



Lower Columbia Catholic Churches (Family 43)

One Parish Plan

Summary

This report explains how our listening sessions over the past two and a half years have helped guide our plans for the new parish we hope to begin together in Spring 2027. It explains why the new parish is needed and shares a five-year plan. The plan is based on our vision statement and on ideas suggested by the people of our current parishes and missions during the listening sessions. The plan also includes input and advice provided by parish family staff and advisory councils. The central part of the proposal is a new weekend Mass schedule. The plan for the new parish will have 6 Masses, which is a change from the 7 active Masses we have now. This means not every church will have a regular Sunday Mass. However, if a church no longer has Sunday Mass, that does not mean the campus will close or be sold. To begin with, the new parish will use our campuses for programs and activities in the same way as we do now.

We are fortunate, because of your good stewardship, that we are relatively financially stable. We do not need to rush decisions about whether we can operate all our campuses indefinitely. The main goal of the five-year plan is to set the new weekend and daily Mass schedule and to help us grow as one parish. We will do this by working together on the goals we have chosen. Then we can make any future decisions carefully and prayerfully.

Two values are very important as we move forward together. First, we need to think and act as one parish. This is different from being a parish cluster. In a parish cluster, one pastor cares for several separate parishes at the same time. Some resources may be shared, but each parish still has its own needs, boundaries, and identity. In a parish with several churches, we will look at everything together. That makes a shared identity very important. Second, we need to understand our mission as the presence of the Catholic Church in this area. The Church does many good things around the world, including worship, evangelization, education, and works of mercy. As we form this new parish, we need to accept our responsibility to be the presence of Christ for every person in our part of the Vineyard. These two values are connected to what a parish is: A parish includes every person, Catholic or not, who lives in a certain area. Our area is large, and there is no “next parish over” to do the work of the Church for us. As one new community, working together, we can do amazing things by God’s grace.

Part I: The Listening Sessions

Preparation Phase

In the summer of 2024, the Archdiocese of Seattle reorganized the parishes across Western Washington into about 60 parish families. Some families were made from parishes that were already working together. Others brought together parishes that had been independent. Our parish family was third kind of mixture: Four of our churches had already worked together as a cluster for more than ten years to serve northern Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties, but we were also asked to include St Joseph Mission in Kalama, which had been a mission of St Philip Parish in Woodland. This expanded our area of responsibility to almost all of Cowlitz County. This setup was meant to be temporary while we discerned how to become one parish from the many parishes and missions in our area. At the same time, the Archdiocese of Seattle assigned new priests to many parish families. For us, that meant Fr Thompson as pastor and Fr Vinner HGN as parochial vicar. This year we welcomed Father Jay Bonete as vicar, after Fr Vinner was transferred by his order.

To help parish leadership and advise our pastor, we asked people to apply for the Parish Family Advisory Council (PFAC). Some parish families in the Archdiocese already had pastoral councils at each church. Those councils continued to work alongside the larger PFAC. Some of our communities had local planning commissions, but they did not have a full pastoral council. Because of this, Fr Thompson chose to form one unified Pastoral Council that would also serve as the PFAC for the family. At the same time, each parish kept its own Finance Council, as required by Church law, to oversee that community's finances. The two missions also kept their own financial resources and identity, but they were represented by joining the Finance Council meetings of St Rose. Because St Joseph was added from another parish, it needed to recruit a new member. The other communities mostly kept their existing arrangements.

Father Thompson and the staff opened applications for the PFAC in August and September 2024. We received 17 applications. After reviewing them and making sure the selected members represented the five church communities, as well as the Spanish-speaking community at St Rose, we invited 9 people to form the council. One gap was that no one from the school community applied. We kept the door open during these years of discernment, but we still did not have a volunteer from the school. We hope to correct this in the new parish. The PFAC membership has stayed mostly the same during these two and a half years. One representative from St Joseph Mission stepped back in September 2026, but we filled that seat right away with another Kalama resident. The Finance Council representative from Kalama also stepped back in September 2026, and we have not yet found a replacement.

Before parish families were created, the former cluster had already brought much of the staff together, with a few exceptions. Over the last two and a half years, we have made more changes when there were opportunities. When some positions became vacant, we did not replace them and brought those responsibilities into the shared office. We also changed some staff responsibilities and work locations. In some cases, staff who had been shared with nearby parish families moved fully to those neighboring families.

Listening Sessions Overview

The Partners in the Gospel process is built around listening to the community. The PFAC and parish staff, also called the Parish Family Leadership Team (PFLT), helps advise the pastor as he makes decisions and helps adjust parish life accordingly. Because of this need to listen, most listening sessions and other chances for feedback used a synodal model. At times, we also used digital surveys. We also learned from normal parish life and from individual conversations. These gave us more informal feedback. The Archdiocese of Seattle also gave us strong support with planning, data collection, communication, canon law, and local policy. These helped set the boundaries for our discernment.

Phase 1: Who are we?

The first part of the Partners in the Gospel process focused on the question, “Who are we?” This phase included basic demographic and financial information about our parish family. It also included a two-part series of listening sessions focused on identifying our gifts but also our challenges and opportunities.

Listening Session 1: Who are we? What are Our gifts?

We began the first listening session in January and February 2025. It used a synodal listening model and online surveys for the church communities and the school. We held four live sessions with more than 100 people total. The youth group also had a modified listening session that included about 60 youth. We received 9 online survey responses from the school community and 52 from the parish community. Some of those responses came from people who had also attended a live session. We expected participation to slowly decrease as the process continued, but this was a strong start. After reviewing the results and hearing guidance from the Archdiocese, we decided future sessions would work better if they were fewer and more focused. From then on, we usually held one evening session, one midday session, and one Spanish session after a Sunday Mass. After each round of input, the priests and PFAC discussed the results and shared them with the parish in a public letter. Usually, one side of the letter gave a summary from the Pastoral Council/PFAC, and the other side gave the pastor’s comments and proposals.

At the “What are our gifts?” sessions, people named many ministries and volunteer opportunities in our churches. Common answers included the importance of Sacraments, Eucharistic Adoration, devotional prayers, and sacred music. People also said they value that our communities “bring many cultures together.” They described us as a “welcoming community that works together.” Some also named hospitality as an important and successful ministry at several churches. The school was identified as an important part of the wider community and as a community hub. At the same time, people noted that St Rose School can sometimes feel separate from parish life. Stronger school-parish connections were an area of hope for improvement.

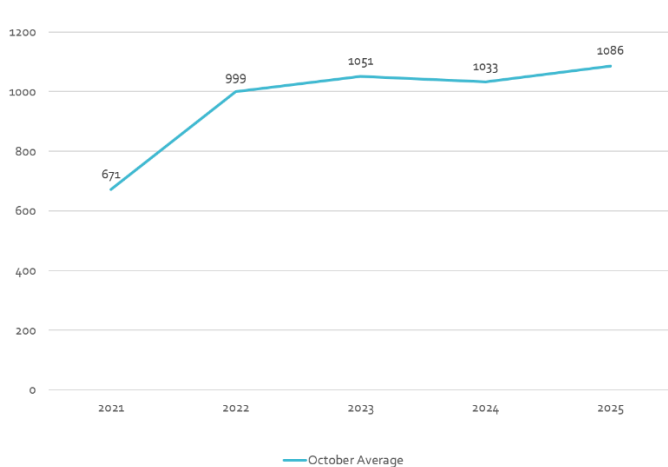
Many of our churches are very active and have long relationships with works of charity in their local communities. As a parish family, and sometimes as individual churches, we support or take part in many charitable efforts. These include St Vincent de Paul, Prepares, Family Promise, FISH, jail ministry, and local food banks, among others. Our churches also have Knights of Columbus councils that serve in our area through social and charitable works. In formation and education, we also offer several parishioner-led Bible studies and faith formation opportunities during the year.

Around the same time as the first public listening session, the Archdiocese gave us statistical, demographic, financial, and property reports on our communities and campuses. The reports showed that the people of our church communities are older on average than the wider population of Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. The Spanish-language ministry at St Rose and the school make the average age in Longview somewhat younger, but not by a large amount. Most of our parishioners are White, and we also have a large and growing Hispanic community. We also have smaller groups of Pacific Islanders, especially Filipino and Chuukese parishioners. There are also individuals and families from many other backgrounds. Many people in our area work in blue-collar and white-collar jobs, especially in industries connected to industry and agriculture.

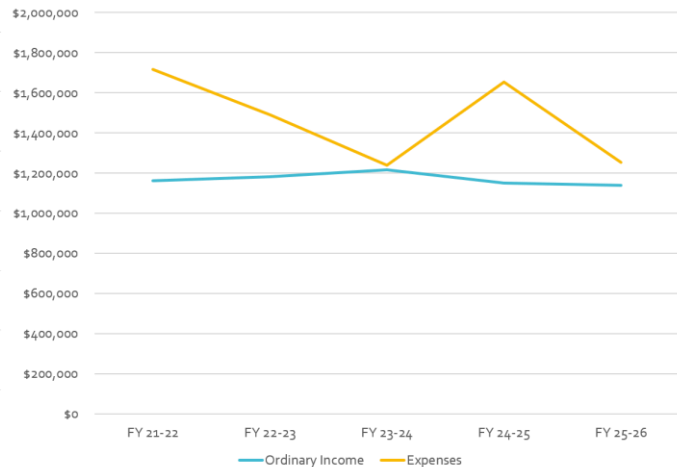
Families in our parish use several different kinds of education for their children. Most use public schools, some use our parish school or another private school. A smaller, but still appreciable, number of families homeschool their children.

The report from the Archdiocese also included our combined income, expenses, and Mass attendance over the past several years.

Mass Attendance



Income/Expense



Mass attendance has not fully returned to where it was before the Covid pandemic. Still, attendance is growing overall. On average, we are gaining a few dozen people each year across all our communities. Our financial trends since Covid have been harder to predict. According to our internal numbers, our basic income and expenses seem to be moving in a sustainable direction all together, though local situations differ per church. However, the Archdiocese's projections were affected by unusual Covid-year factors. Expenses were lower during some years because of Payroll Protection Plan loans and forgiveness. Some years also included large building repair projects, and part of those costs came from savings instead of regular income. Because of this, when we estimated finances for the new parish, we made a conservative projection, as opposed to using the numbers the Archdiocese's data set, which led to absurd outcomes projected out 5 years. We assume in our plans that income could rise about 1.5% each year and expenses rise about 3% each year. With steady growth in our population, this should leave us in a fairly stable place. However, we will eventually need a strategic plan to slow expense growth, reduce overhead, and increase income growth.

The Archdiocese also reviewed the condition of our buildings and properties. They used a color code. Green means a property is in excellent condition and needs little beyond normal maintenance. Yellow indicates a property needs small repairs, minor safety improvements, or updates that are not strictly required. Red is a broad category. It means a building needs real repair. This could include restoration of something damaged by an otherwise resolved issue, catching up on delayed

St Mary	St Catherine	St Joseph	Immaculate Heart	St Rose
Church & Hall	Church & Hall	Church	Church & Rectory	Church
Storage Shed		Hall	Hall and Classrooms	Rectory
			Covered Walkway	Parish Center & Office
			Storage Shed	Mulligan Hall
				School

maintenance, or problems that could become safety or security concerns. Black means a property needs major repairs or even replacement of the building. The chart near this paragraph shows an updated review of our sites after work completed over the last several years. Because of that, it is different from earlier building condition summaries.

Listening Session 2: Who are we? What are our challenges and opportunities?

We held our second set of listening sessions in May 2025. A total of 84 people took part in three live sessions using a synodal model. The pattern of three sessions became our normal approach for the rest of the process: one evening session, one midday session, and one Spanish session. This round of sessions had two main parts. The first part asked about the challenges and opportunities in the wider community. The purpose was to help us discern how the Church can serve the whole parish area, remembering that a parish includes all the people in a certain territory. As always, an update letter was published summarizing the results for parishioners.

Participants named several social and economic problems in our community. This included homelessness, poverty, crime, addiction, lack of good jobs, and lack of resources. They also noted that many people in our area do not have faith, or do not actively practice it. Youth were mentioned as especially in need of direction. People also said that our culture often lacks a clear moral foundation. Participants also noticed growing political division in our local communities and in the nation. This has made it harder for people to get along with those who have different political or social views. As more cultures have come into our area, language and cultural divides have also become more noticeable. In some cases, this can even appear as racism.

In the second part of the listening session, we looked at the challenges and opportunities within our parish family. Many people said communication can be difficult across churches and programs. They also noted problems in communication between parishioners, staff, and clergy. Others said that a small number of volunteers seem to do most of the work in our churches. Some people also noticed a lack of knowledge or appreciation for our Catholic Faith and Tradition. We also heard concerns that some effects of the Covid pandemic are still present. Some people remain extremely cautious about germs, and others have not returned to the habit of attending church.

One challenge stood out across many tables and listening sessions: Our wider community is getting older, and this is even more noticeable in our churches. There are fewer children in our congregations than there used to be. Over time, parish culture has also shifted in ways that may not attract young people or young families.

Phase 2: Who do we want to become?

Listening Session 3: Who do we want to become?

After finishing the “Who are we?” portion of the Partners in the Gospel process in the Spring of 2025, we rested over the summer of 2025 and reconvened in September to begin the “Who do we want to become?” phase. Our third listening session in September 2025 drew 56 people across three live synodal listening sessions. This portion drew on the results of the “Who are we?” phase as well as conversations that had occurred in the PFAC/Pastoral council.

This third listening session was the open-ended step of the process by design, allowing people to both brainstorm and to present hopes and dreams for what a new parish could accomplish with all our participation. Due to this, the suggestions varied in terms of how concrete or aspirational they may have been.

Following on the theme of the second listening session, one message we received loud and clear was desire that the new parish focus on evangelization especially emphasizing bringing young adults and families into the community. We also received many strong suggestions about the importance of fostering a unified identity as the new parish and forging social connections. The strength of this input led us to make a decision to add a staff member to the team oriented towards Evangelization and coordination of community efforts.

Responding to another identified challenge and opportunity from the previous listening session: lacking formation in our faith or anemic appreciation of our Sacred Tradition, some suggested that the new parish should start with the most essential thing: Divine Worship celebrated worthily. From there we could expand to faith formation, spiritual, and charitable offerings.

Coming at the question of evangelization from another direction, the Spanish session especially expressed a desire to reach out to and help fallen away Catholics and those who are living with a barrier to the reception of Sacraments and the full living of their faith (especially those living with marriage irregularity issues).

In the orbit of these two main themes, there were strong calls to some specific values. The desire to serve the Works of Mercy and offer formation in the social doctrine of the Church was popular. We also heard a desire for the new parish to serve those called to the Sacrament of Matrimony, both in the form of enrichment of marriage and family but also adequate preparation for the engaged. Connected to this, Participants expressed hope that the new parish support parents as the first and primary educators of their children. At the Spanish session, people advocated that we call children and youth into ministry more intentionally. Suggestions also came in that if we wish to form community and call people into ministry. We should ensure that everyone is aware of what ministries exist and make sure our ministries

are open to participation across the lines of our present parish and mission communities. Importantly, many also expressed an awareness that the challenging cost of all these wonderful ideas is that we must shed outdated habits and structures.

Phase 3: How do we get there?

Listening Session 4: Defining the Vision and Initiatives

Father Thompson and the PFAC took the output from the third listening session and worked together to develop a shared vision statement that could guide our new parish toward these goals. Then, with this vision statement in mind, they proposed a list of potential initiatives that the new parish could take on to pursue the hopes and desires expressed in the listening sessions. We presented a draft vision statement and fairly long list of potential initiatives to parishioners, and the fourth listening session consisted of hearing perspectives of the people regarding them. The fourth set of listening sessions was conducted by synodal listening model in November 2025. For this consultation, we reopened the possibility of online survey responses in a limited way. In total, 90 people across three live sessions participated, a notable jump from the previously decreasing participation, as well as six online submissions. As always, a public summary letter from Father Thompson and the PFAC followed the session. In this case, the form it took was the final vision statement and the chosen initiatives among the longer list of potentials.

While not directly the topic of the listening session, this session was the point at which many people were beginning to express concern about the practical consequences of founding a new parish. We especially heard concern about reduction of Sunday Masses, and the reality that this might lead to some locations no longer having a Sunday Mass. While Father Thompson had been open about this reality from the beginning, we realized this was the moment in the process where the notion became “real” to a number of people on account of the first proposed initiative: evaluate the number and location of Sunday Masses in our parish family.

Within the longer list of potential initiatives, people continued to express desire to improve communication across the parish family and more effectively to use technology. There was a great deal of positivity around marriage preparation and enrichment, especially at the Spanish-language session. There was also great enthusiasm for coordination and education around the social doctrine of the Church and charitable service.

Some initiatives drew mixed opinions. The idea of establishing a parish cemetery and the idea of exploring the possibility of some kind of catholic education on the high school level in Cowlitz County drew a small but impassioned number of opinions, both for and against. At the same time, there was

general enthusiasm in principle for the support for parents in their task of providing education for their children and ensuring they have resources available to them.

Finalizing the Vision Statement and Initiatives

Ultimately, Fr Thompson and the PFAC used the input to focus the list of potential initiatives down to a shorter list and finalized the phrasing of the parish vision statement:

Glorify God, proclaim the Gospel, and form disciples who love, live, and serve like Jesus Christ.

The outlook behind the vision statement is to understand our Christian calling as a series of expanding circles of responsibility. We must begin and keep everything we do rooted in our duty to God. This strengthens, fuels, and leads us to take on personal responsibility for the work of the Church. Our service in turn leads us to “pass on the fire” by inviting others into the love of God and the work of the Church. By doing this, we equip others for discipleship and ministry so that they in turn can continue the cycle.

In terms of our final initiatives, we ended up with:

1. Discuss and evaluate the number of Sunday Masses needed in the new parish.
2. Evaluate activity storage and program space and resources (as part of a facility review)
3. Evaluate the use of technology to serve the parish and improve communication.
4. Explore ways to foster and support families and the Sacrament of Matrimony
5. Evaluate and coordinate works of mercy within the parish.
6. Evaluate and state the needs of Catholic Education in the parish.

We understood each of these stated initiatives calls us to follow up the exploration and evaluation by appropriate action in the new parish, and in preparation for it. In the spring of 2026, the PFAC and staff began applying the listening session feedback to develop multistep plans to put the initiatives into action.

Our plan is more pastorally oriented than structurally oriented, and so the majority of our initiatives have a relatively small financial impact of adding a few thousand dollars to the budget each year to support the work. There could also be subtle costs such as utilities or devoting a certain amount of staff time to the work. The outcome of the facility review, with the potential for building projects, and the technology review, with the intention of purchasing and installing devices, represent larger one-time costs with funding mechanisms that the new parish will determine in the case of building work, or for which the present parishes have already dedicated funds such as this year’s ACA rebate dedicated to technology.

Initiative 1: Mass Allocation

Need: sufficient times and locations for worthy Divine Worship. Vatican II teaches the Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian Life.

- Determine the number and location of Sunday Masses for the new parish.
- Shape proposal according to canon law and Archdiocesan policy.
- Base proposal on objective and subjective data
 - Attendance vs capacity of each church
 - Priest and lay minister numbers
 - Equity of drive times for as many parishioners as possible
 - Time of day and travel safety, especially for elders
 - Financial factors, if applicable
 - Factors unique to each site
- Remain attentive to history and personal experiences, while at the same time recognizing that in fairness, we cannot honor or value one person's story or investment in one of our communities over someone else's investment in his.

Initiative 2: Facility Review

Need: Functioning, adequate, and safe facilities. Also, it serves financial stewardship.

- Seek input from ministries and programs to establish needs.
- Assess or update assessments of building conditions and deferred maintenance (need and cost)
- Discern need and propose projects (Repairs, renovations, replacement)
- Consultation with pastor on major projects and fundraising

Initiative 3: Technology

Need: Tools to permit participation more effectively in programs and foster communication across our territory.

- Evaluate current technology in use.
- Collect input from ministries and programs regarding desires and hopes for technology.
- Propose whole-parish technology plan.
- Facilitate installation and setup.
- Train ministry and program leaders & ordinary parishioners

Initiative 4: Communications

Need: Tools and practices to communicate effectively.

- *Note: We split this off from the technology initiative because communications is more complicated than technology alone*

- Establish clear and consistent processes and procedures.
- Evaluate staffing needs.
- Evaluate state of parish website and social media presence.
- Train use of Parishstaq and Our Catholic Community App
- Develop branding and logo for new parish.
- Budget for and change Signage, Letterhead, and digital presence
- Budget for and redesign Church vestibules
- Maintain bulletin and physical bulletin board postings for non-technology users.

Initiative 5: Marriage and vocations support and promotion

Need: Discern and live our vocations from God and foster vocations with focus on family as seedbed of all vocations

- *Note: This initiative was adapted and expanded beyond Matrimony to fulfill a goal of vocations promotion the Archdiocese set.*
- Recruit and vet members for vocations Commission.
 - Initial experiment with orientation toward vocations as a whole
 - If this is ineffective, we will reorganize the leadership of this initiative.
- Discern and propose events and programs.
- Assist priests in coordinating a team of mentor couples to provide marriage preparation.
- Propose and plan marriage enrichment events.
- Propose and plan promotions of Holy Orders and Religious Life

Initiative 6: Works of Mercy Coordination and Formation

Need: Intellectual formation in the social doctrine of the Church, human, and spiritual formation to learn love for the poor, and coordination of shared efforts to perform the works of corporal and spiritual mercy

- Recruit and vet initial Commission members.
- Gather information on existing Works of Mercy in the parish.
- Help ministries discern their most effective paths forward.
- Proposed charitable giving by the parish in local area.
- Discern, propose, and provide educational and formational opportunities for parishioners in the social teaching of the Church.

Initiative 7: Support Catholic Education

Need: Parents who are equipped with resources and supported by the parish in their vocation as first and primary educators of children in all things.

- Listen and discern needs of parents in the parish.
- Special attention for access to resources by all parents across education options (home, parish, other private, or public school)
- Advise pastor on educational and formational needs of community.
- Collaborate with School Commission to foster school-parish integration.

Forming the Plan

In late spring 2026, Father Thompson provided an outline of the latter portion of the Partners in the Gospel process. This included an explanation that the nature of the process would change during this part of the “How do we get there?” phase. Father shared that the staff had a number of tasks in this phase related to putting together a plan based on all the previous decisions and feedback. He wanted people to know that this part would be a little more technical and done “behind the scenes.” Finally, he shared that for most of our parishioners, the presentation of the One Parish Plan would likely be the next major point of communication. However, he did later end up providing a few additional updates or points of consultation as will be noted below. These were above and beyond what was originally required for the process.

During this same time, but separate from the Partners in the Gospel process, in May of 2026 we suspended regularly scheduled use of the St Joseph Mission campus in Kalama. We did so because of concerns about building issues that we were afraid might soon become active problems of safety to people and property. We are currently working with the Archdiocese to gather precise information about how much it would cost to fix the building. Also, there is a local effort to fund the repair of the property. As much as possible, we have kept the building problems of St Joseph Mission separate from the PitG process. We did this because we did not want to predetermine certain decisions or deny local people the opportunity to try to fix the building. However, there are important things in the One Parish Plan that do overlap with the local situation at St Joseph Mission.

In the late portion of Spring and early Summer 2026, Father Thompson devoted several weekly bulletin columns to explaining and inviting applications to the various commissions and committees that the new parish initiatives would require. Several applications have come in already and recruitment is still ongoing. When a given Commission hits a critical Mass of qualified candidates, Father Thompson, or the appropriate leader for that Commission or Committee, will bring the body together for the first time and begin operating. They will address things that benefit our current communities and also plan for the new parish.

During the summer of 2026, the staff evaluated the financial and practical impacts of initiatives and other changes that would be needed for the new parish. This involved considering some hypothetical scenarios of major fundraising for building projects and even sale of property. This impact analysis was not a concrete plan or precommitment, but a check to ensure that the consequences of any decisions we might make in new parish would keep us viable.

Father Thompson decided that the communities might benefit from being able to see select portions of the data currently under consideration, especially around the initiative that would change people's experience of our faith most: Evaluation of the number and location of Sunday Masses in the new parish. In July 2026, we shared high level summaries of financial, geographic, and attendance data. The update provided a profile for each of our churches and the goals set by the Archdiocese. This was once more over and above what was strictly required, but Father Thompson felt it was important for transparency.

Part II: One Parish Plan Proposal

We reviewed the process of our listening sessions and their fruits, the things we have learned in these last two and a half years of living the reality of a parish family. We also looked back on the older "cluster" model. It is clear that the goals of our discerned initiatives are not obtainable while we have to maintain the complexity of 5 canonical entities. We have noted a high degree of priest, staff, and volunteer fatigue that we cannot sustain for very much longer. A high degree of this fatigue and burnout is on account of overextension or the need to keep matters such as finances parallel, which multiplies the amount of work needed.

Yes, our parish family is indeed growing, yet the rate of growth is not outpaced by looming realities of demographics as older generations age. We also recognize our responsibility to our forebears to be faithful and respectful stewards of patrimony, especially in cases where some things unfortunately cannot be preserved as they presently are. In such cases, we must find a way to preserve what we can while also being responsible for seeking the good of each other now and that of those who will come after us.

A reorganization of the presence and ministry of the Catholic Church in our territory is needed, not just in terms of size or number of facilities we operate or our schedule of liturgies, but in parish life and culture itself. We need to reduce redundancies and move from an outlook focused on maintenance to a unified parish vision that enables us to experience renewed effectiveness.

None of these matters can be avoided. These challenges and opportunities are already present and already grave. Therefore, we propose after this long period of discernment, and because the already-

attempted cluster model does not solve the identified challenges, forming one parish is indeed the most responsible and reasonable path forward.

Managing Expectations

Before we put forward the concrete proposal for our new canonical parish, we want to establish clearly what it does and does not mean. We are planning for the continuity of the work and presence of the Catholic Church in our territory. A new parish means new outlook and new culture, not just matters of buildings, finances, and scheduling. This plan and this reality will be a lot to process intellectually and emotionally, and our feelings are entirely understandable. We are human and may have strong emotions and responses to the realities set before us.

However, we must also be clear on the reality of our situation. We cannot abandon this path or fail to address these challenges. We cannot sustain a thin spread of resources as we are presently doing, nor can our proposed new parish be founded upon an unsustainably thin spread of our resources. We need especially to be realistic about energy and morale of our priests, staff, and volunteers. While this reality will mean we must confront some strong emotions, especially recognizing certain easy solutions or options of delay we have taken in the past are off the table, we know also that we cannot change the reality that we have to make difficult decisions at this time. The choice is in our hands whether to experience this as an adversarial process, a managed decline, or an opportunity for renewal.

Our hope, and goal, is to make these decisions in a spirit of true freedom. One of the great spiritual principles of discernment is not to make major decisions at moments of great consolation or great desolation. This is one of the reasons why this process has been so long and deliberative, to ensure that we are not making impulsive, sentimental, or unnecessarily drastic decisions. Indeed, you will see that the plan put forward below limits the initial changes to what we need to come together as a single community. From there, together, we can make the big decisions that still await in proper time and in spiritual freedom.

Divine Worship

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the source and summit of the Christian life, and the centrality of divine worship was raised as such in the listening sessions. Beginning the planning of the new parish with consideration of the most important function of a parish makes perfect sense. It also makes a lot of practical sense given that one of the great sources of clergy and lay volunteer burnout and stress is overextending ourselves regarding the number of liturgies celebrated, especially on Sunday.

The values we used when thinking about the allocation of Sunday Masses began with setting a boundary on how many Masses we ask of our priests. By custom and law, a priest is highly encouraged to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass every day. If—for pastoral reasons—he needs to say a second Mass on a

given day, he may do so with the permission of the local bishop (ours has graciously granted us as a standing permission). For the sake of providing sufficient Masses on a Sunday or holy day of obligation, a priest can even say three Masses if truly necessary. On a human level, each additional Mass and/or change of location or language takes a certain amount of stamina from the priest that an average parishioner may not fully appreciate. An occasional exception for an extra Mass on a special occasion is a sacrifice a priest could find motivation for (indeed, this is the very reason the law makes room for a second or third Mass). However, setting such over-extension as the norm, especially to maintain Mass times and locations that are not particularly full is demoralizing and draining over time. Thus, in the new parish, we will respect an ordinary limit of one vigil Mass and two Sunday Masses per priest. With our two priests this means a maximum of six Masses—and even that many only if truly needed.

Regarding the distribution of these six weekend Masses, the number of people served per Mass and what percentage of the seating capacity of a church each Mass uses are important factors. The Archdiocese helped us by concretizing this value into an ideal range for how much of a church building's seating should be used. The goals are designed to support sufficient vibrancy for a given Mass, while also not filling the church so completely that people are regularly uncomfortable and there is no space for growth. Specifically, the guideline we are using for our planning is that each Mass will fill its church between 50% to 80% of capacity. We understand that this will not always be possible and there are certain values that could override the capacity goals of a specific Mass, provided that the parish overall still achieves 50% to 80% capacity usage. For example, we might excuse capacity metrics for a small church in a remote area, without which there would be people lacking access to a church within a reasonable distance of travel.

Alongside the initial framework of the maximum number of Masses and attendance capacity goals, we considered principles drawn from the listening session feedback and other sources of advice and input that came in. We remembered the desire to foster truly worthy worship and prioritized the ability to bring a congregation together that has enough people and energy to make this a reality. To do this, we decided that a necessity for any viable plan would be a perspective that the whole parish is to be served by any decision, rather than falling back into “parish cluster” mentalities of maintaining the status quo or serving local needs in parallel and tension, or even competition. Drawing from feedback, we also wanted to ensure the times of the Masses were arranged such that the priest could spend social time with the people after Mass, and that we could develop a deeper culture of consistent hospitality across the whole parish. To enable a sense of belonging in the broader community, we sought to arrange the Masses geographically such that drive times for our people were equitable. We plotted the addresses of our registered parishioners on a map and evaluated the distances. We determined that asking a drive of about 30 minutes or less to Mass represented a good goal both in terms of geographic ranges that cover our whole territory, but also in terms of what we hope feels reasonable to the most people—using simple

tests of intuitive reasonableness such as how far one would drive to buy groceries or run some mundane errand.

Even though the listening sessions clearly indicated a desire to focus on the needs and service of young families, we obviously also wanted to make sure we were serving the whole community, especially our elders. So, we set as another value that our Masses should not be set excessively early or excessively late in the day, specifically to avoid—as much as possible—asking people to drive in the dark. Finally, we wanted to make sure that we were attentive to our cultural communities, which in our case meant that the Spanish Mass needs to remain a given on the schedule and also at a time that would treat that community as a true part of our parish and not as an afterthought or outsiders.

	St Mary	St Catherine	St Joseph	Immaculate Heart	St Rose
Current Masses	1	1	1*	1	4
Attendance vs. Capacity and % (Oct 2025 counts)	8:30am – 117/250; 47%	Vigil – 27/80; 34%	Vigil – 37/100; 37%	10:30am – 164/370; 44%	Vigil – 125/480; 26% 9am – 193/480; 40% 11am – 199/480; 42% 1pm – 226; 46%
Time to Parish Center	25 min	35 min	10 min	10 min	-
Longest Drive to Parish Center (even if by choice)	45 min	75 min	30 min	30 min	50 min
Special Factors	Last point before rural communities; Highway Adjacent	Last point before rural communities	Historical Building; Highway Adjacent; Significant Building issues (local effort to repair underway)	Highway Adjacent; Rectory	Rectory; School; Parish Center adjacent.

* Out of respect for the local efforts to repair St Joseph Mission, and to give it every benefit, we put St Joseph into the evaluation according to the same October 2025 statistics as the rest of the churches.

The above table summarizes the most important factors we considered. The data show that while most of our Masses are in the 40% or higher range in terms of capacity used, no Mass was above 50% full in October 2025. However, because we do take Mass attendance each week, we are aware that some of our Masses do at present break 50% attendance occasionally or even regularly in 2026. It is also important not only to consider capacity use by percent, but also to keep in mind the absolute number of individuals and the size of the Church in question.

Both capacity percentages and absolute attendance numbers indicated nearly immediately that we could not take “easy” solutions such as combining the 9am and the 11am Mass at St Rose to spare us from having to consider the status of one of the Masses at another church. Even in October 2025, the 9am and 11am Masses would combine to more than 80% of capacity. Similarly, the Saturday Vigil could not be a candidate for cancellation or movement. While it represents the lowest percentage in terms of capacity, if we asked that raw number of people to relocate to one of our other sites, they would fill that church beyond the 80% capacity. Additionally, were we to move the whole Mass laterally to another site, we would risk excessive attrition in attendance if we were to ask both a Sunday Mass congregation—some of whom come for a convenient time—to move to Saturday evening while also asking the—on average older—Saturday night attendees to change location.

So, it was clear that we could not reduce from eight to six Masses by reducing the number of Masses at St Rose below the present four. The question then became how to distribute out the 5th and, if needed, 6th Mass between four remaining churches. St Catherine Mission, Cathlamet came to the fore as essential because without a church in that location there are people who would be intolerably distant from a Catholic church. Yes, the drive from St Catherine itself to the Parish Center is only five minutes outside of our window of equity, but many of the St Catherine attendees live further West and North. The churches of Pacific County are more than an hour beyond Cathlamet, and even were they nearer, we are responsible for every person who is in our territory and cannot under-serve them even were they geographically closer to another parish.

Setting the building situation entirely aside, St Joseph is not a viable candidate for the last available Mass due to its small size and close proximity to other churches. Actual used capacity aside, the greatest number of people a Mass there could serve is only 100, which is less than attend our existing smallest Mass in Cowlitz County.

This led our evaluation to become a consideration between allotting a Sunday Mass to St Mary, Castle Rock or allotting a Sunday Mass to Immaculate Heart, Kelso. We did acknowledge that the entire population of both St Mary and Immaculate Heart could join the Masses in Longview without breaking building capacity, but it could potentially exceed the goal range of 80% frequently. At the same time, we recognized that discontinuing Sunday Mass in Castle Rock would violate our pastoral commitment to

rural access. Without a Mass at St Mary, people living in rural areas in the northern part of the county and on the slopes of Mount St Helens would need to drive for a time beyond what we deemed equitable to attend Mass.

Immaculate Heart is also highway adjacent, significantly larger than St Mary, and has much more ample facilities. However, we came back to the question of drive time equity for rural communities, and the reality that there is a yet larger church 10 to 15 minutes from Immaculate Heart, any one of whose Masses, apart from the Spanish Mass, could take in all of the congregants from the current 10:30 AM Mass without breaking the attendance capacity goals.

Thus, we deemed a 6th Mass necessary and determined that it ought to be celebrated at St Mary. This was a difficult decision because metrics, goals, and principles aside, we understand that we are dealing with real people who have real bonds in communities. At the same time, this cannot prevent us from making the necessary decisions, motivated by the good and future viability of the whole new parish not only at present but in the range of decades.

We propose the following Sunday schedule:

Saturday	Sunday
4PM Longview	Sunday 8:30AM Longview
5PM Cathlamet	Sunday 9:30AM Castle Rock
	Sunday 10:30AM Longview
	Sunday 12:30pm Longview (Spanish)

With the number of Masses we are planning, we were able to space them out such that times do not overlap, providing people with ample opportunities for Masses on Sunday. We hope the space between Masses will also serve the goal of giving priests sufficient time to socialize with the people between Masses. Between the Sunday morning Masses in Longview, it does remain a little tight at an hour for hospitality but given that the priest needs to walk rather than drive to the next Mass we believe this can still honor the value of pastoral and social availability. The timing of the Masses themselves avoids excessively early or late times that would ask people to drive in the dark for extended periods of the year. Finally, the physical placement of the Masses honors the goal of ensuring that people in rural communities have reasonable access to a church and everyone in our territory be at most 30 minutes from a Catholic church.



	M	T	W	R	F	Sat AM
Pastor	OFF	Longview	Longview (School)	Longview	Longview	Longview
Vicar	Longview	OFF		Castle Rock	Kelso	
					1 st Friday Longview (pm, Spanish)	

Periodic	Kalama	Nursing Homes	Hospital
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In terms of the weekday schedule, we wanted to establish a consistent 7-day Mass time at our largest church. At the same time, we wanted to make sure to offer consistent daily Mass at the other churches too. We chose to allot those daily Masses at the same time and location as they are in the present arrangement. Maintaining the days that a particular church presently has Eucharistic Adoration permits that that ministry to continue uninterrupted. This is also helpful in the case of Immaculate Heart, because a church must always have a minimum number of Masses celebrated in it over the course of the year, and even though it will not be a Sunday Mass, ensuring there is a Mass every Friday goes well above and beyond fulfilling that obligation. We also have not forgotten Kalama. Even while we are in a process of discerning the feasibility of repairing the church, we are attentive to the need to say Mass there occasionally. If and when the safety concerns are addressed, we will be able to use that church more freely. Cathlamet will remain with a liturgical schedule of one weekend Mass and Adoration, with the ability to request a weekday celebration of Mass on occasion as needed, or for necessities such as weddings or funerals.

Two additional changes from our current daily Mass schedule are that the somewhat new daily Mass in Castle Rock on Mondays will not continue, as the priests discerned after following that schedule through the summer of 2026, they cannot sustain it in terms of schedule and stamina. Being first thing in the morning on a Monday and away from the parish center was becoming a burden, and finding ministers has also been difficult at times. Similarly, the Tuesday Mass presently celebrated at Immaculate Heart will be shifted to Longview not only to serve the 7-day consistent Mass time, but also because a midday Mass on Tuesday has taken a significant toll on Father Thompson's ability to attend to his duties in the office and other parish needs. You may also see that we are going to maintain the First Friday Spanish Mass in the evening as well as remain open to periodic scheduling of off-site Masses at locations such as nursing homes and St John Hospital (something we have not been able to offer in these last two and a half years while we have been stretched as thin as we have been). Finally, maintaining only one Mass on Wednesday, concelebrated by both priests, enables the priests to be present to the Parish School.



With this discussion of the schedule completed, we can summarize what to expect in both the immediate term upon the founding of the new parish, as well as in the first five years of our coming together as a community.

Upon the founding of the new parish, we will adopt the above Sunday and weekday Mass schedule. This will mean cessation of regularly scheduled weekend Mass in Kelso and the cessation of one of the two current daily Masses, while maintaining Mass and Eucharistic Adoration on Friday. The cessation of regularly scheduled Masses in Kalama will continue, but crucially because it is now so due to broader pastoral planning as opposed to building and safety reasons, we must understand that the local efforts to repair the building will not foreseeably lead to regularly scheduled Mass being established there by the new parish.

Over the course of our first five years together, we will integrate as a community including reassembling and retraining our liturgical ministries and taking steps to foster greater unity and shared identity. The churches that do not have a regularly scheduled Sunday Mass will still be used either regularly or on occasion for daily Masses as well as remaining available for liturgical use by our parish programs, for weddings and funerals, and for other events. This is not to mention the continuation of programs and ministries.

Community Stewardship

Divine Worship is the largest practical component of our One Parish Plan. However, a parish is first and primarily its people. So, the stewardship of our community life is going to be a guiding value as we unfold the initiatives that came from the listening sessions, as well as whatever else comes our way in terms of opportunities to foster a sense of community, solidarity, and identity as a single parish with multiple locations (as opposed to an assortment of cooperating but independent churches).

In the immediate term from now until found the new parish—and beyond, we need to be fostering actively and intentionally a whole-parish attitude and outlook. This will mean setting aside old ways of thinking and old priorities. Our Coordinator for Evangelization will continue to invite ministries to collaborate and help the liturgical ministers plan and schedule their new teams. One thing that will be very important to internalize is the notion that we really are a new parish and so those who are accustomed to having particular ministry will need to understand that while they are welcome to volunteer again for that same ministry, perhaps even at the same church building that they are accustomed, no individual is going to have seniority or prior claim to this or that ministry. This is just a function of fairness and compassion to those who might be finding themselves in a new time or at a new place for worship and community life.

Also, from now to the founding of the new parish and beyond, we will be recruiting for the initiative-related commissions and committees. Deacon Fred will be leading our Works of Mercy Commission,

Father Thompson and Cecile Bamer will be heading up the Technology Commission, we are still seeking parents and others who have expertise or insight into education to form the Catholic Education and Vocations Commissions, and we are open to new voices on the existing Maintenance Commission as well as those who have expertise and insight to bring to the Building Committee, which will discern any major projects we need to undertake.

In the first five years, our community stewardship may involve such things as creating a Social Committee or other ways to foster community life and opportunities to get to know one another. In parish leadership, our Pastoral Council members will be invited to continue forward as the Pastoral Council of the new parish, having thankfully put the Partners in the Gospel PFAC responsibilities behind. If there are vacancies, we will of course seek to fill them, maintaining representation across our parishioners.

Patrimony Stewardship

The immediate and five-year plan for stewardship of our shared patrimony, which means our material property such as sacred art, documents, and even mundane things like tables and chairs, is very simple: natural continuity. No special actions are required, and stewardship of our history and artifacts comes to the new parish automatically. Still, it is important that the new parish, while not dwelling on the old, acknowledge and remember the life of the parishes that will have ended. We anticipate the creation of a History Commission to memorialize the former parishes. This group may do such things as determining which artifacts to include in a display in the lobby of the Parish Center, or to help us organize and archive what we inherit from the former communities.

Facilities Stewardship

Facilities are a place where the whole-parish perspective is going to be particularly crucial. When we come together, our real estate, buildings, and property immediately become the responsibility of the new parish. The needs of one physical site will become the needs of all. Our Maintenance Commission will begin considering the needs of all our sites with fresh eyes and with a mandate to conduct the building review called for by the initiatives. We will take stock of our maintenance needs, especially those needs that have previously been deferred, and which have become worse over time on that account. The Maintenance Commission will propose an order and strategy to bring our facilities up to standards. At the same time, our Building Committee will evaluate the larger-scale needs of the new parish in terms of facilities, exploring the potential to renovate spaces, add church seating where needed, and even undertake construction. Most notably, we have already identified the need to raze and rebuild Mulligan Hall to provide more storage and meeting space, as well as additional space for use by the school.

There will also be minor adjustments needed to facilities prior to the establishment of the new parish, to make some of the immediate items workable. A prime example of this are adjustments to the parking lots at St Rose and St Mary to include more handicap stalls.

Over the next five years, we will take the advice of the Maintenance Commission and take a more proactive stance on deferred maintenance, so that our facilities do not become a liability. On the Building Committee side, there are quite likely some projects that may not be attainable either financially or in terms of time and attention within the first five years, but we will do what we can without overextending ourselves.

To the degree we can accomplish our goals through ordinary income and prudent use of savings, we will do so. To the degree that we need to propose a capital campaign, which will be likely for the replacement of Mulligan Hall, we will also explore that with the help of the Finance Council.

Finally, within the first years of the new parish we will determine shared and future uses for our various buildings. Yes, this will include taking serious stock of whether we need to maintain ownership of all of them. There is a great amount of anxiety about the future of the Kalama campus, and understandable questions have been asked about the Kelso campus in light of the proposal to cease Sunday Mass there. One especially important thing about the shape of our One Parish Plan is that we are not proposing any canonical status changes of any of our properties as part of the plan itself, nor are we predetermining that any will take place. As we mentioned at the beginning of this document, we are in a fortunate place in that we are not in a place of crisis forcing us into making any kind of hasty decision about properties. We will evaluate the ongoing repair effort in Kalama, not giving up on it prematurely, but also being responsible about balancing the needs of the whole parish and willing to make difficult decisions if necessary. Of course, we intend to continue using Kelso for faith formation, works of mercy, daily Mass, and the majority of present functions other than Sunday Mass.

Again, our plan is to discern all these things together in freedom without a predetermined outcome. We need to remember that we are the primary presence and ministry of the Catholic Church in our territory. If there is any work of the Church that we desire to see, it is our responsibility. Perhaps we might discern the use of some of our facilities for such purposes.

Financial Stewardship

At the founding of the new parish, the Archbishop will legally suppress the existing parishes and missions and found one new parish that will steward the former entities' assets and liabilities. As a part of this process, the distinct Finance Councils for each church will dissolve and we will invite our Finance Council members to discern membership in the new council. We may also seek new qualified participants if there are vacancies.

To accomplish this and keep it equitable, within the first five years we are going to prioritize the use of any funds or donations earmarked for the benefit of a particular community or a particular facility. From that point forward, we will not ordinarily accept donations that have a condition of use solely for a specific campus. Obviously, there is room for pastoral judgment here, and Fr Thompson may make exceptions where needed and relevant with the advice of the Finance Council and Archdiocese. The obvious example here would be that efforts to repair St Joseph will be earmarked for that purpose.

The Finance Council in the first five years will help the Maintenance Commission to strategize how we can fund deferred maintenance projects, help them to prioritize projects according to urgency and cost, and to ensure the projects are equitably distributed across our properties. The Finance Council will also collaborate with the Building Committee to discern any needed capital campaigns and the like. The Finance Council will also be involved if we ever must consider whether we can continue to own or operate one or more of our properties.

Summary

In brief, the substance of the One Parish Plan effectively is to adopt our new Mass schedules, Sunday and Daily, understanding that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life and thus the source of our community and relationships. Having come together through the Sacraments, we will pursue the initiative projects we identified during the listening sessions, as well as remaining open to discerning new paths forward. The crucial thing here is that many of the most significant questions about our future together, we are intentionally going to ask only once we have been united. We are in a fortunate place in our communities because we have a reasonable amount of time to discern. We are not being spurred forward by some crisis, beyond the overall need to unify. There are some parish families that are not as fortunate. We will hopefully be able to come together before we have to have those kinds of discussions, but we will still need to have them in due time.

Part III: Next Steps

After you read and digest this proposal, we would appreciate your constructive feedback. If there are any things we have omitted or any crucial factors you feel we have not considered, please let us know so that we can adjust the plan accordingly or help clarify something that we had considered but perhaps we did not communicate or communicate well. This document is over 20 pages, but it is also summarizing the work of two and a half years that has produced hundreds of pages of work product. So, today and in the coming days, the immediate next step is to await your feedback.

Later in October, we will submit this plan, with any amendments derived from your feedback, for review by the Partners in the Gospel Board in Seattle, who may request additional information or refinement. In November, we intend to convene one final listening session to discuss the question “What Should We Be Called?” That is to say, the new parish name. Remember that the name of a parish and the name of a church are not always the same thing, and in our case our parish will have a name different than any one of the churches that exist within it. After that process is complete, we will submit the finalized plan and name preferences to the Archbishop, along with a formal canonical petition from Father Thompson. If Archbishop is satisfied by our proposal, he will choose a name, taking our preferences into account—but not being bound by them—and provide needed canonical decrees.

The canonical decrees from the Archbishop will specify a date of founding. Our hope is that we will be able to begin new parish together some time in the Spring of 2027, but that is wholly dependent the date that the Archbishop selects.

Thank you for your patience and attention in digesting this very long document, and for your dedication to participating in these last two and a half years of discernment. This is only one more step in a very difficult thing we have to do together, but it will be for best in the end and will enable us to build a new parish together that can exemplify the vision statement that we developed: *Glorify God, Proclaim the Gospel and form disciples who love, live, and serve like Jesus Christ.*