council members in advance (seven days is recommended to allow time for prayerful consideration for the included items).
- Agenda items should include the following:
  
  **Prayer:** An opportunity to put Christ at the center of decision making and to share faith together. Meetings open and close with prayer.

  **Learning:** Time spent engaging in a discussion concerning the teachings of the Church and topics related to spiritual growth of all Council members (see Appendices for suggested resources).

  **Goals and Objectives:** Time spent discussing and evaluating how the parish is incorporating the diocesan Mutually Shared Vision into parish life and ministry within the context of “The Joy of the Gospel.”

  **Committee Reports:** Listening to how various committees are implementing the diocesan Mutually Shared Vision (Growing in Holiness, Forming Intentional Disciples, and Sent to Witness). Informative reports should be limited to 5 minutes each unless prior permission was granted for extended time.

  **Set Date and Agenda Items for Next Meeting**
  (*see Appendix A for sample agenda*)

  **SAMPLE AGENDA INCLUDED AS APPENDIX A**
  
  **PRAYER:** An opportunity to share faith together. Meetings should open and close with prayer.

  **LEARNING:** Time spent engaging in discussion concerning the teachings of the Church and topics related to spiritual growth of all Council members (see Appendices for suggested resources).

  **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:** Discussion and evaluation about how the parish is incorporating the diocesan Mutually Shared Vision into parish life and ministry (see Article II: Section 2).

  **REPORTS:** Listening to how each Committee is implementing the Diocesan Mutually Shared Vision.

  **NEXT MEETING:** Date and agenda items.
ARTICLE VI: SECTION 2
The Parish Pastoral Council may be called into a special session by the Council President with the approval of the pastor.

ARTICLE VI: SECTION 3
Two-thirds of the current officio members of the Parish Pastoral Council shall constitute a quorum.

A simple majority of those present is required for any specific determinations and recommendations to be agreed upon and submitted to the pastor.

Article VII
COMMITTEES

ARTICLE VII: SECTION 1
The Parish Pastoral Council should assist the pastor in the establishment of committees where they do not already exist. In larger parishes, the Parish Pastoral Council may wish to recommend additional committees to meet specific needs of the pastoral plan, e.g., a separate committee for family life, evangelization, youth, temporalities, etc.

Each Parish Pastoral Council should establish those standing committees necessary for its work (examples of standing committees may be found in Appendix A).

ARTICLE VII: SECTION 2
Each standing committee shall be represented on the Parish Pastoral Council. The representative serves on the Council as an ex-officio member.

ARTICLE VII: SECTION 3
Members of committees should be familiar with deanery planning and recommendations made by diocesan offices/ministries in so far as these recommendations impact their specific area of concern.

The Parish Pastoral Council is concerned with the implementation of the Diocesan Mutually Shared Vision. The committees are primarily committees of the parish, not of the Parish Pastoral Council. They report to the Parish Pastoral Council on relevant issues.

To achieve harmony within the parish, no committee nor its subcommittee should act as an autonomous body. The standing committees relate to the Council and through the Council to one another.

This is not to imply that the committees are inhibited from acting responsibly in carrying out their functions. The operating principle should be that decisions are made at the appropriate level.

If a member of a standing committee is not already on the Parish Pastoral Council, the Council should assign one of its members to serve as a liaison to that committee.
Appendices
Appendix A
SAMPLE AGENDA

OPENING
• Prayer
• Reflect on and discuss: Scripture and/or a Spiritual book (Suggestions in Appendix B) (10 minutes)
• Take attendance

NEW BUSINESS
Growth in Holiness – planning for parish based efforts at spiritual growth
  a. Upcoming Bible Study
  b. Lenten/Advent extra Reconciliation times
  c. Rosary Group
  d. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
  e. Parish Mission/Evening of Recollection/Retreat

Forming Intentional Disciples
  a. Sacramental preparation and RCIA
  b. Upcoming youth events – DYC, Steubenville, Totus Tuus, VBS, vocation opportunities
  c. Upcoming Adult events and movements – (i.e. Cursillo, Catholic Man/Woman Nights, That Man is You, Welcome, ACTS, White House Retreat, Emmaus, Catholic Charismatic Renewal)
  d. Young Adult/Married/Family Events – (i.e. Theology on Tap, Small Faith groups, Family gatherings, etc.)

  e. Ongoing faith formation opportunities for all ages through catechesis and other means

Sent to Witness
  a. Outreach to divorced/those needing validations and support
  b. Outreach to the sick and homebound
  c. Outreach to non-Catholic spouse, apologetics, catechesis
  d. Outreach to high school/college age
  e. Signs of a Vibrant Parish (i.e. How do we welcome on Sunday?)
  f. Outreach to wider community “the nones”

REPORTS (LIMITED TO 5 MINUTES EACH)
  a. Pastor’s report
  b. Finance
  c. School Board
  d. Administration/Buildings/Maintenance
  e. Christian Service/St. Vincent de Paul/ Food Pantry
  f. Catholic organizations such as Knights of Columbus, Women’s/Men’s Club, etc.

Date of Next Meeting
Closing Prayer
Appendix B

RESOURCES


5. “Light of the Nations” ("Lumen Gentium") – Second Vatican Council

6. “Living As Missionary Disciples” – from US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)

7. *Forming Intentional Disciples* by Sherry Weddell

8. *Becoming a Parish of Intentional Disciples* by Sherry Weddell

9. “Welcoming the Stranger Among Us” – USCCB

10. “Open Wide Our Hearts” – USCCB


12. “Seven Signs of a Vibrant Parish” – Appendix C

13. Various Web resources:
   - Focusoncampus.org/content/how-to-evangelize
   - Franciscanathome.com/SCG
   - Franciscan Online Catechetical Institute (available to all parishes courtesy of the Knights of Columbus)
   - Bishop Barron – Word on Fire; wordonfire.org
   - amazingparish.org
The very first line in his Apostolic Exhortation, “The Joy of the Gospel,” Pope Francis reminds us, “The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus.” That’s it. Nothing else need be said. The reason for the existence of the 66 parishes and 17 missions of the diocese is to lead others to an encounter with Jesus. Therefore, it must also be said that we should continually evaluate all we do through the lens of, “Is [whatever it is we are doing] assisting us in our encounter with Jesus or hindering our encounter with Jesus?” Our schools, for example, should be places of encounter. Our Parish School of Religion (PSR) programs should be places of encounter. Our sports programs should be places of encounter. Our hospitals, our Knights of Columbus, our Parish Councils of Catholic Women (PCCW), and any and all other organizations should be places of encounter. If not, then we have to ask ourselves, “Why are we spending our precious time, energy, and resources toward this?”

In all that we do, our parishes should be building a “culture of encounter.” Pope St. John Paul spoke of a “Culture of Life.” We can speak of a “Culture of Vocations.” We must also have a “Culture of Encounter” with Jesus. That is why it is good to scrutinize all we do and ask such valid questions: How vibrant is our parish? In our sacramental life, commitment to prayer and formation, outreach to the poor, and hospitality and leadership—in all of these, are we encountering Jesus?

A disciple of the Kingdom of God who isn’t joyous doesn’t evangelize this world; he is sad.

—POPE FRANCIS, RECENT WEDNESDAY AUDIENCE
Vibrant Parishes are Sacramental parishes. “The whole liturgical life of the Church revolves around the Eucharistic sacrifice and the Sacraments” (Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC] 1113). The manner in which we celebrate the Sacraments bespeaks our attitude. For example, it might be beneficial to look at the type of baptismal font that is used in the Church. In the past, a decorated “salad bowl” has been used due to the fact that it can be moved from place to place. In some churches, the Reconciliation Room doubles as storage. Is the sanctuary cluttered with unnecessary items? What about the sacristy and vestibule? Are the altar linens clean? Do the vestments bespeak the noble actions we are celebrating?

Could we be more attentive to the music used for the celebration of Holy Mass? While many parishes have limited resources or no musicians at all, every attempt should be made for noble musical accompaniment. The simple melodies of the Latin chants of the Mass parts would be useful for those who may not have many options. Are the lectors and extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist well trained? Are the times for Mass and Reconciliation convenient for the people to take advantage?

While some of these questions could be subjective, the Church guides us with the principle of “noble simplicity” and the Roman Missal guides the actions of the celebrant through the rubrics. The care we give to the sacred space and the attention we give to the sacred action sends a message of what is important to us. The Catechism refers to the Sacraments as “the masterworks of God” (CCC 1116). The attention given to the noble, simple celebration of the Sacraments will assist the people of God in their encounter with Christ in the Sacraments.

The Eucharist is the ‘source and summit’ of the Christian life.

—CCC, 1324
A visitor searching for a parish typically decides within 10 minutes whether or not they will return, all based on how welcomed they are made to feel. It could be the greeter at the door, or an usher who helps them to find a seat or the location of the restrooms, or someone simply inviting them to coffee and donuts after Mass. What is the point? These little efforts at hospitality matter, they make a difference in the environment in which we encounter Christ! They make people feel welcome and less of a stranger. Isn’t that the kind of environment that all of our parishes should strive to create, especially in areas of the diocese where there are seasonal visitors enjoying the natural beauty of the Ozarks? These visitors may not end up joining the parish, but they go away with a positive experience of the community and hopefully will return in the future.

The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and minds of those who have encountered Jesus.

―POPE FRANCIS, “THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL”
The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw us to Himself. Only in God will we find the truth and happiness we never stop searching for: ‘the dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God...’” (CCC 27). We exist because God has created us through love, and through love, God continues to hold us in existence. On our part, we cannot live fully according to truth unless we freely acknowledge the love of God and entrust ourselves to our creator.

God is never finished with us. God never tires of us. God never gets bored with us. Actually, it is just the opposite! God is fascinated with us! Life, our lives, creation, and all of this world is part of a love story. Love never ends.

If God never ceases to draw us to Himself, then we must do our part to respond to the one who first loved us. How do we do that? We may do it through participation in retreat programs such as Cursillo: the White House Retreat, ACTS, and Welcome; or through special gatherings for prayer and learning such as: Catholic Man Night, Catholic Woman Night, That Man Is You, adoration programs, Bible study, Catholic faith studies, book clubs, rosary groups, Marian Consecration programs, and more.

A vibrant parish offers on-going faith formation, prayer opportunities, and catechesis programs so that all members can continue to grow in the faith. Why? “God never ceases to draw us to Himself.”

These two criteria are like the pillars of true love: deeds, and the gift of self.

—POPE FRANCIS, JUNE 7, 2013, SACRED HEART
A serious commitment to prayer and Christian spirituality should be promoted throughout the parish, beginning with the members of the parish staff! Do parish meetings begin and end with time for prayer? Pope Francis, in a prayer video stated, “Let us never forget that our joy is Jesus Christ – His faithful and inexhaustible love.” That “faithful and inexhaustible love” must be encountered when someone comes to the door of the parish office, or telephones or Emails the parish. And if that occurs, it is because the staff person who opens the door of the office, or picks up the phone is filled with the joy of Jesus Christ. To further reiterate what Pope Francis stated in the Joy of the Gospel, “The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and minds of those who have encountered Jesus.” An authentic encounter with the person of Jesus is the basis for any growth in holiness. And when that encounter occurs, the joy comes across at the office door, or over the phone, or through the Email platform, and in every parish meeting. When the parish staff is committed to prayer and Christian spirituality, that same desire becomes present in all parish meetings. By beginning a meeting with prayer and ending with prayer, even the most mundane meeting can become an encounter with Jesus.

Within the parish, hopefully there are opportunities for Eucharist adoration, prayer groups, Bible study, Marian devotions and the Liturgy of the Hours. While most may be unfamiliar with the Liturgy of the Hours, it is not difficult to introduce it into parish life. Morning Prayer could easily be incorporated into the daily routine 20 minutes prior to the morning Mass. In the Mutually Shared Vision for our diocese, we have outlined three priorities. Before we can Grow in Holiness, be Intentional Disciples, or Sent to Witness, we must have the desire and the capability to grow in holiness. Providing opportunities for personal growth in holiness helps to support a life of discipleship expressed through the vocations of marriage, the single life, the priesthood, and consecrated life.

Without vision the people perish.

—PROVERBS 29:18
The Diocese of Springfield - Cape Girardeau has many of the poorest counties in the State of Missouri. While Catholics may be only 6 percent of the general population, we have a beautiful mandate to do our part to assist those in need. Does your parish have a St. Vincent de Paul Society to assist those in need? Does that organization partner with other local religious denominations or civic organizations? Does the parish maintain or support a local food pantry? Can other parish groups such as the Knights of Columbus or the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women play a role in these areas? Could your parish “adopt” a parish in a poorer area of our diocese? Reaching out to meet the needs of the poor should be characteristic of every parish and mission of our diocese.

We promote the respect and dignity of life of every person, from “the womb to the tomb.” All humans were created in the image and likeness of God, including the death row inmate. We acknowledge that all persons, by virtue of their humanity have dignity and worth. We take a stand against any ideology counter to these basic principles. We therefore promote education and funding to support programs for the poor. Still more, are we sensitive to racism? Are we aware of human trafficking? Do we support efforts to promote employment and a just wage, do we combat homelessness, and the protection of marriage and family life? So many issues fall under the umbrella of “social justice.” Meeting the needs of the poor and those who are hungry is a good place to start.

One of the great challenges facing the Church in this generation is to foster in all the faithful a sense of personal responsibility for the Church’s mission, and to enable them to fulfill that responsibility as missionary disciples, as a leaven of the Gospel in our world.

— POPE FRANCIS, SEPT. 26, 2015
A leader in a parish setting, whether serving on the Pastoral or Finance council, or some other leadership position in the parish, must see their role as an opportunity for “servant leadership.” Leadership must be in service to the people of the parish and the diocese. In a diocese of our size and with a small Catholic population, it is important that we collaborate where we can to promote the works of the Church. Parish leadership should identify and call forth the gifts and talents of others, inviting them to build-up the parish. A strong sense of stewardship, offering opportunities for parishioners to use their time, talent, and treasure, will help the parish move forward in the three diocesan priorities of “Loving Jesus, Serving Jesus, and Sharing Jesus.”

My own eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared in the sight of every people—a light to reveal you to the nations; and, the glory of your people Israel

—Pope Francis, Recent Wednesday Audience