



***Abundant Life: Enriching Faith and Community on
Campus and Beyond***

The Elon University Catholic Life 2025-2030 Strategic Plan

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INTRODUCTION

As expressed by the U.S. Bishops' pastoral letter *Empowered by the Spirit*, "Campus ministry gathers the Catholics on campus for prayer, worship, and learning in order that they might bring the light of the Gospel to illumine the concerns and hopes of the academic community." Programs like this enhance student life on the university campus and create an encouraging space for students to engage in their faith at a pivotal stage of formation in their lives. Catholic Life at Elon University and the Catholic Campus Ministry (CCM) student organization are a vibrant and welcoming community on Elon's campus that serve Catholic students, faculty, staff, the surrounding community, as well as those interested in learning more about the Catholic tradition.

To support this engagement of faith, this strategic plan lays the groundwork for Catholic Life and Catholic Campus Ministry over the next five years, prioritizing the needs of students and establishing the ministry as an essential part of campus life. This work also contributes to Elon University's broader Multifaith Strategic Plan.

BACKGROUND

Catholic Life has existed on the Elon campus as far back as 1977; it began in response to a growing Catholic student population at Elon and their passion to appropriate their Catholic faith. March 1989 is the earliest SGA record of Catholic Campus Ministry as an official student organization.

According to the university's latest enrollment report (Fall 2023), over 1,400 undergraduates self-identified as belonging to the Catholic faith tradition. This comprises approximately 22% of the total undergraduate population, making Catholicism the largest single religious denomination on Elon's campus (among students who disclosed their religious tradition).

The program is served currently by Associate Chaplain for Catholic Life, Fr. Peter C. Tremblay, OFM Conv. He is the seventh priest appointed by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Raleigh and the Our Lady of the Angels Province (Order of Friars Minor Conventual) to Elon University. Four full-time lay staff members serve in a variety of roles to mentor students and support the Catholic faith at Elon. All professional staff are employees of the Diocese of Raleigh and are granted "affiliate staff" status at Elon as the department of Catholic Life. The Elon Catholic Life Advisory Board also supports the ministry and consists of Catholic parents, alumni, students, staff, community members, and other stakeholders.

CCM's student programming aspects are led largely by a Servant Leadership Team typically numbering 12 students. They serve as role models to the Elon community and invite them into a deeper engagement with their faith through personal relationships and social, spiritual, and service-based events. In addition, Catholic Life annually funds four to eight student interns who lead efforts to engage first-year students and oversee the musical elements that are an important part of Catholic services.

Catholic Masses are held in various locations on campus, including the Elon Community Church, Numen Lumen Pavilion, and Holt Chapel. Elon University also provides Catholic Life staff with office space in the Numen Lumen Pavilion. From 2009-2024, the Diocese of Raleigh worked under a contract with Elon University to make the Holland House on South Campus the center for Catholic Campus Ministry, providing programming space as well as some residences. Dedicated as the "Catholic Newman Center", it was the first religious life house and residence at Elon. As the 2025 Catholic Life Strategic Plan was being drafted, Elon University was poised to make changes to meet the school's broader facility needs – changes that would likely impact CCM's ability to continue using its current facility. Accordingly, a new facility is an important element of this strategic plan. Significant work in this area was completed in the months leading up to this strategic planning period.

THE 2025 STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The 2019-2024 Catholic Life Strategic Plan was the first of its kind for the ministry. The 2019 Catholic Life Summit engaged a broad range of constituents (students, alumni, parents, faculty, Advisory Board members, and university officials), identifying six key priorities for Catholic Life for the next five years. Some major accomplishments of the plan include the establishment of the Engagement Internship program, growth in retreat attendance and leadership training, increase in communication methods, and expansion of professional staff.

The 2025-2030 Strategic Plan, which builds on that work, involved a similar process. Work on the current plan began with Advisory Board discussions in 2022, leading to development of surveys and focus groups, both qualitative and quantitative, that were conducted during the Spring of 2023 and Winter 2024. Participants came from the same broad range of constituents consulted during the previous planning process. The results of the surveys, along with the analysis completed by the strategic planning committee of the Advisory Board, were presented during a workshop held on campus in April 2024. The workshop included representatives from the various constituencies and resulted in additional insights used in preparing this plan.

The priorities of the current plan are not too different from the last plan – a testament to the fact that the strategies identified previously were, for the most part, effective in achieving the goals identified. Taking inspiration from the 10th chapter of the Gospel of John, where Jesus the Good Shepherd proclaims, **“I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly” (John 10:10)**, the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan responds to the current needs as identified by our constituents, builds on what we know works, and includes new initiatives to meet challenges that lie ahead.

As Catholic Life approaches 50 years of service to the Elon community, much consideration was given to how to serve the campus even beyond the timeframe of this plan. To that end, a new facility dedicated for Catholic Life, ideally located on campus and easily accessible by students, is an important part of the plan. This is consistent with the goals of Elon University’s latest Multifaith Strategic Plan, specifically as they relate to supporting “the evaluation of spaces and locations that allow for students to engage in practices that support wellness and being” and auditing “current and proposed university spaces and make recommendations to ensure that Elon community members have access to appropriate and inclusive spaces for religious and contemplative needs.” This new Catholic center will serve the needs of students and the entire university community, helping to entrench Catholic Life and Catholic Campus Ministry as a significant and indispensable part of campus life for decades to come.

MISSION

Catholic Campus Ministry is a welcoming home at Elon where we: LIVE as a community of faith on campus, LOVE Jesus in prayer and the Eucharist, GROW as disciples and leaders, and SERVE the needs of our Elon community and the whole world.

VISION

Our vision is a vibrant, inclusive campus community where students and staff encounter the transformative love of Christ; are empowered to grow in their Catholic faith through worship, fellowship, and service; feel welcomed and supported; and are encouraged to live out the Gospel in their daily lives on campus and beyond.

STRATEGIC GOALS and INITIATIVES

I. ENGAGE - “I know mine and mine know me” (John 10:14)

Increase and enhance participation of students, faculty and staff in Catholic Life activities. Strengthen CCM’s connectivity by collaborating with other campus departments and student organizations.

Initiatives:

- Implement targeted welcome and outreach to first-year students beginning early in the summer before enrollment and during orientation weeks.
- Form partnerships with University Admissions to share information about Catholic Life to prospective students.
- Develop further engagement and mentorship programs linking new students with upperclassmen.
- Establish partnerships with other campus organizations for joint events.
- Create opportunities to serve students involved in other key areas of campus, e.g., athletics, Greek Life, and identity centers.
- Establish drop-in areas within the new Catholic facility to allow for hospitality and community building.
- Create low-commitment social events to encourage initial encounters with students both at the new Catholic facility and other areas on campus.
- Create a faculty and staff resource group to support faith practices of Elon employees.
- Invite faculty and staff to participate alongside students at events, retreats, and service opportunities.
- Explore innovative marketing strategies like special events and physical promotions on campus.
- Collaborate with Elon University administration to integrate faith-based activities into wider campus events.

II. DEEPEN - “I am the good shepherd.” (John 10:11)

Enrich the spiritual life and faith understanding within the CCM Community and serve as an important gateway to lifelong faith engagement.

Initiatives:

- Expand the discipleship model to encourage students in their practice of faith.
- Deepen the experience of Mass through fostering a greater understanding of worship and encouraging active participation.
- Explore the concept of mini-retreats to encounter students with limited time availability.
- Organize workshops and talks that integrate faith with academic and career guidance.

- Create programs to educate students on their global responsibility as faithful citizens.
- Connect students with Catholic faculty and staff to build a network of support.
- Establish a Eucharistic Adoration chapel within the new facility, with 24/7 access to students for prayer.
- Explore additional forms of prayer and other contemplative practices that support student wellness and wellbeing at the new Catholic facility and Eucharistic Adoration chapel. (A goal noted in the 2022-2023 Multifaith Strategic Planning Committee Report)
- Engage with CCM alumni to facilitate mentoring and engagement with current students.
- Initiate a speaker series and seek bringing high-profile Catholics to campus.
- Craft new videos and other media to engage students' faith through social platforms.

III. STRENGTHEN - "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish." (John 10:28)

Build on what's working and establish a long-range success model for the ministry as it enters into the next 50 years. Ensure that Catholic facilities are consistent with the organization's goals to provide for students' spiritual needs, expand its reach, and increase opportunities for broader community support.

Initiatives:

- Enrich training and development programs for student leaders to best serve a diverse student population.
- Establish baseline metrics using current visit and engagement data to set standards for increasing engagement and reach.
- Enhance social media presence and email strategies for maximum effectiveness.
- Work closely with Elon University administration and the Diocese of Raleigh to confirm that space and programming requirements are met through current spaces and a new Catholic facility.
- Ensure spaces in the new facility can accommodate multiple-use gatherings for CCM and the Catholic Life community.
- Work closely with University Advancement to secure immediate and long-range funding for spaces and ministerial needs.
- Ensure the Facility Plan prepared in 2023 remains relevant and up to date.
- Undertake succession planning for staff leadership of Catholic Life.
- Strengthen the brand of Catholic Life at Elon to establish clarity, relevance, and longevity.
- Increase monthly giving to provide steady and sustainable resources for the ministry.
- Expand the Advisory Board membership and engage members with updates and results so that they may provide further guidance in line with the plan's goals and objectives.

IV. EXPAND - “These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice.” (John 10:16)

Broaden ministerial reach beyond campus and identify additional ways that the benefits of our ministry and faith can serve ministry constituents outside of Elon.

Initiatives:

- Develop a program of faith-based service activities linking with local community needs.
- Partner with University Alumni Engagement to establish an Elon Catholic alumni network and host alumni gatherings, both virtual and in cities with larger alumni populations.
- Connect with alumni to share experiences of life within a parish and set students up for success after graduation.
- Form a parent group for Catholic parents to engage with the ministry and share resources.
- Partner with University Admissions and other relevant departments to host Catholic family gatherings at off-campus admissions events.
- Initiate events at the new Catholic facility that welcome and encourage family and alumni participation.
- Partner with the University’s Global Education Center to identify where students are studying abroad and provide resources for faith practice.
- Partner with nearby Blessed Sacrament Church to help students bridge the gap between campus ministry and parish life.
- Engage parents and alumni to collaborate and champion Elon Day efforts.
- Leverage media, campus tours, and other opportunities to promote the ministry’s mission, activities, and impact.