

St. John Neumann – Covenant

MISSION STATEMENT

*Catholic Community of St. John Neumann
1998-1999*

FOUNDED on the teachings of Jesus Christ,
NOURISHED by the hospitality of the Californ Christian
Communities,

FORMED with a commitment to Social Ministry, and,
STRENGTHENED by the Holy Spirit

*The Catholic Community of St. John Neumann
is a jubilant people
on a continuing spiritual journey of hope:*

TO CELEBRATE AND DEEPEN our faith

TO SHARE our unique gifts, talents and treasures

TO CHERISH all life

TO LIVE in openness, acceptance and love.

1. Introduction

Recognizing that sound decisions emerge from the collective wisdom of the People of God, Father William Mickiewicz, Pastor of the Church of Saint John Neumann, established a team of parishioners described as the Governance Planning Group in the spring of 2004. The mission of the group was to define and construct a Pastoral Council for the parish. At the onset of the discernment process, it was decided that the Pastoral Council should be spiritually based, fully aligned with church teachings, and collaborative in nature.

The documents of the Second Vatican Council (Appendix A – Pastoral Council Foundation Documents) state that Catholics have a right and duty to express their opinion on what pertains to the good of the Church. We, the community of St. John Neumann, embrace these foundation documents and are challenged to accept increased responsibility and accountability for the ongoing vitality of the parish. These documents encourage the establishment of a Pastoral Council, with its express function being to investigate, ponder, and discern on pastoral matters.

By nurturing the formation of a Pastoral Council, Fr. Bill affirmed the wisdom of his parishioners and expressed his desire to share with them responsibility for the governance of the parish: notions which he has consistently affirmed through his consultation and participation as a member of the Governance Planning Group.

The Governance Planning Group underwent a period of prayer, reading, discussion and exploration in order to arrive at a means of discernment appropriate for the governance of our parish. We concluded that the Shared Wisdom Model was best suited for parish governance. Under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Shared Wisdom Model assumes that no one individual is likely to have the correct and complete answer to a complex question. Rather the group as a whole, with all members participating in order to explore issues and arrive at a consensus is more likely to arrive at a better decision.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the parish Pastoral Council is to investigate pastoral matters, to consider them thoroughly, and to propose practical conclusions. This process is defined as pastoral. Specifically, the Pastoral Council's purpose is to envision and support pastoral planning by evaluating the suitability and effectiveness of various programs and services

The council's first task is to study priority pastoral matters and to shed light on them. Its second task is to reflect on them thoroughly, to discern their true nature, to evaluate and to ponder them. Its final task is to draw sound conclusions. The council presents their conclusions in the form of recommendations. Together with the pastor the Council proposes approaches for implementation.

3. Scope

The scope of the council is pastoral matters. Its boundaries include everything that pertains to the 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. The scope includes all the practical matters of parish life, excluding intrusion into the day-to-day operations of individual ministries, unless a ministry specifically requests assistance in achieving greater clarification about its role and strategic direction.

The Council does not deal with the daily operations of the parish, e.g., parish programming, budgeting and personnel matters. The pastor has responsibility for these matters and for management of the staff. Some elements of administration belong to other groups, such as the Finance Committee.

4. Criteria for Membership

Pastoral Council members are chosen, above all, for their ability to accomplish the main task of the council - the work of investigating, considering, and recommending practical conclusions on pastoral matters. They are able to do the work of the council in prayer, study, discernment and dialogue, to work collaboratively with others, and to seek what will best serve the needs and contribute to building the parish community as the Body of Christ. They are baptized and confirmed Catholics who are registered, active and participating in the parish. They embrace and seek to follow the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. Due regard is to be given to the cultural, ethnic and gender diversity of the community, social conditions, professions, gifts and roles when choosing Council members. Council members seek to avoid a narrow focus on personal interests or single issues. They are parishioners noted for their faith, good morals, and prudence.

The pastor has a unique position on the Pastoral Council, as he is its sponsor, spiritual leader, and consultant on matters pertaining to dogma and doctrine. Beyond these roles, he participates as a full-fledged member in discernment and consensus building.

5. Selection of Members

The council is comprised of nine members who are succeeded over a two to three year period so as to stagger terms in order to retain reasonable continuity. A councilor's term shall be 3 years and the councilor shall not serve successive terms. The pastor is a continuing member of the council.

Prospective members may be identified by the council or may nominate themselves. Individuals who are called to this ministry will reflect on the criteria for membership and complete an application and present it to the pastor. The pastor or his designee will interview the candidate and

then present him or her to the council. The council reviews the application and invites the candidate to participate in an evening of discernment.

In order to ensure that the Pastoral Council reflects the composition of the parish, the Pastor may appoint in addition to the nine selected members, up to two individuals to serve as members of the Council for a one, two or three year term.

Council vacancies caused by resignations will be filled at the time of the annual selection of new members concluding on Pentecost Sunday of each year. Unless the total membership of the Council falls below 5, the Council in consultation with the pastor may consider an off-cycle selection date.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Through the acceptance of this covenant, the parish community, and more specifically, each individual within the community agrees to support the fullness of this covenant by practicing the key concepts of shared wisdom, collaboration, discernment, and ministry in all facets of parish life.

The Pastoral Council is a structure, which can foster the full participation of the entire parish in the life and mission of the Church. One of the chief ways that a Pastoral Council functions is by pastoral planning. The members of the Pastoral Council need to be rooted in prayer, open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, committed to patient listening and study, and working with the Pastor, recommending plans and directions which will enhance the quality of parish life. The pastor consults with the Pastoral Council through a consensus-building process in an atmosphere of prayerful reflection. Pastoral Council members may become privy to confidential information and must respect and maintain that confidentiality.

Pastoral planning is essential to the development of a parish. It encourages the fullest collaboration of clergy, religious and laity. Pastoral planning enables the parish to become ever more fully the people of God, sharing in the mission of Christ, and developing the structures necessary for supporting its community life and carrying out its mission. Pastoral planning increases clarity about the mission and priorities of the parish, affects the way in which the resources of the parish are used, and encourages the participation and support of the parish members.

The Pastoral Council will develop in collaboration with the parish community a five-year pastoral plan that will be updated on an semiannual basis. Council members will facilitate an annual parish town meeting to report on the council's progress and to elicit the advice of parishioners.

7. Meetings and Agenda

The Pastoral Council meets monthly. Pastoral councilors select a Chair from within the group. With group input, he or she develops the council agenda, and designates a scribe at the beginning of each meeting. The Chair directs council discussions, making sure that everyone speaks (and is heard) and that the meeting proceeds efficiently and in focus. The Chair also monitors the work of the councilors between regular meetings, and ensures (with the secretary) that meeting minutes are sent, along with the agenda and supporting documents, to each councilor at least one week before every meeting.

The Chair constructs the agenda with input from the pastor and other council members (See Appendix B – Examples of Agenda Items). The Chair states the goals for each meeting, the means

and group process for reaching the goals, and the materials needed to accomplish them. The agenda guides the meeting. It begins with prayer, and then a review of the minutes of the previous meeting, and concludes with a brief evaluation. If any member is dissatisfied with the outcome, he or she expresses his or her reservations and asks the council to clarify whatever remains obscure. When all are satisfied with the consultation, the pastor formally accepts the council's recommendations, which are reported in the minutes.

8. Pastoral Council Communication

Effective communication is a pre-condition for effective parish life. The Pastoral Council is to be viewed as a part of the overall parish community and will communicate with that premise in mind using the parish bulletin as its official means of communication, although other modes of communication will also be employed depending on needs and circumstances. Thoughtful consideration will be given to all aspects of communication within the council as well as outwardly. To that end, we will assure our efforts via periodic evaluations. Our communication plan addresses the goals and characteristics of the communications we endeavor to achieve (See Appendix C – Pastoral Council Communication Plan).

9. Role of Pastor as Pastoral Council Member

The pastor has a dual role within the pastoral council, i.e. that of council member as well as shepherd of the parish (Canon Law 5:19). This role as shepherd is to reflect church teachings and parish management concerns. He also consults others besides the pastoral council about parish governance. He relies upon the parish staff for their expertise and consults them daily about the management of parish operations. Indeed, he may occasionally ask parish staff members to attend council meetings in order to put their knowledge at the service of the pastoral council. Moreover, the pastor relies on the Finance Committee to develop, monitor, and report on the parish budget. Finance council members are chosen for their technical skill in realms of accounting and finance. The pastoral council, in contrast, defines primary pastoral goals and discerns the long-term objectives of the parish. Functionally, the pastoral council members investigate pastoral matters in a general way, reflect on them deeply in dialogue, and then propose conclusions appropriate to the parish.

10. Council Member Formation

Considering the responsibility entrusted to them, Pastoral Council members are expected to participate in an ongoing formation process.

The formation process will consist of the following:

1. Through a series of bulletin inserts/flyers, the pastor informs parishioners about the reasons for a Pastoral Council, its purpose and function, and their role in parish governance.
2. Members will be required to attend a general orientation on Pastoral Councils provided by the diocese or other recognized institutions. In addition, the Diocese will offer presentations / workshops on a variety of topics including pastoral planning, goal-setting, visioning, conflict resolution and discernment.

3. Ongoing formation at the parish level may include an annual evening of recollection and other prayer experiences including an annual retreat.

4. The appointment of a sponsor for new Pastoral Council members; sponsors assist new members in mastering their role for the first six months of their terms.