

Companion to
THE
FOUR
WAYS
FORWARD

THE MISSION IGNITE TOOLKIT

Building an Evangelizing Parish,
Together

SUSAN WINDLEY-DAOUST
for The Mark 5:19 Project

DIGITAL PDF EDITION

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GRACEWATCH
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The Mission Ignite Toolkit: Building an Evangelizing Parish, Together
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PREVIEW

Foreword

The Church does not need another program. What it needs are people who awaken to the dignity and calling of their baptism, and parishes that are fully alive to their mission in service to the whole world.

The Mission Ignite Toolkit offers something far more valuable than a one-size-fits-all strategy: it gives parish leaders a practical, prayerful way to discern where God is already at work and to discover where the Holy Spirit is calling them next. Rooted in the conviction that every baptized person is called to evangelize, this resource helps parish staff move practically and simply from activity to fruitfulness, and from good intentions to intentional action.

What makes this toolkit especially powerful is its insistence that renewal begins not with a program but with prayer, discernment, relationships, and a renewed missionary imagination. From this place, the IGNITE process then gives parishes a clear path forward while honoring the unique people, gifts, challenges, and mission of each local Church. This is how the Holy Spirit brings about renewal: in its own way and in its own time, honoring the charisms, gifts, circumstances, and unique places in which God's people are called to live and serve.

This is a resource for parishes ready to stop asking, "What have we always done?" and begin asking, "Lord, what are you asking of us now?" It is practical without losing its spiritual center and deeply rooted in the missionary identity of the Church.

For anyone longing to see their parish become more intentional, more outward-facing, and more alive to the joy of the gospel, *The Mission Ignite Toolkit* is a welcome and timely companion. It gives us the tools, but, more importantly, it reminds us that the Church is ultimately built not by our efforts alone, but by the grace of God working through his people.

Julianne Stanz

Director of Outreach for Evangelization and Discipleship, Loyola Press
and author of *Start with Jesus: How Everyday Disciples Will Renew the Church*

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Introduction: How to Use This Toolkit

Welcome to your new toolkit. We all need to focus on what an evangelizing parish looks like, and how to get from here to there. This toolkit, based on the theological and pastoral work in *The Four Ways Forward: Becoming an Apostolic Parish in a Post-Christian World*, is designed to get you going with a team, a vision, and a mission map in approximately ten months.

This is not a program or a promotion for a particular process of evangelization (because let's be honest: we all have our favorites). Instead, these are the tools you need to do what Francis of Assisi heard the Lord tell him: "Rebuild my Church."

Like Francis, you may have thought, "Then let's get out the bricks and build!"—as he did with the San Damiano Church. (And sometimes a physical building truly helps.)

But like him, you may have realized: the Church is "built" with the hearts of the people of God. They need to know the Lord is good and he has come to save us, and that he sends us to share that good news with others. Every parish is the same, in that its people are called to be the local center of the evangelical call to be his witnesses.

But every parish is different, in that the people attending have different gifts, and are on different points of the discipleship path. Every parish that exists has different geographical boundaries and people who live within those boundaries. And God himself has a distinctive

and specific vision of your parish, fully alive in the Holy Spirit and his mission.

Finally, almost every parish in North America has a common problem: your parish culture—the inherited habits in which you live out the great story of salvation—does not know how to handle the prevailing culture outside of Sunday Mass. This larger culture is where all the people we are supposed to "go and tell" actually live. In fact, it is where the parishioners themselves live. Values are muddled. Mission is confused. A lack of identity causes drift. Drift yields to people hopping off the boat.

However, there is only one way to refocus on a mission: *pray, make a plan, and implement.*

What makes this process different?

A combination of things:

1. *We take spiritual discernment seriously.* We pray before and through this process, and fully expect that God wants this parish to thrive in its mission more than we do. We begin with discerning what God's vision is for your parish, and build to that ideal.
2. *We set up structures for strength in leadership and communication.* We work with a shared leadership model that takes some burden off the pastor, but also acknowledges that the pastor is the chosen leader by the bishop, and makes final decisions. We also awaken new awareness of baptismal leadership within laypeople involved in this process.

3. *We unleash the evangelical power of the laity.* The leash may be one of the laity's own making, but everyone is called to evangelize through their baptism—and they have been given the grace to do so. No one is evangelizing for you. You need to do it yourselves, and you can.
4. *We aim for a parish culture shift.* Your parish culture supports and enables mission focus and activity—or the culture prevents it. Through focus on mission values, language, and relationships, the culture will shift to an eager expectation of sharing God's goodness.
5. *We remember this is God's parish.* Humility is a companion and outcome of this critical work. Although we cooperate with God as fully as we can, this work is ultimately the Lord's, not ours. And if it is not bearing fruit, we know God's will is perfect—so we need to be humble and see if we can improve how we offer God's light in a darkened world.

In short, this toolkit answers the question every parish asks: how do we become a mission-shaped parish in our current reality? This resource booklet is relentlessly practical and meant to be used, just like your everyday tools.

So, how do we build this evangelizing parish?

We build an evangelizing parish one discerned step at a time.

As a peek into what is to come, let's look at the core process, which we call IGNITE; see the chart on the next page.

These eight steps are part of our apostolate's ten-month process. While it is a packed ten months, the time frame allows for momentum, and encourages action. This is a significant difference from most multi-year strategic

planning processes that set goals: there is intentionality and planning built in, but also spiritual conviction, and decisions for implementation. While you can stretch this to a year, we hold that parishes embrace change best by doing—rather than thinking (and thinking, and thinking) about doing. We think a focused year gives you everything you need. In order to simplify the process, we propose an acronym: I-G-N-I-T-E.

Work through these eight steps, with prayer, discernment, exploration, and study. At the end, you have an implementation plan for the future based on the Lord's vision for your parish.

All the extra tools

This toolkit also alludes to multiple optional projects that fall under one of the IGNITE core steps: perhaps a specialized church ministry, or directed to a target community. You may look at one or more of these and realize you need this badly in your parish. Others you may have in hand. Others are irrelevant, and still others are critical. Choose the ones you need to work through, and determine whether you have the need—and bandwidth—to address them immediately. Otherwise, some could serve as follow-up work.

Here's the thing with all the extras. This is a toolbox! Do you use every tool in your home toolbox? Not usually. Are some tools more used than others? Of course. But do they each have a particular job to accomplish? Yes. You never know when you will need what. The workbook contains the essential tools. But we refer you to precision tools, and connect them to the most relevant core step. See the chart on the opposite page for a full list.

These precision tools are available at gracewatch.org/MissionIgnite.

The IGNITE Process

 	I Invite God's Vision: Prayerfully inviting the Lord to reveal his vision for this parish, fully alive. 1. Invite the Lord's Vision for Your Parish 2. Invite People into Their Baptismal Leadership: Recruit a Short-Term Parish Discipleship Team
	G Go to the Mission Field: Discovering the real people, places, and relationships the parish is sent to serve. 3. Go and Discover Your Parish's Mission Field
	N Name the Discipleship Reality: Honestly assessing where parishioners are in belonging, faith, and practice. Name and Measure Your Parish's Discipleship Level
 	I Illuminate the Way Forward: Clarifying evangelization models and shaping a clear, lifelong path of discipleship. 4. Illuminate the Way: Adopting a Common Discipleship Path 5. Illuminate the Way: Exploring and Discerning the Four Evangelization Models for Ministry
	T Turn Toward Fruitfulness: Reorienting ministries, energy, and leadership toward what gives life and bears fruit. Turn Your Ministries to the Mission and Discipleship Path
	E Establish a Mission-Shaped Parish: Setting up in a steady, sustainable direction for the long haul. 6. Establish a One-Year Evangelization Plan and a Three-Year Intention

Precision Tools

1a	Fostering a Prayer-Driven Staff and Councils
1b	Brainstorming for Evangelization
1c	101 Ways to Evangelize
2a	Working through Joined Parishes
3a	Recentering OCIA as the Reason for the Parish
3b	When Should a Parish Take On Social Mission Work within a Broader Evangelization Renewal?
3c	Becoming an Other-Focused Parish through Service
3d	Evangelizing Those Living with Disabilities: Inclusion, Participation, and Invitation
4a	Making the Parish a “School of Prayer”
4b	Creating a Community of Christ-Centered Friends
4c	Better Ways to “Find Volunteers”: Invite According to Gifts
4d	Helping Your Parishioners Resist Social Media
4e	Strengthening Your Giving through Tithing
4f	Link Your Parish School to Parish Mission by Prioritizing Parents’ Vocations
5a	Making a Clear Communications Plan for a Distracted World
5b	Mission Language Immersion 101
6a	Creating an Invitation Culture
6b	Creating a Parish Culture of Radical Hospitality
6c	Creating a Witness-Forward, Story-Sharing Parish
7a	Implementation Planning 101
7b	Evaluating Individual Ministries for Mission Template

Do you need a facilitator to use these tools?

In short, a seasoned facilitator makes it all easier—people can focus on the discernment rather than the process. But this book was written in part for parishes that cannot access a facilitator. Study it, read *The Four Ways Forward: Becoming an Apostolic Parish in a Post-Christian World*, and consider rotating the facilitator role between a couple of people who are strong at keeping a group on task while making room for prayerful discussion. Pastors, encourage laypeople to share what their prayer is revealing to them.

Otherwise, The Mark 5:19 Project offers Mission Ignite facilitator training, or we can personally facilitate this process for your parish. Consider

that investment for the future of your parish. You can reach out to learn more anytime at mark519project.org/contact/.



The Mission Ignite Toolkit is your practical set of resources to walk through the deliberate discovery and transformation of your local church into an apostolic, thriving parish. Use the core IGNITE steps to discover, discern, and set up a parish that can share the good news with its particular mission field. Look up and use some of the extra tools right away, or as needed if you want to focus on a particular element of the mission.

The Mission Ignite process is designed to help parish leaders invite God's vision into parish renewal, and live out the call to become

If you want more theology, more magisterial teaching, more story, and more examples, we encourage you first to read *The Four Ways Forward: Becoming an Apostolic Parish in a Post-Christian World* (OSV, 2022). This toolkit is based on the process proposed in that book, and it may be simpler to understand after reading the original book.

NOTES



I G N I T E

I: Invite God's Vision

Prayerfully inviting the Lord to reveal his vision for this parish and this moment.



Step 1

Invite God's Vision for Your Parish

Mark 10:51–52: Then Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man said to him, “My teacher, let me see again.” Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

We recommend reading the “Starting Conversations” article to understand the difference between mission and vision, then discussing this together: what you’re praying for is a vision—a picture of what could be—not a mission, which is the action that gets you there. Get it here: mark519project.org/parishvision.

the sightless man in this healing narrative, we have to *want* to see.

To begin this process, take time to invite the Lord to share his vision for your parish through prayer on select scripture passages. This process is ideally led by someone outside your parish, but you can do it

Vision is derived from the Latin word *videre*, meaning “to see.” Discerning the Lord’s vision for the parish involves praying to see the parish God foresees, in the fullness of its glorious mission. But like

yourselves with an experienced parishioner in the role of a facilitator.

This process is meant to be a day-away retreat or a three-evening gathering of no more than ten people. This should include the pastor. If you are

*Write the vision; make it plain For there is still
a vision for the appointed time.*
—Habakkuk 2:2–3

offering this as a part of the IGNITE process, we would suggest bringing in the nascent discipleship team (see Step 2). However, this vision discernment work could be done by a different group.

What you'll need:

- 6–10 people, ideally including the pastor, select staff, and invested parishioners
- A facilitator; ideally this is an outsider to the group. However, it could be an insider who understands the process and recognizes that his or her contribution is silence and support.
- A designated notetaker.
- An interpreter for bilingual parishes.
- A presentation board for recording and sharing ideas, as well as the vision.
- Snacks and drinks to keep it relaxed.
- Bibles (or copies of the scripture text chosen for Lectio Divina in session 1).

It's virtually impossible to become an evangelizing parish unless the parish operates within a common vision of who it is called to be. Vision doesn't get the attention it deserves: Americans are practical at heart, and tend to think of vision and mission as nice but

superfluous. But the lack of a common vision for the parish means that any decisions tend to be based entirely on less helpful guides—personal appeal, cost, familiarity. A common, articulated vision serves as a North Star, and gives you the ability to measure your progress in reaching the vision for your parish. Without one, you have no way to assess progress other than “people like it.” (People like ice cream, too, but too much can kill you.)

It is common for many organizations to create a vision statement (we don't require a statement, but we do recommend time to discern vision). Whatever you do, don't create a vision. Only God creates the vision, and we simply behold it. You need to see, point to, and name that North Star.

God's vision for your parish will be:

- Aspirational
- About who you desire to be, not who you are
- Centered on God's relationship to his people
- Relevant to every person within your parish boundaries, Catholic or not

An articulated parish vision is not:

- A description of your current ministries
- Overly focused on weaknesses
- A how-to manual of discipleship
- Triumphalistic

Most parishes think too small when they think about vision. Resist small. Now is the time to dream God's own dreams for humanity, and those dreams are almost as big as God himself. If this parish were radically open to the gifts of

the Holy Spirit, what would that look like? Pray and name that reality in concrete, specific terms.

The following sessions offer a way to move into a prayer-filled discernment discussion about parish vision. Ideally, those present are the pastor, select staff, and invested parishioners with a heart for God and your parish. (Choose prayerfully and judiciously—you want spiritually wise and creative discussion partners.) Plan for 60–90 minutes per session.

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PREVIEW

Session 1: Lectio Divina for Vision

Preparation

Deliberate prayer before the meeting is essential. This exercise gets at the heart of what it means to be a parish, and prayer for insight, guidance, and honesty in the days leading up to these discussions would be most appropriate. The participants should pray, and it would be wise to ask people outside the conversation to pray for the meeting as well.

Bring Bibles to the meeting.

Process

Begin with a prayer to the Holy Spirit ("Come, Holy Spirit" or your own). The pastor explains or reviews what discerning God's vision for the parish means.

As a group, you are going to pray with three scripture passages connected to vision:

- Matthew 28:18–20
- Isaiah 61:1–3
- Matthew 13:31–32
- or choose your own.

One passage at a time, pray with each scripture through a group Lectio Divina (20 minutes per passage).

If you have never done this before, choose a leader to facilitate this simple process:

1. Read the passage aloud, slowly. Everyone else should listen prayerfully, perhaps with eyes closed.
2. When done, the participants should be invited to read the passage silently to themselves for a few minutes.
3. The facilitator reads the passage aloud a second time, and asks people to listen for one word or phrase that strikes them for some reason.
4. After a few moments of silence, the facilitator invites individuals to share the word or phrase that struck each of them.
5. Now, discuss: How does this scripture passage help you see what is possible for a shared parish vision? Take notes. Conclude the session by bringing together all insights from these three passages. Is there anything else God is bringing to mind?

End with a closing prayer.

Session 2: Discerning the Vision

Preparation

This session is less structured, and more of a conversation around three topics. Plan to spend between 20 and 30 minutes discussing each topic, using the provided prompts. Be sure to have a notetaker recording the group's insights. Take a short break between topics.

Process

Begin with a prayer to the Holy Spirit ("Come, Holy Spirit" or another).

Review the first session's notes, especially insights from the group Lectio Divina. Then launch into the following discussions.

1. Describe the most faithful, vibrant, reverent Church you could possibly imagine.
 - Who would be there?
 - How would they express their faith?
 - What would they look like outside of the church building?
 - What impact would the church have on the larger community?
 - What is the liturgy like?
 - How many young people would consider entering the priesthood/religious life?
 - How many would be in OCIA?
 - If there is a school attached, what would make that school notably a parish school?
2. Discuss the reality that your parish has a mission given from God through the successors of the apostles.

Share the following:

A parish is a geographic boundary set by the diocese's bishop, the local successor to the apostles. Our parish is ultimately here in obedience to Jesus's instruction: Go and make disciples of all nations. That world-wide mission was entrusted to the apostles, and is handed directly to us. According to canon law, each local parish church is responsible for the spiritual welfare of everyone within its boundaries.

- Did you realize you have a mandate that reaches back to Jesus Christ?
 - What do you think when you consider that our parish includes everyone within our parish boundaries, not primarily the building and the people who attend?
 - The apostles went and made disciples of all nations after receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Is this parish open to the inspiration and movement of the Holy Spirit? How? Where could we improve our openness?
 - What does it mean to be a disciple of Christ? How could that be measured? (This could be and should be another discussion, but touch on it now.)
3. Discuss the supernatural reality of what it means to offer Mass within this geographic boundary.
 - How do we honor the centrality of the Eucharist celebrated and given at each Mass?
 - How can we acknowledge the communion of saints present among us, especially at Mass?

- How do people know this building is dedicated to God?
- Is being present in this church, especially for Mass, a refuge? An oasis? Find a word that communicates your experience.

discussion. Invite the participants to go home and write a description of the emerging vision they see in their mind, based on the preceding discussion and their own prayer. Ask them to bring these statements to the third session.

Close in prayer.

Closing

Use the last five minutes of the session to assess what seems to be rising to the top of the

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Session 3: Beholding the Common Vision

Preparation

This last session is meant to bring the two previous sessions into conversation, and continue praying to behold and name together the Lord's vision for this parish.

Some parishes will want to make this a vision statement. If that is you, heed these instructions to the right. But what is most important is having a prayerful discussion and discerning the Lord's vision for your parish. Maybe your vision will become a painting rather than a statement. Who knows? Let the Lord lead.

Process

The facilitator begins with a prayer to the Holy Spirit, and reminds those gathered of the perceived high points of the discussion in the first and second sessions.

Then, each person shares their emerging vision (or words or a drawing) on the board, or presentation sheets attached to a wall. Invite everyone to walk around viewing the different

articulations. The facilitator opens the discussion by asking participants to consider which submissions capture the glimpses the Holy Spirit gave over the last two meetings. Hopefully, you will begin to focus on two or three that are rising to the top.

Once you have culled the options, check for these items in each presentation:

- Is God clearly central to the vision?
- Is our call to discipleship clear?
- Is our outreach to the community evoked?
- Is it aspirational rather than descriptive?
- Does it help us direct where we need to go?

Use the discussion to adjust the wording or imagery in each presentation as needed. How do you land on a final vision statement? This could be the pastor's decision, or if he is willing, the decision of the group. There could be wisdom in praying on this for a week, and then making the decision.

Close with prayer.

Precision Tools for Step 1

1a	Fostering a Prayer-Driven Staff and Councils
1b	Brainstorming for Evangelization
1c	101 Ways to Evangelize

These precision tools are available at gracewatch.org/MissionIgnite.

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PREVIEW



Step 2

Invite People into Their Baptismal Leadership

Recruit a Short-Term Parish Discipleship Team

This ten-month process is not for “lone rangers.” One important outcome of this larger process is creating a discipleship team composed of the pastor and a small number of parishioners, who will carry forward the work and be formed for missionary discipleship. The pastor and staff gain additional mission support, and the people of the parish are called more deeply into their baptismal vocation. People learn and practice praying and discerning together. The parish itself receives mission guidance from the Lord through family and friends, which is often amazing and humbling. Everyone wins!

To begin, you want a gathering of discerners who are spiritually invested in the future of the

parish as God desires it. The laity have a baptismal call to lead others to Christ, and it is appropriate that the people on the evangelization front lines are part of this team. Laypeople in the pew tend to have a much better sense of the evangelical challenges and opportunities in town. When the path forward has been discerned, there is excitement and buy-in to share with the larger parish community as well as future lay leadership.

Beyond honoring the baptismal call of the laity and their role in sharing the gospel beyond parish walls, this team also gives the decision a broader base within the parish, and lends confidence to all that this is the way forward.

*For where two or three are gathered in my name,
I am there among them.*
—Matthew 18:20

A few basic questions before you begin inviting:

Who should be on this team?

- Adult parishioners who are able to pray and listen for God's word to them. If this is unfamiliar to them, they need to be open to and teachable in this form of prayer.
- They should be able to understand and work with the materials provided.
- They should be able to handle experiencing mild conflict in a group setting.
- They should be able to give attention and dedication to this process for the next ten months.

What should be the size of the team?

- 6–12, including the pastor, is the right size. You want enough to divide into subgroups to focus on certain discernment and exploration exercises, but the larger the group gets, the harder it is to have conversations.

What should be the expected commitment of the team members?

- Attendance at monthly meetings.
- Planned reading between meetings.

- Occasional small group work between monthly meetings.
- Commitment to pray daily for inspiration from the Holy Spirit.

As the pastor, how should I discern and invite?

First, take an hour to consider: why do you want the parish to become a missional, evangelization-forward parish? Pray through it, and write it down. There may be data and practical realities, but begin with what is on your heart for this parish and town.

The prayer in this process begins now. Dedicate time to consider who should be invited to discern being part of this team. Write down names and pray with those names. Ask trusted members of the parish who they would suggest (given that the main requirement is a person of deep or growing prayer).

Invite people through a phone call, or better, in person. Not after Mass—that can be a time to set up a meeting or call. But reserve 20–30 minutes to tell them why you are convinced the parish needs to become an evangelizing parish.

When you meet with the prospective team member, begin with prayer, and introduce to them what this movement to becoming an evangelizing parish is about. Offer that you have discerned through prayer that the person would be good to invite. Share the basic requirements of the team. And then tell them:

Do not give me a response right now. I am going to ask you to pray on this and offer an answer in a week. You can call me if you wish, but I will follow up. Are you willing to do that?

(Some willing people may need to sit with this. Some people may also realize they are attracted, but truly do not have the time to be consistently present.)

Follow up with a phone call in a week. If they want to meet again, set it up, and receive your answer.

Now, we move on to more detailed questions that often arise.

Should parish staff be on the ten-month discipleship team?

There are pros and cons to this.

Typically, the staff are deeply invested in the parish and they are people of prayer—and this is a good thing. If you have staff who are deeply prayerful, it is worth asking them to consider joining this team. It may feel like the most natural thing to do. However, staff are often already overworked. They also have the potential disadvantage of being too deeply connected to the details of parish life, whereas the discipleship team begins with the vision and openness to change.

The advantage of not having staff on the team is that it extends lay leadership and discipleship in the parish, which relieves the leadership load

overall. A “non-staff” discipleship team is sometimes able to see things with fresher eyes. However, if there are no staff on the discipleship team, Mission Ignite consulting typically works intentionally with the staff to keep them in the process and engaged through a current ministry mapping exercise. The staff are always involved, but not always on the team.

Finally, keep in mind that staff *need to be allowed freedom to say no* to this (the interest may be there but it may be too much extra work). Forced attendance will kill the spirit of the team.

By the way, if the staff is entirely new, inviting them to the discipleship team could be an excellent way to get everyone on the same vision. But that kind of turnover is rarely the case. If it is, invite the whole staff and invite them to learn to pray via Precision Tool 1a, “Fostering a Prayer-Driven Staff and Councils.”

Could this be the work of the pastoral council?

Technically, yes, but it depends on the people who are on the parish council. If these are good people who simply don’t meet the requirements of this discipleship team, we would avoid it. If your parish or diocese has a practice of councils serving as reporting bodies for different ministries of the parish, we would avoid making the council the discipleship team.

Does the pastor need to be on the discipleship team?

Yes. When we do Mission Ignite consulting, the consultant is the facilitator (not the pastor). But he needs to be present to (1) be part of the prayer, (2) veto ideas that are clearly not doable, and (3) be fully informed of how the Spirit has

moved in this team, so he can make the best leadership decisions.

The pastor always makes final decisions on the path forward, as is his responsibility via canon law. However, a pastor should respect the process and listen attentively to what people have been discovering and discerning.

What about parish ministry/service group representation?

This often comes up: “Do we need to have representatives from these service clubs, or different ministries?” Our advice is no. This is not a “representative body” process. What you want is for different communities within your parish to be kept in the loop. However, if you go for pure representation, there will be a temptation for people to treat it like the United Nations or the U.S. Congress, and they will defend their particular community’s interests over the greater good. That defeats the purpose of being centered on listening to the Holy Spirit. Because of that, we rigorously reject community-based representation for this short-term discipleship team.

We suggest that a balance between men and women and across generations would be ideal. But that’s it. Let their receptivity to prayer be the guide to your discernment.

What if the people I am thinking of are already very busy in the parish?

Consider suggesting (or offering permission) that they step back from involvement in one area to focus on this instead. This demonstrates the depth of importance of this group. While the active, busy ones may be ideal candidates, it would be perfect to expand the outreach to the laity in one way or another. Also, this is a team that could be best suited to the quieter, more reflective members of the parish.

I’m a new pastor, and don’t know people yet. Should I do this, or rely on others’ opinions as to who can serve?

It’s probably best to wait, work on getting to know people, and invest in the basics of parish life: strong liturgy, adult discipleship, perhaps a parish mission on prayer. Pray to notice and meet the people who could form a team starting next year.

Precision Tools for Step 2

2a

Working through Joined Parishes

These precision tools are available at gracewatch.org/MissionIgnite.

NOTES

PREVIEW



I G N I T E

G: Go to the Mission Field

Discovering the real people, places, and relationships the parish is sent to serve.



Step 3

Go and Discover Your Parish's Mission Field

Welcome to the work of the discipleship team. Let's get started!

You are all working with the presumption that your parish exists as a beacon for Christ in the immediate community surrounding the parish church. While your mission can and probably will go beyond that defined area, it should not extend beyond the local area at the expense of your immediate neighbors in need. They have been given to you as the people to invite to come and see, to encounter God through Jesus Christ in his Church. We are also called to address the social mission as it is needed by the people living in the neighborhood. To that end, you are going to spend some time researching

and assessing the spiritual and material needs of the immediate community. This work is going to be enlightening, and help you “go home to your own people ...” (Mark 5:19, NIV).

Working with a particular ZIP code (or two, if appropriate) is going to be the easiest way to do local data gathering. Although you can get more specific, we're going to take advantage of the free, publicly available research here. It doesn't need to be perfect, but try to make it reasonably specific to your parish's geographic boundaries.

Pray that you will find what God wants you to discover. Always ask for divine help first!

*Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord
has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.*

—Mark 5:19 (NIV)

Then, read the following, meet to decide which elements each of you want to do, and divide up the work.

There are three parts to this research; the third is optional.

Part 1: Rediscovering where you live and serve

Formally, this is called hyperlocal demographic data gathering. Simply put, you are looking at where you live from the outside in.

There are different ways to pick through public data about your parish. The easiest data gathering will use AI. Just use your preferred ethical AI provider, and begin asking the questions below. The answers will link to the data sources, which may be the U.S. Census (2020), GSS Data through the University of Chicago (national dataset, but sometimes broken down), ZIP code demographic info (through U.S. Census or ZipWho.com or UnitedStatesZipCodes.org). Some basic demographic analysis (by city/town) may be found at [CensusReporter.org](https://censusreporter.org). In our opinion, it is best to call up the data and load it into the AI provider before asking questions.

You can also avoid AI entirely and work through the data yourself. Or, you can outsource your data-crunching to *MissionInsite* through ACS Technologies (but don't worry, you'll still have mission field discovery work to do).

Suggested demographic questions to answer regarding the residents of your geographic area or county:

- How many people live in the selected area? (Again, by ZIP code will be the easiest to isolate the area around your parish.)
- What is the average age of residents of your selected area?
- What is the gender breakdown of residents in your selected area?
- ...Married?
- ...Families?
- ...Income?
- ...Homeowners?
- ...Employed/unemployed?
- ...Race/ethnicity?
- ...Religious affiliation? (This is gold if you can find it—but it may be challenging.)

Part 2: Interviews with people who know the community

What is most helpful is often requesting meetings with someone who knows the shape and the challenges of your local community. Choose a few from these examples: elected representatives (city council district representatives, maybe the mayor), police chief or sheriff, county social workers, principals of schools (all public schools that serve your boundaried area), and human resource heads of large local employers. Consider other people who have positions where they would know people on the margins—coordinators of homeless shelters, leaders of immigration services, etc.

You want to ask questions that open up how the people they know in the community need to be served. Ask them what the strengths of this population are as well. (See the sample interview on page 29.)

The key to this is simply to get people talking and see where the conversation goes. You don't have to pose every question, and you may have questions of your own. When you are done, quickly assemble the main points to share with the others, being sure to omit any names of people mentioned, aside from the interviewee.

Part 3: Survey the community

This step is optional. If you'd like to ask some of these same questions more broadly, an opt-in online survey can be a rich source of detail. Several tools make this easy to set up: Gloop

(powerful, but more involved), Google Forms, SurveyMonkey, or similar platforms.

A simple way to reach people is through a local social media group—your county or neighborhood Facebook group, or Nextdoor, which is organized by neighborhood. Post a short, friendly invitation explaining who you are and why you're asking, then link to a survey that is truly anonymous. Avoid collecting emails if you can.

The survey itself asks neighbors where they see the community's deepest material and social needs, with an optional second question about faith practice. See the Online Survey Template sidebar on page 30 for suggested wording you can adapt and use directly.

Conclusion

Once you have all this information, meet again and discuss:

- What do you think, given what you see, are some of the material struggles of this population?
- The emotional struggles?
- The relational struggles?
- Do any of these sometimes translate into spiritual struggles?

Feel free to use the chart on page 31 to organize your thoughts and conversation.

Sample Interview: Spiritual and Material Needs of the Community

Begin by quietly praying to the Holy Spirit for a fruitful conversation. Here's a sample opening and possible questions.

Hi, I'm _____ from [Church Name]. We're trying to better understand the material, emotional, and spiritual needs of our community so we can serve our neighbors more effectively—and honestly, just get to know them better.

We have a few questions, but please feel free to share anything we might miss. Just so you know, we're not collecting names, this conversation stays confidential, and nothing we gather will be published.

Tell me a little about yourself, how long you have lived in this town, and what insights your workplace/role brings to knowing the community.

- What would you say are the three biggest life challenges you hear about? (Possible answers: underemployment, overwork, difficult family life, addiction, debt, raising kids, loneliness, boredom, depression, political strife, etc.)
- What would you say are the three biggest strengths of this community?
- In your work, what do people say their biggest worries are?
- Would you say the churches make a positive, neutral, or negative impact on this community?
- Is there a good sense of community in this town? What does that look like?

If the person is a public servant, ask more specific questions, such as:

Principals:

- What percentage of kids are on free/reduced lunch? Or need tuition assistance?
- Are the children stressed? By what—what do you hear?
- What is the biggest challenge your teachers find in teaching children today?

Elected officials:

- When people call, what are their concerns?
- When you campaign, which issues get raised to you most consistently?
- What do you see as a challenge specific to our area?

Business owners and managers:

- Which everyday concerns rise to the top among your employees?
- What is noteworthy or exceptional about the people who work for you?

Online Survey Template

Sample social media post

Hi, I'm a member of [Church Name], and we're hoping to better understand our neighborhood as we look for ways to serve. Would you take two minutes to share what you think are the community's greatest needs? This survey is anonymous, and no one will call you. Thank you! (Insert link to survey.)

Sample survey questions

Question 1 (required)

As a resident of this area—thinking about your neighbors and your own life—where do you see the greatest need for material or social support? Please choose no more than three.

- ☐ Paying for necessities
- ☐ Financial debt
- ☐ Strained spousal relationships
- ☐ Parenting difficulties
- ☐ Unemployment
- ☐ Job stress

- ☐ Depression and anxiety
- ☐ Addiction
- ☐ Loneliness
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Question 2 (optional)

Which faith do you practice, if any?*

- ☐ Protestant Christianity
- ☐ Catholic Christianity
- ☐ Orthodox Christianity
- ☐ Judaism
- ☐ Hinduism
- ☐ Islam
- ☐ Buddhism
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other _____

Thank you for helping us serve the neighborhood!

**This question is unrelated to the first, but it will be interesting to see the overlap among respondents.*

Mission Field Findings

Mission Field Struggles

Emotional	
Material	
Relational	
Potential spiritual struggles	

Mission Field Strengths

Emotional	
Material	
Relational	
Potential spiritual strengths	

Precision Tools for Step 3

3a	Recentering OCIA as the Reason for the Parish
3b	When Should a Parish Take On Social Mission Work within a Broader Evangelization Renewal?
3c	Becoming an Other-Focused Parish through Service
3d	Evangelizing Those Living with Disabilities: Inclusion, Participation, and Invitation

These precision tools are available at gracewatch.org/MissionIgnite.

NOTES

PREVIEW



I G N I T E

N: Name and Measure Your Parish's
Discipleship Level

Honestly assessing where parishioners are in belonging, faith, and practice.



Step 4

Name and Measure Your Parish's Discipleship Level

Many parishes track Mass counts once a year, watching whether they rise or fall. Others follow sacramental records: more baptisms? OCIA numbers? Marriages? Religious vocations? All these numbers are useful, at least in part. But this exercise captures something more: the overall discipleship level of the parish. Are the people of the parish close to Jesus in mind, body, and soul? Are they growing closer, and helping others grow closer? Are they becoming more like the Teacher of all teachers, Jesus?

This project is led by a subgroup of the discipleship team, with some staff support as needed. Other organizations and processes can offer a “deep data capture” of a parish’s discipleship

level, but we encourage you to create a simple snapshot instead—one that can be repeated every other year, or after a major event or program. What you lose in depth, you gain in the ability to chart growth over time.

Friends, your task is to discern the discipleship level of the parish as best you can. The goal is a snapshot of where parishioners stand in their discipleship walk—especially where they can grow—so that you can measure again in a year, two, or three and see whether your mission-forward initiatives are making a real difference in the health of the congregation. Remember: souls are made to grow, and grow, and grow.

A disciple is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully qualified will be like the teacher.

—Luke 6:40

We suggest three approaches: conduct a survey, collect sacramental records and attendance counts from the past year, and, if possible, run focus groups. Surveys let people self-report their wins and challenges with discipleship.

If you're doing this as a team—or as a subgroup of the discipleship team—gather, pray, and make a few key decisions:

1. First decision: Will you focus on those who attend regularly (Sundays)? Or on everyone registered in the parish? There are pros and cons either way—but know which group you're assessing, and next time, use the same method to reassess that same group.
2. Part of this process is an anonymous survey. Announce it at Mass for at least one weekend, and encourage people to complete it either in the pew or just outside church, using a QR code or URL. Work with your pastor or his designate to pick a launch weekend that won't compete with other major parish events, and keep the survey open for two weeks after launch.
3. Decide which questions belong on the survey. We offer suggestions below, but feel free to adapt them. Err on the side of keeping it short—ten questions is ideal—and have your pastor review and approve it before going live.
4. Others in the workgroup may want to draft focus group questions and plan how to gather the conversations. An advertised "open focus group," welcoming anyone who wants to attend, is a smart option; it will need a facilitator and a notetaker. Some discussion can happen through existing meetings (staff, council, other parish groups). Don't forget the teens—the youth group makes a great focus group. If you're familiar with the synodal process, this can work in a similar way.
5. Finally, someone needs to gather last year's Mass count and sacramental records—baptisms, first Communions, confirmations, marriages, ordinations, and religious vocations. If you can compare three, five, or even ten years back, that's even better. Ask your pastor whether staff can be assigned to this work, or help the team get started with the raw data. The numbers may not be what you'd hoped—but to turn things around, you first need to know where you stand.

Once people are assigned their tasks at the first meeting, the project can move forward. Set a

second workgroup meeting for about six weeks out, to discuss your findings and prepare a presentation of the data for the rest of the discipleship team.

As you compile this data, you'll illuminate the discipleship of current parishioners through three "spotlights":

- Attendance and sacramental markers
- Discipleship survey
- Focus groups

Attendance and sacramental markers

Numbers aren't the only thing worth measuring, but they do mean something. If attendance drops significantly, it's worth understanding why. If people aren't getting married in the Church (or at all), that's worth understanding too. And if you're working to improve your cul-

ture of invitation, a yearly check on whether attendance has grown is one marker of how well that culture is taking hold.

Discipleship survey

We recommend collecting this survey online as much as possible—it's easier to replicate and easier to analyze the data. You can offer a few paper copies for people who don't use online surveys, but keep in mind that someone will need to enter that data by hand.

Google Forms is an easy way to run a short online survey, and it can be set up to stay anonymous. Find a parishioner familiar with the tool to help collect responses. Use QR codes and URLs in emails, texts, and on the website, and consider setting up a few tablets—ready to go, with paper copies on hand—in the narthex or gathering space.

Aim for a balance of quantity and quality questions about discipleship activity (see examples,

Examples of Quality Questions

*Never have an awareness
of God's presence*

**How deep is your prayer time with
God?**

*Often have a powerful
awareness of God's presence*

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all

**How confident are you in inviting
someone to consider God at your
parish?**

Comfortably confident

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all

**Do you sense your service to others
deepening your spiritual life?**

*My service is a meaningful
way I connect with Christ*

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

pages 36–37), and include a couple of questions that help you pinpoint areas for improvement.

We recommend a Likert scale for the qualitative measures of discipleship health—it will be easier to assess consistently when you repeat the survey later.

Finally, we encourage you to add two checklist questions. First, how is the parish praying? Offer

a short list of ways people pray. Second, ask people to name their personal obstacles to growing in discipleship.

Focus group questions

First, encourage participants to focus on spiritual life—their own and that of parishioners they know—without naming names. They’ll be

Examples of Quantity Questions

How often do you attend Mass?

- ☐ never
- ☐ 1–2 times a year
- ☐ monthly
- ☐ weekly
- ☐ 2–5 times a week

How often do you receive sacramental reconciliation (go to confession)?

- ☐ never
- ☐ rarely
- ☐ once a year
- ☐ several times a year
- ☐ monthly or more

How often do you pray, outside of Mass and meal prayers?

- ☐ never
- ☐ rarely
- ☐ once a week
- ☐ several times a week
- ☐ daily

How often do you talk about your faith with others?

- ☐ never
- ☐ rarely
- ☐ once a week
- ☐ several times a week
- ☐ daily

How often do you serve others as an act of Christian discipleship—that is, connecting your spiritual life with serving others, from family to people you don’t know?

- ☐ never
- ☐ rarely
- ☐ once a month
- ☐ once a week
- ☐ almost daily

Improvement Point Questions

Check all the ways you know how to pray and at least occasionally do:

- ☐ Memorized prayers (Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be)
- ☐ Intercessory prayer (praying for others)
- ☐ Conversation with God
- ☐ The Rosary
- ☐ Lectio Divina (prayerful scripture reading)
- ☐ Ignatian prayer
- ☐ Liturgy of the Hours
- ☐ Song/Music
- ☐ Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
- ☐ Other:

What gets in the way of you becoming a deeper disciple of Christ? Choose all those that strike you as important:

- ☐ Family busyness
- ☐ Work obligations
- ☐ Social media
- ☐ Sports (doing, watching, or both)
- ☐ Don't know how to start
- ☐ I don't understand my faith
- ☐ Not sure it is worth it
- ☐ Personal medical challenges
- ☐ I'm comfortable where I am
- ☐ My own sinfulness
- ☐ Feels "too late" in my life to begin this
- ☐ No one else is doing this
- ☐ Not attracted to the options I see for growth at the parish
- ☐ Other:

tempted to focus on what the parish offers or doesn't; some of that is fine, but it isn't the point of a discipleship-health focus group. Set ground rules and make space for everyone who wants to speak, which means gently quieting the extroverts after a while. If your parish has gone through a synodal process, you can adapt that same approach here.

Someone will need to take notes and create a summary of the conversation to share with the original workgroup. Consider open-ended questions that cover some of these.

Finally, let yourself get excited about what this work will reveal. No matter where your parish stands today, this will be a gold mine to help you move to the next level!

Possible Focus Group Questions

Prayer

- Given what you see and hear, how important is prayer in the life of the Church community?

Worship

- Given what you see and hear, are people uplifted or consoled by our common worship? What would that look like?

Sacramental life

- Are we open to God's action in receiving the sacraments? How could we be more so?

Devotional life

- Do we have a healthy devotional life as a parish? Examples: Song, adoration, devotion to saints, all spiritual practices outside of Mass.

Christian service

- How strong is our service to those in need in our city? To family? To work—teaching, medical care, other?

Sharing the gospel with spouses/families

- Do we pray together at home as a family? Do we talk about our spiritual life? Do we witness a shared spiritual life in other couples?

Sharing the gospel outside of family

- How well do we witness to our faith in the world? Examples: Friends, work colleagues, etc.

Precision Tools for Step 4

4a	Making the Parish a "School of Prayer"
4b	Creating a Community of Christ-Centered Friends
4c	Better Ways to "Find Volunteers": Invite According to Gifts
4d	Helping Your Parishioners Resist Social Media
4e	Strengthening Your Giving through Tithing
4f	Link Your Parish School to Parish Mission by Prioritizing Parents' Vocations

These precision tools are available at gracewatch.org/MissionIgnite.

PREVIEW



I G N I T E

I: Illuminate the Way Forward

Clarifying evangelization models and shaping a clear, lifelong path of discipleship.



Step 5

Illuminate the Way: Adopting a Common Discipleship Path

Do we know how
to be disciples?

If there is a missing link in parish-based evangelization, it is that we do not set up an obvious, discernible discipleship path from “womb to tomb” in every parish. Given that people struggle to even define the term disciple, it is difficult to build anything solid on that ignorance!

Perhaps the reason is that discipleship used to be deeply embedded in the family or, alternatively, in the ordained or consecrated religious life. In parishes, there was often a rich context of devotional practices, steady family roles, and

This exercise is typically done by parish staff, because they tend to be the most aware of ministry offerings and who the target “audience” is for each ministry.

However, if there is no staff, a gathering of those leading discipleship ministries can complete this step.

This section is influenced by the excellent book *A Clear Path: How to Make Missionary Disciples in Your Parish* by Jim Jansen. We strongly recommend reading that text and, if you prefer it, using his process to build a discipleship path. This step is about intentionally adopting a discipleship path in line with the Catholic tradition articulated in the Vatican’s *Directory for Catechesis* (Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, 2020), and determining what you already have in place.

Then Jesus said ... “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples;
and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

—John 8:31–32

close contact with each other within the parish church. The ambiguity in discipleship today stems from the erosion of the family-based culture that once shaped it. Discipleship was defined as something you did as a family, and they (with parish support) guided you along life challenges: growing up and learning, getting married in the Church, raising a family and working in the world, raising adults and grandchildren while looking to the end of your life and a holy death. That lens had its flaws (not everyone received a positive family life and models)—but it was a framework, and people knew that framework. Now, it is largely gone.

Thankfully this is a fixable challenge. While we want to recover the anchor of the original small group—the family—and strengthen it for the contemporary world, we also want to recognize that many of our parishioners are coming to the faith and living it “on their own.” They have moved away from family, or the family doesn’t practice or never practiced, or they are converts. In this cultural moment, everyone needs to make visible the framework of discipleship. This is not unlike providing a frame or a trellis for a growing plant. The frame provides a structure to guide the plant’s growth upward. Without the frame, the plant won’t have a path for its growth, and may even fall over.

What is this “discipleship path”?

John Paul II often said that the new millennium was going to be marked by defining anew what it means to be human. To be a disciple of Christ is part of that reality. Discipleship is living humanity at its fullest and at its most self-aware.

While the ways the discipleship path is fulfilled are as individual as each human being, the pattern is largely the same. This is the path. It exists for parishioners, so people will know what is coming in their life of discipleship, and how to grow. And it exists for missionary parish pastors and staff, so they will know what to offer and who to invite.

This dual use (leaders and parishioners) is important. And often what is presented as a path is angled to one or the other. It has caused a lot of confusion. For this reason, we are focusing on one use: how the parishioner sees the path. Pastors, priests, lay staff, missionaries: *your challenge is to see the path through your parishioners’ eyes.*

We suggest the following sentence as a discipleship path suitable for any parish, and angled for parishioners to recognize, understand, and remember:

**Friends come to know Jesus
and grow to go and tell.**

This sentence breaks down into four movements that align with the *Directory for Catechesis*' categories (which *The Four Ways Forward* abbreviated as PECDA).

PARISH-FACING DISCIPLESHIP PATH	STAFF-FACING THEOLOGICAL MOVEMENTS
Friends	Pre-evangelization
Come to Know Jesus	Evangelization
And Grow	Catechesis and Discipleship
To Go and Tell	Apostolic Mission

You can use other terms (for example, Jim Jansen's parish-facing language is "Connect, Know, Grow, Go"). But whatever terms you choose, make sure they are connected to the four basic movements, and get ready to anchor this path everywhere—and move on to the exercises

on the following pages to determine what the path looks like *right now* at your parish.

On the next two pages, you will find handouts containing discipleship path language for your parishioners and staff. You are free to copy and share them.

Anchoring the discipleship path everywhere requires some attention to communication. See Precision Tool 5a if you want to shore up and focus your parish's communication process.

A final note: Not every parishioner moves through these steps at the same pace. The parish's role is not to force movement, but to make each step visible, accessible, and supported.

The Discipleship Path for Our Mission-Focused Parish

FRIENDS: “I have called you friends.” John 15:15

We begin by forming genuine friendships. The parish is a place where people are known, welcomed, and cared for. No one walks alone, and everyone belongs.

- Often expressed through: hospitality ministry, welcome weekends and greeters, parish meals, coffee and donuts, social gatherings, neighborhood or family events, service projects open to all, informal small groups and parish clubs

COME TO KNOW JESUS: “Come and see” John 1:39

Through friendship, prayer, scripture, and the life of the Church, we invite people to encounter Jesus personally and to discover who he is and what he desires for their lives.

- Often expressed through: Alpha or similar evangelizing experiences, OCIA/inquiry sessions, parish missions and retreats, testimony nights or witness talks, evangelization-focused small groups, scripture-based prayer experiences

AND GROW: “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” 2 Peter 3:18

As we come to know Jesus, we continue to grow—learning to pray, celebrating the sacraments, living the gospel in daily life, and supporting one another as disciples.

- Often expressed through: adult faith formation and Bible studies, small faith-sharing groups, sacramental preparation and mystagogia, spiritual direction and retreats, men’s and women’s groups, ongoing catechesis and formation programs

TO GO AND TELL: “Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” Mark 5:19 (NIV)

Having encountered Christ and grown in faith, we are sent. We share what God has done in our lives through words and actions, bringing hope, healing, and peace to others.

- Often expressed through: evangelization teams and opportunities, mentoring and accompaniment ministries, leadership in small groups or ministries, workplace or family witness, outreach to the poor and marginalized, mission trips and local service initiatives

Friends → Come to Know Jesus → And Grow → To Go and Tell

This path is not a checklist or a program. It is a way of naming how faith grows—person by person, relationship by relationship. Let’s walk the path together!

Your Parish Discipleship Path: Pastoral and Planning Language

This framework names the same discipleship journey using the language of the *Directory for Catechesis*, enabling staff to plan, assess, and align ministries without introducing unnecessary complexity to parishioners.

Planning language	Pre-evangelization	Evangelization	Catechesis and Discipleship	Apostolic Mission
Parish language	Friends	Come to Know Jesus	And Grow	To Go and Tell
Directory focus	Creating the conditions for openness to the gospel through presence, listening, hospitality, and trust. Pre-evangelization attends to the human and relational ground in which faith can take root. It is not content-driven, but relationship-driven.	The explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ, inviting a personal response of faith and conversion. Evangelization proposes—not presumes—faith. It is invitational, relational, and centered on encounter with Christ.	Forming disciples who mature in faith through catechesis, sacramental life, prayer, and moral formation. Catechesis is not merely instructional; it is formative, communal, and oriented toward lifelong conversion.	Sending mature disciples to witness to Christ and participate actively in the Church's mission in the world. Mission is not an optional "fourth step," but the fruit and fulfillment of discipleship.
Pastoral aims	Foster belonging and trust • Remove obstacles to faith • Create spaces of welcome and encounter	Proclaim the kerygma clearly • Invite personal encounter with Jesus • Support an initial response of faith	Integrate faith into daily life • Deepen prayer, scripture, and sacramental participation • Form habits of Christian living	Form disciples on mission • Equip leaders and witnesses • Extend the Church's presence into daily life
Typical ministries and expressions	Hospitality and welcome ministries • Parish social events and meals • Open service opportunities • Family and community events • Informal groups and parish gatherings	Alpha and evangelizing experiences • OCIA inquiry and precatechumenate • Parish missions and retreats • Testimony and witness events • Evangelization-focused small groups	Adult faith formation and Bible studies • Small discipleship groups • Sacramental preparation with mystagogia • Retreats and spiritual direction • Ongoing formation for ministry leaders	Evangelization and outreach teams • Mentoring and accompaniment roles • Parish leadership and ministry leadership • Works of mercy and justice • Witness in family, workplace, and community
Key planning question	Are people experiencing the parish as a place where they are known, welcomed, and safe to take a next step?	Where and how is Jesus Christ explicitly proclaimed and personally encountered in the parish?	Are we forming disciples who are growing in prayer, understanding, and lived commitment to Christ?	Are disciples being intentionally sent, supported, and equipped for mission beyond parish programs? If we don't know the answer, how would we find out?

Sorting existing ministries through the discipleship path

This worksheet helps parish leadership assess how well current ministries support the full journey of discipleship—from first relationships to apostolic mission—and identify gaps, overlaps, and next steps. Ideally this will be done as a staff, and people responsible for different ministries will fill in their work within the appropriate spots in Stages 1 and 2. Stages 3 and following are done together as a staff after reviewing Stages 1 and 2. This process will take a few dedicated meetings to do well.

Parish Ministry Mapping

Stage 1: List All Current Ministries and Programs

Include *everything*: ministries, programs, events, committees, seasonal offerings, and informal gatherings. Continue on the next page if needed.

Ministry or Program	Primary Audience	Frequency

[illegible]

Parish Ministry Mapping

Stage 2: Map Each Ministry to the Discipleship Path

Place each ministry in the movement where it most naturally functions, even if it touches more than one movement.

1. Pre-evangelization (Friends)

Building trust, belonging, and relationships

Ministry or Program	Does it foster welcome and relationships?	Notes
	☐ Yes ☐ No	
	☐ Yes ☐ No	
	☐ Yes ☐ No	
	☐ Yes ☐ No	
	☐ Yes ☐ No	
	☐ Yes ☐ No	
	☐ Yes ☐ No	
	☐ Yes ☐ No	
	☐ Yes ☐ No	
	☐ Yes ☐ No	
	☐ Yes ☐ No	
	☐ Yes ☐ No	
	☐ Yes ☐ No	
	☐ Yes ☐ No	
	☐ Yes ☐ No	
	☐ Yes ☐ No	
	☐ Yes ☐ No	
	☐ Yes ☐ No	

Explicit proclamation and invitation to faith

	☐ Yes ☐ No
	☐ Yes ☐ No
	☐ Yes ☐ No
	☐ Yes ☒ No
	☐ Yes ☐ No
	☐ Yes ☐ No
	☐ Yes ☐ No
	☒ Yes ☐ No
	☐ Yes ☐ No
	☐ Yes ☐ No
	☐ Yes ☐ No

3. Catechesis and Discipleship (And Grow)

Ongoing formation in faith and practice

[illegible]

Sending disciples to witness and serve

Sending disciples to witness and serve

[illegible]

Parish Ministry Mapping

Stage 3: Evaluate Balance and Flow

Use the questions below as a group discussion, not a scorecard.

Overall Balance

Which movement has the most ministries?

Which movement has the fewest?

Are we unintentionally over-invested in one movement? Which one?

Transition Between Movements

How do people move from Friends → Come to Know Jesus?

Is there a clear invitation to Grow from Come to Know Jesus?

How are people invited from And Grow → To Go and Tell?

The Anchor Stones on the Path

Challenge yourself as a team. Which existing ministry best embodies each movement?

Note: Most parishes discover the weakest transition is from catechesis/discipleship into mission.

Parish Ministry Mapping

Stage 4: Identify Gaps, Overlaps, and Opportunities

Gaps (What's Missing?)

Are there parishioners who belong but are never invited to encounter Jesus?

Are formed disciples unsure how to live missionally?

Overlaps (What's Redundant?)

Are multiple ministries serving the same discipleship path movement with little coordination?

Are we offering any movement without a clear next step?

Opportunities (What Could Be Reimagined?)

Can any existing ministries be adapted to serve a different movement?

Which ministries could add a clear invitation forward?

Parish Ministry Mapping

Stage 5: Discern Priority Actions (Next 6–12 Months)

Choose no more than 2–3 focus areas. One may be sufficient!

Priority Area	
Movement Addressed	
Action Step	
Owner	

Priority Area	
Movement Addressed	
Action Step	
Owner	

Reflection questions

- If someone entered our parish this year, could we clearly name the next step for them? How?
- Does our parish assume discipleship, or intentionally cultivate it?

Precision Tools for Step 5

5a	Making a Clear Communications Plan for a Distracted World
5b	Mission Language Immersion 101

These precision tools are available at gracewatch.org/MissionIgnite.

NOTES



*You show me the path of life.
In your presence there is fullness of joy*

—Psalm 16:11



NOTES

PREVIEW



Step 6

Illuminate the Way

Exploring and Discerning the Four Evangelization Models for Ministry

To explain this step, you need to know how the director of The Mark 5:19 Project, Dr. Susan Windley-Daoust, came into evangelization ministry.

When I was appointed a diocesan director of Missionary Discipleship, Americans were in a period where evangelization was the “in thing” (at least in some chanceries). On the heels of the 2017 Orlando Convocation of Catholic Leaders, every publisher, Catholic creative, state Catholic conference, and influencer created and promoted various ways of evangelization. Some of these tools and programs built on fruitful work in the previous two or three decades. Some were built on the magisterial encyclicals of Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis. Some were—and I

hate to say it—opportunistic publications that weren’t even evangelical.

But the biggest problem was that there were a lot of resources, most new, all promising a lot, and a strong impulse to do something. And most pastors, lay leaders, and parishes had no idea which to choose, and for what reason. We were in serious “program-itis.”

My first job as a new director was to study and explore all these resources. At first, this was simply to match parish desires with a program’s claimed content. Second, it was to assess whether the program was actually evangelization or not. Third, it was to assess how helpful this program was in achieving what it claimed—reaching a cer-

“...This is the way; walk in it.
—Isaiah 30:21”

tain audience, building up discipleship of the initiated, equipping for invitation, etc. But I began to notice something: these evangelization programs were all centered around four distinct models. Everyone was reinventing four wheels.

(All four themes—called parish evangelization models—can be found in Part II of *The Four Ways Forward*.)

The other thing I quickly realized was that each one of these thematic models was targeted to a specific movement in the discipleship path, so that model could never serve all the movements necessary for parish evangelization. The resources were often operating out of great insights and well-developed processes, but they were more like polished pieces of a puzzle than the full picture. The challenge was that some eager marketers—and eager consumers—assumed “buying in” to one program would be buying into self-sustaining, full-spectrum evangelization. No program offers that. No single program can offer that. So often people would, in good faith, adopt a program and invest in its method and insights. A year or two or three later—the program is struggling to bear more fruit. The fault is not with the program (usually). The fault is expecting that solitary program to stand alone and do it all. It cannot, and without a complementary process that addresses a new audience or deepens growth, it will collapse.

And a parish will wallow in discouragement: “We knew this wouldn’t work.”

Back to the Mission Ignite process. Let us describe briefly the four parish evangelization models. We will close with a discussion of why you need three of them to sustain evangelization for the long haul.

The Four Parish-Based Evangelization Models

The Radical Hospitality/ First Proclamation Model

This model weds two powerful elements: the love without expectation that is radical hospitality, and the truth offered in the first proclamation. This model welcomes the stranger to come and see (and eat) and gets to know them and their questions. The first proclamation—that God is love, wants your friendship, and has an amazing plan for your life—is offered in the context of that budding relationship, and in response to their questions. This model can often teach parishioners how to become comfortable speaking about their faith with others outside the Church, and foster a culture of invitation.

Common examples of this model are Alpha, ChristLife, The Rescue Project, Life in the Spirit Seminars, and, to a lesser extent, Saint Paul Street Evangelization (which is in the model but less parish-anchored).

This model is ideal for engaging in pre-evangelization and beginning evangelization.

The Small Group Spiritual Multiplication Model

The small group spiritual multiplication model involves engaging people in longer relationships about the Christian life and living it well. These can take the form of Bible studies, prayer circles, faith-sharing groups, etc. Small groups are less about teaching, more about learning together and challenging and supporting each other in the discipleship walk.

We have had small groups investing in their faith for a long time, but focusing on spiritual multiplication is often new to us. Based on the Book of Acts and the practice of the early Church, it notes that the first evangelists formed and invested in these small communities, and then left them in order to go share the good news and form new small communities. Spiritual multiplication today refers to the practice of small groups having a “term limit,” at which point each member of that group goes and offers a small group growth experience on their own. The outcome is that the faith spreads rapidly—instead of adding people to the Church, the number of believers multiplies.

The two best-known practices of spiritual multiplication of small groups would be FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students) and Franciscan University’s Discipleship Quads. Evangelical Catholic has a version of this as well.

The Organizational Mission Refocus Model

The Organizational Mission Refocus Model leans on healthy human processes oriented cleanly to a clear evangelical mission. This addresses the perennial problem of organizational mission drift: this model is a deliberate turning back to the Lord’s mission to go and make disciples. This usually involves pruning, and even rebuilding.

Beyond the refocus, this model tends to look at organizational health. It’s true that our parishes, especially our larger ones, have a complex system of ministry in place—and healthy organizational practices serve mission better every day of the week.

In years past, the most prominent version of this model has been The Amazing Parish and the work of Patrick Lencioni, but you also see elements of this model in the Catholic Leadership Institute, as well as our own apostolate (The Mark 5:19 Project).

The Elevating Signs and Wonders Model

Signs and wonders are experiences of God breaking into the natural realm. Sometimes these take the form of miracles, or devotion to saints who received the miraculous graces. Sometimes this comes in prayers for healing and received graces. Often people use this language about Eucharistic adoration, and the power of the presence of God.

The strength of this model comes in the direct encounter with God and his grace, felt and sometimes seen in the person. When God breaks in, people want—need—to share it with others. Sometimes healed people need to explain what has happened! It is strongly evangelistic.

The best examples of this model are the Charismatic Renewal and the Eucharistic Revival.

You Need Three out of Four to Become an Evangelizing Parish

Each of these models serves a different marker on the universal discipleship path. If you are welcoming people in at different places on the path—and you have dedicated disciples at different places on the path—you need to meet these people where they join the path! Your parish needs to accompany diverse people at different growth points to and through the discipleship path that leads to God.

At one level, that's exciting—here comes everybody! At another level, it's a little like herding cats. You'd better make that path clear and its signs obvious.

DISCIPLESHIP PATH	THEOLOGICAL MOVEMENT	RELEVANT PARISH-BASED EVANGELIZATION MODELS		
Friends	Pre-evangelization	Radical Hospitality/ First Proclamation	Organizational Mission Refocus	Signs and Wonders
Come to Know Jesus	Evangelization	Radical Hospitality/ First Proclamation	Organizational Mission Refocus	Signs and Wonders
And Grow	Catechesis and Discipleship	Small Group Spiritual Multiplication	Organizational Mission Refocus	Signs and Wonders
To Go and Tell	Apostolic Mission	Small Group Spiritual Multiplication		Signs and Wonders

As you see, no one program—or even process or model—covers all four movements of the path.

But Wait...

You may say, but wait! There are two models (Organizational Mission Refocus and Elevating Signs and Wonders) that come close to covering them all, right? Here's the problem.

Organizational Mission Refocus is a health-based, structural gut check. It is done by leader-disciples who know what is good for the com-

munity as a whole in prioritizing mission and evangelization. A structure for organization and supported leadership is incredibly helpful. However, it cannot make evangelization happen on its own.

Elevating Signs and Wonders, on the other hand, is given to us as a real gift, working brilliantly toward evangelization and deepening discipleship. But this is a habit more than an intentional process. It cultivates a culture of evangelization and discipleship more than a process of evangelization and discipleship.

The reality is you will more adequately cover the discipleship path if you add at least one more model, and we recommend three in all.

Exploring the models

What you need to do as a discipleship team is break into three (or if enough people, four) subgroups and each explore one of these models. Plan to meet as a subgroup 2–3 times over two months. In the end, one person from each group should be prepared to summarize your conversation and what you think of your assigned model—especially its fit for the parish.

For example:

Subgroup #1: Radical Hospitality and First Proclamation

1. Read *The Four Ways Forward*, Ch. 4.
 - a. Discuss the chapter.
 - b. Determine who will explore Alpha, who will explore ChristLife, and who will explore The Rescue Project. Add additional processes as needed.
 - c. Look at the available materials online, and reach out to representatives from the process if you have questions.
 - d. Ask your diocesan director whether any parish in the diocese has run the processes listed, and talk to those parish leaders to learn their perspective, pros, and cons.
2. Meet again and report what you have learned. This should be a free-flowing conversation about positives and negatives of these processes:
 - ▶ Is there one option rising to the top, and why?
 - ▶ If people are circling around one, perhaps everyone goes home and does some research on this process/program.
3. Ideally, meet again and discuss your impressions of the model and the programs/processes. Fold in these questions as well:
 - ▶ Given the spiritual needs of the community, is this model a good fit? Why/why not?
 - ▶ Given the spiritual gifts of the parishioners, is this model a good fit? Why/why not?
 - ▶ Which program or process is most attractive and why?
 - ▶ What do you see as the specific benefits of this model for the evangelization of this community?
 - ▶ Is it possible to implement this process on your own (without programmatic support)? Is it preferable?
 - ▶ How much does the process cost? How many people will it take to run it? Do you have any idea who would run it (staff or volunteer)?
 - ▶ Do you think this model should be implemented first, second, third, or not at all?

The second subgroup will focus on the Small Group Spiritual Multiplication Model.

Subgroup #2: Small Group Spiritual Multiplication Model

1. Read *The Four Ways Forward*, Ch. 5.
 - a. Discuss the chapter.
 - b. Determine who will explore Discipleship Quads, FOCUS parish missionaries, and Evangelical Catholic's ReachMore™. Someone could explore other small group programs and what it would take to make them faith-sharing and missionary. Add additional processes as needed.
 - c. Look at the available materials online, and reach out to representatives from the process if you have questions.
 - d. Ask your diocesan director whether any parish in the diocese has run the processes listed, and talk to those parish leaders to learn their perspective, pros, and cons.
2. Meet again and report what you have learned. This should be a free-flowing conversation about positives and negatives of these processes:
 - ▶ Is there one option rising to the top, and why?
 - ▶ If people are circling around one, perhaps everyone goes home and does some research on this process/program.
3. Ideally, meet again and discuss your impressions of the model and the programs/processes. Fold in these questions as well:
 - ▶ Given the spiritual needs of the community, is this model a good fit? Why/why not?

- ▶ Given the spiritual gifts of the parishioners, is this model a good fit? Why/why not?
- ▶ Which program or process is most attractive and why?
- ▶ What do you see as the specific benefits of this model for the evangelization of this community?
- ▶ Is it possible to implement this process on your own (without programmatic support)? Is it preferable?
- ▶ How much does the process cost? How many people will it take to run it? Do you have any idea who would run it (staff or volunteer)?
- ▶ Do you think this model should be implemented first, second, third, or not at all?

If there are three subgroups on your discipleship team, we tend to drop Organizational Mission Refocus. This IGNITE process covers a lot of that already—however, if you want to explore it, we recommend reading Ch. 6 of *The Four Ways Forward*, and exploring the materials from The Amazing Parish.

The last subgroup, #3, will explore what it looks like to focus on Elevating Signs and Wonders as a parish.

Subgroup #3: Elevating Signs and Wonders

1. Read *The Four Ways Forward*, Ch. 7.
 - a. Discuss the chapter.
 - b. Determine who will explore Encounter Ministries (or Renewal Ministries), the Eucharistic Revival resources, and Catholic Evangelization Outreach (local witness talks). Add additional processes as needed.
 - c. Look at the available materials online, and reach out to representatives from the process if you have questions.
 - d. Ask your diocesan director whether any parish in the diocese has run the processes listed, and talk to those parish leaders to learn their perspective, pros, and cons.
2. Meet again and report what you have learned. This should be a free-flowing conversation about positives and negatives of these processes:
 - ▶ Is there one option rising to the top, and why?
 - ▶ If people are circling around one, perhaps everyone goes home and does some research on this process/program.
3. Ideally, meet again and discuss your impressions of the model and the programs/processes. Fold in these questions as well:
 - ▶ Given the spiritual needs of the community, is this model a good fit? Why/why not?
 - ▶ Given the spiritual gifts of the parishioners, is this model a good fit? Why/why not?
 - ▶ Which program or process is most attractive and why?
 - ▶ What do you see as the specific benefits of this model for the evangelization of this community?
 - ▶ Is it possible to implement this process on your own (without programmatic support)? Is it preferable?
 - ▶ How much does the process cost? How many people will it take to run it? Do you have any idea who would run it (staff or volunteer)?
 - ▶ Do you think this model should be implemented first, second, third, or not at all?

Regather and discern

After all the subgroups have met, explored, discussed, and prayed—and this should take about six to eight weeks—it's time to regather. Begin with one hour of adoration or a rosary.

If any subgroup has something written up, that can be shared with the group ahead of time.

Each subgroup discusses what they have learned and where they are placing this model and why. Presentations should be kept to 15 minutes each, with an additional 15 minutes for discussion and questions.

With opening prayer and a break, this is a two-hour meeting—and it will be exciting, but everything will be on the table. It will be messy. That's okay, but try to stay on track—you are discerning what God wants for your parish as a next immediate step, and then second and third step as well.

The facilitator's questions

Ideally, you have an outside facilitator. If not, the pastor or his designate should be gently asking two questions in order to help you discern your first model:

- ▶ Where are you all discerning peace? Peace is a sign of God's desire for this path.
- ▶ If there is no peace: What more do you need to come to peace? Time? Information? Prayer?

If the answer is nothing more, then leave the meeting with a joint promise to pray daily for clear discernment over the next seven days. If there are things to learn (sometimes cost, people needed to run, etc.), a plan is made to get that

information ASAP. Then, meet again with the intention of discerning your first initiative, as well as the next two options in the years ahead.

(This could also be "mailed in" more anonymously if a second meeting is not possible.)

The ultimate decision lies with the pastor, who should communicate this decision as soon as reasonably possible after the first or second "regathering" meetings.

Before you move on

Your three chosen models should be written on the following pages, with details from this step of the IGNITE process.

NOTES

Our Parish's Tactical Plan to Share the Good News

1. The first model we will invest in is:

a. We are most attracted to implementing the following process/program:

b. This was chosen with an intention to reach out to:

c. These are our lingering concerns:

2. The model we want to invest in second is:

a. We are most attracted to implementing the following process/program:

b. This was chosen with an intention to reach out to:

c. We want to begin preparing for this process on this date:

d. Ideally, we want to launch this process on this date (no sooner than one year after the first model launches):

e. These are our lingering concerns:

Our Parish's Tactical Plan to Share the Good News

3. The model we want to invest in third is:

a. We are most interested in this particular process:

b. This was chosen with an intention to reach out to:

c. We are most excited about:

d. We want to begin preparing for this process on this date:

e. Ideally, we want to launch this process on this date:

f. These are our concerns that need to be addressed to offer this model well:

Finally, place these models on the discipleship path below. The models can blur boundaries (a little, not a lot!). If you are not using our version of the discipleship path, create a table to fill in your own.

Our Parish's Tactical Evangelization Plan Supporting Our Discipleship Path

FRIENDS (PRE-EVANGELIZATION)	COME TO KNOW JESUS (EVANGELIZATION)
<i>Model:</i>	<i>Model:</i>
AND GROW (CATECHESIS AND DISCIPLESHIP)	TO GO AND TELL (APOSTOLIC MISSION)
<i>Model:</i>	<i>Model:</i>

Precision Tools for Step 6

6a	Creating an Invitation Culture
6b	Creating a Parish Culture of Radical Hospitality
6c	Creating a Witness-Forward, Story-Sharing Parish

These precision tools are available at gracewatch.org/MissionIgnite.

NOTES

PREVIEW

PREVIEW



I G N I T E

T: Turn Toward Fruitfulness

Reorienting ministries, energy, and leadership toward what gives life and bears fruit.



Step 7

Turn Your Ministries to the Mission and Discipleship Path

This is the point where you realize: but what about everything else we do? Where does that fit? Our parish has lots of branches!

If the parish staff worked through Step 5, you may have a good idea of which ministries fit where on the discipleship path. But given the work you did at the end of Step 6, you may realize that you need to do some pruning—there is just too much energy, too many people-hours, and too much of the budget in one segment of the path. On a more positive note, you may realize that you get to make some stronger connections, so people will see the discipleship path clearly.

This does not need to be done all at once ... but you need to begin.

Begin with your chosen tactical evangelization plan supporting your discipleship path at the end of Step 6.

You also have the parish ministry mapping work accomplished from Step 5.

At this point in the process, your team is set to do these things:

1. Determine what you already have in place for your discipleship path, and whether you want to keep it.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit.

—John 15:1–2

2. Ask questions about what best suits the discipleship level of the parish and the needs of the people in the geographic area.
3. As a team, prayerfully discern what is the next best step for your parish.

The first two of these assignments feel inherently messy: there is a lot of data on the table, a lot of hopes and dreams stirred up, and significant decisions to make. However, the third item is what makes this (relatively) easy. Let's take it a step at a time.

Determine what you already have in place for your discipleship path

If you completed step 5, you have a discipleship path. If you don't, you are assessing the ministries you have in light of where they "meet" people: at the movement of pre-evangelization, evangelization, catechesis and discipleship, or apostolic mission. These movements hold the basic path of discipleship within them, and every parish needs to have a footprint in each movement. When you invite people to come and see, and you encourage adults to grow in their discipleship, then you need to have an appropriate place for them to do that. People are

at different places on the journey. We want to welcome and support people in growing into the disciples Christ calls them to be.

The most common problem is that parishes don't regularly balance out the movements, and most ministries and apostolates tend to be in one movement. There may be nothing wrong with those ministries and apostolates—but if they draw all the parish energy (and funding) in just one spot, they are a disservice to the wider community.

The other typical problem that emerges is that parish leadership simply doesn't think through the movements as the full path or cycle of discipleship ministry. Many parishes think in terms of silos and events: children's faith formation, sacramental prep classes, annual parish mission, annual autumn festival, Christmas activities, Easter activities, punctuated by funerals. While all these have a place, where they fit within these discipleship movements is a mystery. And so they are treated as events to offer.

The last problem? Beyond the discipleship path and movement, placing existing ministries into a category can be surprisingly difficult. Don't be discouraged if you find this challenging. It's worth figuring this out, and it will likely focus your attention well.

You now know the discipleship strengths and weaknesses of the parish, and the spiritual needs of the larger community. Write that at the top of the worksheet on pages 76–77 to keep it before your eyes.

You can't do it all, so choose what to do

Now: as a team, prayerfully consider what needs to move.

If you have too much going on, something needs to give. We are made of flesh. We can't be everywhere at once.

For example: Fr. John Riccardo (ACTS XXIX) wanted his parish in Detroit to experience Alpha—all together, as a parish, every person. He made the decision as a pastor to put all ministries and apostolates on hold for one year precisely so they would have the people to support running Alpha! (The exceptions, of course, were liturgy and sacramental prep.) It was a bold but smart move. You cannot do it all. But you can prioritize what the parish needs to grow.

Note that we said “prayerfully consider what needs to move”: not be destroyed or ended. The options are:

1. **Operating ministries can be given the choice to redirect their work to a different segment of the discipleship path.** For example, a catechesis-heavy ministry that teaches Catholic Social Teaching can be challenged to be more practical and go on local mission (apostolic mission). They are moving their discipleship path focus. Another discipleship-heavy program can be challenged to move more into pre-evangelization by being much more invitational in their outreach and focusing on people who are just returning to a spiritual life.

2. **Operating ministries could be asked if they wanted to pause their own work and support the new model.** If these ministries exist primarily to offer Christian friendship with one another, that may be fine with all of them—they still get to grow in friendship, and now you have more volunteers!

3. **Operating ministries could simply continue, but have a lower profile.** If they are not a strain on staffing or budget, this could be the simplest way to go. They can use space and have occasional bulletin notices.

4. **You could declare a moratorium on new apostolates other than your three chosen models.** This would be wise, period.

Begin by filling out the worksheet on pages 76–77. Include every ministry and apostolate that exists in your parish.

However, do not include maintenance and leadership activities. They are often very necessary to parish governance but are not part of people's discipleship path. In most cases, this means meetings with pastoral and finance councils, staff meetings, fundraising festivals/initiatives, school boards, and maintenance.

Moving from observation to discernment

As a team, prayerfully consider what adjustments are needed—not in theory, but in practice. The goal is not perfection, and not immediate overhaul. The goal is alignment: ensuring that your parish has a real, visible path of discipleship, and that your energy, people, and resources are supporting that path. Use the observation questions to guide your conversation.

Observations for discussion

Where are we over-invested? Which movement holds a disproportionate amount of time, leadership, or budget?

Where are we under-invested? Which movement is weak or missing entirely?

Which ministries are clearly bearing fruit and should be strengthened or supported?

Which ministries could shift their focus to better serve the discipleship path?

Which ministries may need to pause, simplify, or take a lower profile for a time?

What are the 1–3 most important changes we are being called to make right now?

Turning Parish Ministries to the Discipleship Path

DISCIPLESHIP PATH	FRIENDS	COME TO KNOW JESUS
THEOLOGICAL MOVEMENTS	PRE-EVANGELIZATION	EVANGELIZATION
EVANGELIZATION MODELS		
OTHER MINISTRIES AND WHERE THEY FIT		

Turning Parish Ministries to the Discipleship Path

DISCIPLESHIP PATH	AND GROW	TO GO AND TELL
THEOLOGICAL MOVEMENTS	CATECHESIS AND DISCIPLESHIP	APOSTOLIC MISSION
EVANGELIZATION MODELS		
OTHER MINISTRIES AND WHERE THEY FIT		

As you discern, pay attention to where there is peace, clarity, and shared conviction. These are often signs of where the Lord is leading.

Finally, name your proposed next steps.

What will change this year in your ministry offerings?

What will remain in place?

What will be revisited later? When?

You do not need to solve everything—but you do need to begin.

With these decisions in place, you are ready to move forward and establish a clear, focused plan for the year ahead.

Precision Tools for Step 7

7a	Implementation Planning 101
7b	Evaluating Individual Ministries for Mission Template

These precision tools are available at gracewatch.org/MissionIgnite.

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I G N I T E

E: Establish a Mission-Shaped Parish

Setting up in a steady, sustainable direction for the long haul.



Step 8

Establish a One-Year Evangelization Plan and a Three-Year Intention

In the end, it's simple. We keep repeating it: *pray, make a plan, and implement.*

This closing step reviews what you have discerned as a team, and uses that to plan ahead. (Precision Tool 7a—Implementation Planning 101—gets into the details, if that is what you want.)

As we said, any discipleship path that offers a lifelong walk from first welcome to eternal welcome will need to have three models of evangelization and discipleship in place. While it is impossible to start all three at once, you can dedicate time to making sure each gets its needed attention and proper launch.

In the previous step, you spent valuable, sacred time together discerning what God's call is for your parish. You determined, based on wider community needs and the discipleship level of your community, to begin with one particular model—either introducing it, or building up what you have in place.

You also chose a second model to layer the evangelization in your parish after the first is established, and a third model to cover all movements of the parish's discipleship path and provide full-spectrum evangelization.

The most important thing you can do now is take time to do the first model of evangelization well. Focusing one full year on this new (or

Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.
—Proverbs 16:3

renewed) initiative is important and allows you to concentrate energy. Will you get everything rolling perfectly smoothly? No. But you can begin to get in a rhythm. You can get momentum. And most importantly, you are continuing to implement and improve that model in the second year.

Most parishes have an “activity year” that spans from Labor Day to Pentecost (the exception is youth ministry, which can go into overdrive in the summer). But detailed operational planning of new or renewed initiatives usually begins in July, so you can work this as a “fiscal year” calendar.

If you choose a Radical Hospitality/First Proclamation process like Alpha or ChristLife, your operational year *could* look like this:

- July–August: Invite leadership, set up, and communicate
- September–November: Launch #1 (possibly a pilot)
- December: Assess (midpoint or exit); if necessary, invite more leadership, set up, and plan
- January–March: Launch #2, wider community

- April–June: Possible Launch #3; think ahead to new leadership and invite participation
- June: Assess the year. Will you continue as is? What will you change?

If you choose a process like small group spiritual multiplication, your operational year could look like this:

- July–August: Invite leadership, ready communications and launch
- September: Parish mission to launch small groups, set up and invite
- Monthly: Check in with group leaders for formation and troubleshooting
- Christmas/January 1: Communications push, reporting graces, more invitation
- February: Possible parish mission, part 2; invite more small groups in
- Monthly (continuing): Check in with group leaders for formation and troubleshooting
- April–May: Get participants to invite others in and create new groups
- June: Assess how the year has gone, lessons learned, moving forward

Consider the community's rhythms and availability, and plan a deliberately mission-forward first year. Whatever you do, be aware that tweaking will happen the second year, and the most important piece right now is a deliberate start rather than perfection.

In the following section, write down what you hope to implement in the first year—and be as specific as you can. (For example: run three Alpha courses, launch five spiritual-multiplication small groups, or begin Eucharistic adoration two days a week, with the intention of moving it to four to five days a week through the year.)

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First Model of Parish Evangelization

Which model are you implementing this coming year? What exactly are you doing to introduce this model? What do you hope you can reasonably accomplish in the first year?

Who is going to help get this off the ground—lead the initiative, go to or provide training, and be on top of communications?

Have you budgeted for the costs? If not, how will funds be secured?

How and when will you measure whether this process is helping you fulfill the mission of this parish?

When will you know you are ready to launch the second model of evangelization?

Second Model of Parish Evangelization

How do you plan to introduce this model? What do you hope you can reasonably accomplish in the first year of its introduction (that is, probably the second year of intention)?

Is there a connection between the first model and the second that you want to use to best advantage? If so, what is it?

Who is going to help get this off the ground—lead the initiative, go to or provide training, and be on top of communications?

Have you determined the costs? Do you have a plan for securing the funds?

How and when will you measure whether this process is helping you fulfill the mission of this parish?

When will you know you are ready to launch the third model of evangelization?

Third Model of Parish Evangelization

How do you plan to introduce this model? What do you hope you can reasonably accomplish in the first year of its introduction (that is, probably the third year of intention)?

Is there a connection between the previous models and the third that you want to use to best advantage? If so, what is it?

Who is going to help get this off the ground—lead the initiative, go to or provide training, and be on top of communications?

Have you determined the costs? Do you have a plan for securing the funds?

How and when will you measure whether this process is helping you fulfill the mission of this parish?

Conclusion: The View from the Kingdom

Friends, you have prayed, discerned, assessed, learned, collaborated, and planned for the inbreaking of the kingdom of God. Are you surprised by that? You may have stepped into this thinking it would be wonderful to have more people in the pews. It would be good to focus more on the next generation, or rethink what we are offering as a parish. But that isn't entirely where you ended, is it? You realized through discerning these choices that you are called to the greatest mission on earth!

The truth is, building a missional parish cannot be done unless it is in light of the kingdom. You have engaged in kingdom of God work and have given yourselves over to that awesome reality. You have taken the Lord's words in the Book of Revelation as a sacred promise that we will behold the Lord making all things new.

That promise is not just for a faraway future. It is for today, and the Lord gave us a daily prayer to participate in the fulfillment of that promise. You may be familiar with it:

“Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” —Matthew 6:10

The Incarnation of our Lord was the beginning of the inbreaking of the kingdom, and it continues where the Lord is revealed, encountered, and befriended. Your parish was created to participate in and facilitate that. We pray for the kingdom to further break into our parish reality (your kingdom come), we pray to know and do God's will in this (your will be done), right here, right now (on earth as it is in heaven).

Will it be easy? Probably not. But we can trust that when we listen to God, he shows us the way—and we will receive what we need.



“See, I am making all things new.”

—Revelation 21:5



But this we promise: it will unquestionably be worth it. The Lord is worth it. The healing of your community is worth it. The joy of God's love embraced is worth it. Our ongoing conversion to the Way, the Truth, and the Life is worth it.

Full-spectrum evangelization (engaging in three of four parish evangelization models) takes time to set up, but it makes everything in your parish easier once it is in place. Evangelization is not a fad or a simple parish fix. Sharing the gospel is our baptismal call and our greatest joy. Seeing the Lord make all things new in people's lives makes church exciting.

Keep praying and asking for a view from the kingdom. The Lord is equipping us to be overcomers and to participate in his work. We're eager to see Isaiah's prophecy of "a new heaven and a new earth" fulfilled with you.

Susan Windley-Daoust

for The Mark 5:19 Project
mark519project.org

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PRAISE FOR THE MISSION IGNITE TOOLKIT

COMPANION TO THE FOUR WAYS FORWARD

What makes this toolkit especially powerful is its insistence that renewal begins not with a program but with prayer, discernment, relationships, and a renewed missionary imagination. From this place, the IGNITE process then gives parishes a clear path forward while honoring the unique people, gifts, challenges, and mission of each local Church. This is how the Holy Spirit brings about renewal: in its own way and in its own time, honoring the charisms, gifts, circumstances, and unique places in which God's people are called to live and serve.

This is a resource for parishes ready to stop asking, "What have we always done?" and begin asking, "Lord, what are you asking of us now?"

—Julianne Stanz

Director of Outreach for Evangelization and Discipleship, Loyola Press and author of *Start with Jesus: How Everyday Disciples Will Renew the Church*

Susan Windley-Daoust is one of the clearest voices in the country on creating mission-centered parishes. Here, she provides a practical guide for evangelizing parishes, with an easy-to-learn 8-step process, an easy-to-use set of 21 practical tools and an easy-to-read guide for parish leaders who want to re-focus their parish on mission and vision.

—Dr. Dan R. Ebner

professor, facilitator and author, *Blessings for Leaders*

Your parish knows why it should become an evangelizing parish. But will anyone explain how? The Mission Ignite Toolkit allows a dedicated parish leader to gather together a team of disciples and engage an organized and clear process of visioning, evaluation, planning, and implementation in their community. It doesn't just tell you what to do, it shows you how to put together a team and actually do it!

—Heidi Indahl

co-founder of Designed for Discipleship

