

Southeast Rochester Catholic Community

Facilities Presentation FAQs

Do we plan to close a church?

Granted, it's the elephant in the room. Nothing has been decided. There is no secret plan. No directions from the diocese or bishop on what to do. We realize that this is an emotional issue that deeply impacts our faith community. That is why we are holding this meeting to gather ideas, assess costs and start planning for our future.

Why is our current model “unsustainable?”

- Our 14 buildings entail annual “carrying costs” – heat, power, insurance, alarm monitoring, upkeep and repairs – and require significant short-term and long-term capital expenditures simply to maintain what we have. Already, we are tapping into our reserves. To continue on this path would be irresponsible.
- Our facilities were built for a different era and don't match our present needs.
- Our collections and attendance decline an average of 10 percent annually.
- We need to assess long-term effects of the pandemic on attending Mass in-person versus viewing services online, and on collections.

What do we have to decide for our future viability?

- Do we hold one or more capital campaigns?
- Do we sell assets to fund capital costs?
- Do we shed assets to cut costs?
- How might we repurpose a building, or build something new?
- How do we grow the parish and increase attendance and revenue?
- Could we reimagine the parish based on successful models such as Nativity in Timonium, MD. (Rebuilt) or St. Benedict's in Halifax, Nova Scotia (Divine Renovation).
- The Parish Pastoral Council has reviewed facilities, collected cost data, considered the future, and solicited parishioners' ideas, all while trying to be as transparent as possible. Anything decided locally involving significant changes or expenditures must be reviewed and approved by the diocese and bishop.

How much local control do we have over our future?

- After the Parish Pastoral Council has reviewed facilities and ministries, collected cost data, considered the options, solicited parishioners' ideas, developed a plan and sought feedback and buy-in from parishioners and stakeholders, anything decided locally involving significant changes or expenditures must be reviewed and approved by the diocese and bishop.

To submit ideas, please send an email to: sercc.parishcouncil@dor.org

If we maintain the status quo, will we be sound financially?

- No, we currently are tapping into our reserves to make ends meet.
- The churches have significant capital costs looming for electrical, HVAC, roof and stained-glass repairs.
- Some needed expenses are not covered in these estimates – plumbing, alarms, architectural costs.
- These projected costs do not take into consideration any renovations or enhancements such as flooring, painting, windows, elevators, accessibility, as well as any remodeling to suit current or future needs.

Are there other circumstances to consider?

- We should be prepared to contribute significant money to the overall settlement of the diocesan bankruptcy and claims against individual parishes arising from cases brought under the Child Victims Act (CVA). No figure or formula has been determined for the 90 parishes in the diocese, but it will more than likely impact our reserves.
 - In May 2022, the diocese proposed to settle its federal bankruptcy case by paying nearly \$148 million to survivors of child sexual abuse. As part of this proposed settlement, the diocese asked the federal bankruptcy judge to approve an agreement with its insurance carriers to provide \$107.25 million toward the settlement of all claims.
 - The claimants did not agree to this settlement and pressed to pursue a number of CVA cases in state court against individual parishes, which not having declared bankruptcy like the diocese, are not shielded from these suits. These cases currently are working their way through the discovery phase.
- Bishop Matano has reached retirement age and submitted his letter of resignation. A new bishop will likely come with his own set of ideas and priorities once installed in Rochester.

What role does the priest shortage play? Will we get another priest?

- We are down to one full-time priest. We don't expect a second to be assigned to the SERCC.
- The current diocesan count shows that there are essentially enough priests to cover the existing parishes, but a large percentage will surpass retirement age in the next five years.

Do you expect further consolidations with city or suburban parishes?

- Nothing has been discussed but given the aging priest population and similar challenges facing other parishes that remains a possibility.

What is my role?

- Share your ideas, thoughts and concerns with staff, members of Parish Council, neighbors, and friends. Don't wait. You don't want to exclude a great idea. Be heard in a timely manner.
- Pray, meditate, discern. We are relying on your participation to develop and establish a viable plan for our parish.

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