Paulist Center Pastoral Planning

Community Meeting #1
September 28, 2025

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Overview

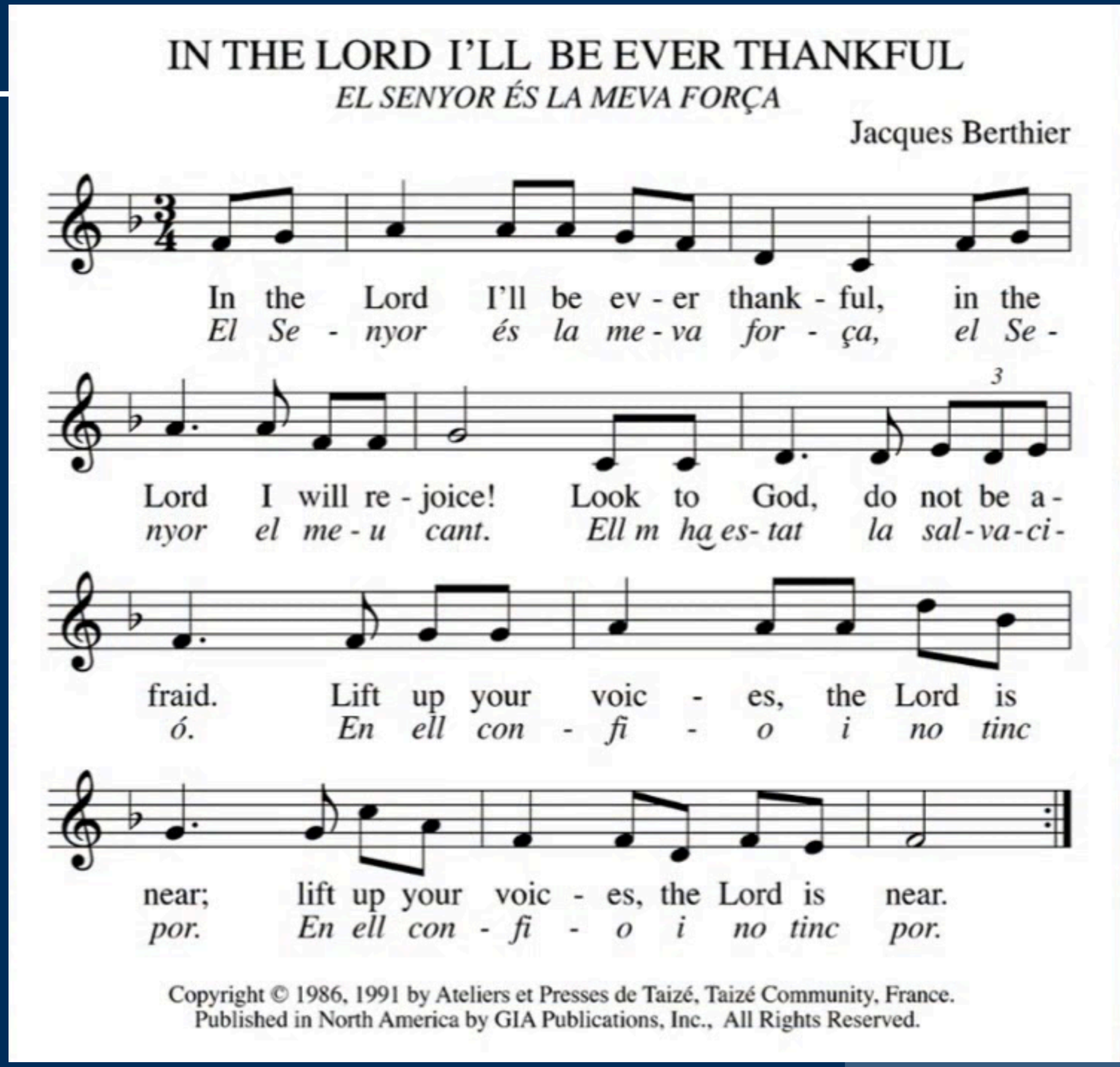
- Introduction & Opening Prayer
- Paulist Center 2045 *(Discussion)*
- Overview of Pastoral Planning Process
- Reading the Signs of the Times
- Mission Statement & Core Values
- “Welcomes All” *(Discussion)*
- New Opportunities *(Discussion)*
- Closing Reflection *(Discussion)*
- Next Steps

Goals of the Day

1. Review the planning process work to date
2. Sharing and listening to the promptings of the Holy Spirit together
3. Collect feedback on priorities from the community
4. Share the next steps about the process this Fall

Opening Prayer

- We pray for those who are not currently part of the Paulist Center community
    - For those who have died in our community...
    - For those who have moved away...
    - For those who are no longer participating...
    - For those who will become involved in the coming year...



The Year 2045

Imagine it's 20 years from now, and you open the Boston Globe to find a front-page story about the Paulist Center's 100-year anniversary.

<u>What does the article say about the impact we've made?</u>

The Boston Globe

Serving our community since 1872

Boston's Paulist Center celebrates 100 years

By: Betty Boston

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Pastoral Planning Process

Pastoral Planning Process

- A communal process of listening, discernment and planning, guided by the Holy Spirit, that leads to fruitful mission

How Do We Discern?

- Listening to God (personal prayer, communal prayer, Scriptural reflection)
- Listening to the People of God (inside and outside of the Center community)

3 Attitudes in our Pastoral Planning

1) Hats Off
2) Ears Open
3) Arms Out

1. Hats Off

“Let us be careful not to see our contributions as points to defend at all costs or agendas to be imposed. I hope each of us will offer our contribution as a gift to be shared, ready even to sacrifice our own point of view in order to give life to something new, all according to God’s plan.”

Pope Francis

2. Ears Open

“A synodal church is a listening church, aware that listening is more than hearing. It is a reciprocal listening in which each one has something to learn.

Pope Francis

3. Arms Out

“The Church is called to be always on the move, reaching out, never closed in on herself, never self-referential, but a Church that goes forth to the peripheries.”

Pope Francis

Pastoral Planning Timeline

May:

- Planning team selected by Fr. Rick and Staff
- Met with Bishop O'Connell, Archdiocese of Boston

June/July

- Gathered and reviewed Paulist Center reports, data, & demographics
- Gathered and reviewed City of Boston data & demographics

August:

- Two Zoom Community Meetings
  - Who is present? Who is missing? Who are we called to serve?

September:

- Two Zoom Community Leader Meetings
  - Evening of Reflection
  - Core Values discussion
- In-Person Community Meeting #1
  - Needs and Priorities Discussion

October:

- In-Person Community Meeting #2
- Recommendations and prioritization
- Paulist Pre-Assembly Meetings (New York, Los Angeles, Zoom)

November/December:

- Draft, review, and publish 2026-2029 Pastoral Plan

paulistcenter.org/pastoralplan

Pastoral Planning Handouts

1. August Community Meeting Synthesis
2. Religious Education and Mass Attendance Data 2025
3. Paulist Center Financial Report
4. Pre & Post COVID Impact on Downtown Boston
5. Beacon Hill Demographic Projection (Archdiocese of Boston)

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Pastoral Planning Documents

StoryView

Significant Demographic Indicators of the Study Area's Story

1	**Population Change** In the 10 year future, how is this area expected to change? (See Population and Families Theme)	Significant Decline	Moderate Decline	Little Change	**Moderate Growth**	Significant Growth
2	**School Age Change** In the 10 year future, how is the population of school age children in this area expected to change? (See Age Theme)	Significant Decline	Moderate Decline	Little Change	Moderate Increase	**Significant Increase**
3	**Families with Children** Compared to the state, are families with children more or less likely to live in two parent households? (See Population and Families Theme)	Significantly Less	Somewhat Less	About the Same	**Somewhat More**	Significantly More
4	**Adult Educational Attainment** For this area, what is the general level of education of the adults 25 and older? (See Education and Career Status Theme)	Very Low	Low	Mixed	High	**Very High**
5	**Community Diversity Index** How diverse is the racial/ethnic mix of this area? (See Community Diversity Theme)	Very Homogeneous	Homgeneous	**Moderately Diverse**	Very Diverse	Extremely Diverse
6	**Median Family Income** How does the median family income compare to the state for this area? (See Financial Resources Theme)	Significantly Less	Somewhat Less	About the Same	Somewhat Greater	**Significantly Greater**

Paulist Center August Community Meeting Synthesis

Who is present in our Paulist Center community and who is missing?

Who is Present?

- A community deeply rooted in faith with a strong commitment to meaningful liturgy
- Devoted long-time parishioners and families who have journeyed together for years
- Catholics looking for:
  - Community
  - A more-inclusive Church (e.g. leadership of women and inclusion of LGBTQ members)
  - Acceptance despite disagreement with Church teachings
- Demographics of community members include:
  - Older long-term members in their 60s/70s
  - Those living alone
  - Growing number of families
  - Highly educated
  - White collar workers
  - White

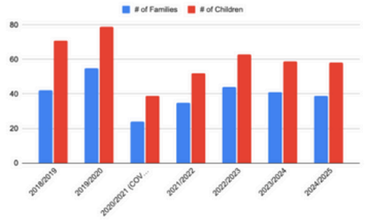
"Who shows up on the weekday and who shows up on the weekend is completely different - the weekday community is very different from the weekend community."

Who is Missing?

- Demographics of those who are missing from the Paulist Center include:
  - A diversity that fully reflects the makeup of the city we serve
  - People of color
  - Families that were involved pre-covid or online during covid
  - Single YAs
  - 20-somethings
  - Young professionals
  - The poor/low-income
  - Persons with disabilities
  - More conservative in worship form but with progressive ideas (i.e. women, lgbtq+, diverse)
  - Immigrants
  - Children
  - People who live in downtown Boston/Beacon Hill

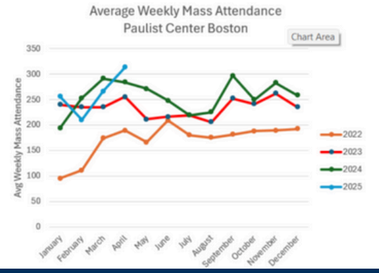
Paulist Center Religious Education & Mass Attendance Data 2025

Religious Education:



Average weekly Mass attendance:

- 2015: **581**
- 2016: **466**
- 2023: **233**
- 2024: **256**
- 2025: **261** (Year to Date average: Jan-April)



Pre & Post COVID Impact on Downtown Boston

This handout highlights key demographic, real estate, and mobility trends shaping Downtown Boston and Beacon Hill in the post-COVID era. These realities help us understand the opportunities and challenges for community life and outreach at the Paulist Center.

Population & Demographics

- Boston population: 652,000 (2022), down 3.4% since 2020 but stabilizing.
- Downtown neighborhoods, including Beacon Hill, have remained largely stable, with only minor population fluctuations.
- Majority-minority city: 56% Hispanic/Latino and/or non-white.
- Median age: 33.7 years — 38% of residents are young adults (18–34).
- 13what% of the population are seniors (65+), a growing share.

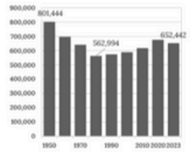


Figure 2 - Boston's Population 1950-2020 Census, 2023 ACS Estimate

Housing and Commercial Real Estate

- Median rent in 2024: $2,800/month; condos $745,000; single-family homes $800,000.
- Two-thirds of units are rentals; affordability challenges persist.
- Downtown office vacancy: 20% (2024), well above pre-pandemic levels.
- Hybrid/remote work reshapes downtown rhythms — 18% fully remote by 2023.
- City launching office-to-residential conversion program (2025).
- Suffolk University has invested in residential programming. Since 2024 it offers a two-year housing guarantee for incoming freshmen. A new property at 101 Tremont Street will serve as a sixth residence hall, set to open in Fall 2026—expanding its housing capacity.

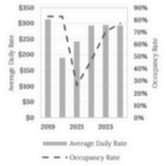


Figure 7 - Boston Average Daily Rate and Room Occupancy, 2017-2023, Pinnacle Advisory Group and BPDA Research Division

Transportation & Mobility

- 33% of households do not own a car; 41% commute without one.
- MBTA ridership is still 36% below 2019, affecting downtown foot traffic.
- Many people who previously used transit are now **more likely to drive** for discretionary trips.
- People working remotely often make more non-work trips than either fully remote or fully in-person workers. Many of these trips are to "third places"—like cafes, parks, or libraries—and are typically: shorter in distance, taken outside traditional peak hours and more likely to use sustainable modes of transport (walking or biking)

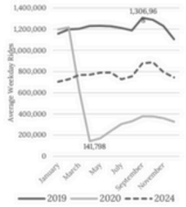


Figure 5 - MBTA Average Weekday Rides by Month, 2019, 2020, 2024

(Based on boston.gov data and developed in part using chatGPT)

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“Reading the Signs of the Times” at the Paulist Center

- Dedicated:
  - Dedicated long-term community members investing time, talent, and treasure into the community
- Culture-changers:
  - Paulist Center has impacted the Catholic culture of Boston with more welcoming and inclusive Catholic churches downtown
- Declining membership:
  - Over 50% decline in Mass attendance in the last 10 years
- Limited weekday programming/outreach:
  - Increased opportunities for outreach to those who live and work downtown
  - Weekday audience different from the weekend audience

“Reading the Signs of the Times” in the US Church today

- Indifference:
  - The greatest barrier for many inactive Catholics is not anger but indifference: the Church feels distant from daily life
- Tradition:
  - Many young Catholics hold progressive social views while still seeking Catholic traditions and devotions in an unstable post-modern world
- Loneliness:
  - 61% of young adults (18-25) say they feel lonely “all the time” (still 36% among adults)

“Reading the Signs of the Times” in the US Church today

“I think a lot of young people, if you talk to them, especially young people who are considering or have re-joined religion in some form, will say that religion gives them a structure, a sense of the transcendent, sort of clarity of form of life that is in many ways absent in normal life. In kind of a modern secular society, especially for young people, you're told that you're free. You can kind of make up your life and your belief system as you go along...in a time when people feel really unboundaried and unmoored, having that clarity, having those rules is actually really compelling

-Christine Emba (NYT/AEI)

Mission Statement		8 Core Values
Attentive to the Holy Spirit	→	*Spirituality*
And Nourished by Vibrant Liturgy	→	*Liturgy*
We are a Catholic Community	→	*Collaboration*
That Welcomes All	→	*Outreach*
Fosters Healing and Reconciliation	→	*Inclusivity*
And Acts for Justice	→	*Service & Justice*

**Stewardship, Education*

Core Values

Spirituality →

Liturgy →

Outreach →

Service & Justice →

Stewardship →

Education →

Collaboration →

Inclusivity →

7 Areas of Ministry

1. Prayer & Liturgy

2. Outreach & Evangelization

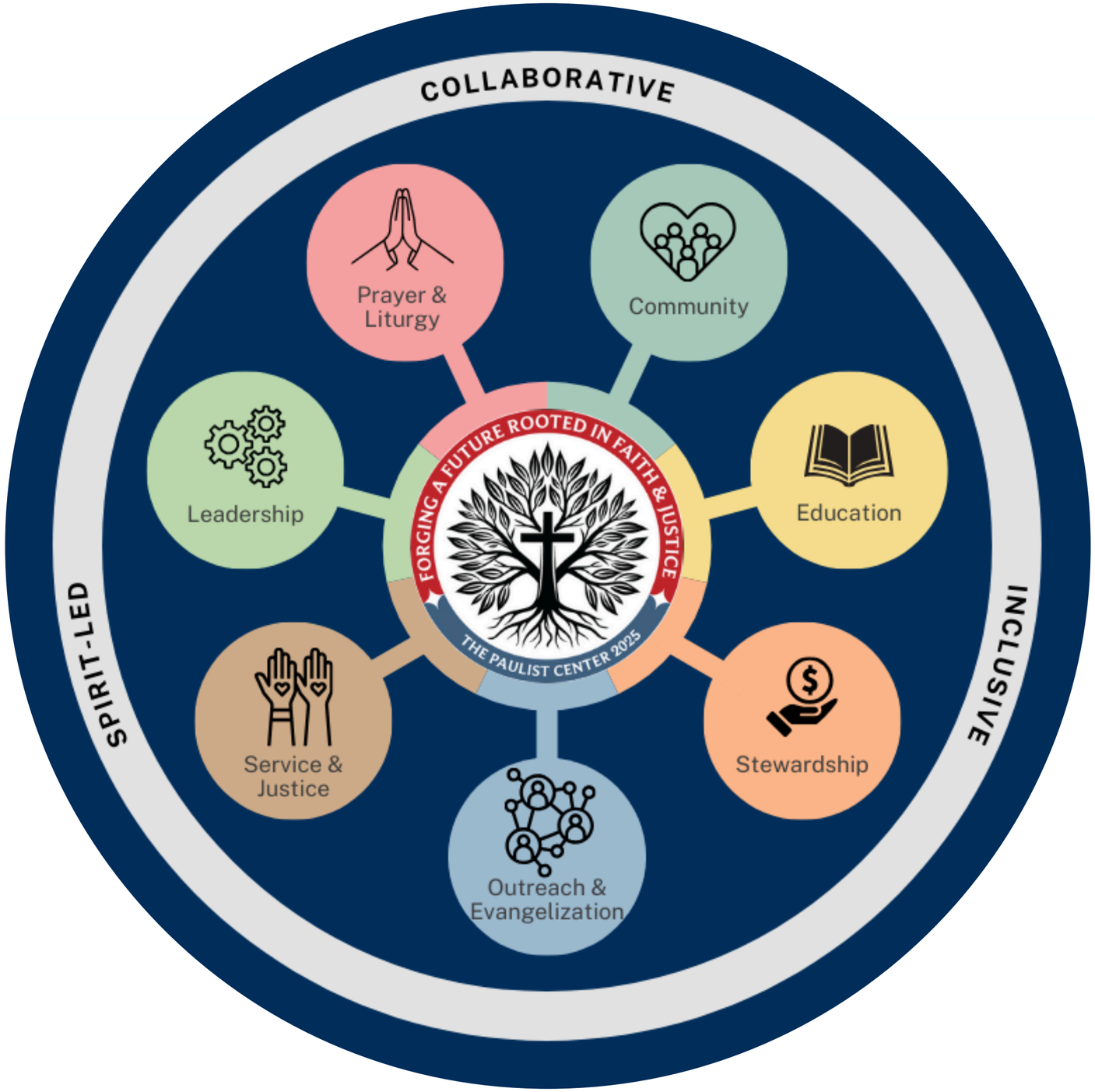
3. Service & Justice

4. Stewardship

5. Education

6. Leadership

7. Community


COLLABORATIVE
INCLUSIVE
SPIRIT-LED
Prayer & Liturgy
Community
Leadership
Education
Service & Justice
Stewardship
Outreach & Evangelization
FORGING A FUTURE ROOTED IN FAITH & JUSTICE
THE PAULIST CENTER 2025

“Welcomes All”

- New outreach to inactive community members
- New outreach to people who live or work in downtown Boston e.g. college students, young professionals, etc.
- New outreach to Catholics in Greater-Boston who share in the Paulist Center priorities e.g. social justice, inclusivity, collaboration, etc.
- New outreach to inactive Catholics who feel alienated by the Church
- New outreach to ‘spiritual but not religious’ or spiritually curious

Which 2 new outreach communities are most important right now?

New Opportunities

Without sharing
new programs or ideas,
what are the 3 greatest
opportunities for growth at the
Paulist Center in the next 3 years?

Example: Outreach/Evangelization

Help couples that go through marriage preparation at the Paulist Center have a reason to come back and get to know the community as a possible long-term home

PAULIST CENTER OPPORTUNITIES

MINISTRY AREAS:
COMMUNITY | EDUCATION | STEWARDSHIP | OUTREACH & EVANGELIZATION
SERVICE & JUSTICE | LEADERSHIP | PRAYER & LITURGY

EXAMPLE:

Ministry Area: Outreach/Evangelization
Opportunity: For couples that go through marriage preparation at the Paulist Center to have a reason to come back and join the community

1

Ministry Area: _____

Opportunity:

2

Ministry Area: _____

Opportunity:

3

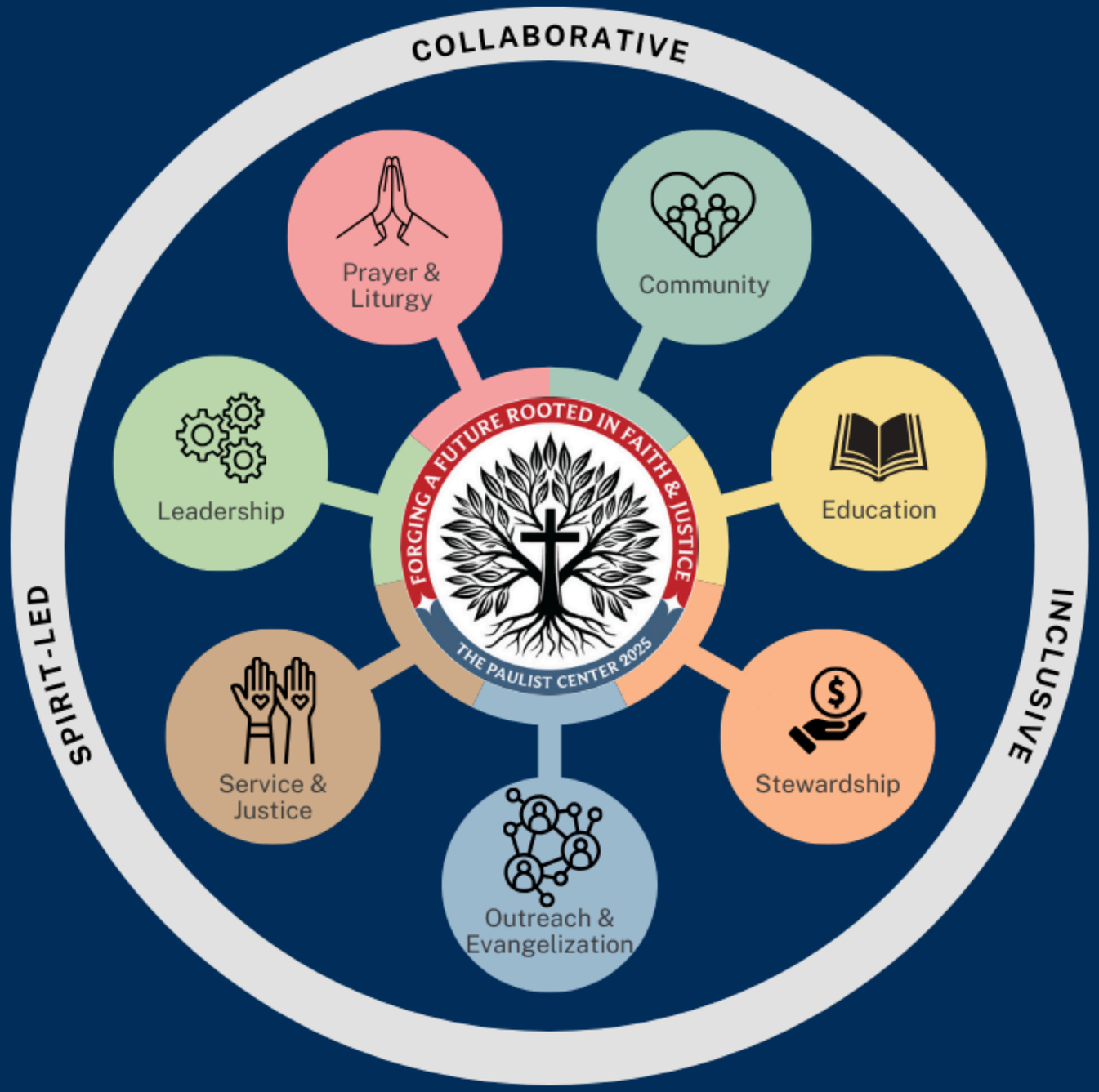
Ministry Area: _____

Opportunity:

Hats Off | Ears Open | Arms Out

Large Group

Without sharing
new programs or ideas,
what are the 3 greatest opportunities in this area of ministry in the next 3 years?



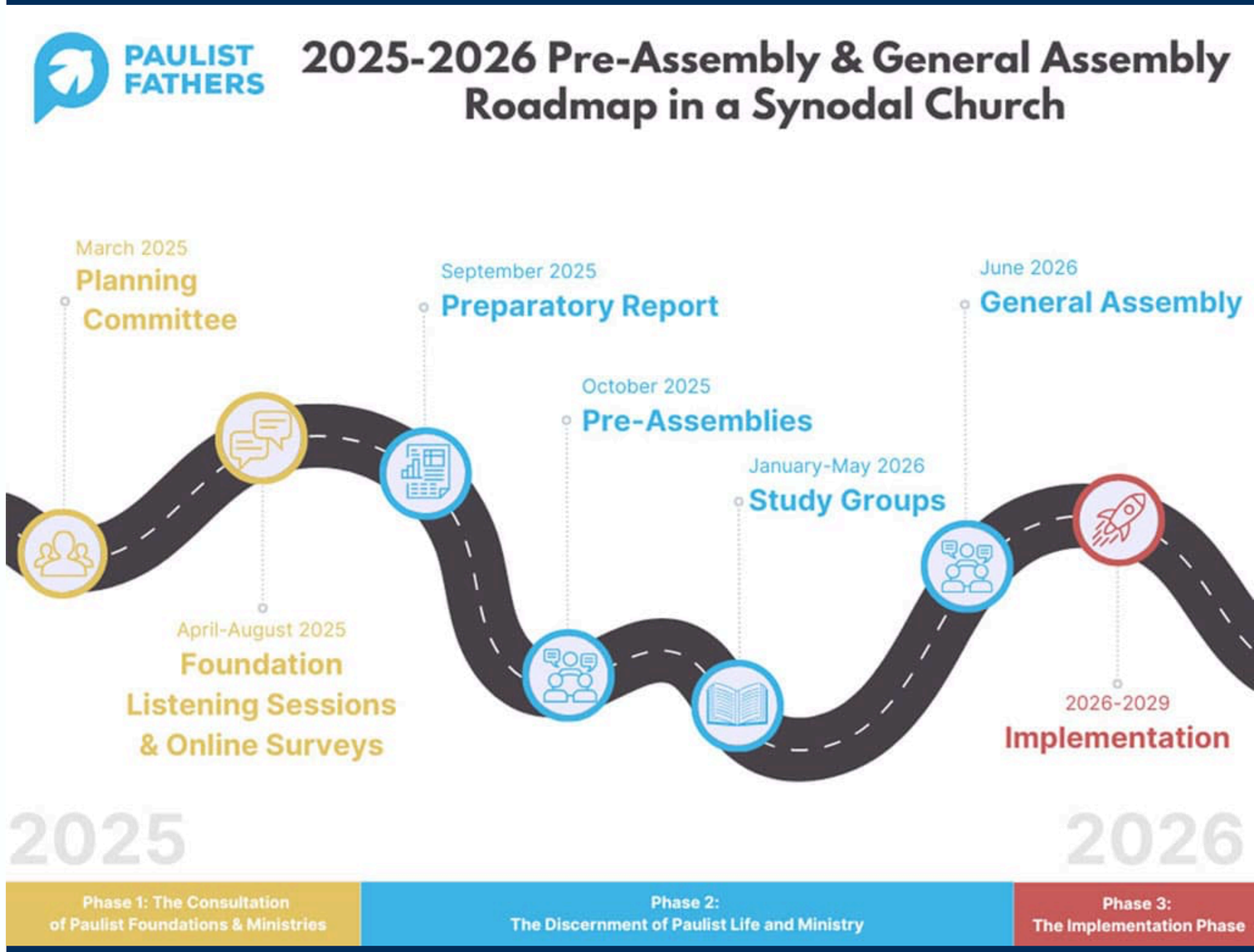
Discussion

What is the Holy Spirit saying to me personally as a part of this process?

FORGING A FUTURE ROOTED IN FAITH & JUSTICE
THE PAULIST CENTER 2025

Commissioning

- Paulists meet every four years to discern and identify priorities at Pre-Assemblies & General Assembly
- Pre-Assembly: 150 Priests and lay collaborators will meet in October (NY, LA , Zoom)
- Let us offer a prayer of commissioning to all those who will represent the Paulist Center, both staff, Paulist Associates, and Paulist Fathers



Next Steps

1. Intentional conversations with those we want to reach
   a. “Not about us, without us”
2. Synthesizing community feedback on opportunities across ministry areas
3. Discernment of ways to respond to those opportunities
   a. What do we need to start new?
   b. What do we need to continue to invest in?
   c. What do we need to let go of?
4. October 26th Community Meeting

Save the Date

Community Meeting #2

October 26th

-After 10am Mass
-After 6pm Mass

Lunch/Dinner provided!