



SAINT GREGORY^{the} GREAT

YEAR 3

Family Pathway Report

FALL 2025

Dear Parishioners of the St. Gregory the Great Family of Parishes,

This past year, we said goodbye to Maggie, our Director of Communications and Pathways Lead, who departed for another position in real estate. In October, we welcomed Abigail Rafael, our new Director of Communications. Abigail and Sara Rehl, as our communication folks, have offices in the GA rectory. The Leadership Team remains strong and highly competent. A new administration is in place at IHM with Principal Kelly Pendergest and Assistant Principal Kevin Duncan. Kelly and GA Principal Corey Stoops are working together and consulting regularly with each other. They are also attending the meetings of the Leadership Team. The Family Pastoral Council is engaged and leading, doing whatever is necessary to bring the Family together. More attention has been paid to Family-wide ministries. This past year through a discernment process we established ministry councils. A flow chart was created for all staff in all three locations as a great deal of organization has taken place. Everything revolves around our vision and goals as a Family.

There is a positive vibe regarding Beacons of Light. Once again in June we had a joint celebration at the seminary with a reception that has continued to be important to us. The Archdiocese sees us as a leading family of parishes and we are thankful our Leadership Team is a working group with a lot of positive energy that can challenge each other if need be. We saw Dan Frey and Gloria Parker Martin finish their commitments to the Pastoral Council, welcoming Michael Putnam (GA) and Stacey Potts (SJF) as new members. Jim Moyer completed his term as chair and Pam Payne was discerned to lead the Pastoral Council in the upcoming year. There is a great deal of energy, hope, and enthusiasm as we proceed down the path toward becoming one canonical parish with three churches. Thank you all for being a part of the St. Gregory the Great Family of Parishes.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Steve

SECTION 2

ANNUAL PLAN REPORT SUMMARY

We spent Year One establishing the Leadership Team and Pastoral Council and Year Two orienting parishioners to our unification plans. We spent the past year building the infrastructure of a unified parish. Our priests continued to supply prayerful supervision over all aspects of parish affairs. The Pastoral Council, which includes three members from each church, kept its ear to the ground, reporting on parishioner concerns. The Leadership Team, which is composed of staff directors, worked consistently with Fr. Steve to make informed decisions regarding parish direction.

One of the most important of these decisions was to cease operations of guiding bodies at each church in favor of integrated councils addressing the needs of all three. While this transition raised questions about the future of cherished local activities, the new councils sprang into being with a spirit of accommodation and goodwill that confirmed the distinctiveness of each church's traditions. Attention now turns to shaping a Saint Gregory the Great Parish culture that will nourish all three churches and their congregants.



Observations

It is interesting to reflect on a point that Fr. Steve makes in his cover letter: the Archdiocese sees us as a leading parish in the Beacons of Light initiative. To the Archdiocese, "leading" means that we are ahead of pace to meet unification goals by July 1, 2027. But to us it can be a source of pride in the charitable teamwork that has characterized our approach to the unification process. Parishioners themselves, who have shared their concerns as well as their hopes for success, have fortified this teamwork.

And so there is every good reason for all of us to pitch in, put our shoulders to the wheel, and undertake our responsibilities, ensuring that the legacy of faith our forebears left us will bloom all the brighter in years to come.

Challenges

Several indices demonstrate that parish activity has stabilized since the Covid-19 shutdowns. The number of baptisms and new parishioners returned to pre-Covid levels, parish space utilization is up, and total giving has risen every year since 2022. Even Mass attendance has risen, although there is still more ground to make up. The main challenge we face, then, remains evangelization. They say the martyrs of the early church sang hymns while they gave their lives for the faith. What are we prepared to give to repopulate what they built?

Meanwhile, the unification of parish finances looms on the horizon, the last of the great administrative restructuring initiatives that must be undertaken before this process can conclude. At present, church finance councils are still operating independently, as we are not yet one canonical parish. Many key discussions will take place this year to gear up for financial unification next year. We are right to take comfort in the knowledge that all three of our churches are debt-free.

Insights

To return to the early church, there we find Saint Gregory the Great (c. 540–604). On one side of his household were the abandoned buildings and falling masonry of a dying pagan Rome. On the other were the upstart convents, monasteries, and libraries of an increasingly confident Catholic Christendom, which was even then converting people as far away as the Saxon clans of Britain. Shortly before he died, he wrote beaming letters about the new Christianity that had emerged in northern Europe despite the odds against the Church's growth there. If he were here today, he might very well enkindle our own hope in Christ with words he wrote back then: "These new churches shine with such miracles that the miracles of the Apostles seem to live again!"

Our Family Vision

Our Mission: To be a Eucharist-centered Roman Catholic community dedicated to fostering discipleship by following Jesus through prayer, teaching, sacraments, and service.

Our Vision: To be lifelong disciples responding to the mission that we are called for more.

PASTORAL PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Progress and Plans

Eucharist

A Family Worship Council came together with subcommittees for each of the three churches. It declared its bylaws and is now preparing statements of purpose and vision. It streamlined celebrations of First Reconciliation, First Communion, and Confirmation with an eye toward best practices in pastoral liturgy and in view of archdiocesan guidelines. As a rule, the patronal feasts of each church will be celebrated on the Sundays nearest to them but last year in two of the three churches the liturgical calendar prevented us from doing so. The Worship Council continued the combined Thanksgiving, Holy Thursday, and Easter Vigil celebrations, which received much positive feedback for their quality. If you have not attended one of these powerful liturgies, great blessings await all who do!

Church

In addition to the Worship Council, Family councils have also formed for Evangelization, Health Ministries, and Social Action. These groups, composed of people chosen from all three churches after a careful discernment process, will now be responsible for directing activities at each site. Characteristic of a key commitment of all involved in the Beacons unification process here, the councils pledge attentive consideration of each church's traditions.

Leadership

With Leadership Team, Pastoral Council, and now Family councils in place, and with Fr. Steve's guidance, the pastoral gusto of Fr. Aaron, and the warm and wise presence of Fr. King, our Family of Parishes has a solid foundation for success. And we have not even mentioned the gifted involvement of parish staffers, too many to mention here, who have themselves met the challenges of unification with courage and studied skill. The Second Vatican Council envisioned the cooperation of clergy and laity in leading the local church and transforming local culture. This ideal is in operation here.

Stewardship

We continue to encourage people of all ages and abilities to discern how to serve God with whatever our Lord has entrusted to them. This encouragement takes many forms. For example, our intercessory prayer ministry enables people who are home-bound to serve by praying for the needs of the community. We look for opportunities for those with disabilities to become involved in the work of the Family. We are forming a Family-wide stewardship group that will promote giving in all its forms. We are also developing a stewardship newsletter that will share inspiring stories of how parishioners are stewarding their lives in gratitude. Watch for it in 2026!

Evangelization

We redesigned our religious education programs to empower parents regardless of their circumstances to embrace their role as the primary catechists of their children. All formation opportunities are integrated under the Family-wide Evangelization Council and are open to everyone in our three churches. To advance Catholic identity, we now have associate directors in both schools who collaborate with school leaderships to relate academic learning and Catholic faith. We hired a youth minister to apply new approaches to evangelizing the young, especially middle-school children and their families. Our marriage ministry is aligned with recent archdiocesan guidelines. It continues to build community through newlywed small groups and special events for married couples. We are expanding awareness of and access to the convalidation process for those married outside the Church. We formed numerous Bible study and prayer groups for people from diverse backgrounds. Finally, we are offering community and formation that reach individuals outside our Family of Parishes. One example of this effort is our well-attended "The Chosen" TV series. It attracts Catholics and non-Catholics alike and promotes dialogue and evangelizing opportunities.

Love in Action

At our Family of Parishes last year, a thorough discernment process concluded with the formation of a Health Council and a Social Action Council. The Director of Health Ministries and the Social Action Coordinator work with these councils to support our local community through the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy. Some of our activities, which often involve whole groups of volunteers, include distributions of groceries and clothing, food preparation to feed the hungry, bereavement services that

Love in Action *(continued)*

plan funerals and support grieving families, visitations of the sick, a variety of engagements that offer mental and spiritual support to the struggling, and many more ministries and outreach initiatives. Overall, there has been increased cooperation in Love in Action work across the Family. At the end of October 2025, we held a social event for our Love in Action volunteers from our three churches to meet each other, share stories, and spread awareness of all the different ministries our Family offers.



St. Gregory the Great Prayer

St. Gregory the Great, patron saint of teachers,
present our prayer of gratitude to our Heavenly Father.
Share our prayer of wisdom and guidance
as we continue on the path to unify our family of parishes.
Just as you led the faithful knowing
"the proof of love is in the works,"
open our hearts to be dedicated disciples of Jesus
through prayer, teaching, sacraments and service.
May our works, inspired by Jesus,
guide us to unity within our family
and love within our community.
Teach us humility and compassion,
the cornerstones of generosity,
and the unwavering faith you demonstrated
through times of change,
so that we come together in unity,
rooted in Christ's love.
Amen