

# Parish Family Feedback Report



*I give thanks to my God at every remembrance of you,  
praying always with joy  
in my every prayer for all of you,  
because of your partnership  
for the gospel from the first day until now.  
(Philippians 1:3-5)*

**Archdiocese of Seattle**

**November 16, 2023**

(Revised November 18, 2023)



## Overview

Partners in the Gospel is a strategic pastoral planning effort aimed at restructuring and renewing parish life. The ultimate goal of this work is to help everyone carry out the mission Christ gave us - to be missionary disciples by encountering Christ, accompanying one another and living the joy of the Gospel - in essence helping us grow deeper in our faith, while inviting others to know Christ.

As Partners in the Gospel begins, parishes will be placed into families of two or more parishes so that they can share resources and join together to enrich parish ministries, liturgies, outreach and more. This historic work will impact all aspects of parish life. This is why the Archdiocese of Seattle selected a highly consultative model for the process of developing the parish families. The first drafts were developed by an outside consultant, then refined over several months in consultation with all priests and with the Partners in the Gospel Oversight Committee to reflect the nuances and uniqueness of the Archdiocese of Seattle. The refined draft was then shared publicly for broad feedback.

### **The Consultation Process**

Public consultation on the draft parish families began in August 2023 when parish staff and leadership groups were invited to host in-person consultation sessions.

The consultation process used for all groups was the same. After the presentation of the Partners in the Gospel initiative and the draft parish families, people divided into small groups. They used a synodal listening and sharing model based on the recent global Synod. People shared their concerns, their hopes, and their concrete suggestions for changes to the draft families.

The public comment period opened on September 23 and continued until October 14, 2023. Communities were encouraged to use the same consultation process described above. Most parishes followed the process, starting with a video from Archbishop Etienne and then moving into the small groups for discernment.

In addition to the in-person sessions, an online survey was created for those who could not participate in an in-person consultation. Meanwhile, several parishes collected individual written submissions at Masses. Sessions were held in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Q'anjob'al (an indigenous Mayan language native to Guatemala), along with special consultations with the Swinomish, Lummi, Tulalip, Swahili, and Chuukese communities. In all, 140 parishes and missions submitted 700

input session reports. In addition, about 800 online submissions were received, for a total of about 3,000 pages of input.

This feedback was read by Chancery staff and Partners in the Gospel team members. In all, about 30 people participated in the reading process. Working in teams, people read the feedback for an entire family, and together prepared a synthesis, highlighting common themes as well as specifics from each of the parishes within the draft family. The teams also highlighted concrete suggestions for changes to the draft family. Every piece of feedback was read by at least two people. The entire review process took more than 200 hours.

### **Common themes that emerged**

**People love the Church, their parishes, and their priests. They treasure their communities. They trust in God and know that with the Holy Spirit's help, all things are possible. They want to spread the faith, fill the pews, focus on youth and young families, and invite people into their parish communities.**

There is broad acceptance that Partners in the Gospel is needed and a willingness to roll up sleeves to help make it work. There is hope that through the sharing of resources and best practices, new ideas will emerge – and new life for our communities. People are excited at the idea of having fuller access to a parish school.

There are also fears and uncertainties about what Partners in the Gospel will entail. Many assumed there would only be one worship site in each family, which was a common misperception. Others assumed that schools would close, which is also not the intention of this work.

There was widespread concern about the distance between parishes, and the hardship of driving, especially for elderly parishioners and priests. People expressed concerns about losing more people due to these changes and further compromising communities already deeply impacted by the pandemic. People were also very concerned about losing access to the sacraments.

Participants also expressed how much they value their parish communities. They are concerned at a loss of identity in becoming part of a parish family, and with the potential loss of buildings and change of names. People are aware that parishes have different expressions of our common Catholic faith, and that some communities may be hard to blend. People shared concerns about the Spanish-speaking community, and about continued access to Mass in Spanish at times that work for families. People also want to be sure that Native American Catholic communities are provided for and that smaller communities are valued. Specifically, they were concerned about small and rural communities being swallowed by larger ones.

People asked many logistical questions about how the parish family groupings will work - specifically, questions about how finances will be shared and what will happen to schools. They asked how staff will be shared, if staff would lose their jobs, and hoped this would not lead to burnout.

Another major area of concern is for the priests. People have deep concerns that Partners in the Gospel will be too burdensome for priests, leading to burnout. They see this work as a huge administrative burden and hope that lay people can be trained and welcomed to step up and assist with the administrative responsibilities of a parish family.

One of the big questions people asked in many consultations was whether Partners in the Gospel will address the root causes of the challenges we face in our Church today. There is a strong sense that we need to do more to promote vocations and to empower other forms of leadership, including deacons and lay leaders.

An insistent refrain in the feedback is that the consultation will not matter and that everything has already been decided. As one participant said: "I hope that you really listen. Everyone who has shown up is very invested in the Church and in their parish. Please take our feedback on board. Also, please ensure that you have diverse representation in your decision-making process and include women and men as you make decisions. Don't miss the emotion in all this feedback."

**Holy Spirit, fire of love, we give you thanks  
for all those who participated in the Partners in the Gospel  
listening process -  
all who took time to share their thoughts and insights  
and to listen to one another, and to you.  
May we enter these pages as "holy ground."  
Let your wisdom and understanding  
accompany and guide us in our reading.  
Help us to listen deeply and discern wisely.  
Come, Holy Spirit!**

A prayer used at the reading sessions for Partners in the Gospel input  
(based on a prayer from the Document for the Continental Stage of the Synod)

# Direct Quotes

## Nine reasons to be excited for Partners in the Gospel

### It's necessary.

- "I am excited, because I know we need this." (Deacon consultation)
- "We have a problem. It's an all-hands-on-deck problem. It can be done—but it will take a missionary spirit." (Parish consultation)
- "I get it. I am up to the challenge. I see the reason and purpose for the change." (Parish consultation)
- "I am excited. It takes change to make growth. It takes Jesus to make change." (Parish consultation)

### It's an opportunity to reset and renew.

- "I'm hopeful that Partners in the Gospel will give us an opportunity to reset and renew. From a church perspective, and from a faith perspective, that has been needed for a long time." (Chancery consultation)
- "We've been doing things the same way for a long time. Maybe we need to sit in different pews for a while. Maybe this is the Spirit asking us to do something new. If that's true, let's grasp it with both hands." (Parish consultation)
- "It might be a breath of fresh air. Let's not do it the way we've always done it." (Parish consultation)
- "This is an opportunity to embrace the changes that are coming (change is coming no matter what!) and be a part of the positive changes." (Parish consultation)
- "The more people you have, the more energy, volunteers, excitement--it's contagious. It's gonna take some time but we'll come out like a phoenix from the ashes, better than before." (Parish consultation)
- "I think we are stuck and complacent without change... I resisted change... but I will enter this with hope." (Parish consultation)
- "This could be an exciting time, we need to open ourselves to what is best for all of us." (Parish consultation)

### It's a chance to break down silos.

- "We've stayed in our silos, in our various parishes. We're getting pushed to expand our faith journey with others." (Chancery consultation)
- "Instead of being 'those people out there,' and 'those people here,' we'll all just be one. I think that's real evangelization and what Jesus would want us to do." (Parish consultation)
- "I would like to move away from the parochial and towards collaboration." (Principals consultation)
- "As a church we could do great things if we could become one and work together." (Principals consultation)
- "Sometimes mixing things up makes things better. Multiculturalism can open our eyes." (Chancery consultation)
- "I hope this will force us to become more inclusive in our church." (Principals consultation)
- "No matter who is in our family, they are not 'the other,' they are us." (Parish consultation)

### **We can be stronger together.**

- "I have been part of a consolidation previously, and people thought it wouldn't work, but it did; it created new opportunities that we hadn't previously thought of. It's not easy, but it worked out well." (Parish consultation)
- "Three parishes will make a more robust youth ministry." (Deacon consultation)
- "We can offer good liturgy and religious ed programs that bring people to Jesus." (Deacon consultation)
- "Concentrated resources could lead to stronger, healthier schools." (Principals consultation)
- "We can all be enhanced by the partnership and engagement of the parishes within the family." (Parish consultation)
- "There are good people in all these communities and I am hopeful we can come together for the greater good of us all." (Parish consultation)
- "I hope that we can come together with a new purpose and a soft heart towards one another." (Parish consultation)

### **We can treasure and strengthen what is good.**

- "Take the goodness of each parish and build on it." (Deacon consultation)
- "This is for vibrancy; that doesn't mean that everything you know will disappear." (Deacon consultation)
- "Partners in the Gospel gives us an opportunity to sustain what we have into the future. Maybe the schools that have been struggling to survive could move towards sustainability." (Principals consultation)

### **We can develop lay leadership.**

- "I am excited that this will bring out the importance of lay leaders." (Principals consultation)
- "There is so much potential in lay leadership." (Parish consultation)
- "I hope this will shake us all up so we will become more engaged and part of the process." (Parish consultation)

### **We have time.**

- "At Emmaus, it took time for Jesus to warm up. It will take time for us to warm up to each other." (Deacon consultation)
- "We need to make room for people. We need to treasure them, even if it means slowing down the process." (Deacon consultation)

### **We can reallocate resources.**

- "For those groups that are not thriving alone, bringing them together with others may open the doors to new resources, new ministerial opportunities." (Chancery consultation)
- "With this process there is a potential to increase programs... We can go out and be with the poor.... There is a lot of potential." (Deacon consultation)
- "There ARE opportunities. Don't forget that." (Parish consultation)
- "It could be a cost-savings in the accounting department... Vendors could be shared across the family." (Parish consultation)

**The Spirit will be present.**

- "Dios nos va a guiar y vamos a crecer." *God will guide us and we will grow.* (Parish consultation)
- "How do we keep Jesus in the forefront as we go through these changes and bring glory to his name in the process?" (Parish consultation)
- "There's going to be a lot of bending of knees in prayer. The disciples were sent to many different places and had to adapt. We are in a similar place." (Parish consultation)
- "Maybe this is the Spirit asking us to do something new. If that's true, let's grasp it with both hands." (Parish consultation)
- "I hope the Spirit will lead us, help us figure it out. Bring it on. Let's go." (Deacon consultation)

# Draft Parish Families

- 1** St. Francis (Friday Harbor), Lopez, Island Station (Lopez Island), Eastsound Station (Orcas Island)
- 2** St. Joseph (Ferndale), St. Joseph (Lynden), St. Anne (Blaine), St. Peter (Deming), St. Joachim (Lummi)
- 3** Assumption (Bellingham), Sacred Heart (Bellingham), Western Washington University Newman Center (Bellingham)
- 4** Immaculate Conception (Mount Vernon), St. Charles (Burlington), Sacred Heart (La Conner), Immaculate Heart of Mary (Sedro Woolley), St. Catherine (Concrete)
- 5** St. Mary (Anacortes), St. Augustine (Oak Harbor), St. Mary (Coupeville), St. Paul (Swinomish)
- 6** St. Cecilia (Stanwood), Immaculate Conception (Arlington), St. John Vianney (Darrington), St. Mary (Marysville), St. Anne (Tulalip)
- 8** St. Mary Magdalen (Everett), St. John (Mukilteo), St. Hubert (Langley)
- 9** Holy Cross (Lake Stevens/Granite Falls), St. Michael (Snohomish), St. Mary of the Valley (Monroe)
- 10** St. Brendan (Bothell), St. Teresa of Calcutta (Woodinville)
- 11** St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (Bothell), St. Pius X (Mountlake Terrace)
- 12** Holy Rosary (Edmonds), St. Thomas More (Lynnwood)
- 13** St. Mark (Shoreline), St. Matthew (Seattle), St. Catherine (Seattle)
- 14** St. Luke (Shoreline), Christ the King (Seattle)
- 15** St. John the Evangelist (Seattle), St. Alphonsus (Seattle), St. Benedict (Seattle)
- 16** Our Lady of the Lake (Seattle), St. Bridget (Seattle), Assumption (Seattle)
- 17** Our Lady of Fatima (Seattle), St. Anne (Seattle), Sacred Heart of Jesus (Seattle)
- 18** St. James Cathedral (Seattle), Christ Our Hope (Seattle), Immaculate Conception (Seattle)
- 19** St. Therese (Seattle), St. Joseph (Seattle)
- 20** Holy Rosary (Seattle), Our Lady of Guadalupe (Seattle)
- 22** St. Francis of Assisi (Burien), St. Bernadette (Seattle), St. Thomas (Tukwila)
- 23** St. Edward (Seattle), St. Paul (Seattle), St. George (Seattle), St. Peter (Seattle), Our Lady of Lourdes (Seattle)
- 24** St. Stephen the Martyr (Renton), St. Anthony (Renton)
- 25** St. John Vianney (Kirkland), Holy Family (Kirkland)
- 26** St. Jude (Redmond), Holy Innocents (Duvall), St. Anthony (Carnation)
- 27** Sacred Heart (Bellevue), St. Monica (Mercer Island)
- 28** St. Louise (Bellevue), St. Madeleine Sophie (Bellevue)
- 29** Mary, Queen of Peace (Sammamish), St. Joseph (Issaquah), Our Lady of Sorrows (Snoqualmie)
- 30** St. Philomena (Des Moines), Holy Spirit (Kent)
- 31** St. Vincent de Paul (Federal Way), St. Theresa (Federal Way)
- 32** St. Barbara (Black Diamond), Sacred Heart (Enumclaw), St. Aloysius (Buckley), St. John the Baptist (Covington)
- 33** Holy Family (Auburn), St. Andrew (Sumner), Sts. Cosmas & Damian (Orting)
- 34** All Saints (Puyallup), St. Martin of Tours (Fife)
- 35** St. Patrick (Tacoma), St. Leo (Tacoma)
- 36** St. Charles Borromeo (Tacoma), Holy Cross (Tacoma)



- 37** St. Frances Cabrini (Lakewood), St. John Bosco (Lakewood), Immaculate Conception (Steilacoom)
- 38** Our Lady Queen of Heaven (Tacoma), Pope St. John XXIII (Tacoma), Sacred Heart (Tacoma), St. John of the Woods (Tacoma)
- 39** Holy Disciples (Puyallup), Our Lady of Good Counsel (Eatonville)
- 40** Sacred Heart (Lacey), St. Columban (Yelm)
- 41** St. Michael (Olympia), St. Peter (Tenino)
- 42** St. Joseph (Chehalis), St. Mary (Centralia), St. Francis Xavier (Toledo), St. Yves (Harmony)
- 43** St. Rose (Longview), Immaculate Heart of Mary (Kelso), St. Mary (Castle Rock), St. Catherine (Cathlamet), St. Joseph (Kalama)
- 44** St. Mary of Guadalupe (Ridgefield), St. Philip (Woodland), St. John the Evangelist (Vancouver), Sacred Heart (Battle Ground), St. Joseph (Yacolt)
- 45** Our Lady of Lourdes (Vancouver), Proto-Cathedral of St. James the Greater (Vancouver), St. Joseph (Vancouver)
- 46** Holy Redeemer (Vancouver), St. Thomas Aquinas (Camas), Star of the Sea (Stevenson)
- 47** St. Joseph Parish at Holy Family (Frances), St. Mary (Seaview), St. Lawrence (Raymond), McGowan Station (Chinook)
- 48** St. Mary (Aberdeen), Our Lady of Good Help (Hoquiam), St. Jerome (Ocean Shores), St. Paul (Westport), Our Lady of the Olympics (Amanda Park)
- 49** St. Edward (Shelton), St. Joseph (Elma), St. John (Montesano)
- 50** St. Joseph (Sequim), Queen of Angels (Port Angeles), St. Mary Star of the Sea (Port Townsend), St. Anne (Forks), St. Thomas the Apostle (Clallam Bay)
- 51** St. Cecilia (Bainbridge Island), St. Olaf (Poulsbo), St. Peter (Suquamish)
- 52** Holy Trinity (Bremerton), Our Lady Star of the Sea (Bremerton)
- 53** St. Nicholas (Gig Harbor), St. John Vianney (Vashon), St. Gabriel (Port Orchard), Prince of Peace (Belfair)

**“Standalone” Parishes, not included here:**

- 7 Our Lady of Hope (Everett)
- 21 Holy Family (Seattle)
- 54 North American Martyrs (Edmonds)
- 55 St. Joseph (Tacoma)
- 56 Blessed Sacrament (Seattle), University of Washington Newman Center (Seattle)
- 57 St. Andrew Kim (Seattle)
- 58 St. Paul Chong Hasang (Fife)
- 59 Vietnamese Martyrs (Tukwila)
- 60 St. Margaret (Seattle)
- 61 Ss. Peter & Paul (Tacoma)

## Family 1

**St. Francis (Friday Harbor), Lopez, Island Station (Lopez Island), Eastsound Station (Orcas Island)**

No feedback was submitted.

### **Concrete Changes Suggested:**

None.

## Family 2

### **St. Joseph, Ferndale; St. Joseph, Lynden; St. Anne, Blaine; St. Peter, Deming; St. Joachim, Lummi**

In this family, there was widespread concern about the distance between the communities, and fear that if a church building is closed, people will have to drive even farther for Mass. This is a real hardship for the elderly and people are concerned that a large number of parishioners will be lost if Mass times/locations are further reduced. "38 miles one way." "Many are too far apart for there to be any interaction as a community."

People also shared concerns about the logistics of sharing staff and programs across such large distances, and about merging finances. "Keep each parish separate, under one central church." "We are all waiting with anxiety to know if our church locations will be closed." People also had questions about the logic of combining these parishes into one family on financial terms: "These are the five poorest churches in the county. The other Whatcom county family is comprised of the three wealthiest churches." "If three parishes is too many, then six is overboard."

People also had general questions and concerns about Partners in the Gospel. There is a sense that not enough information has been provided for genuine input. "Just how is this going to increase the numbers of those attending Mass and availing themselves of the sacraments? I fail to understand." "Both young and old will find it easier to fall out of Catholicism." "This is all about money and not the parishioners." People expressed openness to alternative leadership models: deacons, lay leaders, including women. "This is a vocational issue. Let's call it what it is. It's restructuring and reorganization. No fancy words. That's what it is. We're all adults. We can accept that." "We're accommodating the problem, not solving it."

**St. Joseph, Lynden** is aware of its distinctive presence in the Lynden community. "It is a Catholic presence in a city that is heavily Dutch Reformed. We in a variety of ways offer to our community a view of what it means to be Catholic." The Hispanic community is at the heart of the Lynden parish. "They regularly attend Mass on Saturday night because they work the weekends on the farms and they finish working late." There is a very deep concern about maintaining these evening Masses. Otherwise, the risk is dispersing this community.

**St. Joseph, Ferndale** expressed a generally negative outlook on Partners in the Gospel. "To me it indicates the Church is in retreat. ... I see no hope in the proposed grouping." "A parish is like a family unit, people know one another. ... These are not families, these are groups of parishes."

**St. Joachim, Lummi** expressed deep fear of ongoing disenfranchisement/wounding of the Native community. "Significant loss of parish attendance and increased animosity between the First Nations people and the church." "This is already such a small community that fights for Mass times and sacraments. It is paired with Ferndale's St. Joseph Parish, which is run by people who have no understanding of the needs and wants of St. Joachim's parishioners." "If we restructure parishes and reassign priests, then we can at least make greater efforts to employ Lummi and Nooksack Catholics who can make their community needs known to the broader public." "I think this is only going to continue to disenfranchise the Lummi people and make no real progress in healing the wounds the church has caused First Nations people ... the Church still dismisses the needs of the tribe." "The impact on rural churches would be a disadvantage. Imbalance of power."

**St. Anne, Blaine** treasures the small parish feeling of their community. "Bigger is not better." They hope to be left as is.

**St. Peter, Deming** has a strong sense of independence. They prefer to keep finances separate and maintain their own pastoral council. This community expressed a unanimous, strong preference to join Family #3, Assumption and Sacred Heart.

### **Concrete Changes Suggested:**

- St. Peter, Deming, as a community, expressed a strong, almost unanimous desire to join Family 3 instead of Family 2. "As a lifelong member of St. Peter Mission, I wonder if the more natural grouping for our mission would be with Assumption and Sacred Heart." A strong, repeated request for Christmas and Easter Masses celebrated in St. Peter Deming. Father Moore presented three options to his parishioners (see his notes). The vast majority favored his "Option 2," which would be to move St. Peter, Deming, into the Bellingham family (#3).
- St. Joseph Lynden also suggested moving St. Peter to Assumption family. St. Joseph Lynden also suggested partnering with Assumption because both have Spanish-speaking communities.

## Family 3

### **Assumption (Bellingham), Sacred Heart (Bellingham) and Newman Center (Bellingham)**

Many of the responses received were from Assumption, Bellingham. It appears that several family groupings were presented at the listening sessions for voting. (See below.)

One of the main fears is that the “distribution of power to be significantly imbalanced,” benefiting Assumption more than the other parishes. Assumption has the bulk of resources, ministries, and a Catholic school. There is concern about how resources will be shared with equity.

Responses from **Assumption** also addressed concern that the Lummi and Nooksack tribes have “special representation” in the family and felt that this was not reflected in the current arrangement of Family 3. There were also concerns about serving the Hispanic community. Some recommended that they could be more effectively served at Lynden, but others noted that this community has the largest number of baptisms, first Communions, and marriages.

It was also noted that Assumption and Sacred Heart haven’t always meshed and this needs to be considered in finalizing the family structure. There is also a concern that combining the larger parishes with the Newman Center will deprive the smaller parishes in the county financially. At the same time, people see hopes for this grouping that the communities can share resources, become more diverse, and have young people from the Newman Center be part of the Church and bring new ideas to the table.

Both parishes expressed concern that this family could be overwhelming for one priest. Based on the nature of the parishes and the Newman Center, people asked that the priest assigned have the special skills needed. The Hispanic community requested more Masses in Spanish. They feel that this is a top-down approach and are skeptical that they will be considered in decision making. They also express hope of greater participation of the laity in the life of the parish family.

At **Sacred Heart**, travel distance for elderly parishioners was a primary concern. People are tired after experiencing many changes. They are also hopeful because of the opportunity to diversify ministries and meet people from other cultures. There is “worry that generational loyalty will be lost.” There is also a hope to engage and include young people. “We can build more outreach programs.” “Few people advocated that Assumption and Sacred Heart remain separate as standing alone parishes.”

### **Concrete Changes Suggested:**

- First choice based on voting: Family 2: St. Joseph, Ferndale, St. Joseph, Lynden, St. Anne Blaine, St. Peter, Deming, St. Joachim, Lummi. Family 3: Assumption, Bellingham, Sacred Heart, Bellingham, Newman.
- Second choice based on voting: Family 2: St. Joseph, Ferndale, St. Joseph, Lynden, St. Anne Blaine, St. Joachim, Lummi. Family 3: Assumption, Bellingham, Sacred Heart, Bellingham, Newman, St. Peter, Deming. (Second choice)
- Third choice based on voting: Family 2: St. Joseph, Ferndale, St. Joseph, Lynden, St. Anne Blaine, St. Peter, Deming, St. Joachim, Lummi, Assumption, Bellingham, Sacred Heart, Bellingham, Newman. (Difficult to achieve)

## Family 4

### **Immaculate Conception (Mount Vernon), St. Charles (Burlington), Sacred Heart (La Conner), Immaculate Heart of Mary (Sedro Woolley), St. Catherine (Concrete)**

The Skagit Valley churches have been “partnered” for a number of years now. They share pastoral leadership and have a lot of shared ministry already. A common theme in all the consultations is that this grouping works well, and people are happy to see it preserved in the draft family structure. “The current church family seems to be working and has for many years. It has been noted that we have become a model for the Archdiocese of Seattle.”

The Skagit parishes see opportunities in the Partners in the Gospel process, including even more shared ministry and “increased sharing of time, talent, and treasure across all parishes.” This is an opportunity to “establish centers of excellence.” “It is hard to bring the different communities together – it takes a lot of work – but builds a stronger community.”

People also identified a number of concerns about what becoming one canonical parish will mean. The biggest concern is about the “potential of losing the unique character, culture, and vibrance of our existing parishes.” There were also questions about sharing governance and finances among multiple communities and how that will work. People want their financial gifts to support their own community. There are also concerns that the smaller communities will not have a voice if there is only one pastoral council for the whole family.

Given that these parishes have been grouped for a long time, the consultation also brought forth a number of concrete suggestions for improving the life of the communities. People envisioned how they could further strengthen the partnerships they have already begun. A major theme was the need to empower laity to assist the priests and to supplement their outreach in the community. “We need more leaders in the Church; there is too much for our current priests to handle.” People are quite aware that some parts of the community are underserved – people specifically mentioned the Oaxacan community, youth, and families.

#### **Concrete Changes Suggested:**

- None

## Family 5

### **St. Mary (Anacortes), St. Augustine (Oak Harbor), St. Mary (Coupeville), St. Paul (Swinomish)**

In the consultations, some common themes emerged across all these parishes. People expressed concern about losing Masses and confession times. They also expressed concern that the families will not address the root causes of decline – the need for further evangelization and vocation work. People spoke about the challenges of the geographic distribution of these communities. They are far apart, and travel, weather, and summer traffic can have a major impact, especially traveling between Oak Harbor and Anacortes. All mentioned priest workload as a significant concern. People also noted that there are some significant cultural differences among these communities, which span “Island” and “Valley.” Communities want to preserve their culture and the reverence they experience at Mass (St. Mary, Anacortes).

People also see hope in this family structure. **St. Augustine** parishioners point out that the parishes already work together in several areas. **St. Mary in Anacortes** notes the younger population at St. Augustine and the hope for a more vibrant youth program. In general, the potential for sharing resources and accessing more volunteers for programs is a source of hope.

In their consultation, the **Swinomish** community was offered two options to choose from – this family, with St. Mary Anacortes, or Family 4, the Skagit parishes, including Sacred Heart, LaConner. The leadership of St. Paul was unanimous in their desire to remain with St. Mary, Anacortes. In addition to a long history that would make a partnership with LaConner unlikely to succeed, the Swinomish people have strong cultural ties with the south Whidbey area. “We have deep historic roots with the lower Skagit.” “This is all of Swinomish, the ancestral land, the homecoming. It’s all on this side of the channel.”

Swinomish leaders also indicated that building connection with St. Mary in Anacortes, while not easy, is working. There is a good relationship with the pastor, and there are regular efforts to relate with the people of St. Mary, Anacortes, including times for reflection on the fraught history with residential schools. “We’re trying so hard to build relationships with St. Mary’s.... I don’t have a lot of years or energy left, but I see a glimmer of hope with St. Mary’s.” “We want St. Paul’s to continue to be serviced by St. Mary’s. We don’t want to start over again.”

“My greatest hope and dream is that as we grow with St. Mary’s, and we come to understand what our joint Catholic history is. We all want the same thing, we want our faith to heal, we want to be strong.”

### **Concrete Changes Suggested:**

- Make St. Augustine, St. Mary, Coupeville, a family
- Make St. Augustine, St. Mary, Coupeville, and St. Hubert a family
- Add Family 1 (San Juans) to St. Mary, Anacortes
- Add Sacred Heart, La Conner to this family
- Create an all-Spanish parish in the valley
- Native American parish needs dedicated vicar

## Family 6

### **St. Cecilia (Stanwood), Immaculate Conception (Arlington), St. John Vianney (Darrington), St. Mary (Marysville), St. Anne (Tulalip)**

One of the biggest concerns was the distance among these parishes. People are concerned about travel times and safety for priests and for seniors having to drive distances. They wonder about how shared faith formation would work across such far-flung communities. Another significant concern is that the current configuration calls for only 2 priests for 5 communities. There were many requests for 3 priests to be assigned to this family. We need "a priest who can bilocate." "One priest may not be able to make a bond with all the parishes if they are just running from one parish to the next." "Are we going to lose even more priests to burnout?"

Many people commented on engaging deacons in leadership of the family. One commented on the (now discontinued) Cabrini Ministry Training program, and how useful that could be in the new parish family setup. Many mentioned lifting up lay leaders to extend the ministry of the pastor and prevent parish closures.

Many parishioners at **St. Cecilia, Stanwood** expressed concerns about preserving daily Mass. There is a real sense of loss in losing the presence of the Carmelite fathers. A lot of the parish identity revolves around Carmelite spirituality. "I'm basically opposed to change and this schedule seems to be an uphill battle." "I honestly don't have hope. I really need more time to process all of this." There is openness to other parishes, especially working with Tulalip Mission.

At **St. Mary, Marysville**, the Hispanic community expressed concern about distance between parishes. Changes to Mass schedules and access to Mass are the primary concern. People expressed hope "that St. Mary Discipleship Academy may have the opportunity to grow with support and nurture faith in the kids of our church."

**St. Mary, Tulalip:** "A piece of history – Stanwood and Tulalip were serviced by canoe." "St. Mary/St. Anne are a natural family – they have always been connected." "Tulalip Tribes have given resources to the St. Anne project – if a donation is given it must go toward what is designated." "Indigenous people need representation, with understanding of a community who has had a lot taken away." "Why is Seattle making decision(s) that impact local and cultural identities?" "Can we use laity who are well trained to help with administration so that priests can do priest duties and spend more time on sacraments and so that each family has a mix of 2 (maybe 3) churches?"

**St. John Vianney:** "We know the vision; what will the transition period be like?" People had many questions about logistics. "The Archdiocese closed [the] parish during Covid for 1-½ years, then moved our pastor. If they move our pastor again, people will leave the Church and not come back." "It seems more harm than good to move priests."

**Immaculate Conception, Arlington:** "Arlington is filled to capacity and additional Masses would overwhelm the pastor. Camano Island parishioners would simply quit attending due to the distance."

### **Concrete Changes Suggested:**

- St. Cecilia: Move to Family #4 with Mount Vernon



## Family 8

### St. Mary Magdalen (Everett), St. John (Mukilteo), St. Hubert (Langley)

People in all three communities participated in the feedback, with St. Hubert being especially engaged in the process.

At **St. Hubert**, the biggest concern is the ferry. Service is unreliable, expensive, and challenging, especially for elderly people, who make up the majority of St. Hubert's parishioners. There is great concern about priests needing to go back and forth for Mass, or for parishioners having to travel frequently for Masses or activities on the mainland. "I am really concerned that the priests being spread out will not serve us" (St. Hubert). People find their current leadership model to be working well. "We have an excellent model here with a Pastoral Coordinator and a retired priest who is happy to not be an administrator." There was acknowledgment at St. Hubert that being part of a family with a larger parish might offer programs they otherwise would not have access to.

People also see this family as problematic for other reasons. "I think we are in the wrong family. We should be in the island family because we are an island culture, not a suburban culture" (St. Hubert). They also worry about being swallowed up in a family with a large parish like St. Mary Magdalen: "We are 1/9 the size of St. Mary Magdalen, and therefore will not be listened to." At the same time, some parishioners pointed out that there could be opportunities in partnering with a large parish like St. Mary Magdalen – especially faith formation, youth ministry, and cultural diversity. Many noted the need for openness to the Holy Spirit: "The Holy Spirit is really guiding."

At **St. John** and **St. Mary Magdalen**, there were fewer responses, but they echoed the concerns of St. Hubert about the ferry, and the burden it places on priests. It was noted that there are already many cultural issues requiring pastoral attention in these communities, and adding a ferry commute would make the job too difficult. "I have no concern with the SMM and SJ pairing. St. Hubert is a major concern" (St. Mary Magdalen). People are worried about this family stretching the priests too thin. The parish staff "expressed puzzlement on how this parish family would work in practical terms," and was "unsure what this would mean for programs and ministries like faith formation," feeling that "being separated by a body of water seems to make this grouping impractical" (St. Mary Magdalen).

Across all the parishes, people found this draft family challenging and expressed concern about whether they would be heard. They feel the ferry would be a major hindrance to forming a parish community. Some suggested that the only way this could work would be if three priests, rather than two, could be assigned to this family, with a retired priest continuing to serve at St. Hubert.

### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- In this family there was widespread consensus that the current pairings are unlikely to succeed. Many suggested partnering St. Mary Magdalen and St. John with Our Lady of Hope, St. Anne, Tulalip, St. Mary, Marysville, or St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Bothell. A very strong preference to put St. Hubert with the other churches on Whidbey Island (Coupeville, Oak Harbor), Family 5

## Family 9

### Holy Cross (Lake Stevens/Granite Falls), St. Michael (Snohomish), St. Mary of the Valley (Monroe)

All three parishes participated in the consultation process, with the most feedback coming from St. Mary of the Valley, and the fewest from St. Michael, Snohomish.

All parishes reported concerns about the potential for closing church buildings in the Partners in the Gospel process. If people have to drive for liturgies or parish events, that could impact the community, especially the elderly: "Seniors have small numbers but have special needs and may quit." There were also concerns about the distribution of priests, especially losing the bilingual priests they have now. There is also a sense of hope that with this new organization, priests can focus more on the pastoral needs of the community rather than on the administrative side. They also see this as an opportunity for the community to "come together," "bring new people" with more opportunities in fellowship. They also shared the hope that the youth group programs can be enhanced and enriched by sharing resources.

**St. Mary of the Valley** is particularly concerned with losing their leadership – clergy, religious, and lay. Would Sister Carmen continue at St. Mary? Would she have to be shared with the whole family? Would they be able to maintain the prison ministry? People also asked questions about "finance coordination, organization of programs such as Knights of Columbus, St. Vincent de Paul, and how services for funerals, weddings, and sacraments are going to be organized." People expressed concerns that this process has the potential "danger of becoming a competitive" process rather than a collaborative one. The Hispanic community was especially concerned about the possibility of the church building being closed, and about losing Masses, healing Masses, and other services in Spanish. They also have hope that this change could strengthen the faith and bring new ideas. "Nuevas ideas. Unidad de lideres."

**Holy Cross** is a growing parish with a strong sense of community. They expressed concerns about losing the "small community feeling." They are also worried that if there are closures, their church building that is just four years old would be impacted.

Parishioners at **St. Michael** shared the hope that this is a great opportunity to expand their Catholic school. It was also noted that they would like to retain their current pastor since he communicates well in more than one language.

### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- One suggestion that Holy Cross be paired with St. Mary, Marysville/Immaculate Conception, Arlington
- Several suggestions to pair St. Mary with Holy Innocents in Duvall

## Family 10

### St. Teresa of Calcutta (Woodinville), St. Brendan (Bothell)

Both parishes expressed concern with the significant differences in style of worship between the two communities. Major concerns are changes or reductions in Mass times, the distance for travel between the parishes, and the impact this could have on seniors and families. Both expressed the desire to boost efforts to attract young families, youth and young adults to grow the parish. Both parishes mentioned concerns about possible lingering bad feelings: many St. Brendan parishioners have moved to St. Teresa because they were uncomfortable with the traditional style of worship and pastoral decisions made at St. Brendan: "They may not want to come back."

Many parishioners of **St. Teresa of Calcutta** did not feel the two parishes should be combined since both are presently healthy churches serving their local communities. Those who were agreeable to being part of a family are fine with pairing with St. Brendan, though a few suggested it would be better to pair with St. Jude since the two parishes are geographically closer. Many expressed, in particular, a strong concern that their fairly new church would be closed, which would be devastating after the significant time and financial commitment undertaken by parishioners to build it. Many also voiced concern that in the family, decisions might favor St. Brendan as the larger parish. Several parishioners expressed sadness about the potential loss of the name of St. Teresa of Calcutta, which is believed to be the first parish in the country to be named after the saint. At the same time, parishioners saw value in the two parishes combining resources and ministries and the opportunity to know other people. It's an "opportunity to expand my world with new friendships and experiences." Many identified the key issue as a priest shortage and suggested the solution is to allow women and married priests.

**St. Brendan** parishioners were generally more positive about pairing with St. Teresa but seemed to speak from an expectation that most of the sacrifices would be made by Woodinville as the smaller parish. "(We) don't want to be the big guy swallowing the smaller guy." Parishioners were most concerned with retaining their style of worship, "reverent liturgy," with Latin and more traditional forms of music. They also expressed concern about accessibility for older parishioners if they had to travel to Woodinville to participate in Masses or parish programs. Of the benefits of pairing, many were excited about the opportunity for growth in ministry, particularly youth ministry. Others mentioned that St. Brendan has lost a good number of parishioners in recent years, and perhaps the pairing could fill empty pews. Several St. Brendan parishioners expressed their hope their pastor would stay on as the pastor of the new family, with some noting they will leave the parish and follow him wherever he is assigned.

Members of the **Hispanic community at St. Brendan** voiced reservations that St. Teresa would not welcome them since they did not embrace the community when the parish was established. They also had concerns about Mass times and locations, the number of Masses, and the ability of the priest to preside in Spanish. It was noted that Spanish Mass at St. Brendan is packed now, which causes some concern about space issues depending on where Masses are held. One member of the community encouraged fellow parishioners to reach out to each other in welcome: "La lectura del señor Jesucristo en camino a Emaús me invita a reconocerlo en los nuevos hermanos que nos toca recibir, o les toque recibirnos. Ver a Jesús en ellos y que ellos vean a Jesús en nosotros." ("The Emmaus passage reminds me to invite people to meet along the road, and now it's my time to welcome people. To see Jesus in them and for them to see Jesus in us.")

### **Concrete Changes Suggested:**

- St. Teresa of Calcutta, Woodinville, could be partnered with St. Jude, Redmond, since they are geographically closer and more compatible in style of worship (suggested by a few).
- Parishioners at both parishes (though more at St. Teresa of Calcutta), stated that the Archdiocese of Seattle should leave healthy parishes alone and work with or close failing parishes.

## Family 11

### St. Pius X (Mountlake Terrace) and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (Bothell)

**St. Pius X:** Traffic/travel time was a major concern, if all ministries were to be consolidated at one location. Several responses noted that each of these two parishes already have vibrant ministries as well as great attendance. "Why combine these 2 parishes besides the shared Hispanic population?" "Hoping that communities work together." These present an opportunity "to grow more and encourage youth to be more involved." People expressed concern about who the assigned pastor would be: "Priest is the deal breaker." "Administrative streamlining could allow for relocation of resources to provide greater support for the Pastor." St. Pius needs a Spanish-speaking priest "to maintain current Hispanic presence at the parish." There is a concern about losing the religious sisters working in both faith formation and Hispanic ministry.

St. Pius X also received responses in Spanish, with these main topics: "People leaving for lack of understanding and facing new models of working." The decision appears more financially based. Concerns about the schedule of Masses and services and that the different ecclesial movements won't get along, dividing rather than creating unity. The community is hoping to create a larger church with more possibilities to respond to the needs of the community. Hopes for more access to the Catholic school.

**St. Elizabeth:** They fear losing the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit, who have been "an excellent and inspiring example of faith and perseverance" and "have provided a strong sense of community." They are concerned that the "community might fall away due to the distance; members of this parish may choose to go to other places." People feel a deeper solution is needed because of the decline of vocations and people attending church. Some mentioned allowing married or woman priests.

They also have the desire to maintain thriving programs and celebrations. People see their community as a sign of hope: an "active congregation with diversity of parishioners, such as English, Spanish, Filipino, Indian, some Vietnamese and African" cultures. There is also the hope that "people feel they have a parish that is welcoming and one that is accessible to them without making them seem like a burden to get to church."

A number of parishioners felt that there was not enough information provided to fully understand what Partners in the Gospel is and thus provide better feedback. Combining finances was seen as a plus, but there is "the fear that because St. Pius has a school that this parish is absorbed by them." There were a couple of responses in Spanish expressing concern that the sense of family and ownership may be lost if a parish closes. Instead of bringing the community back to the parish, there is concern that merging will have a "contrary effect."

The Spanish-speaking community also sees the opportunity to be educated on the topic of stewardship so they can provide more financial support.

### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- Group St. Mark parish with St. Pius X

## Family 12

### Holy Rosary (Edmonds), St. Thomas More (Lynnwood)

Both parishes see possibilities in this grouping. They see the potential for an expanded youth program and recognize the rich diversity that St. Thomas More would bring to the family. "The cultural diversity of St. Thomas More is a gold mine for enriching our parish" (Holy Rosary).

They are also hopeful about the possibility of expanding their volunteers and enriching their community. "I like the idea of stirring the pot. Challenges me, new ideas, they may have done things one way, we did it another way, we may come up with a better way. It may present opportunities. Perfect opportunity to allow new people to get involved." (St. Thomas More)

They also identified similar challenges and raised concerns about losing their current pastors, and about losing the history and culture that they treasure. Both are concerned about the impact on schools and Mass times and wonder how finances will work in a family situation.

**Holy Rosary** parishioners expressed concern about losing the new pastor. Some noted that St. Thomas More is less economically stable and were curious what impact that will have to Holy Rosary. "My perception is that St. Thomas More is in a more desperate financial situation. It will be important that we allay any fears of their parishioners, for Holy Rosary to welcome them."

Many welcomed the cultural diversity of St. Thomas More and would like to see more of it at Holy Rosary. "I hope we can come together and feel like a family and feel excited about our cultural differences, an opportunity to grow and double, new ideas." "I believe St. Thomas is more diverse than Holy Rosary. I believe it will be good to have more diversity in our community. Then we can truly become a catholic community..."

Some **St. Thomas More** parishioners are concerned about blending the communities and having the ethnically diverse communities accepted. One online commenter wrote, "There is no way these two diverse groups will ever share a common ground. The celebration of the Masses are culturally divergent."

At the same time, they are hopeful at the possibility of expanding their volunteers and enriching their community. "I like the idea of stirring the pot. Challenges me, new ideas, they may have done things one way, we did it another way, we may come up with a better way. It may present opportunities. Perfect opportunity to allow new people to get involved."

#### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- Partner St. Thomas More with St. Pius X
- Partner Holy Rosary with St. Luke or North American Martyrs

## Family 13

### St. Catherine (Seattle), St. Matthew (Seattle), St. Mark (Shoreline)

Some of the common concerns that emerged were the size of the family and the distance between the parishes. If people have to travel to another location for Mass or events, there are concerns that people will leave altogether or go to parishes closer to them, particularly seniors and families with young children. “If people have to drive far, they may change churches or stop going to church” (St. Mark). Participants also expressed concern about the loss of the sense of community, the impact on cultural diversity, the difference in style of worship, the additional burden on priests, staff job loss, the disposition of property, and the impact on schools. “Culture matters and location matters. People are going to go to the church that is most convenient to them” (St. Catherine). Some expressed that Partners in the Gospel is too focused on administration and logistics and not enough on the aspects that would welcome people and enliven the faith. Some also fear that despite the request for parishioner input, the Archdiocese of Seattle has already decided on a plan.

Participants also recognize the possibilities in Partners in the Gospel, providing greater opportunities and financial stability by pooling resources, increasing diversity, encouraging more volunteer engagement and supporting more robust ministries. “Merging will create critical mass, which will have positives in many ministries” (St. Mark). “We share the same mission to spread God’s love and maybe it is a good time to share” (St. Matthew). People also expressed hope for fuller Masses and that a more vibrant environment, and particularly an enhanced youth ministry program, which would attract families with children. There was also hope for more stability and less turnover with full-time parish staff and with a greater reliance on lay leadership, particularly women, so that priests can focus on sacramental and spiritual care and be present to the community. “Right now, priests are spread so thin they can’t even minister to their current communities” (St. Catherine).

People also voiced concern about losing what is distinctive in their communities. **St. Mark** parishioners do not want to lose the classical education in the school and the emphasis on “orthodox” teaching in both the parish and school. **St. Catherine** parishioners wondered how St. Mark could join with the more “progressive” cultures of their community, especially St. Catherine’s outreach to LGBTQ persons and advocacy for greater leadership from women in the Church. Many at St. Catherine questioned why they were not joined with St. Benedict, where a relationship already exists. Many comments from **St. Matthew** parishioners focused on how to bring the three parishes together despite their differences in style of worship, demographics, music and preaching. “You get a different sense at each place. It will be a challenge to incorporate all of that stuff” (St. Matthew).

### Concrete Changes Suggested:

All of the following suggested changes came up multiple times.

- St. Catherine and St. Benedict due to their existing partnership into which much energy has already been expended
- St. Luke and St. Mark since they already have shared relationships
- St. Catherine, St. Matthew and St. Benedict because they are more similar in nature
- St. Mark with St. Pius because they are more alike in expression of faith
- St. Catherine, St. Matthew, Our Lady of the Lake
- St. Mark, St. Matthew, and St. Pius X – they are culturally and geographically close
- Some noted that the parish families appear to be organized in north-south groupings rather than east-west groupings where parishes are closer together and groupings would seem to make more sense



## Family 14

### Christ the King (Shoreline), St. Luke (Seattle)

"Pairing Christ the King and St. Luke's is a positive match that can provide many opportunities for parishioners. I am looking forward to greater parish resources and a larger parish community." This sentiment was universal across all feedback. "St. Luke and Christ the King will mutually benefit from the ethnic diversity offered by their respective communities. The joint financial resources of these two churches will create a critical mass beneficial to both communities. It is a Win Win!"

Both parishes had some concern about distance between the two, especially for the elderly. Both recognized that one parish is strong financially and the other is not. Both see opportunities – for more interaction and connection, and for expanding ministries by combining resources and people, especially youth groups.

"More people means more ideas" (St Luke). Both communities see the benefit of greater diversity, treasure what they already have and want to maintain current Mass times, but see opportunities that combining may lead to more overall Masses, including daily Masses. There are some questions about how the two schools will interact with each other, but people also see a lot of hope and opportunity in working together and sharing programs.

A frequent theme was concern about switching pastors during this significant period of transition. Each parish strongly wants to keep their current pastor.

**St. Luke** parishioners expressed joy in welcoming the Hispanic community. "This is a real opportunity to help another parish and we want to do so ... this goes to the heart of what it means to be a Christian." "We love Christ the King and see it as a great fit." "We don't see as hardship but an opportunity."

**Christ the King** sees an opportunity for both parishes to grow and build community. "We have a good thing going; how do we combine and keep the ministries and prayers going?" There was some concern that the focus on Partners may interfere with other parish activities: "How much time on this over the next three years? Is this all we will talk/think about, or will we keep up other programs/activities?" There is also a fear in the community of not having a priest and staff that can meet their needs in Spanish. "My concerns are around our Movimientos Parroquiales (parish movements). Will they remain active, or will their richness be lost in this transition?"

#### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- Almost all respondents were happy with the pairing. People mentioned that they did not think St. Mark or St. Matthew would fit as well.



## Family 15

### St. John the Evangelist (Seattle), St. Alphonsus (Seattle), St. Benedict (Seattle)

*Updated 11/19/23 to make corrections and reflect more fully the feedback from St. Alphonsus*

All parishes within this family participated in the listening process. However, there was much more engagement from St. John than from St. Alphonsus or St. Benedict.

Across all three communities, there were hundreds of questions on logistics. How will finances work? How will Mass times work? How will priests make themselves available to parishioners? What about properties? There is a shared concern that these communities are not a good fit, especially putting St. John and St. Alphonsus together. People shared concerns about the process itself and about whether they will be listened to. They felt frustrated at not having enough information to make a truly informed consultation about the draft family. They also sensed a lack of trust and transparency between the parishes and the Chancery. "The diocese tells us parishioners to be good stewards, but they aren't being good stewards" (St. Alphonsus). Parishioners expressed concern for loss of their parish identity, priests being spread too thin, what will happen to the schools and the fate of the school/parish staffs. "I hope the archdiocese sees that they are going to need to create rock star priests above and beyond anyone who has gone before." There is also "fear of losing our history (not just ours, but every parish in the archdiocese" (St. John). People also noted the need to address the root causes that have led to Partners in the Gospel: "If it is because of the priest shortage, then the archdiocese and the papal leadership of the Catholic Church should be coming up with solutions to get more priests." "The group would have liked to have input on the model chosen to address priest shortages."

One of the keynotes of feedback from **St. John** was concern about the mismatch with St. Alphonsus. These two parishes and their schools have very different approaches. "St. John's welcomes and wants to welcome LGBTQ members." "We currently enjoy a safe community for all, including LGBTQ+. Will that continue?" "Concern that St. Al's is much more conservative, and how is that going to work?" St. John School was the driving force for many of the people who submitted feedback. "Chose St. John's over St. Al's. What happens to my kiddo now?" People expressed concern about jeopardizing a wonderful school and strong budget. At the same time, there is openness to creativity: "We could be creative about schooling and perhaps creating specialized programs. We can improve the quality and improve pay."

**St. Alphonsus** parishioners expressed their desire to sustain a thriving St. Vincent de Paul Society. They were concerned about potential changes in Mass schedules or locations and how that will impact senior parishioners who walk to Mass. People want to see more people in the pews and more young families, and there is a desire to reach out to youth and young adults. St. Alphonsus parishioners wonder how this grouping will affect their school, and don't want to lose the ground they have gained with their new principal. People also expressed a strong sense of the possibilities in the family grouping. "Combining supplies for schools into bulk could save money and require fewer volunteers." People are also mindful that the pairing with St. John could be challenging: "St. Al's and St. John's have had a little bit of an adversarial relationship in the past." On the plus side, becoming part of the parish family, "we can share our orthodoxy and reverence with them, and we can learn their hospitality." With three different neighborhood, three different schools, and three different cultures, "there could be difficulty in combining.... how to combine the three and still remain vibrant, to feel like a family. We don't want to lose people."

**St. Benedict** parishioners expressed concerns about loss of identity and inclusiveness. "I worry that when you dilute a community you are going to scatter it." "St. Benedict's has always been 'all are welcome' and all our pastors have always operated from a place of inclusion. Inclusion regardless of sexual orientation for example." People expressed concern that girls cannot be altar servers at St. Alphonsus. (Correction: girls have been serving at the altar at St. Alphonsus since 2022.) Changing Mass times could drive more parishioners away. "We already lost a lot of people when we removed the 11:15 Mass and have not gotten those people back." Some noted that the merger of St. Benedict and St. Catherine has not worked well, that the two parishes do not talk to each other.

### **Concrete Changes Suggested:**

- A repeated and recurring theme: St. John is not a good fit with St. Alphonsus.
- St. John would be better paired with Christ the King
- Why split up St. Catherine and St. Benedict?
- A strong preference for clusters over parish families. "I believe that disassembling our entire Archdiocesan system of parishes (through dissolving and merging them) would greatly cripple our ability to serve our increasing population in the future."
- "I think St. John's and St. Ben's could have a fruitful partnership"

## Family 16

### Our Lady of the Lake (Seattle), Assumption (Seattle), St. Bridget (Seattle)

All three parishes see opportunities in coming together and pooling resources and facilities: "There are good people in all these communities, and I am hopeful we can come together for the greater good of us all" (OLL). "We're hoping to see facilities like childcare in our buildings to keep them in use rather than close them" (St. Bridget). "The convent would make a great shelter for homeless people –can we use our facilities for things like that?" (OLL) Coming together as a family and pooling resources could lead to more robust ministries and staff positions and stronger schools: "More people equals thriving committees" (Assumption). "Sharing resources across parishes ... rather than competing to see which community 'wins' – we could be one of the most comprehensive and well-resourced schools, public or private, in North Seattle" (St. Bridget). We could have "a school that could support kids with special needs" (Assumption).

Other common hopes expressed included the opportunity to elevate women in church leadership positions and more lay leadership in general: "It won't be just the pastor making decisions" (St. Bridget). "Maybe we can burst some bubbles, be more inclusive, nimble, creative ... not acting as gatekeepers to the old church" (Assumption).

All three parishes acknowledge that it would be a challenge for one pastor to handle three parishes and had some questions about how this pairing would impact the school. People also shared concerns that Partners in the Gospel is not addressing the real issues. There is distrust in the process, a sense of a lack of transparency, a feeling the decision was already made, that parishioners were not involved in consultation early enough, and a general concern over the amount of uncertainty: "Feels like a big and fast change for a church that historically is slow to change" (St. Bridget).

**Our Lady of the Lake** expressed concerns that they might feel like a third wheel based on their size, and by the strong existing relationship between St. Bridget and Assumption: "We could be the odd parish out." Some were concerned that Our Lady of the Lake's strong culture of outreach might be lost. Many commented on the historical "competition" between the parishes: "They are the other guys." "I have those feeling of 'them' and 'us.'"

### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- Several suggested it might be better to partner these wealthier parishes with a poorer or struggling parish in another part of the city.
- Several suggestions about putting Our Lady of the Lake in another family because Assumption and St. Bridget already have a relationship: for example, putting Our Lady of the Lake with St. Matthew and St. Catherine, which would split up wealthier parishes and partner them with parishes with more financial needs.

## Family 17

### Sacred Heart (Seattle), St. Anne (Seattle), Our Lady of Fatima (Seattle)

Across this family, there were shared concerns and hopes. People worried about the potential loss of their parish community and combining two thriving schools. They wonder if the Archdiocese of Seattle has already determined that certain parishes will close. They said Partners in the Gospel, though needed in many ways, does not address the root of our problems. Family groupings will help but not prevent the continued decline of the Church unless we also support vocations and embrace lay and other alternatives to priestly leadership. There were many questions and concerns about logistics, including Mass time changes, parking and access at the other churches in the family.

People also see hope that this may allow parishes to do more ministry, including youth-focused ministry not tied to the schools. The three parishes are very different, which was noted as a challenge as well as a potential point of strength. All three parishes are aware of the strong social justice ministries at Sacred Heart.

**St Anne:** Parishioners shared their desire to do more with social justice and service and see partnering with Sacred Heart as a positive. People shared concerns about elderly parishioners getting to different facilities within the family. They hope that priests will have more time to pastor, and less time to devote to administration. "I want to go in here without fear and encourage all of us to be fearless in this and be open to God's will, not my will, not St. Anne's will, not [the Archdiocese's] will, but God's will."

**Our Lady of Fatima:** Traveling distance between the parishes was noted. "My biggest concern is getting in the car. Magnolians don't leave Magnolia. Leaving the neighborhood will be a stretch for some of us." Some wonder if Sacred Heart would be a good fit with the other two communities. People are concerned about potentially losing/forgetting their parish identity and history, but they hope the family could lead to an expansion of shared lay ministers. Our Lady of Fatima and St. Anne already share some ministry. They also see the potential for increased diversity. This could "pop the Magnolia bubble."

**Sacred Heart:** Parishioners don't want to lose what is unique about Sacred Heart: the ministry of the Redemptorists, diversity, and the ministry of welcome to visitors coming to Climate Pledge Arena, from cruise ships, etc. They want to continue Sacred Heart's social justice ministry, including the (food bank and deaf ministry). These are sources of pride they would like to share. Would these be supported in a family?

"The Church is the center of my life. ... I spent years trying to find a good parish, and I love this parish. The Redemptorists have really made this place home for me." There are concerns about Sacred Heart being geographically cut off from the other parishes in this proposed family.

### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- Add St. Margaret and remove Sacred Heart (St. Anne)
- Leave Sacred Heart as a standalone parish without adding any others (Sacred Heart)
- Add Christ Our Hope to the current configuration (Sacred Heart)

## Family 18

### St. James Cathedral (Seattle), Christ Our Hope (Seattle), Immaculate Conception (Seattle)

Parishioners at all three parishes recommended that St. James Cathedral stand alone because of its role as the cathedral church of the Archdiocese and because of its sheer size and volume of activity. Parishioners at all three parishes also strongly suggested that Immaculate Conception, as the oldest church in the Archdiocese and cultural home especially to the Black Catholic community in Seattle, should stand alone and be preserved by the Archdiocese. People in all three parishes largely agreed that in any family model, Immaculate and Christ Our Hope carry distinctions that merit retaining and using both properties as active sites. Many also mentioned that ordaining women as deacons and priests and accepting married priests would address the priest shortage problem.

**St. James Cathedral:** Most parishioners who participated strongly believe St. James Cathedral should be a stand-alone parish given its unique nature as the cathedral church of the archdiocese and seat of the archbishop. It has a “responsibility to the Church, to be in relationship to the whole Archdiocese.” In addition, due to the cathedral’s exceptional size and resources, most expressed deep concern that the Cathedral would overwhelm the two smaller parishes, diminishing their identity and unique character, which they almost unanimously appreciated. “I heard a lot of compassion for the small communities.” “I think they might be surprised how much we are concerned about how they feel at this process.” A smaller number supported the idea of being part of a family to bring greater diversity of people, ideas, culture, and experience to the cathedral, which some noted has a tendency to be “insular.” “I love St. James, but every once in a while, we can get a little grand. It would do us good to be with churches with more modest means, less grand surroundings, trappings. That’s an interesting opportunity to ‘ground us.’” Parishioners also expressed concern about the success of a partnership given the differences in worship style among the three parishes, the significant cultural differences unique to each parish, a perceived increased workload for priests and staff and the financial impact on St. James as the parish with the greatest resources. However, parishioners also saw how a partnership with the smaller and different parish environments could be beneficial. “The pooling of volunteers for liturgy, outreach, service – it could open up more opportunities for all of us. I’m hopeful, and this is a good starting point.” “I am happy with the collaboration and continuity even though these communities are very different, but I think in the diversity, there is very much hope that we will grow if we live our values.”

**Immaculate Conception:** Parishioners who participated saw few benefits to being part of the proposed parish family. There was significant worry that their voices would not be heard within the two wealthier parishes and that their cultural and spiritual traditions as a diverse, multicultural community would not be nurtured or supported in the larger family model. “We have to be part of any family we join. We bring our gifts, and they shouldn’t be changed.” Parishioners generally shared a high level of anxiety and sadness that they would be overshadowed by the cathedral in particular and that they would not enjoy equal representation in how the family would develop. There should be “equal balance among all aspects of parishes so there is a true fostering of cultures, economics.” Parishioners also expressed a sense that families are being grouped by financial considerations only and not cultural compatibility, which is more important. Other concerns noted were loss of identity, whether daily Mass would continue at the church, the limitations of sharing priests in terms of building relationships, and the “historical significance (of the parish) as it relates to social justice.” At the same time, parishioners saw in the family an opportunity to meet new people,

learn from others, strengthen youth and outreach programs, strengthen finances, and share their own gifts with others: "Other churches will benefit from our spirituality at Immaculate." "Current proposal could help to 'loosen up' St. James to come into the 21st century diversity and inclusion journey."

**Christ Our Hope:** Parishioners expressed concern about losing their particular programs and culture, closing or changing Masses, losing their special relationship with the Josephinum, and losing their parish name. Since the parish is only 12 years old, many present-day parishioners are founding members who participated in forming the mission statement for the parish and choosing the name, and that identity is important to them. People also expressed significant concern with the loss or diminishment of their "lay-led" parish model and ministries since they perceive the family structure under Partners to be "a very clerical structure of leadership." We have "concern that our community won't have the ability to lead ourselves. We have confidence in our CoH community but don't have confidence that we'll be given the ability to lead and manage ourselves." Parishioners also voiced concern about the "power and size imbalance" with the cathedral, the "large, deferred maintenance costs" at Immaculate Conception, the loss of relationship with priests and staff, and potentially no longer having staff on site. Among the benefits of joining the family, parishioners cited the greater availability of resources for growing and expanding social and ministry programs, enhanced administrative and office support, having a larger number of persons to participate in parish life, serving as a model for lay-led ministry, and meeting new people. "Parishioners are hopeful that this can help us to focus on being better disciples for Christ. An opportunity to really lean into our mission and focus on coming together as the body of Christ."

### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- St. James should remain as the mother church of the Archdiocese and not merge with other parishes (many suggested).
- St. James Cathedral and Christ Our Hope (several suggested)
- St. James Cathedral and Immaculate Conception only – allow us to welcome a community of color; already has a relationship with the cathedral (a few suggested)
- Immaculate Conception, St. Joseph and St. Therese – as an alternative to the cathedral being a partner and because there are already relationships that exist between these parishes (several suggested)
- Christ Our Hope and Sacred Heart (a few suggested)
- Immaculate Conception with St. Joseph because Immaculate's origins are with the Jesuits (a few suggested)
- Immaculate, St. Therese, Christ Our Hope and Sacred Heart, as more culturally similar and having a better balance of resources to share (a few suggested)
- Immaculate Conception, given its history, should be a shrine or should be preserved, even if it is eventually not its own parish (a few suggested)
- Immaculate Conception with St. Therese – more of a natural fit (one suggested)
- Christ Our Hope and Immaculate Conception - as an alternative to the cathedral being a partner (one suggested)
- Immaculate Conception and St. Therese (several suggested)
- St. Joseph with Christ Our Hope (one suggested)

## Family 19

### St. Joseph (Seattle) and St. Therese (Seattle)

Both of these parishes recently experienced mergers – St. Joseph merged with St. Patrick parish, while St. Therese merged with St. Mary parish. This fact was mentioned as a point of challenge but also potential hope, especially from St. Joseph: “If the process is similar with the St. Pat’s [merger] process, the new parishioners from St. Therese will bring boundless energy. Strong volunteer base for new and ongoing ministries.”

Concerns were expressed about the potential for communities on the margins to be hurt by these two parishes coming together, as some felt happened with St. Mary and St. Patrick.\* There is a lot of mistrust as a result of the way those mergers unfolded, which leads to trepidation in both communities as they enter into the Partners in the Gospel process, however many had hope. “I think St T’s and St Joe’s are very similar in their teaching and their openness to all. If the two parishes come together, I do think they would make each other stronger.” (St. Joseph)

Some common themes emerged in the listening. Both communities are diverse, but in different ways. St. Joseph is very welcoming to the LGBTQ+ community. St. Therese is more ethnically diverse. While both communities view themselves as very progressive, they also treasure their differences. They have different worship styles. “Little things I worry about losing: bread baking, lay presiders. Holding hands at the Our Father, celebrating weddings and birthdays every month. These all create a natural warmth and uniqueness at St. Therese.” St. Joseph is a Jesuit parish, and St. Therese parishioners see that Jesuit identity as a positive. Many commenters spoke to the need for a different approach to parish leadership into the future, both to avoid burnout of the priests and to allow for the charisms of the laity to be strengthened and capitalized upon in building a new community. The role of women in leadership specifically was called out multiple times.

St. Joseph is more financially stable than St. Therese, which could open doors for future ministries. It also poses some challenges, particularly for the schools, where people are aware of a class difference, with the potential for a “haves” and “have-nots” situation. Some questioned the future of the school and have a sincere desire to strengthen St. Therese’s school. “That school is very special and service a population that may not get served elsewhere. I worry for the families that send their kids to school at St. T’s. I worry that St. Joe’s may not be able to take all the St T’s kids, then what happens?”

#### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- Several suggested that it would make more sense to pair St. Therese with Immaculate Conception (the existing pairing)

\*Note: Both of these parishes were part of recent mergers. St. Joseph merged with St. Patrick, St. Therese with St. Mary. Thus, some participants see this family as consisting of four parishes, not just two. Additionally, the process used to merge these parishes is very different than the new Partners in the Gospel strategic pastoral planning process.



## Family 20

### Holy Rosary (Seattle), Our Lady of Guadalupe (Seattle)

These parishes have a shared history (Our Lady of Guadalupe was founded from Holy Rosary Parish) and have shared ministries over the years. There are many friendships across parish boundaries. Each parish also has a strong sense of individual identity. At Holy Rosary, parishioners love their traditional church building and devotional practices. The people of Our Lady of Guadalupe are proud of their social justice focus and their tradition of welcome, especially those on the margins.

There is widespread acceptance that this pairing is one people expected and that makes sense. People can see a lot of possibilities in the partnership, allowing access to the strengths of the other community. Parishioners of Holy Rosary talked about the high level of parishioner engagement at Our Lady of Guadalupe, the strong parent involvement at the school, the diversity of the community, as well as the ample parking and the gym. They expressed excitement about the possibility of being part of Our Lady of Guadalupe's thriving outreach programs, Knights of Columbus, and youth ministry. The people of Our Lady of Guadalupe admire the thriving school at Holy Rosary and see great potential in expanding the volunteer base in different ministries. Partners in the Gospel offers the "opportunity to unify Catholics in West Seattle who are physically neighbors and to generate a mutual appreciation for each community, and nurturing the growth of each." "I think Holy Rosary and Our Lady of Guadalupe will merge well together. People already know each other. There has been some shared programs or staffing over the years."

At the same time, there is deep trepidation because these two communities are very different. Holy Rosary is more financially secure than Our Lady of Guadalupe and the families tend to have higher incomes. This leads to concern about how shared finances would work. At Our Lady of Guadalupe, people expressed concern about being a "stepchild" because of the financial imbalance.

There are also quite different expressions of the Catholic faith in these two parishes, and since they are only two miles apart, people tend to be very intentional in choosing the "progressive" approach at Our Lady of Guadalupe or the more "traditional" or "conservative" approach at Holy Rosary. Both parishes made it clear that the pastor assigned to this family will be critical to making the family work. "We need a pastor who respects and fosters the cultures of both communities" (OLG). The pastor will need to be able to speak to two quite different communities. A pastor who is a unifier could make it work.

"My hope is that we can keep our eye on the ball and where is God calling us, and God is calling us all into communion, a sharing of life" (OLG). "I have been in this parish for over 70 years and seen several pastors and changes. I can't think of any immediate challenge that I wouldn't be willing to tackle and work with" (Holy Rosary).

#### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- None



## Family 22

### St. Francis of Assisi (Seahurst), St. Bernadette (Burien), St. Thomas (Tukwila)

Overall, **St. Francis of Assisi** was open to the parish family. They expressed broad concerns about the Church and Partners in the Gospel itself – the need for transparency, the need to explore married priests, why people are leaving the Church, etc. There was also hope and willingness to try: “Most of us are hopeful people and want to help make it successful. It’s a new opportunity.” “Hope we get all parishes together and grow together.” “Change is going to be challenging but it is positive.” They are also concerned about the loss of their identity. “Breaking down ‘them’ and ‘us’” ... “unknown is scary.” Concern was expressed about having two schools and how that would work.

**St. Bernadette:** Parishioners said they did not have a good history with St. Francis. Many of them proposed another family configuration of St. Bernadette, Our Lady of Lourdes, and St. Thomas Tukwila, given a long history with those communities (see below). “Although we have tried in the past, we have never been able to collaborate on any meaningful program. St. Francis always seems to work against us rather than with us.” There were questions about how to join parishes of such different sizes. “What safeguards will be in place to ensure that no one parish group is more influential in decision and policy making than the other parish groups just because of their size?”

**St. Thomas, Tukwila:** They love their priest and don’t want to lose him. They are also concerned about how the new pastor will work with them and want to ensure that he is bilingual to minister to the Hispanic community. Lots of concerns were expressed about confession and worries that the lines will be too long. They have significant fear of the unknown and are assuming buildings will close. “What will happen to the large, beautiful sacred buildings?” The Hispanic community is concerned about continuation of Masses and sacramental prep/catechism in Spanish. They are also concerned about non-Catholic groups proselytizing among the Hispanics in the region who have not been served well by Catholic churches. Questions were also raised about what will happen to the Burmese community and the large community garden.

Common themes: concern about the elderly, the distance between the locations and changes to the Mass times. There was widespread concern around the pastor, his personal wellbeing and capacity. There was an assumption that the big parish would swallow up the small parishes. There was trepidation around losing their community identity and how to realistically fuse the community so that is truly one vibrant community. “Hope that each parish will accept everyone; yet focus on needs of different cultures.” Concerns around losing staff, finances, and many questions around the logistics of the one canonical parish structure. Many expressed apprehension that consolidation will cause people to leave the Church.

### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- Several St. Bernadette comments suggest pairing with Our Lady of Lourdes, given their long history of collaborating: “I believe that Our Lady of Lourdes should be assigned to our parish family. We have a large number of Vietnamese children in our St. Bernadette School. They go to Lourdes for Mass and language school but attend regular school here.” Prior to the Vietnamese community settling at Our Lady of Lourdes, they gathered at St. Bernadette. The Vietnamese community from St. Bernadette and Our Lady of Lourdes serve a traditional Vietnamese dinner every year

at St. Bernadette. "The obvious parish family would include St. Thomas, Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Bernadette – so much historical connection here." "I realize that in proposing parish families, the consulting bodies looked at geography, finances, Mass attendance, number of parish families, etc., all data-driven information. But did anyone look at history or feelings of the heart? The obvious parish family would include St. Thomas, Our Lady of Lourdes, and St. Bernadette. There is so much historical connection here." "St. Thomas and OLL have been working together for years. Why divide them now?"

- One person commented that St. Francis would be better fit with St. Philomena and suggested St. Thomas, St. Bernadette and Our Lady of Lourdes be combined.

## Family 23

### St. Paul, St. George, St. Peter, St. Edward (Seattle), Our Lady of Lourdes (Seattle)

There was robust feedback from all parish groups. St. Paul, St. George, St. Edward, and St. Peter are already a four-parish cluster, and they provided feedback as a group.

All parishes within the family shared concerns about priest burnout. "The workload for our priests will only increase." "We only have two priests for four parishes. They don't have time for all of us ... we want a priest who wants to know all names and know if someone is missed." "It's hard to make appointments to meet with priests." A common concern was around handling change. "Drastic change will push some parishioners away."

**Four-parish Cluster:** Parishioners in the four-parish cluster wonder how it would work to add a fifth parish to the mix. "Does that solve the problem? When does this process stop? Do we merge again and redo the process later?" "We did the original 3 cluster and feel like it was okay. We used to have priests to cover everything, now we are a bigger cluster with fewer priests." There are many concerns about the workload for priests.

People sense a culture clash in adding Our Lady of Lourdes. "With such distinct parishes, how to connect them?" "Adding an additional parish poses cultural challenges. Inclusion and maintenance of culture." Many had no idea what it would mean to take on Our Lady of Lourdes. "I don't know where Our Lady of Lourdes is." This community has deep concern about the empty pews and a strong desire to engage young people. Some hope was expressed that the pews would be fuller with the addition of Our Lady of Lourdes to the family, with more volunteers and more opportunities for youth.

**Our Lady of Lourdes:** "We, OLL parishioners, are expressing in a single voice to plead with the Archdiocese of Seattle to reconsider consolidating our parish with four other parishes." The feedback from this community is overwhelmingly opposed to joining the four-parish cluster. People have a very strong wish to remain an independent community. They feel that financially, they are already independent and are in a position to be able to maintain what they have and expand as needed. They are a strong community – attendance was not impacted by Covid, and weekday Mass attendance is upward of 100. They also note that they are currently staffed by a religious order of Vietnamese priests, so they do not believe that they need to take an archdiocesan priest. Not only that, but they noted, "This community church has produced 5 priests for the Archdiocese of Seattle: Fathers Phuong Hoang, Tuan Nguyen, Thanh Dao, Vu Tran, and Thomas Tran. We are confident that if we stay intact, we can produce more future priests."

People also expressed the importance of the Vietnamese cultural setting at Our Lady of Lourdes. "Our community started attending Mass at Holy Family, then we moved to St. Bernadette; Finally we have been attending Mass and participating in the community here at Our Lady of Lourdes for over 20 years. We call this place our home and we do not want to lose our home, again!!" People shared that Vietnamese children are very faithful and active in church because of the Vietnamese cultural setting. What will happen to that cultural setting if there is a merger? How would the active Vietnamese groups and activities continue?

### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- Our Lady of Lourdes unanimously request to remain a standalone parish, making cogent arguments to support this. They have the support of a religious order and do

not need an archdiocesan priest. In contrast to most parishes in the Archdiocese of Seattle, they have experienced tremendous growth in every aspect of parish life. There has been no decrease in attendance in the wake of Covid.

- The four-parish cluster had more questions than answers, and while there is openness to the Partners in the Gospel process, the reaction to Our Lady of Lourdes is lukewarm at best.

## Family 24

### St. Stephen the Martyr (Renton), St. Anthony (Renton)

In both parishes, there are concerns about combining two large parishes and losing their vibrancy as a result. Both parishes expressed concern about losing staff. Both have financial concerns about becoming a family and feel they do not have enough knowledge of each other's finances. "St. Stephen and St. Anthony's are on different financial spectrums and the need to align with a smaller church who isn't in financial crisis seems more appropriate." (St. Stephen) Both fear for the retention of parishioners during the transition. St. Anthony expressed concern at the lack of diversity on the staff of St. Stephen.

At **St. Stephen the Martyr**, parishioners shared concerns about losing their unique identity, 24-hour adoration and the impact on their priests. "If we don't see our priest/shepherd the sheep will go elsewhere." They also worry about the workload for the priests. "Two big parishes merged together is overwhelming for one pastor. All the responsibilities will burn him out. It's better to be merged with a smaller parish." "There is concern about the ability of the pastor to make personal connection with parishioners when the number of parishioners doubles." "I believe the family grouping will be challenging. I have witnessed ministries fail without some involvement of the main pastor." "It will hurt the culture of the church if the main pastor is not able to reach everyone. It will be too thinned out." But they see hope for retaining and increasing youth participation and for more of their own young people to attend Catholic school and for increasing diversity. "St. Anthony's has a school which may encourage more St. Stephen parishioners to send their children." "We hope to bring out the many diversities of this new united family."

At **St. Anthony**, they wondered about what will happen to St. Stephen if they lose their current pastor. There is also concern for a loss of diversity. "At St. Anthony there is so much diversity and I really like that. That might get lost, would hate to see the uniqueness get lost." People weren't sure they would be welcomed by St. Stephen and how they would get to the parish, since there is no bus service. At the Spanish-language sessions, acceptance was an issue. "Will our cultural celebration and language be accepted?" "Will we lose our services in Spanish?"

#### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- A sense that these parishes are too big and each should be combined with a smaller parish.
- Many suggested putting St. Stephen with St. John the Baptist, Covington: "We may have more of a relationship with St. John locally."
- St. Stephen, Holy Spirit, Kent, St. Barbara, Black Diamond
- St. John with Holy Spirit, Kent
- St. Anthony with St. Thomas, Tukwila
- St. John, St. Anthony, and St. Stephen

## Family 25

### Holy Family (Kirkland), St. John Vianney (Kirkland)

Both communities share a concern about the distance between the parishes and the need to rely on the freeway if activities are merged, which would be a special challenge for elderly parishioners. Both parishes see potential synergy in the fact that St. John Vianney has a strong preschool program but no school, and those children could flow into Holy Family School. Both communities are concerned about losing their current pastors, who have played a major role in building the environments their parishioners love. People also wondered about combining already fully Masses, and the potential loss of participation that changing Mass times or locations would bring. Both parishes are financially strong and ministerially vibrant, so many felt this pairing will not help support a struggling parish. Others saw potential in the pairing: "It will expand out the idea of the family of God. We think we're family and forget sometimes that there is a larger family out there" (St. John Vianney).

**St. John Vianney** has a strong sense of history and identity, and a sense of intimacy as a community. There is great fear of losing that: "[We] acknowledge so many of you have been part of founding the parish. It's got to be really emotional to think about the merger." One constant hope was that pastors could be relieved of administrative responsibilities, with the potential for deacon, lay, and alternative leadership models to allow the pastor to focus on "being a pastor." There was skepticism about whether the family grouping would actually lead to improved financial health at either parish. There are also fears about parish closures.

For parishioners at **Holy Family**, in general, the pairing makes sense. They see opportunities for sharing of ministries that could "bring vibrancy to SJV [and] bring vibrancy to HFK" (Holy Family). One concern was how to make St. John Vianney feel like "equal partners" in the process and not feel "second class" in decision-making due to the size differential. People are hopeful for a consultative process for becoming a family: "Bottom-up discernment is a great thing" and "very reassuring" (Holy Family).

#### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- Pair St. John Vianney with St. Brendan due to proximity, cultural similarity, and existing shared sacramental work (expressed by many St. John Vianney participants)
- Pair Holy Family with St. Jude due to proximity

## Family 26

### St. Jude (Redmond), Holy Innocents (Duvall), St. Anthony (Carnation)

All three parishes saw benefits to working together as one parish in terms of sharing resources, developing and strengthening ministry and program offerings in the following areas: youth, young adults and families, integrating and supporting cultural communities, providing an opportunity to welcome new energy, and encouraging more participation with a larger number of parishioners. "I was drawn to Holy Innocents because of the smaller parish, but sometimes (it) is hard to know who is volunteering to do certain things. More people may be more engaged in an organized way at a larger parish" (Holy Innocents).

At the same time, all also expressed concern that the two rural communities, Duvall and especially Carnation, would feel swallowed up by St. Jude, the large urban parish. The hope was expressed "that each parish will have an equal voice, common goals and equal ownership" (St. Jude). They also expressed concern that, if Masses, sacraments, programs and activities are centralized at St. Jude, Duvall and Carnation parishioners, many of whom are elderly, would not travel to Redmond from the Valley, particularly in crossing the river, which is prone to seasonal flooding. Each parish also expressed the importance of welcoming the Hispanic community from Duvall and Carnation and ensuring Spanish and bilingual Masses.

Parishioners at **Holy Innocents** expressed the most concern with the family grouping. They noted the parish has significant debt from the construction of its new church building, and parishioners questioned whether St. Jude would resent taking on Duvall's debt. Concern was also expressed about losing the new church building. Several parishioners noted the appeal of a smaller parish that drew them from a broader area. "We don't want a megachurch experience. The smaller community is vital to us. Christmas and Easter are impossible to serve everyone." They also expressed concern that people would stop attending Mass or participating in parish life if they had to drive to Redmond.

**St. Anthony** parishioners were generally positive about the family grouping, remarking on the opportunities the relationship would provide to develop or resurrect programs and ministries that had diminished and were needed to attract people, particularly youth and families. **St. Jude** parishioners voiced a lot of questions and suggestions about how the two smaller parishes could be welcomed and engaged without their parishioners feeling overwhelmed or feel like they would be in a "mother/child" relationship. They shared concerns that Redmond is too far to travel for Duvall and Carnation parishioners and if that were required, the smaller parishes' participation might diminish.

#### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- Holy Innocents, St. Anthony and St. Mary, Monroe, because all are rural and have more in common, Travel is easier to Monroe than Redmond, and families from Monroe are already going to Duvall (several suggested).
- Holy Innocents, St. Anthony, and St. Mary, Monroe, or St. Teresa, Woodinville (one person suggested)
- Our Lady of Sorrows, St. Anthony and Holy Innocents because they are in the valley and there has been a lot of population growth (several suggested)

## Family 27

### Sacred Heart (Bellevue), St. Monica (Mercer Island)

Common concerns for both parishes included transportation, Mass times and daily Mass availability. "What would happen should the senior parishioners be required to drive to the other parish for Mass?" The strain on pastors, and a sense that they will be even less available after Partners in the Gospel than before. "How will clergy cope with the workload?" "Will we have more time with the pastor than we do now, only one day a week and one weekend a month?" (Sacred Heart)

**St. Monica** parishioners in general have quite a negative view of Partners in the Gospel. "I don't see any hopes! I will travel to a more conservative church." "Don't feel ANY hope." "Don't know what it means – close schools?" "Question how much combining will help engagement. People will get lost in this whole process." Parishioners are very concerned about the loss of community, which has already suffered greatly in the wake of Covid. "Concern about St. Monica fellowship degradation."

St. Monica parishioners expressed worry about combining with a more "liberal" parish. "Concern we don't lose our reverence." Several comments suggested the energy put into Partners in the Gospel should instead go into the evangelization of young people. "We want a fiery renewal." Parishioners wonder if Partners in the Gospel is addressing the root cause: "Feels like no one is 'steering the boat.'" "Circling the wagons." "We lack vision, leadership, strategic planning on the content and the product – the root cause. We will further alienate the community if change of product doesn't happen."

**Sacred Heart** parishioners are on the whole very hopeful about the future, ready to put energy into the new family, and generally optimistic. "Combining the youth group will help them thrive." "Revitalized programs that aren't working individually." "We need to adopt the attitude that we can make this work!" "Great opportunity for more people to be able to show their leadership abilities and fill the roles that previously required the priest to do it all." "Get the two parish councils together with the input of the people and let them lead us. Not just the priests because they are stretched." "Call for women leadership; deacons in particular."

#### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- One person: Sacred Heart with Holy Family
- One person: St. Monica with St. Madeline Sophie



## Family 28

### St. Louise (Bellevue) and St. Madeleine Sophie (Bellevue)

In general, parishioners at both communities view the pairing as workable, with opportunities to bring people together for outreach and other ministries. "Opportunity to be twice blessed!" They have many questions and want more information about what this process means and what it will look like in practical terms, such as Mass time changes, impact on schools, driving between locations, ministries, and the future of facilities, etc. Both communities wonder how finances will work and noted the lack of information about their own or the other parish's finances. They placed high importance on continuing to care for their unique cultural communities, including Hispanic, Korean, and Filipino Catholics. Both communities expressed concern that priests will have too much to do and will be absorbed by administrative work. People shared their concerns about the Catholic Church in general, particularly the lack of priests and young people.

At **St. Louise**, there was significant concern about losing their pastor. The Hispanic community raised questions about how Hispanic ministry would be impacted by a combined parish family, especially the impact on Masses. They see the need to involve more lay leaders and want to see more deacons. People expressed concern about becoming a "mega" parish without sufficient priest support. This is "an opportunity to compete to be in the top 10 list of largest parishes in the USA." There was a perception by staff that the "St. Louise brand" has unique value.

At **St. Madeleine Sophie**, many shared worries about the staff and particularly about losing their pastoral coordinator - "getting pushed out of her role would also be horrific." As the smaller community of the family, they are concerned about being overwhelmed by St. Louise and losing their distinctive identity. People shared many practical concerns that could impact older parishioners: driving between locations, availability of disabled parking spots, senior groups, hospital coverage by priests and long lines for confessions. They also see opportunities to revitalize programs and pull in more volunteers. St Madeleine Sophie school has a special gift of supporting special needs students.

#### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- One online comment: Sacred Heart with St. Louise (to balance wealthy parishes with more struggling ones)
- One online comment: Pair St. Madeleine with St. Joseph, Issaquah. Pair St. Louise with Mary, Queen of Peace, Sammamish.
- Several expressed concerns about changing all pastors at once and recommend changing at later date.

## Family 29

### Mary, Queen of Peace (Sammamish), St. Joseph (Issaquah), Our Lady of Sorrows (Snoqualmie)

People see opportunities for shared ministry in this family. Having one school could be an opportunity for ministerial growth (St. Joseph School). There was some concern about school capacity but hope for the school. "With the Saint Joseph school in a large parish family I hope it will have more students and family participation. This would be more beneficial for the family and a better use of the families support dollars."

People shared concerns that the geographic spread of the family would be challenging, especially for the elderly and young families. "People have already expressed to me that they watch livestreamed Sunday Mass for no other reason than because it's a long way to drive to Mary, Queen of Peace. I'm concerned that with fewer Mass times, this will become even more common" (Mary Queen of Peace)

People had questions about how consolidation would affect finances and ministries (e.g. St. Vincent de Paul). The potential change of pastor also causes concern: "We just adjusted to our pastor, why start over again?" People have fears of losing parishioners in this process. They are also mindful of travel times between the communities. "Will families become Sunday-only Catholics if they have to commute to church, as opposed to engaging the parish on weekdays as well?"

"It has always been hard for OLS to minister to the small cities of Snoqualmie, North Bend and the large surrounding unincorporated King County areas. Hardship is nothing new. But, OLS Parish remains the anchor of faith for all Catholic people living there."

There is some experience sharing young adult ministries and sacristans between Mary, Queen of Peace and St. Joseph.

**Our Lady of Sorrows**, the smallest community of the three, expressed concern about not being heard in this process and a fear that because they are "the poorer, semi-rural" parish that their character will be lost. "Better that it becomes a separate Mission of the Archdiocese if necessary."

People also asked whether Partners in the Gospel will solve the real problems that need to be addressed. The "centralized control of consolidated parishes is not a problem-solving solution for all parishes. At best it is an Urban Solution. But, it will only further marginalize those of us on the Rural and Semi-Rural fringes of the Archdiocese."

#### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- Put St. Joseph with St. Barbara, Black Diamond and St. John the Baptist, Covington
- Mary, Queen of Peace with Holy Innocents, Duvall
- St. Joseph with Our Lady of Sorrows
- Place St. Anthony, Carnation in this family

## Family 30

### Holy Spirit (Kent), St. Philomena (Des Moines)

These two communities expressed a lot of worries about the unknowns in this process. They shared concerns about maintaining Mass times as well as Masses in Swahili and Spanish, and about how to blend two such diverse communities. It is important to them that cultural needs are met and that communities are not simply assimilated or broken up. They need priests who are able to work with these cultural needs. A particular concern is that each parish has a large Hispanic ministry. What is that going to mean if they come together? Will the expanded needs be met?

People also had worries about priest capacity and workload; what happens to their staff, councils, programs, and buildings; and losing parishioners in this process. They flagged distance and transportation issues, particularly for seniors. Many are concerned about losing their current priests. They wonder if decisions have already been made by the Archdiocese of Seattle and if anyone is truly listening.

People also see hope in this process. Could the merge be an opportunity to attract fallen-away Catholics? There is a shared excitement about opportunities to offer more programs. Both parishes share a sense that the Church needs to pay more attention to children, youth, and families. "There is hope to continue worshipping together in our diversity."

At **Holy Spirit**, there is hope that the new family will continue to be welcoming to the various cultural communities, including the Swahili/Chuukese Masses. The priest assigned needs to be able to engage with these cultural communities. There was significant hope around gaining a school and the possibilities for child/youth evangelization. "Holy Spirit parishioners will have a school where the children can attend with an in-parish tuition rate. Both parishes will have more resources." Some wondered how pairing with St. Philomena would impact finances at Holy Spirit. "Ellos tienen cosas que nosotros no tenemos. Y nosotros tenemos cosas que ellos no tienen." (They have things we don't have, and we have things that they don't have.) "Nuevas oportunidades de convivencia para fortalecer lazos entre las diferentes culturas." (New opportunities to come together and strengthen ties between the different cultures.)

At **St. Philomena**, there were some concerns about not being welcome at Holy Spirit. Several suggested other possible pairings (see below).

#### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- Put Holy Spirit with Holy Family, Auburn
- Put St. Philomena with either St. John the Baptist, Covington; St. Theresa, Federal Way; or St. Thomas, Tukwila

## Family 31

### St. Theresa (Federal Way) and St. Vincent de Paul (Federal Way)

Both parishes agreed that this grouping makes a lot of sense if families are to form. They are both successful, vibrant parishes in different ways with unique gifts. They see both challenges and opportunities to coming together. There was widespread apprehension that this is a “done deal” and the Archdiocese of Seattle will not really take their comments into account. There were also concerns for those who did not participate: “How do we get this to the people who aren’t here? How do we get them to know about this?” (St. Vincent de Paul). People are worried that this process is not addressing the “real issues” which have led us to this point: e.g., reduced vocations, increasing secularization of society, a culture that has turned away from Jesus. Many expressed concern that the lack of youth in parishes is a key problem the Church is facing today. “That new structures will be the same as the old structures. Replicating old structures ... won’t change the outcomes, won’t build community, won’t enliven the church.” (St. Theresa)

People questioned the logistics of how this pairing works, given that both parishes are very full now. How would either parish accommodate more if Mass times were reduced? People were curious about how changes to Mass times, or the need to travel between parishes for Mass, would impact the ability of parishioners, especially the elderly, to attend. Significant love is expressed for the priests currently serving these parishes. People worry about more work being put on them and about losing them.

The communities see positives in sharing Hispanic ministry. They also see the potential to share volunteers and increase ministries across parishes. The school is an opportunity to evangelize teens/children and bring youth back to the Church.

**St. Theresa** is the smaller parish. There is a fear of being “swallowed up” due to the size differential between the two parishes. Several people noted that they chose St. Theresa because it is smaller than St. Vincent de Paul. They fear becoming a “mega” church or losing “the small, cozy, family church of St. T’s.” The Hispanic ministry is critical to the life of the parish. There is a desire to make sure this ministry is maintained, and also hope for shared growth. They see the potential for increasing the diversity of both communities as a value. Lastly there is also a fear of losing special traditions and feast days celebrated by the Spanish-speaking community and a constant request for insuring they have a Spanish-speaking priest.

Many at **St. Vincent de Paul** expressed the desire to make St. Theresa mutual partners despite the size difference. “I don’t want them to feel they are being absorbed into St. Vincent, that they don’t have an equal voice.” Several mentioned that they prefer a more “conservative” parish culture and are concerned about that being impacted in the formation of a family.

#### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- None

## Family 32

### **St. Barbara (Black Diamond), Sacred Heart (Enumclaw), St. Aloysius (Buckley), St. John the Baptist (Covington)**

In general, people felt this family was too large (four parishes) and too widespread. People in this draft family proposed many alternate structures. In general, all agreed that St. John the Baptist was not a good fit with the other three: "The Plateau way of life is very different from that (of) Covington." People pointed out how different the cultures are at each of these parishes. They do not want to lose their individuality as parish communities. They wondered, "How do we relate/evangelize with a larger community?" People had a lot of concern about drive times, and if Masses are reduced or cancelled, if people would travel even further for Mass.

People also noted that Covington is far from the other parishes in the family, and they noted that the population growth in Black Diamond gives potential for that parish to grow. There is a large Hispanic community at Sacred Heart. People want to be sure that Masses continue in Spanish, and that the new pastor is fluent. The Mass there is very full already. People also expressed hope that with more people, there will be more opportunities to involve more volunteers in ministries, and for people to meet each other and blend cultures.

At **St. Barbara**, people noted that they would rather go to Auburn than Buckley. People expressed disappointed that there is no school within the proposed draft family. They also noted that St. John is much larger: "St. John's is going to run over us!" People expressed excitement at meeting more families, and at the opportunities for outreach and sharing of programs the family structure would allow. They are also aware that sharing some operations would save money overall.

Parishioners at **Sacred Heart** brought up travel as a central concern. "The traffic from Enumclaw to Buckley is especially horrid the few hours (from) early afternoon to evening with one lane road." "The distance to Covington is a 110% concern." People expressed nervousness about change and worried about priest burnout. They also have hopes that an influx of new volunteers could help renew their community and their ministries, especially youth ministry. Having a cadre of priests means that "parishioners have more opportunities to hear the Gospel message from more than one perspective." They also noted that Sacred Heart has great opportunity for expansion and could be a good center for the region. They want to be sure the Hispanic community continues to be served: "Our Hispanic ministry is a precious resource, and we want to protect and support it."

Parishioners at **St. Aloysius** note that they are a small church, and they treasure that. They are concerned with being combined with much larger churches. "Big churches are not welcoming." They sense opportunities as well: they have "a lot of similarities with Sacred Heart, St. Barbara and Buckley. We can learn from others."

The community at **St. John the Baptist** also expressed concerns about the distance and the integration of the different communities. People felt the other three parishes were a natural family, but not St. John the Baptist. There is uncertainty about finances, and about children and youth. Would they really participate in shared events over such a long distance? "We will have a priest going from parish to parish? That will age the priest greatly, all that travel time." There are concerns around bringing together such different cultures in a single parish family. People also expressed hopes: "with work, willingness and openness, people can come together." There is hope for expanding ministries and reinvigorating the communities. "I

hope that a larger community can get more energy from a larger input of people. And they recognize that their parish has a lot to give. "If our parish has been financially gifted, we need to share because it's not our money, it's God's money." "We are a strong parish and can convey this strength to other parishes." They see a value in growing in diversity.

### **Concrete Changes Suggested:**

- St. John, Holy Spirit, Kent, Holy Family, Auburn, St. Barbara, Black Diamond (St. John)
- St. John, Holy Spirit, Kent, Holy Family, Auburn (St. John)
- St. John the Baptist and St. Stephen the Martyr (St. John)
- Buckley and Enumclaw with Sumner and Orting (St. John)
- Combine St. John and St. Barbara only
- St. John and Holy Spirit
- St. John the Baptist, St. Barbara and Holy Spirit, Kent is much more rational and much more likely to be a "happy" family.
- St. John, Holy Spirit, Holy Family, Auburn and St. Barbara seem a better fit.
- Group St. Aloysius with either Sts. Cosmos and Damian in Orting, Holy Disciples in Graham or St. Andrew in Sumner (St. Aloysius)
- St. Aloysius and St. Barbara (St. Barbara): "We have a longstanding partnership with St. Al's"
- Buckley-Enumclaw-Black Diamond could work

## Family 33

### Holy Family (Auburn), St. Andrew (Sumner), Sts. Cosmas and Damian (Orting)

People see the need for Partners in the Gospel. "I am actually thankful that the Archbishop is acknowledging that just merging churches was not a great process and that he's going to be more transparent with his thought processes; he's getting help from others and he's going to let our parishes make some of those hard decisions together versus just closing churches, taking over other churches. ... So I'm thankful they really want to hear from us." (St. Andrew)

All parishes in this draft family are worried about the distance between the communities, and about the financial impact of Partners in the Gospel, particularly on the school. There were many questions about the impact on the Mass schedule. People question whether this family grouping would help the many cultural and ethnic communities in the parishes: "This pairing does not help differing ethnic communities within the respective churches such as Spanish, Vietnamese and Filipino be served by the priests in the family." People shared concerns about the loss of parish culture, the "family feel" (St. Andrew). "How will we take advantage of each parish's strength? Can we function as one?" (St. Andrew) People also wondered whether they will really be listened to in this process.

Parishioners at **Sts. Cosmas and Damian** noted some negative history with St. Andrew in a previous relationship between the two communities. Parishioners at St. Andrew appreciate the idea of sharing Holy Family School, and they see opportunities to share faith formation, youth group, and multicultural communities.

"I hope that God and the Holy Spirit inspire in all a positive outlook and willingness, even in small ways to accept the changes and participated." (Holy Family) "I hope we can embrace this change with an open heart. I hope that we can learn new ways of making this change effective for all. I hope that God will be our guiding light." (St. Andrew)

#### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- Many suggestions that Sts. Cosmas and Damian join with Holy Disciples due to growth in Graham. Others suggested pairing Sts. Cosmas and Damian with St. Aloysius
- Holy Family suggested joining Holy Family with Holy Spirit, Kent or St. John the Baptist, Covington



## Family 34

### All Saints (Puyallup) and St. Martin of Tours (Fife) (with Holy Rosary Bilingual School)

For these communities, this pairing “made a lot of sense” as they “have been united for the better part of years.” Overall, there was a very positive outlook and openness. “By joining the two parishes this will give Catholic families and children opportunities to create life time friendships and bonds.” “Our parish and their parish are enriched by joining together. Those two vibrancies could be something fantastic.” “It will work.” All Saints looks forward to the greater diversity that will come with a partnership with St. Martin.

While it is a “natural family grouping” there are “so many unknowns, though, we are nervous about that.” There are worries about a loss of identity and a loss of history. “Having a new name will throw out the heritage of each parish.” We need to “honor the traditions of both parishes.” There is a special sense of vulnerability at St. Martin, the smaller parish in the family. “I hope it wouldn’t get steamrolled” (St. Martin).

At both parishes, there are concerns about losing people as a result of the changes, especially if seniors are expected to travel to the other site for Mass and events. “Elders might feel excluded” (St. Martin). Is there a “plan for retention of parishioners?” (All Saints)

There was a powerful expression on the part of the communities that they keep their current pastor. “All of the people in the room stated in one form or another that they want their pastor to stay.” “I really think they need to keep him where he is.”

#### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- None

## Family 35

### St. Leo (Tacoma), St. Patrick (Tacoma)

Common concerns included difficulties in understanding the reasoning behind this pairing. There was recognition that both the school and the social justice ministries can mutually enrich each other. “Bellarmine grads are connected to both parishes and hopefully that thread will sew us together.” Both communities voice concern for parish staff (i.e., exhaustion, future staffing) and about losing their priest. There is anxiety about the deep ecclesiological differences between the two communities (i.e. conservative, liberal), but also hope about the potential mutual enrichment that could take place. There were many questions about finances and how that will work. There was both excitement and fear around school and the potential to engage with St. Leo’s social justice ministry.

**St. Leo**, expressed a strong concern about losing its Jesuit identity and mission orientation. “If we lose our Jesuits, we will lose our mission.” “We are such a welcoming parish – I would hate to lose that. We might lose the intimacy of the liturgy. We are so close. The priests are one of us, they are our friends. Losing the Jesuit presence would not be good. At another parish, I might be estranged.” St. Leo has social justice ministries that require large resources from the parish, and some are worried that St. Patrick’s focus will be on the school, and outreach ministries could suffer as a result. There’s a strong desire to maintain an open, accepting culture in the parish, especially to LGBTQ+ community. They see St. Patrick as more conservative and incompatible with more liberal culture of St. Leo. There was a general perception that the Archdiocese of Seattle was not addressing “real” issues (i.e. not ordaining woman, priestly celibacy). Worries were also expressed that cultural groups won’t be welcome at St. Patrick. St. Patrick is seen as affluent and not culturally diverse.

**St. Patrick** shared similar concerns as St. Leo in terms of greatly differing expressions of Catholicism. They are also concerned about new connections with the growing Samoan community at St. Patrick suffering in the new family pairing. St. Patrick is a much younger congregation due to the school. It was noted that St. Patrick has been in constant state of transition for the past eight years, and in recent years was paired with Holy Cross. “We know we must participate in the changes that are coming, and we understand the reasons for Partners in the Gospel, but we are weary, and our staff are having a hard time understanding why all the efforts of the past several years are not being considered and in essence have been for naught. Again, we don’t understand the reasoning for dismantling our parish family for a new family.”

#### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- St. Leo mentioned the desire to be paired with Sacred Heart, Tacoma, as a more viable and compatible option (a few)
- Leave St. Leo as a standalone parish, similar to St. Joseph, Tacoma being left as a standalone parish (a few)
- Keep St. Patrick in its current pairing with Holy Cross (many). St. Patrick would rather take on both Holy Cross and St. Leo than lose Holy Cross.

## Family 36

### St. Charles Borromeo (Tacoma) and Holy Cross (Tacoma)

Common themes from both parishes included the opportunity to make “new pew buddies” and increasing diversity with the addition of the Samoan Community (St. Charles). “I am excited about the St. Charles-Holy Cross partnership. These two parishes complement each other in terms of population and ministries.” While some supported the family, others were not as favorable noting the big parish may “absorb” the smaller parish and that pulling Holy Cross from St. Patrick would be a mistake. “Why change something that’s already good?”

While both parishes worry that people will leave the Church as a result of the change, they also see the potential benefits of sharing resources, ministries, and facilities.

**Holy Cross** expressed fears they will be closed soon after joining with St. Charles. Many uncertainties were expressed about splitting up Holy Cross and St. Patrick; they have spent five years working together and building relationships. Holy Cross wants to retain its 24-hour adoration – the only such devotion in Pierce Deanery. The Holy Cross Samoan community expressed fears over losing their newfound spiritual home at Holy Cross, after they were welcomed a few years ago under the existing partner relationship between St. Patrick and Holy Cross. There were several lengthy responses from parishioners of St. Patrick and Holy Cross expressing their opposition to splitting up Holy Cross and St. Patrick.

**St. Charles Borromeo** parishioners saw the diversity of the community as a positive. “The Samoan community and 24-hour perpetual adoration at Holy Cross would be a boon to St. Charles.” St. Charles Borromeo commenters expressed a desire to make sure Holy Cross parishioners feel like real partners in a family, and the desire to express “compassion, concern, and empathy for those who will experience the change.”

“As a new family, my hope is that we would come together as one body, sharing our gifts and growing together as faithful disciples.”

#### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- Keep Holy Cross partnered with St. Patrick (numerous recommendations from St. Patrick, St. Charles, and Holy Cross that Holy Cross stay with St. Patrick after five years of building a relationship)
- Partner St. Leo with St. Charles Borromeo (many recommendations from St. Charles, St. Leo, Holy Cross, and St. Patrick)
- Add St. Nicholas Parish, Gig Harbor to the family

## Family 37

### St. Frances Cabrini (Lakewood), St. John Bosco (Lakewood), Immaculate Conception (Steilacoom)

Many commented that this is the “right combination.” “My first reaction when I heard this: it’s about time. Let’s move on.” “I think it is a good grouping.” “This is as good a combination as possible.” “Pairing is logical and makes sense.” But all three communities expressed unease about Partners in the Gospel. “I feel they made up their minds and our input won’t make 2% difference in what they are thinking.” “How will the Archdiocese support our freedom to make decisions about property?” “Concern that while we have listening sessions, decisions have already been made. Property should not be sold.” (St. John Bosco) “There exists a hidden agenda in this process. The Archdiocese isn’t really giving us a voice.” (Immaculate Conception). Another common question had to do with whether this effort is getting at root causes: “What are we doing about vocations and empty pews? “Will this reorganization address whatever problem(s) we’re trying to address?” “There needs to be a real exploration of the root causes. This is a people problem.” Other common themes focused on youth and how to bring in young people and families; Mass time changes, transportation for the elderly, no one getting left behind, the burden on the priest; and who the pastor will be.

**St. Frances Cabrini** had many questions about what Partners in the Gospel actually entails. Most questions were around the closure of church buildings, how the family would function, etc. “Would we be able to use both churches and properties down the line?” “Concerned where people are going to come when we are closing churches.” “Where will I go, to which parish?” In the Spanish-speaking community there is also a fear of what will happen around parish closures. There was deep concern expressed for the Hispanic community at St. Frances, by both English speakers and Spanish speakers: “Will there be a Spanish-speaking priest?” Many in the Spanish-speaking community fear they will not be accepted or have a place at the table. Deep care for the school was expressed, along with a hope that St. John Bosco parishioners would support the school. “With more people we might get more students.” “Will attendance at the school be affected?”

**St. John Bosco** had a sense that they were more vulnerable to closure than St. Frances Cabrini because they are smaller and don’t have a school. They share a sense that St. John Bosco is a more beautiful campus. “Fear SJB will eventually be put up for sale to fund bigger parish.” “We have a great church and grounds that SFC don’t have.” “Bosco has property, Cabrini does not.” The two communities have a long history: “SFC has been a part of SJC and vice versa, parishioners have gone back and forth between parishes.” “We’ve been together before and it left a bitter taste.”

**Immaculate Conception** expressed that they were an extremely small and tight-knit community left behind by Covid. They have a strong hope that a weekend Mass could be restored and bring back community members who left. This is an historic and treasured building, which should not close. “I suppose every parish in the Archdiocese will say their church is special. Well IC truly is special.” “IC is special – the land, the building, the parish family, it has been a part of my life for five decades.” “IC’s great historical significance. It requires input from the historical society for maintenance and upgrades. The town of Steilacoom and the historical society will want input in its future.”

#### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- No changes suggested.

## Family 38

### **Our Lady Queen of Heaven (Tacoma), Pope St. John XXIII (Tacoma), Sacred Heart (Tacoma), St. John of the Woods (Tacoma)**

One of the main themes that emerged around this draft family is that Pope St. John XXIII is still dealing with the merger from three years ago. All parishes involved feel this should have been taken into consideration. "Since Visitation, PSJ23, SJOW, St. Rita, and Holy Rosary are already together, keep them together. They have a lot of issues that they have not resolved since their merger three years ago." (Sacred Heart)

People noted that the recent changes have already had a negative impact, with people leaving because of inconsistent pastoral care (Sacred Heart). "We just did this process in merging 5 parishes – still working on that." (Pope St. John XXIII) There was a common consensus that Pope St. John XXIII should be left as a standalone parish, like Our Lady of Hope in Everett.

Another major theme was a lack of trust in the Archdiocese of Seattle, especially in communities that experienced a merger. "It is concerning when I stood at the exit and invited people to stay for the listening session, multiple parishioners said, 'No point, the archdiocese already made up their mind.'" (Pope St. John XXIII)

People also generally feel the area is too large: "The geographical parish boundaries will be too large and unmanageable" (St. John of the Woods). They feel this will negatively impact the elderly. "They would rather travel to Holy Disciples" (Our Lady Queen of Heaven). They are mindful of the many cultural communities within this family and wonder if the priest will have the language skills to minister to all (Our Lady Queen of Heaven). "Years ago, we were in a large cluster. The experience proved to be dysfunctional and unmanageable. Many Hispanic Catholics have joined Protestant churches due to the lack of proper pastoral and spiritual care for Hispanics." (Sacred Heart)

Smaller communities are concerned about losing their voice: "In the past Sacred Heart was in a cluster with what used to be St. Ann's, and others, and St. Ann was the dominant parish because many of the pastoral and administrative decisions came from them." (Sacred Heart)

#### **Concrete Changes Suggested:**

- Widespread consensus: Leave Pope St. John XXIII alone as they continue the work of their existing merger
- Holy Disciples and Our Lady Queen of Heaven (Our Lady Queen of Heaven)
- Sacred Heart and Our Lady Queen of Heaven (Sacred Heart)

## Family 39

### Holy Disciples (Puyallup), Our Lady of Good Counsel (Eatonville)

The general consensus was that this family grouping makes sense, because both communities have worked together for a long time now. People expressed that if anything, this is not enough change: there are financial challenges, which could potentially continue. Transportation was a major concern, especially for the youth and the elderly, if services are consolidated at one location. The hope was shared at both locations that this could allow for a mutually beneficial sharing of resources, ministries, etc.

The size imbalance between the two came up multiple times, especially with the fear that Our Lady of Good Counsel will be closed. Both communities spoke at length about the call for increased lay leadership and an increased role for deacons: "Use lay people in the church and community. Train us – we will help... Renewal and change give us the energy for this" (Our Lady of Good Counsel). "We all need to know what it takes to run a church. Once you understand it, people are inspired to help out." (Holy Disciples).

**Our Lady of Good Counsel** expressed hope around the possibilities for increased opportunities for youth. Hopes were also expressed around the possibility of having an additional priest, and more flexibility for Mass times (especially potential Sunday Masses). It was noted that this area is growing, so this could allow more outreach to Eatonville Catholics.

Worries were expressed around losing the "small church" feel which many are drawn to; multiple comments about the possibility for "rejuvenating." "Spiritual challenge can be an opportunity. Now we have an opportunity to be 'one' and to start talking more with each other. ... We need good leadership that can express that this is a good thing."

The major concern was expressed by **Holy Disciples** staff and parishioners that Our Lady of Good Counsel parishioners would feel "swallowed up" or ignored, but there was hope that the Holy Disciples team could intentionally work to make sure all voices were heard and that they were equal partners.

Multiple comments were made about the logistical challenges of combining leadership teams and resource pools, but also the opportunities that this combination and sharing can provide. Overall, the sentiment seemed to be largely summed up in the statement: "I feel like everybody I've known from the two (communities) – they help each other out."

#### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- None

## Family 40

### Sacred Heart (Lacey) and St. Columban (Yelm)

There was a sense of mutual respect for each parish: “Neither one is better than the other” (Sacred Heart). “A hope that we can share resources and events and come together and get to know and learn from one another. That we will be able to strengthen our programs and ministries.” “We have nothing to fear with Jesus’ help.” “Building a strong, one holy and catholic and apostolic church” (St. Columban). “When Holy Spirit involved: we see this as gaining a new larger population of Catholics with increased diversity of voices and opinions” (Sacred Heart).

Both parishes were worried about the impact on priests (geographic coverage, Mass times, and general stress and workload). Common concerns included addressing the unique cultural communities of the two parishes, and the differing liturgical styles. There was also mutual questioning about whether staff may be reduced. There were a few comments expressing the belief that the pairing of the two parishes was a pre-determined outcome.

**St. Columban** expressed a fear of losing its identity or the church being closed. “Concern St. Columban being swallowed by Sacred Heart or becoming a de facto mission rather than both becoming a new parish.” “Yelm is a growing community – worry about over-centralizing into Lacey.” There are concerns regarding the distance to Sacred Heart; reduced access to sacraments; and worry that the relatively new parish offices at St. Columban would no longer be needed.

**Sacred Heart** saw the potential for Holy Family School to benefit from the relationship with St. Columban.

#### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- Don’t separate St. Columban from St. Peter, Tenino, given “the distance between the churches and how the towns are connected in daily life.” Staff from St. Columban of Yelm support keeping them with St. Peter.
- Partner Spanaway, Yelm, and Eatonville (with or without keeping St. Peter)



## Family 41

### St. Michael (Olympia) and St. Peter (Tenino)

One of the common themes was the distance between the two parishes, along with concern for elderly parishioners at Tenino. For this to work, transportation would have to be addressed. Both communities shared the belief that the size differential would adversely impact St. Peter. Would St. Peter feel lost? (St. Michael) "Concern with the assumption that we are absorbing them and loss of identity for their community" (St. Michael). We "fear loss of community in the ocean of St. Mike" (St. Peter). "Risk of being steamrolled" (St. Peter).

At **St. Michael**, the community is open to cooperation and the opportunities, but concerned about supporting St. Peter and making sure it is "included and respected." "Being one parish would allow us to provide exceptional ministry opportunities to their community." People asked if the demand on pastoral resources would be a detriment to St. Michael and prevent them from reopening West side Chapel. They were questions about priests traveling for Mass. "St. Peter's has no living quarters for a priest, so it would make for a lengthy commute from St. Michael's to celebrate Mass." One person asked: "St. Michael's will be fine, but because St. Peter's is so small, does it make sense to send a priest there every weekend, given how we use our priests currently?" Some raised concerns about "Hispanics being ignored."

**St. Peter** parishioners shared differing views. Some said that they are content with staying paired with St. Columban in Yelm. "Merely connecting a rural parish to the nearest adjacent city is not supporting rural ministry." "Maintaining extant relationships is good when possible." "St. Michael's is four towns away compared to St. Columban." Parishioners indicated they would never travel to Olympia for Mass, and if the church were closed, they would go to Centralia or Yelm. "Property of a closed church should follow its people whenever possible." Another parishioner said: "I am very happy to have St. Peter Mission with St. Michael's. We were a mission of St. Michael for many years before being moved under St. Columban in Yelm. All parishioners I have talked to are equally excited about the changes and will do all we can ensure success." In general, hesitations stem from fear that the church building in Tenino will be closed, and where parishioners at Tenino would go if the building is closed.

#### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- Don't break up the current pairing of St. Peter with St. Columban in Yelm (some at St. Peter). There is a strong resistance to traveling to St. Michael for Mass and many indicated they would go elsewhere.

## Family 42

**St. Joseph (Chehalis), St. Mary (Centralia), St. Francis Xavier (Toledo),  
St. Yves (Harmony)**

No in-person consultations were hosted at any of these parishes. The only feedback received was from two individuals online.

A parishioner from St. Joseph expressed confusion about what was happening. They understood that their parishes would not be combined. "I know the Catholic church has lost most of its members, and the combining of churches will allow for more services to be distributed. It is a hard pill to swallow, but it does not make sense to maintain a church where half or three-quarters of the pews are empty."

A parishioner at St. Mary in Centralia expressed hope that with Partners in the Gospel, the parish might come more to life since currently there are no councils or committees and a lack of communication for the English-speaking community. "We are one body and none of us are forgotten but are Partners in the Gospel." There is a sense that the Hispanic community receives better pastoral care than the English-speaking community because they have special councils and bulletins. People want to be empowered to do more in their parish community.

### **Concrete Changes Suggested:**

- None

## Family 43

### **St. Rose (Longview), Immaculate Heart of Mary (Kelso), St. Mary (Castle Rock), St. Catherine (Cathlamet), St. Joseph (Kalama)**

All parishes stated the need for intentional, ongoing, pointed prayer for vocations and for the outcome of Partners in the Gospel to be a strengthening of the Church. The biggest question across all parishes focused on resources – especially people power. These parishes are already low on personnel – lay and clergy – and there is fear that Partners in the Gospel could make this worse. An additional concern was that the pastor of this area would not have the time to be a pastor because of their administrative responsibility and the potential challenges of serving such a large geography. St. Catherine parishioners said that one of their major hopes was that “we could have happy priests due to less work load.” Another common concern was distances, especially for the elderly, and especially from Kalama and Cathlamet.

St. Rose, Immaculate Heart of Mary, St. Mary, and St. Catherine feel that they have worked together for so long that they could come together as one parish effectively and be mostly ready to receive St. Joseph: “We are open with open hearts and minds” (St. Mary).

**St. Rose** hopes that this would allow for increased participation at the school. They are concerned about existing staff structures and the ability to find and train new staff. They are also concerned about the current financial realities and the difficulties of taking on additional communities. “Parishioners will have opportunity to be charitable in extending their mission.”

**St. Catherine** hopes for “the chance to engage with more parishioners” and “the opportunity for lay (people) to learn leadership.” They hope that this will allow for a “sense of community and focus on ministry.” People were worried about the possibility of sites closing, which would be especially challenging for the elderly and for those who rely on the ministries of the community (e.g. the food bank).

**St. Joseph** wants to “have a chance to fix (their) problems” before any changes are made. They worry about losing their existing connection with St. Mary of Guadalupe, Ridgefield and being the “new kids on the block” in an existing partnership. They do not want to lose the unique history and identity of St. Joseph, as well as the “small-church” feel.

**Immaculate Heart of Mary** has questions around the ability of priests to serve this large geographical area and the need for many more volunteers to make this happen. Also, they expressed unease about the loss/complication of their Mass times.

**St. Mary** worries about the ability to meet the needs of specific demographics in each current parish and the ability to maintain a Mass schedule and receive the sacraments regularly. They acknowledge that something needs to happen: “We need the change to survive as a Church.”

### **Concrete Changes Suggested:**

- Keep St. Joseph with the family containing St. Philip, Woodland and St. Mary of Guadalupe, Ridgefield (St. Joseph online feedback and input session)

## Family 44

**St. John (Vancouver), St. Philip (Woodland), St. Mary of Guadalupe (Ridgefield), Sacred Heart (Battle Ground), St. Joseph (Yacolt)**

**UPDATED 18 November 2023** | *Our team was alerted that a substantial amount of feedback from this family was overlooked in the reading process. This synthesis has been updated to reflect the full feedback from these parish communities. Our sincere apologies for this error.*

People recognize the need for change, but know it will be difficult. "I wish the need to do this wasn't there" (Sacred Heart). "What I hear is big change. Change is hard" (Sacred Heart). "Elderly people are not usually in favor of change. If they have to travel far for Mass, if they feel their little parish is not theirs anymore, they just won't go" (St. John). People expressed a lot of concern about losing access to the sacraments, both on a day-to-day basis and in emergencies. "People need to be fed or they fall away from the Church" (St. Joseph the Worker). Many worry about priests being overburdened by the distances and the number of parishes. "What are you doing to get more priests? We have had pastors from Ireland, Africa, India, Vietnam, the Philippines. And some of them were the best pastors we ever had" (St. Mary).

Across this draft family, a number of people expressed a sense of disconnect from Seattle, from the Archdiocese, and from the Partners in the Gospel process. People asked why "less attention is given to southwest Washington than Seattle" (St. Mary), especially given the growth in the area. There were repeated comments about communications at the Chancery and parish level, and making sure they are clear, pastoral, transparent. "We are walking in the fog" (St. Mary). "Patience is necessary so as not to turn people off" (St. John). "Create the right language agreeable to all of our parish family. Create right messaging for our parish family" (St. John).

There were many questions about how the family structure will impact priests, staff, and finances. "Are we solving any problems or are we just going to run our priests into the ground?" (St. Joseph the Worker). "Our priest is already stretched as much as he is. He is spread out pretty thin" (St. John). "Will my job be phased out?" (St. John). "The economic weight of being the bigger church will be where we will feel it." (St. John). "Will there be resentment that churches in better financial position have to 'carry' those parishes with challenged budgets?" (St. Philip). People wonder how it will work to share administration and resources since there have been negative experiences trying to collaborate in the past (St. Mary, Sacred Heart).

For smaller communities, there is great concern about being left out of decision-making (St. Philip) and losing identity. A small parish is like "a big family" (St. Mary). "Bigger is not always better. I have been in large parishes, and you get lost" (St. Mary). "Will St. John carry more weight" in decision-making in the family? (Sacred Heart)

At the same time, many are hopeful for opportunities and possibilities in coming together. "When you get to the other side it will be wonderful" (Sacred Heart). "When I look at larger parishes, there are more groups to get involved to share our faith, have retreats—more people to draw from" (St. Mary). "I hope to have all five churches' youth get together and share their faith" (St. Mary). People recognize that we will all need to work on hospitality: "Catholics need to be reeducated on how to be welcoming" (St. Philip).

There is also hope for greater collaboration with the clergy. Lay people can “stand up to help so priests can do the work of a priest” (St. John). We need “a pastor that will work with us and not dictate” (St. Mary). “I think this is a great way to bring parishes together and build community with each other. I can only see benefits coming from this. The Hispanic community is vibrant. I am so happy for the future” (St. John). We will “feel like a bigger part of the Church globally, meeting more of the community. Overall, a great idea. A+.” (St. John). “Three words come to mind – unity, respect, trust. Unity: the goal is we are all one Church, and it is not the presence of a physical building. It is the presence of the Church on earth. We are all part of it. Respect; we are all on this earth temporarily, with one mission that He has given us. We need to have respect for each other. Trust: we should trust each other and know that we are not in competition – we are meant to work together.” (St. John) “Catholics will begin to see themselves as one, no tribal differences between parishes.” (St. John) “I started out with negative ideas; now that’s evolving to look for the positive” (Sacred Heart).

The Spanish-speaking community at St. John shared hundreds of responses about the urgent desire for a Spanish-speaking priest. Many members of the community do not speak English. “Confessing and listening to homilies in Spanish has greatly nourished our faith. A Spanish-speaking priest is essential for us.” “There is a lot of us Latinos but some of us may lack reading/writing skills, so having a leader that can understand that and can truly motivate us is essential. We can do a lot with the right leader.” “My concern, a change from Spanish to English, and Protestant community is growing and Catholics are colder.” While there is a strong desire for an additional priest, there is also deep fear of losing the one they have. People also shared concern about changing Mass times in a way that will not allow families to attend together.

### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- In general, it was felt this family was too large, both geographically and in the number of parishes.
- St. Philip would be better off with Longview (several suggested)
- Several inclusion of St. John’s in this family given the geography
- Sacred Heart staff suggested the following configuration, which puts a school in each group and balances Hispanic communities:
  - St. James, Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Mary
  - St. Philip with Longview
  - Sacred Heart, St. Joseph (Yacolt), St. John, St. Joseph (Vancouver)
  - Holy Redeemer, St. Thomas, Star of the Sea
- Move Our Lady of Lourdes or St. Joseph into Family #44 so that each family has a school (one person suggested)
- Suggested configurations (by one person): Family #44: St. John, Vancouver, Sacred Heart, Battle Ground, St. Joseph, Yacolt. Family #45: Proto-Cathedral of St. James the Greater, Vancouver, Our Lady of Lourdes, Vancouver, St. Mary of Guadalupe, Ridgefield, St. Philip, Woodland.
- Move St. Joseph, Kalama, out of #43 into #44 (one person suggested)

## Family 45

### St. Joseph (Vancouver), Proto-Cathedral of St. James the Greater (Vancouver), Our Lady of Lourdes (Vancouver)

One of the general themes that emerged across the three parishes was a sense of not having enough information to be able to weigh in on the decision. There was frustration at a lack of details about the decision-making process and a sense that the decision had already been made. "I am disappointed in the Archdiocese with lack of transparency in this process! Tell us what we're doing instead of milking it to the end; change is not easy – my ears are not hearing anything useful."

People shared more specific concerns about parking and access, particularly at St. James. They mentioned the high value of the Knights of Columbus councils in their parishes. Several parishioners were worried about the blend of cultures, including liturgical styles, in this proposed family. They mentioned that they have had experiences of not feeling welcome in other parishes in the family. "Worry about conflict among people in the different current parishes, not be able to please everyone" (St. Joseph). They wondered about priest burnout and hopes that priests would be able to concentrate on sacramental ministry. They want to ensure that the Spanish-speaking and Vietnamese communities are not left behind in a family configuration. People in all the communities recognized the unique historical significance of St. James and the need to preserve it in some way.

All three parishes also recognize positive aspects. "Opportunity to see that the Catholic Church is bigger than any one church. Opportunity to share our gifts collaboratively. That Jesus is in all of us" (St. Joseph).

**St. Joseph:** Many mentioned that they miss Sausage Fest as an opportunity to build up community. There were a number of concerns about the distance (to Our Lady of Lourdes) and about schools. The Spanish-speaking community expressed frustration about the lack of Hispanic and youth ministry at St. James and Our Lady of Lourdes: "No ay ministerio de jóvenes el Lourdes y St. James, quinás el ministerio hispano." They asked if this will change the way we serve our communities: "Va a cambiar la forma en como atendemos a los católicos, similar a los protestantes? Antes criticaba a los protesantes de como ellos se formaban, y ahora veo que está pasando lo que yo criticaba?"

**St. James:** People shared concern about losing some of their specific traditional liturgical practices (e.g., the Communion rail). There were questions about whether this is the first of several mergers: "the proposed parish family is small, will more mergers take place as time passes?" If there is too much change, "parishioners will leave the parish to attend in Portland – this was a common concern in the group." People also questioned whether Partners in the Gospel addressed the root cause of the challenges we are facing: vocations.

**Our Lady of Lourdes** expressed concern about the smaller, family feel in their community. "What will happen to our school? K-4 Lourdes, 5-8 St. Joe's."

### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- "St. Joe's should be paired with Holy Redeemer so they have a school too."
- It might make more sense to combine with Sacred Heart, Battleground, for parishioners there whose children go to school at St. Joseph (one person suggested).
- Match St. James with Our Lady of Lourdes.
- Many suggestions from St. James that they should be a standalone parish.

## Family 46

### **Holy Redeemer (Vancouver), St. Thomas Aquinas (Camas), Our Lady Star of the Sea Mission (Stevenson)**

Both staff and parishioners have reservations about the culture of Holy Redeemer and St. Thomas Aquinas coming together. Parishioners from both communities noted that they had felt unwelcome at Holy Redeemer or St. Thomas Aquinas and then switched to the other parish. All communities noted the driving distance, especially for Star of the Sea and senior parishioners. "I am also concerned for the amount of driving that the parishioners in Stevenson will face in the event that their church is closed, or the amount of services diminishes greatly."

There were questions about the impact on schools. All the communities felt that Partners in the Gospel will not solve the main issue – instead we should be working to foster vocations. "I am concerned that the Arch(diocese) is trying to fix a practical, logistical problem, when the real issue is the spiritual crisis." There was a general lack of trust, a sense that public input didn't matter and wouldn't be considered. Some expressed that this is a Seattle problem – Holy Redeemer's pews are full. "Just solve the issue within Seattle, don't bring it here" (St. Thomas Aquinas). People hoped it would lessen priests' workload, but many felt it would end up being more work for them: "Will this burn out priests?"

**St. Thomas** parishioners worried about the very traditional culture and very different demographic at Holy Redeemer and that it wouldn't be welcoming. They worry about losing what makes them special. "Concerned about being overtaken by Holy Redeemer. Keeping our culture. Completely different personalities." "My concern is how long it takes to form a community in a parish of our size and how much longer it will take to form a community when it's SO MUCH LARGER." There was frustration that Archdiocese "did not accept the offers to add priests HGN or any foreign or domestic priests." "We were told when he returned that we would have stability for 5 years. In the years since his return we have seen an increase of attendance, especially among young families. The stability helps us grow."

At **Holy Redeemer**, people do not want to lose their pastor. They are worried that they might have to forego improvements to their facility to support the less financially sound communities. They want to preserve their altar server program. There are worries about being open, welcoming, and inclusive.

#### **Concrete Changes Suggested:**

- No concrete changes suggested.



## Family 47

### **St. Lawrence (Raymond), St. Joseph at Holy Family (Frances), St. Mary (Seaview), McGowan Station (Chinook)**

Both parishes share concern about the distances, with St. Mary being over an hour from the other parishes. This will be a significant problem, especially if events/staff/leadership groups are to be shared among the parishes. There are concerns about priests being always on the road. The priest will not be able to be grounded in the community. "Our priest doesn't have any time on Sundays to do anything but deliver the sacraments and get on the road. Our shepherd can't know his sheep." "We need another priest for St. Mary's; St. Lawrence and Holy Family (St. Joseph) is enough for one priest." There are concerns about the current Mass schedule and that a new Mass schedule could be developed that is "acceptable to priests and parishioners."

Parishioners at **St. Mary** shared concerns about staff. They already share staff with other parishes, and find that frustrating because they pay a large portion of the salary but only have staff on site one day a week. People at St. Mary feel that they do not get the same support as the other two parishes. "The whole system feels unfair."

At **St. Lawrence**, people noted that the parishes serve a very different demographic. "St. Mary's is exclusively retirees and seasonal visitors. St. Lawrence is working families. Having one council and one budget could be divisive." They feel that the Spanish-speaking population is growing and untapped, and they need a Spanish-speaking priest to minister to their needs. "Our priest doesn't speak Spanish – though our potential growth will likely come from the Spanish-speaking communities. "

**St. Joseph at Holy Family** shared some of the challenges they already face: "It continues to be a challenge to have a common community outlook with St. Mary's because of the distance between parishes." (Holy Family)

### **Concrete Changes Suggested:**

- Join St. Lawrence and St. Joseph at Holy Family, put St. Mary in a different family.
- "A large urban parish with staff, volunteers, resources, and proximity to other priests is where we've often seen the most gifted priests assigned. The multi-parish rural mission is where you should prioritize your best, most creative, and brightest – because the challenges are immense and the potential is largely untapped. The archdiocese has asked us to reflect, rethink, and to be flexible – and so we are asking the same of the archdiocese. We pray you will be partners in the gospel to rural parishes."



## Family 48

### **St. Jerome (Ocean Shores), St. Mary (Aberdeen), Our Lady of Good Help (Hoquiam), St. Paul (Westport), Our Lady of the Olympics (Amanda Park)**

All three parishes fear potentially losing church buildings, Masses, priests and services under the new family model. They asked what would happen to weekday Mass and voiced hope that at least one weekend or Sunday Mass would be held at each parish. They expressed significant concern with people having to travel for centralized functions, which would be especially difficult for seniors, the parishes' largest demographic. Several believe three priests, rather than two, would be needed for them to be present to the people because of the distance to travel. "We already live the experience of having only 2 priests with 7 parishes, and it is an almost impossible job for priests who ... cannot arrive in time to celebrate all the Masses" (St. Mary).

Several also expressed concern with adequately supporting the Hispanic community and providing Mass in Spanish, while others worried that Masses would have to be bilingual. Several noted the financial weakness of the existing cluster of seven parishes and did not feel that the new family would provide any benefit and might even weaken them further: "We think finances will be a huge challenge. People will be reluctant to donate to 'one' big parish" (Our Lady of Good Help). They ask what the Archdiocese is doing to strengthen vocations and provide support to help communities thrive. "Education needs here would be better met if we could have more resources here" (Our Lady of the Olympics).

At the same time, parishioners expressed hope that the family could provide opportunities to do new things, enjoy shared ideas and resources, connect with other people and cultures, and build community. Some noted it would be nice for everyone to come together for the sacraments in one place and that everyone working together to support the family would bring new interest and energy. Some also noted that they have already been part of a cluster of seven parishes, so working together would not be new.

The **St. Mary Hispanic community** commented: "The percentages of decrease in everything – this is the consequence of our lack of commitment. We need to do a lot of work to evangelize. For example, today (the pastor) invited us all to participate, and few of us stayed."

**Our Lady of Good Help** parishioners feel closing some of the five parishes would reduce accessibility for parishioners, especially the elderly, and weaken the Church rather than strengthen it: "We are a rural/widespread family. We need all of our churches to stay open to serve the Catholic population in this county." "It may be more efficient – not more vibrant."

A **St. Paul** parishioner noted their parish's particular role as a church available to tourists: "St. Paul's is always in the black because the tourists can sometimes give more than registered parishioners."

**Our Lady of the Olympics** parishioners discussed the community's current challenge with a lack of resources to provide the programs needed to support and attract people, particular the significant Hispanic community: "The next generation is the Hispanic community. How to get them interested and involved?"

### **Concrete Changes Suggested:**

- Several noted it makes more sense for St. John, Montesano, to be part of this family than family #49.
- Several also noted that the family would be stronger connected with St. Edward, Shelton. One suggested a family composed of St. John, St. Mary, St. Joseph, Elma, and St. Edward, Shelton.

## Family 49

### St. Edward (Shelton), St. Joseph (Elma), St. John (Montesano)

People expressed concern about losing their small parish churches. "Even small parishes need to remain open, in order to have viable Catholic participation, have ownership of their church home" (St. Joseph).

All communities shared concerns about travel time, distance, and difficulty. For elderly parishioners, it would be a real hardship to have to travel great distances. Yet, there was still hope, "perhaps the Parish family can provide new growth."

**St. John** would like to have a priest or deacon in residence at the parish. People are willing to be part of the community and work together but are mindful that language differences could make that difficult. People expressed that they need a bilingual or Spanish-speaking priest. There were questions about holy day schedules and impact on Mass times. People also brought up logistical questions about the cost for sacraments, weddings and quinceañeras.

**St. Edward** recently experienced the sudden death of their pastor. "I have new, more pressing fears with this entire process. Who will be our voice through this process? Who will keep us top of mind, not just in a fleeting thought but all the way through this journey? Who will speak for our Hispanic population which is 60% of our parish, is devout and reluctant to speak up to authority due to their cultural values?"

"My hope is for better attendance, more involvement and also continued outreach to the Hispanic community." (St. Joseph)

#### Concrete Changes suggested:

- Partner St. John with St. Mary, Aberdeen (geographically makes more sense).
- Prince of Peace, Belfair parishioners better suited for St. Edward, as many of the families are related to those at St. Edward and already participate in St. Edward activities (St. Edward staff).

## Family 50

**St. Joseph (Sequim), Queen of Angels (Port Angeles), St. Mary Star of the Sea (Port Townsend), St. Anne (Forks), St. Thomas the Apostle (Clallam Bay)**

*Updated 11/19/23 to reflect more fully the feedback from St. Mary Star of the Sea*

A common theme was concern about the distance to travel, especially by elderly parishioners and priests. Bad weather has a big impact on ability to travel in this region. People see this not simply as inconvenient, but potentially dangerous and a source of burnout for priests and parishioners alike. “There is real worry about the health/safety of priests and parishioners if they must travel between parishes, especially in rain, snow, dark, etc” (Star of the Sea). “Consensus of St. Thomas parishioners is that we are far enough from other parishes to make it a hardship to get to Mass especially in bad weather” (St. Thomas). “This process will create another class of the marginalized, especially the elderly,” because the distances are too great to drive (St. Anne).

The distances also raised logistical questions. Where would the parish office be – and how would parishioners access it? How would money be shared in a parish family? Would people’s contributions go to another community? People want access to the sacraments, adoration, including anointing of the sick and emergency services. How would that work with no priest on-site? The danger is losing people “with less services available. The real issue is losing congregation” (St. Joseph).

People also noted specific challenges to ministry in this area. “The Olympic Peninsula has unique challenges being small and having a hard time keeping people in the area.” (Queen of Angels) Parishioners talked about this as a social justice issue- young people cannot get work and remain in the area, which makes it difficult to retain young families in the parish. The current Mass times result in low attendance and are difficult for families (Queen of Angels).

Another common theme was that for this to work, priests will need to stick to spiritual needs and sacramental ministry, and let the laity handle the administrative areas. “Concerned about priest burnout. It’s difficult enough to be the leader of one parish let alone a five-church Family” (Star of the Sea). People expressed openness to deacon leadership, women and lay leaders. “We need uniquely qualified pastors to pastor and that the lay leadership does the ‘nuts and bolts’ of administrative duties. We need a unique set of pastors and deacons to work collaboratively to promote a pastoral vision. One pastor can’t run 5 parishes. Lay people need to be incorporated to make this work” (Queen of Angels). “Will lay people have a greater role in parish operations? What is the Archdiocese doing about recruitment?” (Star of the Sea) Some express concern that their community is already being neglected in the current configuration of their parish. “We do not see our pastor much and I would sure like to see him more. He is the ‘glue’ to making this work.” (St. Anne) “I have been a member of St. Anne’s for 47 years. We have always done well with or without a permanent priest. I see no advantage of combining with parishes 60 and 75 miles away” (St. Anne).

People noted that the reorganization is primarily a priest shortage issue – but this new configuration will mean priests are even less present than they are, no time for interaction. How will burned out priests be able to inspire vocations?

The communities also see opportunities in a family arrangement, to engage more volunteers, grow the Knights of Columbus and other ministries, and increase attendance at special cultural celebrations, “infusing more cultures and ideas together” (St. Joseph). “Perhaps there

could be more vibrant youth groups or a satellite school at St. Mary's" (Star of the Sea). This is an "opportunity to build each other up. Prayer and things will open. ... An opportunity to seek others out. Meeting others may inspire us" (St. Joseph).

People are aware of, and value, the distinctive culture at each of these communities. Will that be lost in combining? "When churches consolidate, they lose their identity." (St. Joseph) "What happens to St. Mary's very vibrant Hispanic community and all their ministries?" (Star of the Sea) How can those cultures be respected and honored? How can good communication be facilitated across the parishes within the family? People expressed desire to serve the Mexican, Californian, Guatemalan and others in the diverse Hispanic community. Deacons with language fluency are greatly needed (St. Anne).

### **Concrete Changes Suggested:**

- Queen of Angels and Star of the Sea is a good pairing.
- People feel the family is too far-flung and are not sure how they would reap the benefits of being joined to other parishes.

## Family 51

### St. Cecilia (Bainbridge Island), St. Olaf (Poulsbo), St. Peter (Suquamish)

*No direct feedback from St. Peter, Suquamish.*

In general, people found that this proposed family makes sense. There seems to be a widespread sense that only one of the three churches would be able to remain open – there's a lot of confusion and anxiety around that. People in both communities mentioned that St. Peter is an historical treasure. "Hopes to rebuild our relationship with the Suquamish tribe."

"St. Peter's is unique with the tribal connection. We would need to be very sensitive to their needs." There is a cultural difference – "how the island feels vs. how the peninsula feels about the island."

Transportation, distance questions, the reality of traffic on and off Bainbridge would be an obstacle for shared events and problematic for priests. Questions arose about how much input people will have and who the priest will be. Will Mass times be impacted? What about finances: Will St. Cecilia, which is wealthier, take on the debt of the other two communities? How will people maintain access to the Eucharist? Will Communion services be permitted? A sense that lay people need to be empowered to lead. "Are there options for lay people to step up?"

**St. Cecilia** offered many comments about how they treasure their pastor. A sense of possibility in expanding ministries and engaging more volunteers. The usual concerns around distance, closure, overextending priests, losing parishioners in the midst of the change. "The more the merrier." There is a sense of possibility. "Parishioners can share their gifts and talents, which will invite higher attendance." A lot of comments about how people were excited at the possibility of welcoming the Hispanic community at St. Olaf, and the tribal community at St. Peter." It is "an opportunity to make new friends." "It's an opportunity for a more expanded, diverse family."

In general, **St. Olaf** parishioners welcome Partners in the Gospel as an opportunity to revitalize their community, which has not come back after Covid, with many ministries still not reinstated. There is hope of regaining financial stability through joining with the stronger parish of St. Cecilia.

Common concerns of **Hispanic Catholics**: People would like to see the Mass more embedded in the Hispanic culture. "We need a deeper Hispanic culture in the parish." They have a desire for a truly bilingual priest who understands the community, and staff who also speak Spanish and can offer faith formation in Spanish. Concerns about children, youth and young adults, and about the elderly getting to Mass.

#### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- Many mentioned that people already travel around for Mass. Some travel a distance to go to St. Cecilia.
- No real consensus on proposed changes.
- Some felt that St. Cecilia might go with Star of the Sea instead. Some concern that people would go south, not north for Mass, no matter what the family structure ends up being.

## Family 52

### Star of the Sea (Bremerton), Holy Trinity (Bremerton)

Both parishes expressed concern around the process itself. “The discernment process should have been completed before the initial announcement of parish partners by the archdiocese” (Holy Trinity). People shared wide concern that Partners in the Gospel does not address the root causes of the challenges we are facing. “Partners in the Gospel addresses [challenges] with bromides, but no real path for renewal” (Star of the Sea, online). “What is the Archdiocese of Seattle doing about the problem of lack of vocations to the priesthood and people leaving church and not returning. What is the Archdiocese’s plan for evangelization?” (Star of the Sea, online).

People in both communities felt that the pairing makes sense geographically, but questioned whether the pairing makes sense in any other way. Many mentioned that they don’t understand why two large, vibrant parishes are being combined. There are deep concerns that the style and culture are different at each parish. They are relatively close together, so people choose intentionally the more traditional style and culture at Star of the Sea, or the more progressive style at Holy Trinity. In both parishes, people asked why they are not being combined with a smaller parish (e.g. St. Olaf, St. Gabriel, Prince of Peace). This would better serve the principle of Partners in the Gospel in allowing a strong parish to lift up a smaller, more struggling parish. A lot of concern about priest workload, the potential for spreading priests too thin and burnout. “We will burn out the priests because we are asking too much.” “There is a palpable concern about some age-related and ethnic communities being left out and not being served” (Holy Trinity).

**Star of the Sea** feels that they are a thriving community that is doing everything right and that the Archbishop and the rest of the Archdiocese of Seattle should learn from their success. There is a strong attachment to the current pastor and to the liturgical style. There were many comments about whether Partners in the Gospel really addresses the root causes of the challenges we are facing. They shared a sense of urgency about promoting vocations in the Church and inviting people into the life of faith.

At **Holy Trinity**, feedback was gathered in a staff consultation and via the online survey. Staff expressed concern about losing the distinctive identities of the two communities. “Are we going to be a megachurch? Will we lose our separate identities in this process?” They feel that they have drawn closer in recent years, with some good working relationships between staff at the two parishes. “Pairing makes sense, but it will be challenging ... concerned that two different communities/cultures will have to be carefully handled.” “Each parish has a lot of benefits and talents to bring to the pairing, how do we support the positive while quelling the negative?” “Leader needs to be gentle and the balancing act is scary.” Parishioners shared online: “Our family picked Holy Trinity over Star of the Sea because we loved the style/vibe. I would hate to lose that.”

#### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- Reincorporate St. Gabriel and Prince of Peace into Star of the Sea.
- Pair Holy Trinity to St. Olaf and St. Cecilia.
- Pair Holy Trinity and Prince of Peace.
- Pair Star of the Sea with St. Gabriel.

## Family 53

### St. Nicholas (Gig Harbor), St. John Vianney (Vashon), St. Gabriel (Port Orchard), Prince of Peace (Belfair)

People shared that having one pastor for four parishes would be especially challenging in this proposed family. "I feel like the Diocese is working all the priests too hard and this is way, way too stressful on priests, laity, staff, and parishioners." (Prince of Peace)

These are four very different communities: St. Nicholas, an affluent, mostly Anglo parish; Prince of Peace with its large Guatemalan population; St. John Vianney as an island community; and St. Gabriel with a different ecclesiology from the others. Transportation would be a huge challenge. Ferry wait times and costs would be a major impediment both for the priest and for parishioners. In the Guatemalan community at Prince of Peace, women typically do not drive. People expressed the need for a Spanish-speaking priest. "There is a richness of faith tradition from the Guatemalan community in Belfair. I would love some of the energy and devotion spread to the other parishes." (St. Gabriel)

All the communities had questions about how sharing finances would work, how sharing of staff would work, and what the impact on schools would be. "The logistical chaos is greater than any hope" (St. Gabriel and Prince of Peace staff). There is concern about a loss of parish identity, and a fear of not being welcomed in another community. "I don't know how we will be welcome in the other churches. Will we be welcome?" (Prince of Peace)

There is also widespread fear of parishes closing.

While there is uncertainty, there is still hope. "This will be a good opportunity to support each other in their parish." "I'd like to have my church expanded every service it's full to the max and expanding my church would be great and gives more opportunities for people to stay and come often to prince of peace." "I hope it is successful for our priests and parish community so our Catholic faith is more visible and vibrant."

#### Concrete Changes Suggested:

- St. Charles is a better match for St. Nicholas than the current selection, trying to blend four different cultures.
- St. John Vianney would be better suited to join Holy Family or Tacoma parishes. Possibly Family 36, due to travel issues/ferry schedule. Many will not travel to Port Orchard or Belfair (St. John Vianney).
- Move St. Gabriel into the Bremerton parish family