



Five Star Area
Catholic Community



All Things New Proposal 1-10-2026

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 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.

Design Parameters and Current Reality:

Accessibility to Sunday Mass:

- 80% of the faithful must have access to a Sunday mass within a 20-minute drive
 - *There are currently multiple options within 20-minutes for over 80%*
- No rotation of mass schedules between churches (*Currently no rotation*)

Budgeted Ministries:

- One administrative office per ACC
 - *Located in Long Prairie, need to hire full time business manager*
- Liturgical ministries (*parameter met*)
- Formation ministries: Children – youth – adult (*parameter met*)
- Hispanic ministries (*parameter met*)

- Pastoral care (*Will improve with plan*)
- Social outreach (*Will improve with plan*)

Pastors/Priests:

- Limit of 3 Sunday masses per weekend/priest not including weddings/funerals
 - *Currently have 2 priests with 7 masses, need to cut a mass*
- Pastors will spend at least 50% of their time in pastoral ministry (*Will improve with plan*)
- Desire to live in community with ACC will be considered (*Will improve with plan*)

Buildings:

- Overall facility usage must average 50% or higher occupancy or higher for all weekend liturgies in the ACC. (*Parameter met at all current mass times*)
- Buildings must be physically accessible, hospitable and safe (*All buildings meet parameters*)
 - Restrooms in church building
 - Church building is either one level or has access to an existing elevator
 - ACC plan must specify how empty buildings will be repurposed or relegated for secular but not unbecoming use ideally within five years

Governance:

- Reduce the number of parish corporations (*Needs to be considered*)
- Potential worship sites – primary church, partner church (*Needs to be considered*)

Finances:

- Each finance council will approve an attainable and reasonable balanced budget
- Parish investment in Catholic school may not exceed 40% of plate/envelope within five years.
- Routine building operations may not exceed 25% of plate/envelope
 - *All current parishes are financially well currently, impacts need to be considered with any changes.*

Planning Process:

An ACC Planning committee was formed with members from all 5 parishes in our ACC. We held many meetings with our ACC Planning Committee, taking turns at each ACC location. We examined the design parameters set forth by the diocese along with our current reality. We then determined the areas that needed to be addressed in our proposal.

We discussed our options to cut a weekend mass. We determined that we would need to either take away the Long Prairie Saturday night mass, or one of the other 4 parishes would need to lose their only weekend mass. It was determined as a group that if a location were to lose its weekend mass, it would be Clarissa as it is the smallest parish currently.

Ideas were formed to reduce corporations and determine primary/partner churches. The idea of one corporation was introduced, though this option likely seemed harder to gain community support. Another option for three corporations was formed. The 3 corporations would be Browerville/Clarissa, Swanville/Grey Eagle, and Long Prairie. The option of 3 seemed to make sense for our ACC, noting that there were already signs of it working with the Knights of Columbus councils and the former 3 priest assignments.

Community Engagement:

After plan options were formed by the committee, we held a townhall and meal at each church in our ACC to discuss plan options and get feedback from community members. During this time, the community was encouraged to ask questions and provide input on the information presented. We always left the door open for community members to reach out to committee members directly with questions or ideas outside of meetings.

Starting in Clarissa, the feedback was very negative to the idea of losing its weekend mass. The idea of a potential merger with Browerville raised concerns of being swallowed up by a larger parish. When asked if they would be okay switching to a Saturday mass, many of the older parishioners seemed open to the option, though the younger ones seemed to like the Sunday mass. It was noted that Clarissa has seen an uptick in younger families recently, and currently maintains over 50% occupancy.

In Browerville they seemed open to the idea of merging with Clarissa. The effects of the prior merger of the 2 churches in Browerville was discussed, and there are still feelings on the topic to this day. The merger of all 5 into one corporation concerned the community members. There is worries of about having to fund Long Prairie's school and new building project, when they have their own school to try and keep funded. A common concern being "I want my donations to go towards my church and my school".

These same concerns were raised in both Grey Eagle and Swanville as well, notably because neither parish currently funds a school and both buildings are in good shape. Both of the parishes seemed open to merging together. Both are equal in size and already have partnership in other areas as well. The topic of their church not being named a primary church was not well received in these communities, each making the case as to why they would be the better choice for a primary church.

In Long Prairie there are serious concerns if the Saturday Mass were to be cut. Further research shows that the weekly income averages for this mass is \$2800.00. This accounts for income of appx \$145,000.00 per year. Merger options seem to be acceptable to St Mary's parishioners if the Saturday Mass is retained. If not, this financial loss would pose serious problems for the parish, with a school and a building project to pay for.

Goals for the ACC:

Goal 1: Reduce the total number of weekend masses to six.

Goal 2: Reduce the number of parish corporations.

Goal 3: Hire a full-time business manager for the ACC.

Goal 4: Determine Primary and Partner Parishes

Proposed Plan

- Reduce corporations from 5 corporations to 3 corporations. Corporations will be Long Prairie, Swanville/Grey Eagle, and Browerville/Clarissa. These changes will be fully implemented no later than July 2028.
- The process of hiring a full-time business manager will begin in October 2026, with input needed by the newly appointed pastor. This will be completed no later than December of 2026
- Long Prairie will drop their Saturday evening mass, maintaining two including the Spanish mass. Long Prairie will be considered a primary church, with all holy day masses. The incoming pastor may decide when to implement the mass cut based on his needs. This change will take place no later than July 2027.
- The mass schedule will be readjusted throughout the ACC with input from the priests. These changes will begin when the Long Prairie mass is cut.
- A second primary church location will be decided between Browerville, Swanville, and Grey Eagle. (Clarissa's seating capacity being too small for a primary designation) This decision will include input from the new pastor, and will be implemented with the other mass schedule changes.

Action Steps:

- Upon approval, new corporations will be formed. New financial councils will be formed for Browerville/Clarissa and Swanville/Grey Eagle, with equal representation from each.
- Upon creation of a new mass schedule, mass attendance will be monitored. If attendance drops below 50% for a 3-month period, or at the discretion of the pastor, weekend worship locations and/or primary church designations may be reconsidered.
- The financial impact of losing a Saturday mass in Long Prairie will be monitored after implementation. A one corporation model or mass schedule adjustment may be considered if financial assistance is needed for the school and building project.
- Long Prairie building project process and financials will be monitored for numerous years. A one corporation model may become more favorable at a later date as this project is completed.

Sign-Off

Date: 1/10/2026

Parochial Administrator:

Father Arlie Sowada

Parochial Vicar:

Father Gabriel Walz

Other Committee Members:

Marissa Mollner -Swanville- Young Adult Representative

Tanner Koetter - Swanville

Tony Johnson - Swanville

Mary Woeste - Grey Eagle - Employee Representative

Marc Brinkman - Grey Eagle

Kim Marstein- Clarissa

Deacon Jim - ACC Representative

Kris Lemm - Browerville

Joe Duncan - Browerville

Norma Orozco - Long Prairie - Spanish Speaking Representative

Rocio Ramirez - Long Prairie - Spanish Speaking Representative

Ben Barlage - Long Prairie

Doug Schmidt - Current ACC Board President