

**Parish Family Advisory Council**  
**Minutes: Thursday, February 12, 2026**

**Present:** Fr. Matthew Oakland, Chris Morgan, Bernadette Coughlin, Barb Merchant, Tony Cruz, Rey Gereda and Bill Whitaker

**Staff:** Ann Shikany

**Absent:** Amy Morris, Isabella Laguna

**Part 1: Opening Prayer, Dinner and Introductions**

The initial meeting began promptly at 6:00pm at Mary, Queen of Peace parish office. Fr. Oakland welcomed the group and led with prayer and Sunday's Gospel reflection. Next, each member gave a brief introduction about themselves.

**Part 2: Why of Partners –**

Fr. Oakland began with a brief overview and an introduction to the newest video of Partners in the Gospel One Parish Planning Process from the Archdiocese of Seattle. Fr. Oakland also explained that he gathered all three Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils in the parish family for an opportunity to meet and begin to know one another. But their role during this time is to continue fostering the life of their individual parishes. The goal for the Parish Family Advisory Council (PFAC) is foster the life of our one Catholic community.

Fr. Oakland summarized the history of strategic and pastoral planning in the Archdiocese of Seattle. He began with Archbishop Brunett, who focused mostly on the structural. His goal was to help struggling schools, which included the launch of the Fulcrum Foundation to help with funding. With fewer Pastors, clustering of parishes continued, (first begun with Archbishop Murphy) – separate parishes with one pastor. Two new churches - Holy Redeemer in Vancouver, now the second largest in Vancouver after St. John with its large Hispanic community, and St. Theresa of Calcutta in Woodinville.

With Archbishop Sartain the focus was structural and pastoral with more clustering based within the deaneries. There was lots of energy, discernment, recommendations, focused on ministry and quality of ministry and how we carried that out. But the deanery focus stymied the project as a whole. A few parishes were closed in rural areas, plus two mergers in Tacoma and then in Everett as well. A school in south Seattle closed, with another soon to follow.

With Archbishop Etienne the focus was pastoral first and structural second. Archbishop said there is so much goodness and life within our parish communities, but we are also defined by our limitations. First with human resources – a

disproportion number of people in the pews from church to church; people volunteering or on staff, to fill out the full spectrum of ministry and share in this work. Second, limitation in our finances - buildings are expensive and we want to make sure we are funding ministry first, and not just maintenance on many buildings. Lastly, limitation in priests, but also in pastors - priests who can lead communities. We had several pastors on R-1 Visas, who had to abruptly leave partway through the year, with no one to replace them in the short term which created great instability in their communities.

Fr. Oakland continued that while we offer many ministries, there are things that we lack, or could do better. One of those is reaching beyond our parish boundaries, something we aren't great about. The mission suffers because so much of our life is defined by both our blessings and our limitations. And given that our mission is the salvation of souls, that's not something we should allow to continue.

**Small Group Reflection** – Fr. Oakland led the group in a reflection on the following three questions:

**1. What do you mourn or miss that was lost as a part of Partners:**

- SJ daily Mass and the church being more open to visit
- Miss one Pastor, change in parish staff, some rough spots
- Daily Mass schedules – need to have more personal planning to attend daily Mass
- Missing youth activities and other things like Lifeteen
- Change is always challenging
- The onset of Partners brought a lot of uncertainty. What does the future look like
- Losing St. Anthony
- Apprehension at OLOS since it's the smallest, would it eventually be gone. Still a concern
- Miss Fr. Lyle and daily Mass
- Vibrant youth groups at all three parishes

**2. What are the fruits or blessings that you have seen and appreciate as a result of Partners?**

- Rejuvenation, restart and new celebrations
- Attend Mass at all three parishes. Previously had not. It's great being a part of all communities.
- Getting to know more folks and becoming familiar with new faces
- Great seeing and meeting more people
- We have access and connections with two great priests
- Access to strong and talented folks is a blessing for all parishes, expanded base

### 3. What are your hopes?

- More vibrant community
- Better chance to pool resources
- Wider exposure for the school community
- The investment in our youth is the future of the Church
- A greater role for the laity to help offset the decrease in clergy
- To hit the reset button on all ministries
- For the discernment process both personally and the entire community
- Need to create warmth in the community and to extend invites to others
- How can we use proven practices to better our own communities
- Get the Young Adults Ministry underway again
- Need to keep the energy and good experiences going

### 4. Final Thoughts – Fr. Oakland introduced Chris Morgan, who will be leading the group. Chris provided his thoughts on leadership and leading the process. He also shared a recap on the reality of the world we live in with some takeaway points:

- All of what we do gets us closer to God
- What is our mission as we discover together
- There is a tremendous opportunity to share all of our gifts and how best to use them
- Fun to imagine what this can look like
- It is very important to not skip ahead. We need to listen to parishioners and work on the discernment process for all.

### Part 3: How of Partners – What Shapes our process and our work together

Chris led the group and discussed what the norms of the process in this journey:

- Be patient and don't skip ahead
- Ok to disagree – we are here to share ideas
- Involve the Holy Spirit and let him partake
- Spend personal time in prayer during this process
- Keep in mind that this is the time and place God has chosen for us, for this moment in time
- Try to start and end on time
- Pace faster or slower as needed
- Maintain confidentiality when necessary to ensure messaging is accurate and timely
- Be transparent
- Approach with unity and buy into one another

- Here to support each other on all decisions – group effort
- Boldness and courage

The process is prayer and discerning, not majority rule. How is God's will discovered. Not a worldly approach, but God leading and guiding us.

- The group is an advisory to the Pastor and Archbishop.
- Your job is not to advocate for your parish but for the Catholic community as a whole
- How do we listen to respond. Listen to listen and receive. It's important for everyone to be heard but eventually it's the Spirit to lead.
- Take the time for self-reflect along the journey

#### **Part 4: How do we Get There of Partners**

Annie Bailey is the Archdiocesan liaison assigned to Parish Family #28. She will help lead us through the process. What does this actually look like?

- We are currently organizing and will begin with a kickoff. Need several bodies including the Parish Family Leadership team, PFAC, Finance and Pastoral Council at each parish, parish and school staff and school commission. Lots of bodies to help and advise.
- Define who we are before we get going. What are our gifts? We will gather this via a survey to parishioners. PFAC will review the results and respond to the parishes.
- Who do we want to become and serve – start envisioning. Provide a listening event to create a vision statement. OR create the vision statement and present to the audience. Once the process is complete then finalize. Focus on four to six initiatives.
- How do we get there? Work on and prioritize the initiatives.
- What should we be called? Current policy
- The one parish plan – encompasses all the details, key initiatives, staffing with one parish name. One of three names can be selected from the Archbishop's approved list or we choose otherwise and explain why.
- Process will take about two years to complete.

Next Steps:

- Send the "What are the gifts survey"
- Map out the plan and timeline
- Final review of the survey to launch to the community mid-March
- Review post Easter

**Part 5: Questions**

- How often do we meet? Monthly. May be times to meet more with subgroups
- Pre-meeting material will be provided at times, please read prior to the meeting to keep meeting time productive.

**Closing Prayer – Partners Prayer****Adjourned – 8:35 pm****Next Meeting – Thursday, March 5 at 6:30 pm at St. Joseph Parish Library**