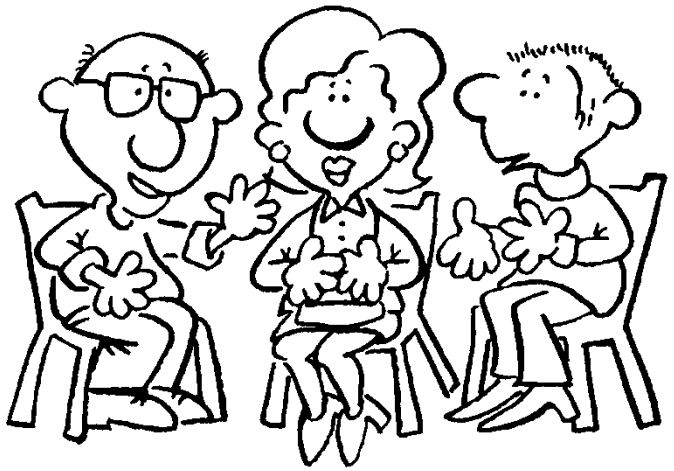




English Speaking Catholic Mission Zurich

Notes and Information on the ESCM Mission Council

What does it do?

What is it supposed to do?

Why is it needed?

How can I join ?

Notes on ESCM Mission Council and Councillors

The impetus for this leaflet is to encourage reflection amongst the members of the ESCM, increase knowledge of what the Council is and does, and hopefully this will lead to some to nominate others, or even themselves to be nominated, to join the ESCM Council. In preparing these notes I am aware that not all your questions may be answered, however, if some of the main ones, are then I shall be happy. – Fr John

1. ***Why have a Pastoral Council?***

The documents of the Second Vatican Council recommended the establishment of such councils. 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", say the documents, and use their prudent advice." By establishing a 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."

- And so recognizing that sound pastoral decisions are informed by the wisdom of the People of God, I welcome and indeed need a Council in the ESCM.

2. Purpose

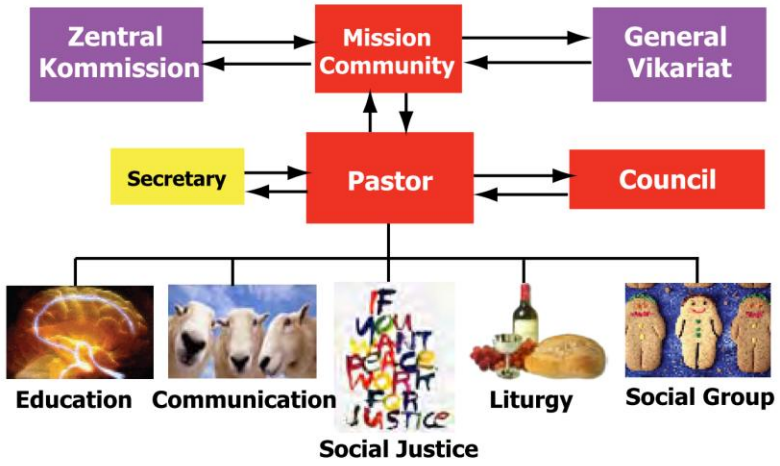
"The purpose of the parish pastoral council is to:-

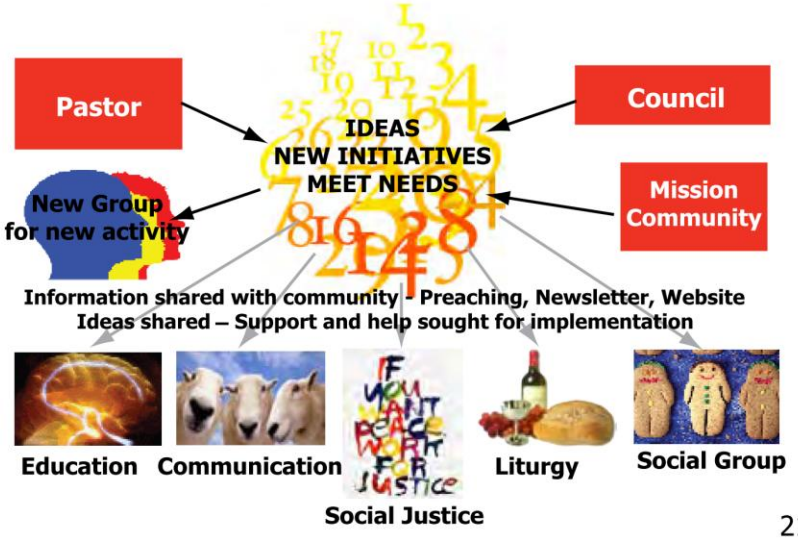
I. investigate pastoral matters
II. to consider them thoroughly, and
III. to propose practical conclusions about them.

The council's task is then, first of all,

a. to study those matters brought to its attention and shed light on them.
b. Its second task is to reflect on them thoroughly
c. to discern their true nature
d. to evaluate and
e. to ponder them.
f. Its final task is to draw sound conclusions.







How the Mission Works

The top diagram opposite shows how the Mission is governed, and how the community is involved. The Zentral Kommission funds the Mission, and the General Vikariat oversees the pastoral needs (including the Pastor and his needs). The Mission is defined as the community of all the registered members - from these the Mission Council is elected. The Council works with the Pastor and the Mission community generally to implement the aims and needs of the Mission.

In the past there were 5 groups who oversaw and cared for various functions in the Mission. These 5 groups still exist, but now 3 of them have only 1 person in them!

The lower diagram shows the way the Council works. The primary function of the Council is to work with the Pastor in providing for the spiritual and community needs of the Mission. Council members and the Pastor meet to discern the needs of the community – generate ideas and discuss possible projects. If these ideas or projects are believed to be helpful to the growth of the community, then they are given to either one of the groups already existing or a new group will be created for the specific new project or activity.

This is the plan, the way it should work. In reality we are lacking people to help. I am sure that there is no shortage of enthusiasm, but there is a "lack of workers". In the coming months I will be looking at ways of "reaching" out to parishioners and encouraging them to get involved. You may find a letter from me in your Briefkasten, or hear a knock on your door .....

I have every confidence that we will build up the Lord's Kingdom together working together to the Glory of His name, by serving our sisters and brothers in the Mission.

Thank you

Fr. John



The 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. Council members may assist him, but strictly speaking, implementation is the responsibility of the pastor, not the council."

- Please note here that the Council members spend much time in reflection, discussion and discerning the "pastoral side" of the Community.
- Also, note that the council **is not responsible for and does not** implement the recommendations it gives to the Pastor. In the ESCM we have 5 different groups that have been established to cater to the implementation. (See appendix)

3. Scope

"The scope of the 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 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."

The council only recommends. But its advice can be more or less persuasive. Its persuasiveness depends on the quality of the members' work. No council can force a pastor to do what he believes will harm the parish. A pastor would be foolish, however, not to accept good advice.

- I try not to be foolish!

4. Criteria for Membership

What are the criteria for good council members? It is recommended that, "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. They are baptized Catholics, in good standing with the Church, who reflect the parish's various neighborhoods, social and professional groups, and apostolates. Finally, they are parishioners noted for their faith, good morals, and prudence."

First, parishioners should receive a thorough orientation to the work of the council. To this end, those interested in being a council member or would like to nominate another, will be invited to attend an information &, orientation session. This will be held before the annual general meeting of the ESCM, and before nomination and election. It is vitally important that those who are to be nominated or interested in being a councilor, are aware of what is being asked of them, the qualities needed and the length of time commitment expected.

Second, all parishioners should have an opportunity to nominate parishioners who are willing and able to do the council's work.

Finally, they should have an opportunity to elect them.

- Information sessions will be announced and publicized
- Afterwards, those interested will need to find a proposer for their nomination, who will give their name at the AGM, where a seconder needs to be found.
- Where there are more nominations than places on the Council a vote will be taken at the meeting.

5. Officers of the Council

"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 councillors select three officers from among their number. They are, the chairperson, vice-chairperson, and secretary. With the pastor they develop the council agenda.

The chairperson facilitates council discussions, making sure that everyone speaks and is heard.

The chairperson also monitors the work of the councillors between regular meetings.

The vice-chairperson assists the chairperson and facilitates meetings in the chairperson's absence.

The secretary keeps the minutes. He or she ensures that they are sent, along with the agenda and supporting documents, to each councillor at least one week before every meeting."

- Although the pastor is the presider, he shares leadership of the council with its officers. To be sure, the pastor has legal responsibility for the parish. He alone has the legal right to speak on its behalf. But his final decision, is only one part of decision-making. The other parts include research, reflection, and the development of recommendations. And in these parts, the officers of the councils may exercise leadership. They aid in the operation of the council.

- Councilors are asked to commit to a 2 year term.
- In the ESCM we have a 2 year cycle with half the council standing down each year, this gives some stability to the council and allows those who are here for a short time to offer themselves as councilors.