



DIOCESE
— *of* —
GAYLORD

**PASTORAL
PLAN
2026**

**LOVE.
COMMUNION.
MISSION.**



“Love never fails.” (1 Cor 13) • “They devoted themselves... to the breaking of the bread.” (Acts 2:42) • “Go, therefore, and make disciples.” (Mt 28:19–20)



Table of Contents

Page

4	Letter from Most Reverend Jeffrey J. Walsh
8	Diocese-wide Summary Overview
8	8 Pastoral Plan 2026 Changes Coming
8	8 Parish Clustering
9	9 Projected Priestly Ordinations and Retirements
9	9 Registered Parishioner Households vs Households Affected By Changes Within Each Vicariate
10	10 Diocese At a Glance as of July 2026
	11 Limited-Use Churches and Closed Parishes by Vicariate
12	12 Vicariate Snapshots
12	12 Central Vicariate
13	13 North Vicariate
14	14 East Vicariate
15	15 Southeast Vicariate
16	16 Southwest Vicariate
17	17 West Vicariate
18	18 Diocesan Leadership



PASTORAL PLAN 2026

From the Desk of Most Reverend Jeffrey J. Walsh

For more than a year, the clergy, parish leaders and lay faithful have been working with me on the pastoral plan for our diocese. The guiding theme of our diocesan pastoral planning was the “2025 Jubilee Year of Hope.” As a Church, we are Pilgrims of Hope.

Now, as we begin the implementation of this diocesan pastoral plan in July 2026, the guiding theme will be *“Love, Communion and Mission.”* (L.C.M. in the D.O.G.)

I am grateful to all our priests, deacons, directors of parish life, parish finance and pastoral council members and other key leaders who participated in the planning process and will continue to be instrumental in making it fruitful.

The planning process was marked by careful review of:

- the 2009 Long Range Recommendations Report
- analysis of current data/parish statistics
- realistic assessment of resources

The data-driven process was deeply rooted by collaboration, synodal process, discernment and, of course, prayer.

Despite our daunting challenges, we were hope-filled every step of the way.

Building on the foundation of the virtue of hope, we now look forward with a Gospel-vision of love, communion and mission. Let us not underestimate the tasks that lie ahead and trust more steadfastly in Divine Providence. Clergy and laity alike will be asked to make sacrifices. I would ask us all to embrace the future with the credo of *Love, Communion and Mission.*

LOVE – 1 Corinthians: 13

Love never fails. Love must animate the difficult discussions and actions we take to adapt to changes in our diocesan structures, personnel and schedules.



Not in a trivial way, love is foundational. God is love. Jesus is love incarnate. We are united to Christ and each other through love.

COMMUNION – Acts 2: 42

In all we do, let us strive to be “in union with” God and each other. Sacramental communion is the source of sanctity from which flows awareness of being bonded to others as brothers and sisters in Christ. We are just in the beginning phase of an authentic Eucharistic Revival in our country. Our Lord gives himself to us as food for the journey.

MISSION – Matthew: 28:19-20

“The Great Commission” from Jesus underscores our responsibility to know and share the Gospel. By virtue of our baptism, we are called to be and to make disciples. Our Lord pledged to be with us always. Let’s get to the work of building the kingdom. To God, be all honor and glory.

In his first homily as our Holy Father in May 2025, Pope Leo succinctly captured what I hope will be our embrace of a Church rooted in love, communion and mission:

“Brothers and sisters, I would like that our first great desire be for *a united Church, a sign of unity and communion, which becomes a leaven for a reconciled world.*

“In this our time, we still see too much discord, too many wounds caused by hatred, violence, prejudice, the fear of difference, and an economic paradigm that exploits the Earth’s resources and marginalizes the poorest. For our part, we want to be a small leaven of unity, communion and fraternity within the world. We want to say to the world, with humility and joy: Look to Christ! Come closer to him! Welcome his word that enlightens and consoles! Listen to his offer of **love** and become his one family: *in the one Christ, we are one.* This is the path to follow

together, among ourselves but also with our sister Christian churches, with those who follow other religious paths, with those who are searching for God, with all women and men of good will, in order to build a new world where peace reigns!

“This is the **missionary spirit** that must animate us; not closing ourselves off in our small groups, nor feeling superior to the world. We are called to offer God’s love to everyone, in order to achieve that unity which does not cancel out differences but values the personal history of each person and the social and religious culture of every people.

“Brothers and sisters, this is the hour for love! The heart of the Gospel is the love of God that makes us brothers and sisters. With my predecessor Leo XIII, we can ask ourselves today: If this criterion “were to prevail in the world, would not every conflict cease and peace return?” (*Rerum Novarum*, 20).

“With the light and the strength of the Holy Spirit, let us build a Church founded on God’s love, a sign of unity, a missionary Church that opens its arms to the world, proclaims the word, allows itself to be made “restless” by history, and becomes a leaven of harmony for humanity.

“Together, as one people, as brothers and sisters, let us walk towards God and love one another.”

(Excerpt from Pope Leo XIV, May 18, 2025, homily at St. Peter’s Basilica, Rome)

Through study of hundreds of suggestions, recommendations, comments etc. that were received during the planning process, it became abundantly clear that not only was there need to “rightsize” our diocese, but to celebrate it and invest in it. Lay education, vocations and youth ministry are three particular areas where we will do just



that. Stay tuned for future announcements about a Diocese of Gaylord “JMJ Holy Family Institute” for adult lay formation and education, vocation events and programs, and new initiatives for middle/high students and young adults.

While I could not incorporate every recommendation regarding parishes, I thoughtfully reviewed each one and prayed about them. These final decisions about our parishes reflect a collective wisdom and effort to address the driving factors of:

- clergy availability
- finances
- geography
- seasonal shifts
- parish vibrancy
- clergy wellness

You will notice in this pastoral plan, in addition to the changes with parish clusters, changes of personnel. It is understood that change will bring some anxiety, sadness and perhaps anger. In the time of transition from February to July 2026, resources and help will be available. At the spiritual level, let us ask God for an increase of patience, understanding and kindness.

With this plan, I believe we will be in a better position to meet pastoral needs and enrich the lives of our clergy by:

- reducing the number of parishes from 73 to 56
- decreasing the burden for most priests and parish leaders with minimized clusters and
- adding international and other priests in roles of support

To those who will experience the closure or limited use of a previously active parish, I want to acknowledge your hurt. I have been through it myself. My home parish in Scranton closed in 2007; seven churches eventually merged into one. My family, especially my grandfather, felt this pain deeply.

But we are never left abandoned and remain as a family of faith. It took time, but my parents integrated into the new parish and remained active.

To those who are in a parish that has a new cluster structure, I want to ask for your understanding and patience while adjusting to new people and scheduling. Please be welcoming and generous when it comes to the practicalities – parking, seats in the pews, lay ministry sharing, volunteering etc.

To those in parishes where no apparent changes took place, it is important to recognize the broader Church in our diocese and also be ready to be welcoming and generous to those who may be joining your community from a closed/limited-use church.

To our priests, deacons and directors of parish life, please pray for this pastoral plan to give new life to our diocese. Many of our priests and deacons will experience change and three of our directors of parish life will lose their positions. I am most grateful to Sister Chris Herald, Sister Sue Gardner and Deacon Martin Korson for their many years of ministry and service. As change is different for everyone, be steadfast and true. It is not just a cliché, “God provides.”

The reality of this pastoral plan is that it does indeed reduce the number of churches and shifts personnel, resources and responsibilities. However, it does not solve all our problems – no plan can do that. If today, just one pastor was to fall sick, take a leave of absence, or if God calls one of our pastors home to heaven unexpectedly, more change will be necessary. There, but by the grace of God, go we!

May God bless our stewardship of this local Church. As time moves on, may God also let us experience the good fruit from diocesan branches pruned for more abundant *Love, Communion and Mission* (L.C.M. in the D.O.G.) I am convinced we have fertile soil in the Diocese of Gaylord, and by patiently cultivating seeds of faith now, God will bring about a generational growth.



It is fitting to end with a reminder of the dogmatic constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) from the Second Vatican Council. Let us take to heart and strive to embody this vision of the mystery of the Church:

“Just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and persecution, so the Church is called to follow the same route that it might communicate the fruits of salvation to men. Christ Jesus, ‘though He was by nature God...emptied Himself, taking the nature of a slave,’ (77) and ‘being rich, became poor’ (78) for our sakes. Thus, the Church, although it needs human resources to carry out its mission, is not set up to seek earthly glory, but to proclaim, even by its own example, humility and self-sacrifice. Christ was sent by the Father ‘to bring good news to the poor, to heal the contrite of heart,’ (79) ‘to seek and save what was lost.’(80)

“Similarly, the Church encompasses with love all who are afflicted with human suffering and in the poor and afflicted sees the image of its poor and suffering Founder. It does all it can to relieve

their need and in them it strives to serve Christ. While Christ, holy, innocent and undefiled (81) knew nothing of sin, (82) but came to expiate only the sins of the people, (83) the Church, embracing in its bosom sinners, at the same time holy and always in need of being purified, always follows the way of penance and renewal. The Church, ‘like a stranger in a foreign land, presses forward amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God’ (14*), announcing the cross and death of the Lord until He comes.’ (84) By the power of the risen Lord it is given strength that it might, in patience and in love, overcome its sorrows and its challenges, both within itself and from without, and that it might reveal to the world, faithfully though darkly, the mystery of its Lord until, in the end, it will be manifested in full light.”

In Christ our Life!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Most Reverend Jeffrey J. Walsh".

Most Reverend Jeffrey J. Walsh
Bishop of Gaylord



Diocese-wide Summary Overview

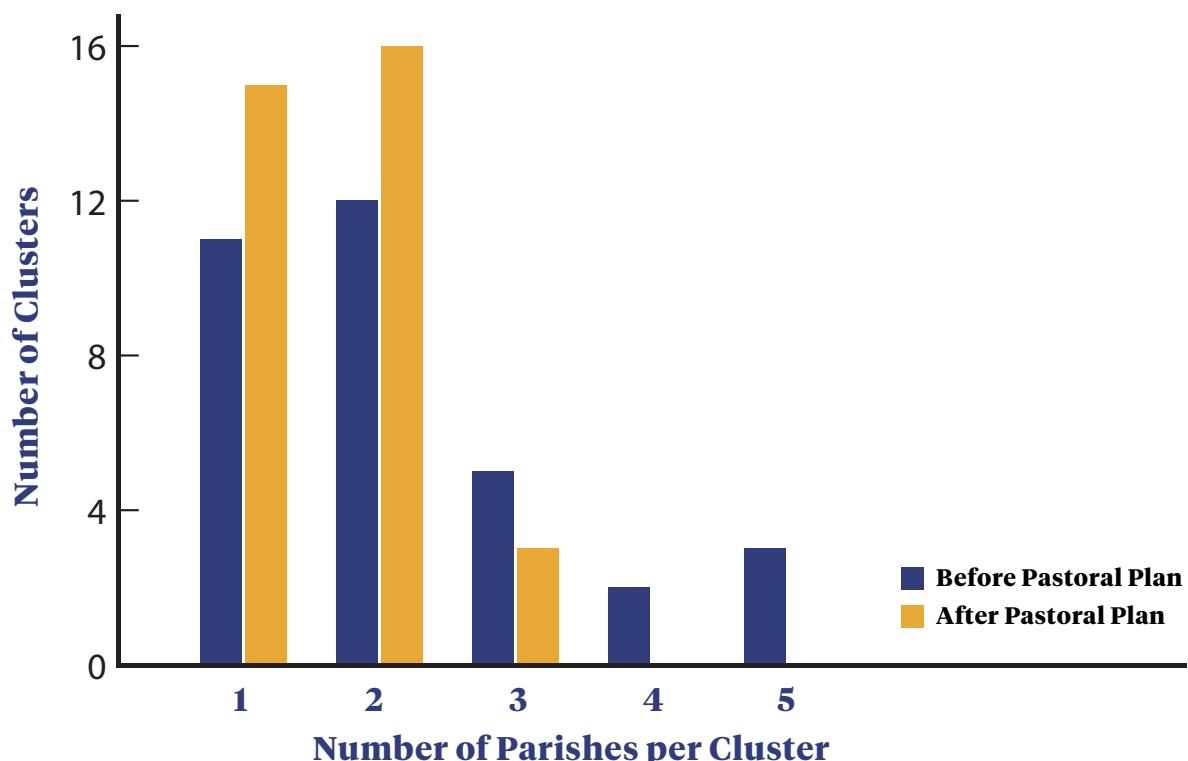
Effective July 1, 2026

Pastoral Plan 2026 Changes Coming

- 2 Parishes Closing
- 20 Parishes to be Designated Limited-Use Churches
- 757 Registered Parishioner Households Affected by Closures/Limited-Use Status

- 18 New Parish Clusters
- 29 Priests with Altered Assignment
- 3/3 Directors of Parish Life/Sacramental Ministers Affected by Changes

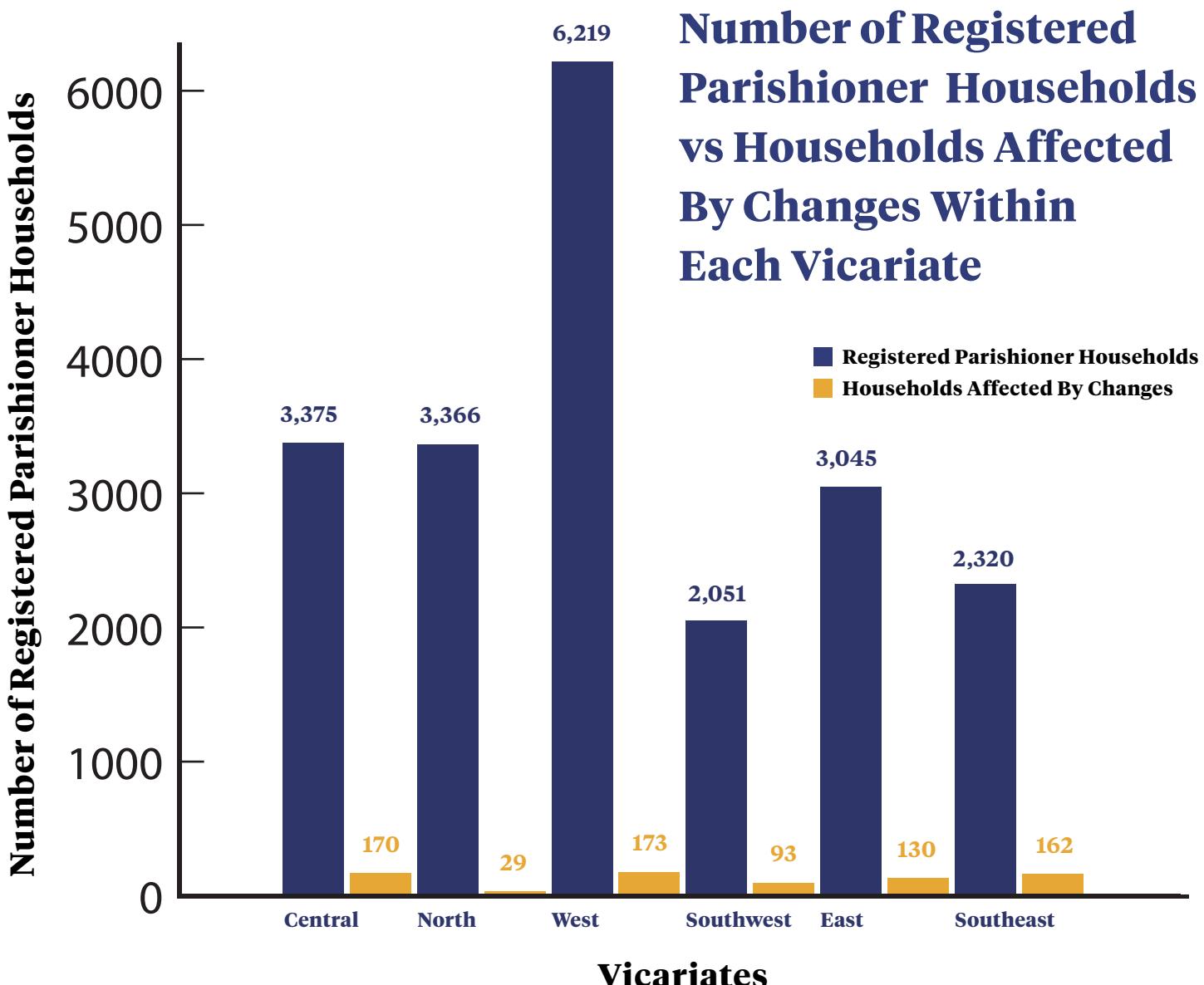
Parish Clusters, Effective July 2026



Projected Priestly Ordinations



Projected Priestly Retirements



Diocese At a Glance as of July 2026

56

Parishes

20

Limited-Use
Churches

2

Chapels

29

Pastors

2

Priest
Administrators

10

Parochial
Vicars

9

International
priests

29

Deacons

8

Seminarians

3/3

Directors of
Parish Life /
Sacramental
Ministers

Parishes to be Designated Limited-Use Churches by Vicariate

Central Region

- 2 St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, Elmira
- 3 Holy Redeemer Parish, Vanderbilt
- 13 St. John Nepomucene Parish, Praga

North Region

- 19 St. Francis Solanus Chapel, Petoskey
- 21 St. Ignatius Parish, Good Hart
- 31 St. Monica Parish, Afton

East Region

- 34 St. Dominic Parish, Metz
- 39 St. Bernard Church, Alpena
- 40 St. Mary Church, Alpena
- 41 St. John Church/School, Alpena
- 43 St. Gabriel Parish, Black River

Southeast Region

- 46 St. Raphael Parish, Mikado
- 53 St. Helen Parish, St. Helen

Southwest Region

- 59 St. Theresa Parish, Manton
- 60 St. Edward Parish, Harrietta
- 62 Guardian Angels Church, Manistee
- 65 St. Raphael Parish, Copemish

West Region

- 76 St. Rita and St. Joseph Parish, Maple City
- 79 St. Gertrude Parish, Northport
- 81 St. Wenceslaus Parish, Gill's Pier

Parishes Closing by Vicariate

Central Region

0

North Region

- 25 St. Mary Parish, Burt Lake

West Region

0

Southwest Region

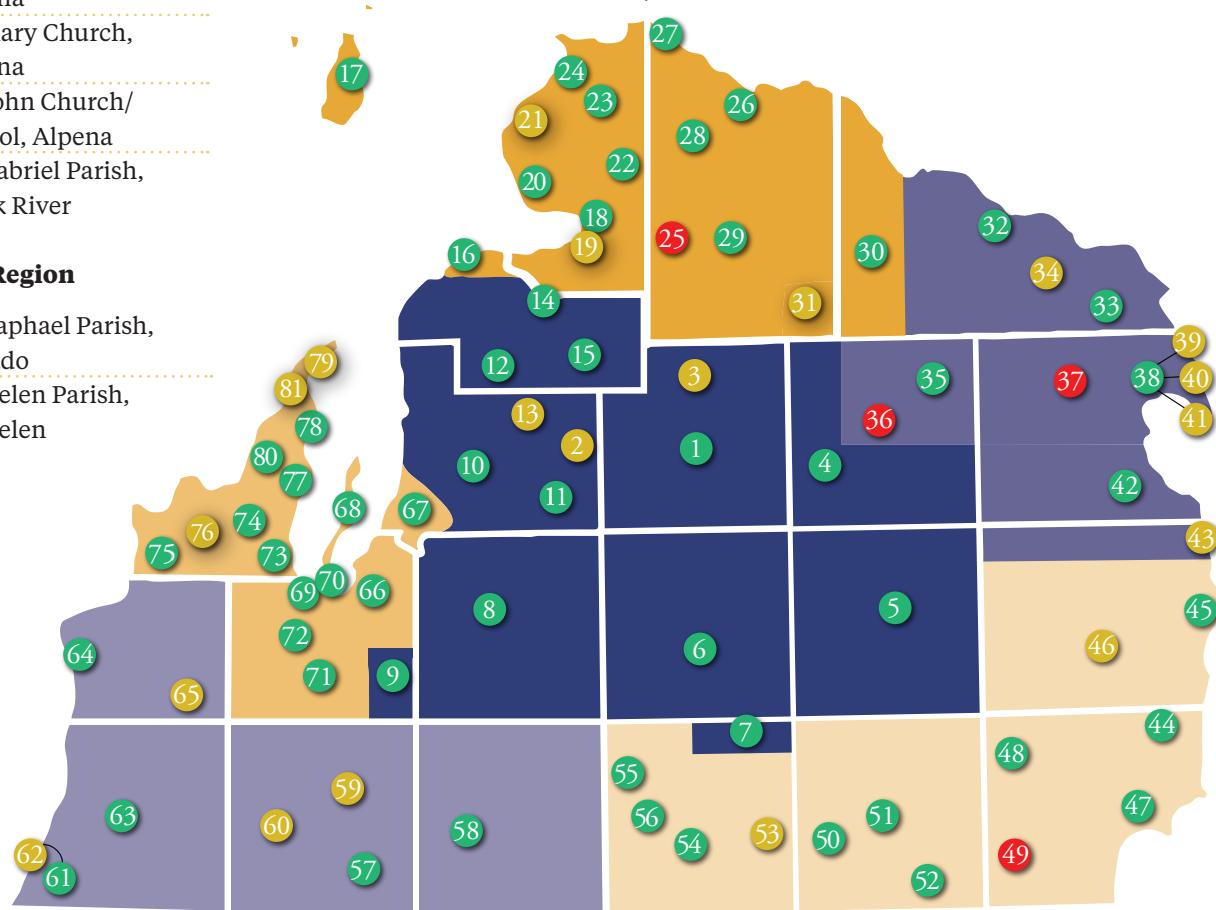
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East Region

- 36 Jesus the Good Shepherd Parish, Atlanta
- 37 St. Rose of Lima Parish, Herron – Already Closed

Southeast Region

- 49 St. James Parish, Whittemore – Already Closed

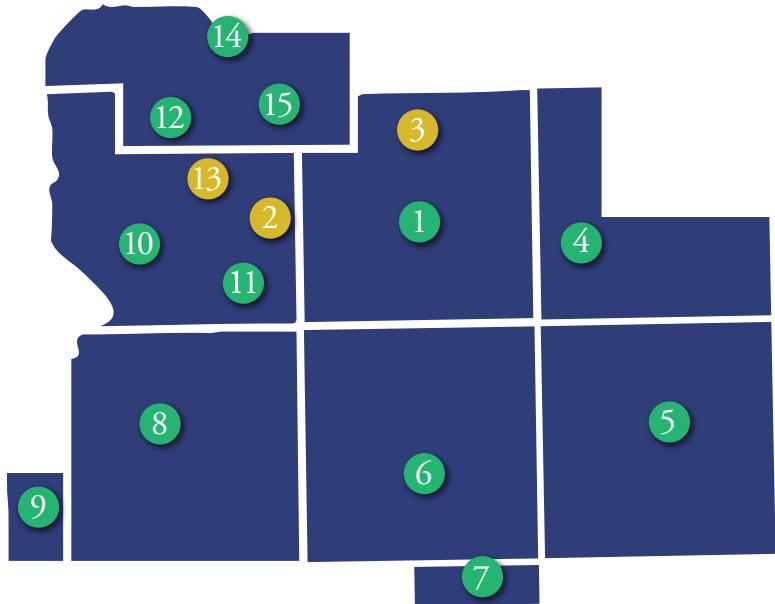


CENTRAL Vicariate

Vicar: Rev. Matthew Furgiuele

Central Vicariate Snapshot

- Parishes – 12
- Parish Clusters – 4
- Limited-Use Churches – 3
- Closing – 0
- Cluster Changing – 2
- Remaining the same – 6
- Pastors – 6
- Parochial Vicars – 0
- Deacons – 8
- International Priests – 0
- Directors of Parish Life/Sacramental Ministers – 2/2



Key: *Open*, *Limited Use*, *Closed*

1 ST. MARY CATHEDRAL GAYLORD – OPEN
Rev. Matthew Wigton, Rector, Pastor and Vicar for Clergy; Rev. Charles Donajkowski, Vicar General, part-time sacramental help

2 ST. THOMAS AQUINAS PARISH, ELMIRA – LIMITED-USE CHURCH

3 HOLY REDEEMER PARISH, VANDERBILT – LIMITED-USE CHURCH

4 ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI PARISH, LEWISTON – OPEN
Pastor: Rev. Scott Lawler

5 ST. MARY PARISH AND OUR LADY OF THE WOODS SHRINE, MIO – OPEN
Pastor: Rev. Santiago Hoyumpa

6 ST. MARY PARISH, GRAYLING – OPEN
Pastor: Rev. Gerard Hunko

7 ST. MICHAEL PARISH, ROSCOMMON – OPEN

8 ST. MARY OF THE WOODS PARISH, KALKASKA – OPEN
Director of Parish Life: Denise Elsenheimer; Sacramental Minister: Rev. Michael Verschaeve

9 ST. ALOYSIUS PARISH, FIFE LAKE – OPEN

10 ST. LUKE THE EVANGELIST PARISH, BELLAIRE – OPEN
Pastor: Rev. Rolando Silva

11 ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA PARISH, MANCELONA – OPEN

12 ST. JOSEPH PARISH, EAST JORDAN – OPEN
Pastor: Rev. Matthew Furgiuele

13 ST. JOHN NEPOMUCENE PARISH, PRAGA – LIMITED-USE CHURCH

14 ST. MATTHEW PARISH, BOYNE CITY – OPEN
Director of Parish Life: Patty Furtaw; Sacramental Minister: Rev. Dennis Stilwell

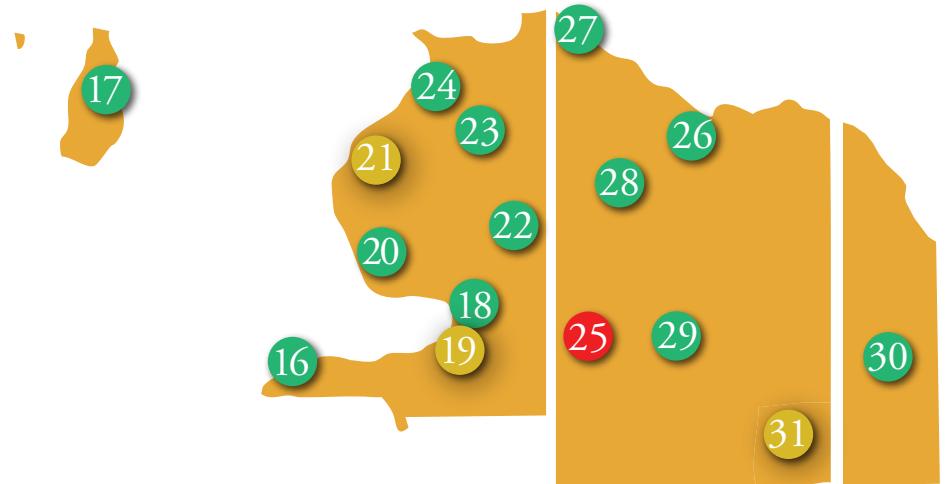
15 ST. AUGUSTINE PARISH, BOYNE FALLS – OPEN

NORTH Vicariate

Vicar: Rev. Duane Wachowiak

North Vicariate Snapshot

- Parishes – 12
- Parish Clusters – 4
- Limited-Use Churches – 3
- Closing – 1
- Cluster Changing – 4
- Remaining the same – 2
- Pastors – 5
- Priest Administrators – 1
- Parochial Vicars – 2
- International Priests – 2
- Deacons – 2
- Directors of Parish Life/Sacramental Ministers – 0



Key: *Open*, *Limited Use*, *Closed*

16 ST. MARY OF THE ASSUMPTION PARISH, CHARLEVOIX – OPEN

Pastor: Rev. Peter Wigton

17 HOLY CROSS PARISH, BEAVER ISLAND – OPEN

18 ST. FRANCIS XAVIER PARISH, PETOSKEY – OPEN

Pastor: Rev. Peter Eke

19 ST. FRANCIS SOLANUS CHAPEL, PETOSKEY – LIMITED-USE CHURCH

20 HOLY CHILDHOOD OF JESUS PARISH, HARBOR SPRINGS – OPEN

Pastor: Rev. Mitchel Roman

21 ST. IGNATIUS PARISH, GOOD HART – LIMITED-USE CHURCH

22 ST. CLEMENT PARISH, PELLSTON - OPEN

Administrator: Rev. Michael Class

23 ST. NICHOLAS PARISH, LARKS LAKE – OPEN

24 HOLY CROSS PARISH, CROSS VILLAGE – OPEN

25 ST. MARY PARISH, BURT LAKE – CLOSE

26 ST. MARY-ST. CHARLES PARISH, CHEBOYGAN – OPEN

Pastor: Rev. Duane Wachowiak; Parochial Vicar: Rev. Thomas Philip

27 ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA PARISH, MACKINAW CITY – OPEN

28 SACRED HEART PARISH, RIGGSVILLE – OPEN

29 CROSS IN THE WOODS NATIONAL CATHOLIC SHRINE, INDIAN RIVER – OPEN

Pastor: Rev. Donald Libby; Parochial Vicar: Rev. Emmanuel Yilar

30 ST. PAUL PARISH, ONAWAY – OPEN

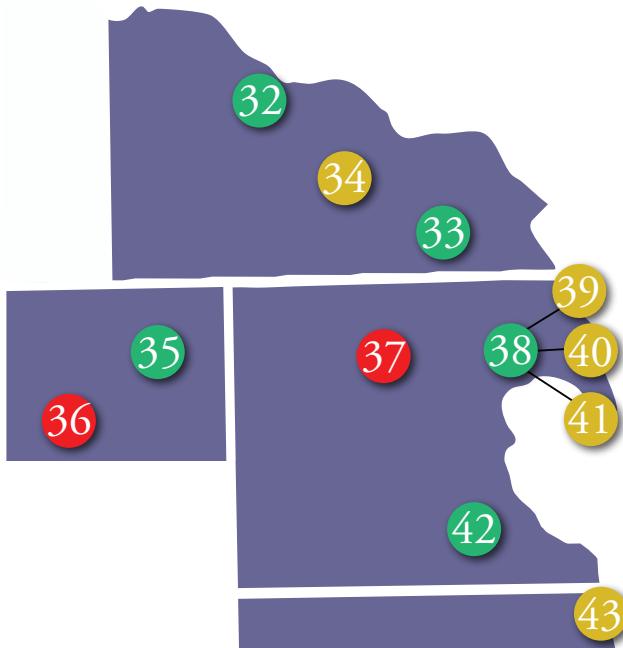
31 ST. MONICA PARISH, AFTON – LIMITED-USE CHURCH

EAST VICARIATE

Vicar: Rev. Benjamin Martin

East Vicariate Snapshot

- Parishes – 5
- Parish Clusters – 2
- Limited-Use Churches – 5
- Closing – 1
- Cluster Changing – 3
- Remaining the same – 0
- Pastors – 3
- Parochial Vicars – 3
- International Priests – 2
- Deacons – 2
- Directors of Parish Life/Sacramental Ministers – 0



Key: *Open*, *Limited Use*, *Closed*

32 ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA PARISH, ROGERS CITY – OPEN

Pastor: Rev. Don Geyman; Parochial Vicar: Rev. Yakubu Philibus

33 ST. CASIMIR PARISH, POSEN – OPEN

34 ST. DOMINIC PARISH, METZ – LIMITED-USE CHURCH

35 ST. AUGUSTINE PARISH, HILLMAN – OPEN

Pastor: Rev. Benjamin Martin

36 JESUS THE GOOD SHEPHERD PARISH, ATLANTA – CLOSE

37 ST. ROSE OF LIMA PARISH – ALREADY CLOSED

38 ALL SAINTS PARISH, ALPENA – OPEN

Pastor: Rev. Emmanuel Finbarr; Parochial Vicars: Rev. Aloysius Okpala and Rev. Basil Lek

39 ST. BERNARD CHURCH, ALPENA – LIMITED-USE CHURCH

40 ST. MARY CHURCH, ALPENA – LIMITED-USE CHURCH

41 ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH/SCHOOL, ALPENA – LIMITED-USE CHURCH

42 ST. CATHERINE PARISH, OSSINEKE – OPEN

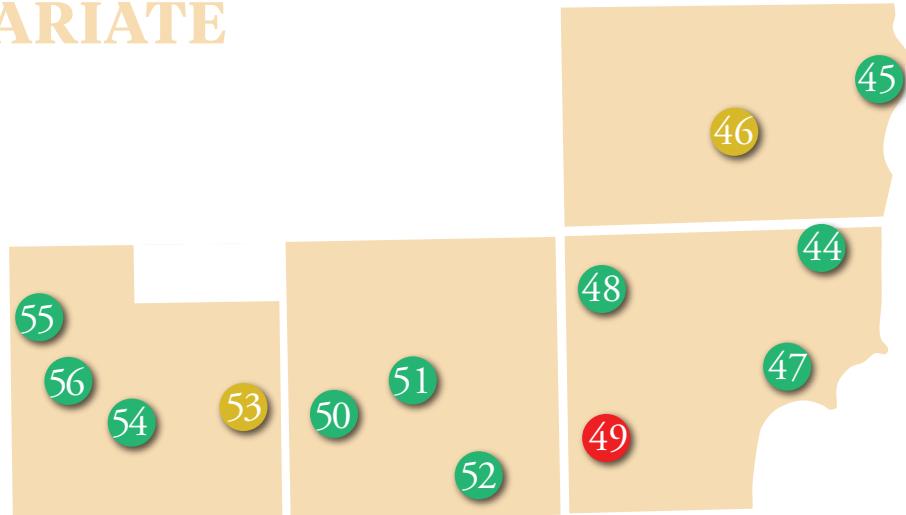
43 ST. GABRIEL PARISH, BLACK RIVER – LIMITED-USE CHURCH

SOUTHEAST VICARIATE

Vicar: Rev. Artur Duchnowicz

Southeast Vicariate Snapshot

- Parishes – 10
- Parish Clusters – 4
- Limited-Use Churches – 2
- Closing – 0
- Cluster Changing – 3
- Remaining the same – 2
- Pastors – 4
- Priest Administrators – 1
- Parochial Vicars – 1
- International Priests – 1
- Deacons – 4
- Directors of Parish Life/Sacramental Ministers – 0



Key: *Open*, *Limited Use*, *Closed*

44 SACRED HEART PARISH, OSCODA – OPEN
Pastor: Rev. Gerald Okoli

45 ST. ANNE PARISH, HARRISVILLE – OPEN

46 ST. RAPHAEL PARISH, MIKADO – LIMITED-USE CHURCH

47 HOLY FAMILY PARISH, EAST TAWAS – OPEN
Pastor: Rev. Artur Duchnowicz

48 ST. PIUS X PARISH, HALE – OPEN

49 ST. JAMES PARISH, WHITTEMORE – ALREADY CLOSED

50 ST. JOSEPH PARISH, WEST BRANCH – OPEN
Pastor: Rev. Alfred Pillarelli; Parochial Vicar: Rev. Shaphan Zirra

51 HOLY FAMILY PARISH, KLACKING CREEK – OPEN

52 ST. STEPHEN OF HUNGARY PARISH, SKIDWAY LAKE – OPEN

53 ST. HELEN PARISH, ST. HELEN – LIMITED-USE CHURCH

54 OUR LADY OF THE LAKE PARISH, PRUDENVILLE – OPEN

Pastor: Rev. Matthew Cowan

55 ST. HUBERT PARISH, HIGGINS LAKE – OPEN
Administrator: Rev. Michael Steltenkamp

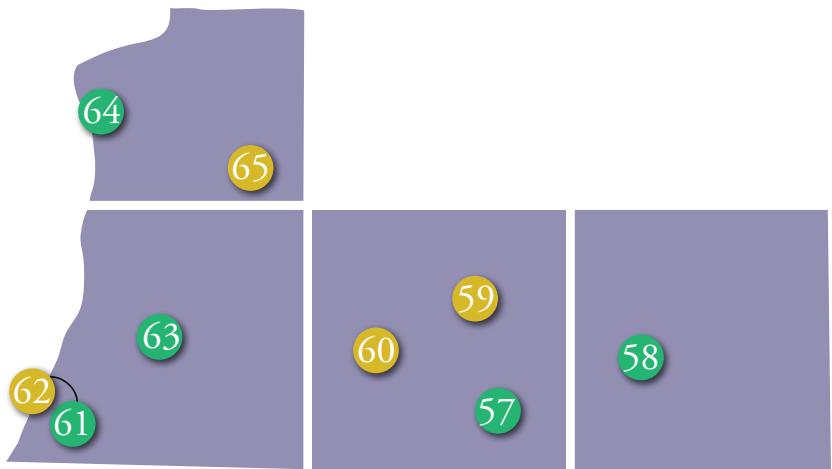
56 ST. JAMES PARISH, HOUGHTON LAKE – OPEN

SOUTHWEST VICARIATE

Vicar: Rev. Michael Janowski

Southwest Vicariate Snapshot

- Parishes – 5
- Parish Clusters – 2
- Limited-Use Churches – 4
- Closing – 0
- Cluster Changing – 3
- Remaining the same – 0
- Pastors – 2
- Parochial Vicars – 2
- International Priests – 2
- Deacons – 2
- Directors of Parish Life/Sacramental Ministers – 1/1



Key: *Open*, *Limited Use*, *Closed*

57 ST. ANN PARISH, CADILLAC – OPEN

Pastor: Rev. Michael Janowski; Parochial Vicar: Rev. Kanul Baliaj Singh

58 ST. STEPHEN PARISH, LAKE CITY – OPEN

59 ST. THERESA PARISH, MANTON – LIMITED-USE CHURCH

60 ST. EDWARD PARISH, HARRIETTA – LIMITED-USE CHURCH

61 DIVINE MERCY PARISH, MANISTEE – OPEN

Pastor: Rev. James Bearss; Parochial Vicar: Rev. Shabu Kunnathoor

62 GUARDIAN ANGELS CHURCH, MANISTEE – LIMITED-USE CHURCH

63 ST. JOSEPH PARISH, ONEKAMA – OPEN

64 ST. ANN PARISH, FRANKFORT – OPEN

Director of Parish Life: Kristin Smeltzer;
Sacramental Minister: Rev. Christopher Welch

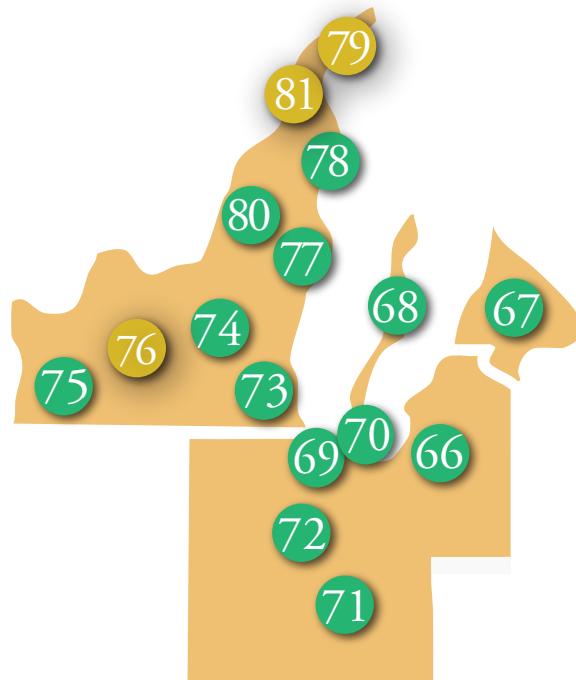
65 ST. RAPHAEL PARISH, COPEMISH – LIMITED-USE CHURCH

WEST VICARIATE

Vicar: Rev. Anthony Citro

West Vicariate Snapshot

- Parishes – 12
- Parish Clusters – 3
- Limited-Use Churches – 3
- Closing – 0
- Cluster Changing – 3
- Remaining the same – 7
- Pastors – 9
- Parochial Vicars – 2
- International Priests – 2
- Deacons – 11
- Directors of Parish Life/Sacramental Ministers – 0



Key: *Open*, *Limited Use*, *Closed*

66 CHRIST THE KING PARISH, ACME – OPEN
Pastor: Rev. Christopher Jarvis; Parochial Vicar: Rev. Cleetus Koochikkatt George

67 SACRED HEART PARISH, ELK RAPIDS – OPEN

68 ST. JOSEPH PARISH, MAPLETON – OPEN
Pastor: Rev. Benjamin Rexroat

69 IMMACULATE CONCEPTION PARISH, TRAVERSE CITY – OPEN
Pastor: Rev. Anthony Citro

70 ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI PARISH, TRAVERSE CITY – OPEN
Pastor: Rev. Michael Lingaur; Parochial Vicar: Rev. Joy Libin

71 ST. MARY OF HANNAH PARISH, KINGSLEY – OPEN
Pastor: Rev. Greg McCallum

72 ST. PATRICK PARISH, TRAVERSE CITY – OPEN

73 OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE CHAPEL, TRAVERSE CITY – OPEN
Vicar for Hispanic Ministry: Rev. Wayne Dziekan
Center for Hispanic Ministry Apostolate

74 HOLY ROSARY PARISH, CEDAR – OPEN
Pastor: Rev. Bradley Nursey

75 ST. PHILIP NERI PARISH, EMPIRE – OPEN
Pastor: Rev. Kenneth Stachnik

76 ST. RITA / ST. JOSEPH PARISH, MAPLE CITY – LIMITED-USE CHURCH

77 ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL PARISH, SUTTONS BAY – OPEN
Pastor: Rev. Patrick Maher

78 ST. KATERI TEKAKWITHA PARISH, PESHAWBESTOWN – OPEN
Center for Native American Apostolate

79 ST. GERTRUDE PARISH, NORTHPORT – LIMITED-USE CHURCH

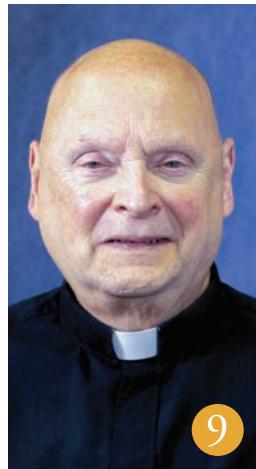
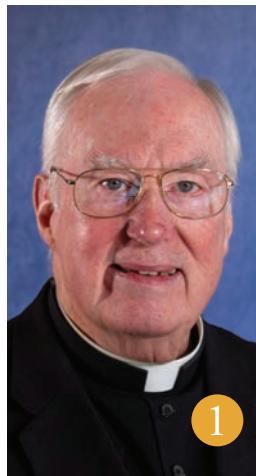
80 ST. MARY PARISH, LAKE LEELANAU – OPEN
Pastor: Rev. James Siler

81 ST. WENCESLAUS PARISH, GILL'S PIER – LIMITED-USE CHURCH

Overview

Diocesan Leadership

1. Rev. James Hayden – from Vicar General to retirement
2. Rev. Charles Donajkowski – from Pastor to Vicar General
3. Julie Erhardt – to Chief of Staff and Director of Canonical Affairs
4. Rev. Matthew Furgiuele – from Tribunal Judge to Judicial Vicar
5. Dr. John Amos – from Director of the Tribunal to Tribunal Advocate
6. Rev. Benjamin Martin – to Regional Vicar (East Vicariate)
7. Sr. Sue Gardner – from Coordinator of Native American Ministry to return to her religious community
8. Rev. Patrick Maher and Deacon Curtis Chambers – Co-Coordinators of Native American Ministry
9. Rev. Joseph Graff from Spiritual Formation Director of Permanent Diaconate Formation Program to Retirement
10. Rev. Michael Class – from Sacramental Minister to Spiritual Formation Director of Permanent Diaconate Formation Program and Administrator for a three parish cluster





**For More Information,
visit DioceseofGaylord.org/PastoralPlan2026**



DIOCESE
— *of* —
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