

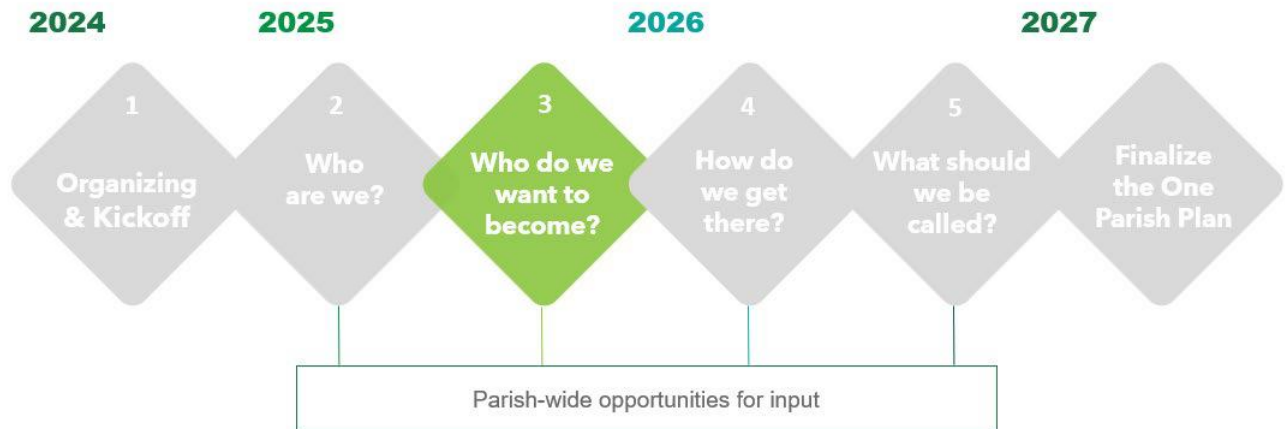


**PARTNERS**  
IN THE GOSPEL

# One Parish Plan: Who do we want to become?

*Possible start: Oct-Dec 2025 / Anticipated duration: 6-9 months*

## Document C1: Overview



After completing the discussions from the first phases, it is time to move to the next phase: "Who do we want to become?" This phase explores opportunities and challenges while ensuring the vision for the parish family is aligned with the mission of the Church. Most importantly, this phase ensures alignment with what *the Holy Spirit is calling us to be*. As such, careful listening to the Holy Spirit will be an important part in determining the future of the parish family.

This document will help facilitate discussions intended to answer the question of "Who do we want to become?" It begins with an overview of the areas for consideration and concludes with proposed forms and procedures for hosting these discussions.

The process is to:

1. **Refamiliarize** the PFAC with the outcomes of the discussion in the "Who are we?" portion of the One Parish Plan work, if necessary.
2. **Hold community consultations** for initial input around the question, "Who do we want to become?" (Be sure everyone is invited.)
3. **PFAC Reviews and synthesizes** the input from the community listening sessions.

4. PFAC creates a **draft parish vision statement based on the synthesis of the community listening sessions.**
5. **PFAC creates proposed initiatives** for fulfilling the vision.
6. Hold **community consultations** to review and respond to the drafted vision statement and initiatives prepared by the PFAC.
7. PFAC **reviews and synthesizes** the input received in the community listening sessions and then drafts a parish vision statement and list of initiatives to submit to the pastor.
8. PFAC reviews feedback from the pastor and produces a final version, endorsed by the pastor, of the finalized **parish vision statement and list of initiatives.**

## Encounter, Accompany, Live the Joy of the Gospel

*Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.*  
- Matthew 28:19-20

The Archdiocesan Pastoral Plan (2020) describes how we advance the mission of the Church (in Matthew 28) through **encountering** Jesus and one another, **accompanying** one another on the journey of faith, and **living the unconditional love and joy of the Gospel**. It is important that all parish discussions happen within this context.

### Encounter

Jesus invites all of us to have a personal relationship with him. Encounter is about entering into this relationship through real, authentic experiences and recognizing his presence in our lives and in others. Some ways that we encounter Jesus and one another are through the Eucharist, prayer, adoration, scripture, charity, small faith-sharing groups, and the sacrament of reconciliation. Given these concrete means of encounter, we must consider who we want to be and how we will create these types of encounters – and encourage parishioners to make use of them.

### Accompany

Jesus is always with us, which is a blessing we should recognize and share with others. Discipleship requires that we are ready to accompany others. We must not reserve accompaniment only for those whom we naturally love and instead seek to help all we encounter to grow in their relationship with Christ. By sharing Christ's love, we can help others understand his teaching and invite them into relationship with Jesus. Examples include volunteering with faith formation programs, joining lay ecclesial movements, welcoming new people to the parish, serving those in need, or reaching out to those who have fallen away.

## Live the Joy of the Gospel

While our faith is personal, it should not be private. The love and joy we experience in our relationship with Jesus should radiate out to those we meet. We should be prepared to share how Jesus has changed our lives.

We live the Joy of the Gospel when we give witness to the Christian life and deepen our own faith. In other words, we live this joy we have found in the Good News, when we live as missionary disciples. This happens through faith sharing and loving acts of charity. How does your parish family foster faith sharing and public embodiment of the Gospel message?

## Creating a vision and crafting initiatives

Creating an authentic vision statement for the new parish should be a consultative process that explores the following questions:

- **Who is God calling us to become as a new parish? What is our vision?**
- **What new groups of people do we want to focus on or prioritize moving forward?** Who have we *not* been serving? Who do we serve that we may want to serve differently?
- **What new ministries and/or programs do we want to start, or which current ministries should we expand to fulfill our vision of who we want to become?** Where are opportunities to start something new? What current offerings should be bolstered based on our vision?
- **Are there ministries or programs that are not in alignment with our vision?** What ministries, activities or programs should we consider stopping?

### Vision Statement

The vision statement for the new parish should be aspirational and describe who the parish community wants to become in light of the mission of the Church – that is, Matthew 28. This vision statement works to clearly explain where the new parish is going together and should be finalized before creating any initiatives. We all need to know where we *want to go* before we can determine *how we are going to get there*.

While the vision statement will look different at each parish family, it should always orient a community towards the future and reflect on the unique gifts and opportunities present in the parish family (and the larger community). Some examples of parish vision statements from across the country are provided below to spark your imagination:

- *“The spirit of St. Louis King of France is to lift each other up to reach what we are seeking. Confident of Christ’s transforming love, nourished by Word and Sacraments, we are compelled to further the Reign of God in our families, our parish, and our community through welcome and outreach to everyone.”*  
  
– St. Louis King of France Parish, Metairie, LA

- *"Saint Luke Roman Catholic Church aspires to be a welcoming community of faith where:*
  - a. *Parishioners and newcomers feel enlivened, engaged, and spiritually nourished – among a community of friends that is central to their lives;*
  - b. *Parishioners and newcomers grow as disciples of Christ who love and serve the Lord, each other, and others in need.*

– St. Luke, McLean, Virginia

Parishes and schools in a parish family likely have mission or vision statements. As part of this process, do not synthesize these parish statements into one single statement, or rewrite school mission or vision statements. Rather, review the existing parish and school statements as a part of writing the vision for your new canonical parish so that they can be considered. Individual parish mission and vision statements will be retired during this process, but schools will retain their existing mission and vision statements.

### Initiatives

The initiatives are concrete plans and proposals to bring the vision to life. These may include starting something new or sunseting existing programs. In the context of Partners in the Gospel, initiatives will either focus **on re-envisioning or restructuring parish** life.

- Initiatives dedicated to **re-envisioning** parish life will focus on aligning the life of the parish with fostering encounter, accompaniment, and living the joy of the Gospel.
- Initiatives dedicated to **restructuring** will address the physical, financial, and personnel resources of the parish family and how to use them to better achieve the vision of the new parish.

Questions to answer when considering initiatives are:

- Does this initiative help re-envision parish family life, restructure parish life, or both? If it does neither, what could be changed about it to do so? Does the initiative directly address a challenge or opportunity identified in the "Who are we?" sessions?
- Does this initiative have the potential to cause unnecessary challenges as we re-envision or restructure? For example, does this initiative hurt our ability to fund other ministries, or reduce people's opportunities to encounter Jesus?

As with vision statements, initiatives will be unique to each parish. They will depend on the unique gifts and needs of the community. Here are some ideas for the types of initiatives parishes might consider:

- We will start a young adult ministry aimed at community college students offering regular social and worship gatherings.

- We will renovate the larger of our two food banks and combine operations there, offering services Monday-Saturday.
- We will develop a family catechesis program at each of our sites and connect children and families taking part in this program with children and families in our schools.

The initiatives identified will vary greatly in both ministry areas and scope based on local needs. The focus for these should be at a *high level* so the community may determine what might be worth tackling. Do not focus on step-by-step workplans yet. If the parish family is considering combining food banks, the needs and core people supporting this work should be identified, but the full workplan or cost estimates are not needed yet. That work will come as part of “How do we get there?”

Additionally, you will be asked to review any major initiatives or existing plans as part of this process. Previously proposed initiatives should be reconsidered as part of this planning process, with the needs of the new parish at the forefront. This may mean sunseting previous or existing individual parish initiatives that no longer fit into the context of the new family.

Upon completing the parish vision and initiatives, reflect on how they align with the “Who are we?” and “Who do we want to become?” work.

## Initiative timing

Most initiatives will have start dates beyond the completion of the One Parish Plan. However, there are some initiatives that may begin sooner. Due to unique circumstances or opportunities, initiatives can be started before the One Parish Plan is completed to address emergent challenges or opportunities, or to complete a body of work that was underway when the parish family formed. If any of these initiatives exist, make sure to capture what they are and to acknowledge their impact on the restructuring and re-envisioning of the parish family.

### Ending ministries as part of re-envisioning

When we think about what God is calling us to, we should also think about what God is calling us to leave behind. Ending one ministry does not mean that it “failed” – but as in our personal lives, God sometimes asks us to choose between goods. It may also be the case that the need this ministry was created to fulfill has shifted over time – maybe the language community being served is no longer present in large numbers in the parish boundaries, or the age demographics of the community have shifted substantially over decades. Like Simon, Andrew, James, and John, God may be calling us to “leave our nets” and follow him into a new ministry.

While doing this allows us to more effectively serve God, these endings also represent a loss for people - especially those who have been serving their ministries for years. If a ministry is to end, please make sure to explain the reason transparently to the ministers and the whole parish family. Additionally, be sure to walk with those impacted. Transparency around the adjustment and accompaniment for those impacted by the change are essential to make sure this change is transformed into something new. If someone’s ministry ends, make sure they have the space to grieve this loss, but are also invited to *use their gifts in new ways*. There is no shortage of

work to do in serving the mission, and we do not want to lose someone because their ministry ended.

### **How to have these discussions**

After identifying resources and the types of questions that should be asked, it is time to begin holding parish family discussions around strategic pastoral planning. It is important that the community is aware of the work that is coming, as well as how their input will play a part.

The forms on the following pages will help facilitate these discussions. Since each community is unique, these discussions will differ based on the language, geography, personnel and local resource realities. These forms are designed as a simple guide to help the parish family determine the best format for these discussions.

The work of creating a parish vision and proposed initiatives will take great intentionality and prayerful work by the PFAC and PFLT. Please be sure the work is done in the proper order and at an appropriate pace. Do not try to fit these discussions into a single session or create a fully fleshed out work plan before you've had the chance to draft and revise your vision, and then initiatives. The work to draft and revise the vision and proposed initiatives *now* will lay the foundation for creating the work plan as part of the next phase: "How do we get there?"

## **Completion of the identified forms is a required part of the One Parish Planning Process.**

### **Timing, steps, and tools**

**Possible start: Oct-Dec 2025 | Anticipated duration: 6-9 months**

1. Refamiliarize the PFAC with the outcomes of the "Who are we?" work.
2. Hold "Who do we want to become?" community listening session(s).  
(Hosts: PFAC/PFLT or pastoral leader | Audience: Parishioners | See Docs. C2A - C3B)
3. Hold a series of PFAC meetings to complete the "Who do we want to become?" PFAC exercises that will help draft a vision statement and proposed initiatives.  
(Hosts: PFAC/PFLT members | Audience: PFAC members | See Docs. C4A - C4C)
4. Hold the "Drafted vision and initiatives review" community listening session(s).  
(Hosts: PFAC/PFLT or pastoral leader | Audience: Parishioners | See Docs. C5 - C5E)
5. Complete the "Parish Family Advisory Council Input Review 2 + Vision / Initiative Revision" PFAC session.  
(Hosts: PFAC/PFLT members | Audience: PFAC members | See Doc. C6)