

Archdiocese of Louisville Parish Planning Process 2025 - 2026

Report to the Presbyterate – June 5, 2025

Rationale for Planning Process

The Archdiocese of Louisville is a proud diocese with a rich heritage of faith. The parishes, schools and agencies serve more than 150,000 registered members and perhaps 40,000 more who are not enrolled in a parish. Many thousands more who are not Catholic rely on the pastoral care, schools, social services and health care provided in our 24 counties.

The works of the Church are being carried out in an era of tremendous change. Demographic and population shifts, particularly age and ethnicity, have reshaped our communities. Changes in religious practice including decreases in Mass attendance, reception of the sacraments, and religious practices in the home, have resulted in fewer numbers of engaged Catholics. Societal changes with increased secularization, greater disparity in economic stability, and significant divisions in political views have created ever deepening divides in communities.

Meanwhile there are indications of a growing hunger for spiritual renewal. There remains a desire among Catholics to have parishes alive and growing where priests and other church personnel are available to offer support and pastoral care in times of sorrow and joy. They want quality formation and education, inspiring worship, opportunities for service, and a vibrant social community.

These dynamics form a backdrop to operational challenges impacting the Archdiocese of Louisville in 2025.

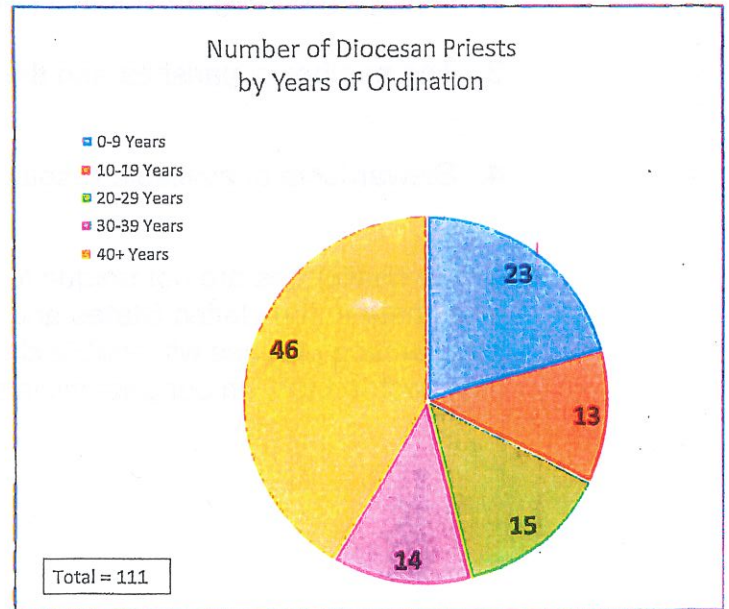
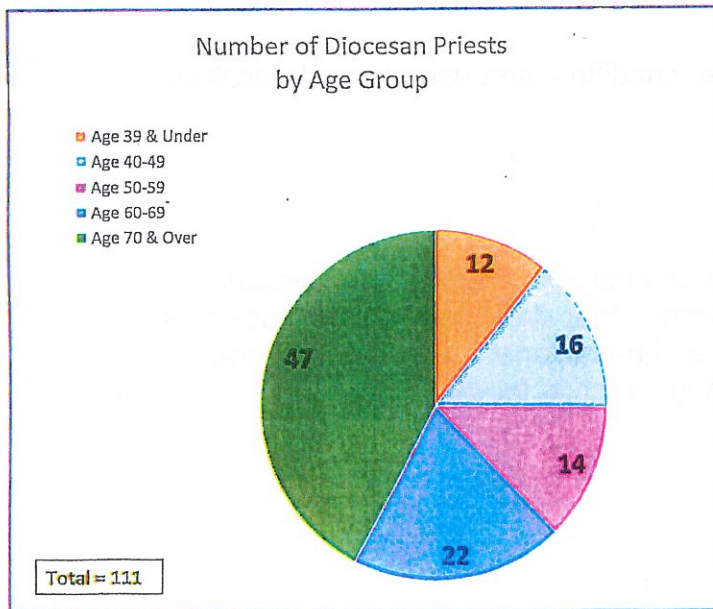
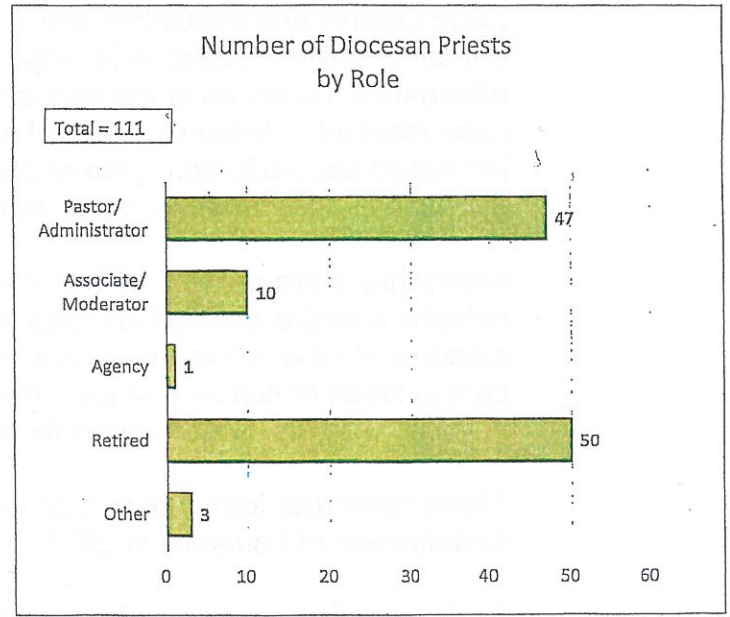
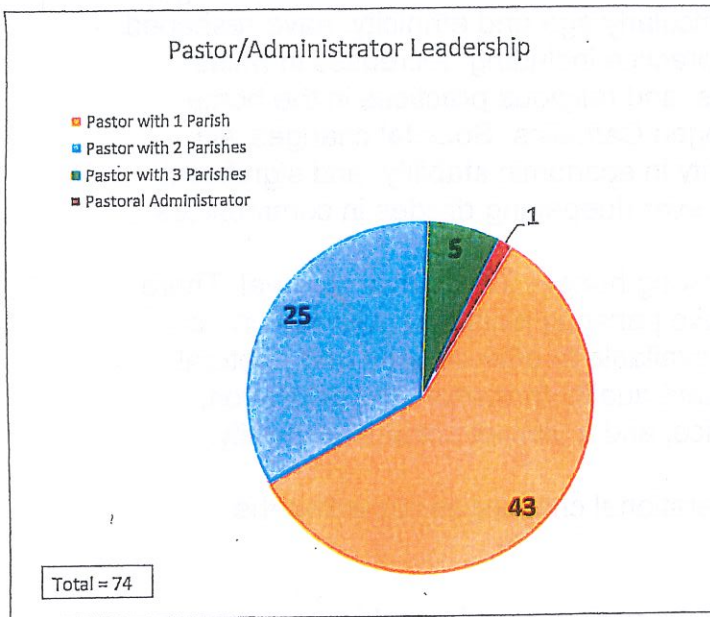
1. The available number of priests to serve parishes and parishioners.
2. Changing demographics and population trends.
3. The number of parishes and the age, condition, and use of parish facilities.
4. Stewardship of available resources.

These challenges are not unique to this archdiocese. Similar trends exist elsewhere in the United States and in some other countries. It is the hope that the planning process will enable clergy and parishioners to determine together how best to build on our past while setting direction for the future.

Data on Priests Serving in the Archdiocese

The available number of priests to serve parishes and parishioners is limited.

- There are 57 archdiocesan priests with parish assignments.
- Dependent on 35 non-archdiocesan priests for parish assignments.
- New federal laws may impact number of available international priests.
- Dependent on retired priests to provide sacraments.
- More than 40% of the pastors serve more than one parish.
- Average of 15 seminarians annually over past 12 years.



Data on demographic and population trends.

Catholics in the Archdiocese of Louisville during the decade 2010-2020:

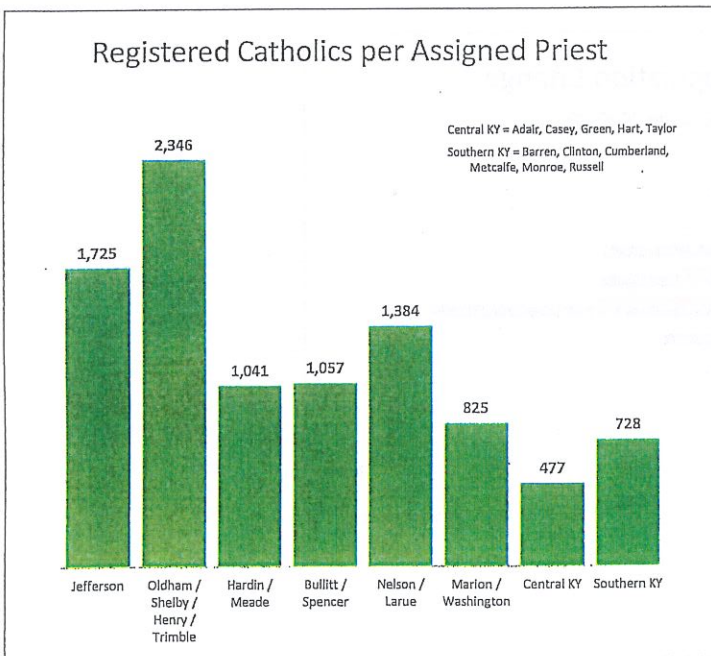
- Registered Catholics decreased 20%
- Unregistered Catholics likely increased by an unknown percentage
- Infant/minor baptisms decreased 25%
- 72% of registered Catholics are in Jefferson County / 28% in other counties

Overall population change in the Archdiocese during the decade 2010-2020:

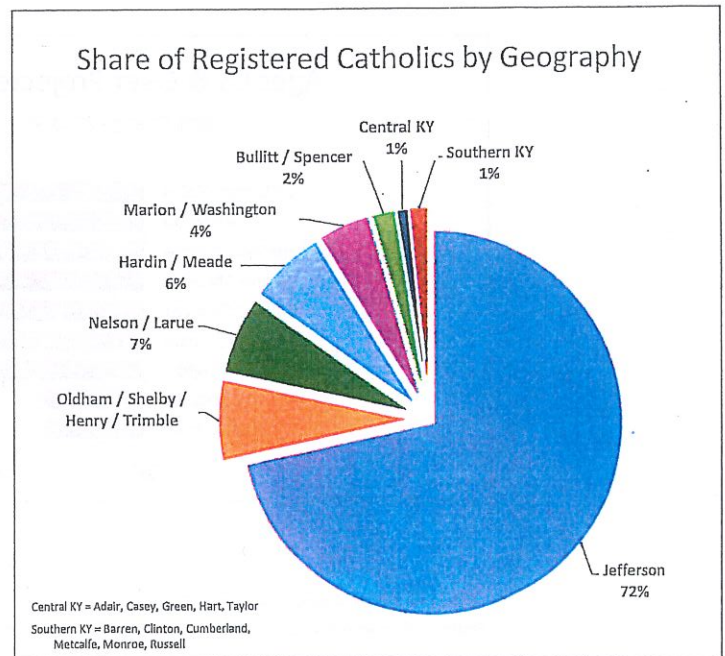
- Total population increased 6%
- Ages 19 and under decreased less than 1%
- Ages 65 and over increased 35%
- Hispanic/Latino population increased 66%

Overall population projection in the Archdiocese for the decade 2020-2030:

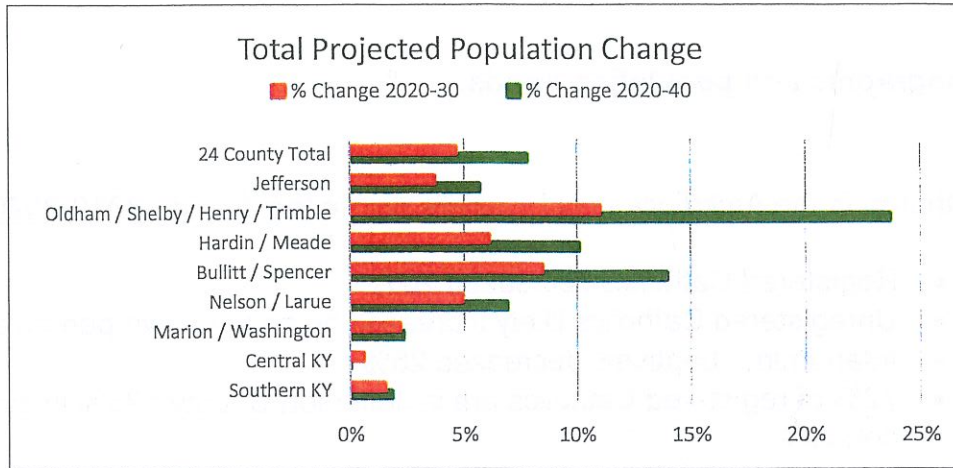
- Total population projected to increase 5%
- Ages 19 and under projected to increase 1%
- Ages 65 and over projected to increase 24%



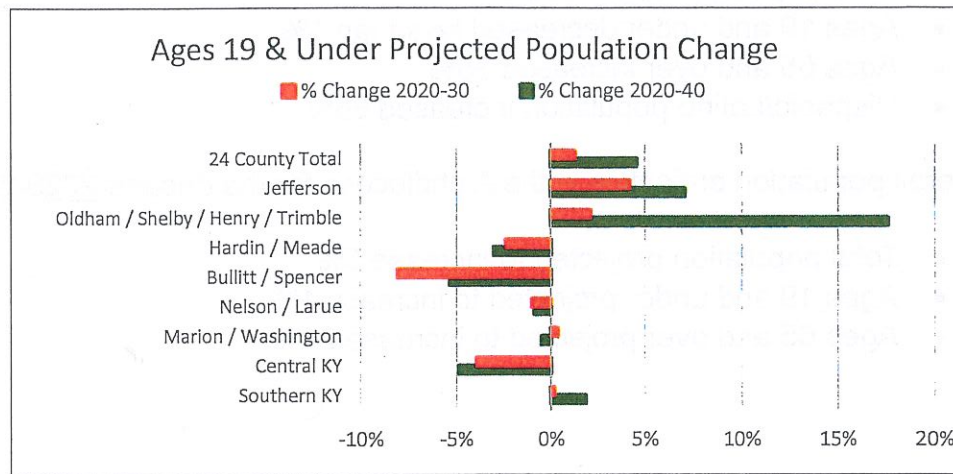
Source: Official Catholic Directory 2024 and Priest Personnel Office



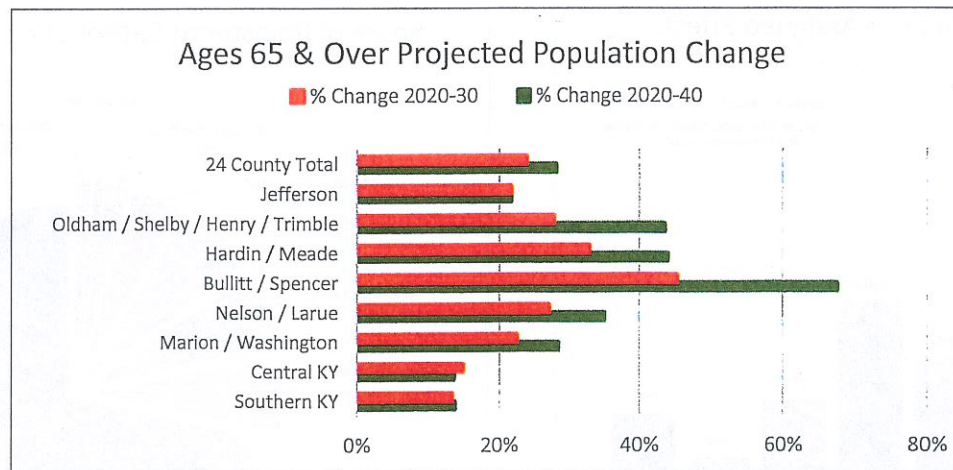
Source: Official Catholic Directory 2024 (parish submissions)



Source: Kentucky State Data Center



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Central KY = Adair, Casey, Green, Hart, Taylor
 Southern KY = Barren, Clinton, Cumberland, Metcalfe, Monroe, Russell

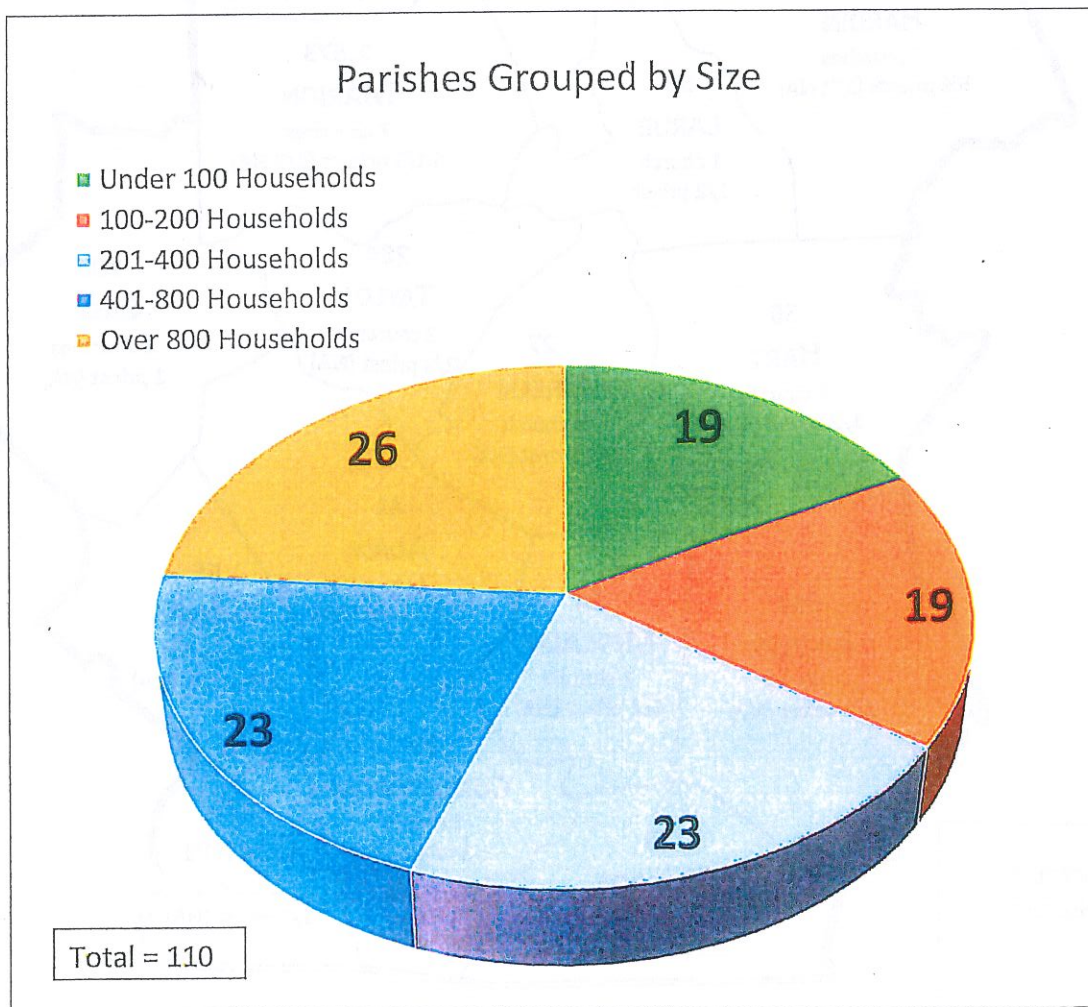
Data on the number of parishes, missions, shrine

Number of parishes in the Archdiocese:

- 1989 = 138
- 1997 = 126
- 2001 = 122
- 2010 = 111
- 2025 = 110
- Of 110 archdiocesan churches, 57 are in Jefferson County / 53 in other counties

Parish Sunday Masses (includes Saturday Vigils):

- 159 Sunday Masses celebrated weekly in Jefferson County
- 109 Sunday Masses celebrated weekly in other counties
- Average of 2.44 Sunday Masses per parish across the Archdiocese
- Nationally, fewer than 25% of Catholics regularly attend weekend Mass



INFORMATION KEY

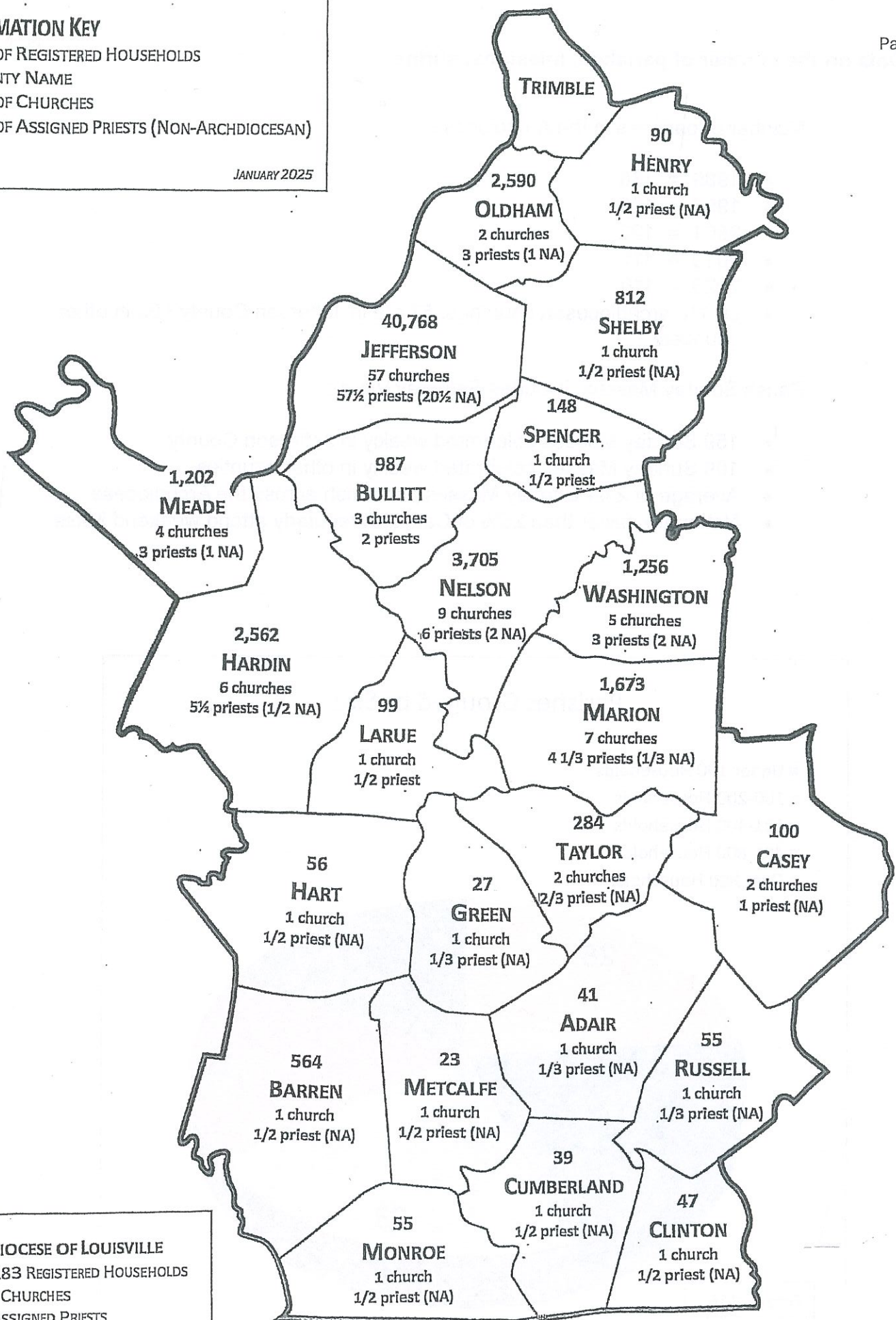
NO. OF REGISTERED HOUSEHOLDS

COUNTY NAME

NO. OF CHURCHES

NO. OF ASSIGNED PRIESTS (NON-ARCHDIOCESAN)

JANUARY 2025



ARCHDIOCESE OF LOUISVILLE

57,183 REGISTERED HOUSEHOLDS

110 CHURCHES

92 ASSIGNED PRIESTS

Data on Schools:

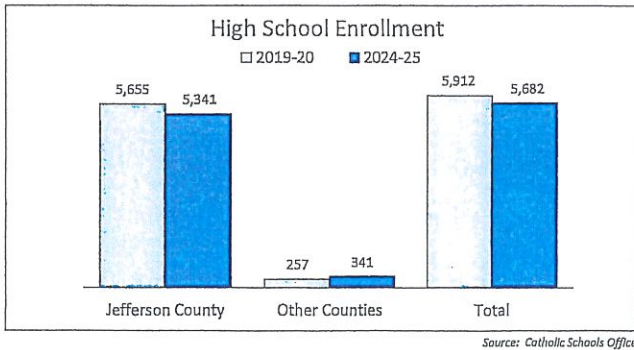
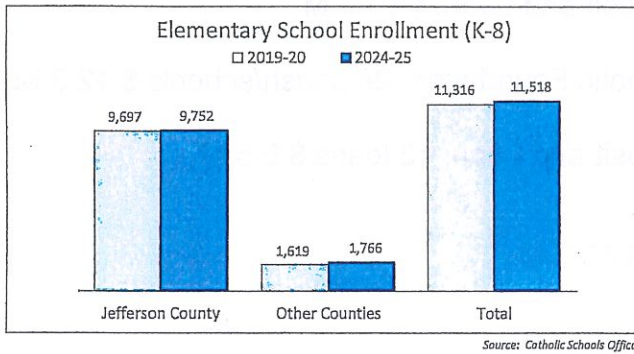
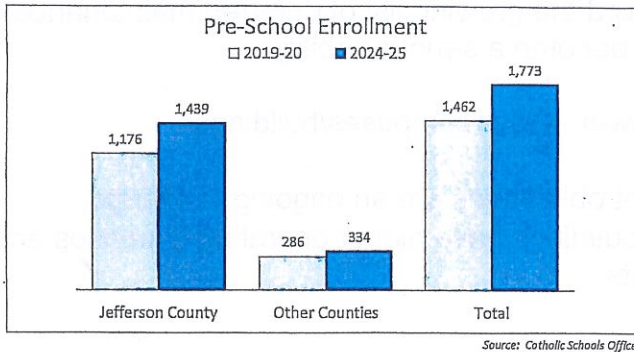
School enrollment changes for the 5-year period 2019-2024:

- Pre-K enrollment increased 21%
- K-8 enrollment increased 2%
- High school enrollment decreased 4%

Elementary school finances and sizes (excludes independent schools):

- Most parishes with an elementary school provide some degree of subsidy
- Financial health of elementary schools ranges from stable to struggling
- Current K-8 enrollments of our 33 parochial/regional elementary schools are:

400+ students: 10 schools
 300-399 students: 7 schools
 200-299 students: 6 schools
 100-199 students: 7 schools
 Under 100 students: 3 schools



Data on Stewardship Resources: Finances and Facilities

Financial health of parishes ranges from thriving to struggling:

- Sunday collections have been relatively flat for several years
- Covid-era federal grants/subsidies masked underlying financial deterioration
- Sharing a pastor is the only way some parishes can afford a priest assignment

A large number of parishes have older buildings, and many are historic:

- Buildings, equipment, and systems are inefficient due to age
- Excess/unused buildings due to declining membership
- Burden of high maintenance/repair costs – trending toward unsustainable
- Some cannot afford the growing list of deferred maintenance/repair issues. This can become a serious liability.

A few parishes have newer, larger campuses/buildings:

- Construction debt obligations are an ongoing challenge
- Larger, modern buildings have higher operating expenses and capital replacement costs

Notes:

1. Parish Deposits in Deposit and Loan: \$ 91.3 M
2. Parish Deposits in Catholic Foundation: 28 parish/schools \$ 12.3 M
3. Parish loans from Deposit and Loan: 12 loans \$ 5.5 M
4. External parish loans: \$ 33.7 M

Overview of Parish Planning Process

Principles of Effective Parish Planning

Planning requires pastor input and direction.

Planning should engage parish leaders.

Planning begins with a Situation Analysis and is dependent on data.

Planning requires effective communication.

PART I: Parish Studies - Quantitative and Qualitative

Pastors are encouraged to engage their parish and finance councils in preparation of these reports. Parish staff and other leaders might also be consulted.

Quantitative Report

Each parish is asked to prepare a Quantitative Report detailing present parish statistics on parishioners (number, age, ethnicity etc.) sacramental celebrations, mass attendance, programming, present staff positions; facilities, finances and stewardship, committees and councils, and any inter-parish initiatives or collaboration already in place.

Qualitative Report

Each parish is asked to prepare a Qualitative Report indicating what it sees as the particular strengths of the parish and what challenges it is facing. In addition, the parish will be asked to identify the unique mission it fulfills for its membership and within the wider community.

Parishes with a school are asked to provide an additional information on the school.

Timeline

- May 2025 - Questionnaires mailed to parishes.
- August 31, 2025 - Parish questionnaires due back to the Archdiocese.

PART II: Parish Planning Recommendations

Each parish in the deanery will receive the reports from the other parishes in their deanery. Using the reports as a resource, each parish is asked to prepare recommendations for possible changes in parish structures and priest assignments. Where appropriate, recommendations about parish schools will also be requested. Parishes may consult with other parishes in preparing their recommendations. *Detailed instructions and materials will be provided at that time.*

The recommendations must be based on the following assumptions:

- Each deanery must anticipate that there will be a 20% reduction in the number of priests available for parish ministry within the next five years.
- Whatever demographic trends (growth or shrinkage, age, ethnicity, economics) presently impacting the parish will continue for the next 5-10 years.
- The only source of financial support is the Catholic households within each deanery.
- Each set of parish recommendations would consider the following issues:

Key Question: In light of the parish reports, changes in the number of available priests, the data on demographics, the information on facilities and finances, would you recommend:

1. Closures.

There are more parishes in this deanery than are needed to provide for the pastoral care of this community. These parishes should be considered for closure:

2. Mergers.

The following parishes could be merged into a single parish. The new parish will work with the Archdiocese to determine which facilities to maintain:

3. Clusters.

The following clusters within the deanery should be divided and no longer share a pastor:

The following additional parish clusters could be created in our deanery allowing a single pastor to be assigned to two or more parishes:

4. New Parishes

There are not enough parishes to serve the faithful in this deanery. Where could a new parish be added from dividing a present parish.

5. Schools.

Changes in demographics and the cost of education suggest the following schools should be closed or merged with another forming a shared school:

6. Other alternatives ... (developed by parish/group of parishes)

Timeline

- October 2025 - Parish reports distributed to parishes of each deanery with guidelines for preparing recommendations.
- January 2026 - Parish recommendations due back to the Archdiocese.

PART III: Planning Commission Review

Archbishop Shelton will appoint a Planning Commission to review each of the parish recommendation reports and prepare draft deanery plans. The plans will be distributed to each parish in a deanery for consultation and feedback. Appropriate deanery gatherings will be held to gather deanery feedback.

Additional consultations will occur with various groups such as retired priests, school leaders, and archdiocesan committees to gather more insights.

The feedback from the deanery may be:

1. Affirm the plan prepared by the Archdiocesan Planning Commission
2. Suggest adjustments to the proposed plan
3. Develop a new alternate plan

Timeline

- Winter 2026 - Planning commission prepares deanery plans for distribution.
- Spring 2026 - Draft deanery plans distributed to each parish.
- Spring 2026 - Deanery gatherings to prepare feedback on draft plan. Feedback submitted to Planning Commission.

PART IV: Preparation of Final Parish Plan

After the period of consultation is complete the Planning Commission will prepare a single comprehensive plan for the archdiocese. This plan will be reviewed by the Priest Council.

The plan is subject to the approval of Archbishop Shelton. The intention is that a final plan and implementation timeline will be announced before the end of 2026.

Timeline

- Summer 2026 - Planning Commission prepares final plan for review and consultation with the Priests' Council and Pastoral Council.
- Fall 2026 -Final archdiocesan plan announced by Archbishop Shelton. Implementation timelines will follow for each element of the plan.