PARTNERS IN THE GOSPEL

Transitioning Technology:
Websites and Social Media

Overview

Once parish families become one canonical parish, the new parish will need a new website and social media channels, which require careful planning and several steps.

This document outlines the high-level steps, including archiving requirements and how to direct people to the new channels. Some parish families are taking interim steps before becoming one canonical parish to reduce the need to keep multiple websites and social channels. Please be sure to review this guidance before making any major changes to your website or social media channels.

As parishes enter the last stages on One Parish Planning, more robust technology guidance around websites, social media, email, phones, ParishStaq and more will be forthcoming.

This document covers:

Websites

- Archiving history
- Why archiving is important
- How to archive
- Redirecting old websites

Planning for new canonical parish website

- Domain names
- Audit content
- Designing digital content
- Multi-lingual support and accessibility
- Web analytics

Social media

Websites

Archiving history

Parish websites are often the most complete digital archive of a parish's history, hosting many digital assets, including images, videos, documents and PDFs. Careful stewardship of these archives is essential to ensure none are permanently lost. Ensuring these materials are thoughtfully archived honors the legacy of each parish and supports long-term historical preservation.

Parishes should identify independently created websites that exist outside the main parish domain – such as those developed by volunteers – and be sure to archive them along with the main websites.

While these websites may have served specific purposes, maintaining separate digital channels outside of parish and school leadership and oversight is not advisable. Moving forward, all digital channels should be part of the main parish or school website, ensuring alignment with the vision and strategy of the new parish.

Once all websites have been identified, **please create a permanent digital archive of each, using the Internet Archive Wayback Machine, which is a requirement from the Archdiocesan Archives and Records Management team, see below**.

Additionally, parishes may wish to capture their own content by downloading images, newsletters, page content, contact records and more for future use. Having access to these specific files may be important when building out a new website or when the need comes to locate this information in the future.

Why archiving is important:

- Historical preservation: Creates a digital record of the parish's online presence for future research.
- Change documentation: Allows tracking of how a parish's activities and information evolve.
- Legal and administrative resource: Provides evidence of past statements or policies when needed.
- Accessibility: Ensures important information remains available even after website changes or closes.

How to archive (It's easy!):

1. Go to the Internet Archive Wayback Machine at https://web.archive.org/
2. Paste your website URL into the "Save Page Now" box and click "Save Page."
3. After completion, you'll see "A snapshot was captured." Click the provided link to verify the capture.
4. Check important sections by clicking though various links in the captured version. If a section is missing, copy its specific URL and create a new snapshot for that page.
5. These snapshots are stored on the Wayback Machine website.

Tip: The free version may not capture everything, especially embedded media or deeper pages. The archives team recommends multiple snapshots for comprehensive coverage.

Redirecting old websites

To ensure a smooth user experience during the transition, each existing parish website should be thoughtfully redirected – while maintaining the original parish website homepage for at least three years. In addition to preserving the website for three years, it is important to retain ownership of the domain indefinitely. Doing so ensures hackers and other bad actors will not take over the domain and begin sending emails on your behalf.

Maintaining the home pages of the parish websites in a parish family is important to inform visitors of the change, explain why and provide a clear link to the new website. This approach preserves familiarity for parishioners, maintains search engine visibility, and ensures that no visitor is left confused or disconnected.

- The home page of each parish website should explain the Partners in the Gospel changes and then provide a link directing visitors to the new site.
    - Sample text: *"St. Zelie parish is now part of a new parish: [ENTER NEW NAME]. Please visit our new website for the latest information, Mass times and more: [ADD NEW URL]."*
- Additionally, for each main landing page on the website, a banner or text at the top should be added to indicate that the page is no longer up to date and to drive visitors to the new website:
    - Sample text for faith formation page: *"For the latest information on our Faith Formation program, please go to [ADD NEW URL.]"*
- We recommend unlinking or hiding all the sub pages of the website so that a visitor may not unknowingly pull information from an out-of-date webpage.

Planning for New Canonical Parish Website

Creating a new canonical parish website requires careful planning to ensure a smooth and effective transition. The following lists a few key steps:

Domain names

The selection of the domain name (e.g., *myparish.org*) is a critical step for the new website. The domain name serves as the foundation for parish communications—supporting email addresses, social media handles, internal network configurations, and most importantly, acting as the primary way people locate the parish website.

The Archdiocese of Seattle has pre-purchased several domain names that align with the names on the pre-approved parish name list. Please be sure to consult with your liaison on the process for obtaining the correct domain name for your new parish after it has received its official name from Archbishop Etienne.

Audit content
Conducting a comprehensive content audit across all parish family websites is a vital first step. This process helps identify valuable digital assets—such as ministry descriptions, event archives, sacramental resources and historical content. A thorough audit ensures that the new website reflects the richness and diversity of the combined parish communities – and informs the digital experience.

After pulling the information from each of the parish websites, the team can determine which content should be consolidated and presented on the new website.

Designing a digital presence
While capturing and archiving existing parish websites is a critical, equal attention should be given to designing a well-structured digital presence. Rather than attempting to merge content reactively, parishes should take a strategic intentional approach to designing each section and feature. Thoughtful preparation helps avoid confusion, ensures consistency and lays the foundation for a website that truly reflects the mission and community of the new canonical parish. Certain features like calendars should be unified from the start to support clarity and coordination.

The Archdiocese of Seattle is working with a website vendor to develop a series of website templates for parishes. Based on best practices for presentation and navigation, these templates will help jumpstart the design phase of building out a new parish website.

More information on these parish website templates will be forthcoming in 2027.

Multi-lingual support and accessibility
Today, it is essential to include multi-lingual support and accessibility to ensure inclusivity for all website visitors. Offering content in other languages helps foster belonging and improves access to pastoral resources. Equally important is ensuring the website meets accessibility standards (such as WCAG 2.1), including features like screen reader compatibility, high-contrast design and keyboard navigation.

These practices not only reflect the Church's commitment to hospitality and equity but also ensure that all parishioners—regardless of language or ability—can fully engage with parish life online.

Web analytics
When developing the new website, it's important to leverage existing web analytics on the current individual parish websites to understand how they are being used. Which pages are people visiting? Which ones aren't getting visitors?

Analytics data—such as page views, traffic sources, search terms and user behavior—can inform decisions about which content should be prioritized, migrated or retired for the new parish website. This insight helps ensure that the new website meets the needs of parishioners and preserves high-value content.

Search engine business profiles
After creating the new website, be sure to review and update search engine business profiles—such as Google Business, Bing Places, and Apple Maps—for each parish.

These search profiles appear prominently in search results and serve as a key source of information for people seeking Mass times, contact details or directions. During the consolidation process, outdated profiles should be either updated to reflect the new canonical parish identity or redirected to the new website. Ensuring consistency across these platforms helps maintain visibility, prevents confusion and reinforces the unified digital presence of the new parish community.

Communicate the change
To ensure a smooth transition, be sure to communicate widely about the new website. Ideally, this would be part of a wider communication strategy outlining all the communication and technology changes so that people can see the cohesion across the website, social channels, email, etc.

Share the plan in your bulletin, on the current website(s), in your Partners in the Gospel parish updates, in Mass announcements and more. Develop a PowerPoint presentation about all the new communication channels and share this at PFLT, PFAC, staff and ministry meetings so that parish leaders can become familiar with and use the new channels. By doing so they can help advocate and help promote the new communication strategy.

Social Media

To ensure a clean user experience and to avoid any confusion, we recommend taking the following steps to transition social media channels.

1. **Identify and list all the social media accounts for the parishes in the parish family.**
    - How many accounts are there among the parishes?
    - Take inventory of all the social platforms for each with their handles for each channel: i.e. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Vimeo, LinkedIn, X, etc.
    - Make a list of all the administrative information including who has access to the admin controls, the audience details and any other information required to access and manage the channel.

2. **Evaluate account performance: Assess the relevance or need of each account.**
    - Are the accounts active and regularly maintained? If yes, by whom? How often do they post? What type of content?
    - Do the pages assist the parish with furthering the greater communication strategy?
    - Do parishioners engage with the page by liking, sharing, following, etc.? Do posts spark conversations in the comments? Do people find the page helpful?

3. **Decide which accounts to keep and assess if certain accounts should transition to a joint account for the parish family – or if all current channels will be closed down and new ones started.**

4. **Develop a communication strategy for announcing the transition.**
    - Draft simple messaging to launch the new channel with clear instructions on how to follow the new account.
    - Decide on the platforms and formats for these announcements—whether through posts, videos, or newsletters.
    - All existing channels should have a final message or post that clearly points people to the new channel. Place the announcement as your cover photo for Facebook or pin the post to your pages on Facebook or Instagram directing followers to your preferred account. A message could be very simple like "This social channel is no longer active. Stay in the loop by following ADD NEW CHANNEL HERE."
    - This information could also go in the "about" or profile section of the channel.
    - This channel should stay "
    - on" for several months to ensure people who may come to the main page are clear on where to go.
    - Provide a timeline for when to expect the transition to happen. Set a date for when the old account will be deleted and include this date in your announcement.

5. **Back up content and archive it before deleting former accounts.**

- Do you need to archive the information on the account?
- **YES** if:

    i. It contains information that holds long-term historical value for the parish or may be needed by other staff to complete their work.

    ii. It is used to share official information, policies, or decisions on behalf of the parish or school.

    iii. It is used to interact with parishioners, especially for addressing complaints or providing service.

    iv. It documents progress on work projects or is used for team collaborations.

    For how to download and back up data, follow the linked instructions below for each platform (Note: These instructions are updated as of January 2025 and are subject to change.)

    a. Instagram

    b. Facebook

    c. X

    d. LinkedIn

    e. YouTube

    f. TikTok

- **NO** if:

    i. The information shared on the profile is already documented and archived in other records.

    ii. It mainly contains posts or interactions that are purely temporary and lack substantive business or pastoral information.

    iii. It is used mainly for general marketing posts or promotional content, unless they contain unique information not documented elsewhere.

    iv. It predominantly shares articles, memes, or other content created by third parties that do not directly relate to business activities.

6. **Ensure all accounts are securely managed by updating passwords and managing admin rights.**
    - Securely record new passwords and login credentials. Make sure they are strong and secure.
    - Ensure two staff members have access to the account as admins. (They should not be solely tied to volunteers or outside consultants.)
    - Ensure the admins account are **NOT** attached to their personal account (use work email, not personal.)
7. **Double-check before executing transition and deletion of accounts.**
    - Double-check the old page to make sure all the information you want to save has been downloaded.
    - Double check the new page has proper admins and account setup before launching.