

*“For it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish, according to his good will.”*  
*-Philippians 2:13 (Douay-Rheims)*

October 17, 2019

Dearest Commission and Committee Members,

One of the great gifts of the Second Vatican Council was the rediscovery of the dignity of baptism and the baptismal mission of the laity. The Council reminded us that *every single baptized person* is called to work for the advancement of the Gospel. Here at Assumption, much of that good work is undertaken or overseen by the excellent commission/committee structure set in place by Fr. Scott.

It is my desire that the structure we already have in place should continue at Assumption relatively unchanged. However, I would like fortify this structure so that our different commissions/committees feel comfortable and capable of doing their good work without the pastor present. This will have the simultaneous benefits of (1) freeing the pastor up to focus deeply on specific growth initiatives at the parish and (2) increasing the feeling of ownership by the laity as they assist in our parish mission. One of the most difficult aspects of becoming a pastor has been learning that, despite my passion for everything that happens at our parish and my responsibility to oversee it, *I do not have to be part of every decision*; that is, I have had to learn to trust our staff and parishioners as partners in a shared mission. You have been excellent partners, and I do trust you in your work. More importantly, I trust that God himself is working through your baptism to carry out the mission of the Church.

To that end, this letter lays out how I plan to *strengthen* our commission/committee system so that our groups feel more *empowered* to work without the pastor present.

#### **Definition of Terms**

For the sake of our parish life at Assumption, a council refers only to the consultative structures mandated by the Archdiocese (i.e. the Pastoral Council and the Finance Council), a commission is a consultative structure responsible for a major “branch” of parish life, and a committee is either a sub-committee of a commission or a one-time structure set up for a specific purpose (e.g. an event planning committee).<sup>1</sup>

#### **Leadership Structure**

First, I am asking that the leadership structure of our commissions be uniform across the parish. (Our councils will follow the leadership structures outlined in Archdiocesan documents and our committees can structure themselves in whatever way necessary to accomplish their goal.)

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<sup>1</sup> The diocesan definitions are:

- Commission: “A group that develops recommendations concerning strategic plans and policy for a specific area of parish life.”
- Committee: “A group involved in implementation of parish ministries and programs that flow from parish priorities and strategic plans.”

To this end, I want each of our commissions to have three officers: (1) a chair, (2) a Pastoral Council liaison, and (3) a staff liaison. I expect all three of these officers to be at every meeting, or to appoint a delegate to sit in their place. The responsibilities of these officers are as follow:

**Chair:**

- Communicates with the commission members
- Sets the agenda for each meeting, in consultation with the executive team
- Runs each meeting
- Makes provision for taking minutes (either through a vice-chair, secretary, or rotating responsibility) and sends these minutes to the pastor and executive team within two weeks
- Checks in with various sub-committees as necessary

**Pastoral Council Liaison:**

- Ensures that the commission is acting in accord with the parish's long-term strategic plan and suggests items for the commission agenda based on that plan
- Brings items for discussion to the Pastoral Council as necessary; acts as a barometer for the commission on what items may need to be elevated to the Pastoral Council or the pastor

**Staff Liaison:**

- Ensures that the commission is acting in accord with all Archdiocesan and parish policies, including policies about scheduling events and reserving space
- Suggests items for the commission agenda based on staff meetings and discussions
- Brings items for discussion to staff meetings as necessary; acts as a barometer for the commission on what items may need to be brought to the staff or the pastor
- Helps the commission to understand how their decisions will affect the staff or the day-to-day operations of the parish
- Uploads all pertinent documents to the parish file server

These three officers constitute the executive team for each commission. This team should work together to prepare for commission meetings and to ensure that the necessary work of the parish is carried out in these commission.

**Fr. Moore's Presence at Meetings**

Second, I am going to reduce my regular presence at our commission meetings. As a default, **I plan to attend two meetings of each commission each year**. I will let each executive team determine which meetings they would like me to be at, and to make sure these meetings get on my calendar.

Ideally, these two meetings each year would focus especially on *strategic* questions about the future and structure of our programs and our ministries, as it is the pastor's role to provide vision and direction for the parish community. They may also be meetings planning for the upcoming year, or whatever the executive team decides is a good use of my time with the commission.

This does not mean that I want to be disconnected from the work of the commissions. I will still likely send questions or items for discussion to various commissions via the staff liaison. I also plan to read the minutes from each commission meeting so that I can stay abreast of the good work happening at

Assumption Parish. But the commissions should feel empowered to do their good work without my prior approval or continual check-in.

Of course, my presence will vary from commission to commission depending on the actual needs of the parish. In 2019-2020, for example, I will need to attend every meeting of the Buildings and Grounds Commission while we revise our campus master plan and every meeting of the Stewardship and Engaged Church Commission while we discuss Forming Intentional Disciples. I will rely on the executive teams to help me determine how much attention each commission needs from me in a given year.

Certain councils and commissions are structured such that my presence is always required. Primarily this is the Pastoral Council, but I will also try to attend every meeting of the School Commission, which acts as the Pastoral Council for the school.

Because I am not planning to attend every commission meeting, commissions should feel some freedom to set their meeting schedule according to the needs of their members, rather than the needs of the pastor. This comes with the understanding that, when the commission asks to meet with me, we will need to negotiate around my calendar.

### **New Language Group Commissions**

Finally, I am going to create two new commissions: a Hispanic Commission and a Vietnamese Commission.

These are not *cultural* commissions, but are very specifically *language group* commissions. We have many wonderful cultures in the Catholic world-at-large and at Assumption specifically, and I do not want to create a situation where each culture feels the need to have its own commission. However, we do have two very large *language* groups at our parish (Spanish and Vietnamese) that struggle to find representation in our current commission structure because there is a significant language barrier. Having commissions that can work in Spanish and Vietnamese and speak broadly to the needs of these communities will help me ensure that the voices of these parishioners are being heard at our parish.

The specific responsibilities of these languages commissions will be to:

- Ensure that the pastoral needs of our non-English-speaking communities are being met, and to organize ministries and activities to meet these needs.
- Make recommendations to our other commissions on how parish programs and initiatives can better integrate and serve non-English-speaking Catholics.
- Discuss how to hand on the Catholic faith to a second generation of bilingual Catholics, and to make recommendations to the pastor via the Pastoral Council and staff liaisons.

May Jesus continue to bless you in your missionary work!

*F. Moore*