

NATIVITY OF THE LORD JESUS – COMMISSIONS OVERVIEW

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What are Commissions

“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord’ there are different workings but the same God who provides all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.” (1 Corinthians 12:4- 7)

This verse concisely captures what each of us are called to do. Within our Parish there are a variety of people with many gifts and talents. Every person and every gift are needed to carry out the mission of Jesus! Each of our gifts comes from God. Every one of us needs to respond to the call by **sharing our gifts** for the sake of building up our Parish.

Commission: Co-mission is Latin for “to be on mission with”. We are on a mission with Jesus.

The Commission structure was introduced at Nativity of the Lord Jesus in the Fall of 2018. Father Kawalec, with input from the Strategic Planning Committee, reviewed all the groups, organizations and ministries within the Parish and categorized the ones with similar areas of interest and activity into an overarching Commission.

With the formation of the Commissions, the Parish has a working model of leadership which enables Father Kawalec and the staff to focus on the things they need to do, while empowering lay persons to be actively involved in the planning and implementing of goals and activities within our Parish.

Commissions provide an organized means to coordinate the activities within the Parish and will contribute to its spiritual growth. All then current organizations and ministries were organized under 7 Commissions: Administration, Education, Innovation, Outreach, Participation, Sacraments and Worship. As new ministries are added, they will be added to a specific Commission based on the function of the ministry. Each Commission is responsible for the visioning and planning of goals and activities within their specific area of responsibility.

Commissions report back to Pastoral Council for review and consideration of new ideas and if approved by the Pastor, they can be implemented. To ensure effective two-way communication, there is an assigned Pastoral Council liaison to each Commission.

The Lord is calling us to thrive on the abundant life God has offered to all of us. We need to use our talents and God-given gifts to renew our Parish with a new vibrancy.

The Purpose and Function of the Commissions

Purpose: Each Commission identifies areas of improvement for the Parish, provides updates to Pastoral Council, gains approval and implements the Commission priorities and goals in its specific area of mission and responsibility.

The basic function of each Commission within its own area of responsibility is to:

1. Identify and prioritize the needs and desires of the Parish.
2. Create actionable plans for the area of ministry by formulating goals, objectives, and tasks, with timelines and deliverables. Identify who will be responsible for the implementation.
3. Discern new ideas for programs and their potential use within the Parish.
4. Submit ideas to Pastoral Council liaison for review and consideration at Pastoral Council.
5. Promote the activities and programs of the Commission and communicate to the Parish.
6. Encourage parishioners to become involved. Seek new members for fresh ideas while valuing the current members and their commitment to the cause.
7. Conduct ongoing evaluation of existing programs and activities to ensure effectiveness.

Commission Governance

All Commissions work in collaboration with Father Kawalec and Pastoral Council. A Pastoral Council liaison is appointed to each Commission. Commissions propose new ideas, programming and/or major changes to Pastoral Council for review and consideration, through their liaison.

Review at the Pastoral Council meeting is to ensure alignment with overall goals and objectives of the Parish and to ensure other Commissions are not already doing something similar. The Pastor has final approval on all ideas prior to implementation.

Commission Structure

Commissions need structure to be successful. Each Commission is dedicated to a set of specific ministries in which they have responsibility. The group should be representative of the groups, organizations and ministries within the Commission. An ideal Commission size should be between 7 – 12 people.

Membership on the Commission is open to all Nativity of the Lord Jesus parishioners. When Parish Commissions meet, they gather as members of a faith community focused on the mission of Jesus. Every meeting becomes an opportunity to pray, to build comradery and to strengthen the Parish community.

Ambassador For Christ (AFC)

In 2 Corinthians 5:20, we are called to be ambassadors for Christ. Each Commission will have an AFC leading the Commission. The AFC attempts to create an atmosphere of trust, openness and safety that will ensure the best communication among the members of the Commission. Central to this is a respect for the members' ideas and abilities and an ability to facilitate meetings. The AFC also has responsibility for the following:

1. Opening the meeting with a prayer.
2. Being aware of the overall responsibility of the Commission.
3. Guiding the discussion and creation of goals, objectives and task items.
 - a. Chairpersons need to be mindful that the Commission does not take over leadership of the individual groups, organizations or ministries, but facilitate and encourage their involvement in meeting the goals of the Commission.
4. Scheduling and facilitating Commission meetings (e.g. one or two a month initially, then as needed to accomplish goals).
5. Preparing the meeting agenda and ensuring meeting minutes are taken and distributed to the group.
 - a. You may want to ask a member to take notes or rotate this responsibility among the Commission members.
6. Involving all members. Ensuring all voices are heard within the Commission.
7. Promoting collaboration within and among Commissions. Diffuse any tension that may arise.
8. Monitoring the progress of activities of the Commission.
9. Reaching out to organization, group and ministry leaders to understand what they're doing.
 - a. Requesting periodic updates from organizations, groups and ministries to share with the Commission.
10. Communicating with the Pastoral Council liaison ensuring he/she is informed of Commission activities.
 - a. Providing meeting minutes and ensuring the liaison has a monthly report for review at Parish Council.
 - b. Providing periodic updates on the Commission for inclusion in bulletin and newsletter.
11. Overseeing the recruitment and orientation of new Commission members.

Parish Council Liaison

Each Commission will have a Pastoral Council liaison. This liaison is responsible for ensuring proper communication between Pastoral Council and the Commission. Key to the entire structure is proper communication. The Pastoral Council liaison has responsibility for the following:

1. Being an active member of the Commission.
2. Attending Commission meetings.
3. Communicating and collaborating with Commission leader on updates to Pastoral Council.
4. Communicating Commission reports and activities to Pastoral Council.
 - a. Take any ideas to Pastoral Council for review and consideration.
5. Providing updates from Pastoral Council meeting back to Commission.

Membership:

Ideally, members should be representative of the groups, organizations and ministries that fall under the Commission's responsibility. However, any parishioner with a passion or interest in the Commission is welcome to join. Each Commission should decide on the appropriate number of members.

Responsibilities of the members include:

1. Show personal commitment to Nativity of the Lord Jesus Parish and the Commission served.
2. Actively participate in Commission meetings by sharing ideas, volunteering for identified action items and supporting the chair person.
3. Listen with interest and show respect for all opinions shared.

Nativity of the Lord Jesus Parish Commissions

Administration

Within our parish structure, the Administration Commission includes the day-to-day tasks of the Parish Office, the advisory service of the Pastoral and Finance Councils, the ongoing needs about communication and technology, and the professional upkeep of our parish buildings and grounds

Committees:

- Building Committee: These parish members volunteer their time twice a month by holding a planning meeting and a work day one Saturday morning every month. They are organized, prayerful, dedicated, talented and skillful in many trades. They enjoy each other's company, have fun with their professional work, and build friendships throughout the numerous projects they begin and complete. This group continues to help the pastor of this parish save money through their generous labor, support growth by creating solutions to varied problems, and expand comradery within the community by welcoming new members.
- Collection Counters:
- Computer & Technology:
- Finance Council: Members of the Finance Council meet quarterly to review the parish financial records and to make recommendations to the pastor about spending, savings, and issues regarding financial matters.
- Nativity Newsletter: This quarterly printed communication connects people with faith and community by sharing parish news and events for the glory of God. If you have any ideas, comments and/or an article you would like published, please send a note to the contact person or put it in the parish office mailbox.
- Pastoral Council: The Parish Pastoral Council is an advisory group to the pastor. Their purpose is to suggest practical and spiritual recommendations concerning the betterment and growth of the parish. They also help to communicate and/or implement the pastor's preferred ideas, changes, or projects for the good of the parish. Our council members are elected by parishioners and hold office for two years.
- Strategic Planning Committee: This committee is the newest of our groups, formed in November of 2017, for the purpose of preparing for and guiding us through our Parish Renewal Process as a result of celebrating our 40th Anniversary (7/1/2017 – 7/1/2018). This team has conducted and summarized the results of a parish survey, in early 2018, and are making plans for social, capital, and spiritual parish-wide improvements for both the immediate and extended future.

Education

Within our parish structure, the Education Commission facilitates religious education/faith formation for both adults and children. Some opportunities also include Nativity's Bethlehem Cave and Museum tours, monthly guest speakers, and special events. In efforts to better share the faith we are constantly updating our use of multimedia resources: our parish website, online discussion groups, and broader opportunities both diocesan and national.

Committees:

- Adult Bible Study: This is a comfortable group who shares knowledge and laughter every week as they journey through Sacred Scripture. The class usually ends with a lunch at a local restaurant for those able to attend.
- Bethlehem Cave and Museum Tours: The Bethlehem Cave is a replica of the cave where Jesus was born as it appears today in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, Israel. Only two such replicas are in the United States. The museum contains over 500 Nativity Scenes from all over the world.
- Catechesis of the Good Shepherd: This faith formation is based on Montessori methods. Nativity has two Atrium (classroom) levels. One is for the 3-6-year-old and the other is for the 6 – 9-year-old. Children entering the second level must have time in level one.
- Grades 1 – 8 Catechesis:
- RCIA: The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is a centuries-old Faith formation program for those interested in becoming Catholic, as well as those interested in learning more about our Catholic Faith. Classes usually meet weekly between September and May. All are welcome.
- Summer Programs:
- Youth Bible Study:

Innovation

Within our parish structure, the Innovation Commission, builds on the strengths and traditions of our past, and move forward to find new ways to engage our parishioners in their ever-changing needs. As we reflect on the core of our mission statement “Giving birth to Christ”, we are excited about the new life that will come from our efforts and desires to live out that mission in our community.

Committees:

- Currently being formed.

Outreach

Within our parish structure, the Outreach Commission gives witness to the love of Jesus by sharing parish resources, networking with local and community services, and meeting the spiritual and material needs of our neighbors. Through personal contact, prayerful labors of love, and the generous donation of time and talent, our Nativity family extends many helping hands to our brothers and sisters in need.

Committees:

- Bloodmobile: The local Red Cross Bloodmobile serves the community from our location here at Nativity of the Lord Jesus Church every other month. You can make a big difference in someone's life.
- Comfort Quilters: Giving comfort to children, one quilt at a time. Quilts are donated to Akron Children's Hospital. We donate pillow cases to Ronald McDonald House. We have also donated to We-Care and local nursing homes. People who can cut out and sew quilts, as well as tie finished quilts, are needed and most welcome. Material donations accepted.
- Funeral lunches: Nativity offers after funeral meal support, where delicious meals are provided by our wonderful volunteers. There will be no charge for the members of our parish, but in order to cover the cost of the meat, a donation to the Ladies' Guild would be greatly appreciated. There will be a minimal fee for the cost of the lunch for non-members of our parish.
- Hospital Visitation:
- Prayer Shawl Ministry: This ministry involves a great group of women, from Nativity and cluster parishes, who get together to knit and crochet prayer shawls. These beautiful shawls are then blessed by Deacon Dennis and given to those who are in need. Anyone can request a prayer shawl for a sick family member or friend.
- St. Vincent de Paul Society: St Vincent de Paul provides support to individuals in need regardless of race, origin, religion or gender. Here at Nativity we operate a food pantry and provide rent, utility and other financial assistance for all those in our parish boundaries. (contact: Parish Office)
- We Care: We Care is a parish group that visits the sick and home-bound of the parish and brings Holy Communion.

Participation

Within our parish structure, the Participation Commission activity involves parishioners and non-parishioners to engage in social groups, fundraising societies, nationally and locally recognized Church apostolates, and community building activities. The committees under this commission seek to bring the spiritual and physical dimensions of parish life to a significant level of activity and shared responsibility.

Committees:

- Boy/Club Scouts: Club Den #3282 and Boy Scout troop #282 meet here at Nativity Church. Scouting offers boys the opportunity for friendship, to learn leadership, to seek out the best version of themselves, and to work hard for the things they want to accomplish, because anything worth doing is worth working hard for.
- Catholic War Veterans: For God, for country, for home. They have been supporting our nation's veterans and their families of all faiths since 1935 and are the oldest Veteran's Service organization in the nation.
- Craft Show: The Nativity Craft Show is something new and exciting for our parish. Come and see almost 50 tables topped with rare and one-of-a kind items.
- Holy Name Society: The Confraternity of the Most Holy Names of God and Jesus (Holy Name Society) promotes reverence for the Sacred Names of God and Jesus Christ, obedience and loyalty to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, and the personal sanctification and holiness of its members. The members are to assist in parish ministries by performing the Corporal Works of Mercy. Holy Name Society supports the spaghetti and parent/child dinners and supply Bibles to the Confirmation class. Holy Name also provides funds for parish projects as needed.
- Knights of Columbus: All the good works we do are informed by our four core principles: Charity, Unity, Fraternity, Patriotism. From the moment of their founding in 1882, charity has been the first principle of the Knights of Columbus. The Knights sponsor a Pro-Life baby shower each year.
- Ladies Guild: As Christian women, we are called to follow Christ and do His works. The Ladies Guild answers that call through services to the parish: funeral dinners, widows ministry, Bread for bread drives, cookie sell-abration, graduation breakfast and Easter fun day. We also generously provide Bibles for 2nd graders making their First Holy Communion, while also giving monetary support to other parish ministries.
- Men's Fellowship: Men from both Queen of Heaven Parish and Nativity of the Lord Jesus Parish come together in friendship and brotherhood. All are welcome to join them in learning more about our Catholic Faith, sharing our life experiences and becoming better men of prayer and charity.
- Silver Stars: In our parish family, we have many ways to make new friends. Silver Stars is one of them. The group is for parishioners over 50 years of age who enjoy good food and companionship.
- Spaghetti Dinner: Our famous Italian Spaghetti dinner has helped raise parish funds for 37 years, hosted by our Holy Name Society, and supported by so many generous volunteers! Enjoy a great atmosphere of fun and feasting.
- Youth Ministry: Nativity's Youth Ministry is dedicated to helping the youth of our community not only form a deeper relationship with the Lord and learn more about the Catholic Faith, but also form

relationships with other teens and adults through the various activities in the Parish. Youth Drop-In Nights are for young people 6th through 8th grades – enjoy friendship, talking, eating, playing games in the Holy Family Room and sports activities in the hall.

Sacraments

Our LIFE as Catholics is completely surrounded by, and inescapably informed through, the Seven Sacraments. The facts that 1) God the Son took on human flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ, 2) Grace builds on nature and 3) Jesus intended for certain material things to take on spiritual meaning enforce the Catholic Sacramental Principle that God uses His physical Creation to bring about our spiritual Redemption and Eternal Salvation. Thus, it is, in and through, these Sacraments that human life is especially marked during important moments within our development and maturity.

Committees:

- Covered by parish clergy.

Worship

Within our parish structure, the Worship Commission focuses attention to the highest activities of Christian Life. The parishioners involved in these committees take great care to fulfill the duties and ministries surrounding the Mass with utmost reverence and devotion. Through hearts open to receiving God's revelation, Catholics can provide a welcoming, prayerful, and engaging environment to worship the Lord as He has taught us through Sacred Scripture and the Church Liturgy.

Committees:

- Altar Servers:
- Art & Environment: This team of faithful and talented volunteers are honored to decorate the church and narthex according to the appropriate Liturgical Seasons. Our professionally tailored matching altar cloths, ambo covers, and tabernacle banners were recently added to the treasure of beautiful and noble decorations used yearly to help us focus on Christ's presence and the purpose of liturgical prayer – affectively lifting the mind to God. If you are a good decorator and enjoy wonderful expressions of liturgical art, consider joining this group.
- Children's Liturgy of the Word (CLoW): Children from grades K – 3 are called to gather during the 11:00AM Mass to celebrate the Liturgy of the Word together.
- Church Cleaners/Linens: These Holy Cleaners are volunteers who maintain and care for the interior of the church and all the altar linens. Each team of 2 or 3 enjoys their routine of dusting pews and woodwork, watering plants cleaning and replenish the Holy Water fonts, polishing patens, and making sure everything is in order for the weekend. Much of this works is "behind-the-scenes" but very meaningful for all of us who are made so comfortable to pray.
- Eucharist Adoration:
- Liturgical Ministers: Liturgical ministries include: extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (emHC), Greeters, Readers, and Ushers. Each of these groups perform an act of service encouraged by the Church to help people become active participants within the celebration of Mass.
- Music Ministry: Nativity's Music Ministry is an ever-growing group and active all year long, through our cantors, adult and children's choirs, guest musicians, and Legacy Music. This ministry is open to all ages 16 and up.

References

Parish Commission & Committees Manual – Archdiocese of Milwaukee

Parish Commission Handbook - St. Pius X Roman Catholic Church

St. Joseph Parish Community Life Commission Guidelines

St. Rita's Catholic Church Strategic Plan

St. Vincent De Paul Catholic Church