



Iron Hill Deanery

<i>Good Shepherd Church</i>	<i>St. Elizabeth Ann Seton</i>
<i>Holy Family</i>	<i>St. John's / Holy Angels</i>
<i>Immaculate Conception (Elkton)</i>	<i>St. Joseph (Middletown)</i>
<i>Resurrection</i>	<i>St. Margaret of Scotland</i>
<i>The Newman Center at St. Thomas More Oratory (University of Delaware)</i>	

January 29, 2025

Update on the Implementation Stage of the Deanery Pastoral Plan

Priests of the Iron Hill Deanery

Members: Good Shepherd (Fr. Jay McKee), Holy Family and Resurrection (Msgr. David Kelley and Fr. Francis Okorie), Immaculate Conception and The Newman Center at St. Thomas More Oratory (Fr. Rich Jasper, Fr. James Gebhart), St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (Fr. Norm Carroll), St. John's and Holy Angels (Fr. Carlos Ochoa), St. Joseph (Fr. Mark Kelleher and Fr. Bruce Anderson), St. Margaret of Scotland (Fr. Ed Ogden, OSFS, VF).

The priests of the deanery have created an updated spreadsheet of all mass, confession, and adoration times. They are discerning where there is duplication and excessive offerings, where there can be consolidation and creativity. Are there places that can be consolidated to enhance presence, quality liturgies, and better support the well-being of the demands of the clergy? Currently our deanery has seven pastors for nine parishes spread over fourteen church buildings with the support of four associate pastors. On any given weekend, mass attendance at our fourteen churches is approximately 6,500. Our plan will be presented to the bishop for approval, posted on the deanery website, and implemented by September 2025.

The pastors of the deanery meet with all the Directors and Coordinators of Primary Faith Formation on Monday, January 27. We have discovered that parents are not inclined to participate in Religious Education instruction with another parish. For example, St. Margaret of Scotland and Immaculate Conception have aligned their Religious Ed curriculum so that children could attend classes at each other's parishes for when a family could not attend their parish offering. No student has registered to attend classes outside their registered parish. Both Fr. Ogden and Fr. Jasper engaged in extensive efforts to support this collaborative effort. We concluded that this is not realistic at this time.

Our gathering did conclude with a plan for all the Religious Ed leaders to meet on a regular basis and agree on common guidelines especially about sacramental preparation. Their next meeting is scheduled for February 24 at St. Joseph in Middletown, and they will work on a recommended list of guidelines for the deanery parishes. The pastors have agreed to meet annually at the end of the fiscal year jointly with the DRE's.

The Youth and Young Adult Steering Committee

Members: Jenn Ballintyn (St. John/Holy Angels), Rob Callahan, Susan Catalan, Francis Klinecicz (St. Margaret of Scotland), Mary Holmburg (Holy Family), Elaine Little (Resurrection), Jeanmarie Sepka and Candice Harts Zamora (Good Shepherd), Dan Wilshire and Fr. James Gebhart (Immaculate Conception), Elisabeth Vuckovic (St. Joseph), Fr. Ed Ogden, OSFS, VF (Chair)

The Youth and Young Adult Steering Committee (Continue)

The deanery offered two evenings for high school students to gather for an evening of reflection, social, and prayer on November 19, 2024 (21 students gathered) and December 22, 2024 (39 students gathered). The Steering Committee met on January 28, 2025, to discern next steps. Our plan is to offer a deanery retreat for high school students on Sunday, March 23, 2025, at 3:00 PM at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. The theme of the retreat is: “Hope Does Not Disappoint.” The retreat will include food, social, prayer, a speaker, and small group discussion. The committee will work with pastors to discern potential speaker candidates (a youth either in high school or college age). The committee will meet on February 27, 2025, at 7:00 PM at St. Margaret of Scotland to work on the specifics of the retreat. The committee will meet on March 11, 2025, at 6:30 PM at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton to finalize the retreat details. The committee also will consider an opportunity for high school students to do meaningful service.

The Intentional Small Group Steering Committee

Members: Dee Borges (St. Margaret of Scotland), Bob Brabson (St. Elizabeth Ann Seton), Josephine DiGiovanni and William Hamant (St. Thomas More Oratory), Clare LePere (Holy Angels), Mary Holmburg (Holy Family & Resurrection), Wayne Lorandean (Good Shepherd), and Fr. Ed Ogden, VF (Chair)

The committee is creating a spreadsheet directory of all parish small groups in the deanery. The goal is to present a comprehensive look at the many groups functioning in the deanery, to identify commonalities, unique offerings, and discover if any new groups would be beneficial to the deanery.

The committee met on January 14, 2025, to review our work on the spreadsheet directory and to begin the process of hosting a Deanery Lenten Mission in 2026. The group decided that a morning experience with prayer, speaker, confessions, and possibly mass would be the best option for a first effort. Father Ed will work with the pastors to decide on a date for the mission. He will present them with these Saturdays in Lent next year: March 7, 14 or 21, 2026. The next steps would be to discern who will present the mission, where it will be held, and to work out the details so that a marketing and communication plan can be created.

The Marketing and Communication Steering Committee

Members: Deacon Mike Boyd (St. Joseph), Mare Draper and Joyce Ostrand (Immaculate Conception), Paul and Theresa Kough (St. Margaret of Scotland), Kelly Landers (Good Shepherd), Chris Moriak (St. John and Holy Angels), Ellen Ross (St. Elizabeth Ann Seton), and Fr. Ed Ogden, OSFS, VF (Chair)

The committee met on September 23 and November 18 to review the scope of our work for the year: To create a marketing plan to advertise parish and deanery programs and events.

To discern how to best utilize our deanery website: www.ironhilldeanery.com

To recommend best practices for utilizing social media for our deanery initiatives.

The committee has investigated best practices that include essential information for a Catholic website. Our January 6th meeting was cancelled due to inclement weather. Our next meeting is scheduled for February 18, 2025, at St. Margaret of Scotland. We have invited a web designer (Tom Arena) to join us to explore how to best use the deanery website. Presently, the deanery website is a tool that hosts the documents about our deanery planning process over the past two years.