

**St. John Neumann – Covenant**  
(Revised January 16, 2008)

**MISSION STATEMENT**

*Catholic Community of St. John Neumann*

**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 Catholic Community of St. 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 function being to investigate, ponder, and discern 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. They 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 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. Specifically, the Pastoral Council's purpose is to ensure that the vision of the Mission Statement is pursued and to support pastoral planning by evaluating the suitability and effectiveness of various programs and services.

The council's first task is to identify and study priority pastoral matters. Its second task is to reflect on them thoroughly, to understand the issues involved, and 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 good stewards 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 the responsibility for management of the staff. Some elements of administration belong to other groups, such as the Finance Council.

## 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 parish needs and to 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, age, and gender diversity of the community, as well as 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 Church 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 ten members, three of whom are succeeded every year, 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 present his/her application to the council. The council reviews the application and invites the candidate to participate in an evening of discernment.

Council vacancies caused by resignations will be filled at the time of the annual selection of new members concluding on or near 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. Working with the pastor, they will recommend 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 annual basis. Council members will facilitate a semi-annual parish town meeting to address parish issues, to report on the council's progress, and to elicit the advice of parishioners.

## 7. Meetings and Agenda

The Pastoral Council meets monthly. On an annual basis, Pastoral councilors select a Chair from within the group. With group input, he or she develops the council agenda. 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 that meeting minutes are sent, along with the agenda and supporting documents, to each councilor at least one week before every meeting. A member is identified to record the minutes of the meetings.

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 a review of the minutes of the previous meeting if necessary. The meeting concludes with a brief evaluation and closing prayer. If anyone is dissatisfied with the consultation, they express their reservation(s), and ask 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 and website 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. Our communication process will be evaluated regularly. **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, 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 Council 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 priority 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 encouraged 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. Present Pastoral Council members will be available and supportive of new members in their development as councilors.

## 11. Conclusion

In summary, this Covenant expresses the goal of full parish participation in the governance of the Catholic Community of St. John Neumann. It reflects the spirit and promise of Vatican II that fosters the proper role of the laity in the life of the Church. On an annual basis, the Pastoral Council will review this Covenant to foster faithful adherence to its purpose.