



PARTNERS
IN THE GOSPEL

HANDBOOK FOR PARISHES

ARCHDIOCESE OF SEATTLE



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Introduction: How to Use This Handbook

*The angel... measured off a thousand cubits
and had me wade through the water,
which was **ankle-deep**.
He measured off another thousand
and once more had me wade through the water,
which was now **knee-deep**.
Again, he measured off a thousand and had me wade;
the water was **up to my waist**.
Once more he measured off a thousand,
but there was now a river through which I could not wade;
for the water had risen so high it had become a river
that could not be crossed except by swimming. (Ezekiel 47)*

This passage from the prophet Ezekiel may seem an unlikely choice to preface a document on implementing Partners in the Gospel. The prophet describes a vision of water flowing from the side of the temple, beginning as a small trickle but gradually becoming a mighty river.

Partners in the Gospel is a project larger in scope than anything the Archdiocese of Seattle has ever undertaken. The creation of parish families – a major shift in our way of being Church in Western Washington – cannot take place overnight. It is all about re-envisioning parish life, which requires a focus on people, community, and relationships and these take time to develop.

While Partners in the Gospel has a clear vision, the path to reach that vision will be determined by the parish family community. Through listening, dialogue, and discernment, each parish family will use a synodal process to chart its future, a future as unique as the people who make up that community. To make this happen, we need to take things slowly, wading in step by step, at the Holy Spirit's invitation.

The implementation of Partners in the Gospel recognizes this "slow work of the Spirit." Parish communities are urged to take the time needed to *encounter* one another, *accompany* one another, and finally to *live* as one parish family. Imagine that we are wading into the water with Ezekiel, first "ankle-deep," then "knee-deep," and finally "waist-deep" as each parish family prepares to become one canonical parish.

The implementation is divided into three phases, roughly imagined as one-year periods; however, every parish family will be different. Some parish families may take more time than others.



Phase Zero: Prepare (2023-2024)

The focus is on preparing for the journey that is about to begin.

Phase One: Welcoming (2024-2025)

The water is ankle deep. The focus is on encountering one another in Christ, getting to know one another, with open minds and hearts.

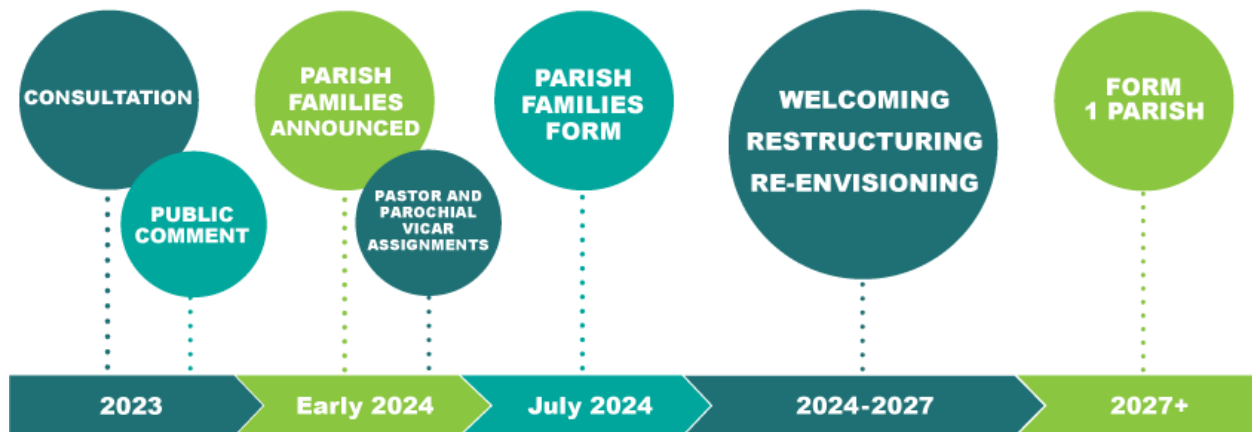
Phase Two: Restructuring (2025-2026)

The water is knee deep. Focus on listening, supporting and laying the foundation as a parish family.

Phase Three: Re-envisioning (2026-2027)

The water is waist deep. Now that the parishes know one another and have laid the foundation, we begin to live as one parish family and to look to the future with a shared vision.

Timeline



The materials that follow are the result of hundreds of hours of conversation and consultation. The Partners in the Gospel Core Team and six Pillar workgroups explored the ramifications of Partners in the Gospel for every aspect of parish life – Worship and Prayer, Discipleship, Community and Hospitality, Missionary Outreach, Governance and Leadership, and Administration, Finance, and Infrastructure.

The resources in this handbook were developed to provide guidance on the major aspects of parish life that specifically relate to the Partners in the Gospel journey. By no means are they exhaustive – nor are they a manual for how to run a parish.

We recognize that as Partners in the Gospel unfolds, we will learn from one another, and new opportunities and challenges will arise. For this reason, the first set of materials focus on **Phase Zero: Prepare**. Checklists, resources, tools, and best practices will continue to be rolled out over the next several years as we learn from one another.

Finally, one important reminder: The life of the parish goes on. There are marriages and funerals to be celebrated, children and adults to baptize and prepare for First Communion and confirmation. The parish campus must still be maintained, and liturgies must continue to be as welcoming, engaging, prayerful, and beautiful as they can be. We can't stop everything we're doing to implement Partners in the Gospel, nor should we!

We must continue to carry out our Gospel mission while all of this unfolds. Partners in the Gospel is not the mission; it is a strategy designed to give parishes greater freedom in fulfilling the Gospel mission. So please take it one step at a time.

Grounded in the Journey

Throughout the process, it is important to continually remind ourselves of why we are engaging in Partners in the Gospel. We must understand and embrace its vision to authentically bring it life. Here are a few ways to stay grounded in the vision:

- Re-read [Archbishop's Pastoral Letter on Partners in the Gospel](#). It sets the tone and message that will help pastoral leaders assist parishioners in embracing this new and exciting initiative to renew our local Church.
- Watch the "[Current Reality](#)" video with Father Gary Lazzeroni and Caitlin Moulding again. It provides both the reality of the situation and our great hope. This will help place your thoughts and heart in the right space.



You're Not Alone: Support for Parishes

The formation of new parish families will require significant effort, discernment, and support. Please know the Chancery team is here for you.

One of the key support resources for parish families will be the **parish liaison**. Parish liaisons are Chancery staff with skills and experience in parish life, discernment, and project management who will work in partnership with multiple parish families' pastors and their leadership teams to help implement the parish family structure and develop a plan for becoming one vibrant canonical parish.

The liaison provides guidance as well as project management support and ensures effective communication between the Partners in the Gospel Core Team, parish family pastor and staff, and the Planning and Mission Effectiveness team. Each liaison will be assigned 7-9 parish families by March 2024 and will journey with the parishes for at least three years. They will be trained in all the support tools and will coach parish families in those tools and in their discernment related to restructuring and re-envisioning to advance the mission of bringing people to Christ.

While the parish liaison is the key support for Partners in the Gospel at the family level, there will also be several other resources available to you, including:

- **Chancery Departments:** Parish families are encouraged to continue working with Chancery departments in a similar fashion as before Partners in the Gospel. This would be true for most day-to-day operational issues. Examples might include payroll, benefits, Annual Catholic Appeal, or the various ministry areas of the Chancery–Vicar for Clergy Office, Faith Formation, Liturgy, etc. Chancery teams can be found in the online [directory](#).
- **Parish Action Committee (PAC):** PAC is a group of Chancery staff who work together to review and resolve more complex parish issues in an interdisciplinary fashion. If you are facing a complex issue that hasn't been resolved, please contact Sally Evanson who can bring this to the PAC team. sally.evanson@seattlearch.org
- **Partners in the Gospel Core Team:** Issues related to Partners in the Gospel and related resources will be triaged to the Core Team for resolution. Please reach out to partners@seattlearch.org.

- **Ongoing Training and Formation:** Pastors and key staff will receive ongoing training related to Partners in the Gospel throughout the journey to becoming one canonical parish. They will have an opportunity to share with other parish families and learn from each other.
- **Common intake/triage/ticketing system:** Parishes will continue to work with Chancery departments by contacting them directly. In addition, a common intake email address will be established so a parish family can reach out if it does not know how to proceed with an issue. The inbox for the common email address will be monitored and triaged to the correct resource for resolution.
- **Go-Live Support Center:** Once parish families form on July 1, 2024, dedicated Chancery staff will be available to help parish families handle unexpected issues around the transition. The intent is to fast-track issues that will impact the transition of pastors and their new parish families.



Phase Zero: PREPARE

Phase Zero (Now - July 2024) focuses on the current parish, in preparation for a future parish family. This is a time to assess the state of the parish and to get ready for transition.

Overview

Partners in the Gospel represents a new era for the Archdiocese of Seattle. The arrival of a new pastor and the creation of a new parish family are major historical moments in the life of the local Church. Phase 0 is for preparation with a focus on the current parish and its people. *Stability is key.*

Parish leadership should accompany people, prepare for a new pastor, and provide pastoral support as the community moves forward. As a team, parish leaders should strive for everyone to be on the same page and to move forward together.

When possible, delay major decisions until the parish family is formed. Develop the FY24-25 budget and preliminary plan with stability in mind. Remember, each parish in the parish family should develop its individual parish budget as usual, taking care not to commit resources to large new initiatives.

Major Tasks at a Glance

(Now-July 2024)

- Spring cleaning of archives and campus.
- Begin work on Parish Transition Workbook.

After new pastors are announced:

- Pastor communications to say goodbye and to introduce new pastor.
- Develop Sacramental emergency plan.
- New pastor and parochial vicar meet and greet, walk-through.
- New pastor determines pastor's/parochial vicar's residence after consultation.
- Planning around necessary adjustments to family Mass times should be done prior to July 1, in consultation with outgoing and incoming pastor and the Vicar for Clergy Office.

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Parish Transition Workbook

We share the goal of having a smooth transition for parish leaders, staff, and the people of God as parishes join together in their new families.

To make it easier for parish leaders and staff to get to know each other, every parish should fill out the **Parish Transition Workbook** to capture information outside the Parish Annual Report. We recommend dividing up portions during a staff meeting so everyone is clear on the parts they own and how they can support each other.

Providing this information truly is a gift to your community, your incoming pastor, and your leadership teams. This Parish Transition Workbook will also be shared with the other parishes in the family to help all staff members get to know one another and understand how each parish operates.

The Parish Transition Workbook will be given to pastors at the April 2024 retreat. Please turn in your finalized workbook to partnersubmissions@seattlearch.org by Friday, March 22, 2024, so we can include this in your new pastor's information packet. If you have any questions, please reach out to partners@seattlearch.org.

[Link to Parish Transition Workbook](#)



Spring cleaning

A new era

Now is a good time to do the spring cleaning you may have been putting off for years or, in some cases, for decades! You will want your parish campus and facilities to be at their best when the new pastor arrives and when you begin to welcome leadership and parishioners from the other parishes in your family.

Decluttering

Don't try to tackle everything at once! Work in focused areas and work as a team. You may wish to block off cleaning time on calendars each week to tackle a new area.

Parish Office: Go through storage areas and clear out unused or outdated items. Get rid of broken and unused items that have accumulated in the basement. Arrange a trip to St. Vincent de Paul or Goodwill for lightly used items.

Faith Formation: Now is the time to recycle old curriculum materials. Make sure all cupboards and files are in good order. Host a book and magazine giveaway.

Sacristy: Now is a good time to dispose properly of:

- Old, unused ritual books
- Worn-out linens
- Dated or tattered vestments
- Candle stubs
- Old holy oils, etc.
- Set aside vestments and chalices that belong to the current pastor.
- See guidelines for the disposal of holy oils at archseattle.org/for-parishes/for-parishes_liturgy/.

Maintenance: Make sure to properly dispose of dried-out paint cans and other accumulated, out-of-date supplies.

Renting storage space? Now would be a good time to clear out the nonessentials and make an inventory of what is kept.

Archives

- **Revisit** the document retention schedule to determine what you must keep and what should be shredded. Find the retention schedule here: [archseattle.org/about-the-archdiocese-of-seattle/archives-and-records-management-public/archives-and-records-management_policies_resources/](https://www.archseattle.org/about-the-archdiocese-of-seattle/archives-and-records-management-public/archives-and-records-management_policies_resources/)
- **Determine** what correspondence and documents the outgoing pastor will take with him and what files remain in the parish.
- **Make sure** the archives are in good order.
- **History is happening.** Be sure to archive items related to the pastor's farewell and the transition as Partners in the Gospel begins.



Mass time considerations

Approaching Mass schedule changes

Where it will be impossible to cover the Mass schedule with the assigned priests, parish families should discern changes in the Mass schedule. If the Mass schedule in the parish family can be covered by the priests assigned, it should remain unchanged to provide stability and continuity through the initial stage of transition.

For those parishes that must change the Mass schedule to accommodate the new parish family and the number of priests assigned, the changes should be discerned prior to July 1, 2024, but not implemented until that date.

Discernment about changes in the Mass schedule should include outgoing and incoming pastors, staff, consultative leaders, parishioners of the affected parishes, and the Deanery. After hearing from all these groups, the incoming pastor should decide the new Mass schedule. The new Mass schedule should be shared with the Deanery for input and advice and must be approved by the Office of the Vicar for Clergy. Below are some considerations to keep in mind as you review the Mass schedule.

- **Change only what must change.** As Partners in the Gospel unfolds, parish families will evolve, and change will happen. To the extent possible, minimize changes early on since many things – including the Mass schedule – may need to be adjusted as the reality of living as a parish family settles in over the months to come. It would be counterproductive to change the Mass schedule only to change it again later.
- **The wisdom of waiting on Mass changes.** Even if the current pastor is also the future pastor, wait to consult, listen, and discern the new Mass schedule with all parishes involved. Changes to the Mass should not be implemented prior to July 1, 2024. To help the new pastor discern holy day Mass times for 2024-2025, Mass counts for Christmas 2023 and Easter 2024 in particular should be included in the Transition Workbook, as well as other historical numbers, if known.

- **Many values.** In adjusting the Mass schedule, especially if there is a need to eliminate a Mass, the time of day and average attendance should not be the only considerations. Is the Mass special to a particular group in the parish – a cultural or language group or some other group, like youth, for example? Is the Mass supported by a particular choir or musical ensemble? Think through all the ramifications and be sure to engage any “stakeholders” in the conversation about how the schedule should be adjusted. Geographic distance is another consideration. If one priest is offering Sunday Masses at multiple locations, is there time to drive the distance between parishes?
- **Think through special Masses.** In addition to looking at the regular Sunday and weekday Mass schedule, it will be important to review the schedules for special liturgies well in advance, including school Masses, reconciliation schedules, and, most particularly, schedules for Christmas, Easter, and other holy days.

The new Mass schedule should be announced as soon as possible after the discernment process is complete. It should be made clear that the new schedule will take effect on July 1, 2024. This new schedule should be widely publicized.

Mass schedule discernment tool

- **Question 1:** Is it possible to keep all the Sunday Masses the same with the new priest staffing, including consideration for Masses in languages other than English? If yes, make no changes.
- **Question 2:** If this is not possible, is it better to change time(s) or cancel one or more Masses? Special consideration should be given to avoid the unnecessary displacement of ethnic communities. Other pastoral considerations could include concern for older parishioners driving at night or balancing the need to have Masses at each location.
 - *Considerations for Changing Mass Times:* Consider changing the time, not eliminating the Mass, if it is important to keep the current number of Masses due to capacity constraints (all Masses are full) and/or travel distance to other family or non-family parishes makes it impractical for parishioners to go elsewhere.
 - *Considerations for Canceling Mass Times:* Consider canceling a Mass if a current Mass(es) is poorly attended, if it's not possible to maintain the current number of Masses with the number of priests assigned, and/or potential new Mass times are not a good option for the community (e.g., mid-afternoon Sunday).

- **Question 3:** What does the potential future schedule look like when the parishes become canonically one, with priests, ideally, having no more than three Sunday Masses each? How does this Phase 1 change set up/fit in with that long-term change and not work against it? How is each community impacted by this initial change, keeping in mind other anticipated changes in the future?
- **Question 4:** What are the neighboring parish family's plans for Mass times, including Masses not in English?

Other considerations

Daily Masses and reconciliation times will need to be evaluated based on the number of available priests and the different languages needed. Like the Sunday Mass schedule, daily Mass and reconciliation times should be coordinated on a parish family level.

Keep in mind that the community whose Mass is being disrupted, eliminated, or changed, should be handled with care. Try to find places for those ministers – ushers, lectors, altar servers, extraordinary ministers of holy Communion, cantors, etc. – in the revised Mass schedule and make sure they feel valued.



Rectory considerations

Overview

"Where am I going to live?" is an important question for priests. The Archdiocesan Property and Construction team is coordinating an archdiocesan-wide assessment of rectories to evaluate suitability and prepare a recommendation with 1-3 housing options for each family. It will be up to incoming and outgoing priests to determine their best living arrangement prior to July 1, 2024.

Since we expect many pastors will move in July 2024, parishes should anticipate the need to vacate, clean, and prepare the existing rectory for a possible new resident. Decisions regarding rectory usage will not be made until the incoming and outgoing priests are able to consult one another.

- **Archdiocesan guidelines** for a distinct residence area, separate from any offices or meeting areas, should be followed. Consultation with the Office of the Vicar for Clergy should be undertaken if there are questions about this policy and its application.
- **Expenses.** Priest residence expenses should be shared by each parish in the parish family.



Sacramental emergency plan

As Church, we are available and present for people in crisis. Ensuring a smooth transition of emergency protocols will be key to fulfilling our pastoral obligations.

Please provide information on the current arrangements for sacramental emergencies. Before July 1, 2024, the incoming pastor will need to review the arrangements in each community within the parish family and develop a workable plan to implement July 1, 2024, with information circulated in advance so people are aware of the new protocols. Here are a few options to consider:

- **Option 1:** Use a cell phone, paid for by the parish family, that can be passed from priest to priest, based on the on-call schedule determined by the pastor, with variances for time away.
- **Option 2:** Establish a phone extension at the parish that reaches an answering service, which screens calls and relays the information to the various priests' private numbers according to an established schedule, amended for vacations.
- **Option 3:** A phone extension at each parish that is programmed to transfer directly to the private cell phone number of the on-call priest.
- **Option 4:** Some other arrangement, such as a staff member who receives the calls as above and screens them before calling the priest.

Once the plan is set, staff and parishioners should know in advance about the new method of requesting a priest in a sacramental emergency, with written directions for staff at each location as well as information in bulletins and on parish websites. A staff member needs to be designated to implement changes in each parish within the family on July 1, 2024 (cancel call service/update call service, phone extensions, etc.).