



**PARTNERS
IN THE GOSPEL**

Phase One

**HANDBOOK
FOR PARISHES**



**PARTNERS
IN THE GOSPEL**

Phase 1: Welcoming

The water is ankle-deep

Phase 1 (July 2024 through 2025) focuses on encountering one another in Christ, and getting to know one another, with open minds and hearts.

Overview

Phase 1 is focused on getting to know each other; welcoming each other and starting to develop an understanding of each parish's gifts, needs and hopes for the future. This Phase 1 Handbook outlines a series of administrative guidelines and recommendations, as well as ways to plant the seed for how to start to work together more collaboratively.

This is a time to go slow. Each of the communities in a parish family has gone through a great deal of change, and time is needed to allow for appropriate endings and positive beginnings. Discernment around restructuring and re-envisioning will come in phases 2 and 3. Right now, phase 1 is a time to maintain stability and build community.

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Synodality and Partners in the Gospel

Overview

Since the end of 2021, the Church has been on a journey to rediscover and embrace the tradition of synodality. The Greek word “synod” literally means “together on the way.” Traditionally, a synod is a gathering of bishops, called together to dialogue and discern questions of importance in the life of the Church.

The Synod of 2021-24 is uniquely engaging the people of God in the broadest consultation ever undertaken. Pope Francis’ dream is that synodality will be integrated into the way the Church functions at every level: in other words, that we listen deeply to one another and, above all, to the Holy Spirit in everything we do.

As Pope Francis emphasized, a synod is first and foremost a spiritual event, centered on the Holy Spirit. In his homily for the opening of the Synod Assembly of October 2023, Pope Francis reminded the delegates, “We are not here to carry out a parliamentary meeting or a plan of reformation. The Synod, dear brothers and sisters, is not a parliament. The Holy Spirit is the protagonist. We are not here to form a parliament but to walk together with the gaze of Jesus, who blesses the Father and welcomes those who are weary and oppressed.”

While the Synod of 2021-24 continues to unfold, we can begin to experience the fruits by incorporating synodal models of listening and discernment in our parish communities as we implement Partners in the Gospel. In particular, a synodal listening process will be an invaluable tool in approaching important decisions and challenging issues. Hosting a synodal session on transition and healing would not only foster this new way of listening to each other - it would also help parishioners process their grief and other feelings about this change. See “[Transition and Healing Guide](#)” in the Appendix.

A few reminders about synodality:

- **Synodal sharing draws on our experiences, not just our opinions.**
In developing questions for discernment, it is important to avoid questions that can be responded to with a simple yes/no, disagree/agree.
- **Synodal listening is a prayerful process.**
When it comes to synodal listening and discernment, time spent in prayer and silence is essential. Pope Francis has said that in the liturgy, silence is the essential symbol of the Holy Spirit. In synodal listening, silence helps us make room for the Holy Spirit and reminds participants that the Holy Spirit is the protagonist.

- **Synodality always leads to discernment.**

Synodality is not just breaking into small groups. Rather, in a synodal event, small-group processes are ordered toward discernment on matters of significance to the parish community. Thus, synodality is not envisioned as an everyday occurrence in the parish. It is a spiritual event which we will engage in regularly as we move, step by step, toward becoming a parish family. During the Partners in the Gospel journey, 2024-2027, parish families might consider using this process annually for the entire community and, more frequently, with leadership groups.

- **Synodal listening is a communal event, not a survey or a parliament.**

Synodal listening is not about taking a vote or a survey of the community. It is a process of communal discernment. Listening to one another and sharing with one another, the community begins to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit in the various challenges they are facing. This process is meant to shape and inform, not to hamper – much less replace – the decision-making authority of the pastor and other leadership bodies within the parish family, like pastoral councils, finance councils, and the Partners in the Gospel team.



Discernment and Decision Making

Discernment is a gift

The journey of life is filled with many choices, the consequences of which can be far reaching.

A basic assumption underlies the process of discernment; growth is more likely to happen when we reflect critically upon our experience and note reoccurring patterns than if we move from one spontaneous experience to another without explicitly dealing with any of them.

Discernment is a gift to be exercised and may be defined as the meeting point of prayer and action. Discernment is the art of recognizing what God is asking of us - what God would like us to do, and how God wishes us to respond to the concrete situations we encounter.

In other words, how are we called to respond to God's call with courage and generosity? The following are some helpful considerations that can be used when entering into prayerful discernment.

Prayerful discernment

In order to practice discernment, it's important to understand exactly what it means, what it does not mean, and how it is best practiced. To understand, like any good thing we care about, that it takes time to become well versed.

Not all things in life require discernment but it proves especially helpful when facing significant decisions, major transitions, liturgical changes, capital campaigns and more.

- Discernment works best when it becomes a habitual practice of the heart and is part of a regular prayer practice, encompassing reflection.
 - How do I/we make this a habit in my/our lives?
- Discernment always involves a choice between various goods.
 - What is the better good to pursue based on the present circumstances?
- Discernment is a prayerful process through which experiences are interpreted in faith.
 - Where and/or how does faith fit into this prayerful process?
- Discernment must deal with many voices seeking to capture our minds, hearts, and energies.
 - What are the voices I am invited to listen to currently? It may not be the loudest or most apparent one, but when it is heard we know it's what we are being invited to hear.

- Discernment relies on deep listening and openness to the Holy Spirit.
 - Can I cultivate stillness and quietness, while trusting the Holy Spirit is with me/us throughout this process?
- Discernment assumes that God is continually working in the depth of every individual and community.
 - Do I trust that God is active and alive in our midst right now?
- Discernment respects the nature of time and is willing to wait freely for a decision, allowing for clarification, detachment, and magnanimity.
 - Am I able to find ways to be patient and trust? Am I able to give the process time needed to truly listen to God's call and the movement of the Holy Spirit?
- Discernment blends faith and pragmatism, seeking to discern God's will through radical trust and implementing it in action.
 - It is not soft, but rather leads us prayerfully towards the best decision for this present moment.
- Discernment's authenticity is reflected in its consequences: decisions that are of God if they ultimately lead to life and love.
 - This is known as the confirmation of discernment - life and love!

Adapted from Spiritual Direction by Robert Morneau



Administrative Milestones

Banking and payment processing considerations

Every parish will need to add the pastor as a signing authority on their bank account, removing the prior pastor. In addition, each online payment processing company in use within the family will need to have the pastor added to the underwriting. Parishes will likely receive communications directly from the vendors related to the underwriting change.

Calendar considerations

Every parish has a calendar filled with daily, weekly, monthly, and annually recurring events. Many of these events are booked months in advance, and many of them demand the pastor's participation. Plan on scheduling a gathering to go over the calendar for 2024-2025 no later than September 1, 2024, to avoid conflicts and make sure the pastor reserves time for the major events at each parish community.

As parish families come together, it is inevitable that there will be calendar conflicts. Each parish in the family will need to be flexible and make adjustments as necessary. Please keep in mind that a pastor's presence in the smaller communities can have a significant impact in helping them feel recognized.

- **Hold a "calendar summit."** Early in Phase 1, look both for conflicts and for areas of collaboration.
- **Plan for 2024-2025.** Each parish in the family should prepare a calendar of all events in each parish community.
- **Compare schedules and eliminate conflicts.** During this gathering, representatives from each parish should review calendars for August 2024-June 2025 and sort out dates, times, and spaces.
- **Look for opportunities for one-off events.** Use special events or parish feast days where each community invites the others in. Make sure to add these events to the calendar for each parish in the family.
- **Don't double-book.** If a parish has a major event to which parishioners at other parishes within the family will be invited (school fundraiser, fish fry, etc.), try not to schedule competing events at the other parishes.
- **Communicate clearly.** Be sure to tell the parish community about changes and events across the parish family. Promote important events in all bulletins across the parish family.

- **Be aware of parish staff holidays.** The new pastor needs to be aware of the holiday schedule for each parish for the second half of 2024. A uniform holiday schedule for 2025 should be put in place for all parishes in the family.
- **What about the Triduum? Christmas?** The Worship and Liturgy team will provide guidance and recommendations around the celebration of the Triduum and Christmas.

Base(s) of operations

An important early consideration for the pastor and parochial vicar is where they will keep primary office(s) to take appointments. If the family has three or more parishes, it may not be practical to maintain an office at each parish. When considering where to have a primary office, a pastor will want to take into account the full structure of the team. For example, if a parochial vicar is going to be assigned spiritual care over particular communities within the family, then select a model that would allow him to be close to these communities.

Some models to consider:

Model one:

- Pastor has a primary office and office hours only there.
- Vicar(s) have offices at the other parishes.

Model two:

- Pastor has a primary office, but office hours at multiple locations.
- Vicar(s) have offices at the other parishes.

Model three:

- Pastor and vicar(s) all have primary offices at one location, with office hours at other locations as well.

Model four:

- Pastor and vicar(s) only have offices and office hours at one location.

Take these factors into account when setting up a base of operations

- Availability of parking for priests and visitors
- Accessibility of offices
- Collaboration with other staff/offices
- Distance of travel for parishioners
- Greatest need/demand (school, size of community, etc.)
- How will the community respond to the model?

Shared expenses

Many parish families are made up of large, financially strong parishes and smaller and/or poorer parishes. The families have been designed to strengthen and support one another. This is an opportunity to educate all parishioners in the family about the unique needs of each parish. How are we called to work together to share our resources? What do we have to offer to our parish family? Are we ready to open our hands to new communities, or are we shut off, a "closed and elite group" as Pope Francis describes?

This insidious worldliness ... can also lead to a business mentality, caught up with management, statistics, plans and evaluations whose principal beneficiary is not God's people but the Church as an institution. The mark of Christ, incarnate, crucified and risen, is not present; closed and elite groups are formed, and no effort is made to go forth and seek out those who are distant or the immense multitudes who thirst for Christ. ("Joy of the Gospel" 95).

How we share our financial resources is a good indication of how open we are to the broader community. What did Pope Francis mean when he said, "How I would like a church that is poor and for the poor"?

Finance point person

Early in Phase 1, a pastor will want to consider a point person to review the overall financial performance of the parish family. This point person is not the person who is running the day-to-day finances but instead has visibility across the parish families. This will create a single point of contact for finances in support of the pastor. In addition, pastors with schools will want to evaluate the staff's skill and ability to manage the complex finances of schools. Filling gaps in the financial skills needed for schools will be critical.

Expense sharing

Until parish families become one canonical parish, finances need to be kept separately at each parish, which presents some complexity related to expense sharing. As parish families begin daily operations, they will need to identify opportunities to share expenses across all parishes. Sharing expenses may result in overall savings for the parish family as well as potential added or improved services.

Early Phase 1 shared expenses

Some shared expenses should be identified early in Phase 1. These would include:

- Priest moving expenses
- Priest salaries and benefits
- Living expenses, including rectory expenses and utilities
- Pastor and parochial vicar administrative support

Shared-expense opportunities

Shared expenses can be an opportunity to provide more and improved services to each member parish while saving money overall. Pastors and administrative leaders should exercise judgment in balancing the opportunities for savings and service improvements with the need to not change too many things at once.

Potential shared expenses could include:

- Services like janitorial, landscaping, and facility maintenance
- Technology contracts like IT support, printers/copiers, and internet service providers
- Office supplies and postage
- Any expense for shared staff
- Shared staff salary and benefits such as music, youth, or outreach ministers
- Administrative staff such as bookkeepers and facilities maintenance

Shared-expense accounting

Parishes will each keep their bank accounts and books separate as required by canon law until they officially become one canonical parish. As shared expenses are identified, there are two primary ways to process the flow of funds:

1. **Direct invoicing** of each parish sharing in the expense, using one of the suggested expense-sharing methodologies below. While easy to implement, it becomes more burdensome as the number of

shared expenses increases.

2. **Agreement ahead of time** on what expenses will be shared is the preferred approach. A separate bank account and set of books can be set up for the shared expenses. Individual parishes would keep their own accounts and books for their own parish-specific expenses and revenue. Using one or more of the methodologies identified below, each member parish moves the agreed upon amount into the shared account at the beginning of the fiscal year. This will simplify the bookkeeping process and reduce the associated labor. If necessary, a true-up can happen at the end of the fiscal year either dispersing excess funds or having each member parish cover a shortfall.

Shared-expense methodologies

Expense sharing should reflect the relative value received by each parish for a shared resource and accommodate the reality of differences in the ability to pay. Use historical data and metrics to determine the best approach for the parish family – and keep it simple so it's easily explained to parishioners and new staff. Methodologies could include:

- **Number of Masses:** For example, assume a parish family has three parishes. Each has two Masses on a weekend. Using this methodology, each parish would pay 1/3 of shared expenses. This is a convenient, easily explained metric that can be used for many different shared expenses. The downside is that it may not align with the value derived by each parish or align with their ability to pay.
- **Square footage:** This approach works for janitorial services or plant maintenance.
- **Number of registered parishioners:** This approach could be used for any shared expense, including shared staff. It is easily explained and maintained. The downside is that it may not reflect the parish's ability to pay and could vary year to year. It also may not be appropriate if one of the parishes is growing or shrinking at a rate faster than the other parishes in the family.
- **Number of givers:** Registered parishioners can sometimes have a significant number of inactive members. A more valid indicator of participation may be the number of givers depending upon the parish.
- **Ordinary income:** Ordinary income could be used to allocate shared expenses. For example, a parish family with two parishes – one with an ordinary income of \$500,000 and another parish with \$1,000,000 – could share expenses 1/3 - 2/3. This approach reflects ability to pay and would vary year to year.
- **Mutual agreement:** The finance councils of member parishes could negotiate a sharing percentage in absence of clear metrics or due to special circumstances. It will be important to document what was mutually agreed upon, to be transparent and to ensure future members understand the decision-making process as council members rotate.

Shared Extraordinary Expenses

There will be situations when unplanned, extraordinary expenses occur at each parish (e.g., leaky roofs or boiler malfunctions). Under normal circumstances, each parish would be financially responsible for the unplanned expense, using either reserves or securing a loan from the Parish Revolving Fund (PRF). If a parish is incurring expenses and does not have the resources to cover the cost, then one or more of the other parishes in the family may help out. In many cases, this would be preferable to a PRF loan. Such

assistance could be in the form of a loan or a gift. The parishes providing the support would need to get approvals from their respective finance councils before providing any support.

Shared Rectory Expenses

Sharing of rectory expenses will present a unique set of considerations. Expenses associated with a rectory could include mortgage, rent, utilities, and repairs. A priest who lives in a rectory may be responsible for saying Mass at multiple locations. Each location where the priest celebrates Mass should pay a share of the rectory expenses.

Shared School Support

Since schools are a ministry of the parish, they often receive financial support. While the financial support for the current year is already set, conversations about the financial support for the future can begin in Phase 1. The financial support is usually based on what the parish is willing to provide and can afford, and multiple parishes can provide different financial supports to the same school. In this case, parishes that do not have a school can choose to financially support the schools that exist within their family. School financial support is agreed upon through the budgeting process.



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:

WELCOME TO OUR PARISH FAMILY!

St. Wenceslaus | St. Chrysogonus | St. Fabiola

WELCOME TO OUR PARISH FAMILY!

SS. Cyril and Methodius | St. John Henry Newman
Mission Church of St. Fabiola

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.



**PARTNERS
IN THE GOSPEL**

Creating a Culture of Hospitality

“Working together to practice hospitality, especially towards those whose lives are most vulnerable, will make us better human beings, better disciples, and a more united Christian people.”

- Pope Francis

Overview

Hospitality, the openness to friends and strangers alike, is at the core of Partners in the Gospel. As parishes come together into parish families, how do we structure ourselves and our offerings in a way that ensures that our *culture* is welcoming and accessible to all? How do we avoid the trap of parishes within a family having approaches to hospitality that are misaligned? This guide provides parish family leaders with steps to take when considering what hospitality will look like in their new community.

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First impressions count

Before people enter a parish, they may call or visit the various parish offices. This is often their first impression of a parish family, and their experience will be greatly impacted by the way parishes align their offerings.

As a parish family, it is important to make sure parishioners receive equal levels of service no matter which parish they approach, whether by phone, online or a visit to the parish office:

1. Is someone there to respond? What about after office hours when some people are more likely to have time to contact the parish?
2. How will they be greeted? Is the person who answers welcoming and helpful? Can the person answering calls speak the main languages used across the parishes? Is someone available to welcome and guide those with different language needs?
3. Did they receive the information they were seeking, regardless of which parish they called? If not, is there a way for them to receive timely, helpful follow-up?

Digital hospitality

An often ignored (but increasingly important) facet of hospitality is *digital* hospitality. Do the digital platforms (e.g., website, email newsletter, social media, etc.) enhance the parish family's welcoming efforts? When someone lands on a website, can they find what they need? If not, is there a way to contact someone?

Here are a few questions to consider:

1. When someone visits the parish/parish family website or social media pages, how quickly can they find key information (Mass times, address, office phone number, registration instructions, event calendar, etc.)?
2. Is the information on the digital channels correct, up-to-date, and easy to read? Does information match across all communication channels in the parish family?
3. Do the digital offerings match the language and accessibility needs of the community? What are the community's unique communication and social media preferences?
4. If someone visits a digital platform for the parish, is there a way for them to quickly connect with an in-person offering or event?

By taking an intentional approach to digital hospitality, parish families meet people where they spend much of their time - online. This approach helps people transition from digital to physical engagement with the parish family. For more information and ideas, see the [Catholic Apostolate Center's Resources for Parishes on Social Media](#).

Welcoming spaces

As newcomers first enter a church, they form an impression that can deeply impact their future life at the parish. This can occur before they encounter any parishioners or staff members. The displays, take-home materials, and ease of access directly shape the way visitors experience parish life, and attention must be paid to making the parish a welcoming *space* in addition to a community of welcoming *people*.

Some helpful questions to determine whether parish spaces are welcoming include:

1. Is the parish accessible to everyone, especially those with mobility challenges?
2. Do the materials in the parishes meet the needs of all parishioners, including language and accessibility needs?
3. Is the space welcoming and inviting to people of all ages, including children, teens, and young adults?
4. When someone arrives for Mass, is it clear where they should go?
5. Are liturgy times and parish office hours clearly marked? Is the signage clear throughout the campus for first-time visitors?
6. If someone arrives with a need and finds the parish office empty, is it clear how to contact the correct person?

The goal is to provide a welcoming, engaging experience for everyone who enters the parish, which means authentically greeting those who arrive for Mass and other events. Establishing greeting points and making sure they are filled, typically by hospitality ministers, is an effective way to welcome everyone and ensure they feel like they belong.

Welcome expresses genuine interest, with an openness and a generosity of heart and spirit. It avoids any indication of ownership, control, or territory. Within a family of parishes, one parish may be larger or more

affluent. There are likely to be different cultural groups and language needs among the parishes in a family. An authentic sense of welcome and hospitality will avoid any condescension or sense that one group is the host and others are the guests.

Direct, one-to-one welcoming by a team of hospitality ministers is a very low-cost but high-impact way to make parishioners feel welcome. Consider creating a Family-wide Hospitality Ministry with current ministers who best understand the needs and abilities of the new community. For further guidance on establishing this ministry, see "[Establishing Family-Wide Hospitality Ministry](#)."

Deacons as servants of community

Deacons serve a unique role in parish communities, especially during transitions. As ordained ministers, deacons have a three-fold ministerial responsibility of service to the Word, the Sacraments and Charity. This responsibility is lived out daily by deacons and will continue once parish families form. Deacons provide a stable, community-level clergy presence in a parish family, which makes their role particularly important during the first year of parish family life.

Unlike priests, deacons were not asked to move as part of parish family formation, so they present a particular source of ordained stability for many communities across the archdiocese. Many parishioners will look to deacons during this transition. At the same time, pastors can lean on the deacons who are a stable presence and will support the process of moving towards one parish community. Their continued ministry will be important to remind parishioners that while things have changed and grief is normal, parish life will go on. Deacons can remind parishioners that the community they know and love has not gone away just because a parish family has formed.

Additionally, deacons will serve a key role in building community within parish families. Since deacons have lived in these communities before the formation of families, they have intimate knowledge of the people and cultures present. When pastors (especially those who are new to the community) and parish staff begin working to bridge gaps between communities, deacons can be a natural source of support for this bridge building and will have important insights to share about potential opportunities or pitfalls during the community building process. Lastly, deacons should play a key role on consultative structures, while also utilizing their skills to effectively live out all three areas of their ministry.

Welcoming current ministers

For ministers already serving at our parishes, the thought of not being able to continue ministry in the same way may be disconcerting. To minimize this, be sure the creation of a shared ministry is not positioned as a win/lose situation and take proactive steps to actively welcome, engage, and thank existing ministers as part of this new way of being community.

As ministers engage with the parish family in this new way, be cognizant of those groups who are currently *not* involved or engaged and consider how this new shared ministry structure can better bring all voices to the table.

Identify, welcome, and thank volunteers

The first step is to identify existing volunteer ministers and determine opportunities for family-level involvement. By identifying the current volunteers in the parishes alongside the offerings that need support

from existing ministers, the pastoral leadership gain the ability to build natural cross-parish collaboration.

Schedule meetings with priests, ministry leaders and staff *at the family level* to gather in prayer, get to know each other, discuss shared vision for ministry, and celebrate what is going well. This will be especially important to reiterate to the multicultural communities in the family. Make sure that when planning these events, that they are accessible to everyone – including those who speak a language other than English. It will be important to express gratitude and thank people specifically for their time and talents.

Create processes for existing ministers

To support parish family volunteer ministers, consider processes that will inspire them to minister most effectively. Consider things like:

- The use of spaces: Can volunteers at one parish request to use the space at another for a welcoming event?
- Communication strategies: Who will keep volunteer ministers at one parish aware of events at the other parishes?
- Existing trainings/retreats: Can ministers from all parishes in a parish family join in a volunteer retreat rather than just at the parish level?

Beyond ensuring that ministers are well engaged, encourage the parish family to give all parishioners a similar level of care no matter which family parish they attend, reinforcing the culture of hospitality desired at parish families.

Parish family welcoming events

Social events and celebrations are important opportunities for parishioners and leaders to share what they love about their own parish, get to know one another, and begin thinking of themselves as one community. These events provide a unique opportunity for pastoral leadership to meet with their parishioners in a different setting. These events, tailored to the interests and needs (including language needs) of the community, will look different in each parish family. It is crucial that the pastor and parish leadership participate *across the parishes* as a visual representation of the relationship parish families have.

It is important that events are held regularly throughout the first year of the parish family's existence to continue to build community connections. Additionally, by hosting events over time, you have the opportunity for events to build upon one another to allow deepening trust across the parish family. A possible timeline for these types of events is:

- **By Month 3:** Host cross-family welcoming events at as many parish locations as possible *aimed at parishioners*. An extended list of potential options for family events is below, but consider things like a family ministry fair, a "tour" of all the sites over a weekend, or shared cultural celebrations. The important thing is that the entire family is welcome and encouraged to attend *as a parish family*.
- **By Month 6:** Host events specifically aimed at parish (and school) staff and leadership to get together. The important thing is to strengthen the relationships developing between parish and school staffs within the parish family. Consider things like a formal staff retreat or a "back-to-school blessing" for school leaders and parents.
- **By Month 9:** Engage in shared liturgical events across the parish family where possible. This can be as simple as encouraging parishioners to attend Holy Week services at a different location than they normally would, or as involved as hosting combined services for multiple parishes at central sites.

- **By Month 12:** Create a plan for family-wide hospitality ministry as described in the Establishing Family-Wide Hospitality Ministry section below.

Potential social events for a parish family:

- **Cultural celebrations**
If parishes within the parish family have unique cultural celebrations (e.g., Our Lady of Guadalupe, Simbang Gabi, Lunar New Year), consider inviting the other parishes in the parish family to these celebrations. This is a great chance to collectively celebrate the unique cultures and histories present in the family.
- **Ministry fair**
Use this as an opportunity to educate people about the ministries across the parish family. For each weekend of a month, ask one parish to host a “ministry fair” to provide information about active ministry opportunities across the family - including both shared ministries and parish-specific ministries - and how to participate.
- **Parish volunteer gatherings**
Invite the volunteers from each of the parish ministries to come together for faith sharing and a meal. This gives parish leadership the chance to recognize the hard work of volunteers in their unique ministries, while also making it clear that volunteers are now part of a larger team.
- **Parish family tour**
Set one month as the “family tour” month. Ask people to attend Mass at a parish they don’t usually attend and invite the hosting parish to share their history and what they love about their parish. After Mass, invite all visitors to an actual tour of the parish campus, giving them the opportunity to learn about the ins-and-outs of parish life.
- **Parish Picnic/Barbecue**
Host parish family picnics or barbecues at each of the sites and invite all parishioners to attend. Have representatives from each parish serve in some role at each event. Alternatively, one event could be offered at a neutral public place or even off campus.
- **Back-to-school blessing**
Invite all the children from a parish family to come to a special event for a blessing before the start of the new school year. This could also be multiple events across parishes. Some parishes may wish to ask kids to fill their backpack with donations for the food bank as part of a blessing of the backpack.

Establishing Family-Wide Hospitality Ministry

During the first year of implementation, a parish family should create a plan for family-wide hospitality ministry to support hospitality needs across all parishes. The goal is to integrate and align the hospitality ministries that already exist, such as greeters or coffee and donut servers, filling in gaps where needed.

The purpose of this work is to create a *plan* for providing hospitality and welcoming ministry across the family, not necessarily a new *team*. Make use of the existing ministers and teams, but if no group exists to specifically support hospitality ministry, consider creating one. The key is to ensure the parish family is approaching hospitality in a way that makes sense for the unique communities, while clearly articulating who is responsible for supporting these efforts. By looking at hospitality ministry collectively, parish families

can ensure a consistent welcoming culture across the parish family while supporting each parish in their unique efforts.

As a leadership team, be sure to model welcoming behaviors and encourage others to do the same.

For help creating a parish family-level Hospitality Ministry from scratch, please review the following resources about aligning, combining, and/or expanding hospitality ministries across each of the parishes in a family.

See Appendix for additional resources:

- [Guidelines for Ministers of Hospitality](#)
- [Developing a Group Charter](#)
- [Sample Hospitality Ministry Charter](#)
- [Hospitality Ministry Team Recruitment](#)



Liturgical Considerations

Basic principles

Through Partners in the Gospel, we are seeking to become one community. This does not mean we seek uniformity, but that we foster communion with one another. The liturgy is the place where that communion starts and where it leads. Coming together in prayer and worship builds and fosters our communion with God and with one another.

As parishes journey together, there will be many opportunities to share liturgical gifts and practices. At the same time, we know there may be some challenges as we begin implementation of Partners in the Gospel. Since each community has a liturgical character, it is important to build upon this as parishes come together.

Help is near

The Liturgy team is ready to help you navigate the liturgical impact of Partners in the Gospel. The team is significantly increasing formation opportunities for liturgy leaders with regular webinars on the liturgical impact of Partners in the Gospel. This will provide an opportunity for liturgy leaders to get to know one another, ask questions, and share experiences and best practices.

Name the challenges

Liturgical changes, whether large or small, can be disruptive in parish life. Some changes – including changes to Mass times – can be contentious. Transitioning to a new pastor is a hopeful time, and pastoral transitions can bring a change in liturgical “style.” As Partners in the Gospel begins, many parishes will be encountering all these changes at the same time.

Bringing parish communities together in a family means bringing together communities with different parish traditions, different liturgical practices, and different cultural backgrounds. Even when there is a strong commonality (a similar musical repertoire, for example), coming together liturgically may be difficult. And if there are widely divergent styles, it may be hard to find common ground.

Handle with care

The liturgy is where we encounter Christ, and the parish church is the place where that encounter happens. Thus, whenever we make changes that impact how, where, or when we worship, we are treading on holy ground. Any changes to the way the liturgy is celebrated must be rooted in liturgical principals and not in mere aesthetics, style, or convenience.

Name the opportunities

Parish families can share resources in new ways, allowing increased access to Mass, confessions, devotions, and cultural expressions. Parish families may be able to share liturgical leadership and improve the quality of their liturgical life. Parishes within a family can also begin to come together for special celebrations. (See below.)

Think interculturally

No two parishes are alike. Each parish has its own unique history, traditions, musical ensembles, and ways of doing things – its own culture. Over the years, the Church has learned much about intercultural encounter and ministry and about the importance of inclusion. It might be helpful to think of the different parishes in terms of culture. As parish families join for events, plan carefully to honor the presence and gifts of each community, so that they feel not only welcome but also fully included.

As parishes come together as families, it is important to reflect on the ways those with unique language needs are (or are not) able to participate. Consider ways to incorporate the languages spoken in your community into the liturgy on a regular basis. By incorporating the different languages spoken by the community, those who speak the languages will feel welcomed and truly a part of parish life.

Some years ago, the Archdiocese of Seattle published a pastoral plan for Hispanic ministry titled [From Guests to Hosts](#) (2007). Mere welcome is not enough. Every member of the parish family needs to feel at home – not just a guest, but a host.

Pray for each other

Pray regularly for the other communities in the parish family in the Prayers of the Faithful at Mass. For example:

- For the parishes of St. N, St. N, and St N – our family – that we may truly become Partners in the Gospel. We pray to the Lord.
- For our parish family – St. N, St. N, and St. N – that we may grow together as one family of faith and live as faithful disciples of Jesus. We pray to the Lord.

Liturgical consultation

During Phase 1, pastors might consider assembling a joint liturgical commission. This group could conduct a self-review process, allowing each parish to identify their own strengths and weaknesses and an inventory of personnel, whether paid or volunteers, their gifts, and abilities. Such a process could help the pastor identify specific challenges and opportunities in bringing diverse communities together. This group could also collaborate on the first shared liturgies of the parish family.

Music is an integral part of a parish's worship experience. Music directors might come together separately, or with the liturgical group, to have similar conversations about the strengths and assets – and the gaps – in each parish's musical life.

Shared liturgies

During Phase 1, most changes will be administrative as pastors figure out effective ways to work with their team and navigate the family. Shared liturgies will be one of the first ways parishioners from the different parishes encounter one another. These are some of the liturgies that can, and perhaps should, be shared early on.

- **Confirmation**
If the number of confirmations and the size of the church buildings in the family allows, Phase 1 is a good time to offer a joint celebration for the entire parish family. In some parish families, this may

not be possible because of the size of the confirmation groups or the existing schedule for formation programs. In many places, however, this could lead to a richer experience for the confirmandi as they see themselves as part of a broader Church. This will need be discussed early in Phase 1 because the scheduling for confirmations happens toward the end of the summer. Whenever sacramental celebrations are shared, some of the formation and preparation should be shared as well: not just the rehearsal, but perhaps also a retreat or some formation sessions.

- **Penance services**

Communal penance services in Advent 2024 and Lent 2025 could be scheduled as family-wide celebrations in Phase 1. The hosting church building should vary to encourage people to feel welcome to pray and worship in every parish that is part of the family.

- **OCIA rites**

Some of the rites of Christian Initiation of Adults could be celebrated together. For example, it would make sense for all the parishes in the family to attend the same Rite of Election together.

- **Holy Week**

If possible, avoid any changes to the schedule for Holy Week and Easter in Phase 1. (See the [Mass time considerations](#) for Phase 0 starting page 13.) There are many special considerations around Holy Week liturgies. Full guidance will be provided to help parish families navigate those challenges.

Shared liturgies require much intentionality. It is not enough for the hosting parish to welcome people from other parts of the family; they need to “enlarge the space of the tent” (cf. Isaiah 54:2) and make room for them. For parishioners, that means greeting unfamiliar faces and perhaps letting go of favorite places to sit. For liturgical ministers, it means fostering a culture of hospitality and flexibility, making room in liturgical ministries – usher/greeter, music, extraordinary minister of holy Communion, altar server, reader, MC, sacristan – for new people.

When shared liturgies happen, the hosting church should intentionally invite ministers from the other parishes in the family to assist with the liturgy. In this way, shared liturgies become a visible sign of the new reality of the parish family and help the whole community realize a shared future.



Faith Formation and Sacramental Preparation

Basic principles

The process of becoming one family will take time. Meanwhile, life goes on even as we implement significant changes to how our parishes operate. We must continue to evangelize; we must continue to make disciples. Nothing else should draw attention away from this core mission of the Church and of our parishes.

Eyes on the prize

The ultimate goal of Partners in the Gospel is to revitalize parish life and to allow us to focus more attention, more energy, and more resources on our mission. Throughout the coming years, remember that being able to focus more energy – *not less* – on discipleship, including faith formation for all ages and sacramental preparation, is the goal of this process.

This is an opportunity to re-envision parish life and to do things differently. What would you do that you're not doing because of a lack of time, resources, or space? Where are the gaps in your own ministry where you need help or vision? Take time to brainstorm both on your own and with others in the parish family. Dare to dream!

Opportunities in Phase 1

Parishes in a family will have access to additional resources, both in terms of personnel and in terms of space. Knowing both your weaknesses and strengths can help you to see what's possible with the larger parish family. What can you offer to other parishes in the family? And where can you benefit from their strengths?

Consider:

- Adult faith formation
- Adult and youth catechumenate
- Bible study
- Funeral ministry
- Life, justice and peace
- Youth and young adult ministry
- Sacramental preparation for baptism, confirmation, first Communion, marriage

Awareness of the strengths and weaknesses in your own programs will help you see opportunities to join in offerings at one of the other parishes in the family and share resources.

Coordinate calendars

Make it possible for members of each parish to participate in events at other parishes by coordinating calendars. If Bible study is seasonal, make sure not every parish is offering Bible study at the same time. Stagger the starts so that offerings are spread out through the year.

Entry points

In preparing the calendar for faith formation opportunities and OCIA, give special consideration to entry points. People join our parishes or inquire about becoming Catholic throughout the year. Are they able to jump right in, or do they have to wait? Consider providing “entry points” for people and families all year round.

Possibilities for shared formation

During Phase 1, we are dipping our toe into the water. Think about simple ways of sharing formation and bringing people together as part of a wider parish family.

Ideas include:

- A joint celebration of first reconciliation for the whole parish family
- A shared retreat for the confirmandi or elect
- A shared celebration of confirmation
- A shared youth night, monthly or seasonally



Development and Fundraising

Although Partners in the Gospel will be a primary focus during this time, the day-to-day work of the parish continues. This section provides guidance on fundraising and development work during Phase One.

Fundraising is a ministry

Fundraising is a ministry that gives people the opportunity to support causes important to them. Father Henri Nouwen wrote a book entitled, "[The Spirituality of Fundraising](#)," which is an excellent primer for how to approach fundraising and may be valuable for team members who are new to it. It helps articulate the world of stewardship and development:

- **Stewardship** is an expression of discipleship. It is the response of a disciple who acknowledges God's blessings and gives back to God and the community what we have freely received. Stewardship in a parish setting means each member of the community gives time, talent, and treasure to build the community and further the mission of Christ and the Church.
- **Development** creates opportunities for community building and deeper engagement. It is the key to forming and strengthening relationships within the community. Development focuses on the cultivation and solicitation of donors. It is future oriented, providing opportunities for new ministries and new engagement.

Opportunities in Phase One

Keep donors informed

Keeping parishioners informed about Partners in the Gospel and its progress, as well as providing opportunities to have direct access to new pastoral leaders are essential to maintaining donor confidence in parish families and schools.

Maintain a positive outlook and communicate a positive vision to the parish community. Be transparent about how parishioners' resources support ministries and clearly communicate what the needs are for the parish family. Prepare an annual family parish report that reviews what happened over the past fiscal year. This report may include elements like ministry stories, the number of sacraments, a general financial statement, events and happenings, and milestones. You may wish to involve your parish and finance councils in preparing the report along with school advisory team members. Share the report via email, your newsletter, and website with the entire parish family.

Best practice recommends each parish in the parish family hold an annual “State of the Parish” and “State of the School” presentation for the community and prepare an annual family parish report. These presentations typically outline the strategic goals for the year, the financial picture, and the great work taking place. It’s an excellent opportunity to share stories, promote volunteer opportunities and be transparent about challenges the parish may face.

In Phase 1, the “State of the Parish” or “State of the School” presentation should also include a section about the whole parish family. It could highlight the new teams that have formed, the work underway, as well as a high-level snapshot of the financial picture at each parish and across the parish family. It is also an opportunity to educate parishioners about the unique financial needs of each parish in the parish family.

Avoid major new fundraising initiatives

This period of significant transition will not be the time for any new major capital campaigns. Instead, take advantage of this time to start envisioning the future and getting to know the people in the parish family. Relationship-building is the cornerstone of all efforts and focus should remain here, rather than kicking-off any new fundraising campaigns.

Relationship-building can take the form of community events, hospitality around Mass, welcoming new parishioners and other engagement efforts.

Maintain current fundraising

Even though parishes are in a parish family, each parish remains a distinct parish canonically with separate finance councils and finances until the parish family is canonically combined into one new parish. This means that tax statements will need to be generated from each parish using ParishStaq. Donations made by parishioners will be available online with ParishStaq and/or the ParishStaq app. Parishioners can log in and view their donations in real time.

With separate finances, a few fundraising elements remain intact:

- **The Annual Catholic Appeal** will continue to run as usual. Parishes will be viewed individually and will each have an individual target goal until they are formed as one canonical parish. While we are in this transition period prior to becoming one canonical family, if one parish in a family exceeds their ACA goal and one falls short, then the former would receive a rebate and the latter would receive a bill.

The parish family can decide internally, with input from the finance councils, if they want to move money from the first rebate to the parish with the bill. Any transfer of funds would follow the rules and protocols that the parish family has agreed upon for moving money from one parish to another.

- **Planned Giving** efforts should continue. Bequests to an individual parish, along with all parish assets, will be assumed by the newly formed parish. This happens after the parish family has developed its One Parish Plan and begins the process of becoming one canonical parish, which is estimated to begin in three years (2027). If a gift is made to a particular parish within a parish family, the gift will remain with that parish until the financial accounts are combined upon the formation of one canonical parish.

- **Stewardship campaigns** will continue at each individual parish during this transitional period. This campaign provides a great opportunity to remind people of the importance of stewardship and giving of their time, talent, and treasure while highlighting the great ministries and volunteer opportunities. However, to promote unity, a parish family could opt to run the stewardship campaign as one unit. Please contact the Development team for more details.
- **Capital campaigns** oriented towards a new project should be taken up at the family level.

Please note that major facility projects that require fundraising should be shared with the Chancery Building and Construction team. Current guidance recommends that parishes ensure the safety and maintenance of their parish and school campus. Fundraising for these urgent needs may continue. (i.e.: need for new roof or HVAC.)

- **National, mission and special collections** (e.g. Rice Bowl, CCHD) can be taken up at the parish or parish family level at the discretion of the pastor. Collection funds will be remitted to the Chancery in the same way in either case.
- **Restricted Funds** need to continue to be used as originally intended by the donor.

Hopeful news from others

In the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, where a similar restructuring process was implemented in 2022, there has **not** been a significant shift in giving either at the parish level or at the archdiocesan level.

Cincinnati's Annual Appeal raised more funding in 2023 than in prior years, though the number of donors declined. It is good news to learn that any dissatisfaction with the restructuring in Cincinnati did not lead to a dramatic decrease in giving.



Data and Technology Sharing

Before starting to explore data and technology sharing, it's important to note a few key elements:

- Parish families will continue to operate separate bank accounts and financial statements until they become one canonical parish.
- Each parish in the parish family remains a parish until becoming one new canonical parish. This means that parish identities and identification numbers stay the same. They will be associated with a new parish identity and number. When the family becomes one canonical parish, then new parish numbers will be provided.

Actions

This first step when approaching data and technology is to identify who on staff at the parish family can assign and approve security roles for the rest of the staff and inform the Chancery IT team at parishstaq.support@seattlearch.org. (**Tech Admin Lead**) This Parish Technology Admin lead should assign appropriate permissions early in Phase 1 to ensure work can be accomplished in a timely manner – and then update the onboarding and offboarding checklist to ensure access to systems is set up and turned off as appropriate.

Here is an overview of key systems to consider:

- **ParishStaq**
The ParishStaq team will adjust positions for parish family staff based on the direction of the Admin Lead. Cross-parish groups can be created by selecting a lead parish as the main campus for the group. Parish families will have a choice of whether to keep the parishioner app at the existing parish level or to create a new parish family app_presence.
- **Payment processing**
Parishes should assess how many payment processing vendors they are working with and whether they want to consolidate. It may be a good time to consider moving to PushPay, which is integrated with ParishStaq and will become more familiar to everyone across the archdiocese.
- **Quickbooks**
Parishes will need to give Quickbooks and QVinci permissions to the appropriate staff. Training on how to do consolidated reporting with QVinci is recommended. Additionally, everyone should use the standard chart of accounts which will make reporting simpler.

As parishes become one canonical parish, they will need to inform Tech Soup, which is the third party many parishes use to purchase software. In addition, parish families will need to work with Intuit to establish a new Company File Account, after receiving new EIN. They can be reached at 800-446-8848.

- **Microsoft 365/email/calendaring/file sharing**

When it comes to these daily office tools, there is no need to make immediate changes. Here are few things to keep in mind:

- It is fine to keep the same domain name for email addresses.
- The technology we anticipate people will need first are tools for calendaring and file sharing. How to go about implementing these tools depends on which systems each parish has as the starting point. For example, parishes on the shared tenant will have no problem sharing calendars and files.
- Parishes with a mixed environment of shared tenant and other tenants will need to set up the shared tenant as the primary calendar, and the other tenants will be invited as guests.
- Parishes with no member parish on the shared tenant will need to work with their local IT support to create the desired sharing environment or consider moving the entire family to the shared tenant.
- Now would be good time to archive and purge old documents and emails in accordance with the Archdiocesan Records Policy.

Websites/domain names

Parish Admin Leads need to determine the domain names that are used, who owns them and who has credentials to them. A minimum of two parish staff must have admin access to all the websites and social media channels. While volunteers may have access to these, the staff must have the ability to control these channels.

Websites should be updated to recognize the other parishes in the family and provide links to each. Over time, content should evolve to showcase shared events, liturgies available across the family, and more.

Planning for a single new website should not begin until the parish family becomes one canonical parish.

Infrastructure (including network hardware, servers, and cloud services)

Infrastructure at each parish can remain independent indefinitely. Cost savings, shared management or other simplifications may be a reason to consider standardization or consolidation. Please consult with your location technical support staff person or vendor.

Other applications

Phones, physical security, and cameras can all remain independent. Cost savings or shared management may make sense to consider standardization and changing permissions.

Schools Student Information System

Families with more than one school might want to consider standardizing the Student Information System. However, this work should not start until the disposition of the schools are determined. There may be several opportunities for consolidation across schools. For example, if more than one school in the family has Chromebooks, then consolidating the G-Suite tenant in the future may make sense.



A Community of Communities

Planning Toward Mission

A parish is “a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a center of constant missionary outreach.”

– Pope Francis in Evangelii Gaudium

Especially important in living up to this mission is understanding the makeup of the parish, *including those who are often forgotten/unheard*. Parish families are in a unique position to better learn who is – and isn't – served by current parish offerings.

A first step toward this is intentionally reviewing the makeup of a parish family, which may include:

1. **Database pull:** Use the ParishStaq database to pull a list of parishioners. From this, glean important information like age, zip code, and even languages spoken.
2. **Surveying:** Hand out a formal survey, or host one online that quickly collects demographic and needs-based information about parishioners. For any community survey, please wait until 2025 to ensure proper time for the communities to come together first.
3. **Ministry review:** Part of what constitutes the parish as a “community of communities” is the presence of different ministries/movements with a range of spiritualities/charisms. Take some time to review the parish ministries. Do they serve specific groups? How integrated are they in parish life? Do they have the resources they need to fulfill their mission? This examination of ministries and their participants will slowly reveal the people or groups who may be underserved or not represented.
4. **Leadership review:** Look at the parish leadership structures and consider their makeup. What are the cultural backgrounds of those in leadership positions? Doing this can help to understand who is highly engaged in the parish, and who is “not at the table.”
5. **Informal assessment:** Ask someone to attend multiple Masses to take an informal assessment of who is attending. Take note of things such as general age ranges, family sizes, languages spoken, etc. By having one person assessing multiple Masses, a more representative snapshot of those in a parish family will emerge.

The most effective and efficient of these strategies are database pulls and surveying. A database pull makes use of information already provided by parishioners and can simultaneously determine how database/registration processes can be improved – as well as what data may be missing in the database.

Surveying works well because it directly asks those attending individual parishes about themselves, even if they are not formally registered or involved in parish ministry. Once information is collected from these surveys, it is also important to make sure the information is fed back into the database to ensure that future database pulls include the most up-to-date information. To assist in survey efforts, we will be generating ready-made surveys (that can be edited to fit your needs) for each parish family, which can be completed online as a ParishStaq form alongside a printable version. Additional information about these surveys is forthcoming.

After taking an assessment of a parish community, it is important to share the information with the rest of the parish family. This will help people better understand the unique character of each parish and of the parish family – as well as unmet needs in the family.



Social Outreach and Pastoral Care

Coming together as a parish family is an opportunity to do things differently. What would you do that you're not doing now because of lack of time, resources, or space? Who is hurting, suffering, or marginalized within the expanded canonical boundaries of your new parish family? How might you encounter, accompany, and be converted by those on the peripheries?

Opportunities in Phase 1

Know your strengths and weaknesses as a parish community

What are your strong suits when it comes to outreach and pastoral care? What ministries does your parishes currently offer? Do parishioners have opportunities for direct service and advocacy? Where are the gaps in your own parish's outreach and pastoral care ministries? Where might you be able to grow if you had more space? Where are you limited due to lack of volunteers?

Together you will have access to additional resources – people, ministries, and space. Look for ways to do more in your region through shared ministry.

- Is there room for new volunteers in your existing ministries? If not, why not?
- Is there overlap in your existing ministries? Are there multiple St. Vincent de Paul conferences or an existing shared ministry at a local hospital?
- Look beyond your parish family for unmet needs in the wider community and in the world. How might the parish family be able to address needs that a single parish community could not?
- Are there unused spaces with the potential to house a new ministry – a food bank, a shelter, transitional housing, clothing closet, etc.?

Foster community through outreach

In Phase 1, look for ways to encourage relationship-building while also supporting outreach and pastoral care ministry work. Examples include:

- Consider a get-to-know-you mixer related to social outreach and advocacy. Potentially include a gifts assessment where parishioners share what talents and interests they have related to outreach (e.g., caring for the homeless, visiting the homebound, collecting diapers, tending a community garden, etc.). Explore what service activities are already unfolding in the new parish family (e.g., shelter ministry, PREPARES, St. Vincent de Paul conference, etc.).
- Host a day of service in which parishioners come together to volunteer at one (or more) outreach sites (e.g., soup kitchen, food bank, community garden, or retirement community). The day can include prayer, service activity, and shared reflection.

- Consider offering a mission trip and inviting all parishioners in the parish family to participate. Contact the archdiocese's [Missions team](#) for more details.

Move out of your comfort zone

Missionary discipleship is the intentional movement away from our comfort zone and toward various margins. Jesus is our blueprint for this. Following Jesus means following his example of encountering those who suffer, those who are ignored, those who are demonized, etc. This allows us to deliver Christ's healing to those who desperately need it while simultaneously transforming ourselves into more loving, more sacrificial people.

Nourished by the Eucharist, we conform ourselves to Christ so that we are propelled beyond the church walls into the streets and other places of distress – jails, hospitals, assisted living, ports, shelters, meal programs, migrant communities, etc.

Pope Francis tells us, "The poor have much to teach us." However, this crucial mutual transformation cannot occur unless we show up on the peripheries. From there, we "make disciples" by inviting others to join us on the margins and experience a similar conversion.

Ways to get started with pastoral care

Sometime during the first year and half:

- Consider hosting a Chancery-led missionary discipleship retreat with your parish family's leadership and parishioners. Rooted in a curriculum developed by Maryknoll, this four-hour retreat invites staff and parishioners to understand and embrace a field hospital model of Church engagement on the margins. Reach out to the [Pastoral Care and Outreach team](#) to schedule or for more information.
- Explore existing outreach programs that could be incorporated into parish life using the Parish Outreach Guide, which will be coming soon! This guide, while not exhaustive, will offer outreach possibilities or partner organizations. It is intended to inspire pastoral imagination about outreach ministries that could emerge from the formation of your new parish family. What Good News might now emerge for the poor and suffering because of this larger, better equipped community of faith?



PARTNERS IN THE GOSPEL APPENDIX

Transition and Healing Guide

Sharing and listening about Partners in the Gospel

(Please use this as a guide. You may edit and distribute as part of a session.)

Introduction and Prayer

- Share: Exodus 16:10: “And they looked to the wilderness to see the glory of God.” (Reminder to look for God amidst the changes and chaos.)
- Partners in the Gospel Prayer ([English](#) | [Spanish](#) | [Vietnamese](#))

Overview of Transition

- We want thriving parishes that carry out the mission of evangelization. To achieve this goal, and recognize the changes in our communities, the lack of engagement in parish life, and the diminishing number of clergy, the Archdiocese of Seattle launched Partners in the Gospel. This strategic pastoral planning process is aimed at realigning our resources in order to better serve the People of God so that everyone can be an effective missionary disciple.
- As a first step, parishes were placed into parish families under the leadership of one pastor. Over the next three years each family will work together to creatively re-envision parish life.
- Parish families will be moving toward becoming one canonical parish by July 1, 2027. Becoming one parish means that the people, the gifts, and the resources of the communities will be combined into one parish. (Keep in mind a parish refers to the people - not buildings or schools.)
- ENTER PARISH NAME is now in a Parish Family with ENTER PARISH NAME(S). Our parish family will spend the next year getting to know each other and will learn about each other’s ministries. We are not necessarily combining our ministries or parish teams during this first year.

Sharing and Listening

Focusing questions:

- How would you describe your feelings about the changes our parish is experiencing?
- Do you have fears or concerns about these changes? If so, what are they?
- What is something you hope for?
- These changes might raise questions for you about ENTER PARISH NAME. If so, what are your questions?

Process:

Step 1: Reflection

- After reading the questions above, pass out the following “Focusing Questions” sheet and allow time for individual reflection (5-8 minutes).
- Invite participants to choose anything they would like to share from their reflections.

Step 2: Small Group Sharing

- Invite participants to form small groups, then invite them to share and listen to each other’s reflections in their small group. (10-15 minutes depending on group size)
- Ask the groups:
 - “Think about what you heard in your group sharing. Think about what struck you as important and significant. We are now going to pause for a moment of quiet and prayer.” (1 minute)
- Invite participants to share in their groups what they heard from others in their group. Ask someone in each group to record the key ideas. (10 minutes)

Step 3: Large Group Sharing (15 minutes)

- Ask each table group to provide a brief report.
- Invite volunteers from the large group to share additional comments about what they heard or what they are feeling that is most significant.
 - “Did the sharing stir up additional questions for you? If so, what are your questions?” Invite participants to write their questions on the sheet provided. Invite volunteers to share their questions with the large group.

Word from Pastor or leader - We’re still the Church - God is with us in the midst of change and transition.

Closing Prayer

Focusing Questions

How would you describe your feelings about the changes our parish is experiencing?

Do you have fears or concerns about these changes? If so, what are they?

What is something you hope for?

These changes might raise questions for you about ENTER PARISH NAME. If so, what are your questions?

Guidelines for Hospitality Ministers

Adapted from resources provided by the Diocese of St. Petersburg

Introduction

When bringing parish families together, it is important to provide opportunities for parishioners to use their gifts. A hospitality minister is someone equipped specifically for welcoming people to the parish and for nurturing a welcoming culture. This minister may be managing existing hospitality efforts or may be part of a new family Hospitality Ministry team. The following guidance provides an overview of how to form a parish family Hospitality Ministry team, as ideas for how to reimagine current offerings, and best practices for recruiting and supporting those in these front-line hospitality roles.

Hospitality ministers: Who are they?

Those who desire to serve as a hospitality minister are active and faithful members of the Church, who have a deep love for the assembly and feel called to welcome them. They are comfortable meeting and greeting others and welcoming people in a way that makes them feel at home. These qualities are a blessing, especially to the stranger in our midst. Hospitality ministers are also knowledgeable about their parish and engaged with the parish family, so that they can serve as a source of information for people interested in learning more about the faith community or specific ministries.

Invitation to ministry

The pastor plays an essential role inviting people to be hospitality ministers. Through his direct invitation, and his reiteration of the importance of welcoming within the parish family, it will be clear to those considering this ministry just how important their service is – and clear to those in the community just how serious parish family leadership is about creating an authentic culture of hospitality.

Consider inviting parishioners of all ages, including mature adolescents and young adults, to serve in this role as appropriate. Thought should also be given to the makeup of the community, the languages spoken, and any particular needs that members have to ensure hospitality ministers reflect the community.

Procedures before the liturgy

- Greet and welcome the faithful at each entrance as they gather for worship. Avoid congregating in one area of the church or speaking with fellow ministers to the exclusion of those attending Mass.
- Assist with the seating of the assembly before the liturgy begins.

Procedures during the liturgy

Hospitality ministers are part of the worshipping community and should participate fully in the music, responses, and prayers. At times, however, the special duties may limit his or her ability to participate. Yet, every effort should be made to be models of participation. During the liturgy, ministers of hospitality should assist with the following:

- Welcoming and seating of latecomers as quickly and discreetly as possible.
- Collect the offerings of the people. Both the faithful and the offerings are to be treated with utmost dignity and reverence. The faithful should be given adequate time to deposit their gifts during the collection.
- Assist those who will be taking up the gifts in the procession for the Preparation of the Gifts.
- Direct the communion procession in an orderly manner.
- Be aware of the placement of first aid supplies and an emergency telephone if the need should arise.
 - Consider offering ministers the opportunity to receive CPR/AED training and any other training that could prepare them in case of emergencies.
 - Make use of archdiocesan resources and guidance in this area when possible, including the training on [Navigating Mental Health Interruptions at Mass](#).
- When appropriate, use hospitality ministers to take Mass counts following the pastor's homily.

Procedures following the liturgy

Hospitality ministers distribute the parish bulletins and any other pertinent materials at the conclusion of the liturgy. They are available to assist those with special needs. Finally, they can assist in preparing the worship space for the next liturgy, making sure it is well organized and inviting.

Training and installation

Individual parish families can develop periodic training sessions to assist and reacquaint hospitality ministers with all aspects of their service. Having appropriate knowledge and training will help ministers function effectively and bring confidence and joy to their experience. These trainings also allow the pastor and pastoral leadership an opportunity to reengage with new and active ministers who support this welcoming work.



Developing A Hospitality Ministry Charter

Introduction

The purpose of a Hospitality Ministry Charter is to align the vision of the pastor, parish leadership, and hospitality ministers to the unique needs of a parish family in a way that makes the best use of the skills and resources in the community. Developing a charter should occur before the creation of the hospitality ministry plan, as it will set the groundwork for how the parish family will approach Hospitality Ministry collectively and who is responsible for what elements.

The elements in this charter can be applied to other ministries.

Creating a Charter

The Hospitality Ministry Charter incorporates several key components developed through dialogue with the team leader, team members, and the pastor. Key elements of the charter are:

- **Vision:** What does the team do? What does the team stand for, and what does the team hope to accomplish? How can the parish family benefit specifically from this ministry?
- **Anticipated outcomes:** What are the results the team must accomplish to be successful? SMART goals (Strategic, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) are helpful because they are statements that describe the desired results the team is expected to accomplish within a specific time.
- **Operating guidelines:** Operating guidelines outline how the team will function: Are there formal meetings? If so, how often do they take place, and how should they be run? Do ministers meet at the parish-family level or parish by parish? What are the decision-making policies and what would be the problem-solving process as well as the rules governing conflict resolution? Do any parishes in the family have unique responsibilities for Hospitality Ministry (e.g., serving as the primary site for a specific language community)?
- **Norms and ground rules:** What are guiding principles or rules that govern interpersonal conduct among members? How people should treat each other and how information should be shared? Who takes note and where are they stored?

- **Team roles and collective/individual responsibilities:** What are the responsibilities of an individual on the team? What are the collective responsibilities shared by every team member? Are responsibilities held by the entire team, and every member is equally and personally responsible for accomplishing them? Or do specific individuals have special responsibilities because of his or her particular expertise and interest?

See below for a sample Hospitality Ministry Charter and guidance on recruiting and training for Hospitality Ministers in a family-level ministry.



**PARTNERS
IN THE GOSPEL**

Sample Hospitality Ministry Charter

Parish Family: _____

Date: _____

Vision

Hospitality Ministry will cultivate a parish family that is welcoming and supportive to everyone. We aim to build a more vibrant, engaged, and welcoming community.

Anticipated Outcomes

We will help establish a welcoming culture where long-time parishioners and newcomers of all ages and backgrounds feel at home when they come to Mass or other parish events.

Our team members will fill essential roles, such as greeters and ushers at Mass, coffee hour servers and welcome desk attendees after Mass.

We will:

- develop and coordinate community events to provide opportunities for people to meet each other and gather in fellowship.
- assist with communication between the parish and parishioners as needed (e.g., through website maintenance, phone trees, etc.).
- help ensure that all parishioners feel welcome at and informed about each parish in the family.

Operating Guidelines

- We will meet _____ (*monthly, quarterly, twice yearly*) as a parish-family Hospitality Ministry team to discuss and plan upcoming activities. Each parish's hospitality ministers will meet regularly to discuss local-level needs.
- We will collectively make decisions, with the goal of cultivating a parish culture that is warm and welcoming to all. Decisions will be reached by consensus or vote once team members have presented their input. Conflicts will be resolved by vote, with a simple majority deciding what we recommend to the pastor.
- Training is required for all new hospitality ministers, and it will be offered _____ (*monthly, quarterly, as needed*).

Norms and Ground Rules

- The schedule for greeters, ushers, welcome desk volunteers, and coffee hour servers will be provided by _____ (name of scheduler or scheduling program) and will be sent each _____ (week, every two weeks, month) by email/SignUp Genius/ParishStaq/etc.
- If a team member is scheduled for a date that does not work, it is their responsibility to switch with another team member or find a substitute.
- Communication about meetings, events, and meeting minutes will be shared with all team members via email/ParishStaq.

Roles

The Hospitality Ministry team includes: *(tailor descriptions as needed)*

- **Collective Roles:**
 - **Greeters** (at Mass and events): Welcome people at doors or in gathering spaces, making sure they feel welcome and know where to go.
 - **Ushers:** Welcome and help seat latecomers, if needed; assist with collections, be a point person during Mass for any issues that arise.
 - **Welcome/Information Desk:** Maintain a presence at a designated location, be available for questions and help newcomers register or access different ministries.
 - **Coffee and Donuts Servers:** Prepare coffee, tea, and other beverages for service after Mass. If applicable, assure that donuts or other food items are picked up and available. Often this is handled in partnership with school volunteers. (For example: This weekend hosted by 6th grade!)
 - **Welcoming Committee:** Welcome new parishioners and families by answering questions and introducing new people to others in the community. May include a variety of activities like delivery of welcome bags/baskets and invitations to welcoming events.
 - **Phone Tree Volunteers:** Take lists of parishioners to call. This can be for simple check-ins, especially to the homebound, or to communicate information to people in a way that would be more effective than email.
 - **Digital Tool Manager(s):** A person or group of 2-3 people who can make changes and updates to the parish website/social media pages under the leadership of a staff member. This role helps to ensure a welcoming digital environment.
 - **Event Hosts:** Plan and coordinate community events to welcome parishioners and newcomers. Works to provide opportunities for everyone to gather.

○ **Other Roles by Activity:**

- _____ (fill in role)
- _____ (fill in role)

● **Individual Roles:**

- Team Leader(s): _____ (fill in name)
- Notetaker: _____ (fill in name)

- Other specified roles as needed in your parish family:
 - _____ (fill in title and name)
 - _____ (fill in title and name)



Hospitality Ministry Team Recruitment

A Hospitality Ministry team should be comprised of people of various ages and backgrounds and should be representative of the whole parish family. Be intentional about inviting people of all backgrounds who can share in the planning of events and provide perspective about the needs of everyone in the community. When developing a Hospitality Ministry Team, adapt the roles to the needs of the community. For instance, if a parish has a Communications staff person responsible for the website and social media accounts, do not assign a volunteer to this work.

Role	Skills	Whom to Consider
Greeters (Mass and events)	Friendly demeanor, outgoing personality, ability to stay calm and assist as needed	Active older teenagers and young adults; key community leaders; people who can speak the languages of those in the community.
Ushers	Same as greeters, plus ability to stand and move about parish easily	(see above)
Welcome/Info Desk Staff	Same as greeters, plus solid knowledge of parish and parish family	Seasoned parishioners who are familiar with ministry activities and contact people; ideal "starter" role for people who are not yet ready to commit to larger parish roles (ex. Parish Council); Good role to keep those "retiring" from larger parish roles engaged.
Coffee and Donuts Servers	Punctual, organized, friendly	Good role for teams, families, or groups of friends to do together.
Welcoming Committee	Approachable, outgoing people, comfortable with technology	A good mix of seasoned and new parishioners. This is a good role for new Catholics.
Phone Tree Volunteer	Friendly demeanor, comfortable talking on the phone	Those who are fluent in the languages spoken. Older generations may be more comfortable with phone conversations than young adults or teens. This is a great role for retirees.
Digital Tool Manager(s)	Comfortable with technology	Person or 2-3 people with a technical background who can work with communication staff
Event Hosts	Same as greeters, plus punctual, organized	Those who like to plan parties, set up decorations, etc. Good role for people who often host dinners or events at their home. Greeters and others from this team can step in to help with events.