

Family of Parishes Discernment Meeting

Joint Pastoral & Finance Councils

(St. John the Baptist - Custer, St. Rose of Lima - Hill City, Our Lady of Mount Carmel - Keystone)

Date: April 20, 2026

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Location: St. John the Baptist Parish, Custer

1. Opening Prayer & Welcome

- Opening prayer for wisdom, unity, and trust
 - Brief welcome
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2. Introductions

Participants introduced themselves stating information below:

- Name
 - Council role
 - Parish affiliation
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3. Why We Are Here: The Bigger Picture

- Overview of diocesan strategic planning (4+ years of meetings, parish input, and discernment)
- Focus on helping families flourish in faith across all ages
- Addressing realities:
 - Fewer priests
 - Increasing pastoral needs
 - Seasonal population challenges
- Emphasis on:
 - Strengthening faith formation (youth and adult)
 - Reaching inactive parishioners
 - Sharing resources and collaboration
 - Supporting priests' well-being

- Goal: **Flourishing parishes, not just surviving** “We want our children and grandchildren to inherit strong parishes.”
 - Reference to diocesan guiding principles:
<https://www.rapidcitydiocese.org/strategicplanning/>
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4. What This Is — and What It Is Not

What remains local:

- Parish identity and culture
- Independent pastoral and finance councils
- Separate finances and assets (pre-July 1, 2026)

What may be shared:

- Pastoral leadership
 - Scheduling and planning
 - Administrative and support structures
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5. Key Areas for Discernment

A. Priest Care, Salary, and Workload

- Fr. Mark’s current responsibilities include:
 - Multiple parishes (Hill City, Keystone)
 - Tribunal work
 - Spanish ministry
 - Daily and weekend Masses
- Considerations:
 - Sustainable schedule (max two weekend Masses/day)
 - Protected day off (Monday)
 - Consistent weekly schedule
 - Balancing ministry demands with priest well-being

Potential adjustments:

- Daily Mass rotation between Hill City T/Th and Custer W/F, adoration in Custer on Friday
- Keystone status as an oratory (limited Mass schedule)

- Discussed the possibility of visiting priests during the summer in Keystone; although this would essentially give the people there less time with their Pastor.
- Potential use of Keystone for daily retreats or something for our youth etc.
- Use of rectory space in Custer for ministry, classroom space and administration offices *if we proceed with the building project*

Staffing needs:

- Father Mark has a desire for one full-time administrative assistant
 - Samantha Chamley (sp – her actual name is Lisa...Samantha was her religious name) worked at St. Rose and if she were to come back to work with Father Mark at both parishes, she requested 40 hours a week, \$19.00 an hour, \$38,000 a year (contract labor/no benefits requested).
 - Kate is retiring in the fall and currently works 15 hours a week in Custer
 - Brenda currently works 10 hours a week in Custer and would like to keep her hours (handles accounting)
 - Brad works 18 hours a week in Hill City and is not interested in increased hours
 - Hill City has accounting done through the Accounting Offices at the Chancery in Rapid
- Continued local office presence in both parishes
- Office hours aligned with daily Mass times T/Th Hill City, W/F Custer

Facilities:

- Ongoing building planning in Custer, awaiting diocesan approval
- Future fundraising required upon approval

B. Financial Stewardship

- Current parish population estimates:
 - Hill City: ~120 families
 - Keystone: ~20 families
 - Custer: ~147 families
- Discussion of cost-sharing models (possibly population-based)
- Diocese projection:
 - Hill City: 39%
 - Custer: 61%

Key financial points:

- One EIN and unified financial structure for the new Hill City + Keystone Parish, beginning July 1, 2026 when Bishop Bullock will merge the two parishes into one, larger Parish.

- In this new Hill City + Keystone Parish, all pre-existing funds remain designated in sub-accounts, respecting the will of the donors, paying for costs of each respective Church / Oratory, until those respective funds are exhausted.
- Post-July 1 income would then be shared within unified system of the new Hill City + Keystone Parish
- All of this, however, is entirely distinct from Custer Parish, which still retains its own, distinct EIN, bank accounts, assets/liabilities, etc.
- To be clear, St. John the Baptist Parish (Custer) and the new St. Rose of Lima Parish (Hill City + Keystone) will remain two distinct parishes, each retaining its own Pastoral Council, Finance Council, etc., though sharing the same Pastor (Fr. Mark)
 - St. John the Baptist Parish possesses and cares for only one Church building (St. John the Baptist Church in Custer)
 - St. Rose of Lima will possess and care for two Church buildings (St. Rose of Lima Church in Hill City; and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Oratory – renamed in Canon Law an “Oratory”, because it would not have regularly scheduled Masses, and would be open according to the discretion of the Pastor – in Keystone)

Additional considerations:

- Shared subscriptions and resources (Magnificat, Word Among Us, Formed.org)
- Budget planning timeline
- Potential future use of Keystone property (retreats, youth ministry, have it open daily for prayer)

C. Weekend Mass Schedules

Proposed schedule concept:

- Saturday:
 - Hill City 4:30 or 5:00 pm
 - Custer 6:30 or 7:00 pm (Father Mark would stay in Custer overnight)
- Sunday:
 - Custer 8:00 am
 - Hill City 10:00 am (Father Mark would remain in Hill City, where he will reside)

Additional considerations:

- Possible change from bilingual to English Mass on Saturday in Hill City
- Summer attendance and overflow needs – adding an English Saturday Mass in Hill City would help with their overflow needs
- Importance of:
 - Consistency
 - Building relationships with one priest
 - Avoiding over-reliance on visiting clergy

6. Hopes, Concerns, and Non-Negotiables

Discussion prompts:

- ~~What gives us hope?~~
- ~~What concerns us?~~
- ~~What must be protected to maintain healthy parish life?~~

7. Next Steps & Communication

Communication & Staffing

- Evaluation of:
 - Parish websites (combine or maintain separately)
 - Social media and communication platforms (FlockNote, bulletins) (combine or maintain separately)
- Bulletin transition to LPI in Custer on May 10, 2026. Will this be a shared publication as of July 1, 2026?

Council Collaboration

- Current meeting schedules vary by parish
- Discussion of future ongoing joint or coordinated meetings (undecided)

Upcoming Meeting

- **May 11, 2026 – 6:00 p.m. (Hill City)**

Parish Communication

- ~~Plan for informing parishioners~~
- ~~Ongoing council involvement in transition~~

8. Closing Prayer