

Guidelines for Committee for Social Concerns
Old St. Mary's Catholic Parish

Parish Mission Statement

Old St. Mary's welcomes and accompanies everyone on their faith journey. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, our diverse community encourages people to grow their relationship with Jesus Christ and one another through Eucharist, worship, prayer, education, and service.

As drafted on 9 December 2024

Council on Social Concerns Mission Statement

The Committee for Social Concerns (CSC) exists to coordinate and execute on Old St. Mary's mission of deepening the community's relationship with Jesus Christ through education and service. The CSC is an advisory and action board assisting the Pastor in defining and implementing social justice and charity ministries with the support of Old St. Mary's parishioners, Old St. Mary's School students, parents, and staff, and community members. The CSC serves as a central clearing house for social justice and service related initiatives and opportunities for the parish and school communities. The CSC is a committee of the Parish Pastoral Council, reporting to a liaison from the PPC.

"To desire the common good and strive towards it is a requirement of justice and charity. To take a stand for the common good is on the one hand to be solicitous for, and on the other hand to avail oneself of, that complex of institutions that give structure to the life of society, juridically, civilly, politically and culturally, making it the polis, or "city". The more we strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbours, the more effectively we love them."

Pope Benedict XVI, Caritas in Veritate, 7

Definitions

Social Justice

“Justice is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor...Justice toward men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity”.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1807

Social justice “upholds the fundamental human right to a dignified life.”

Pope Francis

“Working for peace requires acting justly...Every effort should be made to overcome the global inequalities – between opulence and destitution – that are carving deep divides between continents, countries and even within individual societies.”

Pope Leo XIV

Charity

“Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves“.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1822

Charity or “love of neighbor, grounded in the love of God, is first and foremost a responsibility of each individual member of the faithful”.

Deus Caritas Est, 20

“Charity in truth, to which Jesus Christ bore witness by his earthly life and especially by his death and resurrection, is the principal driving force behind the authentic development of every person and of all humanity... Charity goes beyond justice, because to love is to give, to offer what is “mine” to the other; but it never lacks justice, which prompts us to give the other what is “his”, what is due to him by reason of his being or his acting.”

Pope Benedict XVI, Caritas in Veritate, 1, 6

Advocacy

“The ministry of advocacy includes affirming and protecting the sanctity of human life as a gift from God and building societal respect for those who most need protection and support—the unborn, the poor, the disadvantaged, the sick, and the elderly [...and] developing partnerships and initiatives with leaders and concerned citizens from all sectors of the community...”

Renewing the Vision, USCCB

Education

“The duty and right of educating belongs in a special way to the Church, to which has been divinely entrusted the mission of assisting persons so that they are able to reach the fullness of the Christian life... Since true education must strive for complete formation of the human person that looks to his or her final end as well as to the common good of societies, children and youth are to be nurtured in such a way that they are able to develop their physical, moral, and intellectual talents harmoniously, acquire a more perfect sense of responsibility and right use of freedom, and are formed to participate actively in social life.”

Catholic Social Teaching

“Catholic social teaching is a central and essential element of our faith. Its roots are in the Hebrew prophets who announced God’s special love for the poor and called God’s people to a covenant of love and justice. It is a teaching founded on the life and words of Jesus Christ, who came “to bring glad tidings to the poor . . . liberty to captives . . . recovery of sight to the blind”(Lk 4:18-19), and who identified himself with “the least of these,” the hungry and the stranger (cf. Mt 25:45). Catholic social teaching is built on a commitment to the poor.”

Catholic Social Teaching, USCCB

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops defines 7 themes of Catholic Social Teaching:

- 1. Life and Dignity of the Human Person*
- 2. Call to Family, Community, and Participation*
- 3. Rights and Responsibilities*
- 4. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable*
- 5. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers*
- 6. Solidarity*
- 7. Care for God’s Creation*

Values

1. A commitment to Catholic Social Teaching.
2. A desire to energize and mobilize the community about social issues.
3. A responsibility to engage and coordinate with Old St. Mary's parishioners, Old St. Mary's School students, parents, and staff, and the local community.
4. An obligation to be pragmatic about the committee and community's ability to engage with a given social issue.

Objectives

Strategic

- Support those in need in Chicago by establishing new or engaging with existing social justice and charity initiatives and organizations.
- Without overextending, respond to new and existing social concerns that the community expresses interest in.
- Establish Old St. Mary's as a consistent source of social justice and charity volunteers by engaging and organizing parishioners, Old St. Mary's School students, parents, and staff, and community members interested in social issues.

Operational

- Establish a core council with fixed term appointments to drive the CSC's mission.
- Hold monthly CSC meetings to coordinate CSC activities.
- Engage with Old St. Mary's parishioners, Old St. Mary's School students, parents, and staff, and local community members to create a robust group of consistent volunteers.
- Establish an associated database of volunteers.
- Design and implement a coherent communications plan to engage Old St. Mary's parishioners, Old St. Mary's School students, parents, and staff, and local community members in social justice and charity related initiatives.

Impact

- Establish a culture among the Old St. Mary's Parish and School communities in which engaging in Catholic Social Teaching and Works of Mercy is seen as a core tenant of life and faith.
- Increase opportunities for Old St. Mary's Parish and School communities to engage in Works of Mercy and live out Catholic Social Teaching.
- Improve coordination and communications with Old St. Mary's Parish and School communities about social justice and service opportunities.

Note: It is not the job of the CSC to measure progress on the above goals as KPIs.

Scope

The CSC will prioritize efforts that generate positive impact for individuals in the South Loop neighborhood and broader Chicagoland area. The South Loop and surrounding Chicagoland area have a clear and present need for social justice and charitable support. Old St. Mary's and its community are strategically positioned to effect positive change in the local community.

If agreed upon by appointed members, the CSC may engage with organizations and initiatives that impact individuals beyond the Chicagoland area.

Committee Structure & Terms

This charter establishes three levels of CSC membership: (1) an appointed body of committee members; (2) committee representatives from the Old St. Mary's parish (Associate Pastor) and School (Assistant Principal); and (3) an unappointed group of associated members.

Appointed Committee

The Pastor, in consultation with other Parish and School staff, shall appoint 8-10 individuals to the CSC. To be considered for an appointed position, the interested candidate must send a written statement of interest to the Pastor. Appointments to committee positions will be made based on the candidates':

- Written statements of interest.
- Commitment to social justice and charity.
- Ability to fulfill appointed member duties.
- Background and engagement with social justice and charity initiatives and organizations.

Members shall serve three-year terms. Any member can be appointed to a second three-year term. If a member is appointed to two consecutive three-year terms, that member must take a one-year leave from the CSC before becoming eligible to serve another term.

If any appointed member must step down from the CSC prior to the end of that member's term, they must inform the Pastor three months prior to stepping down to facilitate the appointment of a replacement.

The appointed committee members will be appointed to one of the following roles:

- Co-Chair (2)
- Secretary (1)
- General Members (5-7)

Once appointed, committee members may be assigned to lead one or more programs or initiatives. Not all programs or initiatives will be led by committee members, but all programs or initiatives will have an assigned committee liaison responsible for coordinating with that program or initiative on behalf of the committee.

Pastoral and School Representatives

A Pastoral representative, expected to be the Associate Pastor, and a School representative, expected to be the Assistant Principal, shall serve on the committee. These representatives will facilitate communications with their staffs and with the wider community. They should also be aware of any scheduling conflicts when new activities are proposed.

Associated Members

Any individual who expresses a legitimate interest in social justice and charity may join the CSC as unappointed associated members. Associated members have no terms or requirements.

Duties

Appointed Members

Appointed members must attend at least 75% of CSC meetings each year.

Appointed members are expected to:

- Attend Mass at Old St. Mary's on a regular basis. There is no requirement that every CSC appointed member be Catholic.
- Commit at least 5 hours per month outside of meeting time to assist with CSC-related activities. Less than 5 hours may be needed in any given month, depending on workflow.
- Contribute regularly to the financial needs of Old St. Mary's and the CSC.
- Be generally available to volunteer for CSC and non-CSC related activities at Old St. Mary's.
- Attend CSC-led events, days of service, and related activities on a regular basis.
- Proactively identify CSC-related areas of need and potential solutions.

Appointed members are expected to fulfil the additional expectations of their respective role:

- *Co-Chairs:*
 - Attend 100% of CSC meetings. At least one Co-Chair must be present for a meeting to take place.
 - Serve as the lay lead for the CSC, presiding over committee meetings.
 - Develop and disseminate the agenda for each meeting.
 - Communicate closely and regularly with the Pastor and Parish Pastoral Council regarding the strategic and operational goals of the CSC, and the current committee's progress on advancing those goals.
 - With input from the Pastoral and School representatives, coordinate monthly CSC meetings.
 - Render decisions, with input from the committee members, regarding issues and initiatives to devote the committee's time to.
 - Assign committee members to liaise with CSC-related organizations and initiatives.
 - Assign committee members to execute actions identified during and outside of meetings.
- *Secretary:*
 - Document and circulate meeting notes, decisions, and action points for review by CSC members, pastoral staff, and School administrative team.
 - Maintain a centralized database for CSC notes, deliverables, etc.
 - Maintain a centralized database of CSC associated members and related mailing list.
 - Work with pastoral and school staff to maintain an updated contact list for all associated members.
 - Draft regular blurbs for the bulletin regarding the ongoing work of the CSC, for review by the Co-Chairs and Pastor.
- *Other duties to be assigned to committee members based on talents:*
 - Reach out to and coordinate with CSC-related organizations and initiatives. Every CSC-related initiative should have a dedicated committee member

assigned to liaise with the individuals leading/organizing CSC-related initiatives, programs, and events.

- Develop and implement a yearly communications plan to inform and engage Old St. Mary's parishioners, Old St. Mary's students, parents, and staff, and community members.
- Engage regularly with the Old St. Mary's school and community to inform members about CSC activities.
- Attend CSC-related events, initiatives, and other activities to coordinate volunteers.

Pastoral and School Representatives

Pastoral Representative:

- Attend 100% of CSC meetings. In the event the Pastoral Representative is unable to attend, another member of the pastoral staff shall attend.
- Be knowledgeable on and share with the committee about the Parish's calendar of events and bandwidth for engagement in opportunities.
- Coordinate dissemination of CSC-related content to the Parish (e.g. bulletin announcements).
- Represent the interests of the Pastor and Pastoral staff at committee meetings.
- Update the Pastor as needed regarding CSC activities.

School Representative:

- Attend 75% of CSC meetings.
- Be knowledgeable on and share with the committee about the School's calendar of events and bandwidth for engagement in opportunities.
- Coordinate dissemination of CSC-related content to the School (e.g. school newsletters).
- Represent the interests of the Old St. Mary's staff and community at committee meetings.
- Update the Principal and relevant school staff as needed regarding CSC activities.

Associated Members

There are no functional requirements for associated members' ongoing involvement in the CSC. Associated members should demonstrate an express interest in staying informed about opportunities related to social justice and charity. Associated members are expected to read the Old St. Mary's bulletin regularly and must agree to be on a CSC mailing list.

Associated members do not need to be Catholic, nor do they need to be registered members of the Old St. Mary's Parish.

Associated members will not attend CSC meetings. Associated members may share perspectives and offer ideas regarding opportunities to expand the CSC's impact with the committee via communications channels established by the committee.

Associated members will not have decision-making authority regarding the CSC's mission, goals, or activities. That authority lies with the CSC appointed members and the Pastor.

Member Gifts

Appointed and associated members of the CSC should have the following gifts:

- A desire to learn about and develop the evangelizing mission of Old St. Mary's Catholic Parish and the Paulist Fathers.
- A desire to expand the reach of Old St. Mary's mission, especially to people who do not belong to any community of faith or who feel marginalized by their community of faith.
- A desire to deliberately befriend a diversity of people within the Parish, School, and local community.
- The ability to consider multiple points of view simultaneously and to bring the concerns of others to the decision-making table.
- A commitment to caring about and supporting marginalized people.
- The willingness to share one's opinion in front of the other CSC members during a meeting, especially if that opinion is different than the other members of the CSC.
- A passion and commitment to Catholic Social Teaching, Social Justice, Charity, and serving the local community.

Related Bodies

Four related bodies assist the Pastor in carrying out the mission of Old St. Mary's:

- *Parish Pastoral Staff*: Paid professionals responsible for carrying out important facets of the mission. The Parish Pastoral Staff includes the Principal of Old St. Mary's Catholic School, the Associate Pastor, the Business Manager, the Director of Lifelong Faith Formation, the Director of Liturgy & Music, and the Facilities & Events Coordinator.
- *School Advisory Board*: Volunteers who advise the Pastor and Principal in the mission and administration of Old St. Mary's Catholic School, the largest ministry of Old St. Mary's Catholic Parish.
- *Finance Council*: Volunteers who advise the Pastor in the stewardship of the temporal resources necessary to carry out the mission of Old St. Mary's Catholic Parish, including Old St. Mary's Catholic School.
- *Parish Pastoral Council*: Volunteer advisory board assisting the Pastor in carrying out the parish mission and articulating a vision for Old St. Mary's Parish, including Old St. Mary's Catholic School.

Appendix

Version Control

Version Control	Prepared On	Prepared By	Reviewed By	Approved By
Draft v1	28 May 2025	Steven Balla		
Draft v2	28 July 2025	Steven Balla	Rich Andre	
Draft v3	22 October 2025	Steven Balla	Rich Andre	
Draft v4	28 March 2026	Steven Balla	Rich Andre	

Additional Notes

The values, goals, and structure of this committee should be reviewed by the committee on a regular basis to ensure the Charter properly facilitates the execution of the stated goals.

It is expected that early initiatives undertaken by the committee will focus on works of charity as these opportunities are tangible, quick-win opportunities to generate community interest, energy, and impact. However, charity is only one component of this committee's scope. The committee must maintain and action on its commitment to social justice and execute on longer-term, (somewhat) less tangible goals.

At its inception, the committee's ongoing initiatives include:

- Chicago Shares food vouchers program.
- Kolbe House prison ministry.
- Legal Services pro-bono clinic.
- Catholic Charities dinner and bag lunch programs.
- Greater Chicago Food Depository volunteering program
- Advent Giving Tree initiative.
- St. James Food Pantry program.*
- Service hours for 6th & 7th grade Confirmation candidates in both the Sunday Faith Formation program and Old St. Mary's School.*

**As of the drafting of this charter, these initiatives are not yet implemented but are in consideration.*

A key duty of this committee is to assess, on an ongoing basis, the committee and community's ability to engage with ongoing programs and initiatives. There may be moments in which the committee must make the decision to pause or end certain programs or initiatives.

It is expected that the Old St. Mary's parish and school community members will not all share the same viewpoints on issues of social concern and if/how the committee should address those issues. It is not the job of the committee to mediate different viewpoints, nor is it the job of the committee to limit its purview to issues that 100% of community members agree on. The

committee is expected to select social issues that a majority of community members are interested in (to the best of the ability of the committee to measure interest).

Sample Meeting Agenda

1. Opening prayer.
2. Updates about local/global issues impacting the community. (5-10 minutes)
3. Updates from liaisons regarding each program/initiative (20 minutes)
 - a. Chicago Shares food vouchers program.
 - b. Kolbe House prison ministry.
 - c. Legal Services pro-bono clinic.
 - d. Catholic Charities dinner and bag lunch programs.
 - e. Greater Chicago Food Depository volunteering program
 - f. Advent Giving Tree initiative.
 - g. St. James Food Pantry program.
4. Review of upcoming calendar of events (10 minutes)
 - a. CSC events.
 - b. Parish non-CSC events.
 - c. School non-CSC events.
5. Review of communications plan regarding ongoing work and upcoming events (10 minutes)
 - a. Associated members communication.
 - b. Bulletin blurb.
 - c. School communication.
6. Review of actions/next steps (5 minutes)
7. AOB (5 minutes)
8. Closing prayer.

