



**PARTNERS
IN THE GOSPEL**

People Section

HANDBOOK FOR PARISHES

ARCHDIOCESE OF SEATTLE



PARTNERS IN THE GOSPEL

“Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow.”
- Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

There is more than one way to organize a team. This section provides different roles, support teams and staffing models for consideration. Over the next three years, pastors will want to discern the strengths of their team and the needs of the parish family in developing their staff and organizational structure.

Table of Contents

- [Overview](#)
 - Co-responsibility
- [Parish Staff and Volunteers](#)
 - Discerning Gifts
 - Volunteers
 - Becoming One Staff
 - Human Resources Support
- [New Parish Roles](#)
 - Considerations for Hiring New Directors
 - Director of Operations
 - Director of Pastoral Ministries
 - Assistant to the Pastor
- [New Staff Structures](#)
 - Parish Family Leadership Team
 - Staff Structure Options
- [Consultative Bodies](#)
 - Parish Family Advisory Council
 - Representative Model
 - At-large Appointments
 - Use of Departures and Expirations
- [Strategies for Managing Consultative Bodies](#)
 - Overview
 - Existing Parish Commissions
 - Combined Meetings
 - Meeting Frequency
- [Parish Family Decision Matrix](#)
- [Appendix:](#)
 - Parish Liaison Ministry Description
 - Assistant to Pastor Ministry Description
 - Director of Operations Ministry Description
 - Director of Pastoral Ministries Description
 - Retreat Option 1
 - Retreat Option 2



Overview

“Every vocation is born of that gaze of love with which the Lord came to meet us, perhaps even at a time when our boat was being battered by the storm.”
– Pope Francis

The success of the Partners in the Gospel effort depends on the commitment, creativity, and passion of parish staff. Since most parishes will experience a change of pastoral leadership, the presence of staff will be valued by parishioners as it gives a sense of stability and continuity in ministry. Moreover, staff members’ willingness to engage and to lead the way in welcoming other parishes in the parish family sets a helpful example for parishioners.

Therefore, when parish families form in July 2024, there is no immediate planned impact to staffing. Far from envisioning widespread layoffs or redundancies, Partners in the Gospel calls on each of our staff members to lead the way in the “missionary creativity” that will enable each parish family to draw together as one. The goal is to use the talents of existing teams to meet the needs of the new parish families. Over time, the new parish family could offer opportunities for staff members to focus on a new area of interest, leverage prior work experience, or use a current strength to grow in new ways serving the Church. There may even be opportunities for a staff member to shift to another parish family where there is a need for their gifts.

Co-responsibility

Central to the work of coming together is the idea of co-responsibility. Everyone is co-responsible for the life of our parishes and the life of the Church – not just volunteers or paid ministers. Co-responsibility goes much further than simply recognizing that people have different roles; it ties back to what it means to be Christians.

The concept of co-responsibility is rooted in – and flows from – baptism. By the virtue of baptism, everyone becomes co-responsible for the life of the Church, and it is the dignity instilled by baptism that was so central to the discussion of parish life during Vatican II. A key insight around co-responsibility found in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy centers on the presence of Christ. As Catholics, a reverence for the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is fundamental. Similarly important, however, is reverence for the presence of Christ in the people of God. In the same way that Christ is in Eucharist, so too is Christ in the baptized – allowing the people of God to take their place at the table of ministry.

To be clear, recognition of this co-responsibility does not diminish the importance of clergy. Rather, it elevates the role of the laity. We value the ordained and the incredible gift of deacons and priests, and we also value nonordained Catholics who make up the body of the

Church. Everyone is responsible for the life of the Church and the mission Christ. Such co-responsibility has practical implications for consultative structures and the way work is done. Many parishes already embrace co-responsibility. Though it may look different depending on the community, consultation and collaboration are consistent and central to how they function. While co-responsibility will vary from community to community, consultation and collaboration are central to it. This document highlights ways to engage staff, consultative bodies and the laity at large to ensure everyone is embracing co-responsibility.



Parish Staff and Volunteers

Discerning our gifts

As Partners in the Gospel unfolds, there will be opportunities for lay staff to move into different roles, take on new responsibilities or explore other avenues of ministry as the needs of the parish family evolve. Discernment of gifts and openness to other possibilities will be a key part of becoming one canonical parish. While there are no guarantees that some positions will not be eliminated, it is important to keep in mind that *there is a shortage – not a surplus! – of qualified parish staff members at this time*. Families will need to rely on their staff's individual and collective talents now more than ever.

The pastoral transitions across the Archdiocese of Seattle may well inspire some to retire or change jobs. As this natural attrition occurs, parish staff will be invited to take on roles encompassing not just their own parish, but the whole parish family. How and when this happens will be different in each parish family.

Volunteers

Clergy, lay staff, and parishioners are co-responsible for the mission of the Church. Engaged parishioners, as active disciples, serve in a variety of roles as volunteers and are responsible for helping parishes thrive.

Pastors, vicars, deacons and lay staff have a particular role in engaging, empowering and supporting parish volunteers who serve in ministries. These are some descriptions of volunteers to consider, though some individuals may serve in more than one of these categories:

- **Volunteers who serve in a staff capacity**
These volunteers are performing a role that would otherwise be provided by a staff person. This can be prevalent especially in rural and urban areas and in parishes where financial resources are limited.
- **Volunteers who serve in consultative bodies**
These volunteers support the mission by providing consultation to the pastor and school leadership.
- **Key volunteers**
People who serve as a lead person or organizer for a ministry.

- **Program volunteers**
These volunteers serve regularly for ministries and programs of the parish or school.
- **Event or initiative volunteers**
People who serve as a volunteer for a particular event or function.

Volunteers should be invited to participate in leadership roles, ministries, programs and events according to their gifts. It is essential that they receive preparation for their roles and that they complete all necessary training or requirements, including Safe Environment. Volunteers need support, encouragement and deserve supervision. Each volunteer should know which member of the parish team is responsible for supervision and support.

Becoming one staff

Partners in the Gospel envisions that, once becoming one canonical parish, each community will have **one staff**, not two or three. While the staffs of the parish family are separate today, through the transition to becoming one canonical parish, the staffing model will adjust to the evolving needs of the parish family.

When parish families form, there may be multiple people performing similar roles, which opens up opportunities for sharing, learning and brainstorming ways to divide or share work, cover vacations and other collaboration.

Under the direction of the new pastor, and early in the formation of the new parish family, staff will have an opportunity to connect with their counterparts at the other parishes in the family. Staff will meet regularly to learn about each other's gifts, visit parish facilities, hear stories of how ministry is done in each community and begin imagining the possibilities. A parish family may wish to host a staff retreat (see samples in Appendix.) Throughout, this process, it will be important to listen to the Holy Spirit and be open to new possibilities for ministry.

For example, a parish family may have three pastoral assistants for faith formation. After journeying together and evaluating the needs of the parish family, one might focus on OCIA and adult confirmation, while another may focus on adult faith enrichment opportunities, OCIA adapted for children or something else altogether. By creating opportunities to share resources, staff members will be able to explore new initiatives and ministry yet to be envisioned.

Another example: If a parish family has two or more pastoral assistants for administration, the role might be divided: One PAA might handle HR and finances across the family, whereas the other might focus on facilities, property management, etc. This discernment will happen in collaboration with the pastor, take place over time and will look different in each parish family based on the gifts and expertise of the individuals involved.

Human Resources support for the journey

As the journey toward one canonical parish unfolds, there are several areas that may require thoughtful attention. As a result, the archdiocese's Human Resources team is undertaking several initiatives focused on providing advice, coaching, training and tools to support the transition.

The parish [HR toolkit in the "For Parishes"](#) section of the archdiocesan website has been updated with new materials available in the following categories:

- Recruiting
- Hiring
- Rewards and recognition
- Performance management
- Employment status changes
- Administrative tools

These resources will be updated as new needs and questions arise.

Training and education will also continue to be provided monthly via the popular webinar format hosted by the HR assistant directors. The content for these sessions is developed based on feedback from parishes and schools as well as from trends that are identified during day-to-day inquiries. These sessions focus on aspects of operations or human resources management that align with the toolkit resources mentioned above. Human Resources is also partnering with the Partners in the Gospel team to provide any additional training that pastors or administrators identify.

Day-to-day questions or concerns can be forwarded to the HR inbox (HR@seattlearch.org) or the Integrated Payroll and Benefits inbox (IPBS@seattlearch.org), and a quick answer will be provided, or a time set for a personal follow-up with a member of the HR team.

HR staff are dedicated to coaching or consulting with staff members or leaders who may want to discuss events and scenarios or gain solutions for employment-related issues.

In addition, there are several operational improvements underway to help support and ease administrative aspects of the transition to parish families. These include:

- Simplifying the payroll process for sharing employees.
- Simplifying the process for transferring employees from one location to another.
- Moving to one pay cycle so all parishes in a parish family are on the same pay cycle.

A new Standard Operating Process (SOP) manual will be launched before July 1, 2024, to help parishes maximize Paycom functionality with an eye toward increased efficiency.

For further information, stay tuned for communications through the C2P, online at the Parish HR Toolkit and in memos from Human Resources.



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New Parish Roles

Considerations for hiring new directors

The intent of the director of operations (DOO) and director of pastoral ministries (DPM) roles is to recognize that some parish families will have large staffs that could be challenging from a span-of-control perspective. Typically, a leader can effectively supervise five to seven staff members. With a larger parish family staff, a pastor may want to consider an organizational structure that introduces new models of supervision. The staff structure section suggests options for these organizational structures. In evaluating the appropriate organizational structure, pastors may consider creating new supervisory positions such as the DOO and/or DPM.

Some considerations include:

- **Size of staff:** As staff sizes approach 10 or more employees, an additional layer of supervision makes sense.
- **Interests and strengths of the pastor:** A pastor whose interests and strengths are administrative, or pastoral may want to keep more direct control over those functions most aligned with his charisms and create a supervisory role for functions that are not his area of strength. For example, a pastor with strong pastoral interest may want direct control over the pastoral ministries and may place administrative functions (bookkeeping, payroll, facilities, IT) under a DOO.
- **Strengths of the staff:** Pastors may be blessed with some strong leaders. The DOO or DPM roles might be a way to leverage the skills of these strong leaders and to relieve the supervisory burden on a pastor. This section outlines possible new roles and corresponding responsibilities that may be helpful for parishes as they journey toward one canonical parish and beyond.

Director of Operations

The director of operations is a new position that builds on the traditional pastoral assistant for administration role. It's created to recognize the complexity that will be introduced with many of the parish families needing an elevated level of administrative expertise and skill. *This role has been helpful for parishes within the Archdioceses of Detroit and Chicago.*

The director of operations provides strategic and operational support to the pastor to ensure proper stewardship of the human, financial, information technology (IT) and physical resources of the parish family, in accordance with archdiocesan policies and guidelines.

The director of operations will have primary responsibility for finance, operations, facilities, human resources and project management with direct leadership of finance, administration, IT and maintenance for the parish family.

Within the context of Partners in the Gospel, this person will work with a Parish Family Staff Leadership Team to unify operations of two or more parishes.

Who should this person be?

This could be a current staff member at one of the parishes who exhibits the ability to supervise other administrative roles, or it may be a new hire.

Who should hire this role and when?

This role should be hired by the pastor. The need and timing for this role is at the pastor's discretion and should be driven by the needs of the parish family and the pastor.

This role is one that would be considered a shared expense by the parish family.

Director of Pastoral Ministries

The director of pastoral ministries is a new role that a pastor may choose to fill, particularly in large parish families with a significant number of ministries that would stretch the supervision of a pastor.

The director of pastoral ministries is a key member of the Parish Family Leadership Team and reports directly to the pastor. Under the leadership of the pastor, the director of pastoral ministries shepherds the overall vision for all pastoral ministries.

The director of pastoral ministries leads the Family Pastoral Team, which is responsible for creating, implementing and evaluating a comprehensive strategy for liturgy, faith formation, OCIA, outreach, social justice and evangelization. The director may have responsibility for one or more specific ministries.

Who should this person be?

This could be a current staff member at one of the parishes who exhibits the ability to supervise other pastoral ministries, or it could be a new hire.

Who should hire this role and when?

This role should be hired by the pastor. The need and timing for this role is at the pastor's discretion and should be driven by the parish family and pastor needs.

This role is one that would be considered a shared expense by the parish family.

Assistant to the Pastor

Depending on their unique needs, the pastor may need an assistant who is the *one go-to*

person who serves the entire parish family by tracking the pastor's calendar, arranging appointments and helping him with administrative tasks across the parish family. This role may be of particular help in complex families. There should be one person whom parishioners across the parish family can call to arrange for meetings with the pastor and parochial vicar(s) or to get events on their calendars. Depending on the staff, the parochial vicar(s) may also have his own administrative assistant. Please note that this role is not the same as the current pastoral assistant for administration, which has different responsibilities.

Who should this person be?

This could be a current staff member at one of the parishes who works at the same location as the pastor's primary office, or a new hire if there is financial capacity and/or lack of personnel.

Who hires the assistant to the pastor?

This staff person should be chosen by the new pastor.

Shared expense

The expense of this staff person should be shared by all parishes in the parish family. In some cases, these duties might be fulfilled by someone who has other duties at a specific parish.

Please see full job description in the [appendix](#).



New Staff Structures

Parish Family Leadership Team

Purpose

The Parish Family Leadership Team, comprised of some members of the current parish staff, will be formed by the pastor to support the restructuring and re-envisioning for the parish family. They will be the primary staff consultation and action group for executing the activities related to Partners in the Gospel. It is intended to be a transitional structure until the parish family becomes one canonical parish, at which point this becomes the Parish Leadership Team.

FLT Structure/Considerations

- 3-5 people
- Emerging leaders from existing staff and/or key hires
- Would include the director of operations
- Would include one or more principals
- Would include the director of pastoral ministries
- Potentially include parochial vicar(s)
- Ability and willingness to focus on the parish family, not the parish they came from

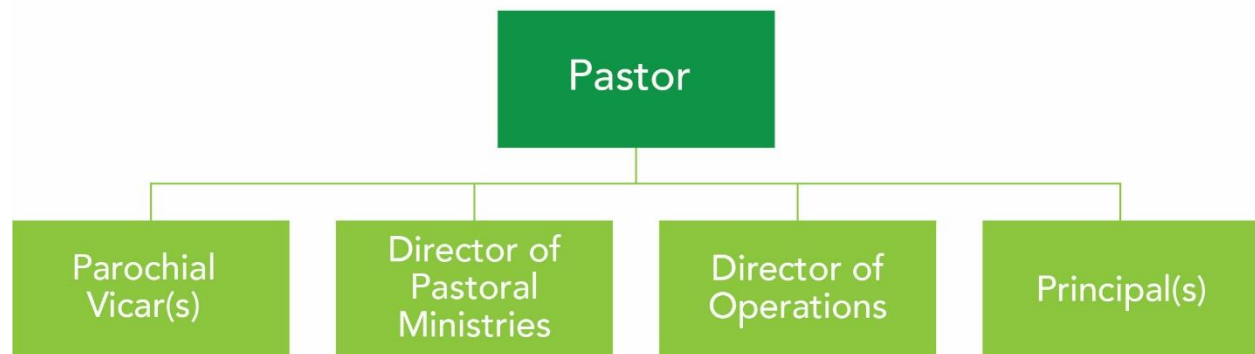
Staff structure options

The following organizational charts are intended to be options for a parish family as they journey to become one canonical parish. Roles identified are functional and not representative of full-time employees (FTE). Roles can be combined and, in some cases, outsourced (e.g., IT support).

Pastors have wide leeway in how they configure staff structures over the next few years. Alternative structures are provided as possibilities for consideration. They can mix and match structures to meet the specific needs of the parish family. Before selecting a model, prayerful consideration should include:

- Personal strengths and interests of the pastor
- Manageable span of oversight (number of direct reports should be less than seven)
- Capabilities of staff
- Geographic distribution of staff
- Size of staff
- Parish finances

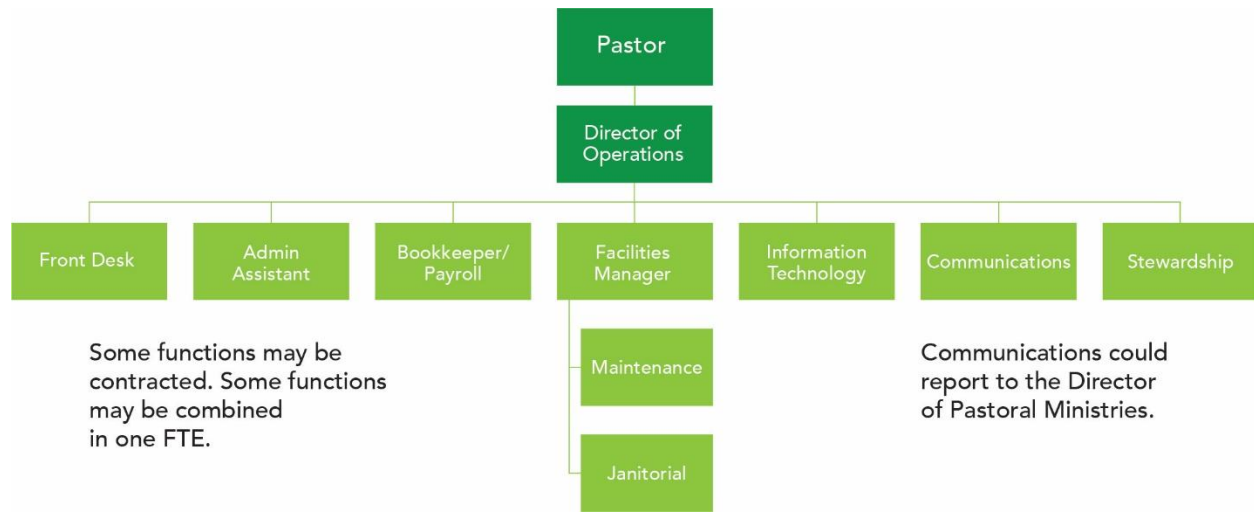
Highest Level Org Chart



Considerations:

- This highlights a potential high-level structure for a parish family with a large staff, multiple schools, and a number of parochial vicars.
- The number of direct reports for a pastor should be less than seven.
- It shows how the director of operations and director of pastoral ministries can be used to reduce the supervisory and administrative burden for a pastor.

Operations Organizational Chart



Considerations:

- This chart shows a potential structure for a large parish family that has chosen to hire a director of operations.
- This structure would be nested under the Highest-Level Org Chart above.
- It shows most of the administrative functions in a parish family.
- Functions may be combined within an FTE and in some cases, a parish family may have multiple FTEs in a function.
- Some functions may also be outsourced.
- Additional layers of supervision may be needed to accomplish the day-to-day work.

Pastoral Ministries Organizational Chart



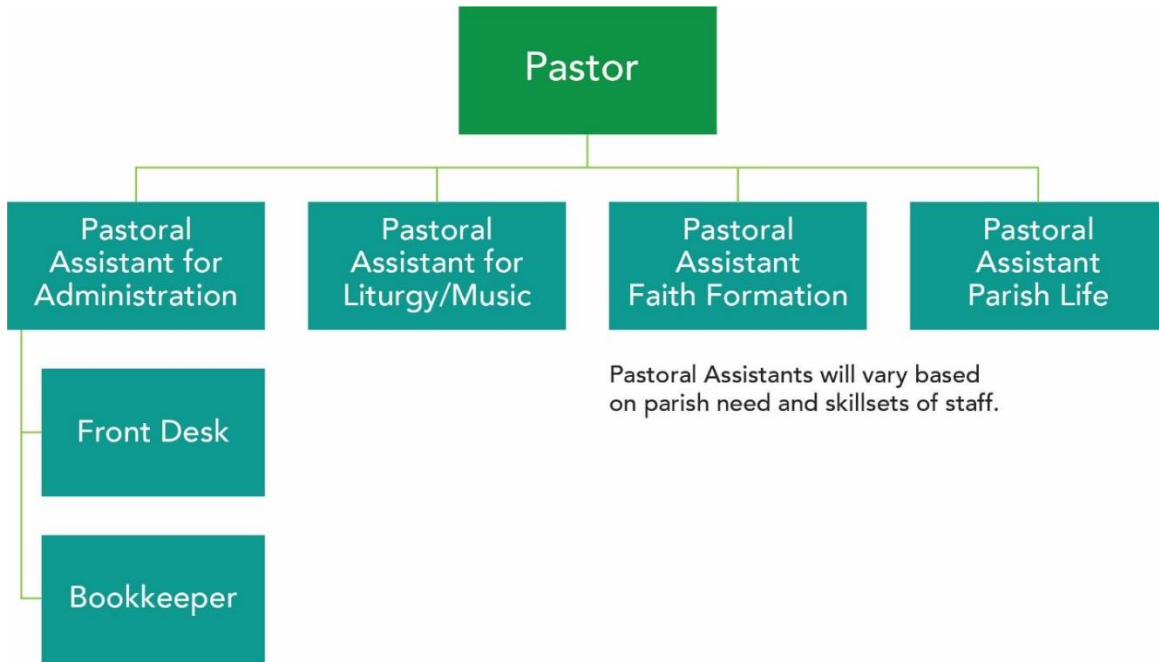
The Director of Pastoral Ministries would typically have responsibility for one of the ministries as well as the supervision of the other ministries.

Pastoral Assistants should have direct access to the pastor for their ministry. Supervisory role of Director of Pastoral Ministries is administrative and coordination. Ministries can be combined as needed into a single role or have multiple staff members assigned.

Considerations:

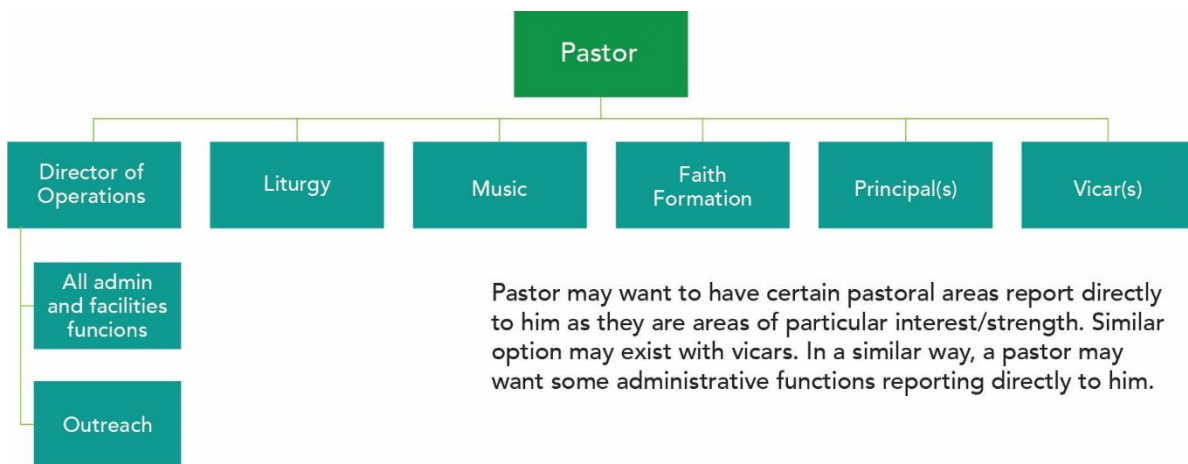
- This chart shows a potential structure for a large parish family that has chosen to hire a director of pastoral ministries.
- This would be nested under the Highest-Level Org Chart above.
- It shows most of the pastoral ministries in a parish family.
- The Director of Pastoral Ministries will often have direct responsibilities for one or more pastoral ministries.
- Pastoral ministries may be combined within an FTE, and in some cases, a parish family may have multiple FTEs in a ministry.
- Additional layers of supervision may be needed for the day-to-day work.
- It is possible to have some pastoral ministries report directly to the pastor.

Alternative Staff Structure – Small Staff



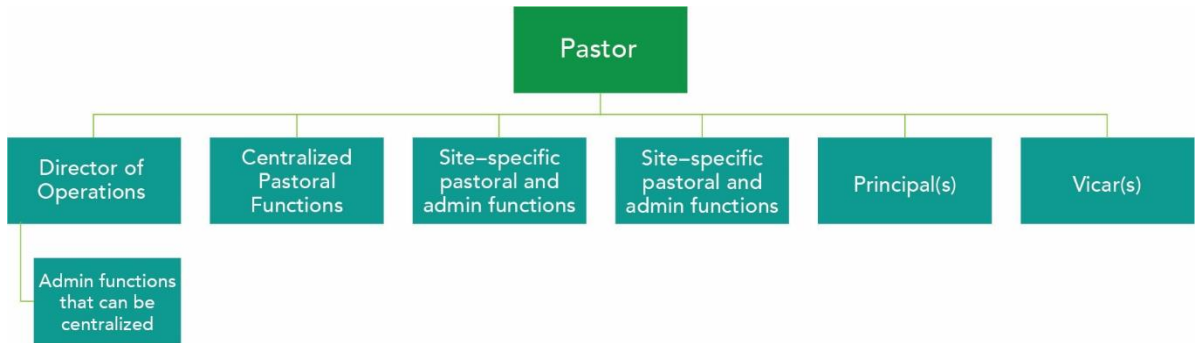
For parish families with smaller staffs, an alternative structure with more of the staff reporting directly to the pastor may make sense.

Alternative Structure – Pastor Interest/Strength



Another alternative would suggest a pastor may want more influence/control over pastoral or administrative functions. This could result in more direct report staff from those areas.

Alternative Structure – Geographic Organization



Considerations:

- Parish families with a large geographic territory may need to keep pastoral or administrative functions geographically dispersed. In this case, they may report directly to the pastor.
- This may make sense if parish family coordination across locations is minimal. This might include facilities or music.
- Some parish families may be so geographically dispersed that practicality requires some staff to report differently.



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Consultative Bodies

The goal of Partners in the Gospel is to have parish families discern a strategic pastoral plan that results in a single canonical parish. The discernment will require engagement of the consultative bodies from the member parishes and the creation of consultative bodies for the new parish family. Here are a few recommended team approaches.

Parish Family Advisory Council

When the parish family becomes a single canonical parish, it will have one pastoral council and one finance council. At the beginning of Phase 1, a pastor should create a **Parish Family Advisory Council** to serve as the primary consultative body for the strategic pastoral plan and the formation of the new canonical parish. This advisory council could evolve into the pastoral council of the new canonical parish.

A similar approach could be considered for the creation of a parish family finance committee with the intention of evolving into the finance council of the new canonical parish.

As pastors identify the membership of these councils, it will be important for that group to know each other. Consider hosting a retreat to build the relationships needed to be an effective consultative body.

Role of the Parish Family Advisory Council

This group will be the pastor's go-to group to consult about all Partners in the Gospel questions, including changes that impact the parish family, shared events, collaboration across parishes, etc. They will primarily focus on the health of the entire parish family, looking beyond the needs of each individual community. It will be the key consultative body for the creation of the strategic pastoral plan called One Parish Plan that will be submitted to the archbishop prior to becoming one canonical parish. They will also help ensure that the necessary discernment processes are in place for the completion of the strategic pastoral plan.

The group should represent the ethnic, cultural, and economic makeup of your new parish family. Schools and other ministries should also be considered as part of the Parish Family Advisory Council.

- May include 9-12 people.
- Include multiple skills for this council, including ministerial, service, finance,

- properties and strategy.
- Minimum term should be three years.
- Be transparent about who the members are and why they were chosen by the pastor.
- Members should commit to attending a Mass at each parish in the family and learning about each parish in the family. They will also need to be able to have a vision of the whole family – a vision not limited to their own current parish.
- Consider sending Parish Family Advisory Council members as representatives to other key meetings, so they can hear, listen, and learn. They will help form relationships and maintain channels of communication across the parish family.
- The most important task to begin with is not looking at big questions but getting to know one another.
- A monthly meeting for this group is recommended, with a minimum of quarterly meetings.

Representative Model

The Representative Model would be most applicable to the formation of the Parish Family Advisory Council and the Parish Family Finance Council. Representatives from the existing consultative bodies of the member parishes would be convened in the new parish family consultative bodies.

Pros:

- Ensures that each member parish is represented.
- Keeps the number of people on the committee to a reasonable number.

Cons:

- Adds a meeting to the schedule of the committee members.
- Could result in a parochial approach to decision-making, where the representative focuses on advocacy for the interests of a member parish instead of the greater good.

1 or more representatives from each parish pastoral council belongs to the Parish Family Advisory Council



At-large appointments

Pastors may want to evaluate the parish consultative bodies for how representative they are of the member parish community. Pastors may want to selectively appoint parishioners to existing consultative bodies or to the Family Advisory Council or Parish Family Finance Council to ensure representation. At-large appointments may also be used to bring previously uninvolved parishioners into the discernment and planning process for the parish family, particularly targeting specific skills or interests.

Pros:

- Underrepresented groups or skills are part of the planning and discernment process for the parish family.
- New leaders are identified and developed.
- Existing consultative leaders learn about the needs of any groups that might be underrepresented.

Cons:

- May present a need for language interpretation and understanding of cultural norms that may impact the effectiveness of the at-large appointment.
- May require additional time to understand and address the needs of underrepresented groups.
- Appointed members will need to be brought up to speed on Partners in the Gospel and their role.

Intent is to consider underrepresented group in the forming of the Parish Family Advisory Council.



Underrepresented groups or skills added to Parish Family Advisory Council.

Use of departures, terms and term expirations

Pastors may want to use departures of members of existing consultative bodies as an opportunity to either add a missing skill set or begin the process of reducing the membership of existing bodies to facilitate the move to the parish family consultative bodies. Similarly, committee membership terms and expirations can be used in the same way.

Pros:

- Builds on agreed upon charter terms
- Creates an orderly transition

Cons:

- An unplanned departure of a key lay leader can be disruptive.
- There may not be an obvious replacement for an unplanned departure.

Phasing

The Parish Family Advisory Council should be in place within the first year of the parish family forming. With the goal of having a single pastoral council and a single finance council when the one canonical parish is in place, a pastor may use a mix of these strategies for managing existing consultative bodies. The strategies may change over time, based on the issues and discernment faced by the parish family.

Pros:

- Creates flexibility for a pastor and parish family.
- Allows adaption to the realities of a parish family, especially as they change over the multi-year period.

Cons:

- Members of consultative bodies will need to be flexible and be kept involved as the consultative bodies change.
- Some members of consultative bodies may choose to stop participating.

Summary

Pastors must determine an approach for how to transition consultative bodies from individual parishes to the parish family and then ultimately to the single, canonical parish. A pastor should configure the consultative bodies in a way that best meets the needs of the parish family – and those configurations may change over time during the discernment and transition process.



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Strategies for Managing Consultative Bodies

Overview

Pastors of a new parish family will be faced with multiple consultative bodies from each of the parishes in the family. In addition, pastors will be asked to form a Parish Family Advisory Committee. The leadership and support of these meetings will put a strain on the time of the pastor and his staff. The following strategies are suggested as possible ways to mitigate the time issues.

Existing Parish Commissions

Parishes becoming part of a new parish family may still have their own commissions such as liturgy, faith formation, school, life, justice and peace commissions, and others. Pastors are encouraged to have these existing commissions continue until they have had adequate time to evaluate consultative bodies in each parish and weigh the need to promote continuity of these commissions as well as the opportunity for consolidation. Individual school commissions of each parish school are vital for the school's long-term viability and should continue.

Considerations

As parishes join, there are several factors that should be considered for existing consultative bodies as well as for the formation of any new consultative bodies.

- The pastor should make effective use of the committed participants in existing consultative bodies to help discern the best path for the strategic pastoral planning for the new parish family.
- Pastor will want to consider how to be efficient yet effective in using consultative bodies, knowing that there is considerable time spent in preparing and managing multiple groups. Several strategies for this are outlined below.
- As new groups are formed, such as the Parish Family Advisory Council, the pastor will want to consider any underrepresented groups in the current consultative bodies (e.g. cultural, age and gender).
- In a similar fashion, pastors will want to consider what talent or skill is missing from the consultative bodies as they currently exist.
- As a pastor looks at possibly combining consultative bodies, unplanned departures

as well as terms in the charters of existing consultative bodies can be used to reduce group size and change composition.

- Pastors have flexibility in creating a set of governance options that can be adapted to the specific needs of their parish family, within the bounds of canon and particular law.

Combined meetings

A pastor may choose to combine the meetings of the required consultative bodies. This approach could be applied to any of the consultative bodies, but particular care must be taken when combining parish finance councils, which have distinct rules per canon law.

In the case of a combined finance council, the agenda should allow for each parish finance council to have its own time to meet and give input, even if it is just for a short amount of time. This way, three or four finance councils can meet on the same date but have separate time for their own specific parish deliberations.

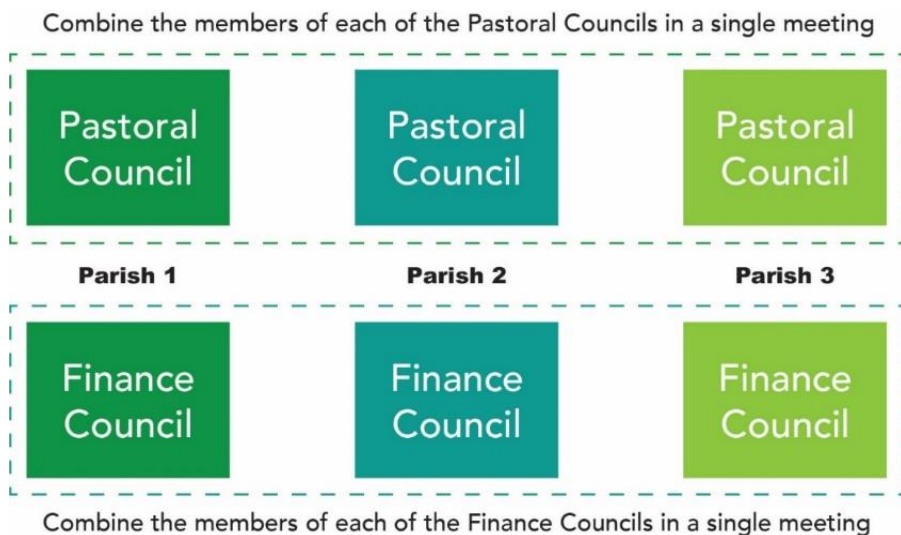
Pastoral councils have more flexibility in how they combine with one another and do not have the requirement of providing distinct time set aside in the agenda.

Pros:

- Allows parish family consultative leadership to better understand the culture of the member parishes.
- Allows the parish family to begin developing a shared culture.
- Reduces number of meetings that a pastor and staff must prepare for and attend.

Cons:

- There may be agenda items specific to a member parish or potentially sensitive that would need to be addressed in separate meetings.
- Meetings could be longer, depending on the number of member parish specific topics.



Meeting Frequency

Pastors may want to manage the time requirements of the multiple consultative bodies by reducing the frequency of some of the meetings.

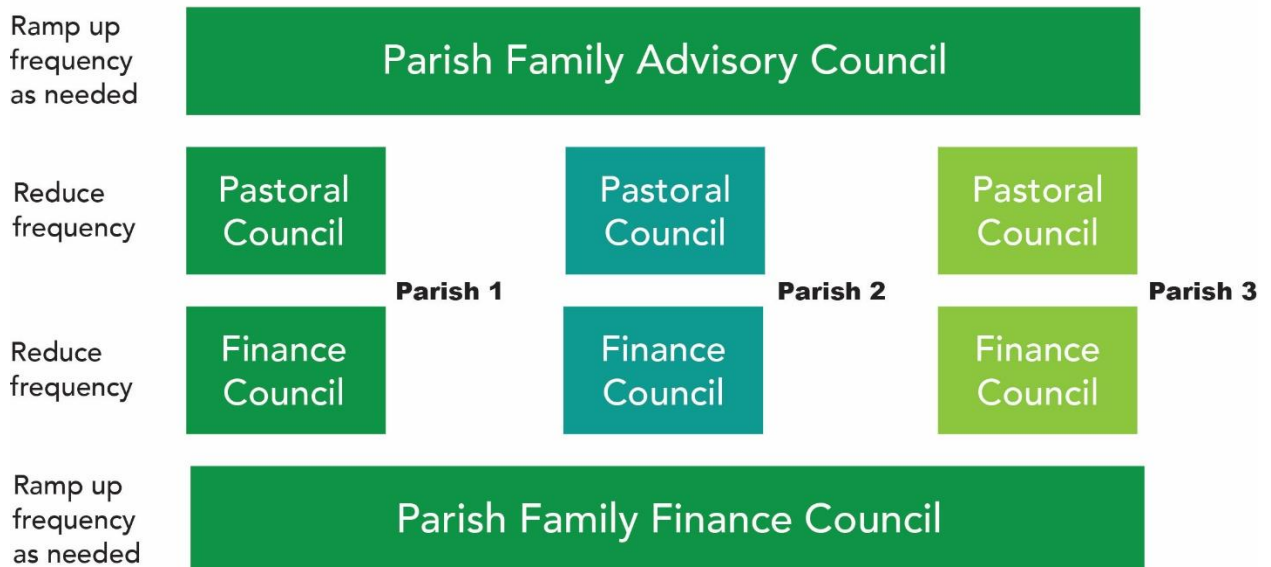
Pros:

- Reduced time in preparation, execution, and follow-up.
- Forced evaluation of most important topics.
- Reduced burden on consultative body members.

Cons:

- Decision-making may be slowed.
- Could lose momentum on some initiatives.
- Could lose interest from some members of the consultative bodies.

Intent is to reduce meeting burden by discerning frequency.



Parish Family Decision Matrix

In a parish, the pastor is the deciding party under canon law. In the spirit of co-responsibility, however, it is expected that he will rely heavily on a consultative model to aid in discernment and help make decisions. The chart below provides the co-responsible roles of the various consultative bodies in parish families, up to becoming a single canonical parish. Parish staff provide input and assist in preparing the pastor for consultative body meetings.

Decision	Parish Pastoral Council	Parish Finance Council	School Commission	Parish Family Advisory Council
Strategic pastoral planning	Input	Input	Input	Recommend
Major expense - single parish	Recommend	Recommend	N/A	Inform
Major expense - multiple parishes	Input	Input	N/A	Recommend
Property decisions	Input	Input	N/A	Recommend
Single-school building decisions	Input	Input	Recommend	Inform
Budget - single parish	Input	Recommend	N/A	Inform
Budget - single schools	Input	Input	Recommend	Inform
Mass schedule	Input	Input	N/A	Recommend
Worship sites	Input	Input	N/A	Recommend
Staff re-org	Inform	Inform	N/A	Inform
Use of space	Input	Input	N/A	Recommend
Combining commissions across parishes	Input	Inform	Input	Recommend
Use of restricted gifts at a single parish	Recommend	Recommend	N/A	Inform/Input

Input: Through discernment, a consultative body provides viewpoints and insights that reflect what has been revealed to them through prayer and discussion and agreed upon by the group as the option with the most support.

Recommend: Formal input as result of discernment and consensus. May include the input of other consultative bodies. Results in formal single recommendation for the pastor to discern next steps.

Inform: Communicating input, recommendations and decisions to a consultative body not directly responsible for that recommendation.

N/A: Consultation is not typically applicable to this consultative body.



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IN THE GOSPEL**

APPENDIX

Ministry Descriptions

Parish Liaison Ministry Description

GENERAL SUMMARY OF ESSENTIAL PURPOSE

Parish liaisons work in partnership with the pastors and leadership teams of multiple parish families to implement the parish family structure and develop a plan for becoming one vibrant, canonical parish. The liaison provides guidance and project management support and ensures effective communication among the Partners in the Gospel core team, parish family pastor and staff, and the Planning and Mission Effectiveness team. This is a project-based position.

ESSENTIAL POSITION DUTIES

- Learns and becomes well-versed in the Partners in the Gospel resources and tools and assists in refining them as needed to improve their utility.
- Accompanies, supports and guides implementation of parish family structures in partnership with pastors and their leadership teams.
- Serves as resource, facilitator and support for effective group discernment and processes.
- Responsible for timeline management and progress tracking as parish families journey through implementation and planning efforts to become one canonical parish.
- Provides guidance in preparing agendas, raising key issues, supporting effective decision-making and other support to ensure effective meetings.
- Tracks progress and key decisions and ensures effective follow-up after meetings.
- Serve as communication link between Chancery offices and parish family pastors and leaders.
- Assist pastors in creating and executing effective communication channels with parish staff, leaders and parishioners.
- Creates monthly status/progress report for each assigned parish family and reviews with the executive director of strategic and pastoral planning.

ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS

Primary:

- Willingness and ability to support the mission of the Church by extending the ministry of the archbishop.
- Ability and desire to use God-given gifts and talents in service of the local Church and in support of the collaboration between lay and ordained ministers.
- Active member of a parish/faith community and in good standing with the Church.
- Strong desire to assist with the growing the Church and spreading the Gospel.

Education:

- Bachelor's degree required.
- Project management certification preferred.

Experience:

- 5+ years' experience and expertise in leadership, project management, change leadership and/or related areas of organizational development preferred.
- Ability to facilitate meetings, primarily among pastors and their planning teams, and work toward resolution of conflict in complex situations.
- Possess emotional intelligence skills and ability to build trust with pastor and leadership team members.
- Strong project management skills.
- Strong verbal and written communication skills.
- Parish or Catholic ministry experience a plus.

Other Elements:

- Desire to grow in personal faith life and enthusiasm for sharing the joy of the Gospel.
- Curiosity to learn and understand the many works of the Church in Western Washington and a desire to apply professional skills to support advancing those efforts.
- Flexibility and emotional intelligence in working with small and large groups of different stakeholders in consensus decision-making scenarios.
- Strong working knowledge of, or strong willingness to learn, Catholic parish structures and organizations.
- Demonstrated ability to work with a variety of people, including, but not limited to, multicultural communities.
- Willing and able to work some evenings and weekends.
- Must possess vehicle, valid Washington driver's license and insurance to travel throughout the Archdiocese of Seattle.

Assistant to the Pastor Ministry Description

GENERAL SUMMARY OF ESSENTIAL PURPOSE

The assistant to the pastor provides administrative services in support of the pastor, serving not just one parish but the entire parish family.

ESSENTIAL POSITION DUTIES

- Performs administrative functions for the pastor, parochial vicar and other staff as assigned.
- Fields calls and appointment requests for the pastor.
- Maintains the pastor's calendar, processes messages, invitations, etc.
- Serves as a communication link within the parish family for its staff members, parishioners, committee members, vendors and others who may be visiting or calling the parish.
- Serves as backup receptionist as needed.
- Attends workshops as appropriate and provides general assistance as needed.
- Performs other duties as assigned.

ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS

Primary:

- Willingness and ability to support the mission of the Church.
- Ability and desire to use God-given gifts and talents in service of the local Church in support of the collaboration between lay and ordained ministers.
- Active member of a parish/faith community and in good standing with the Church.
- Strong desire to assist with the growth of the Church.

Education:

- Bachelor's degree preferred.

Experience:

- 3+ years of demonstrated experience in professional administrative work.
- Proficient in Microsoft Office Suite.
- Ability to facilitate meetings, primarily among parishioners, councils, commissions and general public.
- Possess emotional intelligence skills and ability to build trust with pastor and leadership team members and parishioners.
- Strong verbal and written communication skills.
- Parish or Catholic ministry experience a plus.

Other Elements:

- Desire to grow in personal faith life and enthusiasm for sharing the joy of the Gospel.
- Strong organizational, judgment and problem-solving skills.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills.
- Curiosity to learn and understand the many works of the Church in Western Washington and a desire to apply professional skills to support further effectiveness of those efforts.
- Flexibility and emotional intelligence in working with small and large groups of different stakeholders in consensus decision-making scenarios.
- Strong working knowledge of, or strong willingness to learn, Catholic parish structures and organizations.
- Demonstrated ability to work with a variety of people, including multicultural communities.
- Willing and able to work some evenings and weekends.

Director of Operations Ministry Description

Background: *This role builds on experiences in the Archdioceses of Detroit and Chicago.*

The director of operations provides strategic and operational support to the pastor to ensure effective stewardship of the human, financial, information technology (IT) and physical resources of the parish family, in accordance with archdiocesan policies and guidelines.

The director of operations will have primary responsibility for finance, operations, facilities, human resources and project management with direct leadership of finance, administration, IT and maintenance.

Within the context of Partners in the Gospel, the director of operations will work with the Parish Family Leadership Team to unify operations of two or more parishes with an emphasis on finance, facilities and human resources.

JOB DESCRIPTION

GENERAL SUMMARY OF ESSENTIAL PURPOSE

The director of operations provides strategic and operational support to the pastor (and school principal, as applicable) to ensure the stewardship of the human, financial and physical resources of the parish family, in accordance with archdiocesan policies and guidelines. The person will have primary responsibility for finance, operations, facilities, human resources, and project management with direct leadership of finance, administration and maintenance.

The director of operations will be responsible for working with the pastor and the Parish Family Leadership Team and the Parish Family Advisory Council to unify operations of two or more parishes with an emphasis on finance, facilities, and human resources.

ESSENTIAL POSITION DUTIES

- Assists the pastor in setting direction in the areas of finance, operations, facilities, human resources, and technology in support of the pastoral mission.
- Responsible for the recruitment, management and training of employees as assigned by pastor and in alignment with archdiocesan Human Resources policies.
- Directs staff and contract roles in day-to-day operations of the finance, facilities, human resources, and technology functions.
- Responsible for the oversight of the overall budget of the parish family.
- Responsible for ensuring compliance with archdiocesan policies.
- Serves as staff to the parish family's pastoral councils and the Parish Family Advisory Council.
- Member of the Parish Family Staff Leadership Team to ensure the Partners in the Gospel activities progress.
- Responsible for all operations, maintenance, security, repairs and capital projects of parish facilities.
- Responsible for the oversight of communications activities, including bulletin, website, social media, broadcast email communications and direct mail.

- Responsible for maintenance of current parish census and database as well as parish operational, financial and sacramental records. Also includes safeguarding and archiving all parish records and documents.
- Overall responsibility for all information technology, including but not limited to computers (hardware and software), internet/telephone, copiers, etc.
- Collaboration with liaisons and pastor in implementing Partners strategy and agenda.
- Responsible for the development and implementation of overall budget, preparation of annual reports, evaluation and communication of monthly financial reports, including bank reconciliation of the parish family.
- Ensures the use of best practices in all activities; responsible for the establishment, maintenance and testing of internal controls.
- Manages parish relationships with financial institutions, all aspects of vendor relationships, financial stewardship activities, fundraising and parish offertory collections.
- If schools are present, works effectively with the principal in all school financial, human resources and school commission processes.

ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS

Primary:

- Willingness and ability to support the mission of the Church by extending the ministry of the archbishop.
- Ability and desire to use God-given gifts and talents in service of the local Church in support of the collaboration between lay and ordained ministers.
- Active member of a parish/faith community and in good standing with the Church.
- Strong desire to assist with the growth of the Church.

Education:

- Undergraduate degree in business, accounting, finance or related discipline, or equivalent professional experience.

Experience:

- Five years' experience in accounting, finance or related business practices.
- Experience with a not-for-profit organization or in Church management is a plus.
- Ability to facilitate meetings, primarily among parishioners, councils, commissions and general public.
- Possess emotional intelligence skills and ability to build trust with pastor and leadership team members and parishioners.
- Demonstrate understanding, respect and support of the Catholic Church teaching, mission and values.
- Demonstrable leadership, interpersonal, communication and organizational skills; initiative and a strong desire to achieve results.
- Experience in change management and merger integration is a strong plus.
- Experience and competence in standard management software tools (Microsoft Office Suite, QuickBooks).
- Experience with human resources activities.
- Experience with working in a team leadership environment.
- Experience or familiarity with continuous process improvement.
- Can be entrusted with highly confidential information.

Other Elements:

- Desire to grow in personal faith life and enthusiasm for sharing the joy of the Gospel.
- Curiosity to learn and understand the many works of the Church in Western Washington and desire to apply professional skills to support further effectiveness of those efforts.
- Flexibility and emotional intelligence in working with small and large groups of different stakeholders in consensus decision-making scenarios.
- Strong working knowledge of, or strong willingness to learn, Catholic parish structures and organizations.
- Demonstrated ability to work with a variety of people, including multicultural communities.
- Willing and able to work some evenings and weekends.
- Must possess vehicle, valid Washington driver's license and insurance to travel throughout the Archdiocese of Seattle.

Director of Pastoral Ministries Description

Background

The director of pastoral ministries is a key member of the Parish Family Staff Leadership Team and reports directly to the pastor. Under the leadership of the pastor, the director of pastoral ministries shepherds the overall vision for all pastoral ministries.

The director of pastoral ministries leads the Family Pastoral Team, which is responsible for creating, implementing and evaluating a comprehensive strategy for liturgy, faith formation, OCIA, outreach, social justice and evangelization. The director may have responsibility for one or more specific ministries.

JOB DESCRIPTION

GENERAL SUMMARY OF ESSENTIAL PURPOSE

The director of pastoral ministries is a key member of the Parish Family Staff Leadership Team and reports directly to the pastor. Under the leadership of the pastor, the director of pastoral ministries shepherds the overall vision for all pastoral ministries and leads the Family Pastoral Team, which is responsible for creating, implementing, and evaluating a comprehensive strategy for liturgy, faith formation, OCIA, outreach, social justice and evangelization. The director may also have responsibility for one or more specific ministries.

ESSENTIAL POSITION DUTIES

- Assists the pastor in creating and executing the vision for liturgy, faith formation, OCIA, outreach, social justice and evangelization in the parish family.
- Collaborates with the pastor and parish staff in implementing the mission of the parish. This is accomplished by participating in the comprehensive planning, implementation and evaluation of the parish's programs, goals and objectives, with specific focus on pastoral ministry.
- Assists the pastor in the daily operation of the parish family. This involves collaboration with the pastor and parish staff in the overall pastoral care of the parish family. This may include the direct coordination of one or more specific ministries, e.g., sacramental planning, educational formation, pastoral ministry.
- Works to build a good relationship between the parish staff and the parish community.
- Attends and participates in regional, archdiocesan and national professional meetings and organizations as approved and as appropriate.
- Responsible the liturgical calendar and responsible for all liturgical celebrations.
- Assures the development and implementation of comprehensive plans for faith formation, sacraments and multicultural ministries.
- Leads or attends planning meetings related to adult faith formation, marriage preparation and stewardship objectives, strategies and goals.
- Ensures adherence to Safe Environment policies in ministry.

- Ensures that all pastoral ministries and activities are welcoming and engaging.
- Ensures the budget is aligned to the pastoral priorities of the parish family, in partnership with the pastor and director of operations.
- Works with those responsible for communications in creating a pastoral plan for parish family communications.
- Supervises parish family pastoral team members, including regular one-on-one supervisory meetings with members and regular team meetings.
- Creates a healthy team culture of prayer and ongoing formation and supports the pastor in doing so for the Parish Family Leadership Team.
- Creates, implements and evaluates comprehensive approaches to evangelization for youth, adults and families.
- Develops missionary disciples who will reach out and bring the presence of Jesus Christ to those in need, including outreach to the marginalized, parishioners, inactive Catholics and those who do not know Jesus Christ.
- Ensures outreach to those who are underserved.

ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS

Primary:

- Willingness and ability to support the mission of the Church by extending the ministry of the archbishop.
- Ability and desire to use God-given gifts and talents in service of the local Church in support of the collaboration between lay and ordained ministers.
- Active member of a parish/faith community and in good standing with the Church.
- Strong desire to assist with the growth of the Church.

Education:

- Undergraduate degree in ministry, theology or related discipline, or equivalent professional experience.
- Master's degree preferred.

Experience:

- Seven years' experience in parish ministry and Church management is a plus.
- Ability to facilitate meetings, primarily among parishioners, councils, commissions and general public.
- Possess emotional intelligence skills and ability to build trust with the pastor and leadership team members and parishioners.
- Demonstrate understanding, respect and support of the Catholic Church teaching, mission and values.
- Experience with leadership, interpersonal, communication and organizational skills.
- Possesses strong initiative and a strong desire to achieve results.
- Experience and competence in standard management software tools (Microsoft Office Suite, QuickBooks).
- Experience with Human Resources activities.
- Experience with working in a team leadership environment.
- Experience or familiarity with continuous process improvement.
- Can be entrusted with highly confidential information.

Other Elements:

- Desire to grow in personal faith life and enthusiasm for sharing the joy of the Gospel.
- Curiosity to learn and understand the many works of the Church in Western Washington and desire to apply professional skills to support further effectiveness of those efforts.
- Flexibility and emotional intelligence in working with small and large groups of different stakeholders in consensus decision-making scenarios.
- Strong working knowledge of, or strong willingness to learn, Catholic parish structures and organizations.
- Demonstrated ability to work with a variety of people, including multicultural communities.
- Willing and able to work some evenings and weekends.
- Must possess vehicle, valid Washington driver's license and insurance to travel throughout the Archdiocese of Seattle.



Commitments for Prayerful Listening/Faith-Sharing

“Prayerful listening” is the generous practice of being deeply attuned to ourselves and to each other, seeking the wisdom of the Holy Spirit within us and within others.

- **We will listen generously** without needing to respond, fix, save or give advice. We will listen while putting the best interpretation possible on the words of the other.
- **We will refrain from judgment** while seeking understanding. Please refrain from cross talk until everyone has had a chance to speak.
- **We share from our own experience**, trusting that our story and insights are welcomed by the group.
- **We share where our heart is drawing us** in this moment and in this day, trusting the spirit to guide our words even though we can't share the whole context or story.
- **We agree to care for one another** by being mindful of the amount of time we each speak to make time and space for every voice at the table. (Try to limit your sharing to no more than 3 minutes. The timekeeper will be assigned to keep track of your sharing and will let you know when you exceed the limit.)

- **The diversity of the perspectives** and backgrounds of this group are a gift. Although we hold much in common, let us be honest about the differences in our experiences and see our distinctiveness as an opportunity to learn and grow from one another
- **We will honor confidentiality:** “What’s said stays,” and “What’s learned goes.”



**PARTNERS
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Parish Retreat Option 1

Embracing Quiet Listening

This staff retreat format is designed to welcome people, to pray together, to build community, and to make connections. The intention is to make this retreat meaningful and relevant for the specific parish family at this point in time. Keeping this a time of quiet listening together for the movement of God's Spirit in everyone's own life and that of the community is the key to making this experience fruitful.

Considerations

Since this retreat format can be adapted to the particular needs of a staff, all content suggestions are suggestions. Feel free to swap content for other relevant texts, songs or themes that may be meaningful for the parish family.

The retreat should be facilitated by someone who is not on staff such as a Liaison or other outside person. Designed to be roughly 4 hours, the retreat would include lunch and could be schedule in a way to include an optional Mass **at the beginning of end of the retreat.**

Please select a theme for the retreat, which will be the anchor point for the day. Themes may include journey, companionship, community or hope. Once this theme is chosen, try to select music, prayers, scriptures and reflection questions that echo this theme.

Retreat Flow

- **Gather for social time**

- **Opening song**

Possible songs:

- We Have Been Told
- Gather Us In
- Lord of All Hopefulness
- Instrumental music

- **Opening prayer**

Possible prayers:

- We Dare to Ask (See below)
- Partners in the Gospel

- **Extended check-in**

How are you as you come to the retreat today?

Take time with this session as it lets people get to know one another. Encourage the use of story or images. Could potentially provide a series of images for people to choose from and or have them share a photo from their phones. Or have people bring a photo or object with

them. Creativity keeps it engaging.

- **Scripture**

Possible scriptures:

- Come and See (John 1:35-39)
- Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)
- Come Away to a Quiet Place (Mark 6:30-32)

- **Points for prayer**

This could be a Lectio Divina or a short reflection by the facilitator.

- **Reflection**

Possible reflection questions:

- What struck my heart in listening to this scripture?
- What image or story came to me from my own life as I heard these words of Jesus?

- **Quiet time to reflect**

This is an extended time for people to focus on themselves. Offer opportunity to walk outside (if the weather cooperates), pray in the church, or just sit in silence.

- **Faith sharing**

Gather back to share experience with the larger group. This could be simply sharing a word or image or provide brief highlights of thoughts that came to mind.

- **Closing prayer / Grace**

Share a meal prayer.

- **Lunch**

Order in box lunches to make it special or enjoy a potluck!

- **Song**

Welcome people back from lunch with a song to help refocus the retreat.

Possible Songs:

- We Have Been Told
- Gather Us In
- Lord of All Hopefulness
- Instrumental music

- **Prayer**

"The Romero Prayer": Prophets of a Future Not Our Own

- **Scripture**

Possible scriptures:

- Come and See (John 1:35-39)
- Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)
- Come Away to a Quiet Place (Mark 6:30-32)

- **Points for prayer**

This could be offered using Lectio Divina and/ or a short reflection by the facilitator.

- **Reflection**

Possible reflection questions:

- Where do I see the Spirit at work in my parish/our community at this time?

- **Quiet time to reflect**

This is an extended time for people to focus on the community. This could be done alone or in pairs.

- **Faith sharing**

Gather back to share experience with the larger group. This could be simply sharing a word or image or provide brief highlights of thoughts that came to mind.

- **Closing prayer**

Possible prayers:

- We Dare to Ask
- Partners in the Gospel

Prayers

We Dare to Ask Unknown Author

We ask only a few things more, O God,
a few small, mustard-seed size, faithful, saving things:
to walk with you in each moment
without plotting for tomorrow,
and so to really consider the birds of the air,
and find the treasures hidden
in the round of the daily;
to learn by leaning into your Spirit
to be present to others without preoccupation,
to engage without having to win,
to disagree without being judgmental,
to accept outcomes without despair
to succeed or fail without misplacing hope,
to tune to the bracing hum of the stars,
to fathom enough
without dismissing fathomless mystery
of your creation, our brothers and sisters,
and the grace and mercy and power
of your embrace that holds close,
each small one of us,
And everything all together.
In Jesus name,
Amen.

From the USCCB: Prophets of a Future Not Our Own

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.
We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent
enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of
saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.
No statement says all that could be said.
No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection.

No pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No program accomplishes the Church's mission.

No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.

This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.

It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own.

This prayer was first presented by Cardinal Dearden in 1979 and quoted by Pope Francis in 2015. This reflection is an excerpt from a homily written for Cardinal Dearden by then-Fr. Ken Untener on the occasion of the Mass for Deceased Priests, October 25, 1979. Pope Francis quoted Cardinal Dearden in his remarks to the Roman Curia on December 21, 2015. Fr. Untener was named bishop of Saginaw, Michigan, in 1980.



Parish Retreat Option 2

Journeying Together: *A Reflection Process for the Leadership of our new Parish Family*

This sample retreat envisions four in-person sessions for leadership. It could be led by the new pastor or by anyone the pastor designates.

The four sessions could be conducted over a single day, as an overnight retreat (dinner together, an evening session, and continuing over the following day), or as a four-week process.

The retreat uses the synodal model of deep listening, starting with prayer, Scripture, and reflections from Pope Francis. Then the groups move into the synodal listening process.

Synodal Listening Process

In the first round, each participant takes an equal turn to share the fruit of his or her prayer, in relation to the reflection questions on the first page. *There is no response or discussion in this round;* participants simply listen to each person and attend to how the Holy Spirit is moving within oneself, within the person speaking, and in the group as a whole.

This is followed by a time of silence.

In the second round, participants share what struck them most in the first round and what moved them during the time of silence. Some dialogue can also occur, and the same spiritual attentiveness is maintained.

Once again this is followed by a time of silence.

Finally, in the third round, participants reflect on what seems to be resonating in the conversation. We reflect together on where the Holy Spirit is leading us, our parish, and our Church.

Session One: Opening Retreat

Sign of the Cross, Opening Prayer (or Mass)

Welcome - introduction along these lines:

- We are gathering at a pivotal time in history – both world history and parish history. As Pope Francis writes in *Let Us Dream*: “The change of era, accelerated by the coronavirus, is a propitious moment for reading the signs of the times. A gap has opened up between the realities and challenges we face and the recipes and solutions available to us. That gap becomes a space in which to reflect, question, and dialogue.”
- Through this four-session retreat process, we will reflect on what it means to be a parish, and where God is calling us as a new parish family.

Introductions

Ideally, if the group is not too large, this is done in the large group.

- Tell us your name and something about your name – how you got it, what it means, or what it means to you.

Within small groups

The groups should be designed to bring people together from across the parish family. The same groups can be maintained throughout, or a new small group can be formed for each session to give people more opportunities to connect.

Sign of the Cross

Scripture - Acts 2:42-47 (The early Church)

Reflection from Pope Francis:

The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. While certainly not the only institution which evangelizes, if the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be “the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters”. This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people, and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few. The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities the parish

encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach. We must admit, though, that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented. (Pope Francis, Joy of the Gospel 28)

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Synodal sharing:

- **Round 1:** Share a story or memory of how your parish has been instrumental in your life. How have you encountered Christ in parish life?
- **Round 2:** What common themes emerged in Round 1?
- **Round 3:** Where might the Holy Spirit be calling us as a new parish family?

Concluding Prayer (a prayer for the new parish family)

Session Two: Accompanying Each Other

Sign of the Cross

Scripture - Luke 1:39-56 (Mary visits Elizabeth)

Reflection

The word "congregation" does not mean "a gathering of many people" - not even of many pious and reverent people. Even in such a group that unifying, simultaneously fortifying and fervent quality which is the essence of the true congregation might be lacking. Christ defines it: "For where two or three are gathered together for my sake, there am I in the midst of them." The Acts of the Apostles gives more details in its report on the days following Pentecost: "And continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread in their houses, they took their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and being in favor with all the people."

A congregation, then, exists when a number of people disciplined by faith and conscious of their membership in Christ gather to celebrate the sacred mysteries. Even then it does not flow effortlessly...

If there is to be a congregation, the believers must know what a congregation is; they must desire it and actively strive to attain it... (Rev. Romano Guardini, 1885-1968)

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Synodal sharing:

- **Round 1:** Share a story of a time when your parish accompanied you—or failed to accompany you in the life of faith.
- **Round 2:** What common themes emerged in Round 1?
- **Round 3:** Where might the Holy Spirit be calling us as the new parish family? How can we become a community of accompaniment?

Concluding Prayer (a prayer for the new parish family)

Session Three – Living the Gospel

Sign of the Cross

Scripture - Luke 9:11b-17 (Give them some food yourselves)

Reflection

Let us go forth, then, let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ. Here I repeat for the entire Church what I have often said to the priests and laity of Buenos Aires: I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the center and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: "Give them something to eat" (Mk 6:37). Pope Francis (Joy of the Gospel 49)

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Synodal sharing:

- **Round 1:** Share a story or memory of when you experienced Christ outside of Mass, in serving or being served in Christ's name.
- **Round 2:** What common themes emerged in Round 1?
- **Round 3:** Where might the Holy Spirit be calling us as the new parish family to go forth in service?

Concluding Prayer

Session Four – Conclusion

Sign of the Cross

Scripture - Matthew 5:1-12a (Beatitudes)

Reflection from Pope Francis

The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. While certainly not the only institution which evangelizes, if the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be “the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters”. This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few. The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach. We must admit, though, that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented. (Pope Francis, Joy of the Gospel 28)

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Presentation of what we heard: Leaders share a carefully crafted synthesis of the synodal conversations in Sessions 2-4, through words and images: what we shared about Encounter, Accompaniment, and Living the Gospel, and what we have learned about our new parish: our challenges, our opportunities, our mandates for the future.

Response: small group sharing (groups are mixed, not the same groups that met earlier)

- **Round 1:** Name one fear and one hope you have in this time of transition.
- **Round 2:** What leapt out at you in Round 1?
- **Round 3:** Where do we go from here as a new parish family?

Large group: Invite people to share the fruits of the discussion around Round 3.

Conclude with a sign of peace, then concluding prayer or Mass.

Commitments for Prayerful Listening/Faith-Sharing

“Prayerful listening” is the generous practice of being deeply attuned to ourselves and to each other, seeking the wisdom of the Holy Spirit within us and within others.

- **We will listen generously** without needing to respond, fix, save or give advice. We will listen while putting the best interpretation possible on the words of the other.
- **We will refrain from judgment** while seeking understanding. Please refrain from cross talk until everyone has had a chance to speak.
- **We share from our own experience**, trusting that our story and insights are welcomed by the group.
- **We share where our heart is drawing us** in this moment and in this day, trusting the spirit to guide our words even though we can't share the whole context or story.
- **We agree to care for one another** by being mindful of the amount of time we each speak to make time and space for every voice at the table. (Try to limit your sharing to no more than 3 minutes. The timekeeper will be assigned to keep track of your sharing and will let you know when you exceed the limit.)
- **The diversity of the perspectives** and backgrounds of this group are a gift. Although we hold much in common, let us be honest about the differences in our experiences and see our distinctiveness as an opportunity to learn and grow from one another
- **We will honor confidentiality:** “What’s said stays,” and “What’s learned goes.”