Communications Guidelines

Overview

We have entered a new reality with the formation of parish families. The status quo is no more!

Because the approach to becoming one parish family will be slow and gradual, it is important to continually communicate this new reality. Parishioners will need consistent reminders about creating a culture of welcome and openness, with positive messaging about the new relationship with other parishes, the hope and opportunity that this relationship brings, and about the missionary work across the local Church.

This will mean thinking beyond the local campus communication to the larger family communication – while making it easy for both parishioners and staff to understand everything that is going on.

Take the long view
Long term, the parishes within the family will eventually become one canonical parish with a new name. At that time, the new parish will need to develop a comprehensive branding and communications strategy. Until then, **do not spend time working on professional branding efforts**, which will be moot once a new name is selected. This will not take place until the name of the parish family has been settled when the family becomes one canonical parish. There are legal, canonical, and financial issues around changing names; guidance will be provided at that time.

Positive messaging

All parishioners should be reminded of their responsibility to create a culture of welcome and openness. Positive messaging about the new relationship is vital to creating an environment of openness and welcome. It is no longer "they" but more about "us" and how "we" can work together. Here are a few simple ways to help bolster your communications during the first few months:

Exterior signage
No permanent changes should be made until after the parish family becomes one canonical parish and the official new name of the parish is settled. In the meantime, a banner (or banners) should be displayed at each parish in the family with text:

<div align="center">

WELCOME TO OUR PARISH FAMILY!
St. Wenceslaus | St. Chrysogonus | St. Fabiola

WELCOME TO OUR PARISH FAMILY!

</div>

If the parish has a letterboard or digital signage, similar language could be used. These banners should be kept up for the entire initial three-year period. Click here to download editable welcome banners for the parish to use.

Website/e-newsletter
A similar digital banner should be featured in every bulletin and e-newsletter. This would then provide a regular spot for updates about the parish family.

For parish websites, it should be clear that the parish is part of a parish family and provide links to the other parishes. Over time, it will be important to audit each of the websites and determine which information can be streamlined and what should be called out on each website. For example, over time the website may evolve to list all Mass times in the parish family regardless of the location. (See more about websites in the technology section.)

Bulletin/e-bulletin considerations
- A combined bulletin for all parishes in the family can be implemented as soon as it makes sense. This will not only cut down staff workload but will make it easier for parishioners to find all the information they need in one place while getting more comfortable operating as one family.
- One pastor letter for all bulletins in the parish will help create a cohesive messaging for the whole community. This is an especially good way for pastors to extend their presence to each parish community, even if they can't be present with each community every weekend.
- Each bulletin should include Mass times/confession times at all parishes within the family as well as a master event calendar.
- Even if the bulletins remain separate, there should be a box/page set aside in each bulletin for events at the other parishes in the family.
- Consider having something other than the image of the church building(s) on the cover. Instead feature art from one of the church buildings or photos of parishioners from each parish.

Social media
- Resources for keeping Partners in the Gospel top of mind on social media are available in the FOR PARISH Partners in the Gospel webpage.
- Be sure to take photos during parish events to post regularly on social media and celebrate coming together.
- Ensure the social media access section of the Transition Workbook is filled out so you know who has access to all social media accounts. This will be important as they will eventually redirect to one new account.
- We recommend building a list of all the digital channels, the administrators, and logins. (Keep passwords separate.) Use this time to remove staff who may have left the parish and ensure each channel has a staff member assigned as the administrator. (Volunteers should not be the main administrator but may have access and editing rights.)
- Review social media policies on the Archdiocesan policy page.

Dos and don'ts for temporary family names

Once parish families become one canonical parish, a new official name will be given to the parish. The process for naming a new canonical parish will be a major undertaking in Phase 3 of Partners in the Gospel.

This process includes selecting several names from an approved list and then submitting them to the archbishop for approval.

Some parish families have expressed a desire to establish a temporary "parish family name." This may be problematic for a variety of reasons, which is why using the family number is the recommended temporary approach.

However, for those who plan to create a temporary "parish family name" (or have already done so), please review the following dos-and-don'ts to make sure that any temporary name does not lead to difficulties with canonical naming in the future.

Do	Don't
Choose a name that is easy to remember and logical based on your family (e.g. Ballard Catholic, Cowlitz County Parishes).	Name your family after a name of Jesus, Mary, the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit, an angel, a saint, or a blessed – these types of names are reserved for parishes.
Involve your family's pastoral leaders and consultative leadership in any decisions around family names.	Hold parish-wide discussions to choose a temporary name. Community naming efforts should be reserved for choosing a **parish** name during the One Parish Plan process in Phase 3.
Let the Chancery know as soon as this temporary name is used in any official capacity by the family.	Update websites, addresses, social media accounts, etc. with a new name until new parishes are formed.
Make sure all parishes within the family refer to the parish in the same way (e.g. in bulletins, on social media, etc.). A common bulletin header could be considered alongside adding links to the other parishes on each parish's website. (See the Communications Guidelines section of the Handbook.)	Spend money on branding, design, etc. for the parish family. These types of new branding efforts should not start until after the One Parish Plan has been approved.
Clarify donation requirements for parishioners (i.e. donations to the parish/ACA/etc. need to be made in the name of an individual **parish,** not the parish family).	Fundraise or take up collections under the temporary name of the family. Until becoming one canonical parish, finances within a family must remain separate. Information on sharing money within a family can be found in the Administrative Milestones/Shared expenses section of the Handbook.