



PARTNERS IN THE GOSPEL

Document C5A: Vision/Initiative Review Listening Session Overview & Event Guide

Event Hosts: PFAC/PFLT or pastoral leader | Event Audience: Parishioners

Overview

Hold a parish family listening session to review the drafted vision and initiatives. Before this event, provide the previous discussion overview and the proposed vision statement and initiatives. Ask the community to pray and come prepared to share their thoughts.

Through these listening sessions, people will have an opportunity to provide direct input on the potential vision and initiatives for the parish. The vision is that this is a prayerful discernment with conversation happening in small groups.

Setting Up

Every parish family should host at least one session, and depending on the parish family, more may be necessary – especially if there are different language needs. This could be done through individual sessions at each parish or in collective listening sessions at the parish family level. Please be sure to promote these sessions widely – through Mass announcements, event calendars, bulletins, digital newsletters, etc. Each parish family should train several people on how to facilitate these sessions. If more help is needed, please reach out to your parish family liaison for assistance. The most effective small groups are between 5-8 people (not counting the moderator or notetaker) for facilitating conversation in a way that allows sufficient sharing from all in a prayerful manner.

Event Flow

This in-person gathering should last about two and a half hours. Please be sure that each group designates a note taker to fill out the input form. (Recording the notes directly on a laptop is preferred but hand-written notes are acceptable. It is not necessary for the group to seek consensus – rather, what is more important is that each participant's voice is heard and captured. A recommended flow for the session is as follows:

Opening Prayer – 10 minutes

Begin with prayer and reflection, inviting the Holy Spirit to be part of this process.

Process Overview – 5 minutes

The parish leadership provides an overview of the listening process, explaining the rounds, how the listening works and how feedback will be recorded. Once this is outlined, please send people to small groups, ensuring each group has a note taker to capture the feedback and input.

The facilitator in each group will then guide the synodal listening, which as three rounds of listening. In the first round, each person will take an equal turn sharing their thoughts. There is no discussion or response in this round; all participants simply listen deeply to what each

person has to say. A time of silence follows, as each person pays attention to the Holy Spirit, the people speaking, and the group as a whole. Each person is invited to share very briefly what stood out for them from the first round. This pattern is repeated with a second and third round of listening.

Questions We're Asking - 10 minutes

The parish leadership then provides an overview of the questions, why those questions are being asked, the way the PFAC has been working in this area and how the input from this session will help guide future planning.

Small Group Listening and Discussion ~60 minutes (for entire listening process)

Please be sure to make space for everyone to share their thoughts, while also keeping an eye on the time. Start with very brief introductions, pose the first question, and then invite people to a few moments of silence before sharing begins.

Round One - 20 minutes

Each person shares once, with equal time for each participant.

*What hopes or concerns does the drafted family vision statement raise in you?
Is there something you find inspiring or you think is missing?*

Round One Summing Up - 3-5 minutes

Each person shares once - this could be one word or one sentence.

What did I hear? What is one theme that stands out from what people shared?

Short Break - 5 minutes

Read the next prompt. Ask them to reflect and pray about it during the break. Inform them of the time that the next round of listening will begin.

Round Two - 20 minutes

Each person shares once, with equal time for each participant.

What hopes or concerns do the drafted initiatives raise for you? Is there something you find inspiring or you think is missing from the list?

Round Two Summing Up -3-5 minutes

Each person shares once.

What did I hear? What is one theme that stands out from what people shared?

Free Conversation in Small Groups -10 minutes

Invite people to provide any feedback they would like to share.

Concluding Prayer - 10 minutes

Bring everyone back together for a concluding prayer. Be sure the notetakers turn in their notes before leaving. For examples of how to open and close a consultative session prayerfully, consult the Archdiocese of Seattle's ["Prayer and the Synodal Process: a guide for synod coordinators"](#) document.