

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT PASTORAL COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

1. How can I find out more about being a member of the Pastoral Council?

There are a number of things you can do to learn more about being a Pastoral Council member. The two major initiatives you can take are to attend the “*General Information Meeting*”. You can also meet one-on-one with a current Pastoral Council member to learn more about it and to have your questions answered. Check out the parish website to see who the current members are – their pictures are also provided so you can put a name with a face. If you wish to get their phone number to arrange for a discussion or meeting, please call the Parish Office.

2. How can I be sure that I am being called to this ministry?

While none of us can have 100% certainty that we are being called to this ministry, it is recommended that prospective members pray over their decision to participate. They are encouraged to consult with current Pastoral Council members and discuss their interest with the members of their family.

Finally, there will be a “*Discernment Evening*” that is designed to help prospective members determine whether the Spirit is calling them to serve in this way, and whether this is the right time in their lives to devote themselves to this ministry.

3. What is the purpose of the Pastoral Council?

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 St. John's “Mission Statement” is pursued and to support pastoral planning by evaluating the suitability and effectiveness of various parish 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.

4. What are the criteria for membership?

Perhaps the most important criteria for membership is the willingness to serve the parish community. And, the willingness to give your talents and skills for the development of the seven areas of parish life which include: Worship & Spirituality; Formation; Social Ministry; Connxions; Community Life; Stewardship; and, Leadership. In addition each member is expected to foster the following capabilities that have proven to be essential in the effectiveness of Pastoral Council members:

- Ability to recommend practical conclusions on pastoral matters
- Approach duties with prayer, study, discernment and dialogue
- Ability to work collaboratively with others
- Seek what is best for the community
- Are persons of faith, good morals and prudence

5. How much time will I have to devote to membership responsibilities?

It is hard to put an exact time commitment on one's responsibilities as a Council member. In addition to attending a monthly meeting (2-3hrs), most Council members put in another 2-3 hours which would be devoted to between-meeting activities such as:

- Subcommittee work

- Liaison role with parish staff and other parish ministries / activities

- Responding to email communications

- Preparation for Council meetings

- Attendance at an annual retreat or special Council member formation workshop

6. When are Pastoral Council meetings?

At St. John's Pastoral Council meetings occur monthly and are generally 2-3 hours in length. Approximately 8 meetings per year take place on Wednesday evenings. There are 4 Saturday morning meetings.

7. How long are members expected to serve?

Members serve a 3 year term.

8. When do membership terms begin?

Terms begin in the spring. The induction ceremony takes place on Pentecost Sunday.

9. Are there any other practical things I can do to learn more about being a Pastoral Council member?

There are quite a few things you can do to test whether Pastoral Council membership is compatible with your talents and skills:

- Read the St. John Neumann Covenant (located on the parish website) to understand the foundations of the Pastoral Council and to learn more about how the laity is to be involved in Church governance

- Review the Parish Five Year Plan (located on the parish website) to see how each of the seven areas of parish life are moving forward to meet the needs of all parishioners

- Request the booklet, "Sharing Wisdom", from the Parish Office which provides an explanation of the group decision-making process that we use in Pastoral Council deliberations.

- Talk with current Pastoral Council members

- Read the Minutes of previous Pastoral Council meetings which are found on the parish website

- Attend a Pastoral Council meeting to observe first hand what takes place and how the members deliberate on pastoral matters. If you are interested in attending a Pastoral Council meeting, contact Fr. Bill (832-2513).

10. Why should I consider whether membership on the Council is the right thing for me to do?

Each of us has been given certain gifts and talents which we can use to help build the Catholic Community of St. John Neumann. There are times in our lives when we can best put those talents to use. In some cases, it is when we have children and are concerned about

their faith development; in other cases, it is when we are steeped in our profession and see opportunities to transfer some of those abilities and skills to the development of the parish community; in still other cases, it is when there has been a major change in our life situation, such as retirement or marriage, and we now find it appropriate to give of ourselves in a new way. Everyone has a special life experience and has a unique relationship with the Lord that can be used to foster the development of the community.