



# One Parish Plan: Core Concepts

## Who is involved and where will work happen?

The parish family (and standalone parishes) will discern the elements of the One Parish Plan together through listening and consultation. This process will engage a synodal style of walking together and discerning where God is calling the new parish. Completion of a One Parish Plan is mandatory for all parish families (including standalone parishes).

It will be important to hear from diverse voices throughout the process and ensure wide consultation is achieved. Consultation should include people of different ages, cultural experiences, language groups (if applicable), economic backgrounds, theological perspectives and spiritualities.

Guided by the Holy Spirit and enriched by the lived experiences and insight from all the baptized, parish families will discern the future of their own parish. This will be achieved by engaging the full community in a series of consultations with prompting questions, with the goal of developing a plan focused on the mission of sharing the Good News within and beyond the parish boundaries.

Key people and groups will be involved at different points throughout this whole process. Here is an overview of each role:

### **The Pastor**

The pastor serves as the sponsor for the One Parish Plan and is responsible for ensuring that the plan is completed. The pastor provides final approval of the recommended One Parish Plan and submits it to the One Parish Plan Review Committee and ultimately the Archbishop.

The primary consultative bodies responsible for overseeing the work of the One Parish Plan will be the Parish Family Leadership Team (PFLT) and the Family Advisory Council (PFAC), with the people of God serving as the core group to be consulted throughout the process.

### **Parish Family Leadership Team (PFLT)**

The PFLT, formed by the pastor and comprised of current parish family staff members (or key volunteers when parishes lack staff), provide primary staff consultation. This group is also responsible for executing the activities related to Partners in the Gospel. They will be organizing and collaborating with the Parish Family Advisory Council (PFAC) throughout the process and assisting with activities such as reviewing baseline parish data, collecting parish information, hosting community events, and assembling the One Parish Plan.

A complete explanation of the PFLT, its role, and suggested composition is in the [Partners in the Gospel Handbook](#).

### **Parish Family Advisory Council (PFAC)**

The PFAC, comprised of parishioners from across the parish family, will be the pastor's primary consultation group including the creation of the One Parish Plan and the life of the whole parish family. This group supports the process and ensures the parish family engages as broad a consultation and discernment process as possible.

A complete explanation of the PFAC, its role, and its suggested composition can be found in the [Partners in the Gospel Handbook](#).

### **The People of God**

Throughout the One Parish Plan process, the whole parish, all the people of God, will be consulted. The PFAC will have specific tasks and work to do in preparing for these consultations, processing the information gained from them, and collaborating with the PFLT in drafting the One Parish Plan for the Pastor's final approval.

### **Archbishop and the One Parish Plan Review Committee**

As the pastoral leader and shepherd of the Archdiocese, the Archbishop, who is responsible for ensuring alignment with the mission of the Archdiocese of Seattle, will be the final reviewer of each One Parish Plan. To assist him in this, he will create a One Parish Plan Review Committee, made up of clergy, staff and laity. An explanation of how this review will work can be found in the review section below.

## **Consulting the right group(s)**

The One Parish Plan will be created through a synodal, consultative process that grounds communities in listening, the sacraments, scripture, and prayer. This way of approaching discernment ensures we are opening ourselves to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. However, this does not mean each step of the process will require a formal listening event. An important part of discernment includes determining the best form of consultation for each decision. Below is guidance for different types of decisions:

- **Operational decisions**

The pastor has the responsibility to make decisions related to the pastoral and operational life of the parish. There are some decisions around **operational** issues that can be handled by the pastor with the support of his staff. These day-to-day operational decisions do not need to involve broad community discernment other than as needed for informational purposes. Examples of these operational decisions would be the make-up of the PFLT and their frequency of meetings, the sick-call coverage schedule, the rotation of priests in the Mass schedule, or other day-to-day operational decisions.

- **Short-term strategic decisions**

Consultation with priests, staff and consultative bodies is important for **short-term strategic issues**. Issues that were historically brought to a Pastoral Council or Finance Council should still be shared with those bodies. New issues may also go to the Parish Family Advisory Council for input. These bodies will help the pastor better understand the scope of an issue and help discern next steps that can then be shared with the community if appropriate. Examples of these short-term strategic decisions include regular review of parish budgets by each parish's Finance Council, strategic planning for

community building events (i.e., not details of the events but whether and where to have them within the family) could be surfaced at individual pastoral council meetings and brought to the PFAC, the Finance Council and School Commission continue their annual collaboration to set school tuition for the following year, and other short-term strategic planning recommendations to the pastor for his discernment and decision

- **Long-term strategic decisions**

Decisions that impact the **long-term strategic** direction of the parish will impact how the parish family accomplishes its mission in a substantial way. These types of changes should be made in consultation with the whole community. This process is meant to shape and better inform the decision-making authority of the pastor and other consultative bodies within the parish family. Examples of long-term strategic decisions include those around closing or combining churches or schools, starting new major ministries, erecting or demolishing buildings, selling property or other recommended decisions that are difficult to “undo” overtime.

## Synodality and Listening

During the process of developing the One Parish Plan, regular consultation and collaboration with parish staff and consultative bodies from each parish in the family (i.e., pastoral councils, finance councils, and various commissions), as well as the Parish Family Advisory Council, will become part of parish life.

### *Conversations in the Spirit*

This small group listening process, which was used in the global Synod on Synodality and previous parish family listening sessions, is designed for discernment on matters of significance to the parish family community. Listening, praying together, and sharing with one another, helps the community discern the voice of the Holy Spirit as they assess their current reality, name the various challenges and opportunities they are facing, and plan for the future.

### *Effective Communication*

Each consultive body should be informed of decisions made by other bodies around staff reorganization and the combination of consultative bodies. Each group has unique roles to fulfill within a parish family:

- **Finance Councils** provide formal recommendations or guidance on major single-parish expenses, use of restricted funds at a parish and the budget of a single parish.
- **School Commissions** provide input on decisions and initiatives relating to school budgets, buildings or school initiatives.
- **Pastoral Councils** provide input on any adjustments to programmatic priorities, Mass schedules, worship sites, and the use of parish spaces.
- **Parish Family Advisory Councils** provide input on major parish family-level expenses, property decisions and anything that impacts the future of the family as one faith community.

Catholic schools are a central ministry of their parish families and the Archdiocese of Seattle. A major goal of consultation should be to better integrate families who attend the school into the day-to-day life of the parish family. This will require intentional steps to achieve. Be sure to invite all school families to consultation events (and to make clear why their input is important).

# What are the steps of this process?

The general work will happen roughly over a 3-year period. The actual events and steps may differ for each parish family but be sure to not rush portions of the process. The order and possible start dates of the *earliest* point each section may begin are below.

## Organizing and kickoff

**(Possible start: Jan-Mar 2025, Anticipated duration: 1-3 months)**

- Convene the PFAC with an initial focus on getting to know each other.
- Familiarize the pastor, PFAC and PFLT with the content of the One Parish Plan.
- Determine who from each leadership body will support specific pieces of the planning process.
- Determine an initial work schedule for when to tackle each piece of the plan.
- Determine any external support needed for your work.

## Who are we?

**(Possible start: Apr-Jun 2025, Anticipated duration: 3-6 months)**

- Offer a survey, brainstorming session, and listening event asking, "What are our gifts?"
- Have the PFAC review, synthesize, and report the findings from the "What are our gifts?" session.
- Hold one or more PFAC working session to complete the "Who do we serve?" and "What opportunities/challenges exist for us?" work.
- Hold a community listening event to answer the question, "What opportunities and challenges exist for us?"
- Have the PFAC review, synthesize, and report out the findings from the "What opportunities or challenges exist for us?" session.

## Who do we want to become?

**(Possible start: Oct - Dec 2025, Anticipated duration: 6-9 months)**

- Hold a community listening event asking, "Who do we want to become?"
- Hold a PFAC discussion to summarize the findings from the "Who do we want to become?" listening event and draft a vision statement and initial initiatives based on the feedback received.
- Hold a community listening event to provide feedback on the drafted vision statement and initial draft of initiatives.
- Hold a PFAC discussion to refine and finalize the vision and initiatives based on community input. Then share with the community for input.

## How do we get there?

**(Possible start: Jul - Sep 2026, Anticipated duration: 6-9 months)**

- Hold one or more PFAC working sessions to complete the "Prioritizing our initiatives," "Impact and Effort Analysis," and "Defining our initiatives" activities.
- Hold a community listening event to receive feedback on the drafted vision statement and initiatives.
- Provide a report back to the community on the final prioritized initiatives as determined by the PFAC.

## What should we be called?

**(Possible start: Apr-Jun 2027, Anticipated duration: 1-3 months)**

- Hold a PFAC session to create a proposed list of names (based on the Archdiocesan approved list) for review by the community.
- Hold a community listening session on the proposed name list and provide input to the PFAC.
- Hold a PFAC discussion to review the feedback and create a finalized list of five proposed new parish names. This list is then shared back with the parish family.

## Assembling the report

**(Possible start: May-Jun 2027, Anticipated duration: 1-3 months)**

## Review process

**(Possible start: July 2027, Anticipated duration: 3-6 months)**

- The first draft of the One Parish Plan is provided to the Review Committee for review.
- Comments and needed adjustments are provided to parish leadership for revision.
- Second draft (if needed) of One Parish Plan is provided to the Review Committee for review.
- Comments and needed adjustments are provided to parish leadership and revisions are made (if needed).
  - Revision and review process is iterated as needed. Depending on the scope of the adjustments made, community consultation should be held to receive feedback from the parish family community.
- Pastor provides updated One Parish Plan draft to the Archbishop.
- The One Parish Plan draft is brought to Presbyteral Council for consultation.
- The Archbishop's discernment leads to a request for further revisions or final approval.

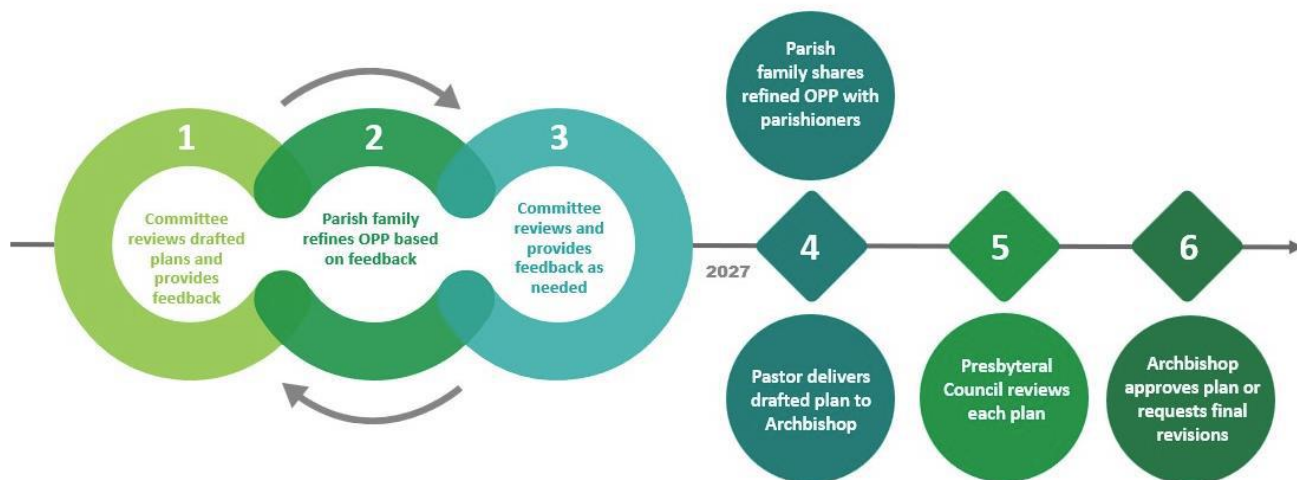
## How will it be reviewed?

Once a draft of the One Parish Plan has been completed, the draft will be submitted for initial review to ensure viability and alignment with the mission Jesus gave us to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28). Each parish family will have a secure location to which they can upload the One Parish Plan.

Reviews will be handled by the One Parish Plan Review Committee, who will ask questions and provide guidance on needed adjustments to the plans. Parish families may be asked to consider revisions. This is an iterative review process to support the parish family in finalizing the plan. Based on the scope of revisions, parish families may be asked to bring their revised plans back to the parish family community for input. This is to ensure the parish family community understands the final One Parish Plan.

Following the final revisions, the pastor will present the plan to the archbishop, who will then bring the plan to Presbyteral Council for consultation. After consultation, he will determine if any revisions are needed or if the plan is approved. The approved plan will be used to write the decree establishing the parish family as one new canonical parish. Due to the consultative nature and to allow adequate time for review, this review process is expected to last roughly 3-6 months.

# Review Process



## Final notes

While the One Parish Plan is a large undertaking, there are many resources available for support. This process is not meant to interfere with ongoing parish life: children will be baptized, the poor will be served, marriages will be prepared, and the Gospel will be preached.

Training on the elements of the One Parish Plan and synodal decision making will be offered to help prepare pastors, staff and lay leaders to effectively work through the planning process.

Parish liaisons are the first line of support along with Chancery team members who will regularly assist with different elements of parish life. Additionally, the community will be there to help. The more consultative and collaborative the process of creating the plan is, the more support the community can provide and the better the final plan will be.

Give people time to learn a new way of parish life. They will need to learn to be co-responsible and learn how to effectively participate in Conversations in the Spirit. People will experience grief related to the change in what they know as *their* parish. Take the time to let people experience their grief, to speak and be heard, to let go. Support each other, but move forward, together.

Lastly, please take the *appropriate time* for each piece of work. The One Parish Plans should take about 2.5 years to complete from initial planning to final approval. There is no rush to complete everything on day one. Communities should discern what the Holy Spirit is saying, and discernment takes time. Not all communities will move at the same pace, and that is alright – some may move faster, and some may need additional time. Take your time. Be flexible. Just as Jesus walked with two disciples on the road to Emmaus, we walk, we listen, and we grow to see Christ beside us through this whole process.