

Parish Families Mark Two Years of Coming Together Across the Archdiocese of Seattle

July 2, 2026 SEATTLE – For the past two years, 136 parishes have been working together in 60 parish families as part of the Partners in the Gospel strategic pastoral planning effort – rooted in the goal of re-reinvigorating parish life across the Archdiocese of Seattle.

In his July 1 letter marking this two-year milestone, Archbishop Paul D. Etienne wrote, “How can we reorganize and restructure parishes so that we are spending more time reflecting Christ’s radical love rather than trying to preserve the status quo that was designed for a different era?”

“How can we combine efforts so that, together, we can better serve our communities as the living presence of Christ, especially for those who are sick and dying; for those who are poor or living on the margins; for the young who seek purpose? This is what Jesus called us to do!”

Year One Activities

The first year was dedicated to getting to know the new pastor, meeting each other and determining their collective gifts and talents. Parish families formed two leadership teams with representatives from each parish: a Parish Family Advisory Council composed of parishioners and a Parish Family Leadership Team composed of employees. Together these teams lead and accompany their communities through the five stages of the One Parish Planning process, which is aimed at forming one new parish over a period of about three years. During this process, they will determine their goals, their vision and their plan as a community of faith.

“What gifts, talents, opportunities and more do our parishes have that can be combined and shared for the greater good? This is at the heart of our One Parish Planning process, which guides parish families as they work together to creatively re-imagine parish life as a new parish community,” Archbishop Etienne wrote.

Year Two Activities

In the second year, the Archdiocese of Seattle launched a series of trainings, resources and tools, including a new short video to bring the vision of Partners in the Gospel to life. Pastors and parochial vicars gathered for retreats, and parish liaisons continued to accompany parish families.

“Our priests have really big jobs, and they are working so hard to move and transition these families through this process,” said Shannon Hull of St. Bridget Parish in Seattle about Father Bill Heric and Parish Family 15. Her middle school students are creating a social media video series to help explain Catholic practices. “The idea is that we meet people where they’re at and to highlight each parish as much as we can in the spirit of bringing our family together.”

Currently, around 42% of parish families are in the “Who Are We?” phase and 54% are in the third phase of planning asking, “Who Do We Want to Become?” In this phase, parishioners are invited to share their hopes and vision for the new parish community. Additionally, 4% of parishes are in the fourth phase, “How do we get there?” which focuses on developing an action plan to bring the vision to life.

To ensure parishioners are helping discern the future vision for the new parish, nearly 400 parish family listening sessions and community consultations have taken place across the archdiocese. Additionally, many parish family ministry leaders began combining efforts offering more robust youth programs, engaging faith formation opportunities, joint fellowship events and more service opportunities.

“I can’t believe how connected we are already,” said Mary Dunivan, parishioner of Immaculate Heart of Mary in Kelso, about Parish Family 43 who describes how the people from the different parishes are coming together “just great!”

“This effort is truly led by the Holy Spirit. Let us be strengthened by this truth as we journey to renew parish life, bringing the light of Christ into the world today,” wrote Archbishop Etienne.

Please read the [pastoral letter](#) by Archbishop Paul D. Etienne, which outlines the vision for this strategic pastoral planning effort. For more information about Partners in the Gospel or to sign up for the UPDATE newsletter, please visit archseattle.org/partners.

About the Archdiocese of Seattle

The Archdiocese of Seattle encompasses all of Western Washington, stretching from Canada to Oregon and from the Cascade Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. There are 74 Catholic schools and 136 parishes organized into 60 parish families in the archdiocese, with more than 500 weekly Masses celebrated in eight languages. Archbishop Paul D. Etienne leads the archdiocese with his auxiliary bishops, Bishop Eusebio Elizondo and Bishop Frank Schuster. For more information about the Archdiocese of Seattle, please visit www.archseattle.org.

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