



## *Disciples of the Mission*

### AREA CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

Church of St. Ann • Church of St. Edward • Church of St. William  
Our Lady of the Lake • Our Lady of Seven Dolors • Sacred Heart • St. James



#### All Things New Planning Process

As communicated in the All Things New June 14 letter, the All Things New Planning Council continues to meet at the diocesan and local level. The Council is discussing the parameters set forth by the Diocesan planning office with a goal of submitting recommendations to the Diocesan office no later than December 31 2025. The parameters include:

- **Pastors/Priests:** The health of our priests is vital to their ability to serve the Church and its community. A priest's physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being directly impacts his effectiveness in ministry, as he is called to lead, preach, and care for the flock. Ensuring that priests have the support, rest and resources they need allows them to continue their ministry with strength, clarity and compassion.
  - Limit of three Sunday Masses per weekend/priest, not including weddings/funerals. This will prevent priest burnout, provide the ability for quality ministry, maintain personal well-being and attend to other responsibilities like sacramental preparation and pastoral care. Balancing Mass duties with rest preserves clergy health and effectiveness.
  - Pastors will spend at least 50% of their time in pastoral ministry. While the pastor leads the parish and oversees its overall well-being, others can assist with administration and various ministries, allowing him to focus more on spiritual leadership.
  - Those who desire to live in community within the ACC will be considered.
- **Accessibility to Sunday Mass (includes Saturday evening vigil):** this parameter requires 80% of the faithful must have access to a Sunday Mass within a 20-minute drive and no rotation of Mass schedules between churches.
- **Budgeted Ministries:** this parameter requires one main administrative office per ACC if under 3000 households and to identify existing or recommend new budgeted ministries including Pastoral Care; Children, Youth, and Adult Formation; Liturgical; and Social Outreach.
- **Buildings:** Usage must average 50% occupancy or higher for all weekend liturgies in the ACC; and must be physically accessible, hospitable, and safe.
- **Finances:** Each finance council will approve an attainable and reasonable annual balanced budget and routine building operations may not exceed 25% of plate/envelope (this includes insurance).

The All Things New Planning Council is currently discussing the parameters using a variety of resources including parishioner locations, Mass attendance, building evaluations, financial data, and various ministries in each location.

A Listening Meeting for all parishioners will be held on July 23, 2025, at the Vining Community Center, 211 Soule Avenue, Vining, 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm. The intent of this meeting is to gather questions for the Council to consider as the team members work through the parameters.

For more information, visit the All Things New diocesan website at <https://stcdio.org/all-things-new/> or visit the link on the Disciples of The Mission website.

Council members are: Fr. Theis; Fr. George; Deacon Craig Stich; Deacon Mick Froslee; Sheila Newark, Our Lady of the Lake; Dennis Fagerstrom, St. James; Darby Bradley, Church of St. Edward; Rose Suchy, Sacred Heart; Jackie Caron, Church of St. Ann; Ben Johnson, Church of St. William; and Mike Bramwell, Our Lady of Seven Dolors.



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Thank you to everyone who attended the All Things New Listening Session on Wednesday, July 23, 2025. We received comprehensive and valuable feedback and are gathering all the information to accurately respond to your questions. Below are the questions for the week. We also encourage you to submit the survey included in last week's bulletin and distributed at the meeting last week, or contact an All Things New Council member.

*Something to Ponder: The differences between "Parishes" and "Churches." The parish is a group of people. The church is the building where the people meet.*

Define Primary and Partner Church? What constitutes a primary church and what constitutes a partner church? A Primary Church is used for all weekend liturgies and holy days. A Partner Church is used for all weekend liturgies but not holy days.

Are we one or two ACCs? We are one ACC with two Pastors and seven parishes.

Do you need any more help on the ACC Council? Thank you for the offer of additional assistance. We currently have enough representation from the parishes in the ACC. However, if it is determined that additional assistance is needed, the Pastors will reach out to parishioners.

Committee, Priests or Bishops....Who ultimately makes the decision of the ACC in the end? The Bishop will ultimately make the decision. The ACC All Things New Council is responsible for listening to parishioners, prayerfully evaluating all the feedback and information, and making recommendations to the Bishop.

Has the Bishop approved the recommendations set forth by the planning council. Could there be more recommendations coming? (Are the "Bullet" points in the previous bulletin suggestions or are they fully approved by the Bishop? The Bishop has approved all the parameters provided by the Diocesan office to the All Things New Councils in each Diocese of St. Cloud Area Catholic Community. There are no additional parameters coming from the Diocese.

What was the population in the ACC in 2010 versus now? The data below is a survey independently completed by Mission Insite.

Phase of Life	2010	2022	2027	2032
Before School (0 - 4)	1045	926	987	1139
Formal School/College (5-24)	4307	4643	4276	4082
Singles/Families (25 - 54)	7043	6371	6593	7095
Enrichment/Retirement (55+)	7752	9387	9080	8794

Comment: "If I am completely honest with you, I think everything has already been decided. Can you be completely honest with me that everything hasn't been decided?" Absolutely, honesty and transparency is a requirement throughout this entire process. Nothing has been decided. The All Things New Council has been provided the parameters by the diocese. The Council's Purpose statement is: *The All Things New ACC Planning Committee is committed to developing a comprehensive plan for the ACC that fosters a vibrant faith community rooted in the love and mission of Jesus and in line with the diocesan parameters provided. The committee will work in collaboration with the Planning Facilitator Team, diocesan staff, and ACC community members, guided by the Holy Spirit, to create a strategic, future-oriented plan.*

Something to Ponder: This poem was written, for the All Things New process, by a local parishioner who has chosen to remain anonymous.

**WHAT WOULD IT TAKE?**

*What would it take to bring  
back the special sacredness?*

*What would it take to bring  
back the respect and holiness?*

*What would it take to bring  
back the faithful rituals?*

*What would it take to bring  
back the children and  
grandchildren of Catholics?*

*Would it take commitment and resolve?*

*Would it take prayer and sacrifice?*

*Would it take forgiveness and thanksgiving?*

*Would it take a change in all of us?*

*-Anonymous-*



This week, we will cover the “Accessibility to Sunday Mass” parameter in greater detail. There were many questions regarding the rotation of Mass and the 20-minute drive for 80% of the faithful.

Ensuring accessibility to Sunday Mass is a priority because the Eucharist is the heart, source, and summit of Catholic life and our worship. Mass is also a foretaste of heaven and a miracle takes place at each and every Mass. Parishioners should have the opportunity to participate in worship without unnecessary obstacles. Accessible locations foster a stronger faith community, support spiritual growth and allow all-especially the elderly, families and those with disabilities to fully engage in the life of the church.

**80% of the faithful must have access to Sunday Mass within a 20-minute drive**

Celebration of the Eucharist is central to Catholic worship. Mass is a communal act of worship where Catholics come together as the Body of Christ. The Church teaches that faith is not just individual but lived out in community. Attending in person fosters this sense of unity and shared belief. Having access to this communal worship is a priority.

**No rotation of Mass schedules between churches (seasonal or otherwise)**

Maintaining a fixed Sunday Mass location and time provides significant pastoral and practical benefits. There can be confusion among churchgoers and presiders as to where the Mass takes place. A fixed location for Sunday Mass provides a stable routine for parishioners, making it easier for them to attend regularly and engage in parish life. Keeping Sunday Mass in one place fosters a stronger sense of belonging, and forms deeper relationships and a stronger parish identity. Maintaining multiple churches for rotating Masses can increase costs for utilities, maintenance, and supplies. A single designated location also streamlines resources.

This week, we will cover the “Priests/Pastors” parameter in greater detail.

The health of a priest is vital to his ability to serve the Church and its community. A priest’s physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being directly impacts his effectiveness in ministry, as he is called to lead, preach, and care for the flock. Ensuring that priests have the support, rest and resources they need allows them to continue their ministry with strength, clarity and compassion.

It is essential to prevent priest burnout by ensuring a manageable Mass schedule. Limiting Masses allows priests to provide quality ministry, maintain personal well-being and attend to other responsibilities like sacramental preparation and pastoral care. Balancing Mass duties with rest preserves clergy health and effectiveness. Relying on retired priests for scheduling is not sustainable.

Pastors should not spend an unbalanced amount of time on administrative tasks at the expense of their ministerial and sacramental duties - the very purpose of their ordination. While the pastor leads the parish and oversees its overall well-being, others can assist with administration and various ministries, allowing him to focus more on spiritual leadership.

Questions/comments from the July 23 listening session focused on Priests/Pastors are below.

- How many priests are in “training” within the Diocese? How is recruitment? *There are approximately 15 seminarians.*
- What specific vocational programs are being encouraged in our parishes/diocese? *Vocation camps and there is a vocation director who visits parishes. This vocation director also works at Cathedral high school.*
- Regarding a priest not spending more than 50% of his time on administrative duties: What percentage of time do our priests now spend on administrative duties? *Varies according to the priest.*
- What specific administrative tasks (if done by others) would free up the most amount of time for our priests? Current administrative tasks are completed by employees and councils. *We are in the process of developing a list of ministries where volunteers are needed.*
- Will the priests be willing to accept help? *The priests are always willing to accept help. Getting volunteers is the challenge.*
- How can parishioners be more involved in helping our priests? *Volunteering and answering the call.*
- How are the priest and parish administrator salaries determined? *Priest salaries are determined by the diocese. Employee salaries are determined by the priest with the help of the finance council.*
- How does our Diocese compare on the priest-parish ratio with the other dioceses in Minnesota? *Unknown*
- Have other dioceses in Minnesota undertaken initiatives like All Things New? With what results? Yes, many have undertaken this initiative. *They were very aggressive with the closing of buildings, reduction of costs, and consolidation of resources. Some even closed all existing churches and built one central church.*
- Are there lessons we can learn from the experience of other dioceses that have struggled with issues similar to those St. Cloud is facing? *Yes, the diocese has been in communication with others and communicated the information to the committees. The planning committees are also meeting with other ACC planning committees within the diocese to learn from the challenges and successes as we walk this path together.*



This week, we will cover the “Budgeted Ministries” parameter in greater detail and provide additional information on the priest/parish ratio covered last week.

Let’s first address the priest/parish ration question from last week:

- How does our Diocese compare on the priest/parish ratio with the other dioceses in Minnesota? *With 131 parishes and 49 active priests, our priest to parish ratio is at the largest deficit among our nine surrounding dioceses (MN, ND, and SD). This information is based on data from the 2024 Official Catholic Directory.*



Now, on to “Budgeted Ministries.”

The Catholic Church exists because it believes it was founded by Jesus Christ to continue His mission on earth: to bring people into communion with God, proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, and guide humanity toward salvation. A budget reflects how we steward our resources for the sake of the mission. Allocating resources wisely and ethically shows gratitude to God and acknowledges that we are caretakers, not owners, of what we have (Psalm 24:1). This includes ensuring just compensation for clergy, staff and those who service the Church, recognizing their dedication and commitment to ministry. The following are areas that are part of administration/mission and expected to be in the budget.

One administrative office for the ACC serves both practical and strategic purposes. It allows for the pooling of resources-such as finances, staff, technology, and formation programs, which can then be efficiently distributed across various locations. This leads to greater efficiency and cost savings. *There were many questions regarding the “one administrative office for the ACC.” Our ACC consists of seven churches and two Pastors. We are also challenged with great distances between churches and parishioners. Because of this, we are considering two administrative offices. Recommendations for administrative office locations are being discussed by the Disciples of The Mission All Things New planning team and will be included in the recommendation to the Bishop.*

Additionally, having a paid business administrator with expertise in human resources, financial management and building maintenance can alleviate some of the administrative burden on the pastor, allowing him to focus more on pastoral and spiritual leadership. *We are considering two business administrators, again due to the seven churches, two Pastors, and the great distance between churches and parishioners. Details are to be discussed and will be included in the recommendation to the Bishop.*

Liturgical, Formation, Pastoral Care, and Social Outreach Ministries. *These ministries will depend heavily on volunteers and the willingness of volunteers to answer the call. Included in our planning process, is discussion around the identification of existing and future ministries. There are many demands on parishioners that are in competition with volunteer opportunities for faith-based ministries. The challenge is making it easy for volunteers to participate, coordinating volunteer opportunities so they are clearly identified, communicating the opportunities so parishioners will be fully informed of the needs and, most importantly, for parishioners to say “yes” when receiving the call.*

This week, we will focus on specific questions regarding buildings.

If a church closes, what happens to other buildings on that specific property? *There would be a plan to relegate the building or sell the building or remove the building entirely.*

What is the occupancy of each Church in the ACC?

Our Lady of Seven Dolors = 500

Our Lady of The Lake = 500

St. James = 300

St. Edward = 288

Sacred Heart = 284

St. Williams = 252

St. Ann = 200



What happens to a Church if they close it? *Parishes will merge, Church buildings will close and corporations will be dissolved.*

Will the 20-minute limit to Mass cause parishioners to leave our parishes and go to parishes outside of our ACC? For example, at St. James some members are closer to Fergus Falls or Pelican Rapids. Considering people drive 100 miles to a football game.....this seems unrealistic for most- Possibly – *The diocese assumes there will be some movement from one area to another as Church buildings close.*

Given our seasonal Catholics in summer how do we accommodate them knowing we have to close some Churches? *We are aware of the fluctuation of our population numbers in the summer vs winter – we are considering the fluctuation within the recommended plan.*

We would like to hear more about changes to Religious Education program locations. We didn't hear anything from the Diocese about requirements for location accessibility. *Religious education is being reviewed annually and adjustments are made by the Pastors and Youth Faith Formation Directors.*

Regarding the slide with a map of ACC area and dots showing where church attendees come from. As best we could determine from the explanation, it appeared that the dots on the map represented the home addresses of the parishioners in the seven parishes. But for St. James and we expect for other parishes in the ACC, church attendees, especially in the summer, often live way outside the seven parish area but have summer lake homes in the area or are in the area staying at resorts or campgrounds or visiting friends and family. We were not quite sure what the map slide with the dots was trying to tell us and we question whether the message it appeared to attempt to convey was accurate or complete. *Dots represent parishioner households within our ACC. We were communicating the type of information we are gathering to make the recommendations. We are using data from various sources.*



This week, we will focus on specific questions regarding finances. Questions are as noted during the all parish listening sessions.

What percentage of the plate and envelope is paid to the Diocese? *The St. Cloud Diocese is not a separate entity, rather it is the local Church of which we are all members.*

*Every parish in the Diocese pays an annual assessment.*

*The assessment is based on the information each parish provides to the diocese in its Annual Report for the prior year.*

*The funds generated from the assessment, support diocesan-wide initiatives such as clergy formation, ministries for clergy, religious, lay ministers, etc., and provide services and resources that benefit the entire Church community.*

What happens to financial gifts to a Church? Does it stay in that Church? *A financial gift made to a particular parish is used to benefit that parish.*

Will a death benefit stay in parish we "Will" it to? *It depends on the intent of the Grantor. A general bequest made to a parish, will be used by that parish as the Finance Council and the Priest determine for the benefit of the parish community.*

Is the restrictive gift fund included in the plate count in the bulletin? *Each week in the bulletin, the money collected during the prior week from plate and envelope, and electronic giving is reported. Restricted gifts are used for the purpose to which they are requested by the parishioner donating the gift and are not included in the bulletin plate count.*

Are charitable gifts included in money stated in the bulletin? *The weekly recap in the bulletin reflects plate, envelope, electronic giving during that week- all of which is considered charitable giving. Donations and bequests from an estate or from an irregular (once in a while) donation to the Church are not reported in the weekly recap in the bulletin.*

Are all of the different gifting funds shown in the categories on the bulletin? *No. The bulletin reflects the weekly amount coming into a parish via collection/electronic giving.*

If any extra money is given (with no designation) does it stay in the parish? *(Have heard it goes to the St. Cloud Diocese and does not stay in the parish.) Money gifted to a parish is used by the parish for its ministries. It does not go to the diocese.*

This week, we will continue our focus on specific questions regarding finances and corporate structure. Questions are as noted during the all parish listening session.

The answer to the questions below are the same:

(1) Please explain the reason why only “regular” giving is to be considered when doing yearly budgets and not bingo, raffles, women’s circle that always buy certain items? (2) How can the money from our (Urbank’s) fish fries and annual bazaar not be counted toward plate ....or along with the plate money? (3) Why can’t we use fundraisers, events, etc. towards our finances for church operations? *Just as an individual household should not depend on gifts and irregular income to meet their monthly budget, neither should a parish. While there is nothing wrong with raising extra money from bingo, raffles and such, we should not depend on those funds to carry out the work of the parish. An annual budget should not depend on how much money comes in from a bake sale, fish fry, etc.*

How much more is the children's collection at Mass, bring in vs. the children’s envelopes? *The children’s collection during Mass, brings in more than children’s envelopes- but amounts collected are nominal. Such amounts are reported with the weekly summary of plate and envelope.*

What happens to a Church building’s funds etc. if a Church is closed? *When a parish is merged with another parish within the diocese, its existing funds and debts are assumed by the new corporate entity.*

Cemetery Funds? *Each Catholic cemetery currently existing will remain and will be supported by the cemetery funds for the cemetery and by the newly formed corporation or corporations for the ACC.*

Heating, Electric etc.? *Any existing funds of a parish whose Church building is no longer used will come under the management of the merged parish. If a Church building is no longer being used for Mass but will be used for other parish activities, the newly formed corporation will pay for building maintenance.*

If a Church is closed how are the assets distributed? *Even if a Church building is no longer being used, the area of the parish will still exist and be merged with another parish. The assets would remain with the merged parish. Some of the physical assets, such as vestments, statues, artwork, chalices, monstrance, relics etc., would be used in the remaining Churches of the ACC.*

Will all local cemeteries be maintained? **YES**

We are concerned over how finances and assets are divided if a Church is dissolved? *All assets would become part of the newly incorporated entity.*

Comment..... We would like more frequent financial information, at least quarterly. We would like a better explanation regarding how finances work and overall communication. *Contact your Parish Financial Council.*

Our ACC is 4 and 3. Will we have two Corporations? *Our ACC is currently SEVEN Parishes. At this time, we are not sure of the new corporate structure as that will be determined by the Bishop after he reviews our recommendations.*

