



**PARTNERS  
IN THE GOSPEL**

## Consultative Bodies

The goal of Partners in the Gospel is to have parish families discern a strategic pastoral plan that results in a single canonical parish. The discernment will require engagement of the consultative bodies from the member parishes and the creation of consultative bodies for the new parish family. Here are a few recommended team approaches.

### Parish Family Advisory Council

When the parish family becomes a single canonical parish, it will have one pastoral council and one finance council. At the beginning of Phase 1, a pastor should create a **Parish Family Advisory Council** to serve as the primary consultative body for the strategic pastoral plan and the formation of the new canonical parish. This advisory council could evolve into the pastoral council of the new canonical parish.

A similar approach could be considered for the creation of a parish family finance committee with the intention of evolving into the finance council of the new canonical parish.

As pastors identify the membership of these councils, it will be important for that group to know each other. Consider hosting a retreat to build the relationships needed to be an effective consultative body.

### Role of the Parish Family Advisory Council

This group will be the pastor's go-to group to consult about all Partners in the Gospel questions, including changes that impact the parish family, shared events, collaboration across parishes, etc. They will primarily focus on the health of the entire parish family, looking beyond the needs of each individual community. It will be the key consultative body for the creation of the strategic pastoral plan called One Parish Plan that will be submitted to the archbishop prior to becoming one canonical parish. They will also help ensure that the necessary discernment processes are in place for the completion of the strategic pastoral plan.

The group should represent the ethnic, cultural, and economic makeup of your new parish family. Schools and other ministries should also be considered as part of the Parish Family Advisory Council.

- May include 9-12 people.

- Include multiple skills for this council, including ministerial, service, finance, properties and strategy.
- Minimum term should be three years.
- Be transparent about who the members are and why they were chosen by the pastor.
- Members should commit to attending a Mass at each parish in the family and learning about each parish in the family. They will also need to be able to have a vision of the whole family – a vision not limited to their own current parish.
- Consider sending Parish Family Advisory Council members as representatives to other key meetings, so they can hear, listen, and learn. They will help form relationships and maintain channels of communication across the parish family.
- The most important task to begin with is not looking at big questions but getting to know one another.
- A monthly meeting for this group is recommended, with a minimum of quarterly meetings.

## Representative Model

The Representative Model would be most applicable to the formation of the Parish Family Advisory Council and the Parish Family Finance Council. Representatives from the existing consultative bodies of the member parishes would be convened in the new parish family consultative bodies.

Pros:

- Ensures that each member parish is represented.
- Keeps the number of people on the committee to a reasonable number.

Cons:

- Adds a meeting to the schedule of the committee members.
- Could result in a parochial approach to decision-making, where the representative focuses on advocacy for the interests of a member parish instead of the greater good.

1 or more representatives from each parish pastoral council belongs to the Parish Family Advisory Council



## At-large appointments

Pastors may want to evaluate the parish consultative bodies for how representative they are of the member parish community. Pastors may want to selectively appoint parishioners to existing consultative bodies or to the Family Advisory Council or Parish Family Finance Council to ensure representation. At-large appointments may also be used to bring previously uninvolved parishioners into the discernment and planning process for the parish family, particularly targeting specific skills or interests.

Pros:

- Underrepresented groups or skills are part of the planning and discernment process for the parish family.
- New leaders are identified and developed.
- Existing consultative leaders learn about the needs of any groups that might be underrepresented.

Cons:

- May present a need for language interpretation and understanding of cultural norms that may impact the effectiveness of the at-large appointment.
- May require additional time to understand and address the needs of underrepresented groups.
- Appointed members will need to be brought up to speed on Partners in the Gospel and their role.

Intent is to consider underrepresented group in the forming of the Parish Family Advisory Council.



Underrepresented groups or skills added to Parish Family Advisory Council.

## Use of departures, terms and term expirations

Pastors may want to use departures of members of existing consultative bodies as an opportunity to either add a missing skill set or begin the process of reducing the membership of existing bodies to facilitate the move to the parish family consultative bodies. Similarly, committee membership terms and expirations can be used in the same way.

Pros:

- Builds on agreed upon charter terms
- Creates an orderly transition

Cons:

- An unplanned departure of a key lay leader can be disruptive.
- There may not be an obvious replacement for an unplanned departure.

### Phasing

The Parish Family Advisory Council should be in place within the first year of the parish family forming. With the goal of having a single pastoral council and a single finance council when the one canonical parish is in place, a pastor may use a mix of these strategies for managing existing consultative bodies. The strategies may change over time, based on the issues and discernment faced by the parish family.

Pros:

- Creates flexibility for a pastor and parish family.
- Allows adaption to the realities of a parish family, especially as they change over the multi-year period.

Cons:

- Members of consultative bodies will need to be flexible and be kept involved as the consultative bodies change.
- Some members of consultative bodies may choose to stop participating.

**Summary**

Pastors must determine an approach for how to transition consultative bodies from individual parishes to the parish family and then ultimately to the single, canonical parish. A pastor should configure the consultative bodies in a way that best meets the needs of the parish family – and those configurations may change over time during the discernment and transition process.



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# Strategies for Managing Consultative Bodies

## Overview

Pastors of a new parish family will be faced with multiple consultative bodies from each of the parishes in the family. In addition, pastors will be asked to form a Parish Family Advisory Committee. The leadership and support of these meetings will put a strain on the time of the pastor and his staff. The following strategies are suggested as possible ways to mitigate the time issues.

## Existing Parish Commissions

Parishes becoming part of a new parish family may still have their own commissions such as liturgy, faith formation, school, life, justice and peace commissions, and others. Pastors are encouraged to have these existing commissions continue until they have had adequate time to evaluate consultative bodies in each parish and weigh the need to promote continuity of these commissions as well as the opportunity for consolidation. Individual school commissions of each parish school are vital for the school's long-term viability and should continue.

## Considerations

As parishes join, there are several factors that should be considered for existing consultative bodies as well as for the formation of any new consultative bodies.

- The pastor should make effective use of the committed participants in existing consultative bodies to help discern the best path for the strategic pastoral planning for the new parish family.
- Pastor will want to consider how to be efficient yet effective in using consultative bodies, knowing that there is considerable time spent in preparing and managing multiple groups. Several strategies for this are outlined below.
- As new groups are formed, such as the Parish Family Advisory Council, the pastor will want to consider any underrepresented groups in the current consultative bodies (e.g. cultural, age and gender).
- In a similar fashion, pastors will want to consider what talent or skill is missing from the consultative bodies as they currently exist.

- As a pastor looks at possibly combining consultative bodies, unplanned departures as well as terms in the charters of existing consultative bodies can be used to reduce group size and change composition.
- Pastors have flexibility in creating a set of governance options that can be adapted to the specific needs of their parish family, within the bounds of canon and particular law.

## Combined meetings

A pastor may choose to combine the meetings of the required consultative bodies. This approach could be applied to any of the consultative bodies, but particular care must be taken when combining parish finance councils, which have distinct rules per canon law.

In the case of a combined finance council, the agenda should allow for each parish finance council to have its own time to meet and give input, even if it is just for a short amount of time. This way, three or four finance councils can meet on the same date but have separate time for their own specific parish deliberations.

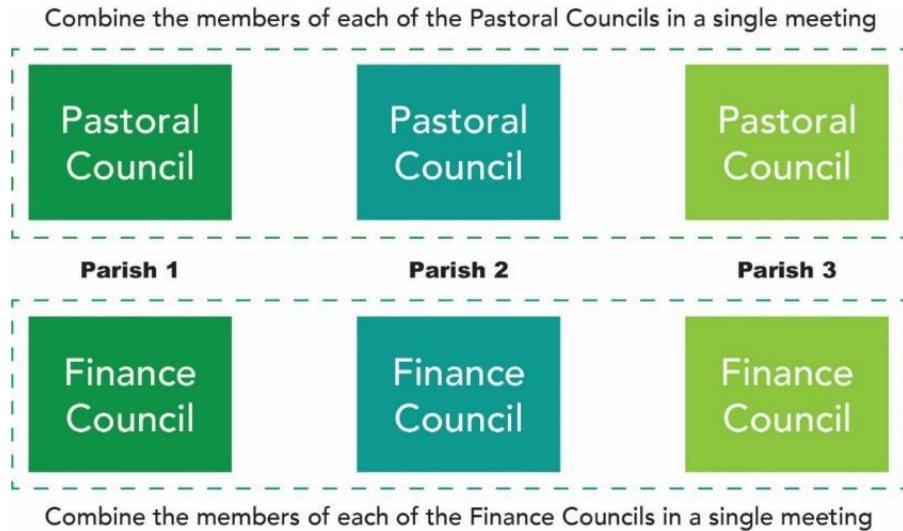
Pastoral councils have more flexibility in how they combine with one another and do not have the requirement of providing distinct time set aside in the agenda.

### Pros:

- Allows parish family consultative leadership to better understand the culture of the member parishes.
- Allows the parish family to begin developing a shared culture.
- Reduces number of meetings that a pastor and staff must prepare for and attend.

### Cons:

- There may be agenda items specific to a member parish or potentially sensitive that would need to be addressed in separate meetings.
- Meetings could be longer, depending on the number of member parish specific topics.



## Meeting Frequency

Pastors may want to manage the time requirements of the multiple consultative bodies by reducing the frequency of some of the meetings.

Pros:

- Reduced time in preparation, execution, and follow-up.
- Forced evaluation of most important topics.
- Reduced burden on consultative body members.

Cons:

- Decision-making may be slowed.
- Could lose momentum on some initiatives.
- Could lose interest from some members of the consultative bodies.



Intent is to reduce meeting burden by discerning frequency.

Ramp up frequency as needed



Reduce frequency



**Parish 1**



**Parish 2**



**Parish 3**

Reduce frequency



Ramp up frequency as needed



# Parish Family Decision Matrix

In a parish, the pastor is the deciding party under canon law. In the spirit of co-responsibility, however, it is expected that he will rely heavily on a consultative model to aid in discernment and help make decisions. The chart below provides the co-responsible roles of the various consultative bodies in parish families, up to becoming a single canonical parish. Parish staff provide input and assist in preparing the pastor for consultative body meetings.

Decision	Parish Pastoral Council	Parish Finance Council	School Commission	Parish Family Advisory Council
Strategic pastoral planning	Input	Input	Input	Recommend
Major expense - single parish	Recommend	Recommend	N/A	Inform
Major expense - multiple parishes	Input	Input	N/A	Recommend
Property decisions	Input	Input	N/A	Recommend
Single-school building decisions	Input	Input	Recommend	Inform
Budget - single parish	Input	Recommend	N/A	Inform
Budget - single schools	Input	Input	Recommend	Inform
Mass schedule	Input	Input	N/A	Recommend
Worship sites	Input	Input	N/A	Recommend
Staff re-org	Inform	Inform	N/A	Inform
Use of space	Input	Input	N/A	Recommend
Combining commissions across parishes	Input	Inform	Input	Recommend
Use of restricted gifts at a single parish	Recommend	Recommend	N/A	Inform/Input

**Input:** Through discernment, a consultative body provides viewpoints and insights that reflect what has been revealed to them through prayer and discussion and agreed upon by

the group as the option with the most support.

**Recommend:** Formal input as result of discernment and consensus. May include the input of other consultative bodies. Results in formal single recommendation for the pastor to discern next steps.

**Inform:** Communicating input, recommendations and decisions to a consultative body not directly responsible for that recommendation.

**N/A:** Consultation is not typically applicable to this consultative body.