

Report to Pastoral Council – ICP & OLPHP, March 11, 2021

Our joint parish's mission statement is: *To Encounter, Know and Share the transformative Love of Jesus Christ by focusing on Encountering Jesus.*

Introduction:

The Archdiocese of Seattle requested a study of the two parishes in North Everett as part of the broader Strategic Planning efforts underway across the Archdiocese. This planning process is central to the future landscape of the Archdiocese of Seattle and 168 parishes and missions. The overall effort is being led by Auxiliary Bishop Daniel Mueggenborg. For our deanery, Dcn. Duane Schireman was assigned to develop the data required to facilitate a proper analysis.

The study analyzed trends of relevant data including growth standards like Mass attendance and demographics; discipleship formation standards such as RCIA involvement and Sacraments; liturgy standards like ministries; and financial standards like revenue, expense, maintenance and facilities.

Background:

The Strategic Planning Committee led by Bishop Mueggenborg was established in 2020 to build upon previous planning efforts that have gone on for decades in the Archdiocese of Seattle (AoS). Archbishop Etienne has pointed to Pope Francis' call for "pastoral conversion of the parish community" in an instruction issued in 2020 by the Vatican: *"Since its inception, the Parish is envisioned as a response to the precise pastoral need, namely that of bringing the Gospel to the People through the proclamation of the faith and the celebration of the Sacraments... If the Parish does not exude that spiritual dynamic of evangelization, it runs the risk of becoming self-referential and fossilized, offering experiences that are devoid of evangelical flavor and missionary drive, of interest only to a small group."*

The "Mission" of the Catholic Church was given to her by Christ himself in Matthew 28:19-20. "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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you."

We have been commanded to "go" "make" "baptize" "teach". We have been called to evangelize. In a widely read book on moving from maintenance-focus to mission-focused parishes (Divine Renovation) states that Disciples of Christ are those engaged in a lifelong process of learning from and about Jesus. Becoming a disciple of Christ is to commit to a lifelong process of growth. Our parishes are called to be places that proactively work inside and outside the church walls to achieve this mission.

The stated mission of the parish communities of North Everett is consistent with this overarching mission. It takes a vibrant faith community, a healthy infrastructure (facilities and finances) and leadership (Pastor, staff and parishioners) throughout to achieve the mission.

Common metrics as discussed above were created by the Archdiocese Strategic Planning Team in order to establish a baseline of common metrics.

The study at our parishes began with a meeting with Bishop Mueggenborg in August of 2020. The first communication went out to the community in October of 2020, which included an introduction to the process, the draft schedule and Archdiocesan-wide trends. On November 20th, Mass attendance data was published, followed by communications on Sacraments on December 4th, financials on December 18th and finally facilities on January 15, 2021.

Due to COVID restrictions, in-person meetings were not possible but Zoom meetings were held following each written communication. Unfortunately, the meetings had low attendance with the largest being the facilities Zoom call.

Study Summary:

Mass Attendance Trends – Between 2015 & 2019 there has been a 29% decline in Mass attendance. Mass attendance is forecasted conservatively to decline by another 21% by 2025.

Sacrament Trends – Between 2015 & 2019 there has been a 33% decline in Baptisms, 1% decline in First Communions, 6% decline in Confirmations, 5.5% decline in Weddings, 50% decline in Funerals, 29% increase of Anointing of the Sick and 59% increase in Reconciliations (increased availability in recent years).

Financial Trends – Collections have been mostly flat from 2015 to 2019. IC has unrestricted cash reserves of approximately \$450,000 with no debt. OLPH unrestricted cash reserves of approximately \$73,000 with debt of \$59,000. IC/OLPH School has seen some decreases in enrollment but have an endowment of approximately \$1,100,000 with a loan debt of \$85,000. Primary concern is potential lingering of permanent negative shifts due to COVID effects. Also of note is the minimal unrestricted cash reserves at OLPH (approximately \$14,000 after debt obligations), which does not include restricted savings from Perpetuate II maintenance campaign.

Facilities – Near term (0-5 years) estimated maintenance obligations are as follows:

• IC	\$207,500
• IC/OLPH School	\$142,250
• IC/OLPH School & IC Shared	\$390,000
• OLPH	\$710,250
TOTAL	\$1,450,000

IC and IC/OLPH School have reserves to cover the facilities maintenance needs (although IC would deplete their reserves without additional donations to complete needed work). OLPH does not have reserves to address the maintenance needs (although some amount of Perpetuate II funds could be utilized to address approximately \$100,000 of the potential maintenance).

Ministry – Involvement in various ministry has been flat or has declined in the past several years. Some of this decline has been a result of consolidating the Mass schedules, while we’ve seen slight increases attributed to the Hispanic and Vietnamese ministries. There has been no ongoing, concerted, consistent effort to increase the participation of lay people in the liturgy in over 15 years.

Additional Pastoral & Staff Factors – I have had the unique opportunity to work with the last three Pastors and much of the staff of our joint community. In addition to serving in leadership roles with each of these Pastors for over 30 years, I served as the Pastoral Coordinator of the two parishes for over a year before the current Pastor was assigned. This experience has given me a unique view of the workings of both parishes and the various cultural aspects contained throughout. I would submit that assigning a Pastor to two parishes with a trilingual community, 10 buildings (the newest being built in 1967) over two sites, a K-8 school and parish cemetery is a heavy load for a Pastor and small staff.

So, while sharing this type of information may not be typical, it is important because these trends have a significant influence and impact on pastors, staff and parishioners, and are a contributing factor to my recommendation. Overall in the Archdiocese we have an abundance of parishes without enough priest support. There is evidence of significant impacts to priests and staff over the past 30 years. Issues range from depression, anxiety, extraordinary levels of stress, physical health challenges and ministry burnout.

Next Steps: (subject to change)

- Dialogue within both parish communities and Pastoral Council – 10/30/20-3/11/21
- Discussion with Deanery – 3/12/21
- Final Report to Archdiocese – 3/12/21
- Archdiocese Strategic Planning Committee recommendation to Archbishop - TBD
 - Yes/No Decision (if “No” process is concluded)
- Archbishop Review & prayerfully discerns
- Archbishop consults with Presbyteral Council
- Final decision made by the Archbishop and communicated to Bishop
- Decision communicated to Strategic Planning Committee & Parishes
- Q&A with Archdiocese Strategic Planning Committee
- Implementation

Blessings...

Dcn. Duane Schireman