

Summary of Comments and Questions from the Parish Town Hall Meeting – August 25, 2026

I have taken the liberty to group the various comments and questions from the meeting into the following categories or themes: **Parish Organization, Liturgies, Parish Unity and Spirit, Communication and Miscellaneous.** The names of the folks making these statements are not included. (Twenty-one different members asked questions or made comments) If you feel your comments are not included someplace in this summary, please let Fr. Michael know. It was especially difficult to capture the depth and articulation of your thoughts surrounding the parish unity/spirit theme. Hopefully those ideas can be fleshed out as we grow through this changing process at Newman.

*Thank you all for showing up with a controlled passion for OUR parish. I thought Fr. Michael set an excellent tone for the night by saying that we were all there because we love OUR parish. The comfort and ease of the conversation was amicable and respectful throughout the night. I thank Fr. Michael and Fr. Kyle for spending this evening of sharing with us.

*Editorial Note from Ken Ripp, recorder for the evening

Parish Organization: Eight members contributed

*Newman Parish will remain Newman Parish while joining a “family of parishes” (pastorate, which will have its own unique name, to be determined) including St. Pats/Sacred Heart and Immaculate Conception.

*There will be a pastorate council composed of two members from each parish plus administration staff and clergy. The method of selection for the pastorate council will be determined soon.

*Newman will continue to have our own Pastoral Council and Finance Council. In addition, we will have these four active committees: Liturgy, Justice and Peace, Education, and Family Life.

*We need to appreciate the different cultures each of the parishes bring to the table. This means we have base Catholic Christian values we share but we need to recognize, articulate, and celebrate the unique values and mission of each parish within the pastorate.

*A parish census and membership list will be generated for each parish in the pastorate.

*Each parish within the pastorate will remain financially independent of each other.

Liturgies: Nine members contributed

*Our present school term mass schedule will continue for this year. Fr. Michael and Father John will rotate weekends between Newman and St. Pat's/Sacred Heart. Fr. Kyle will do the Sunday night mass each weekend. He will also do the Spanish mass each Sunday at Altoona and most of the daily masses at Newman. There will be a weekly communication noting which priest will be presiding at which liturgy.

*There were several comments about our liturgies becoming less dynamic and more ritual based, routine, and at times extremely long. Such liturgies have been a major cause of the ongoing exodus of stationary members to St. James. Such liturgies also make it difficult to keep all ages of students engaged. The priest sets the tone for each mass. A warm and welcoming greeting to start a liturgical celebration makes all the difference.

*Father Michael said he would look into how much time each priest is taking at mass. He will suggest to Fr. John that he type out his homilies and distribute them before mass to make understanding his thoughts and words easier.

*Father Michael, responded to a question about bringing the offering of the blood of Christ back to mass, by saying it was the first he heard about it from anyone. He said he was open to considering bringing the chalice back if enough interest was expressed by parish members.

*Families with smaller children have always felt welcomed at Newman. The kids look forward to seeing the same pastor each mass. The rotation schedule makes this impossible but the good news is that it should only be for this year.

*There were several comments about the divide in worship styles that has developed over the past few years. A feeling of disunity has developed as some students are taking a much more ritual approach to the eucharistic celebration. A particular divide, with its accompanying uncertainty, has developed over body position and posture during several parts of the mass. Is there some way this divide can be mended?

Parish Unity and Spirit: six members contributed

*Pastor needs to set the tone. (see liturgy section)

*The sense of disunity seen at mass along with a lack of stationary member/student interaction has caused many to feel that the past spirit of Newman has been lost.

*Opportunities for more Student/Stationary interaction are needed. Who will take the initiative to make this happen? Will Sean Coyle be looked to for leading this cause?

*Several members lamented the fact that Newman used to feel like a spiritual home – that feeling is fading. What can we all do to bring that back?

Communication: Five Members Contributed

*Flock notes have been very beneficial. Several members asked that they be continued on a weekly basis.

*Where do we go with questions about events, masses, or other Parish related concerns? Is there a staff directory available? Has the phone answering machine been updated to include all new staff at Newman and/or the pastorate? Fr. Michael will take care of this.

*Will there be a priest at the ERC throughout the week? Will this priest have set office hours? Fr. Kyle will have his office where Fr. Dan had his office. Hours?

Miscellaneous

*Will we be pursuing more interaction and joint services with University Lutheran? Are we staying open to suggestions for joint programming or sharing in joint projects?

*One question on funerals related to the appropriate time for a eulogy? Fr. Michael responded that the appropriate time for a eulogy is right before the funeral mass begins.

*Appreciation was expressed for the new idea of blessing monthly anniversaries/birthdays first weekend mass each month. All three priest will continue to do this – great for parish spirit!!