

Planning Bulletin Announcements for Winter/Spring 2019

The 2019 pastoral plan for the Diocese of Saint Cloud introduces the concept of Area Catholic Communities. The aim of this pastoral plan focuses on strengthening the life of the Church in central Minnesota. This will be accomplished through collaboration and sharing of resources, talents, and efforts within an Area Catholic Community.

What is an Area Catholic Community?

Every parish in the Diocese of Saint Cloud will be part of an Area Catholic Community. These communities are comprised of two or more parishes of which can gain substantial advantages by offering a more comprehensive set of pastoral services for their parishioners by being part of the group.

What is “intentional collaboration” in an Area Catholic Community?

Intentional collaboration is about building mutual relationships where every parish shares for the good of the Body of Christ. Every parish is unique and has something to offer.

What has been the planning process thus far? Bishop Kettler asked the planning council when looking at demographics and numbers to develop a plan for the diocese to be implemented in 2109. Priest focus groups began the process in the summer of 2017. Additional input was received from participants at the Diocesan Ministry Day workshop in September, at a Curia meeting, and fall deanery meetings with parish leadership representatives from every parish. In the spring of 2018, each parish was asked to hold discussions and submit recommendations. The planning council read through the over 650 submitted recommendations. Discerning and praying about the input from all of these discussions and studying work done from other dioceses the planning council discerned the concept of Area Catholic communities.

What is the next step in developing Area Catholic Communities? Once the parish configuration is determined, we will be inviting parishes to begin forming area planning councils. Area planning councils comprise of equal representation from each parish in the ACC and has the responsibility to vision a more vibrant area community. This will include, but is not limited to, building relationships, evaluating resources, programs and ministries, communicating between all parishes.

What does ACC planning council do? This group comprised of equal representatives from each parish serves two important functions. The first is building relationships in order for the ACC to carry out its mission. The second is the ongoing review of how that mission is lived out. They set short term and long term goals to ensure that the elements of a vibrant area catholic community grow and thrive. Goals will be determined for each ACC by December 2019.

What will happen on July 1, 2019? The formal establishment of Area Catholic Communities in the Diocese of Saint Cloud. What that will look like will be determined by local leadership in collaboration with the diocesan personnel committee. For some, it is the joining of existing clusters. For others new parish relationships may begin. Goals for relationship building, ministries, resource use, etc. will be determined by each Area Catholic Community planning council.

How many priests will be serving our Area Catholic Community? Overall, the number of parish priests available to serve our 131 parishes in the diocese will go down over the next ten years, and so we will need to collaborate and cooperate more as ACCs to adjust with our human resources. Some ACCs should expect to have fewer priests available to them over time.

Will the roles of lay leadership change for the needs of the Area Catholic Community? In order to facilitate the collaboration and cooperation of parishes within an ACC, lay leaders may need to be added or adapted. Our parishes will be stronger through these changes. They will evolve over time.

Will Mass schedules change? There are many variables that the ACC will need to discuss as they make decisions about mass times. Some of these variables include seating capacities of churches, overlapping and gaps in mass schedules, and time for relationship building.

What will happen with finances of the parishes and ACC? The finances of each parish will continue to be separate. Each parish will maintain its own finance council that will continue its present work. Each parish will maintain its own accounts. The finances of the parishes will not be comingled. Pastoral leaders in collaboration with the area planning council will determine a fair way for each parish to provide for shared expenses, such as personnel, ministries, programs, and resources.

Will any of our parishes in our ACC be closing? Bishop Kettler has asked leadership to avoid closing parishes. After ACC planning councils have discerned and determined resources in a given area, it does not mean a change of status is impossible, but the focus of planning is to work together with area parishes for the sake of our mission. (change of status = oratory, merger, chapel, closure, etc.)

