

IN SERVICE TO OTHERS:

Guidelines for

Religious Education Boards

and Committees



August, 2015

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION BOARDS/COMMITTEES

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**IN SERVICE TO OTHERS:
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FOREWORD

“The parish is the preeminent place for the catechesis (teaching of the Faith) for adults, youth and children.” So says the National Directory for Catechesis, 2005.

For many years, the parishes of the Diocese of Green Bay have assisted pastors/pastoral leaders in helping to fulfill this sacred mission. Talented and dedicated individuals from many walks of life have come forward, agreeing to serve on education boards and committees, in a cooperative effort of policymaking for total Catholic education.

Catholic education teaches the Gospel message, fosters spiritual life, nurtures full human development and helps to build faith communities. It encompasses all ages – from preschoolers through senior citizens.

Every parish and school should have an education board or committee. Again quoting from the National Directory for Catechesis, “No single model...will suit every parish or school...They should represent the diversity in age, ability and the cultural, racial, social and economic conditions present in the parish. They should receive appropriate training...(to) help them understand the Church’s universal mission, the overall goals of the parish and the catechetical priorities within that pastoral plan.”

***“Catholic Education is an expression
of the mission entrusted by Jesus
to the Church He founded.”***

To Teach As Jesus Did, 1972

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION BOARDS/COMMITTEES

The Basic Functions of a Religious Education Board or Committee

Below is a list of the basic functions of a parish religious education board or committee:

1. Develop Policies Regarding Religious Education and the Safety of the Children

It is the responsibility of the religious education board or committee to make sure the parish religious education program follows the Diocese of Green Bay's policies as they pertain to religious education and the safety of students. They also have the responsibility to formulate policies for their parish's religious education program. However, these policies cannot supersede diocesan policy. The parish catechetical administrator is responsible to put these policies into action. It is important to note that the board or committee does not tell the parish catechetical leader how to carry out the policy. These administrators should have the professional expertise to do this.

2. Support the Parish Catechetical Leaders

The board or committee should provide encouragement to and support for the catechetical leader. This body should be an advocate to the parish community at large, the parish finance council, and pastoral council for the religious education program. When appropriate, some sign of appreciation should be given to the parish catechetical leader by the board or committee.

3. Be Present Periodically During Religious Education Classes

Members of the religious education board or committee should make a point of being present during the program's operation at least twice a year. In this way, the members can get a sense of how well the program is being managed, what resources are necessary, and how well the students are learning about their Catholic faith. It is recommended that the members rotate or take turns as to when they do these visits.

4. Provide Program Suggestions to the Parish Catechetical Leader

Members of the religious education board or committee may want to provide program suggestions to the catechetical leader as a result of their visits during the program's operation or from comments they hear from members of the parish community. However, the parish religious education program must follow the curricular and textbook policies of the diocese. Suggestions on teaching materials, methods and resources can be made to the parish catechetical leader at a time that does not disrupt the work of this person.

5. Assist the Parish Catechetical Leader Solicit Volunteer Catechists

Members of the board or committee should help the parish catechetical leader find members of the parish community to volunteer as catechists. Current and retired teachers and school administrators, former catechists, and parishioners with a solid background in their faith should be encouraged to be catechists. Solicitation by the members of this body can take place after Masses, parish picnics, and other appropriate times.

6. Encourage Catechists to Obtain Religion Certification

The religious education board or committee should encourage the parish catechetical leader and all of the catechists to obtain their required diocesan religion certification on an annual basis. Courses are offered year-round at various locations throughout the Diocese of Green Bay and currently three courses – Creed, Sacraments, and Morality – are available on-line.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION BOARDS/COMMITTEES

MEETING

A well-prepared agenda, good strategies during the meeting and efficient record keeping and follow-up are key to an effective board or committee meeting and to satisfying members.

Jesus Christ has entrusted the Catholic Church with an educational mission. Since the Second Vatican Council, the Church has encouraged the laity to share in this mission. Boards of education or committees can be shining examples of laity helping the pastor/ pastoral leader carry out this important work.

The Board or Committee Meeting:

a. The Agenda. The agenda should be prepared by the board or committee president/chair and the parish catechetical administrator in consultation with the pastor/pastoral leader and/or delegated staff. Members should be encouraged to contact the president/chair or the parish catechetical administrator in order to place items on the agenda. People who are not members of the board or committee who want to address the board or committee should contact the board or committee president/chair before the agenda is prepared, usually about 10 days before the meeting. It is advisable to have a policy in place that outlines this process.

The agenda shall be distributed to board or committee members at least one week before the meeting. The agenda also should be posted or published for the benefit of interested parishioners. It's a good idea to include all reports with the agenda.

A standardized format should be used for the agenda, allowing for some flexibility. It might include:

1. Call to order and opening prayer (5 min.)
2. Approval of minutes (5 min.)
3. Reports of officers and standing committees (10 min.)
4. Parish Catechetical Leader's report (10 min.)
5. Pastor/parish director's report (10 min.)
6. Old business (20 min.)
7. New business (30 min.)
8. Adjournment and closing prayer (5 min.)

b. The Meeting. There are some time-tested strategies for effective meetings, which require involvement by the president/chair AND each member of the board or committee.

1. Hospitality helps to create a positive, welcoming environment. It includes everything from including a time for prayer; to providing an information binder for each new board or committee member; and, of course, offering refreshments.
2. Common-sense meeting rules include starting and ending on time; keeping to the agenda; being respectful when a person is speaking; and waiting until everyone has had the chance to speak before calling for a consensus/vote.
3. To keep the meeting on track, remember to: state the issues, explain key points, and sum up information.
4. An effective meeting may require some brainstorming, sharing of research/knowledge and recognizing avenues for change.
5. In making decisions, remember that consensus can help members feel as though they are part of a team and invested in the outcome of their actions!
6. Payer should be included in every agenda.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION BOARDS/COMMITTEES

Here are still more practical ideas to consider, to conduct a successful meeting:

1. Choose a comfortable, well-lit, well-ventilated room, arranged so that all members can see each other. Don't keep changing meeting locations.
2. Have the opening prayer prepared in advance to avoid rambling and remain pertinent. As a help, there is a monthly meeting prayer on the Diocese of Green Bay website. Take turns preparing and/or leading the prayer you select.
3. Welcome guests and help them to feel comfortable.
4. Have a reasonable time limit for discussion, then move for consensus or send the matter back to the standing committee.
5. All members should come prepared, having read the agenda and additional materials distributed.
6. Take attendance and follow a policy on the number of unexcused absences allowed.
7. Allow everyone to take a brief break part way through the meeting.
8. **Limit meeting length to no more than 90 minutes.** Preparation will help keep the schedule rolling along. Have a set time and day, i.e., 6:30 p.m., the first Tuesday or Thursday of each month, to encourage attendance.

c. Minutes and Records. Every board or committee member shall receive the minutes of the preceding meeting, sent with the agenda and other backup materials as preparation for the upcoming meeting. Remember that minutes frequently hold key information regarding proposed actions. Minutes should not be posted until approved at the next meeting. See the Committee Minutes Model on page 5.

- ❖ Each board or committee member should receive and keep adding to a binder of board or committee business. It should include: (1) agendas; (2) minutes of meetings from current year; (3) policies and regulations; (4) a membership list with street and email addresses, and phone numbers; and (5) a copy of these guidelines for religious education boards or committees.
- ❖ Board or committee records should be maintained, including all official business, and stored in the parish and/or school office by the parish catechetical administrator with the assistance of the board or committee secretary.

d. Follow-up

- ❖ In developing the agenda for the next meeting, the board or committee should be sure to include any items which they did not have the opportunity to discuss at the last meeting, as well as items on which action has not been taken.
- ❖ In looking forward, it also is important to make sure that the various committees continue to work towards completion of their respective projects.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION BOARDS/COMMITTEES

COMMITTEE MINUTES MODEL

Title of the Committee:

Date of the Committee Meeting:

Committee Members in Attendance:

Committee Members Excused:

Specific Tasks Assigned:

Summary of Committee's Actions:

Recommendations:

Actions Required of Parish Leadership: