

SPC Pastoral Council Foundation Document

February 20, 2005

1. Introduction

Recognizing that sound pastoral decisions are informed by the wisdom of the people of God, Father Tom Newton re-established the Pastoral Council of St. Peter Celestine Church on October 20, 2004. Such councils have been recommended by the documents of the Second Vatican Council. They state that Catholics have a right and duty to express their opinion on what pertains to the good of the Church. Pastors should willingly consult their people and use their prudent advice. Therefore, this council is present to investigate, ponder, and recommend on issues brought before them. The council is not a governing body. By establishing this pastoral council, the pastor acknowledges the wisdom of his parishioners and expresses his desire to share with them his responsibility for the governance of the parish.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the St. Peter Celestine (SPC) parish pastoral council is to investigate pastoral matters, to consider them thoroughly, and to propose practical conclusions about them. This council's task is, first of all, to study those matters brought to its attention and 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 SPC council presents these conclusions to the pastor in the form of recommendations. This threefold task of the council-investigating, considering, and recommending conclusions-is called pastoral planning. After the pastor has accepted the recommendations of the council, he directs their implementation. SPC council members may assist him, but strictly speaking, implementation is the responsibility of the pastor, not this council.

3. Scope

The scope of the SPC council is pastoral matters. These may include everything that pertains to the pastor's 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 of the practical matters of parish life. There is, in short, nothing about which the pastor may not consult the council, apart from faith, orthodoxy, moral principles or laws of the universal Church.

4. Criteria for Membership

SPC pastoral council members are chosen for their ability to accomplish the main task of the council-the work of investigating, considering, and recommending practical conclusions. They are baptized Catholics, who reflect the parish's various neighborhoods, social and professional groups, and apostolates. Council members are prayerful individuals who accept the teachings of Vatican II. These men and women possess a gift or talent which will allow them to relate to other members as a team in order to study, ponder, and recommend on parish matters. Finally, they are parishioners noted for their faith, good morals, and prudence.

5. Selection of Members

Twelve pastoral council members are selected through a discernment process. Four other members sit on the council as representatives of the SPC Finance Council, Religious Education Board, School Advisory Board, and Ministry Board.

Terms for the initial 12 members discerned in Fall 2004 will be as follows:

2006 – 4 members will come off council after serving 2 years. Discern 4 new members with 3-year term (2006-2009)

2007 – 4 members will come off council after serving 3 years. Discern 4 new members with 3-year term(2007-2010)

2008 – last 4 original members will come off council after serving 4 years. Discern 4 new members with 3-year term(2008-2011)

Discernment will continue annually to elect 4 members to 3-year terms. The 4 members appointed to this Council will be selected by their respective boards. Term is at the discretion of the board, with a 2-year minimum requirement.

All parishioners are notified of open positions via Mass announcements, Church bulletin, and parish mailing. All are invited to attend or nominate someone to attend the first information session. This meeting introduces interested parishioners to the work of the council. The pastor explains his motives for establishing the SPC council and invites interested parishioners to express their thoughts. This initial inquiry session takes place during May and will be offered twice. The second session will be held by the end of June and is for those parishioners who seriously want to pursue the discernment process and are devoted to a reflection on the qualities of a good council member. Participants can identify the characteristics of the parish and the gifts which they possess which would, in turn, be used to strengthen the community. The process culminates in an evening of discernment to determine replacement members.

The members of said pastoral council are pertinent to the appointment of Father Tom Newton as pastor of St. Peter Celestine Church. If Father Tom Newton should no longer be pastor, all Council members should submit their resignations, as this Council ceases to exist. The next pastor may accept these resignations or decline in order for a new council to be created at the new pastor's discretion.

6. Officers

The pastor presides at every meeting of the council. He consults, he accepts or rejects recommendations, and he develops the agenda with the council officers. The pastor and council members select two officers from among their number. They are the chairperson and vice-chairperson. With the pastor they develop the council agenda. The chairperson role is to be action-oriented, often requiring follow-up meetings with groups as they work on projects between meetings. The vice-chairperson helps to facilitate the meetings and ensure participation of all, in order to keep the agenda moving and direct the conversation back to the topic at hand. The vice-chairperson will also facilitate meetings in the chairperson's absence.

The recorder keeps the minutes. This person will not be a member of the council. He or she ensures that the minutes are sent, along with the agenda and supporting documents, to each member at least one week prior to scheduled council meetings. Terms for the chair, vice-chair, and recorder will be one year.

The pastor presides over the meeting. He shares leadership of the council with its officers. The pastor has legal responsibility for the parish. He alone has the legal right to

speak on its behalf. His final decision is made based on information brought forth by the council after research, reflection, and the development of recommendations. In these parts of the decision-making process, the officers of the council should exercise leadership. They aid in the operation of the council.

7. Operation

The pastor will define themes for the work to be accomplished with the SPC council. Such themes can be initiated directly from the pastor, from other Church boards or councils, or from individual parishioners. The methods available to the parish community to submit suggestions, complaints, concerns, ideas and comments include: e-mail to the council recorder, a permanent suggestion box in the church gathering space, and direct contact with any council member. All those submitting anything for consideration who wish to have a response, should include their name and contact information. All suggestions will be forwarded to the council recorder. Those matters suggested to council members without attribution should be submitted by the member. Once collected, the recorder will forward all contributions to the chairperson for review and discussion with the Pastor to decide on inclusion in the agenda. All agenda items will be addressed to the Council. Each theme/need will be assessed by the pastor and pastoral council separately. Viability of the agenda item presented will be reflected upon and discussed. When a determination is made, action taken by the pastoral council will be communicated back to the initiator of the request by the council recorder if the person has requested a response.

The parish council will communicate its actions through monthly updates in the parish bulletin. A section designated specifically for this purpose will include contact information for the council members. It will be updated by the council member assuming responsibility for these bulletin submissions. Entries will appear in the last bulletin of each month, September through June.

The first meeting of each quarter will be open to the public during the first hour. Attendance of guests will be determined by the nature of the contribution made to the council and the council's need to have more information from the source. The pastor has the option to regulate the number of guests in attendance at the meetings when necessary. The pastor holds the right to exclude specific items from the agenda while guest parishioners are present. The council may open other meetings to parishioners as needed or deemed appropriate by the pastor.

Communication Discretion Commitment –

All topics, concerns and issues on which the council reflects shall be treated with integrity and verbal discretion whether during a council meeting, presentation to the parish community, or when discussed generally. The individual reflections, comments and discussions of the council shall be confidential. At any time, when open discussion of matters is considered appropriate and necessary, the same discretion shall be exercised. Individual comments made in council meetings should not be attributed to any individual. The purpose of this commitment is to encourage the free expression of discerned views by each member in council meetings.

8. Agenda

The pastor develops the agenda with the council officers. The agenda 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 a review of the minutes of the previous meeting and concludes with a brief evaluation. If the pastor is dissatisfied with the consultation, he expresses his reservations and asks the council to clarify whatever remains obscure. When he is satisfied with the consultation, he formally accepts the council's recommendations. Any formal acceptance will be reflected in the recorder's minutes. The pastor may then ask the parish staff or other parishioners to implement said recommendations.

9. Relation to the Staff, Boards, and Councils

The pastor 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. The pastoral council offers a practical wisdom while other councils and boards offer specific, technical information based on the skills/talents of their group. The pastoral council has the ability to investigate pastoral matters in a general way, to reflect on them deeply in dialogue, and to propose conclusions appropriate to unifying the community, increasing its momentum and making best use of parish volunteers.

10. Meetings

The pastoral council meets on the second Tuesday of the month, September through June, at 7:30PM. If there is a conflict within the Church calendar, that monthly meeting may be changed. Meetings are two hours in length. Between the monthly meetings, council members are expected to follow up the previous meeting and prepare for the next. This usually entails work on ad hoc committees. During the final meeting of each year, the council members and pastor reflect on the progress made during that year toward reaching SPC council goals.