

The Catholic Parish of St Augustine of Canterbury, Springfield

Priest-in-Charge: Father Nick De Keyser

Telephone: 01245 465333
Mobile: 07736 242747
Email: nick.dekeyser@btinternet.com

The Presbytery
Beardsley Drive
Chelmsford
CM1 6GQ

To: All parishioners.

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

Following a meeting of the existing parish council on 8 October it was agreed that we should reinvent and restructure our council based on a Vision for our parish

What is set out in this document is the agreed Vision and Model for the Parish Pastoral Council together with some commentary and thoughts for consideration.

At the Open Meeting on 4th November this new structure is open for discussion. We have prayed about this and we hope that you will all want to share the vision and ideas. However we are conscious that others will have ideas of their own and it is important that we share them with each other. So we set out our thoughts for you along with some legal facts of life and look forward to discussing them with you on 4th November.

Legal Facts of Life

In establishing a new Parish Pastoral Council for our Church of St Augustine of Canterbury, we would like to begin by explaining how such a council fits into the working of our Church. There has often been confusion about Parish Councils and Pastoral Councils. In Canon Law there is no such thing as a Parish Council. The only recognised council is a Parish Pastoral Council.

The idea of the "pastoral" council had its genesis in the 1965 Vatican II Decree on Bishops (Christus Dominus, par. 27). This decree recommended "pastoral" councils at the diocesan level and Canon 536 then applied the "pastoral" council idea to parishes. The "pastoral" council exists for the purpose of fostering parish activity and (according to the decree) has a threefold purpose.

- 1) to investigate pastoral matters,
- 2) to ponder or reflect on them, and
- 3) to reach conclusions that are recommended to the pastor.

In Canon Law a parish is defined as a certain community of the Christian faithful stably constituted in a particular church, whose pastoral care is entrusted to a pastor under the authority of the diocesan bishop (515).

It is therefore the priest's responsibility to be your pastor. In order to provide the best possible pastoral care we want us to have the most effective Parish Pastoral Council that we can have.

It is important to note that under Canon Law these councils are "consultative" in their nature. They are not strictly decision making bodies but it would be the intention to pay great heed to any recommended decisions of a Parish Pastoral Council.

We wish to adopt this Pastoral Parish Council model described in Canon Law and to make it as effective as we possibly can in the service of fostering activity within our parish.

It is our responsibility to make our parish as strong and as welcoming as we can possibly be and we think that we should never assume that everything that we do is as good as it can be, nor that we are doing everything that we should be doing.

It is clear to us that if we are to have a Parish Pastoral Council that it must be something that adds to our parish life and it would not be a good use of parishioner's time to be a part of something that was not designed to make a positive difference to our parish life.

We already have an excellent parish and we want to clearly express our gratitude to all those people who help and have helped to make it so good. Much of what is in our vision is happening to some extent but there is nothing that cannot be improved upon and it is our hope and prayer that we can make it even better, wider and deeper.

Even small changes or additions can make things better. We should make every effort to make our worship as good as it can be for the greater glory of God. We can widen participation in our parish life so that more people get involved beyond Sunday Mass, we can widen our outreach to those who do not yet know the Good News and we can deepen our faith lives, our support for one another and our concern for our neighbours.

As your pastor the priest may bear the ultimate responsibility under Canon Law but we hope that together we can forge a new PPC that will make a positive difference to all our lives.

OUR VISION

Our vision for our parish is that we are:

- a dynamic worshipping community - where people come for the first time and immediately sense the presence of God
- a community where everyone is growing in their understanding of the Catholic Faith
- a community where everyone is growing in the life of prayer and their relationship with God
- a community where practical care is given to those in need,
- a community where more people are actively involved in the Mission of the Church

Our vision is more than just a few words. The vision would be something that we touch on repeatedly going forward. It would be a guide for us when we struggle with decisions in the future. The vision would help us to focus on what is important when we have choices to make.

Everything you read from here onwards is about how we might bring this vision into reality. The Vision is the really important bit and the rest is how we think we can start on the path to fulfilling it.

MODEL

There are lots of ways that we could structure a PPC and many of them will be workable. We have looked at what happens elsewhere and at what we already have at St Augustine's. In order to be true to the vision and maximise the ability for people to be a part of it, the following is what we think would work for us.

The membership of the PPC should be of a manageable size whilst affording the appropriate opportunity to bring advice and expertise to the council.

The recommendation is for the PPC to consist of:

- Parish Priest
- Deacon
- Chair of the PPC
- Secretary to the PPC
- Chair of the Finance Committee
- Young Person Aged between 16 and 25
- Catechist (Faith & Worship)
- Care for our church (see below)
- Faith beyond Church Walls (Justice/charity/ Social responsibility Representative)

The top four of these are self-explanatory. As for the rest; Canon Law requires a parish to have a Finance Committee and we think that it is important that when we are considering any activity in our parish we do so conscious of the need to use our financial resources as effectively as possible. Therefore having the Chair of the Finance Committee on the PPC makes good sense.

We want people of all ages and from all walks of life to get involved and, although we are sure that middle aged and older people will want to participate without making any positive effort to recruit such age groups, we really would like our parish to hear the voice of young people. To that end we would like to have someone specifically from the younger age group who will canvas and represent the opinions of our younger parishioners.

A catechist is essential because if we are to properly address pastoral matters we need to look at our programmes for formation of young and old alike. It is not necessary for all catechists to be on the PPC so long as one catechist is and that person co-ordinated the other programmes.

Someone needs to continue to oversee how we care for our church building and take responsibility for all those practical things without which nothing happens properly (or at all). We can't think of a snappy title for such a person but we can work on that together.

We also need someone who will oversee and to an extent co-ordinate our practical implementation of our faith through charity and caring. The Chair of the Parish SVP might provide an important voice about how we are putting our faith into practice through Catholic Social teaching but it could be someone else entirely.

Someone on the PPC needs to be responsible for our ecumenical relationships and our joint management of the church buildings, but that might be one of the people above or it may be a separate person. The PPC must not get too big but neither should we overlook important work. PPC MEETINGS

Meetings would be every two months and to be kept reasonably short. They do not need to be held in the church, they might take place in the home of one of the members. There will be an agenda designed to initiate projects, keep track of existing activity and provide advice or assistance to working groups where that is needed.

Standing Committee

The Parish Priest, the Chair and the Secretary will form a standing committee that will ensure that over time we keep to our overall agenda and will determine what should go on the agenda for each meeting of the PPC.

Working Groups (or possibly called Action Groups)

What has been set out so far involves only a few people sitting on the PPC. If the PPC co-ordinates and oversees things these working or action groups will be where the hands on work is done. We hope that we will be able to encourage many more people to play an active part in our parish life by joining in to help with particular individual projects.

The more people who are prepared to do something (accepting that everyone has different time constraints and other responsibilities) then we can achieve a lot more. We cannot only share the existing work we can do new things. We don't expect people to make a lifetime commitment but if you can do something to help our parish family it would be really appreciated. This is really a case where many hands make light work and where there is an almost infinite amount of good work we can do if we have many more hands.

We would envisage the PPC recommending a course of action and assuming that I decide to put it into action we would set up a working group to keep that project moving. That may or may not have a person from the PPC on the Working Group and at appropriate intervals the working group can report back on progress to the PPC. In this way people will be able to help out with something practical and when the project is complete the people on that working group will disband. They may do something else or they may stop for a while. The PPC will co-ordinate and oversee what is being done but the groups will do it.

In the first instance we envisage 7 working groups but suspect that you will be able to think of others and in time we would hope to have lots of groups working on individual projects for the benefit of our parish life. It would be for the PPC to decide which projects to undertake at a particular time. You may think of other areas of activity that could be set up and we would like to hear any ideas on 4th November but our first thoughts are that the following groups will be needed.

1. Faith & Worship

- Liturgy
- Music
- Readers
- Servers
- Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist
- Children's Liturgy
- Prayer of the Faithful Leaders

- Welcome ministry

WHO would be on such a group: Priest & Deacon and those responsible for each of the areas above as required. There is no need for everyone to attend every meeting of a working group. It may be that at one particular time attention needs to be devoted to one area or another. It is even possible that different working groups could exist within this one group.

2. Caring for our Church

- Setting up for Mass
- Cleaning
- Noticeboards
- Flowers
- Refreshments

WHO: Those who want to be involved in these things co-ordinated by a person on the PPC designated to this task.

3. Evangelism and Outreach

- Attracting new people: (lapsed or from new developments)
- The wider church (papal or diocesan matters)

WHO: Young Person and others with an interest.

4. Faith beyond the Church Walls

- Social responsibility
- Justice
- Charity
- Marriage & Family Life

WHO: Anyone who is interested in the topic.

5. Communications

- Website
- Parish Magazine
- Local Media
- Directory

WHO: skilled website managers, budding writers, bloggers, photographers, editors and people who are interested in promoting the parish

6. Social

- An annual party
- A Christmas dinner
- A Quiz

WHO: People who are interested in organising such things. Party people willing to help others to have a good time.

7. Finance & Stewardship

- The existing Finance Committee with a remit to look at stewardship and making our financial life more mainstream and transparent.

WHO: existing FC plus co-opted people as necessary

People would be appointed to the PPC by me from those people who volunteer following a request to people to get involved. We hope that will have lots of volunteers and if we do then we will try to find roles for everyone either on the PPC or on working groups. Initial terms on the PPC will be for three years (Deacon, Priest and Chair of Finance Committee are appointed ex officio)

As part of an ongoing process of sharing the work and getting as many people involved as possible we suggest that no one should serve more than two terms (of three years) in any role but someone who has done two terms (but not as Chair) could go on to be Chair for up to two more terms of three years.

Anyone who has served two terms and is therefore not eligible to stay on the PPC could still be on a working group and that would be encouraged.

Anyone who has not held office on the PPC for three years could apply to be involved again.

All roles will be advertised at the end of the three year term and applicants will be invited to put themselves forward or be nominated. All positions will be filled by appointment.

Some of this administration and organisation may not be too interesting to some of you but what is really important is our Vision and making it a reality. The structures are just a way of getting it moving and keeping us moving towards a realisation of the Vision. It is possible that structures might change as we develop together and we might decide that some things are more important than others at certain times but we will act in the light of our Vision.

Our Vision is more than just a few words.

Please come on 4th November to share your ideas, listen to others and offer your help as you feel able. A dynamic worshipping community is going to need a lot of participants working together.

We are grateful to the existing council who have helped with this so far and now look forward to discussing these ideas with you all on 4th November at 8pm at St Augustine's. Please take time to pray about how we take this forward so that we can come to good decisions for our parish.

With our best wishes and prayers,

Father Nick and C. M. Webb.