

GET TO KNOW OUR PARISH FAMILY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Carmen Bendixen

I've been a member of St. Joseph since around 2007. While I've been a Catholic all my life, St. Joe's was the first parish I chose myself. After a few years of being a member who mostly came to mass and then left, I got involved with the Eucharistic Minister ministry and never looked back. I'm a captain for the 11:00 mass, and the gift of sharing the Eucharist with others brings me joy every time. I'm eager to work with the PFAC on building connections among our parishes and learning how our individual relationships can build a bright future for all of us. My hobbies include being a member of multiple book clubs, long walks around my neighborhood (Green Lake), and cheering on/complaining about the Mariners.



Karla Bocek

My husband, Joe, and I were members of St. Patrick's Parish from 1984 until it closed in 2022 and have been members of St. Joseph's Parish since then. I've been active as a lector and Eucharistic minister at St. Joe's while my husband can be found running the sound system or playing guitar in the choir. Our four children all attended St. Joseph School (and Seattle Prep) so coming to St. Joe's was a bit of a homecoming.

The Masses I've attended at St. Therese feel more like St. Pat's because of the smaller community and home-baked bread. And so, St. Therese also feels like a bit of a homecoming. I'm excited to serve on the PFAC to explore how to bring these two

wonderful "homes" into one family. I believe the result will be stronger than the sum of the parts. My hobbies include hiking in the summer and snowshoeing in the winter, making Sunday dinners for the family, babysitting my two grandchildren, and watching Seahawks football. My chocolate chip cookie recipe once won second place in a contest sponsored by The Seattle Times.

David Coffey

I began attending St. Mary's in 2008 and currently we primarily attend the 9:00am service at St. Therese. At St. Mary's I served on the Board for the Food Bank, and supported their annual fundraiser, volunteered for the Italian Dinner, and served on the Parish Council. I occasionally serve as a presider for the Spirit of St. Mary's zoom service. I was educated by Jesuit institutions for high school and for my master's degree and I'm grateful to be a part of a Jesuit parish.

I am committed to the work of the PFAC because I deeply believe that faith communities are good for us, are powerful antidotes to poverty, loneliness and despair, and because I want there to be a parish family that is thriving that my daughters (Louisa (13) and Amahlia (10) can experience. My wife Hilary and I have been married for 16 years (fun fact: we were married on Halloween!). We like to go to the ocean and we have a Great Pyrenees, Valentina, that loves to bark at everything.



Sara Cotto

I have been attending Saint Therese church for over 20 years and help in a variety of parish ministries. My family and I live within walking distance of the church. I am in private practice as a licensed mental health counselor. I look forward to serving the church community. Fun facts about me: I love learning more as an adult than I did as a child. I am on pace to meet my goal of reading 12-15 books this year.

Jim Dean

I was born at Providence Hospital in Seattle, and attended Catholic Grade School and High School in Ogen, Utah. After graduating from Seattle University in 1978 with a degree in chemistry, started working in schools as an educator and then administrator for 38 years at East Side Catholic and at Heatherwood Middle School, Cascade High School and Glacier Peak High School all in an area just north of Seattle Washington.

I moved on to serve as Executive Director of the Interfaith Family Shelter to help serving families with children experiencing homelessness find safe stable housing. At the end of July 2024, I retired from this and now am blissfully retired for all of one year.

I met the love of my life in June of 1984 and married her in February of 1986. Mary Helen and I have been married for just over 38 years and have four wonderful children. Our oldest Maurissa was with Mary Helen when we got married and is now living in Boise, Idaho. Mary Helen and I had one daughter Rachel between us, currently working as a transportation analyst for the Washington State Legislature. We adopted two of our 14 foster kids. James also works in transportation driving container cargo in Portland OR. Peter lives in his own apartment with caregivers. and has two jobs. His favorite one is as a grounds crew member for our local minor league baseball team.



Brenda Fackler

I joined St. Therese Parish after a series of life-altering events helped me to get reacquainted with my faith. I am grateful for this. I live with my husband, teenage son, and two dogs (one big and quiet, one small and loud) in the Rainier Beach neighborhood of Seattle. I work in marketing and spend my days doing a whole lot of listening, talking, writing emails and making power points in the context of a complex organization helping big brands tackle big ambitions. I do much of this while walking on my treadmill at my standing desk. I love the St. Therese community and its rich history and am excited to contribute thoughtfully and prayerfully in my role on the Parish Family Advisory Council.

Peter Heymann

After attending St Therese in the late 1990s, my wife Nicole and I began attending St Joseph in about 1999. Guided by the Spirit, I was drawn to St Joseph's faith formation programs. My faith journey soon accelerated dramatically. In ~2001 Deacon Steve invited me to complete the 6-month Cabrini Pastoral Ministry program. This led to five years of volunteer jail ministry, a graduate degree at Seattle University's School of Theology & Ministry, and four years of post-prison education ministry. At St Joseph, I helped lead the (now defunct) Winter Shelter program, taught faith formation classes for our youth, and currently serve as "chief confuser" of our lector team. I also help edit the weekly Prayers of the Faithful.



My career has focused on tech startups and NGO startups. I am attracted to projects with the potential for meaningfully changing the world. Serving on the PFAC offers the chance to respond meaningfully to the world's changes with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I bring engineering, business, ministry, and innovation skills to the task. "Fun" facts: Our three sons, two of whom are out of college, grew up at St. Joseph Parish and continue their faith journeys. Our fourth "son" is a chocolate lab who helps keep us fit as we work to keep him fit. We all try to support Nicole, who is a high-achieving businesswoman and nonprofit contributor who has helped open doors for many women in the workplace.



Wendy Kristek

I've been a parishioner at St. Joseph since 2015. Serving as a lector is one of the greatest joys in my life—sharing the Word of the Lord during Mass deepens my faith and connection to our parish. I'm honored to have been selected to serve on the Parish Finance and Administration Council (PFAC), where I bring my experience as CEO of a global consulting firm to help build a parish community where people come together with different ideas, and every voice is welcomed and thoughtfully considered. I choose to lead with purpose and compassion in everything I do.

One of my proudest moments of being a mother was watching my son read at the St. Joseph's Graduation Mass after graduating from Seattle Preparatory School. Outside of parish life, I enjoy sailing, cooking, gardening, and I'm a passionate sports fan who can hold my own in any game-day debate. I was humbled to be nominated as one of the most admired CEOs in the Puget Sound Journal. However, the role I treasure the most is being a mother.

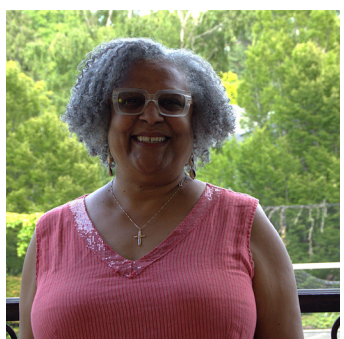
David Okada

My wife Gloria and I landed at Saint Therese February 05, 2012. We were returning to Seattle after nine years living in the Bay Area, expecting our first child and looking for a Parish that had small faith sharing groups and felt like home, with bonus points for a gospel choir. We found all those that day as well as a warm welcome, and special "First Sunday" blessings for our February anniversary and my birthday. Later that day, we found a great place to rent down the hill in the Central District.



In our time at Saint Therese, I've been active as a lay presider, organizer for small faith sharing groups, member of the Stewardship Commission, and most recently have joined the Shades of Praise gospel choir. Our daughters have thrived in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program. There are many weeks where our time at Saint Therese is the highlight. I just love it here. I'm excited to be on the PFAC to learn more about the charisms of our four communities and map out how to weave those gifts together. I'm looking forward to connecting with you and learning what you love about this parish family, what your hopes are for the future, and what you are most passionate about being a part of.

Professionally, I am a mechanical engineer working in the building industry, currently focused on energy efficiency and emission reductions in existing buildings. My hobbies are sea kayaking, rock climbing and making the perfect s'more. My stepbrother is also named David. He is a Jewish Rabbi in the Chicago area, who just went on a fact-finding mission to Israel concerning the occupation of Gaza. One of my fondest memories is traveling with him in Israel for two weeks in 2017 when he was finishing up his Rabbinic studies.



Sharon Spence-Wilcox

Peace be with you . I am a flawed yet faithful cradle Catholic, a Jamaican immigrant and Seattle resident for 30+ years. I joined St. Therese in 1997, and met my husband Eric in the Shades of Praise gospel choir. We were married at St. Mary's and blessed with two children, Ari and Miranda; they attended both St. Paul and St. Therese schools, and the latter's Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. Ms. Ari now serves as St. T's School Counselor and Miranda is finishing up her bachelors degree at Western Washington University.

In addition to singing at St. T's, I continue to serve as a Eucharistic Minister, Lector, and Lay Presider. I previously volunteered as School Commission parent rep, STCA PTO co-lead, and Pastoral Council member & Liturgy Commission liaison. I'm also actively engaged as a member of the Ignatian Spirituality Center's cohort of Women Companions of Color. I bring a spirit of active hope that values listening, learning, and making connections amidst the joy of the struggle as four separate faith communities come together and build relationships as one parish family. Professional experience as a community college educator includes information literacy instruction, committee and union leadership, and meeting facilitation. These are a few of my favorite things: reading, thrifting, crossword puzzling, and gliding through the air on a playground swing.

Polly Young

I was raised in Virginia by parents who were deeply committed to living the Gospel values. Our family regularly participated in racial and social justice activities in the DC area and spent many summers hosting a Catholic family retreat center in rural Ontario Canada.

In my early twenties, I moved to Seattle as a Jesuit Volunteer and made many friendships with fellow JVs, including Steve Wodzanowski! I started at St. Therese, but soon found my spiritual home at St. Pat's where I was active for 40+ years until the parish was closed.

At St. Pat's, I served on the social justice committee, pastoral council, organizer of an alternative crafts fair, co-chair of Noel House monthly meal program, and Eucharistic Minister. At St. Joe's, I briefly served on the pastoral council before being chosen to be on the Parish Family Advisory Council.

I hope to bring my communications experience and a desire for inclusive, equitable, and grace-filled engagement among our four faith communities as we move toward becoming one unified parish family.

My wife Heidi Gemperle and I enjoy hiking, camping, traveling, volunteering and spending time with family, friends, and our dog and cat. Fun fact: my family produces maple syrup in Ontario.

