



One In Faith ACC Communication

How Do We Best Serve the Church's Mission Today?

By: Brenda Kresky, Director of Pastoral Planning, Diocese of St. Cloud

One of the most common concerns I hear is: “We have too many buildings.” This speaks directly to the heart of stewardship, mission and planning. The real question behind the statement is: How do we best serve the Church’s mission today? Some have also said, “It’s just a building — the people are the Church.” While true, our buildings are sacred spaces where baptisms, weddings, funerals and sacraments have taken place. These spaces hold our family and cultural history, and their significance should not be dismissed lightly.

Yet, as stewards, we must ask: Are our buildings helping or hindering the mission? This requires both pastoral sensitivity and practical wisdom. Listening to people’s feelings matters but so does helping the community see that consolidating or repurposing space is not a loss — it’s a way to strengthen mission and shift resources from maintenance to ministry.

Stewardship and pastoral planning are more than administrative tasks — they are spiritual practices rooted in prayer and discernment; they are interwoven dimensions of pastoral life. They guide how we respond to God’s call in a particular time and place. Stewardship is about recognizing our gifts, taking co-responsibility and joyfully living our faith. When we see ourselves as stewards — not consumers—we engage more deeply in the mission of the Church. Stewardship provides that spiritual and practical foundation that makes pastoral planning fruitful. Pastoral planning helps parishes assess changing realities and make faithful decisions. It asks not, “How do we keep doing what we’ve always done?” but “What is God asking of us now at this moment in history?” This process demands honest dialogue, spiritual vision and community involvement. Done well, it leads to vibrant, mission-focused communities.

We face real challenges: declining Catholic population, fewer priests, aging facilities and shifting demographics. This moment calls for intentional planning — not to simply survive, but to renew. It may be helpful to reframe the conversation: Stewardship asks: What buildings can we care for with excellence? Pastoral planning asks: What spaces do we need to carry out our mission today and tomorrow?

By integrating both, we move to a mindset of faithful possibility. As our diocese navigates uncertainty and change, the integration of stewardship and pastoral planning is more critical than ever. These practices ensure that the Church remains faithful to its traditions but responsive to the needs of today. They call forth the gifts of all the baptized and invite every Catholic to take part in shaping the future. Stewardship and pastoral planning are not quick fixes, but long-term commitments. They require vision, courage, and hope. Guided by the Holy Spirit and rooted in Christ, our communities can face the future with confidence – knowing that we are building not only sustainable parishes but also a more vibrant, missionary Church.

Please do everything you can to keep yourself informed. We encourage you to visit the diocesan website at <https://stcdio.org/all-things-new/> where you can find detailed information about the current reality, ACC information, and many resources.

