



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Peace in Christ be with you.

As you know, it was announced a few weeks ago that Fr. Bryan Kujawa, current pastor of St. Francis Xavier in Oklee, St. Ann in Goodridge, and St. Clement in Grygla, will be receiving a new pastoral assignment in the Diocese of Crookston next July. Because of our current situation with retiring priests, we will not be able to replace Fr. Bryan, and new configurations of parishes will need to be considered.

I was able to meet with the parishioners of those three parishes last week to inform them of this, and I would like to share these changes with you as well, along with the process we will follow to discern the best parish configurations. Also, Jim Remer, Director of Parish Planning will be available to come to your parishes soon and answer questions about this situation. Please watch for that announcement.

We are living in missionary times, when the life we offer in Jesus Christ through our Church is desperately needed by so many who do not yet know Him. This is why our entire Diocese is involved in Planning for Mission. This process is meant to help us discern how we can work together as parishes to accomplish the mission of making disciples of all people, as Jesus commanded (see Matthew 28:18-20).

To facilitate this process, we have been holding leadership summits in all regions of our Diocese. Parish leaders from Roseau, Falun, and Badger participated in a summit on September 27. Parish leaders from Thief River Falls, Red Lake Falls, Brooks, Oklee, Goodridge, and Grygla will participate in one on December 6. These summits are designed to help parish leaders reflect on our parish structures, activities, and culture in light of the missionary needs we have today. We want to ensure that all parishes have the vision, leadership, and resources necessary to foster a culture of evangelization that forms intentional disciples, builds community, and inspires witness.

Because of the immediate impact of Fr. Bryan's reassignment in eight months, we will need to move more quickly in your area. To that end, we have developed a process for your parishes to discern the best scenario for parish life, given our limited resources. This process is attached to this letter. It will begin in December, with leaders from your parish collaborating with leaders from other parishes in the proposed structure. We will provide regular updates online here >> <https://www.crookston.org/planningformission>

Please know of my continued gratitude for your faith and your willingness to journey together in hope.

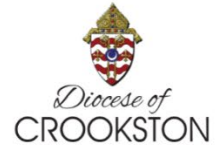
Sincerely, in Christ,

The Most Reverend Andrew H. Cozzens, S.T.D., D. D.
Bishop of Crookston



New Life

Through the Tender Compassion of Our God



Outline of the Planning for Mission Regional Process for the Northeast Deanery

Goal: To ensure that all parishes in the Northeast Deanery have the vision, leadership, resources, and operational foundation necessary to create an effective culture of evangelization that forms intentional disciples, builds communities, and inspires witness.

Some Parameters:

This process will create new clusters for the Northeast Deanery. Those clusters will discern together how to organize themselves to be able to create an effective culture to carry out the mission. The new parish clusters will be:

1. St. Joseph, Red Lake Falls; St. Joseph, Brooks; St. Francis Xavier, Oklee.
2. St. Bernard, Thief River Falls; St. Ann, Goodridge.
3. Sacred Heart, Roseau; St. Philip, Falun; St. Mary Badger; St. Clement, Grygla

No decision has been made about the restructuring of these parish clusters. Each of these clusters will have one priest. Therefore, any proposals for parish restructuring or configuration must take this into consideration. [Please note: the Mass schedule for a cluster should respect Canon Law that a priest will normally have only three Masses between Saturday night and Sunday].

Why do we need Planning for Mission?

Our parishes face a number of challenges — demographics have changed; the parishioner base of some parishes is quite small; lack of volunteers makes it difficult to do the ministry and mission of a parish in some places; we have fewer employees and fewer priests. Because of this, we are led to ask the question: *How can we structure ourselves to serve the mission with fewer resources?*

What is the mission?

Our mission is to live and share with others the saving life of Jesus Christ and his Church. Jesus told us to “Go and make disciples” (Matthew 28:19). To do this we seek to help our parishes to create an effective culture of evangelization that forms intentional disciples, builds communities, and inspires witness.

Parish Representatives

A committee will be formed with 3-4 representatives from each of the parishes. These representatives will be selected by their pastors and will be chosen based on their level of experience in supporting the mission of the Church, their capacity to bring forth an open mind and heart as to where the Holy Spirit is leading, and their ability to participate in the entire process which will span several months.

The priests will lead this process, but the representatives from each parish will meet to discuss and prayerfully discern the ministerial and operational strengths, challenges, and opportunities of each parish. The representatives from each parish will ultimately be responsible for making a recommendation (called a rationale) to the Diocesan Planning Commission, and the Commission will recommend possible new configuration for the parishes to the bishop.

Representatives will also be responsible for leading prayer, discernment and feedback sessions at each parish and regularly soliciting input from parishioners in their parishes. They will also be asked to share information about developments in the process.

Scenarios

Parish representatives will consider scenarios or possibilities regarding new parish configurations including:

- clustering: each parish remains a separate entity but shares a pastor,
- merger: several parishes unite as one new parish entity with one or multiple church facilities,
- establishing of an oratory: Sunday Mass and the parish structure moves but the Church is kept open for weddings, funerals or other sacred ceremonies,
- other configurations.

These scenarios must also consider how we can work together to accomplish the mission of making disciples and creating a culture of evangelization. They will have to consider the need for adequate staffing, facilities that provide room for growth, and financial stability. Scenarios are meant to serve as conversation starters and are in no way conclusive. When scenarios are presented for feedback, no decisions have been made. In fact, new scenarios can – and often are – developed during the discussions that take place.

Rationale

Representatives from each parish within a grouping will submit a separate rationale to the Diocesan Planning Commission. The Diocesan Planning Commission will recommend possible new configuration for the parishes to the bishop.

Phases for Parish Renewal

Phase 1: Discernment and Decisions (approximately 6 - 8 months)

- During this first phase, pastors, parishioners, and parish representatives prayerfully consider different possible configurations for parishes, such as clustering or merger, and identify opportunities for collaboration. This phase culminates in a pastoral rationale given by the representatives of each parish to the Diocesan Planning Commission and then they will make recommendations to the bishop for him to consider.

Phase 2: Implementation (6-8 months).

- Following any necessary processes defined in canon law, the bishop will decide upon configurations and communicate transparently to the parishes. The transition to new parish configurations are implemented over a period of months.

Phase 3: Building the New Reality Together.

- The new parish(es) develop pastoral plans for mission and strong vitality.