A Framework for the Future of the Bettendorf Catholic Community

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish
St. John Vianney Parish
Saint Joan of Arc Catholic School

Bettendorf, Iowa

Prayerfully Submitted By
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2
STRATEGIC OVERVIEW 5
HISTORY & HOW WE GOT HERE 8
- The Origins of Our Two Parishes 8
- The Priest Shortage: A Diocesan and National Reality 11
- Aging Facilities and Mounting Maintenance Costs 11
- Strategic Positioning for Future Growth 12
- Future Campus Capacity and Land Stewardship 13

II. WHAT WE HEARD FROM OUR COMMUNITY 14
- Key Themes from the Listening Sessions 14
- Supporting Data From Parish Survey 15
- Differences in Perspective Between Parish Communities 18

III. IMMEDIATE ACTIONS WE RECOMMEND 20
IV. RECOMMENDED PATH FORWARD 23
- Guiding Principles 23
- Phase 1: Canonical and Corporate Combination (July 1, 2026) 23
- Phase 2: Closure of Our Lady of Lourdes Worship Site 24
- Phase 3: Aggressive Mortgage Reduction (2026-2030) 33
- Phase 4: Planning and Design for New Church (2027-2030) 38
- Phase 5: New Church Fundraising Campaign (Approx. 2030) 44
- Phase 6: Construction and Opening of New Church (Approx. 2032) 45
- Phase 7: Sale of St. John Vianney Property (2032) 45
- Tentative Summary Timeline 45

V. ALTERNATE SCENARIOS CONSIDERED 47
VI. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS 51
VII. MEASURING SUCCESS 63
VIII. RISKS AND MITIGATION 65
- Financial Risks 65
- Community and Pastoral Risks 66
- Operational Risks 67

IX. DECISION AUTHORITY AND GOVERNANCE 68
CONCLUSION: A FUTURE ROOTED IN HOPE AND FAITH 70
APPENDIX SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS 71

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For many years, the Catholic community in Bettendorf has been faithfully striving forward towards a vision of one catholic school, within one vibrant parish, worshiping together in one church. A place where faith, learning, and families grow together for generations. We are now faced with multiple competing realities that require decisive action. These include a growing shortage of priests, rising operating and facility costs, and aging parish buildings. Their combined impact can no longer be addressed through incremental adjustments.

This strategic plan represents a deliberate response. Parish leadership believes it is more responsible to act while leadership capacity, financial resources, and community engagement remain strong rather than waiting for circumstances to force decisions under crisis conditions.

A Strong Community Facing Hard Decisions

As of February 2026, Our Lady of Lourdes includes approximately 870 families and St. John Vianney approximately 2,065 families. Together, they represent a vibrant Catholic presence serving nearly 3,000 households across the Bettendorf and greater Quad Cities area.

St. Joan of Arc Catholic School stands as one of the most significant accomplishments in our community's history. Through extraordinary generosity, more than $17 million was raised, and the school was completed 10 percent under budget. More importantly, the school is not simply a building project. It is the primary ministry of our parishes and the most important investment in the future of the Catholic faith in Bettendorf. The decision to build the school was always part of a larger vision for a unified parish centered on a shared church and school campus. Completing that vision requires both financial stability and the eventual construction of a church on the school campus.

Pursuing that vision required a $22.5 million mortgage that now shapes every major decision facing the parishes. Annual debt service of approximately $1.8 million consumes nearly three quarters of combined parish operating income. If paid on its original schedule through May 2054, the parish would pay roughly $21 million in interest in addition to the principal. This financial reality makes it unsustainable to continue operating two full campuses while also servicing debt and deferred maintenance.

Even before considering staffing or ministry expenses, maintaining the Our Lady of Lourdes facility alone costs the parish approximately $200,000 per year. These ongoing costs directly affect long-term sustainability and limit the parish's ability to reduce debt and complete the vision for a unified Catholic campus.

A Necessary Transition

As a result, this plan calls for the canonical combination of St. John Vianney and Our Lady of Lourdes into one parish and the eventual closure of Our Lady of Lourdes as a worship site once a suitable buyer is secured, which could occur as early as spring 2027. Upon completion of the merger, the unified parish will take the name St. Joan of Arc Parish, reflecting the shared future of the Catholic community in Bettendorf.

This recommendation is not made lightly. Our Lady of Lourdes has been a sacred home of prayer, sacrament, and community for generations. Its history, memories, and spiritual legacy are deeply cherished. The decision to close a worship site represents real loss and grief, and this plan acknowledges that weight honestly.

The Financial Strategy That Supports This Decision

The central financial strategy of this plan is aggressive mortgage reduction. Timing matters. Applying large payments early can save millions of dollars in interest and significantly shorten the mortgage timeline. Every year of delay carries a real cost that diverts resources away from ministry, staffing, and formation.

This strategy includes consolidating parish operations, applying proceeds from the sale of the Our Lady of Lourdes property directly to mortgage principal, shared stewardship across the parish community, and defined contributions tied specifically to debt reduction and not intended to be permanent. Together, these actions are designed to eliminate the school mortgage by approximately 2030.

Once the mortgage is retired, the parish can then responsibly plan for the construction of a new unified church on the school campus, positioned to serve future generations without the burden of unsustainable debt. This approach is intentionally benchmark-driven rather than date-driven, allowing financial readiness and pastoral considerations to guide the pace of implementation.

Pastoral Care, Implementation, and the Long View

This plan recognizes that decisions of this magnitude require intentional pastoral care. The transition away from a worship site will be accompanied by clear communication, opportunities for prayer and remembrance, and accompaniment for those most affected by change. Implementation begins immediately. At the same time, parish leadership recognizes that ongoing strategic oversight will remain in place to monitor progress and adapt as circumstances evolve.

A Path Forward

This strategic plan asks for trust, patience, and shared commitment. By making difficult decisions now with clarity and courage, the Catholic community in Bettendorf can secure a sustainable future that directs resources toward mission and ministry rather than interest payments and deferred maintenance. It is a path rooted in unity and confidence in what this community has already shown it can accomplish.

This strategic plan reflects the recommendations of the Joint Strategic Planning Committee, formed to study long-term sustainability and present options for the future. Final decisions regarding parish structure, property use, and implementation will be made by the pastor, the parish trustees, and the Bishop in accordance with diocesan governance and canon law.

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

The Catholic community in Bettendorf has been shaped by generations of faith, sacrifice, and shared commitment. Families have worshiped, educated their children, celebrated the sacraments, and built lasting relationships within the parish communities of Our Lady of Lourdes and St. John Vianney. That legacy continues today in a vibrant Catholic presence serving nearly 3,000 households.

One of the clearest expressions of this shared commitment is St. Joan of Arc Catholic School. Built through extraordinary generosity and careful stewardship, the school represents far more than a successful building project. It reflects a collective decision to invest in the future of the Catholic faith in Bettendorf. From the beginning, the school was envisioned as part of a unified Catholic campus where worship, formation, and community life are integrated across every stage of life.

At the same time, several long-term realities are converging in ways that require responsible action. The number of priests serving the Church continues to decline, requiring parish structures capable of sustaining sacramental life and pastoral care with fewer clergy. Operating costs continue to rise. Aging buildings require significant reinvestment. Most significantly, the mortgage associated with the new school now shapes every major financial decision. These realities are not temporary challenges; they are structural conditions that will influence parish life for decades to come.

This plan is grounded in a simple conviction: it is more responsible to act while the community remains strong than to delay until circumstances force decisions under crisis conditions. The goal is not merely to respond to present pressures, but to secure a stable and vibrant long term future for Catholic worship, formation, and ministry in Bettendorf.

How We Arrived at This Moment

The decision to build St. Joan of Arc Catholic School reflected a shared understanding that Catholic education is central to the mission of the Church. Addressing the school first was a matter of urgency and sequencing. Existing facilities could no longer adequately support the educational mission, and investing in Catholic education was understood as investing in the future of the faith community. The generosity demonstrated by parishioners confirmed that shared commitment.

Completing the school required a significant financial commitment. The resulting mortgage now shapes the financial landscape of both parishes. Debt service, combined with rising operating costs and the expense of maintaining multiple facilities, limits the parish's ability to invest fully in ministry, staffing, and formation. Continuing to operate multiple aging campuses while carrying substantial debt would prevent the parish from completing the long-planned campus vision and weaken long-term sustainability.

This moment, therefore, is not a departure from past decisions but a continuation of them. The question before the parish is how to take the next responsible step.

What Must Be Decided Now

The immediate decisions before the parish focus on sustainability, stewardship, and the long-term viability of parish life. These decisions include:

- The canonical and corporate combination of Our Lady of Lourdes and St. John Vianney into one parish community
- The formation of St. Joan of Arc Parish as the unified parish structure
- The eventual closure of Our Lady of Lourdes as a worship site once a suitable buyer is secured
- Consolidation of parish operations to reduce duplication and improve stewardship
- The application of property sale proceeds toward mortgage principal reduction

These actions are difficult, particularly because they involve the closure of a worship site that has been a sacred home for generations. Our Lady of Lourdes has been a place of prayer, sacrament, and community life for decades. Its history and spiritual legacy are deeply cherished, and the grief associated with such change is real. This plan acknowledges that loss with honesty and respect while also recognizing the responsibility to steward resources wisely for future generations.

Acting now allows the parish to reduce debt more quickly, limit long-term interest costs, and redirect resources toward ministry rather than maintenance.

Why These Decisions Cannot Be Made in Isolation

The decisions before the parish cannot be evaluated properly without understanding the larger vision they support. This plan is not simply about reducing expenses or consolidating facilities. It is about completing a mission that began with the construction of the school for the creation of a unified Catholic center where worship, formation, and community life are integrated.

Maintaining multiple aging facilities while carrying significant debt would divert resources away from ministry and delay progress toward that vision. Delaying action would increase interest costs and reduce the parish's capacity to invest in pastoral leadership, faith formation, and outreach. Acting now aligns resources with mission and creates a foundation for long-term stability.

The sequencing is intentional. The immediate decisions address sustainability. Debt reduction restores financial strength. Financial strength makes the future mission possible.

The Vision Beyond the Immediate Decisions

Once the parish is unified and the mortgage is retired, the community will be positioned to complete the long-planned vision of a unified church and school campus. Locating the church on the school campus ensures that students, families, and parishioners encounter the sacramental life of the Church daily. This vision reflects a commitment not only to present needs but to the faith lives of children, families, and parishioners for decades to come.

Planning for Pastoral Care and Parish Life

Decisions of this magnitude require intentional pastoral care. The transition away from a worship site will include opportunities for prayer and remembrance, respectful preservation and relocation of sacred items, and accompaniment for those most affected by change. Parishioners remain members of the parish community throughout the transition, and traditions and devotions from both parishes will continue to shape the spiritual life of St. Joan of Arc Parish.

Unifying as one parish also positions the community to sustain sacramental life and pastoral care in a future where fewer priests will serve larger communities. Shared ministry, collaborative leadership, and unified resources strengthen the parish's ability to meet spiritual needs now and in the years ahead.

A Future Rooted in Stewardship and Hope

The decisions before us are not the end of a story, but the next step in a long-term vision. By uniting as St. Joan of Arc Parish, reducing debt, and completing the campus vision, the community secures a strong and sustainable future for Catholic worship, formation, and ministry. By making careful decisions now, the Catholic community in Bettendorf can move forward with clarity, unity, and hope.

HISTORY & HOW WE GOT HERE

The Origins of Our Two Parishes

Our Lady of Lourdes: Serving Bettendorf Since 1903

The history of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church traces back to 1902 when eleven families in Gilbertville (forerunner of Bettendorf) petitioned the Bishop to send a priest to say Sunday Mass due to transportation difficulties reaching St. Joseph's in Davenport. The first Mass was offered on December 8, 1903, in a frame building constructed at 15th and Brown Street.

The parish and its school grew together through the decades. Lourdes Memorial School opened in 1953 with 330 students, expanding just two years later to meet rapidly growing enrollment. The current church building was dedicated on May 30, 1963. The parish added a parish activity center in 1984, expanded offices and classrooms in the 1990s, and developed a Eucharistic Chapel and Gathering Space completed in 1999.

For over a century, Our Lady of Lourdes has been a spiritual home for Catholic families in downtown and southern Bettendorf, marked by strong traditions, dedicated parishioners, and a deep commitment to Catholic education.

St. John Vianney: Built for Northern Bettendorf's Growth

In 1967, St. John Vianney was established by the Diocese of Davenport to meet the needs of a rapidly expanding population in northern Bettendorf. The location was surrounded by cornfields, chosen deliberately to anticipate the northward residential growth of the city. Early parishioners recall the church being a distinct "beacon" in the middle of open fields.

The church opened for its first Mass in November 1969, beginning with roughly 300 families. Through the 1980s and 1990s, the parish expanded significantly to accommodate thousands of new families, adding the McGrath Center for religious education in 1985, completing sanctuary upgrades in 1990, and finishing a $4.5 million expansion in 2003-2004.

By its 50th anniversary in 2017, the surrounding "gravel roads" of the 1960s had become the developed residential heart of Bettendorf, and St. John Vianney had grown into one of the largest parishes in the diocese. The parish also operated a successful preschool program serving young families throughout the community.

Today, St. John Vianney serves approximately 2,065 registered families, while Our Lady of Lourdes serves approximately 870 families (February 2026). Together, these communities form one of the largest Catholic populations in the Diocese of Davenport.

Previous Planning Efforts

The question of how the Catholic Church in Bettendorf can best fulfill its mission has been asked for several years, with planning beginning long before the current strategic effort.

The 2016-2019 Comprehensive Study

In summer 2016, Lourdes Catholic School initiated a strategic planning session, followed by Our Lady of Lourdes Parish launching a pastoral planning process in spring 2017. Both efforts identified facilities as a major concern. A facilities committee initially evaluated three possible directions: do nothing, remodel/renovate, or relocate and build new facilities.

- Bishop Zinkula was consulted on whether relocation would be possible. In August 2017, he asked that a committee be formed "to study the needs of the Catholic Church in Bettendorf for the best growth and development for the well-being of the Church," including consultation with the Davenport Deanery, Our Lady of the River in LeClaire, St. John Vianney, diocesan school leadership, and the Scott County Catholic Schools committee.

From January to August 2018, a committee of over 30 members collected data on population growth in Bettendorf and formulated several scenarios. In October 2018, five scenarios were presented to Bishop Zinkula:

1. No Change - Update only critical building needs
2. Renovate - Stay in current location and update facilities
3. Relocate Our Lady of Lourdes Parish and Lourdes Catholic School
4. Combine Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Lourdes Catholic School, and St. John Vianney Parish
5. Relocate Lourdes Catholic School alone and keep current parish locations

After reviewing the presentation, Bishop Zinkula asked parish leadership to further study and engage parish communities with two specific options: relocation of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish and School, and the option of combining the two parishes.

In May 2019, parish information meetings took place to inform parishioners about the process and recommendations. The general reception was positive, and Bishop Zinkula asked for continued input about parishioner opinions regarding new building, merging, and the importance of Catholic school education.

The Decision to Build the School First

Following this extensive study, a critical decision was made: the urgent condition of the Lourdes Catholic School building required that the school project take priority. The school facilities, dating to 1953 with various additions through the 1990s, had reached a point where continued operation was becoming increasingly difficult. With aging infrastructure, growing enrollment demands, and a shifting population center in Bettendorf moving northward, the need for action was clear.

The decision was made to proceed first with building a new school, with the understanding that planning for a new church would continue as the next phase of the overall vision. This was not an abandonment of church consolidation planning but rather a strategic sequencing: address the most urgent facility need first while maintaining momentum toward the broader goal of parish consolidation and a new church facility.

This decision proved providential, as it would demonstrate our parishes' ability to accomplish extraordinary things together.

The School: Our Greatest Achievement

St. Joan of Arc Catholic School opened in fall 2025, welcoming preschool through eighth grade students and continuing the legacy of Lourdes Catholic School, which had operated in downtown Bettendorf since 1919. The Lourdes Catholic School community and St. John Vianney Preschool community came together in summer 2025 to begin this new chapter in a state-of-the-art facility.

The school project represented the largest collaborative undertaking in the history of our two parishes. Through extraordinary generosity, more than $17 million was raised from parishioners, school families, and supporters of Catholic education. The building was completed 10% under budget, demonstrating excellent stewardship and fiscal discipline by parish leadership and project managers.

This achievement stands as living proof of what our two parishes can accomplish when we unite with shared vision and generous hearts. It created a foundation of trust and demonstrated capacity that now informs our approach to the next phase: parish consolidation and planning for a new church.

Current Financial Reality

The school construction also created a significant financial obligation that shapes every major decision facing our parishes today:

- Outstanding mortgage balance: $22.5 million
- Monthly mortgage payment: $150,000
- Annual debt service: $1.81 million
- Combined parish operating budget: approximately $2.88 million annually
- Combined parish operating expenses: approximately $2.45 million annually

This means that our annual debt service is equal to about 63% of our annual combined income. The $2.45 million in combined parish operating expenses does NOT include our $0.7 million annual Upon this Rock (UTR) obligation to the Diocese. Including UTR, the operating budgets require us to depend almost entirely on the capital campaign income for the debt service. If the mortgage is paid through its end date of May 2054, we would pay roughly $21 million in interest on top of the $22.5 million principal ($43.5 million total).

The school stands as proof that we can do hard things together. It also demonstrates that we cannot afford to delay decisions about our long-term parish structure. The time for action has arrived.

The Priest Shortage: A Diocesan and National Reality

The Catholic Church in the United States and specifically in the Diocese of Davenport is experiencing an acute and worsening shortage of priests. Currently, the Diocese of Davenport has 34 pastors serving 70 parishes across the region.

By 2028, 11 of these 34 pastors will reach retirement age. This represents not a distant theoretical concern but an immediate crisis that will fundamentally reshape Catholic parish life throughout the diocese. The reality is stark: there simply will not be enough priests to maintain the current parish structure.

This shortage means that consolidation is not unique to Bettendorf. Parishes throughout the diocese and across the country are being called to rethink how they organize ministry, share resources, and adapt to a new reality in which multiple communities must be served by fewer clergy.

Aging Facilities and Mounting Maintenance Costs

Both St. John Vianney and Our Lady of Lourdes church buildings have served our communities faithfully for decades. However, the passage of time has created significant infrastructure challenges that can no longer be addressed through incremental maintenance alone.

The facility condition assessment for Our Lady of Lourdes identifies multiple categories of major capital need driven by aging building systems and modern code requirements. The most significant contributors include heating and cooling system replacement reflecting aging boilers, air handling units, and distribution systems that are at or beyond useful life. Electrical distribution, panels, and interior lighting upgrades are required to address capacity limitations, obsolete equipment, and current electrical code standards. Interior finishes (flooring, ceilings, doors, and casework) are needed due to widespread wear, outdated materials, and deferred maintenance. Fire sprinkler systems and fire separation upgrades would likely be triggered by renovation scope. Accessibility (ADA) improvements would be required including entrances, restrooms, and path-of-travel requirements. Hazardous material abatement would be required to address asbestos insulation in the buildings.

Collectively, these categories place planning-level reinvestment at approximately $4M–$7M for selective modernization and $8M–$12M+ for comprehensive modernization.

These items are not discretionary aesthetic upgrades. Many are code-driven and would be triggered by renovation, occupancy changes, or major system replacement. In addition, infrastructure threats such as the deteriorating condition of the boiler and associated mechanical systems create the possibility of forced closure if catastrophic failure occurs. This risk further undermines the viability of continued long-term operation at Our Lady of Lourdes.

St. John Vianney also contains aging systems typical of buildings of its age; however, its overall configuration, capacity, site characteristics and lack of deferred maintenance position it more favorably as an interim worship site. St. John Vianney offers a substantially larger worship space, more flexible interior layout, and a site better suited to support combined parish attendance and parish-wide events. The church has a seating capacity of approximately 1,000, compared to approximately 550 at Our Lady of Lourdes.

Operating two full worship campuses results in substantial duplicated facility expenses. Our Lady of Lourdes now bears 100% of utilities, insurance, maintenance, snow removal, lawn care, and custodial costs for a campus that is largely underutilized following school relocation. Many of those expenses used to be shared with Scott County Catholic Schools. Insurance alone for the Lourdes campus is approximately $48,000 annually, with additional significant costs for heating, cooling, and routine maintenance of large vacant or lightly used spaces. That expense

By comparison, St. John Vianney’s facility costs are more closely aligned with actual utilization and provide greater functional value per dollar spent due to higher worship capacity and more consistent use. Consolidation of worship activity at St. John Vianney allows the parish to eliminate redundant operating costs associated with maintaining two worship sites and redirect those resources toward debt reduction and future parish priorities.

Strategic Positioning for Future Growth

The decision about where to locate a new church considers not just current geography but future development patterns. The City of Bettendorf's Comprehensive Plan Update for 2045 (adopted 2024) identifies "the potential areas for development are concentrated on the northern areas of the city," with over 60% of current city limits already developed. The St. Joan of Arc School campus is positioned in the city's Tier 1A growth area which represents the highest priority for near-term development and planned infrastructure investment. Building where the city is growing ensures the Catholic community remains accessible and relevant to future generations, rather than maintaining facilities in areas that represent where the city was rather than where it will be.

Future Campus Capacity and Land Stewardship

When the St. Joan of Arc School site was acquired, approximately 65 acres were purchased to ensure sufficient space for the school, a future parish church, and long-term flexibility for the Catholic community in Bettendorf. Approximately 30 acres are currently in use for the school campus and related facilities, and the site already provides adequate space for the future construction of a parish church when the community is prepared to move forward.

The remaining acreage represents an important long-term resource for the parish. Based on recent assessments and surrounding development activity, this land is estimated to have a current value exceeding $2 million and will likely appreciate as growth continues in this area of Bettendorf.

No decisions have been made regarding the future use of this land. Parish leadership recognizes, however, that it may provide future opportunities to strengthen financial sustainability and support long-term mission priorities.

At the appropriate time, potential options may be explored, including working with mission-aligned or affiliated partners to ensure that any future development remains compatible with parish needs, preserves the integrity of the campus, and supports the broader vision for Catholic presence in Bettendorf.

Any future decisions regarding the property would be made through appropriate parish and diocesan consultation and with careful attention to stewardship, mission, and community impact.

II. WHAT WE HEARD FROM OUR COMMUNITY

Between January 6 and February 5, 2026, the Joint Strategic Planning Committee conducted extensive listening sessions with over 180 participants across both parishes. These focus groups included parish staff, pastoral councils, parishioners, school staff, Knights of Columbus and youth.

The purpose was to listen carefully, gather diverse perspectives, and understand the hopes, concerns, and readiness of our community for significant change.

What emerged from these conversations was both humbling and hopeful. While there is natural grief and anxiety about change, there is also widespread recognition that our current model is increasingly difficult to sustain long term and that the community is ready to move forward together

Key Themes from the Listening Sessions

From Resistance to Readiness: The most striking theme across all focus groups was a significant shift in community attitude. Where previous discussions about consolidation met resistance and hope that it might not be necessary, current conversations reflect acceptance and even urgency for action. Participants consistently expressed sentiments like "the community is feeling as one," "people are recognizing the priest shortage," and "why don't we just move forward and combine?" One participant captured the prevailing mood as "concerned hopefulness" reflecting a recognition that change is difficult but necessary, combined with faith that working together can create something stronger for the future.

Unsustainable Status Quo: There was strong agreement that the current two-parish model is not sustainable long-term, particularly given priest workload and financial constraints. Staff voiced genuine concern about clergy sustainability under current demands. Parishioners from both locations expressed deep appreciation for Father Rich, Father Tony, and the deacon team while recognizing that the current structure is overtaxing leadership and limiting ministry effectiveness.

The School as Proof of Concept: Participants frequently referenced St. Joan of Arc School as evidence that our parishes can successfully collaborate on major initiatives. The school demonstrates both our community's capacity for shared vision and our leadership's fiscal discipline (completing construction 10% under budget). This achievement gives people confidence that consolidation can succeed.

Building a Shared Future Together: Parishioners consistently expressed the desire that consolidation be experienced as two communities coming together to build something new, not one parish absorbing another. They emphasized the importance of honoring both communities' traditions, ensuring balanced representation, and fostering shared ownership of the future.

Youth Ministry as Priority: Multiple groups identified significant gaps in current youth programming and activities. There was widespread hope that consolidation could strengthen youth ministry by combining resources, volunteers, and programming from both parishes to create more robust offerings for young people.

Ministry Consolidation as Opportunity: Rather than viewing combined ministries as loss, participants recognized that consolidation could reduce volunteer fatigue while strengthening programming. The successful combination of daily Mass schedules was cited as a positive example that pushed people outside comfort zones in beneficial ways.

Communication is Critical: Every stakeholder group emphasized the need for clear, honest, ongoing communication throughout the transition. Transparency was identified as essential to counter rumors, manage anxiety, and build trust during a complex multi-year process.

Readiness for Action: The overwhelming sentiment was that the time for planning is ending and the time for decisive action has arrived. Multiple parishioners asked variations of "what is stopping us from moving together right now?" This readiness represents a significant shift from previous discussions and creates momentum for implementation.

Supporting Data From Parish Survey

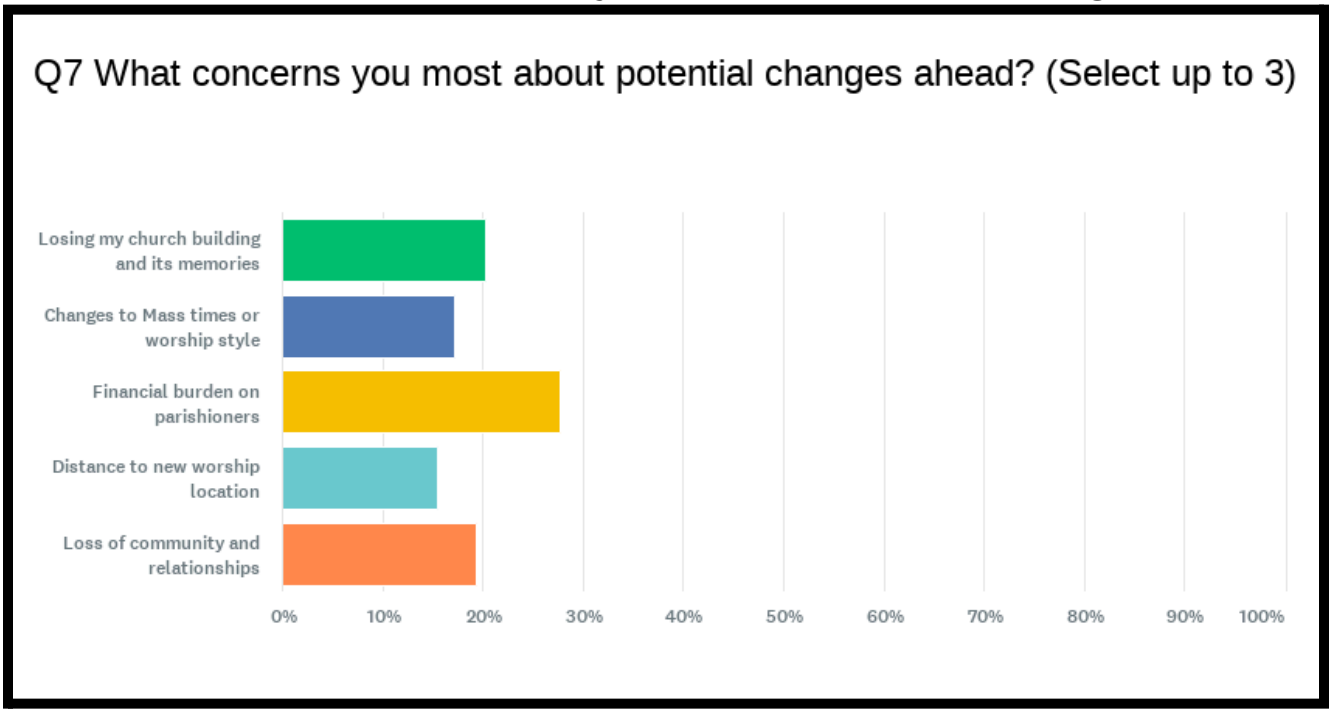
Following the focus group sessions, a parish-wide survey was conducted from February 10–22, 2026, providing a broader opportunity for parishioners to share their perspectives on the feedback gained from the focus groups. The survey was available both online and in print at all Masses to ensure accessibility Over 1,300 responses were received from parishioners of St. John Vianney, Our Lady of Lourdes, and those who regularly attend both parishes.

The survey was intentionally designed to better understand parishioners' values, priorities, concerns, and readiness for change. Questions were based on focus group feedback to explore attitudes toward current challenges such as priest availability, financial sustainability, and facility conditions, as well as priorities for the future including youth ministry, debt reduction, liturgical life, and community building.

Overall, the survey results reinforced and deepened what was heard in the focus group sessions. Quantitative responses showed strong alignment around the need to address long-term sustainability, while hundreds of written comments provided nuance and context that inform how change must be approached pastorally.

A significant majority of respondents recognized the impact of the priest shortage on parish life. Likewise, financial sustainability emerged as a central issue. While many respondents identified financial burden on parishioners as a primary concern, debt reduction and improved financial stewardship were also frequently cited as reasons for optimism about closer collaboration between the parishes. Together, these responses reflect a community that is both anxious about financial strain and supportive of disciplined, long-term solutions.

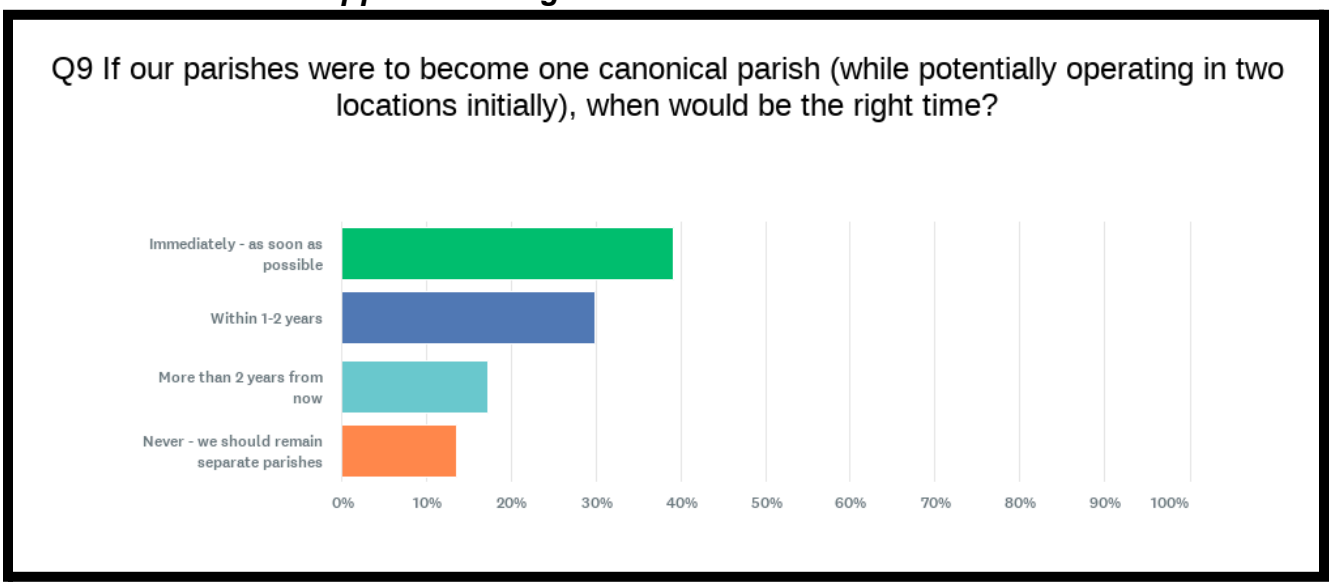
Financial Burden Is the Primary Concern About Future Changes



Among potential changes, financial impact on parishioners was the most frequently cited concern.

When asked about parish structure and timing, most respondents indicated readiness for consolidation. More than two-thirds indicated that forming one canonical parish should occur either immediately or within the next two years, while only a small minority favored remaining separate indefinitely. This suggests that although emotions surrounding change are real, resistance to structural change itself is limited.

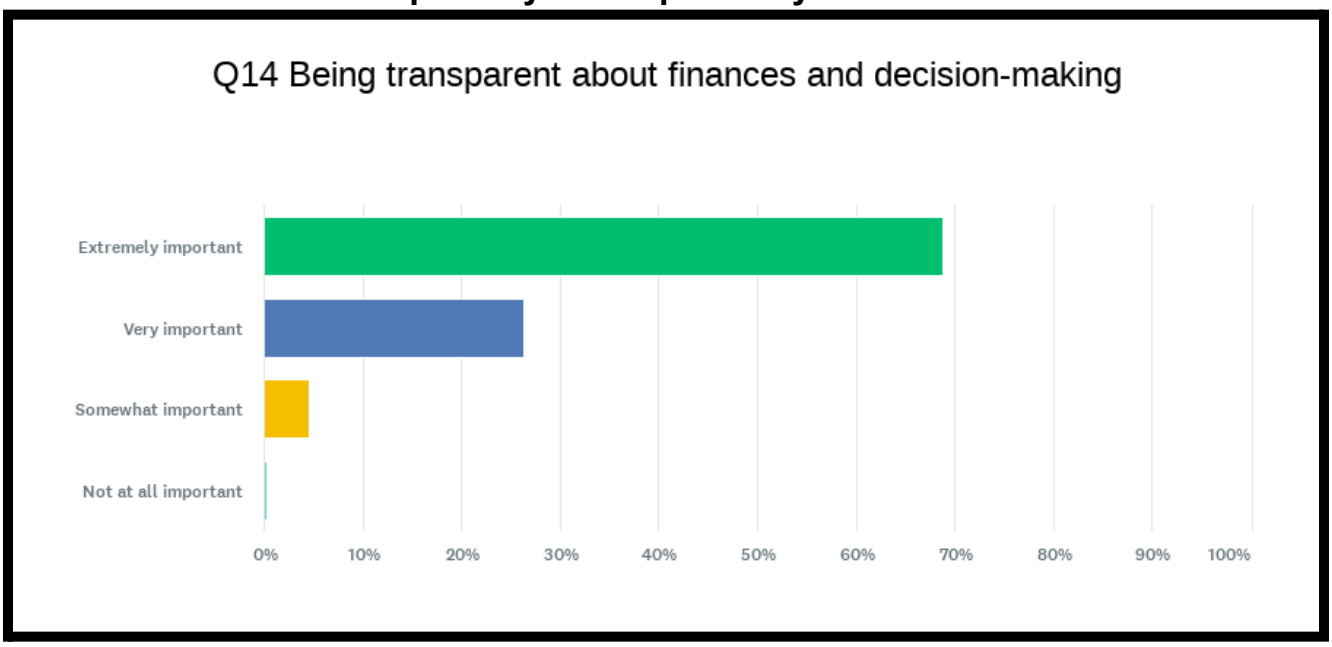
Parishioners Support Forming One Parish Within the Next Two Years



Nearly three-quarters of respondents support combining the parishes immediately or within two years, indicating broad readiness for structural change.

Respondents also consistently emphasized the importance of transparency, ensuring both communities are honored, maintaining strong connections between church and school, and respecting the traditions and identities of both parishes. Financial transparency, in particular, was rated as very important or extremely important by an overwhelming majority of respondents, underscoring the need for clear communication as decisions move forward.

Financial Transparency Is a Top Priority for Parishioners



Over 95% of respondents identified transparency in finances and decision-making as very or extremely important.

Differences in Perspective Between Parish Communities

When survey responses are viewed by primary parish affiliation, some differences in emphasis emerge between St. John Vianney and Our Lady of Lourdes parishioners. These differences do not suggest opposing visions for the future, but they do help explain why certain concerns carry different emotional weight across the community.

Parishioners who primarily attend Our Lady of Lourdes expressed higher levels of concern related to the potential loss of a familiar worship home and the history and relationships formed there over generations. Lourdes respondents were more likely to identify grief, loss of community, and the emotional impact of change as primary concerns. These responses reflect the deep historical and spiritual attachment many parishioners have to Lourdes as a place of worship and identity.

Parishioners who primarily attend St. John Vianney, while also acknowledging the emotional impact of change, were more likely to emphasize financial sustainability, stewardship, and the importance of reducing debt before undertaking future projects. Vianney respondents were somewhat more inclined to view consolidation as an opportunity to build a stronger foundation for future generations.

Importantly, despite these differences in perspective, both parish communities demonstrated similar alignment on key priorities. Strong majorities from both parishes expressed concern about priest availability, supported increased financial transparency, and emphasized the importance of thoughtful, well-communicated leadership. In both groups, most respondents indicated readiness for meaningful change rather than continued delay.

Taken together, the survey results affirm that while parishioners approach this moment from different lived experiences and attachments, there is broad agreement on the need to act, to steward resources responsibly, and to move toward a unified future. While the path forward will require sacrifice, the survey reflects a community that shares a common desire to remain strong, faithful, and united. The strategic plan seeks to honor these perspectives by pairing decisive structural recommendations with intentional pastoral care and clear communication.

The full results of the survey are supplied as an appendix to this document.

III. IMMEDIATE ACTIONS WE RECOMMEND

While the full consolidation process will unfold over several years, there are immediate steps that can and should be taken now to demonstrate progress, improve communication, and begin building our unified future. These actions are sequenced to enable subsequent phases of the plan.

1. Complete Canonical and Corporate Merger by July 1, 2026
The single most important immediate action is to complete the canonical and corporate merger of St. John Vianney and Our Lady of Lourdes into one Saint Joan of Arc parish, effective July 1, 2026. This date coincides with the beginning of the fiscal year to simplify financial integration.
This combination is the essential foundation for everything else in this strategic plan. Nothing else can truly move forward until this step is taken. This step is detailed more fully in Section IV.

- Rename as Saint Joan of Arc Parish with locations at Our Lady of Lourdes and at St. John Vianney

2. Begin Ministry Consolidation Where Practical
Immediately following canonical merger, begin combining ministries and programs that can operate as unified efforts. Priority areas include:

- Liturgical Ministries (Music, training & execution of liturgical roles)
- Faith Formation Ministries (OCIA, Sacramental preparation, religious education, adult scripture studies)
- Social Action Ministries (Community Outreach, Health Ministry)
- Family & Christian Life Ministries (Parish festivals, Cards & Calls)
- Parish Councils and Finance Councils (now required by canonical merger)
- Knights of Columbus (formal council merger)

These consolidations should be done intentionally and transparently, with clear communication about how combined ministries will function and opportunities for all current volunteers and leaders to participate. Some ministries are already consolidated between the two parishes such as the Pet Ministry, Good Neighbor Team, and Christian Experience Weekend (CEW).

3. Cease Operations in Our Lady of Lourdes School Building
Following the merger in July 2026, discontinue use of the former school portion of the Our Lady of Lourdes building to reduce operating costs and prepare for eventual property sale. This produces cost savings while the worship space remains operational.

Actions:

- Limit utility service throughout the school portion of the building
- Relocate parish offices back to the original church offices off the rectory
- Operate boiler only to supply heat to the Parish Activity Center and gym
- Begin liquidating any remaining assets from the school building
- Develop alternative plans for 2026-27 religious education programming

4. Rezone and Replat Our Lady of Lourdes Property
Begin immediately the process to rezone and replat the Our Lady of Lourdes property to maximize its future sale value. The property currently sits on five separate lots with mixed zoning (part commercial, part residential). We believe consolidating to one lot with unified commercial zoning will increase the property's value and marketability.

This work can proceed without affecting any current parish operations or worship at Our Lady of Lourdes. It is purely administrative preparation that positions the parish to maximize financial return when the property is eventually sold. The rezoning and replatting process may take several months to complete through city planning processes, so beginning immediately is prudent stewardship.

5. Combine Parish Bulletins and Websites
Create a single unified bulletin that serves both worship locations, and merge parish websites into one comprehensive online presence. This was one of the most frequently mentioned recommendations from focus groups.

Benefits:
- Improves communication by ensuring all parishioners have access to the same information
- Reduces confusion about what programs and events are available
- Demonstrates visible movement toward unity
- Reduces staff workload by eliminating duplication
- Positions parishes as one community even while operating two worship locations

6. Establish Church-School Integration Staff Responsibility
Utilize current staff to include responsibility specifically focused on strengthening connections between parish and school communities. This addresses the concern raised in focus groups that "the school and church must remain connected" and recognizes that integration requires intentional effort and dedicated personnel.

7. Develop and Implement Comprehensive Communication Strategy
Establish regular, transparent communication channels including but not limited to:
- Monthly updates on planning process through bulletin and email
- FAQ page on website addressing common questions and concerns
- Dedicated email address and online form for questions and feedback
- Regular opportunities for in-person dialogue and listening sessions
- Clear timeline and milestones so parishioners understand the process

8. Begin Planning for Diverse Liturgical Styles in Future Mass Schedule
Assemble a liturgy planning team to envision how the consolidated Mass schedule can intentionally incorporate different worship styles across different Mass times, honoring both communities' traditions while providing choice within unity. This addresses concerns raised by multiple groups about liturgical preferences.

9. Initiate Regional Planning Conversations
Begin exploratory conversations with Our Lady of the River parish in LeClaire about potential future collaboration or consolidation. Given the diocesan priest shortage, regional planning that considers the broader Bettendorf/LeClaire Catholic community will be essential for long-term sustainability.

It is important to note that any decision regarding Our Lady of the River's participation in regional planning rests entirely with that parish community and Bishop Walsh. We have no authority over their decisions and are not presuming their involvement. Rather, we are identifying what we believe is a likely future path based on diocesan realities and inviting dialogue so that Our Lady of the River leadership has the opportunity to be part of planning conversations from the beginning.

The goal is to present this regional planning opportunity to Bishop Walsh and Our Lady of the River leadership so they can determine whether and how to proceed. This ensures that Our Lady of the River has the opportunity to be part of planning conversations from the beginning rather than being presented with decisions made without their input. Any exploratory conversations, timeline, and decision-making process will be determined by Our Lady of the River's community discernment and Bishop Walsh's guidance regarding diocesan-wide planning.

IV. RECOMMENDED PATH FORWARD

Based on extensive research, consultation with diocesan officials, facilities assessments, financial modeling, and listening to our community, parish leadership recommends the following strategic path forward. This plan is driven by financial benchmarks rather than rigid timelines, recognizing that actual implementation will depend on successfully meeting fundraising goals and other financial milestones.

Guiding Principles

This recommended path is guided by several core principles:

- Unity Over Division: Bringing two communities together to build something new
- Pastoral Care: Ensuring adequate spiritual care for our community throughout the transition
- Mission Focus: Keeping our attention on evangelization, formation, and service rather than building maintenance
- Good Stewardship: Making fiscally responsible decisions that ensure long-term financial sustainability
- Benchmark-Driven Timing: Allowing financial realities rather than arbitrary dates to drive major decisions
- Transparency: Clear, honest communication at every step

Phase 1: Canonical and Corporate Combination (July 1, 2026)

On July 1, 2026, St. John Vianney and Our Lady of Lourdes will become St. Joan of Arc Parish which will be one canonical parish operating in two locations. This date coincides with the beginning of the fiscal year to simplify financial integration.

What This Means:

- One pastor, one parish council, one finance council, one administrative structure
- Combined financial books and unified asset management
- Single parish registration and record-keeping
- Coordinated pastoral planning and ministry scheduling
- Staff working for one parish rather than two separate entities
- New parish name of St. Joan of Arc Parish with two locations

What Doesn't Change Yet:

- Mass schedules remain the same at both worship locations
- Both church buildings remain open and fully operational
- Parishioners can continue attending their preferred worship site

Canonical Process:

This canonical merger requires:

- Consultation with Presbyteral Council
- Written decree from the Bishop

Phase 2: Closure of Our Lady of Lourdes Worship Site

Following the canonical combination and a suitable buyer can be secured, the Our Lady of Lourdes church building will be closed as a worship site. While timing is uncertain, this step could be completed as early as spring 2027. This timing is contingent on completion of canonical requirements, funding a buyer for the site, necessary preparations at St. John Vianney and the school, successful communication with the community, and meeting financial benchmarks.

Current Underutilization of Facilities

The Our Lady of Lourdes campus currently consists of the church building, the former school building, and the parish activity center with gymnasium. While these facilities once served a thriving parish school and full worship schedule, current utilization reveals underuse:

- **Former School Building:** Currently houses offices for six staff members. Religious education classrooms are used approximately 18 days per year. The majority of the building sits empty.
- **Church Building:** Hosts six Masses per week serving the worship needs of the community.
- **Parish Activity Center and Gym:** Remain well-utilized for team practices, funeral luncheons, and parish activities. These facilities will continue operating as long as the church remains open.

This underutilization means the parish is maintaining heating, cooling, insurance, and upkeep on substantial square footage that serves minimal function. The former school building particularly represents a significant ongoing operational cost for very limited use.

Increased Financial Burden Since School Relocation

When Lourdes Catholic School occupied the building, many facility costs were shared with Scott County Catholic Schools. Since the school relocated to the new St. Joan of Arc facility in 2025, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish now bears 100% of all facility costs.

- Heating and cooling and other utilities for the entire campus
- Snow removal and lawn care
- Insurance (recently received annual bill of $48,000)
- All maintenance and repairs

These costs, previously shared, now fall entirely on the parish operating budget while serving dramatically reduced function. This represents a substantial increase in parish financial burden for facilities that are substantially underutilized.

When we strip out staffing, ministry, diocesan obligations, and debt, and look only at the cost of operating the Our Lady of Lourdes facility itself, the parish is spending approximately $200,000 per year simply to keep the underutilized building open. This includes utilities, insurance, routine maintenance, custodial services, and the administrative overhead required to operate a physical parish site. It does not include the cost of people or ministry.

These funds could be used to help meet our yearly UTR obligation. Or, over five years, aggregate into a $1 M accelerated principal payment on the school loan.

Important Note on Timing

Our intention is not to close the Our Lady of Lourdes worship site until a suitable buyer has been secured and a responsible transition can be made. This approach allows parish life to continue while we prepare thoughtfully for the future.

At the same time, circumstances beyond our control could require an earlier timeline. Infrastructure concerns, particularly the aging boiler and mechanical systems, could necessitate accelerated closure if a major failure occurs.

Pastoral realities may also influence timing. We are currently blessed to have Fr. Rich and Fr. Tony sharing priestly responsibilities. Changes in priest availability could require adjustments to ensure sustainable sacramental care for the parish.

In addition, parish leadership recognizes that once this information is shared publicly, shifts in Mass attendance or financial support at Our Lady of Lourdes could occur. Should conditions change significantly, the parish may need to adjust the timeline to respond responsibly.

Strategic Partnership with City of Bettendorf

In January 2026, parish leadership met with City of Bettendorf officials to discuss the future of the Our Lady of Lourdes property. The City expressed strong interest in supporting redevelopment of this strategic location, which now serves as the "front doorstep of Bettendorf" from the I-74 bridge.

Key insights from this partnership:

- **Strong Market Interest Expected:** City officials indicated they believe there will be significant developer interest in the property given its prominent location and the City's active focus on downtown revitalization.
- **Commercial Rezoning Support:** The City expressed support for rezoning the property to commercial use and indicated they would assist with the rezoning and potential re-platting process.
- **Development Vision:** The City articulated preference for mixed-use development including residential units and retail. The property was described as "highly desirable and well positioned for redevelopment."
- **Market Demand:** The City estimates demand for approximately 300-400 residential units in downtown Bettendorf over the next 5-6 years, with this property well-positioned to help meet that need.
- **Potential Incentives:** Tools such as grayfield tax credits and other development incentives may be available to support transition to private development.
- **Collaborative Approach:** City representatives have offered assistance with identifying potential developers and guiding the rezoning process.

Property Sale Timeline and Expectations

The strategic plan assumes Our Lady of Lourdes property sale within approximately 12 months of closure (by spring 2028). However, the actual timeline will depend on market conditions, developer interest, and completing the rezoning process.

If securing an appropriate buyer takes longer than anticipated, this could extend the overall timeline for mortgage paydown and subsequent phases of the plan. However, working in partnership with the City of Bettendorf significantly increases confidence that a suitable developer can be identified who will make optimal use of this important real estate.

The property sale price is estimated near $2 million assuming rezoning to commercial use. The strategic plan's financial modeling includes sensitivity analysis showing the plan remains viable even if sale occurs at the lower end of the reasonable range.

Rationale for Closure:

The decision to close Our Lady of Lourdes property is driven by multiple long-standing physical plant issues:

- Facilities assessment showing millions in required code compliance upgrades
- Infrastructure systems past end of useful life
- Inability of parish to finance both school mortgage obligations and major facility renovations
- Ongoing operational costs for redundant facilities draining resources from mission and ministry

The major cost drivers identified in the facility assessment (summarized earlier in this document) place planning-level reinvestment at approximately $4M–$7M for selective modernization and $8M–$12M+ for comprehensive modernization.

Closing Before Sale Is Complete

Some may ask why the parish would not continue celebrating Mass at Our Lady of Lourdes until demolition or property transfer begins. There are several important reasons why closure must occur prior to sale.

Canonical Requirement

Under Church law, a consecrated church must be formally relegated to profane (non-sacred) use by decree of the Bishop before it can be sold for secular purposes. This relegation is a separate canonical process from the property sale itself and must occur first. Continuing to celebrate Mass after the parish has made a formal decision to sell would contradict the canonical process and the intent of relegation.

Stewardship of Ongoing Operating Costs

Operating the Our Lady of Lourdes facility carries substantial annual costs even without staffing or ministry expenses. Continuing to operate the facility would require significant ongoing expenditures.

Clear and Healthy Transition

Maintaining worship at a facility that is known to be closing can prolong grief and create ongoing confusion within the community. Pastoral experience shows that clear transitions are healthier than prolonged ambiguity.

Critical Financial Impact of Early Sale

The timing of the Our Lady of Lourdes property sale has enormous financial implications due to how mortgage interest compounds over time. The sooner sale proceeds are applied to the mortgage principal, the greater the long-term savings.

Financial modeling shows that selling Our Lady of Lourdes and applying $2 million in proceeds to mortgage principal in 2027 results in:

- Approximately $4 million in interest savings over the life of the loan
- Reducing the mortgage payoff timeline by approximately 4 ½ years

Every year we delay the sale costs hundreds of thousands of dollars in accumulated interest that compounds over the remaining loan period. This is why the strategic plan sequences OLOL closure and sale as early as 2027. Not because we are rushed or insensitive to the emotional difficulty of closure, but because waiting costs millions in interest that could instead fund mission and ministry.

Delaying OLOL closure from 2027 to 2032 (just 5 years) would cost approximately $2 million in additional interest expense.This financial reality creates genuine urgency. These are not abstract numbers. This represents real money that could fund youth ministry, outreach programs, and pastoral care instead of going to the bank.

What Happens at Closure:

- Special closing liturgy honoring the history and spiritual significance of Our Lady of Lourdes
- Careful inventory and relocation of sacred objects, memorials, and artwork according to diocesan policy
- Documentation and archiving of parish history

Property Disposition:

Following closure, the Our Lady of Lourdes property (including both church and former school buildings) will be prepared for sale. The property is expected to be redeveloped, with existing buildings demolished as part of that redevelopment. The parish's financial modeling assumes sale of the property in its existing condition.

A professional demolition estimate for the Our Lady of Lourdes structures indicates costs ranging from $500,000 to $750,000, depending on scope and site preparation requirements. Because redevelopment is expected to occur through a private developer, the parish's financial modeling assumes sale of the property in its current condition and does not assume parish-funded demolition. However, this estimate provides important context for evaluating redevelopment scenarios and negotiating future sale terms.

Canonical Requirements:

Canon law requires careful considerations when closing a church building including:

- Consultation with Presbyteral Council on causes for closure
- Written decree from Bishop relegating church to profane but not sordid use
- Consent from those with legitimate rights in the edifice
- Verification that good of souls will not be harmed
- Removal of all sacred objects before property sale

Sacred Object Team:

- A committee should be formed to identify and save sacred items of use in the new worship space.
- This team would work to contact families of anyone with memorial items on the property.
- All assets, including natural assets such as the large oak “Giving Tree” outside the church should be considered for future value in the new church structure.

Pastoral Care During Transition

The closure of a worship site is not only an operational change. It is a spiritual, emotional, and communal loss. Parish leadership recognizes that many parishioners have deep personal, sacramental, and generational connections to Our Lady of Lourdes. These attachments are holy, understandable, and honored.

The closure of Our Lady of Lourdes as a worship site is not a judgment on its faithfulness, fruitfulness, or importance. Our Lady of Lourdes has been a sacred place where countless people were baptized, married, buried, formed, and accompanied in faith. Its legacy remains an enduring part of this parish’s spiritual foundation.

Prior to closure, the parish will provide intentional opportunities for prayer, remembrance, and farewell, including a final Mass of Thanksgiving at Our Lady of Lourdes. Additional gatherings for storytelling, memory-sharing, and communal prayer will be offered to allow parishioners to honor what this sacred space has meant in their lives.

The merged parish is not becoming “St. John Vianney with more people.” It is becoming a new parish formed from two histories, two communities, and two spiritual lineages. Traditions, devotions, prayer practices, and cultural expressions from both communities will be intentionally carried forward.

Sacred art, memorials, stained glass, statues, and significant furnishings from Our Lady of Lourdes will be inventoried and evaluated for incorporation into future parish facilities, or other appropriate sacred spaces. Items will not be discarded casually.

Parishioners who need time to grieve or who choose to worship at another nearby parish for a period of transition will be respected and supported.

Ongoing listening sessions, town halls, and pastoral accompaniment will continue throughout the transition. Even after decisions are made, parish leadership remains committed to listening, adjusting implementation details, and walking with parishioners through this process.

Ritual and Liturgical Transition

The closure of Our Lady of Lourdes will be accompanied by intentional liturgical moments, including a final Mass of Thanksgiving and other prayer services as appropriate.

Consolidated Worship Schedule (Spring 2027 - Approximately 2032)

Following the closure of Our Lady of Lourdes, the parish will operate with worship sites at St. John Vianney church and St. Joan of Arc School.

Weekend Mass Schedule:

A consolidated six-Mass weekend schedule would be designed to balance pastoral considerations with practical capacity. Example schedule (times subject to final determination):

- Saturday evening (St. John Vianney)
- Sunday daybreak (St. John Vianney - No Music)
- Sunday: early morning (St. John Vianney)
- Sunday mid-morning (St. Joan of Arc School)
- Sunday late morning (St. John Vianney)
- Sunday evening (St. John Vianney)

Pastoral Rationale for Six Masses:

- **Avoids priest overload:** Six weekend Masses is sustainable for pastoral team with deacon support; fewer Masses would create larger, less personal gatherings. The schedule is spaced so that in an emergency, while not ideal, one priest could cover the mass schedule.
- **Preserves choice:** Multiple Mass times accommodate diverse parishioner schedules, worship style preferences, and family situations
- **Prevents 'mega-Mass' atmosphere:** Distributing attendance across six Masses maintains a community feel rather than creating an overwhelming crowd experience
- **Allows liturgical diversity:** Different Masses can feature different musical styles and congregational atmospheres while remaining fully Catholic
- **Provides flexibility:** Schedule can be adjusted for high holy days, special occasions, or seasonal needs

Capacity of Worship Sites:

Current combined attendance data for 2024-25:

- Saturday evening: 659 average (908 high on First Communion Sunday)
- Early Sunday: 685 average (744 high)
- Late morning Sunday: 763 average (812 high)
- Sunday evening: 242 average (310 high)
- Easter attendance reached 1,524 and 1,589 at the two morning Masses

Available Seating Capacity:

- St. John Vianney Church: 1,000 seats
- Our Lady of Lourdes Church: 550 seats
- St. Joan of Arc gym (practical capacity): 815 seats
- St. Joan of Arc gym (maximum capacity): 1,100 seats

St. John Vianney's 1,000-seat capacity is adequate to serve the combined community for most Masses. The school gym provides additional flexibility for high-attendance occasions and allows for growth. Our Lady of Lourdes' 550-seat capacity is insufficient to accommodate the combined parish average attendance for any masses, particularly on high-attendance occasions when single Masses regularly exceed this capacity.

Available Parking Capacity:

- St. John Vianney: 323 parking spaces
- St. Joan of Arc School: 194 parking spaces
- Our Lady of Lourdes: 169 parking spaces

Parking Adequacy Analysis:

Church parking planning typically uses a standard of one parking space for every 2.5 seats in the sanctuary. Applying this standard to our worship sites:

St. John Vianney (1,000 seats):

- Required parking: 400 spaces (1,000 ÷ 2.5)
- Available parking: 323 spaces
- **Result: Deficit of 77 spaces**

Our Lady of Lourdes (550 seats):

- Required parking: 220 spaces (550 ÷ 2.5)
- Available parking: 169 spaces
- **Result: Deficit of 51 spaces**

St. Joan of Arc (815 practical capacity):

- Required parking: 326 spaces (815 ÷ 2.5)
- Available parking: 194 spaces
- **Result: Deficit of 132 space***s*
-

All three worship sites show parking deficits by standard planning ratios for full capacity attendance. However, on typical weekends with attendance distributed across six Masses, parking at both St. John Vianney and the school is tight but adequate. Even on high-attendance occasions like Easter, the Mass schedule distributes attendance sufficiently that parking accommodates actual demand. Current experience at both locations shows that parking, while not ideal, functions adequately for real-world worship patterns.

School as Worship Space:

The school gymnasium area is already equipped and tested as a worship space:

- Crucifix, portable altar, and sacristy present
- New sound system installed
- Currently used for daily school Mass
- Setup and takedown will occur weekly for Sunday parish Mass
- Direct access to school parking lot for those attending Mass at the school

While acknowledging this is a gymnasium rather than traditional church setting, it represents a practical, proven solution during the transition period and keeps worship connected to the school campus where the eventual permanent church will be built. Parishes should plan extra expenses to be incurred for setup/tear down, purchasing additional seating and other costs of regularly using the space to worship.

Liturgical Diversity:

The consolidated Mass schedule will intentionally incorporate different worship styles across different Mass times rather than forcing uniformity. This honors both communities' traditions and recognizes that diverse expressions within Catholic liturgy serve our community well. Different Masses may feature different musical styles, varying levels of formality, and distinct congregational atmospheres while all remaining fully faithful to Catholic liturgical norms.

Pastoral Coverage:

- One pastor
- Senior priest assisting with Mass and pastoral care
- Continued support from two current deacons
- Additional deacon after anticipated ordination in 2027
- Hope for eventual assignment of a parochial vicar by the diocese

Phase 3: Aggressive Mortgage Reduction (2026-2030)

A cornerstone of this strategic plan is aggressively paying down the $22.5 million St. Joan of Arc school mortgage in order to eliminate long-term interest expense and free future resources for mission and ministry.

Current Situation

- Initial balance: $22.5 million
- Monthly payment: $150,000
- Annual debt service: $1.8 million

Accelerated Payoff Strategy

Financial modeling indicates that by making regular monthly payments plus approximately $1 million per quarter for 17 quarters, the mortgage can be eliminated by August 2030.

This requires:

- Regular debt service: $1.8 million annually
- Accelerated principal payments: $4.0 million annually
- Total annual commitment: $5.8 million for approximately four years

Funding Sources

The accelerated mortgage reduction will be supported through a combination of:

New parish fundraising campaign: $17 million (phased, concluding end of 2026, with pledges paid through 2029)
Required school family contribution program: $3 million over 5 years
Sale of Our Lady of Lourdes property: $2 million (based on professional appraisal)
Parish resources: $3 million

Total targeted accelerated funding: approximately $22.5 million plus interest

In addition, the parish retains undeveloped land at the St. Joan of Arc campus that represents a long-term strategic resource. While no decisions have been made regarding its future use, it may provide opportunities to support parish sustainability in the years ahead.

Current Fundraising Status

The parish campaign is structured as a phased effort. Initial silent-phase major donor solicitations are targeted to secure in excess of $5 million in commitments. In addition, leadership anticipates $5–$8 million through extended and increased commitments from households that have historically supported parish and school initiatives. A subsequent

public phase in the fall will focus on inviting new donors and broader parish participation to help complete the fundraising effort.

Over a five-year period, the St. Joan of Arc school community is expected to contribute approximately $3 million toward debt reduction. Proceeds from the sale of the Our Lady of Lourdes property are estimated near $2 million. When combined with selective supplementation from parish investment reserves, this comprehensive strategy positions the parish to retire the school debt in full.

School Family Contributions as Shared Stewardship

With the introduction of Iowa's Education Savings Account (ESA) program, tuition for students enrolled at St. Joan of Arc School is now covered by the state. Families are no longer paying traditional tuition for Catholic education.

Instead, school families are asked to make an annual family contribution of $2,000 for families with one student and $4,000 for families with multiple students. This contribution is not tuition. It is a stewardship commitment created specifically to support the aggressive reduction of the school mortgage and the long-term sustainability of Catholic education and parish life in Bettendorf.

Over a five-year period, these family contributions are projected to generate approximately $3 million, which will be applied directly to reducing the principal on the school mortgage. This represents roughly 13 percent of the mortgage principal.

It is important to emphasize that school families are not carrying this responsibility alone. Hundreds of parishioners without children in the school have already contributed generously through the capital campaign and ongoing parish support because they believe deeply in the mission of Catholic education and the future of the Church in Bettendorf.

This model reflects shared stewardship. Different members of the parish contribute in different ways, but all contribute toward the same mission. Families support the school through their participation and annual contribution. Parishioners support the mission through sacrificial giving. Together, these commitments make it possible to reduce debt quickly and redirect future resources away from interest payments and toward ministry.

The school family contribution was introduced for a specific and limited purpose. It exists to accelerate the payoff of the school mortgage and is not intended to be permanent. As the mortgage balance is eliminated, the need for this contribution goes away. In this way, aggressive early mortgage reduction benefits everyone by shortening the debt timeline, reducing millions of dollars in interest expense, and freeing parish resources for ministry rather than long-term debt service.

For families for whom this contribution would create financial hardship, assistance is available through the Melissa Steinke Scholarship administered by the parishes. No family should feel excluded from Catholic education due to financial circumstances, and confidential support is available to help defer this expense when needed.

Diocesan *Upon This Rock* Campaign Coordination

During this same period, the Diocese of Davenport has conducted the *Upon This Rock* (UTR) capital campaign, creating overlapping financial obligations for both St. John Vianney and Our Lady of Lourdes. The combined UTR goal established by the Diocese for the two parishes is approximately $3.2 million ($1.65M St. John Vianney; $1.55M Our Lady of Lourdes).

As of December 15, 2025, approximately 40% of each parish's UTR goal has been paid. Through direct negotiations with the Diocese, a payment schedule has been established requiring St. John Vianney to contribute approximately $30,000 per month and Our Lady of Lourdes to contribute approximately $28,200 per month, with full UTR commitment satisfied by January 2029.

Because designated UTR donations alone are insufficient to meet these obligations, portions of parish capital campaign proceeds and other designated contributions are being used to satisfy UTR payments. Parish communications have consistently clarified the distinction between diocesan UTR obligations and parish fundraising for local needs, and parishioners have been encouraged to participate according to their individual capacity rather than feeling compelled to meet multiple targets.

From a cash-flow perspective, the combined UTR payments, when layered on top of the $150,000 monthly school mortgage, result in a total required outflow of $58,200 per month through August 2028. This equates to approximately $2.5 million annually in 2026 and 2027, and approximately $2.3 million in 2028, to service both school debt and UTR obligations.

The conclusion of the diocesan *Upon This Rock* campaign by 2029 is a critical milestone. Once UTR payments end, required annual debt service drops back to the school mortgage level alone, significantly improving cash flow and enabling the parish's aggressive mortgage reduction strategy to accelerate. This sequencing is intentional and directly informs the timing of future parish fundraising initiatives and long-range facility planning.

Risk Management and Contingency Planning

While the parish is confident in the feasibility of this strategy, leadership recognizes that large-scale fundraising and property transactions carry inherent uncertainty. Accordingly, the accelerated mortgage reduction plan will be implemented with active monitoring and defined adjustment points.

If fundraising progress lags projected benchmarks, accelerated principal payments can be temporarily paused while maintaining regular monthly debt service. If the sale of the Our Lady of Lourdes property is delayed, short-term bridge strategies utilizing parish reserves or investment income may be employed without compromising operating stability.

Campaign progress, pledge collections, and cash-flow performance will be reviewed regularly by parish finance council, trustees, and leadership. Major capital decisions beyond the mortgage reduction effort will be deferred until the mortgage trajectory is firmly established.

These safeguards ensure that the parish remains financially stable while pursuing aggressive debt elimination and prevent the plan from placing undue strain on parish operations.

Benchmark-Driven Timeline:

It is critical to understand that this timeline is driven by financial benchmarks rather than fixed calendar dates. The plan assumes success in meeting fundraising goals and property sale values. If financial benchmarks are not met on schedule, the timeline will extend proportionally.

Mortgage Payoff Timeline Extensions:

The plan assumes mortgage elimination by August 2030 through aggressive quarterly payments of $1 million on top of regular debt service ($17 M total). This equates to $3.3 M in interest payments on top of repaying the original loan principal of $22.5 M ($25.8 M total). If financial benchmarks are not met on schedule, the key question is what happens to later phases.

If mortgage payoff extends to 2031 (6 years instead of 5):

- Church design and planning work continues and does not pause
- New church fundraising campaign launch delays by approximately one year (from 2030 to 2031)
- Worship in St. John Vianney and St. Joan of Arc extends by approximately one year
- New church construction completion shifts from approximately 2032 to 2033
- All phases shift proportionally but strategy remains intact

If mortgage payoff extends to January 2034 (8 ¼ years instead of 5) due to only $12 M available for accelerated principal payments

- Increases loan interest payments by $1.2 M ($4.5 M versus $3.3 M in original plan) for total expense of $27 M.
- Church design and planning work pauses for two years
- New church fundraising campaign launch delays by approximately three years (from 2030 to 2033)
- Worship in St. John Vianney and St. Joan of Arc extends by approximately three years
- New church construction completion shifts from approximately 2032 to 2035
- All phases shift proportionally but strategy remains intact

Other scenarios are listed in the appendix showing the impacts (i.e. increased loan repayment costs and delayed retirement of school loan) from having less funds available for accelerated principal payments.

Critical principle:

The plan is benchmark-driven, not date-driven. Financial milestones must be achieved before proceeding to the next phase.

Emergency Contingencies: Infrastructure Failure at Our Lady of Lourdes

The plan assumes Our Lady of Lourdes remains operational until at least spring of 2027. However, the facility has significant infrastructure risks, particularly the boiler and other mechanical systems that are at or near end of useful life. Emergency closure could be forced at any time.

If major infrastructure failure occurs before planned closure:

The pastor, in consultation with facility managers and the parish finance council, will assess whether emergency repairs are warranted or whether immediate closure is necessary. If closure is required, the pastor will immediately inform the Bishop.

This scenario is possible but not certain. The critical point is that parish leadership has a clear protocol to manage emergency closure professionally and pastorally if it becomes necessary.

Phase 4: Planning and Design for New Church (2027-2030)

With the mortgage elimination strategy underway and the parish operating successfully from St. John Vianney and the school, planning and design work for a new permanent church can begin.

Vision:

- New church will be located on the southeast corner of the St. Joan of Arc School campus
- Design will serve the unified parish and position for potential future growth
- Church will incorporate elements and memories from both Our Lady of Lourdes and St. John Vianney
- Professional estimates place construction cost at $20-25 million (subject to change over planning timeframe)

Diocesan Expectations and Capital Project Requirements

Parish leadership has been clear throughout this planning process that major capital decisions must align with diocesan expectations and policies. Bishop Walsh has communicated directly to parish leadership that it is the expectation that no movement toward construction of a new church occur until the St. Joan of Arc school mortgage is fully paid.

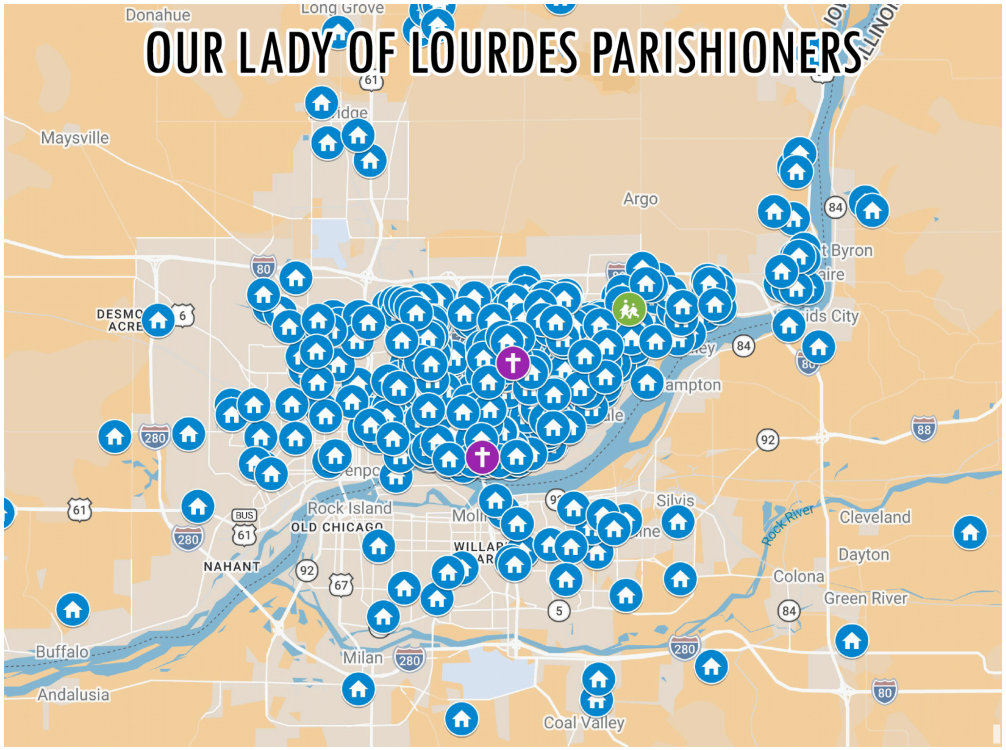
In addition, any future church construction project must follow established diocesan fundraising policies. These policies require that 100 percent of the projected project cost be pledged and at least 60 percent of those funds be in hand before construction may begin.

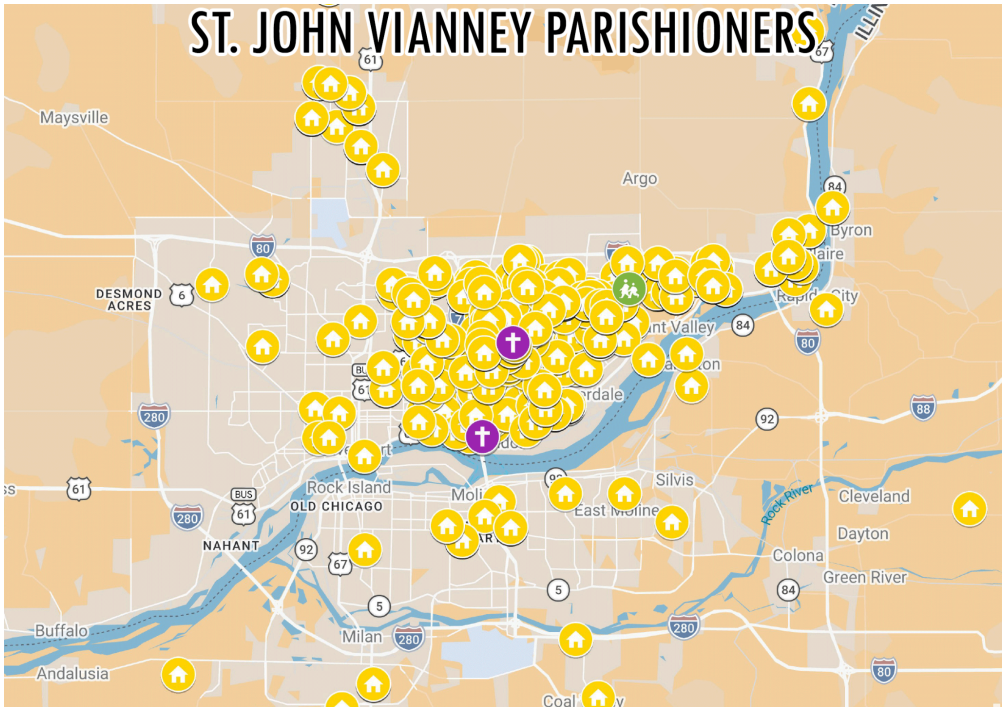
These expectations directly inform the sequencing outlined in this strategic plan. Planning and design work for a future church may continue while the mortgage is being eliminated, but any construction activity will not begin until the school debt has been retired and diocesan financial requirements are met.

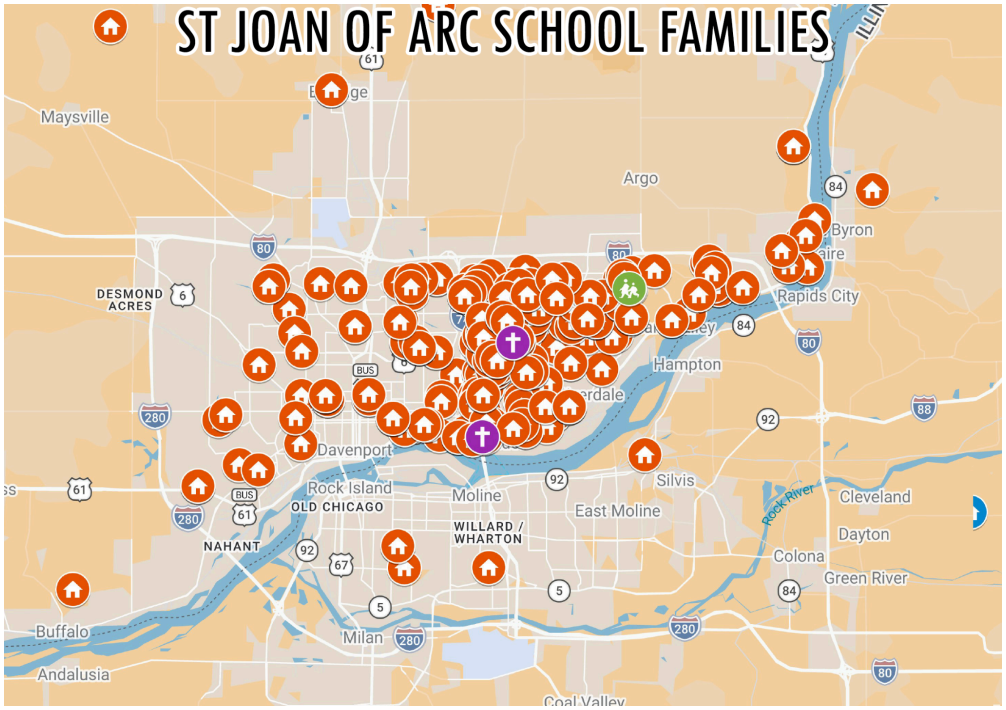
This approach reflects both responsible stewardship and adherence to diocesan governance. It ensures that the parish does not take on overlapping capital obligations and that any future church is built on a financially secure foundation.

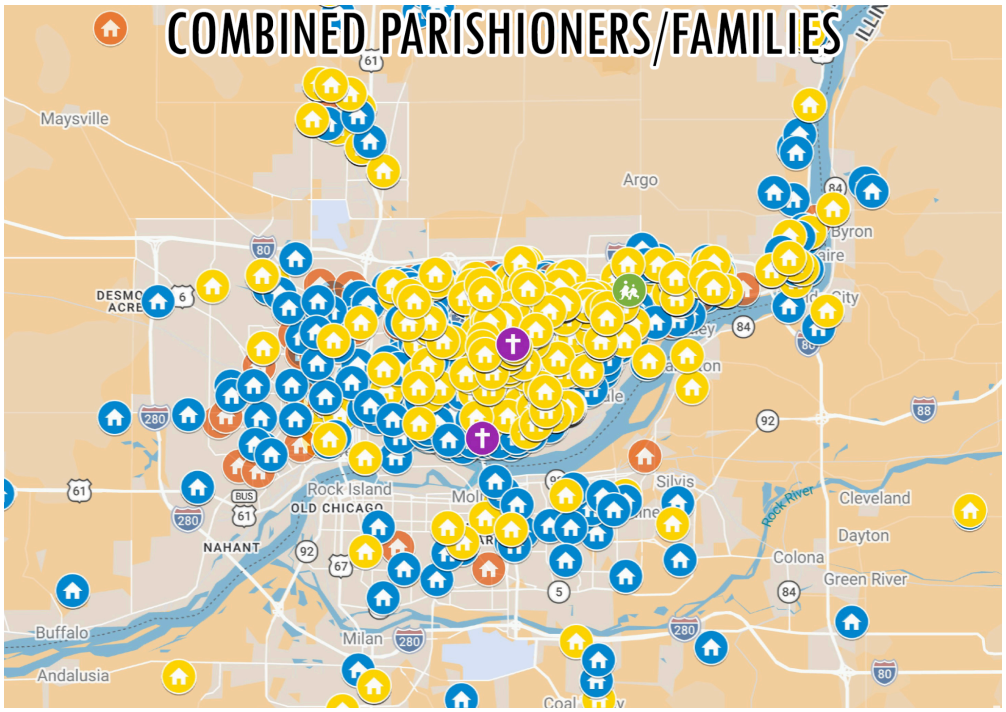
We Are a Regional Parish

St. John Vianney and Our Lady of Lourdes together serve families from across a wide geographic area. Maps of registered households show parishioners distributed throughout the Quad Cities region:






ST JOAN OF ARC SCHOOL FAMILIES
Maysville
Argo
Byron
Rapids City
DESMOND ACRES
Hampton
Davenport
Rock Island
OLD CHICAGO
Moline
Silvis
East Moline
Cleveland
Dayton
Colona
Green River
NAHANT
WILLARD / WHARTON
Buffalo
Milan
Andalusia


COMBINED PARISHIONERS/FAMILIES
Maysville
Argo
Byron
Rock Island
OLD CHICAGO
Silvis
Cleveland
Dayton
Colona
Green River
NAHANT
Buffalo
Milan
Andalusia

The distribution patterns show significant overlap between the two parishes, with concentrations in central Bettendorf and the Quad Cities metro area, but with parishioners spread across the entire region. Neither parish serves a concentrated neighborhood or geographic area.

This wide geographic distribution means that parishioners are already driving to worship from diverse locations across the region. The question is not whether people will drive, but whether we position the church where the community is growing and where accessibility will improve over time.

City Planning Confirms Northern Growth

This northern growth trajectory is documented in the City of Bettendorf's official planning. The Comprehensive Plan Update for 2045, adopted in 2024, explicitly states that "over 60% of land within Bettendorf's city limits is developed" and "the potential areas for development are concentrated on the northern areas of the city."

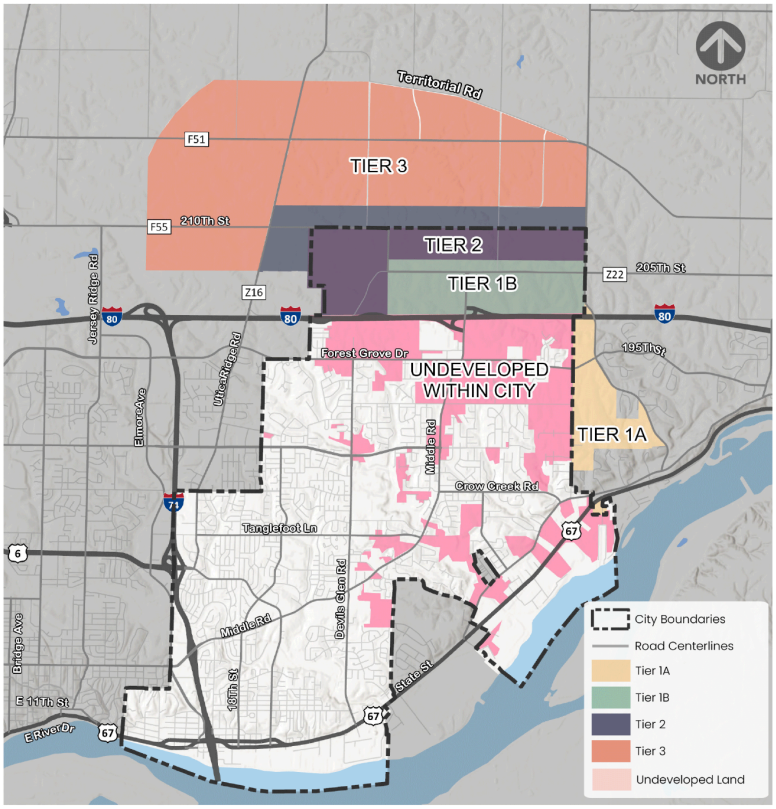
DEVELOPMENT AREAS

Map 1.5 shows the potential areas for future development, including the areas for annexations and the urban fringe. These potential development areas contain a total of approximately 10,618 acres. These areas were split into the following development categories:

DEVELOPMENT AREAS	
Undeveloped Areas within City	2,482 Acres Short-Term Development
TIER 1A	890 Acres Short-Term Development
TIER 1B	890 Acres Short-Term Development
TIER 2	1,807 Acres Long-Term Development
TIER 3	4,549 acres Long-Term: Urban Fringe, currently outside of 2045 planning horizon.

Source: RDG Planning& Design

MAP 1.5 - BETTENDORF FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AREAS



Source: RDG Planning & Design

The area surrounding St. Joan of Arc School is designated as Tier 1A in the city's growth planning which is the highest priority area for short-term development. The city is actively planning major infrastructure investments in this area, including sewer system extensions and road improvements. Additionally, the Middle Road corridor near the school has been identified as a priority focus area requiring a corridor study and potential economic incentives to achieve development goals.

The city projects substantial population growth through 2045, with the most likely scenario adding approximately 18,000 new residents (a 47% increase from 2020 levels). This growth will occur primarily in northern development areas where undeveloped land is available. The school campus is positioned exactly where the city's comprehensive plan directs future residential and community development.

We are building for 2050and beyond, not 2026. The school campus positions the Catholic community where Bettendorf will be, not where it has been.

Rationale for School Campus Location:

Central Geographic Logic:

The school campus is positioned at what will be the center of Bettendorf's future development. Current city planning and development patterns show growth moving toward this area rather than toward the locations of the existing churches. Building where the community is growing rather than where it has been positions the parish for long-term relevance.

Infrastructure Already Present:

The school campus already has utilities, parking, access roads, and site development completed. Building on this site avoids significant infrastructure costs that would be required on a raw land site. Shared parking between church and school provides flexibility with the church using parking on weekends when school is closed; school using parking on weekdays when church needs are minimal. This efficiency reduces total development costs.

Land Already Owned:

The parish already owns the school property. Building here eliminates land acquisition costs and avoids complicated real estate transactions. This is straightforward stewardship of existing assets.

Long-Term Campus Concept:

A unified church-school campus creates a Catholic center for the community. It will be a place where formation happens throughout life from childhood through adulthood. Families can drop children at school, attend daily Mass, participate in adult formation, and gather for community events all at one location. This integrated campus model addresses the concern raised in focus groups that 'the school and church must remain connected.'

Community Engagement:

The design process will include extensive community consultation to ensure the new church reflects the spiritual needs, liturgical preferences, and aesthetic values of the entire parish. This is an opportunity to build something that unites rather than divides, incorporating the best of both former parishes' traditions.

Phase 5: New Church Fundraising Campaign (Approx. 2030)

Once the school mortgage is eliminated or substantially reduced, a major fundraising campaign for new church construction can be launched.

Regional Approach:

By this point, Our Lady of the River parish in LeClaire should be fully integrated into planning. The new church will be designed and funded as a regional facility serving the broader Bettendorf/LeClaire Catholic community, recognizing the diocesan priest shortage requires this level of regional thinking.

Rationale for Integrating Our Lady of the River Now:

Diocese Expectation and Planning:

With 11 of 34 diocesan pastors reaching retirement age in the next three years, diocesan leadership is actively planning for regional parish configurations throughout the diocese. LeClaire's proximity to Bettendorf makes regional collaboration logical. Beginning conversations now aligns with diocesan strategic planning rather than waiting for crisis to force reactive decisions.

Prevents Designing Too Small:

If we design and build a new church sized only for current St. John Vianney and Our Lady of Lourdes communities, we may be forced to expand or build additional facilities when additional communities combine. Better to have a clear vision of our future when designing a potential shared home.

Builds Wide Community Participation:

Potentially asking Our Lady of the River parishioners to in a church they had no voice in designing could create resentment and financial inefficiency. Including them from the beginning makes them co-creators of a shared future rather than late additions to someone else's building.

The campaign will need to raise funds for construction beyond what the St. John Vianney property sale will provide. Future fundraising capacity is expected to be strong given that the parish will no longer be servicing school debt.

Regional thinking is a good realistic response to diocesan realities and good stewardship of resources across parish boundaries.

Phase 6: Construction and Opening of New Church (Approx. 2032)

Construction of the new church is targeted for completion by approximately 2032, though this timeline depends entirely on successful completion of earlier phases.

What This Achieves:

- Modern, ADA-compliant worship space designed for Catholic liturgy
- Physical connection between church and school reinforcing their unity
- Location on school campus positions church at what will be the center of Bettendorf development
- Eliminates ongoing facility maintenance concerns that plagued older buildings
- Creates sense of shared ownership in something new built together
- Positions Catholic community for sustainable future service to the region

Phase 7: Sale of St. John Vianney Property (2032)

Following the opening of the new church, worship will cease at St. John Vianney and the property will be prepared for sale. Professional estimates value the property today at approximately $5 million.

Proceeds from this sale will contribute to new church construction costs. There may be a brief operational overlap between the new church opening and St. John Vianney sale for practical transition purposes.

As with Our Lady of Lourdes, sacred objects, memorials, and artwork from St. John Vianney will be carefully inventoried and either relocated to the new church or respectfully cared for according to diocesan policy.

Tentative Summary Timeline

While specific dates depend on meeting financial benchmarks, the general sequence is:

- 2026: Canonical combination; continued fundraising campaign
- 2027: Close Our Lady of Lourdes; consolidate to SJV and school; sell OLOL property
- 2026-2030: Aggressive mortgage paydown using campaign funds, property sale, and other sources
- 2028-2030: Planning and design for new church;
- 2030: School mortgage is eliminated. Launch fundraising campaign for new church construction
- 2032: Complete and open new church; sell St. John Vianney property

This timeline represents approximately six years of planned transition, with the understanding that financial realities will determine actual pacing.

Ongoing Strategic Oversight and Long-Range Planning

The phases outlined above provide a clear strategic roadmap for the coming years. With this plan in place, implementation begins immediately. Many actions start now, while others will unfold as financial benchmarks are met and pastoral readiness is ensured.

At the same time, parish leadership recognizes that strategic planning itself does not end with the adoption of this document. While implementation is underway, someone must continue to hold the long view. The parish must remain attentive to changing conditions, emerging opportunities, diocesan realities, and the needs of future generations.

For this reason, parish leadership will maintain an ongoing strategic oversight function responsible for monitoring progress, reviewing assumptions, and periodically reassessing long-range direction. This includes regular review of financial performance, enrollment trends, demographic shifts, clergy availability, facility conditions, and regional planning considerations.

This strategic oversight role does not replace existing councils or decision-making structures. Rather, it ensures that the parish continues to act proactively rather than reactively, pairing disciplined implementation with thoughtful long-term discernment. In this way, the parish remains faithful to the mission entrusted to it today while preparing responsibly for what lies ahead.

V. ALTERNATE SCENARIOS CONSIDERED

The Joint Strategic Planning Committee engaged in thorough analysis of multiple possible approaches to addressing our pastoral and financial challenges. The recommended path emerged only after careful evaluation of alternatives and consideration of their respective strengths and weaknesses. This section documents the major alternatives considered and explains why they were ultimately not recommended.

1. TAKE NO ACTION / CONTINUE CURRENT APPROACH

One option considered was to make no major structural changes and continue operating both worship sites while addressing facility issues as they arise.

This approach would focus primarily on short-term repairs, emergency fixes, and limited preventive maintenance. It would not address underlying system aging, space inefficiencies, or long-term sustainability challenges.

Over time, this approach would result in increasing emergency repairs, rising operating costs, growing safety and reliability risks, and continued deferral of major capital needs. It would also leave the parish carrying the full financial burden of maintaining two worship campuses while simultaneously servicing the $22.5 million school mortgage.

Because this approach does not resolve the parish's structural or financial challenges and increases long-term risk, it was not recommended.

2. RENOVATE OUR LADY OF LOURDES INSTEAD OF CLOSING

Renovating Our Lady of Lourdes rather than closing it was carefully examined. The facility condition assessment indicates that the campus is functional but significantly aging with numerous major building systems approaching or at the end of their useful life.

Renovation therefore is not a single-project decision, but a choice among different levels of reinvestment.

The following planning-level cost comparison summarizes the major facility-related options evaluated. All figures are order-of-magnitude estimates intended for strategic comparison, not project budgeting.

Planning-Level Facility Cost Comparison – Our Lady of Lourdes Options

Scenario	Description	Cost Range
Targeted Modernization (Keep OLOL)	Selective HVAC replacement, some electrical and lighting upgrades, partial interior improvements, limited ADA.	$4M – $7M
Comprehensive Modernization (Keep OLOL)	Campus-wide HVAC, electrical, lighting, interiors, fire protection, ADA, abatement.	$8M – $12M+
Demolish Vacant School + Replace Gym/PAC HVAC	Demolish vacant school (~$500k) and provide new HVAC for gym & PAC ($1.0M–$2.0M).	Add $1.5M – $2.5M upfront
Targeted Modernization (Without School)	Reduced footprint targeted modernization.	$3.3M – $5.8M
Comprehensive Modernization (Without School)	Reduced footprint full modernization.	$5.5M – $8.5M

This analysis demonstrates that any option which retains Our Lady of Lourdes as an operating worship site requires multi-million-dollar reinvestment. Even footprint-reduction approaches continue to require substantial capital while the parish remains responsible for a $22.5 million school mortgage.

Renovation therefore does not resolve the underlying sustainability challenge and diverts resources away from aggressive mortgage elimination and future unified church construction. For these reasons, renovation of Our Lady of Lourdes as an alternative to closure was not recommended.

3. CLOSE ST. JOHN VIANNEY INSTEAD OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES

The option of closing St. John Vianney instead of Our Lady of Lourdes was evaluated.

This option was examined primarily through the lenses of worship capacity, site capacity, facility condition, and the parish's need for a reliable interim worship location prior to construction of a new unified church.

St. John Vianney has a seating capacity of approximately 1,000, compared to approximately 550 at Our Lady of Lourdes. If one worship site is to serve the combined parish during an interim period, sufficient seating capacity is essential. Our Lady of Lourdes cannot reasonably accommodate combined parish attendance without adding numerous additional Masses, creating crowding, and limiting flexibility for funerals, weddings, holy days, and major parish celebrations.

Parking capacity is also a significant factor. St. John Vianney provides approximately 323 parking spaces, compared to approximately 169 at Our Lady of Lourdes. Although parking remains a challenge, the St. John Vianney site offers better traffic flow, better accommodation of large gatherings, and greater overall flexibility for parish activity.

While both campuses contain aging systems, St. John Vianney currently has no significant deferred maintenance. It is generally more suitable for this specific continued use and adaptation. It offers a larger, more flexible worship space and a site configuration more conducive to functioning as the parish's primary worship location during a transition period. Our Lady of Lourdes contains a higher concentration of older construction, vertical circulation challenges, and accessibility limitations that make it less suitable as the sole interim worship site.

Some have asked whether St. John Vianney should be closed instead because its property may have higher market value. Property value alone, however, is not the primary driver of this decision. Closing the parish's most functional and highest-capacity worship site in order to pursue higher sale proceeds would shift significant operational and capital burden onto the remaining site and increase long-term facility risk.

For these reasons, closing St. John Vianney instead of Our Lady of Lourdes was examined and rejected. St. John Vianney is better positioned to serve as the interim worship site, and closure of Our Lady of Lourdes remains the more responsible and sustainable option.

4. CONSOLIDATE INTO ONE EXISTING BUILDING PERMANENTLY

The option of permanently consolidating parish life into one of the two existing church buildings, rather than constructing a new unified church in the future, was evaluated.

Neither St. John Vianney nor Our Lady of Lourdes is well-suited to function as a permanent, long-term sole parish church for the larger combined community. While St. John Vianney is better positioned as an interim worship site, it was not designed to support the full range of regional parish life, growth, and integration envisioned for the future. Our Lady of Lourdes, as documented in the facility condition assessment, would require multi-million-dollar reinvestment simply to remain viable.

From a capacity standpoint, permanently selecting either existing church would lock the parish into a building designed for a different era and a different parish structure. Space limitations, site constraints, and circulation patterns at both locations restrict the ability to create a truly integrated campus that physically connects church and school and supports modern ministry needs.

It is also important that the parish school not remain geographically separated from the primary life of the parish. When the school stands apart from the community's central place of worship and gathering, the natural connection between faith, learning, and parish life is diminished. A healthy parish seeks to keep worship, formation, and community life closely united.

Finally, permanently choosing one existing building does not support the goal of creating a unified parish identity. Any permanent consolidation into one of the current churches would inevitably be perceived as choosing one parish's "home" over the other's, rather than building something new together.

For these reasons, permanent consolidation into either existing building was examined and rejected. Construction of a new, purpose-built unified church following mortgage elimination remains the more sustainable and unifying long-term solution.

VI. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This section addresses common questions and concerns raised during focus groups, listening sessions, and informal conversations. It will be regularly updated as new questions emerge.

FINANCIAL QUESTIONS

How much do we owe on the school mortgage?

The opening mortgage balance was $22.5 million. We pay $150,000 per month ($1.8 million annually) in debt service. If the mortgage is paid through its end date of 2054, we would pay roughly $21 million in interest on top of the $22.5 million principal. At the time of this publication, $2 million in supplemental principal payments have been made to begin the aggressive mortgage reduction plan.

Why do we need to pay down the mortgage so aggressively?

Paying only the minimum monthly payment means we would pay $21 million in interest by 2054, nearly doubling the total cost of the school. Every dollar we pay down early saves all the future interest on that dollar.

What happens if school mortgage payoff takes 6 years instead of 4?

If financial benchmarks are not met as projected and mortgage payoff extends to 2031 instead of 2030:

- Church design and planning work continues and does NOT pause
- New church fundraising campaign launch delays by approximately one year (2031 vs 2030)
- Worship in St. John Vianney and school gym extends by approximately one year
- New church construction completion shifts from 2032 to 2033

All phases shift proportionally but the strategy remains intact. The plan is benchmark-driven, not date-driven so extended timelines are acceptable.

How much will we save by closing Our Lady of Lourdes?

Closing the Our Lady of Lourdes facility will result in meaningful and immediate operating cost savings for the parish. Based on current financial reporting, maintaining the Lourdes building costs the parish approximately $200,000 per year, even when staffing, ministry programming, diocesan obligations, and debt service are excluded. This is a conservative estimate as we expect additional savings from ministry combination efficiencies.

These ongoing expenses include utilities, insurance, routine maintenance and repairs, custodial and cleaning services, and the administrative overhead required to operate and manage a standalone parish facility. While individual line items vary from year to year, these costs represent the baseline expense of keeping the building open and functional, regardless of how frequently it is used.

Once the facility is closed, these operating costs can be largely eliminated. On a monthly basis, this equates to approximately $16,700 per month in avoided expenses. Over a five-year period, the cumulative savings total approximately $1 million.

These savings are significant not because they solve the parish's financial challenges on their own, but because they directly increase the parish's capacity to reduce debt. Redirecting approximately $200,000 per year toward mortgage principal reduction shortens the life of the loan and reduces the total interest paid, allowing parish resources to be directed toward ministry, staffing, formation, and long-term sustainability rather than ongoing facility maintenance. If that $1 million in savings is applied to the mortgage, it could save at least an additional $1 million in interest payments depending on when those funds are applied.

What will the new church cost?

Professional estimates place construction cost at $20-25 million based on current market conditions. This estimate will be refined during the design phase and may change based on inflation, material costs, and final design decisions over the planning period.

How will we pay for the new church?

A major fundraising campaign will be launched beginning approximately 2030, after the school mortgage is eliminated or substantially reduced. The St. John Vianney property sale (appraised at $5 million) will contribute to construction costs. By the time we build the new church, we will have eliminated school debt and demonstrated our capacity for a successful capital campaign.

What about the diocesan Upon This Rock campaign?

The Diocese of Davenport conducted the *Upon This Rock* (UTR) capital campaign at the same time the parish launched the initial school fundraising campaign. This has understandably created concern about overlapping financial requests.

The UTR campaign is a diocesan-wide initiative supporting diocesan ministries and priorities. It is separate from parish fundraising, which is dedicated entirely to local needs such as the St. Joan of Arc school mortgage and future parish facilities.

Both St. John Vianney and Our Lady of Lourdes have established payment schedules with the Diocese to satisfy their combined UTR commitment by January 2029. Approximately 40% of each parish's UTR goal has already been paid.

Parish leadership has intentionally coordinated messaging so that parishioners understand the difference between diocesan obligations and parish fundraising and are encouraged to participate according to their individual capacity.

Importantly, the conclusion of the diocesan *Upon This Rock* campaign by 2029 aligns with the parish's aggressive mortgage reduction timeline. Once UTR payments end, parish cash flow improves significantly, creating greater flexibility for future parish initiatives.

FACILITY AND WORSHIP QUESTIONS

What if the boiler at Our Lady of Lourdes fails tomorrow?

If major infrastructure failure occurs before the planned closure, the pastor, in consultation with facility managers and finance council, will assess whether immediate closure is necessary. If so, all OLOL Masses will immediately shift to St. John Vianney church and the school gym. The Mass schedule could expand temporarily to accommodate everyone. Pastoral care teams would be activated to assist parishioners. This is possible but not certain. The key is that we have a decision protocol ready.

Why can't we just fix up Our Lady of Lourdes instead of closing it?

The facility condition assessment shows that Our Lady of Lourdes is functional but significantly aging, with numerous major building systems approaching or at the end of their useful life. The challenge is not a single repair, but the cumulative impact of deferred maintenance, aging infrastructure, and modern code requirements.

Primary capital cost drivers include:

- Heating and cooling system replacement: $1.5M–$3.5M
- Electrical distribution, panels, and lighting: $1.0M–$1.5M
- Interior finishes (floors, ceilings, doors, casework): $2.0M–$3.0M
- Fire sprinklers and fire separation upgrades if triggered: $350k–$450k
- Accessibility (ADA) improvements: $300k–$450k
- Hazardous material abatement associated with renovation: $300k–$400k

Depending on the level of reinvestment, remaining at Lourdes long-term would require approximately $4M–$7M for selective modernization or $8M–$12M+ for comprehensive modernization. Incremental repairs alone do not resolve underlying system aging and would result in continued decline.

Given the parish's $22.5M school mortgage and aggressive debt-reduction strategy, this level of additional multi-million-dollar facility debt would place an unsustainable burden on parish families.

Will we have enough room at St. John Vianney for everyone?

Yes. St. John Vianney has 1,000-seat capacity, and the school gym provides an additional 815 seats (practical capacity) or up to 1,100 maximum capacity. Current combined average attendance is 659 at Saturday evening Mass, 685 at early Sunday, and 763 at late morning. Even our highest attendance occasions (Easter Sunday at 1,524 and 1,589) can be accommodated by using both St. John Vianney and the gym. A six Mass weekend schedule provides flexibility and choice.

Will we have to attend Mass in a gym for five years?

The school gym will host one of the six weekend Masses, not all Masses. Five Masses will be in St. John Vianney church. The gym is already equipped as a worship space and is currently used for daily school Mass. While we acknowledge this differs from a traditional church setting, it keeps worship connected to the school campus where the

permanent church will be built, and it has proven to be a functional worship space. Parishioners can choose from multiple Mass times based on their preferences.

Why do we have to sell Our Lady of Lourdes? Why can't we keep it?

Our Lady of Lourdes faces multi-million-dollar capital needs driven by aging mechanical systems, electrical infrastructure, interior finishes, accessibility limitations, life-safety code requirements, and hazardous materials.

Even if we invested millions to bring the building into compliance, we would still face:

- Smaller capacity (550 seats vs. St. John Vianney's 1,000 seats)
- Continued ongoing operational costs for maintaining two separate facilities
- The building would still age and require additional maintenance
- The millions spent on repairs could instead help eliminate our school mortgage

The choice is: spend millions on a 50+ year old building that will continue to age and cost money to operate, or sell the property and use those funds plus the millions saved on repairs to aggressively pay down our school debt. The second option seems better stewardship in our current situation.

Additionally, selling Our Lady of Lourdes provides critical funding for our aggressive mortgage paydown strategy. Waiting until 2032 when the new church opens means we lose five years of potential mortgage reduction and accumulate millions more in interest costs.

Why can't we wait a few more years before closing and selling Our Lady of Lourdes?

Every year we delay selling Our Lady of Lourdes costs approximately $1-1.5 million in lost interest savings. Here's why:

The $22.5 million school mortgage accrues substantial interest every month. When we apply a large payment to principal, we eliminate not just that principal but all the future interest that would have accrued on it. The sooner we make that payment, the more interest we save.

Financial modeling shows:

- **Selling in 2027:** Apply $2 M to principal early, save approximately $3.7 M in interest, reduce length of mortgage by about 4 ½ years.
- **Selling in 2032:** Apply $2 M to principal later, save approximately $2.4 M in interest, reduce length of mortgage by about 3 ½ years.
- **Difference:** Waiting 5 years costs $1.3 M in additional interest and extends the mortgage by 1 year.

This is not about being rushed or insensitive to the emotional difficulty of saying goodbye to Our Lady of Lourdes. It is about responsible stewardship. Every dollar we pay in unnecessary interest is a dollar that cannot fund a new church or our

programming. There is also the lost opportunity of time. The urgency is real and financial. Delay costs millions and adds years to our goals.

Why can't the parish keep both church buildings open longer while discerning next steps?

Even when staffing, ministry programming, diocesan obligations, and debt service are set aside, operating the Our Lady of Lourdes facility costs the parish approximately $200,000 per year. These costs include utilities, insurance, routine maintenance, custodial services, and the basic administrative overhead required to operate a physical parish site.

Over five years, this represents roughly $1 million spent solely on maintaining the building itself. These ongoing expenses significantly limit the parish's ability to reduce debt and invest in ministry, formation, and long-term sustainability. Parish leadership believes that prolonging this expense delays progress while providing limited benefit to parish life.

Parish leadership recognizes that Our Lady of Lourdes is far more than a building. It has been a sacred place of worship, memory, and community for generations of parishioners. This recommendation is not made lightly or without grief. At the same time, leadership believes that continuing to carry the ongoing cost of maintaining the facility limits the parish's ability to support vibrant ministry and serve future generations well.

Why not sell St. John Vianney now and keep Our Lady of Lourdes?

The main reasons are capacity and condition.

- St. John Vianney seats 1,000 vs. Our Lady of Lourdes at 550
- St. John Vianney has 323 parking spaces vs. Our Lady of Lourdes at 169
- St. John Vianney is in better overall condition requiring significantly less immediate investment
- Our Lady of Lourdes needs millions in code compliance work

During the five-year transition period (2027-2032) before the new church opens, we need adequate worship capacity for our combined community. St. John Vianney provides that capacity. Our Lady of Lourdes does not, especially for high-attendance occasions like Easter when we see 1,500+ people at morning Masses.

Additionally, St. John Vianney is professionally appraised at $5 million vs. Our Lady of Lourdes at $2 million. We need the larger property sale ($5 million) to help fund new church construction in 2032, not mortgage paydown in 2027.

The strategic sequence matters: Sell OLOL now to accelerate mortgage paydown. Sell SJV later to help fund new church construction.

Why do we have to worship in a school gym?

First, important clarification: The school gym will host one of six weekend Masses, not all Masses. Five Masses will continue to be celebrated in St. John Vianney church,

which is a traditional worship space. Parishioners can choose which Mass to attend based on their preferences.

Second, the gym is already functioning as a worship space. It currently hosts daily Mass for the school and is equipped with a crucifix, portable altar, sacristy, and professional sound system.

Third, this is a temporary arrangement. We're choosing to worship in a temporary space rather than invest millions in renovating aging buildings that will eventually be sold.

Fourth, the school Mass keeps worship connected to the campus where the permanent church will be built. This reinforces the church-school unity that focus groups repeatedly emphasized as essential.

The gym arrangement is a pragmatic solution that preserves Mass schedule options, keeps costs down during the transition period, and maintains connection to the school campus where our future church will be built. It's not ideal, but it's a responsible choice for a transitional period.

Isn't the school campus too far north?

This concern reflects where Bettendorf is today, not where it will be in the coming decades. The City of Bettendorf's Comprehensive Plan Update for 2045 (adopted 2024) provides clear data on this question.

According to the comprehensive plan, "over 60% of land within Bettendorf's city limits is developed" and "the potential areas for development are concentrated on the northern areas of the city." The school campus is located in what the city designates as Tier 1A which is the highest priority area for short-term development. The city is actively planning infrastructure investments (sewer systems, road improvements) in this area and has identified the Middle Road corridor as a priority development focus area.

The city projects adding approximately 18,000 new residents by 2045, primarily in these northern growth areas. The school campus, which seems peripheral today, will be centrally located within the developed areas of Bettendorf by 2040-2050. We are building where the city is growing, as documented in the city's own adopted comprehensive planning.

Additionally, our parish community already draws from across the entire region (see household distribution maps). The relevant question is not whether people will drive as they already do, but whether we position the church where Bettendorf's population will be living in 20-30 years.

Are the Mass times guaranteed or could they change?

The six-Mass weekend schedule represents our current best judgment for balancing pastoral needs with practical capacity. The examples provided are subject to final determination. The schedule will be reviewed based on attendance patterns, pastoral feedback, and clergy capacity. It is not guaranteed permanently, and community input

will be sought before any significant changes. The commitment is to maintaining adequate Mass times that serve diverse schedules and worship preferences.

What about daily Mass?

Daily mass schedule will remain the same with worship consolidated to St. John Vianney once the Lourdes site is closed. A weekly school mass will continue as well.

What about confession times?

Confession availability is currently limited across all Quad Cities Catholic parishes due to the priest shortage, and this is a concern we share. Consolidation actually improves our situation rather than worsening it: instead of one priest trying to offer confession hours across two separate parish locations, our priest can focus confession times at one location with more consistent availability.

What will happen to different liturgical styles people prefer?

The consolidated Mass schedule will intentionally incorporate different worship styles across different Mass times rather than forcing uniformity. Different Masses may feature different musical styles, varying levels of formality, and distinct congregational atmospheres. This honors both communities' traditions and recognizes that diverse expressions within Catholic liturgy serve our community well. All Masses will remain fully faithful to Catholic liturgical norms.

Where will the new church be built?

The new church will be built on the southeast corner of the St. Joan of Arc School campus and will be physically connected to the school. This location reinforces the unity of church and school, positions the Catholic community at what will be the center of Bettendorf's development, and allows for efficient site development.

Why build on the school campus instead of keeping one of the existing churches?

Neither existing church building is ideal as a permanent solution for multiple reasons:

Our Lady of Lourdes requires millions in renovation work, has only 550-seat capacity, 169 parking spaces, and sits in an area of Bettendorf that is fully developed with limited growth potential. Even if we invested millions in repairs, the building would continue aging and requiring costly maintenance.

St. John Vianney is in better condition and has larger capacity (1,000 seats, 323 parking spaces) for the transition period. While well maintained, it is also 55+ years old and will face increasing physical plant demands. More importantly, it sits in a part of Bettendorf where development is largely complete rather than where the city is growing.

Retaining one existing church as the permanent worship site could create a perception that one community bears a greater loss than the other. When one worship home remains while another closes, it can be difficult to foster a sense of shared identity.

Building a new church together creates shared ownership and provides a worship space designed collaboratively for our unified future.

The new location matters for the long term. The City of Bettendorf's Comprehensive Plan identifies northern areas (where the school sits) as Tier 1A priority development zones. The city projects adding 18,000 residents by 2045, primarily in these growth areas. Building where Bettendorf will be in 2050, not where it was in 1970, positions the Catholic community for relevance to future generations.

A connected church-school campus creates a Catholic center where formation, worship, and community happen together from childhood through adulthood. This reinforces what focus groups repeatedly emphasized that the school and church must remain connected. Building new on land we already own, with utilities and parking already in place, is more cost-effective than renovating a 60-year-old building to modern standards while also maintaining it long-term.

MINISTRY AND COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

Will there be enough priests to serve a combined parish?

The pastoral team will consist of one pastor, a senior priest assisting with Mass and pastoral care, four current deacons with hopes for one more after his anticipated 2027 ordination, and we hope for eventual assignment of a parochial vicar. This represents adequate pastoral coverage for the consolidated community. It's important to recognize that the current two-parish model is placing unsustainable strain on our clergy, as repeatedly voiced in focus groups. Consolidation actually improves pastoral sustainability.

What happens to parish ministries and volunteers?

Ministries will be merged and strengthened. All current ministers will be given opportunities to serve in the combined parish ministries. This consolidation is expected to reduce volunteer fatigue by distributing responsibilities across a larger pool while strengthening programming. Everything moving forward becomes a joint effort including parish ministries, festivals, outreach, and service programs.

Will parish staff lose their jobs?

No staff will be lost to involuntary termination. Any staff reductions will happen through attrition. Some positions may be repurposed to better suit individual strengths in the new parish structure. We may actually need additional staff in some areas as we consolidate operations.

What will happen to youth ministry?

This is a major opportunity. Focus groups identified significant gaps in youth programming. A combined youth ministry effort will be a strength of the merged parish, combining resources, volunteers, and programming from both parishes to create more robust and sustainable youth ministry than either parish could maintain independently.

Won't this make us too big? Will we lose our sense of community?

The combined parish will indeed be the largest in the Diocese of Davenport. However, size brings both challenges and opportunities. Larger communities can sustain more diverse ministries, provide better programming for all age groups, and weather financial challenges more effectively. Community is not primarily about building size but about how we relate to one another. Many parishioners already experience connection across both current parishes through the school, shared daily Mass, and combined ministries. The question is not whether we will be large, but whether we will be intentional about building community at this scale.

How will we prevent the parish from becoming impersonal?

Community at scale requires intentional structures, not just good intentions. The parish will establish multiple ways for people to connect in smaller, more personal settings including small faith-sharing groups meeting in homes for prayer and Scripture study, ministry-based communities where volunteers serving together build relationships, and life stage groups connecting young families, young adults, empty nesters, and seniors facing similar challenges. Parish leadership will also prioritize keeping certain ministries (funeral ministry, pastoral care teams, hospitality) visible and relational so people experience personal care during key life moments. Large Sunday Mass creates the gathered assembly, but authentic community happens in smaller circles throughout the week. This will be an explicit priority in parish planning.

What happens to Our Lady of Lourdes traditions and devotions?

The goal is to build one parish that honors the best of both communities, not to erase Our Lady of Lourdes heritage. Leadership will work to identify meaningful traditions, devotions, festivals, and practices from each community. The parish pastoral council will review recommendations with input from the broader community. Some traditions may need to end simply due to volunteer capacity or changing needs, but decisions will be made thoughtfully and transparently, not arbitrarily. The commitment is that Our Lady of Lourdes will remain visible and honored in our shared parish life, not forgotten.

SACRED OBJECTS AND MEMORIALS

What will happen to sacred objects and artwork from Our Lady of Lourdes?

All sacred objects, artwork, memorials, and items of spiritual or historical significance will be carefully inventoried according to diocesan policy. Items will be relocated to St. John Vianney, the school, or stored for eventual placement in the new church. Parishioners will have opportunities to provide input on which items are most meaningful and how they should be preserved. Nothing will be discarded without proper canonical process. The goal is to ensure that the spiritual heritage of Our Lady of Lourdes remains visible in the consolidated parish.

What about memorial windows or plaques that my family donated?

Family memorials will be treated with great care and respect. Families who made significant contributions will be consulted as part of the canonical process before closure. Your family's generosity and the memory of your loved ones will not be forgotten.

Will the new church incorporate elements from both old churches?

Yes. The design process for the new church will intentionally seek to incorporate meaningful elements, artwork, and memories from both Our Lady of Lourdes and St. John Vianney. This is an opportunity to build something that represents our unified community rather than being seen as one parish's building. Community input will be essential to this process.

TRANSITION AND PROCESS QUESTIONS

Who makes the final decision about this plan?

Under canon law, the diocesan Bishop has authority to erect, suppress, or notably alter parishes, and to relegate churches to profane use. However, this authority is exercised only after extensive consultation. The strategic plan will be presented to parish leadership (pastor and trustees), to the Bishop, to pastoral and finance councils, and to the Presbyteral Council as required by canon law. If approved, the Bishop will issue formal written decrees after completing the canonical consultation process.

Will parishioners have a vote?

Canon law does not provide for parishioner votes on parish mergers or church closures. However, extensive listening and consultation has been and will continue to be part of this process. Focus groups, surveys, listening sessions, and ongoing dialogue ensure that parishioner perspectives inform the planning and decision-making process. Your voice matters, even though the final canonical decision rests with Church authority.

What if I disagree with this plan?

Your perspective is important. Ongoing dialogue, feedback mechanisms, and listening sessions will continue throughout the process. We hope that through transparent communication, honest dialogue, and shared discernment, we can move forward together even where there is disagreement about specific decisions.

Why is this happening so fast?

While it may feel sudden, this planning process has been underway for over a decade with extensive research, consultation, and community listening. The full implementation timeline spans approximately six years from 2026 to 2032. However, there is urgency driven by several factors. Being proactive while we have time to plan well is better than being forced into reactive decisions later.

What happens between the canonical merger in July 2026 and the closing of Our Lady of Lourdes?

During this transition period, both worship locations remain fully operational with unchanged Mass schedules. However, behind the scenes, significant work happens with ministries begin consolidating, financial systems merge, parish councils and finance council unify, staff transition to working for one parish, and preparations are made for eventual building closure. This transition period allows the community to adjust

gradually while administrative integration proceeds. The timeline for closure could be extended based on these many moving parts.

SCHOOL QUESTIONS

How does the school debt affect parish life?

The $22.5 million school mortgage requires $1.8 million in annual debt service. This puts significant pressure on all other parish operations, staff, programs, and facility maintenance across two locations. This tight financial reality is why aggressive debt paydown and facility consolidation is essential. It will free significant resources for ministry rather than interest payments. Eliminating the debt as projected by 2030 transforms the financial situation and enables investment in parish mission.

PASTORAL CARE QUESTIONS

What about weddings already scheduled at Our Lady of Lourdes?

Our Lady of Lourdes will stop accepting new wedding reservations immediately following the canonical merger in July 2026. Couples who have already booked Our Lady of Lourdes for weddings before the closure will have their weddings honored at that location as scheduled. Couples with weddings scheduled after the anticipated closure will be contacted personally by parish staff to discuss relocating their ceremony to St. John Vianney with full pastoral support during the transition. All weddings from spring 2027 forward will take place at St. John Vianney until the new church opens.

What about funerals?

After the Lourdes property is closed, all funeral Masses will be celebrated at St. John Vianney. Funeral luncheons will continue to be hosted in appropriate parish spaces with our funeral ministry volunteers serving families as they always have. Our pastoral team will remain available to serve all families with the same compassion and excellence they have always provided, regardless of where the liturgy is held.

What if people leave the parish because of these changes?

Change is difficult, and it is realistic to expect that some people will struggle with these transitions. Some may choose to worship elsewhere, at least temporarily. This is painful but not unexpected. However, focus groups revealed that many parishioners are ready for change and see this as necessary for long-term sustainability. The goal is not to please everyone, but to make responsible decisions that ensure a strong Catholic presence in Bettendorf for future generations. Transparent communication, pastoral sensitivity, and invitations to ongoing dialogue can help, but we acknowledge that not everyone will embrace these changes.

How can I stay informed about the planning process?

Multiple communication channels are being established: combined parish bulletin with regular updates, parish website with dedicated FAQ section, email updates to registered parishioners, periodic listening sessions, and opportunities for questions and feedback.

A dedicated email address and web form for questions and concerns will be provided. The commitment is to transparent, ongoing communication throughout the process.

What can I do to help?

Pray for our parish community, our clergy and staff, and for all those involved in planning and decision-making. Engage in dialogue with openness and charity, even where you have concerns or disagreements. Continue your financial support through the capital campaign. Volunteer in parish ministries. Welcome newcomers and work to build community. Most importantly, keep faith that God is present in this process and that the Holy Spirit guides the Church through times of change.

LONG-TERM QUESTIONS

What happens after 2032 when the new church is built and debt is eliminated?

By 2032, we will have solved the three critical problems threatening our future: the priest shortage, unsustainable debt, and aging facilities.

- **Priest Shortage Solved:** One priest serving one consolidated parish is manageable. Our pastoral structure will be sustainable while diocesan parishes that delayed planning face emergency consolidations under crisis conditions.
- **Financial Health Restored:** With the mortgage eliminated, operating budget funds actual ministry instead of debt service. We can hire needed staff, expand programs, support families in crisis, and invest in formation without choosing between ministry and mortgage payments.
- **Facility Crisis Eliminated:** One modern worship space, properly maintained, with adequate parking and accessibility. No more code compliance emergencies, aging mechanical systems, or deferred maintenance threatening closure.

How do we prevent being in this same situation in 30 years?

By building financial health and sustainable practices into our foundation from the start. A parish that has eliminated debt, consolidated operations, and maintained modern facilities properly doesn't face the crises we're solving now. We will establish capital reserves for major building system replacements, conduct regular facility assessments to catch problems early, and maintain financial discipline that prevents debt from consuming our operating budget. Most importantly, we will continue the pattern of proactive planning rather than reactive crisis management. The next generation will inherit a financially stable, well-maintained parish positioned for growth.

VII. MEASURING SUCCESS

A strategic plan of this magnitude requires accountability. While the ultimate measure of success is a thriving Catholic community serving future generations, there are specific metrics that will demonstrate progress and health along the way.

Financial Metrics

- Debt Reduction Milestones: $22.5 million mortgage reduced to $18 million by end of 2026, $13 million by end of 2027, $8 million by end of 2028, $3 million by end of 2028, eliminated by August 2030 (or proportional progress if timeline extends)
- Fundraising Campaign Success: Achieve $15 million in pledges by end of 2026; maintain 90%+ pledge fulfillment rate through 2029
- Property Sale Targets: Our Lady of Lourdes sold within 12 months of closure for minimum $2 million; St. John Vianney sold within 12 months of new church opening
- Operating Budget Balance: Maintain balanced operating budget throughout transition; build reserves to minimum 3 months operating expenses by 2030
- Facility Cost Reduction: Reduce annual facility operating costs by $200,000 following Our Lady of Lourdes closure.

Pastoral and Community Metrics

- Mass Attendance Stability: Maintain combined weekend Mass attendance within 10% of pre-consolidation levels (recognizing some attrition is expected during major change)
- Sacramental Life: Maintain or increase number of baptisms, first communions, confirmations, marriages, and conversions
- Youth Ministry Growth: Increase youth ministry participation within one year of consolidation
- Volunteer Engagement: Maintain or increase number of active ministry volunteers; measure through ministry rosters
- New Parishioner Registration: Track new household registrations as indicator of community vitality and welcome

Ministry and Program Metrics

- Combined Ministry Effectiveness: Successfully merge all major ministries (OCIA, religious education, service programs) within 12 months of canonical merger with no loss of program quality
- School-Church Integration: Increase participation of school families in parish life (measured by Mass attendance, volunteer service, and program enrollment)
- Communication Effectiveness: Achieve 80%+ parishioner awareness of major planning milestones (measured by periodic surveys)

Staff and Leadership Metrics

- Staff Retention: Maintain 90%+ retention of staff (excluding planned retirements) throughout transition
- Clergy Health: Monitor priest and deacon workload to ensure sustainable ministry patterns; maintain regular sabbath and vacation time
- Leadership Development: Identify and train lay leadership across all major ministries to reduce dependence on clergy for operational decisions

These metrics will be reviewed regularly by parish leadership. Adjustments to strategy will be made based on measured results rather than assumptions.

VIII. RISKS AND MITIGATION

No strategic plan of this scope is without risk. Honest acknowledgment of potential challenges builds trust and allows for proactive mitigation. The following are the primary risks and corresponding mitigation strategies.

Financial Risks

Risk: Property Values Decline Below Appraisals

Our Lady of Lourdes and St. John Vianney property sales could yield less than the $2 million and $5 million appraisals if real estate market softens.

Mitigation:

- Plan is structured with flexibility. Our timeline extends if revenue shortfalls occur rather than plan failing
- Combined shortfall up to $1.5 million can be absorbed through 6-9 month timeline extension
- Timing of sales will be optimized for market conditions rather than forced by arbitrary deadlines

Risk: Fundraising Fatigue

Multiple capital campaigns (current mortgage campaign, concurrent diocesan Upon This Rock campaign, future new church campaign) could exhaust donor capacity.

Mitigation:

- Current campaign concludes at the end of 2026. A campaign for a new church would not happen until approximately 2030 (minimum 3-4 year gap)
- Upon This Rock diocesan campaign is concluded, reducing concurrent asks
- New church campaign will launch only after school debt is eliminated, demonstrating fiscal responsibility to donors
- Success of school construction and current campaign establishes track record of delivering on promises

Risk: Construction Cost Inflation

New church construction costs could significantly exceed current $20-25 million estimates due to inflation over 6-year planning period.

Mitigation:

- Estimates will be updated regularly during design phase to track cost trends
- Fundraising campaign goal will be set based on final construction estimates, not current placeholder numbers
- Design process will include value engineering to optimize cost without sacrificing essential quality

- If costs exceed fundraising capacity, project can be phased or scaled rather than abandoned

Community and Pastoral Risks

Risk: Parishioner Attrition Due to Change Resistance

Significant numbers of parishioners, particularly those deeply attached to Our Lady of Lourdes building, may leave the parish rather than accept consolidation.

Mitigation:

- Extensive pastoral care and listening throughout transition
- Multiple Mass times and worship styles provide choice and reduce sense of one-size-fits-all
- Intentional incorporation of Our Lady of Lourdes sacred objects and memories into ongoing parish life
- Focus groups showed readiness for change and resistance appears lower than in previous discussions
- Some attrition is expected and planned for as not all parishioners will embrace change and that is acknowledged

Risk: Perception of Unequal Loss Could Create Division

Consolidation could be perceived as one community bearing more loss than the other, potentially creating resentment or division.

Mitigation:

- Consistent communication that this transition is part of a long-term plan in which both worship sites will eventually give way to a new shared church home
- Building a new church creates shared ownership of a future neither community has experienced before
- Balanced representation in leadership, ministry consolidation, and planning processes
- Intentional liturgical diversity that honors the traditions of both communities
- Ongoing communication emphasizing unity, shared mission, and a common future

Risk: Clergy and Staff Burnout During Transition

The demands of managing consolidation while maintaining pastoral care could overwhelm priests, deacons, and staff.

Mitigation:

- Proactive monitoring of clergy workload with mandatory rest and vacation time
- Empowering lay leadership to handle operational decisions, freeing clergy for pastoral ministry
- Hiring additional administrative support during peak transition periods if needed

- Deacon team (4 current plus 1 new in 2027) provides distributed pastoral coverage
- Clear staff role definitions to prevent duplication and confusion

Operational Risks

Risk: Emergency Infrastructure Failure Forces Unplanned Closure

Critical system failure at Our Lady of Lourdes (boiler, electrical, structural) could force immediate closure before planned timeline.

Mitigation:

- Emergency closure protocol is established (see Emergency Contingencies section)
- St. John Vianney and school gym have adequate capacity to absorb Our Lady of Lourdes Masses immediately in an emergency
- Decision authority clearly defined so response can be swift
- Both parishes hold reserve funds in excess of $1 million as reserves to manage unexpected transition costs

Risk: Prolonged Property Sale Timeline

Properties may take longer to sell than anticipated, delaying revenue and potentially requiring carrying costs for vacant buildings.

Mitigation:

- Timing of sale optimized for market conditions rather than forced by cash need
- Parish maintains insurance and minimal security for vacant properties if needed
- Plan timeline is flexible so delays in property sale extend the timeline but don't derail our strategy

These risks are manageable through careful planning, clear communication, and flexible timeline execution. The greatest risk would be maintaining an unsustainable status quo and waiting until crisis forces reactive decisions without adequate preparation.

IX. DECISION AUTHORITY AND GOVERNANCE

Understanding who makes which decisions reduces confusion, manages expectations, and prevents rumors. This section clarifies the decision-making structure for the consolidation process.

Decisions Made by the Bishop

Under canon law, the diocesan Bishop has sole authority to:

- Decree the canonical merger of parishes (extinctive union)
- Decree the closure and relegation of a church to profane use
- Approve the sale (alienation) of church property above certain value thresholds
- Assign priests to parishes

These decisions are made only after required consultations, but the final decree is issued by the Bishop. Parishioners do not vote on these matters, though they may have canonical right to appeal (hierarchical recourse) after a decree is issued.

Decisions Made by Parish Leadership (Pastor, Trustees, Finance Council)

Parish leadership has authority to:

- Develop and recommend strategic plans to the Bishop
- Manage day-to-day parish operations and staff
- Set Mass schedules (within canonical requirements)
- Allocate parish operating budget and resources
- Launch and manage fundraising campaigns
- Execute property sales after receiving required approvals
- Implement ministry consolidation and program changes

These operational decisions are made locally but must align with diocesan policy and canonical requirements.

Bodies That Provide Advice and Consultation

The following groups have consultative voice but not decision-making authority:

Presbyteral Council:

Canon law requires the Bishop to consult the Presbyteral Council (representative body of diocesan priests) before modifying parishes or closing churches. The council provides advice but does not vote to approve or reject.

Pastoral Councils:

Parish pastoral councils advise the pastor on pastoral matters, community needs, and ministry priorities. They do not have governing authority but provide essential perspective from the faith community.

Finance Council:

The parish finance council must consent to property sales above certain thresholds and advises on all major financial decisions. While their consent is required for specific financial transactions, they do not determine overall strategic direction.

Focus Groups and Listening Sessions:

Community input gathered through focus groups, surveys, and listening sessions informs planning but does not constitute decision-making authority. This input is taken seriously and shapes recommendations, but final decisions rest with designated authorities.

The Planning Process Flow

The decision-making process for this strategic plan follows this sequence:

1. Joint Strategic Planning Committee develops recommendations based on research, financial modeling, and community consultation
2. Recommendations presented to pastor and trustees for review and refinement
3. Plan presented to pastoral councils for advice and feedback
4. Plan is shared with full community In informational meetings
5. Pastor submits formal proposal to Bishop with supporting documentation
6. Bishop reviews proposal and consults Presbyteral Council as required by canon law
7. Bishop issues formal decrees for parish merger and church closure (if approved)
8. Parish implements approved plan with ongoing communication to community

This structure respects both canonical requirements and collaborative discernment while maintaining clear accountability for decisions.

CONCLUSION: A FUTURE ROOTED IN HOPE AND FAITH

This strategic plan reflects a moment of real challenge for the Catholic community in Bettendorf. It also reflects a moment of opportunity. The decisions outlined here are difficult because they matter. They are made not out of fear, but out of a desire to steward well what has been entrusted to this parish and to ensure that Catholic life in Bettendorf remains strong for generations to come.

Hope does not come from avoiding hard truths. It comes from facing them together with honesty, faith, and courage. This community has already demonstrated what is possible when it is united in purpose. The successful completion of St. Joan of Arc Catholic School stands as a testament to generosity, commitment, and trust in the future.

The path ahead will require patience, compassion, and shared responsibility. It will also require prayer and openness to the work of the Holy Spirit. Change brings grief, but it can also bring renewal. By choosing clarity over delay and stewardship over comfort, the parish is laying a foundation that prioritizes mission, ministry, and people rather than buildings and debt.

Implementation of this plan begins now. At the same time, this is not an ending. It is a beginning. With continued leadership, transparent communication, and faithful collaboration, the Catholic community in Bettendorf can move forward together as one parish, rooted in its shared history and confident in the future God is calling it toward.

APPENDIX SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

THE APPENDICES ARE AVAILABLE AS A SEPARATE COMBINED DOCUMENT

THE APPENDIX DOCUMENT INCLUDES:

- **APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS**
- **APPENDIX B: FACILITY ASSESSMENTS**
- **APPENDIX C: FINANCIAL MODELING**
- **APPENDIX D: DIOCESE OF DAVENPORT POLICIES RELATING TO MODIFICATION OF PARISHES AND CLOSURE OF CHURCHES**