



# Parish Pastoral Council Policies

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Diocese of  
Green Bay

Most Reverend David Laurin Ricken, DD, JCL



By the Grace of God and the Authority of the Apostolic See  
Bishop of Green Bay

## DECREE

The Church is responsible for providing the means for the parish community to express its shared wisdom concerning short and long range pastoral plans and activities.

The parish pastoral council provides for this by serving in a consultative role and advising the pastor (administrator, pastoral leader) on matters presented to plan, implement, promote, and support parish pastoral activities. (Canon 536)

An active, well-formed parish pastoral council is a key element to the parish and to the diocesan bishop.

Thus, I hereby establish and promulgate the *Parish Pastoral Council Policies* as particular law for the Diocese of Green Bay, effective July 1, 2015. This manual replaces all previous parish pastoral council policies.

Given at the Chancery on January 21, 2015.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David L. Ricken'.

Most Reverend David L. Ricken, DD, JCL  
Bishop of Green Bay

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Amy C. Basten'.

Chancellor

# Parish Pastoral Council Policies

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# Parish Pastoral Council Policies

## Diocese of Green Bay

### Introduction

The following are the basic policies and procedures for the organization and operation of pastoral councils in the Diocese of Green Bay. Not included in this document are the more specific diocesan initiatives, overall mission statements, policies and procedures of the diocese with regard to diocesan and parish fiscal policies, trustees, fundraising, accounting practices, insurances, etc. A detailed listing of these policies and statements is available at the website for the Diocese of Green Bay at [www.gbdioc.org](http://www.gbdioc.org).

#### I. Requirements

- A. To Have a Pastoral Council.** By mandate of the bishop of the Diocese of Green Bay, every parish is to have a pastoral council (see appendix – Canon 536). The council is to meet a minimum of four times per year. A pastor/administrator/pastoral leader may not dissolve the council without the written approval of the Bishop.
- B. Written Guidelines.** Every parish should have a set of operating guidelines that are in accord with these policies. They should outline the basic roles and responsibilities of the pastoral council, pastor/administrator/pastoral leader, staff and related parish organizations. Every five years these guidelines should be reviewed and updated in light of the parish and diocesan mission statements as well as the lived experience of parish leadership.
- C. Minutes.** Minutes should be taken for each pastoral council meeting and archived at the parish office. To facilitate communication and transparency, minutes of meetings should be posted and shared with all members of the pastoral council and with appropriate parish leaders. This may include, but not be limited to, finance council and key parish committee and organizational chairpersons, trustees, and staff.

#### II. Parish Pastoral Council Purposes

In general, the pastoral council is a community of disciples called together, to work in close collaboration with the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader and staff, to prayerfully discern and carry out the will of God for this parish now and into the future. Its more specific roles and responsibilities include:

- A. Listen and Respond to the Holy Spirit.** The pastoral council, with the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader and input from staff members, will prayerfully consider what the Holy Spirit is calling the parish to be and become.

- B. Organize Lay Participation and Cooperation.** The council provides the means whereby lay members of the parish respond to their baptismal commitment and work closely with the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader, staff, committees and parish organizations for the common good and mission of the parish.
- C. Facilitate Shared Practical Wisdom.** In dialogue, members of the council and the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader come to an understanding of the spiritual as well as physical concerns and needs of the people of the parish and broader community. The council assists the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader in the development of parish policies and strategies to address those concerns and needs.
- D. Facilitate Parish Planning.** At least annually, the council, along with the staff and involvement of all members of the parish community, works with the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader to do parish planning. This includes the formulation of a parish mission statement, the assessment of needs, the establishment of parish goals and priorities and an annual review of the overall operation of the parish for the previous year.
- E. Listen to Needs.** At least annually the council shall provide a means whereby parishioners are provided an opportunity to voice any needs or concerns they may have relative to the overall operation of the parish.

### **III. Making Decisions**

- A. Guided By Faith and Prayer.** All deliberations by parish leaders should be guided by a spirit of prayer, openness to the Holy Spirit, and be in accord with diocesan policies and initiatives, as well as the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- B. Consultation With Total Parish Community.** When faced with a major parish issue or concern, all members of the parish should be provided with an opportunity to learn more about the concern and have an opportunity to share with parish leaders, their reactions and suggestions for dealing with it.
- C. The Council Is Consultative to the Pastor/Administrator/Pastoral Leader.** Decisions of the pastoral council are made in prayerful dialogue and discussion with the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader. If there is disagreement between the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader and the council, final authority rests with the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader (see Appendix - Canon 536). In those instances where the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader cannot accept the recommendations of the pastoral council, he/she should provide the council with an explanation.
- D. Consensus Decision Making.** This kind of decision making is not based on a unanimous vote, but rather the recommendations of a strong

majority. Minority opinions are valued and serious efforts are made to include minority concerns in the decisions which are made. However, once a decision is made, it is expected that for the common good of the parish, all will support it as best they can.

- E. Open Meetings and Executive Sessions.** Notice of all meetings should be posted and parishioners are welcome to attend. When necessary, the pastoral council may go into executive session to discuss sensitive matters. Decisions should be made in an open meeting and recorded in the minutes following the executive session.
- F. Mediation Assistance.** In rare circumstances when a pastoral council and pastor/administrator are not able to work together or achieve consensus on significant concerns, the pastor/administrator or members of the pastoral council may contact the Regional Vicar for assistance in mediating the issue. In parishes served by a pastoral leader, the priest moderator should be contacted to assist in mediating the issue.
- G. Loss of Pastor/Administrator/Pastoral Leader & Continuity.** At the transfer, retirement, resignation or death of the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader, the pastoral council will work with the Temporary Administrator assigned by the bishop.
- H. In Absence of Pastor/Administrator/Pastoral Leader.** In those exceptional instances when the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader is unable to attend a meeting, with the permission of the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader, the pastoral council may meet. However, no action or recommended by the council at such a meeting may be undertaken without the subsequent review and approval of the action by the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader.

#### **IV. Membership**

- A. Pastor/Administrator/Pastoral Leader.** The pastor/administrator/pastoral leader presides over the pastoral council and is normally present for all meetings. The pastoral council selects a chairperson who chairs meetings thereby allowing the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader to fully participate in the deliberations of the pastoral council.
- B. Secretary Lay Trustee.** The secretary lay trustee is a full member of the pastoral council.
- C. Qualities.** Members should be committed to the mission of the church and have a concern for the good of the whole parish. They should have time available, be persons of faith, hope, and love, confirmed, practicing Catholics, in good standing with the church and members of the parish. They should also be reflective of the age, diversity and ethnicity of the parish.

- D. Size.** It is recommended that the council, including the pastor/ administrator/ pastoral leader and secretary lay trustee, be no larger than 12 members.
- E. Council Models and Representation.** Outlined below are two models for representation on the pastoral council. Either model may be used. However, parishes are encouraged to consider the organization of an “At Large Council”.
- 1. At Large Council.** With the exception of the pastor/administrator/ pastoral leader and secretary lay trustee, all members of the council are selected at large. Following their selection, the council prayerfully determines who will be the liaison to each of the parish committees and groups. The liaison is responsible for maintaining a strong communication link between the council and the committee. He or she ensures that the council has an opportunity for dialogue and input on significant committee efforts as well as provides an opportunity for committees to be proactive and have input on council initiatives. When matters pertaining to the work of a specific committee are considered by the council, members of that committee should be invited to participate in those deliberations.
  - 2. Representative Council.** With the exception of the pastor/ administrator/pastoral leader and secretary lay trustee, some members may be selected at large, while others are selected by major parish committees or organizations to represent their needs and concerns on the pastoral council.
- F. Selection.** An ad hoc committee, often chaired by the vice chairperson, recruits and provides an orientation program for potential at large members. A slate of candidates is presented to the pastor/administrator/ pastoral leader for approval. Once approved, at an appropriate public event, and in a spirit of prayer, the names of potential members are selected by lot. Selection takes place in spring of each year. New members should receive an orientation before beginning their terms of office on July 1. The selection of committee and organizational representatives to the council in “Representative Councils” should be determined by their respective group to coincide with the beginning of the program year on July 1.
- G. Staff.** Only in exceptional situations, as determined by the pastor/ administrator/pastoral leader and with the approval of the diocesan Vicar General, should staff be members of the pastoral council. Staff is directly accountable to the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader. Some staff may be present for meetings on a regular basis or an ad hoc basis serving as resource persons. Staff should receive agendas, minutes of council meetings, and opportunities for input for significant pastoral council initiatives via the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader.



- H. Terms.** With the exception of the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader and secretary lay trustee, members serve for three year terms, renewable once. Renewal is based on the willingness of the member, and the mutual agreement of the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader and members of the council. Following six years of service, after one year of absence, individuals can be considered again for selection. Terms should be staggered to allow for continuity from year to year.
- I. Vacancies.** When vacancies occur, they should be filled as soon as possible. Appointment shall be made by the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader from those not selected by lot during the previous council selection process. When this is not possible the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader shall consult with members of the council and appoint new members. The new person completes the unexpired term of the departing member.
- J. Resource Persons and Concerned Members.** These are parish leaders who receive council agendas and minutes. Typically they do not attend meetings unless there is an item of specific importance to them or the area of concern they are interested in. Depending on the needs of the local parish this may include members of staff, treasurer lay trustee, chairperson of the finance council, chairpersons of other major committees and parish organizations.
- K. Conflict of Interest.**
1. No parish employee, full or part time may serve on the council.
  2. Immediate members of the family of a full or part time parish employee may not serve on the pastoral council. Immediate family members would include spouse, child, parent or sibling.
  3. Only one immediate family member can serve on either the finance council or the pastoral council at the same time. Therefore, for example, it is not permissible for a father of a family to serve on the pastoral council while his daughter serves on the finance council.
  4. Should any unforeseen conflicts of interest arise, due to business, personal relationships, or other reasons, the member with the potential conflict of interest should advise members of the council accordingly and absent him or herself from discussion and decision making.

**V. Officers**

- A. Chairperson.** The chairperson chairs meetings and works closely with the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader in preparing agendas.
- B. Vice Chairperson.** The vice chairperson serves in the absence of the chairperson and may chair the nominations committee for the selection of new at large council members.

- C. **Secretary.** The secretary is responsible for taking and distributing minutes for all meetings prior to the next meeting of the council. The secretary is also responsible for insuring the archiving of pastoral council minutes at the parish office.
- D. **Officer Selection and Vacancies.** At the beginning of a new program year or when a vacancy occurs, the council selects officers with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in consultation with the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader.
- E. **Officer Terms.** Within the maximum term of six years of service on the council, terms for the chairperson, vice chairperson and secretary may be for one or two years renewable for a maximum of four years. Renewal is based on the willingness of the candidate, consultation with the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader and agreement of the members of the council. Following one year of absence from a specific office, within their terms, council members may run again for that same office.

## VI. Committees and Organizations

- A. **Basic Relationship.** The relationship between the pastoral council and parish committees should be one of interdependence, trust, collaboration and subsidiarity. The council should provide clear directions to the committees in light of the parish mission statement, goals and priorities. The pastoral council works in close consultation with the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader to determine significant parish policies and parish initiatives. Working with their liaison or representative, committees may recommend to the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader and council, policies or parish initiatives. However, their focus should be on the development and execution of specific action plans for implementation of parish priorities and policies.
- B. **Annual Meeting with Finance Council** – To facilitate collaboration between the pastoral council and the finance council it is recommended that these two bodies meet annually to discuss parish priorities and review the proposed budget for the parish for the coming year.
- C. **Committees.** While the number and type of committees will vary from parish to parish, keeping in mind parish needs and available resources, all parishes should address the following five areas or building blocks of parish life; Worship, Education, Living Justice, Stewardship, and Evangelization.
  - 1. Worship. This area provides for the spiritual development of members of the parish through liturgical celebrations, and significant prayer experiences. Guidelines and resources for this area are available through the diocesan Office for Worship.

2. Education. This area is responsible for the educational needs of all members of the parish including, adults, young adults, youth and children in both Catholic and public school and preschool. In some parishes, responsibility for some aspects of this area may be delegated to an area wide educational system. Guidelines and resources for this area are available through the diocesan Department of Education.
3. Living Justice. This area promotes the dignity of human life as it seeks to carry out the social mission of the Church through social justice and charitable works. Permanent deacons assigned to the parish are encouraged to assist this area. Guidelines and resources are available through the Department of Living Justice.
4. Stewardship. The encouragement of parishioners to be grateful, prayerful, serve and generously share is the focus of this area. To avoid duplication of effort, stewardship should work closely with both the pastoral council and the finance council. Guidelines and resources are available through the Department of Stewardship and Pastoral Services.
5. Evangelization. Ensures that evangelization is at the center of parish missionary efforts. It promotes efforts that make disciples; build lives of intentional discipleship and send parishioners out into the world to share the Good News of Jesus Christ so that conversion of hearts and growth in discipleship continue to take place. Guidelines and resources are available through the Department of New Evangelization.

- D. Parish Organizations** - All parish sanctioned organizations should have at a minimum, a liaison relationship to facilitate communication between the pastoral council and the organizations.
- E. Executive Committee.** Parish Councils may find it helpful to have an executive committee. This committee reviews the previous council meetings and prepares the agenda for upcoming meetings. Typically the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader, pastoral council chairperson and one or two other members of the council serve on this committee.
- F. Annual Leadership Gathering.** Annually, parish leaders, including the pastor/administrator/pastoral leader, pastoral council, finance council, trustees, members of the staff, chairpersons of important parish committees, councils and organizations are encouraged to gather. The purposes of this gathering are:
1. to provide support and encouragement to leaders,
  2. to facilitate communication between leaders,
  3. review the roles, responsibilities and activities of staff and leadership bodies, and
  4. consider together how each contributes to the common mission and priorities of the parish.

## **G. Multiple Parishes**

1. Consolidated Meetings. For a pastor/administrator/pastoral leader who has responsibility for two or more parishes, consideration should be given to the feasibility of meeting with multiple pastoral councils at the same time and place, beginning with common prayer and common tasks before breaking into individual pastoral councils. The pastor/administrator/pastoral leader then rotates from meeting to meeting.
2. Alternate Meetings. Another option for consideration is the scheduling of meetings of pastoral councils on alternate months.
3. Presence at Meetings. See section III. H for guidelines.
4. Subcommittees. All subcommittees of all parishes involved in a multiple parish configuration are strongly encouraged to cooperate and collaborate together.

## **VII. Parishes with Pastoral Leaders**

The following description of roles and responsibilities for parishes with pastoral leaders is not meant to be exhaustive. A copy of all “Pastoral Leader Policies” is available on the Diocese of Green Bay website at [www.gbdioc.org](http://www.gbdioc.org). Policies for parishes with pastoral coordinators are available by contacting the diocesan Department of Ministry Formation.

- A. Pastoral Leader.** A pastoral leader is a deacon, religious or lay person appointed by the Bishop, to whom the exercise of the pastoral care of the parish has been entrusted. The pastoral leader will exercise the responsibilities assigned to the pastor by these norms with the exception of those associated with being a member of the parish civil corporation. (Code of Canon Law 517 par 2)
- B. Priest Moderator.** The priest moderator is a priest appointed by the bishop, to supervise the pastoral care of a parish. In general, the role of priest moderator is to serve as the prime advisor to the pastoral leader in issues relating to the parish and the leadership of the pastoral leader. Specific responsibilities of the priest moderator related to the work of the Parish Council include:
  1. to review the annual parish report and budget,
  2. relates as much as is practical with the parish community,
  3. is to be present for the annual meeting of the parish, and
  4. meets at least once a year with the Parish Council.

- C. The Priest Moderator and the Parish Corporation.** When action by the parish corporation is needed, the priest moderator represents the parish in all juridic affairs such as the signing of proxies, signing deeds, bills of sale, promissory notes and is the vice president of the parish corporation. Any actions of the parish corporation should not be undertaken without prior consultation between the pastoral leader, priest moderator and lay trustees.
- D. Additional Information.** Additional information on the role and responsibilities for pastoral leader can be secured by contacting the diocesan Vicar for Ministers.

## **Appendix – Basic Church Teachings**

### **The Parish**

A parish is a certain community of the Christian faithful stably constituted in a particular church, whose pastoral care is entrusted to a pastor (parochus) as its proper pastor under the authority of the diocesan bishop.

**Code of Canon Law, 515.**

“The parish is the presence of the church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration.”

**Pope Francis – Evangelii Gaudium 2013**

“A parish is a definite community of the Christian faithful established on a stable basis within a particular church; the pastoral care of the parish is entrusted to a pastor as its own shepherd under the authority of the diocesan bishop.” It is the place where all the faithful can be gathered together for the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. The parish initiates the Christian people into the ordinary expression of the liturgical life: it gathers them together in this celebration; it teaches Christ’s saving doctrine; it practices the charity of the Lord in good works and brotherly (and sisterly) love.

**Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2179**

### **The Pastoral Council**

If the diocesan bishop judges it opportune after he has heard the Presbyteral Council, a Parish Council is to be established in each parish, over which the pastor presides and in which the Christian faithful, together with those who share in pastoral care by virtue of their office in the parish, assist in fostering pastoral activity. A Parish Council possesses a consultative vote only and is governed by the norms established by the diocesan bishop.

**Code of Canon Law, 536.**

### **The Finance Council**

In each parish there is to be a finance council which is governed, in addition to universal law, by norms issued by the diocesan bishop and in which the Christian faithful, selected according to these same norms, are to assist the pastor in the administration of the goods of the parish, without prejudice to the prescript of Canon 532.

**Code of Canon Law, 537**

### **Pastor Responsibilities**

In all juridic affairs the pastor represents the parish according to the norm of law. He is to take care that the goods of the parish are administered according to the norm of Canon 1281-1288.

**Code of Canon Law, 532.**

### **Pastoral Leader**

If, because of a lack of priests, the diocesan bishop has decided that participation in the exercise of the pastoral care of a parish is to be entrusted to a deacon, to another person who is not a priest, or to a community of persons, he is to appoint some priest who, provided with the powers and faculties of a pastor, is to direct the pastoral care.

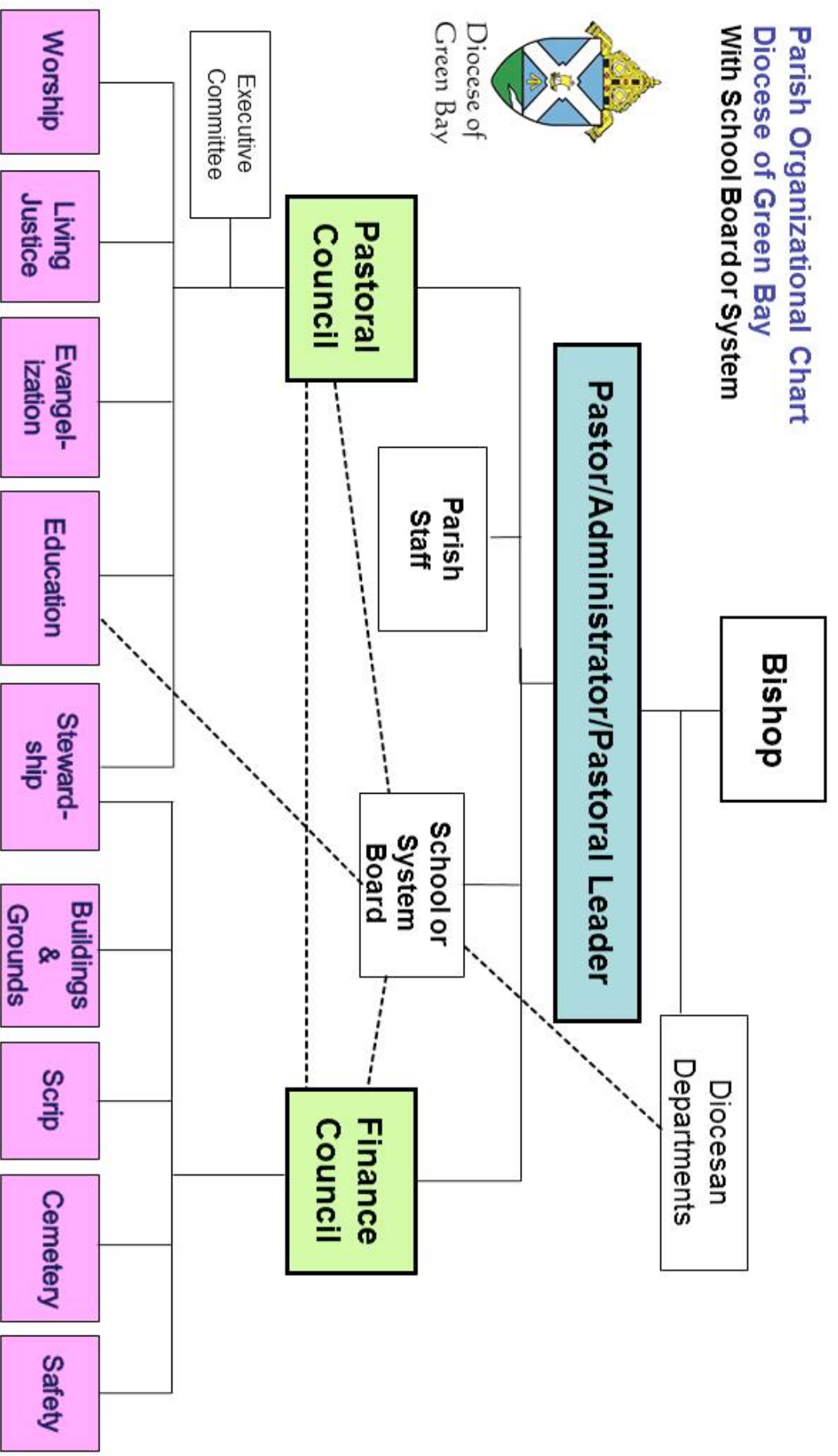
### **Code of Canon Law, 517 par. 2.**

The aforementioned are the basic policies and procedures for the organization and operation of pastoral councils in the Diocese of Green Bay. Not included in this document are the more specific diocesan program and overall mission statements, policies and procedures of the diocese with regard to diocesan and parish pastoral initiatives, fiscal policies, trustees, fundraising, accounting practices, insurances, etc. A detailed listing of these documents is available on the website for the Diocese of Green Bay at [www.gbdioc.org](http://www.gbdioc.org).

**Parish Organizational Chart**  
**Diocese of Green Bay**  
**With School Board or System**



Diocese of  
Green Bay



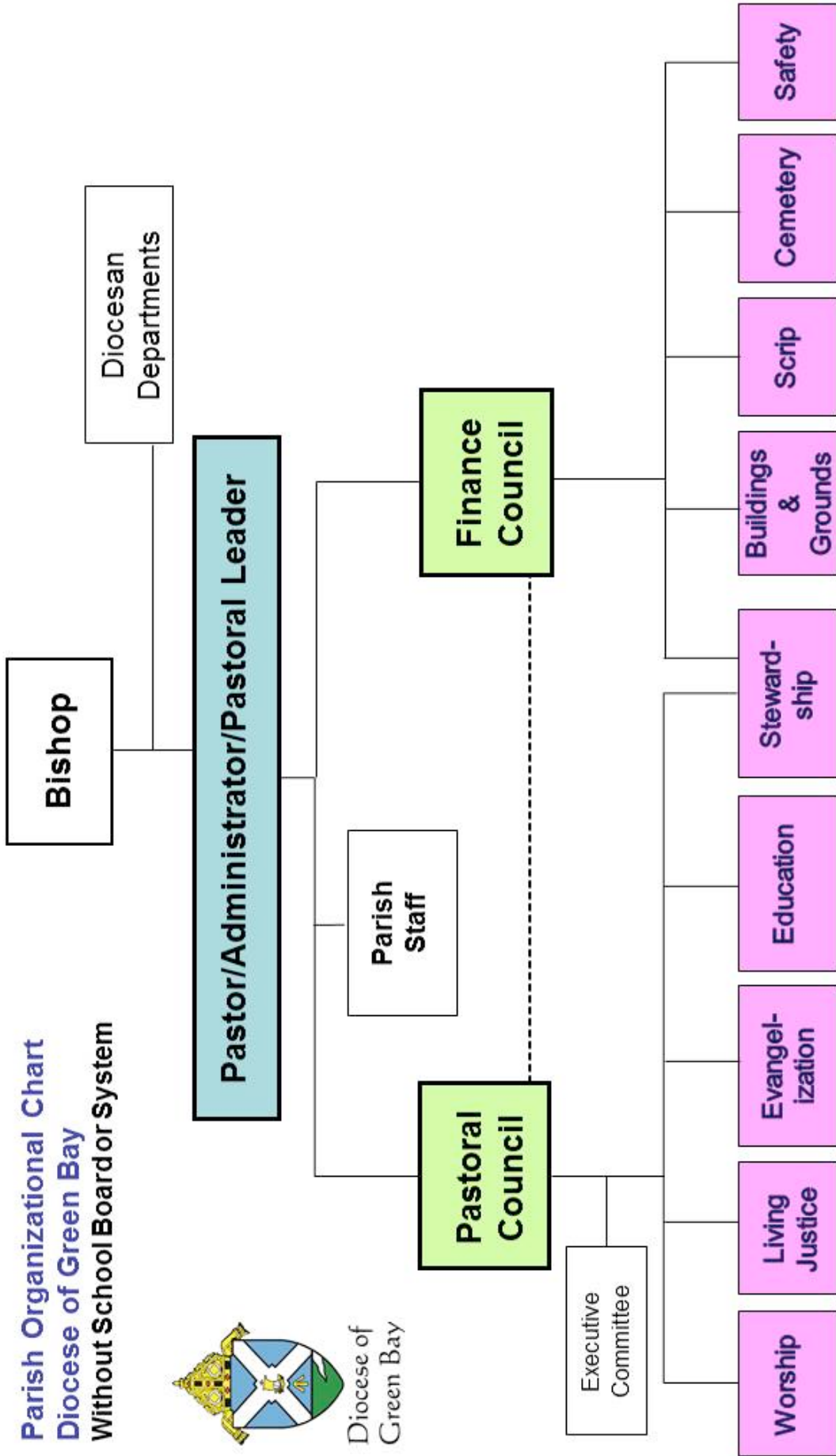
Note: Depending on the size and unique situation of each parish, not all committees listed here will be present in each parish. For example, if the parish does not have a cemetery or a scrip program, the parish would not have these committees. Each parish must have a Pastoral and Finance Council. Though the parish may not have all the committees listed here, the parish should regularly seek to strengthen it's Worship, Living Justice, Evangelization, Education, Stewardship, Building & Grounds and Safety.



**Parish Organizational Chart  
Diocese of Green Bay  
Without School Board or System**



Diocese of  
Green Bay



Note: Depending on the size and unique situation of each parish, not all committees listed here will be present in each parish. For example, if the parish does not have a cemetery or a scrip program, the parish would not have these committees. Each parish must have a Pastoral and Finance Council. Though the parish may not have all the committees listed here, the parish should regularly seek to strengthen its Worship, Living Justice, Evangelization, Education, Stewardship, Building & Grounds and Safety.



For additional information or questions on these policies,  
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