

The current reality illustrates the trends that inspire the future:

We must adapt to the changing demographics.

- The overall population in our diocese has increased 7% since 2010 while the number of Catholic parishioners has decreased from 22.4% to 16.6%.
- Ages 7-42 make up 45.7% of the population.

Sacramental and Catholic household numbers have decreased since 2010.

- Mass attendance declined 33.1%.
- Weddings declined 45.9%.
- Baptisms declined 44.7%.
- First Communion declined 37.8%.
- Confirmations declined 35.5%.
- Registered households declined 19%.

As stewards of God's gifts we must use them more effectively.

- Average church utilization for weekend Masses is 39%.
- It is a struggle to find and retain qualified, faithful employees because of increasing pressures and limited compensation.

Clergy, staff and laity are bearing a heavier administrative burden than in the past.

- In 1999, the diocese had 97 priests serving 140 parishes; today there are 62 priests serving 131 parishes.
- The average number of parishes per priest is 2.4 (*U.S. average is 1*) while the median is 3.

Four out of five parishes are operating with a consistent budget deficit from annual giving (*plate and envelope*).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Missionary Discipleship

As baptized Catholics, we are all called to the evangelizing mission of the Church. Rooted in this mission, together we are guided by a desire to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ in the world by living and sharing a life of faith.

Sacramental Life

The sacraments are outward signs of grace that God gives to people to help them live a life close to Jesus. We are guided by an invitation to encourage the full, conscious and active participation of the faithful in sacramental life and prayer of the Church.

Engaging the Laity

God has given each person a unique set of gifts and charisms to live out their individual vocation. Through revitalized prayer and formation opportunities, encounters with family, friends, co-workers and neighbors, we can welcome new faces into the fold. We are guided by our strengths to stimulate renewal in the Church.

Listening as a Way of Being Church

The Holy Spirit calls us to pray, listen and discern together what God is asking of us today. By listening to each other, we are guided by learning to best respond to the spiritual needs of all people in our diocese.

Prudent Stewardship

All our resources — human, structural, financial — are gifts from God. With a deep sense of gratitude, we are guided by the use of resources to achieve our shared mission in a healthy and responsible way.



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DIOCESE OF SAINT CLOUD



"Behold, I make all things new."

— Revelation 21:5

TIMELINE

In 2015 a task force was created to look at ways to serve parishes with the diminishing numbers of priests in the Diocese of Saint Cloud. The planning council began the task of creating a process for broad consultation including priests, representatives from parishes and schools, diocesan curia and parishioners to envision the future of diocesan configuration.

In 2019, Bishop Kettler announced the formation of 29 Area Catholic Communities. Each ACC was asked to create an action plan for ACC collaboration and sharing resources by Dec. 31, 2019. The plans were reviewed and approved by Bishop Kettler, who then instituted further requirements for a joint bulletin and ACC council.

In collaboration with the Bridge Builders for a Thriving Mission grant, the 29 ACCs were invited to prepare a presentation at St. Mary's Cathedral and present it to the bishop. As part of the listening process, participants gathered to listen to one another, share concerns of their ACC and discuss joys and challenges. The summary report is available on the diocesan website.

This phase is marked by designing common parameters to ensure consistency in planning and expectations across the diocese while allowing local flexibility. Resources will also be prepared to assist ACCs in making data-informed and mission-informed decisions.

ACCs begin implementing the changes outlined in the approved plans. Length and timing may vary from ACC to ACC based on local circumstances.

2015
Task force created

2019-20
Development Phase

2023-24
Listening Phase

October 2024
Resource Development/Formation Phase

January 2026
Implementation Phase Begins

2018
Visioning Phase

2023
Bishop Neary Ordained

April 2024
Evaluation Phase

July 2025
Local Planning Phase

In 2018, 12 priests were preparing to retire with no replacements available within the next five years. Under the leadership of Bishop Donald Kettler and Brenda Kresky, diocesan director of planning, and in collaboration with the Diocesan Planning Council, a plan was developed to share resources and invite intentional collaboration within groupings of between 2-8 parishes.

Bishop Kettler officially entered retirement in February 2023 when Bishop Patrick Neary, CSC, was installed as the 10th bishop of St. Cloud. Since that time, Bishop Neary has consulted with the planning office and the planning council. Sparked in part by the Synod on Synodality, a listening phase was developed.

Emmaus Partners, a consultative company, was hired to collate data and provide a Current Reality report and a Guiding Change document. These documents provide a foundation for the necessity for change and what we hope to accomplish for the mission of the Diocese of Saint Cloud.

Each ACC will develop a plan, based on common parameters set by the bishop, and present it to diocesan leadership for support and approval. Draft due by Dec. 31, 2025.