

A Letter from the Diocesan Planning Commission

In September 2014 the Diocesan Planning Commission submitted a plan to the bishop dividing all the parishes in the diocese into 26 Local Area Planning Groups. These planning groups were tasked with coming up with innovative solutions to address the sharp decrease in the number of active priests over the next decade as well as shifting demographics, especially in rural areas.

In consultation with Bishop Zinkula and having earlier received input from parishioners, the six pastors in our planning group made a collective decision to recommend to the Priests' Personnel Board the implementation of the following changes as of July 1, 2018:

- Columbus Junction will cluster with Muscatine
- West Branch will cluster with Wilton
- West Liberty will cluster with St. Patrick Parish in Iowa City. In addition, West Liberty will reduce their Mass schedule to one Spanish Mass and one English Mass
- Cluster of Riverside, Richmond, and Wellman will reduce their Mass schedule to three masses
- Cluster of Hills, Lone Tree, and Nichols will reduce their Mass schedule to three Masses
- Washington has already reduced their Mass schedule to three Masses

This was done in the spirit of “responding” in a well-thought-out manner to the present and anticipated future challenges, as opposed to “reacting” in haste as they become a reality.

In formulating our decision, we had two primary goals:

1. To share the burden of sacrifice as equally as possible
2. To strategically position our parishes in a way that will keep them all viable and open for the foreseeable future

Bishop Zinkula stated, “I very much appreciate the collaboration and efforts of this local planning group. I was extremely impressed by how well they worked together on the plan for their area. They are a witness to all of us of what it means to be part of a local church, in our case the Diocese of Davenport, and not simply single, isolated parishes.”

Signed by:

Fr. Bernie Weir, Fr. Michael Spiekermeier, Fr. David Brownfield, PhD., Fr. Joseph Sia, Fr. Greg Steckel, Fr. Troy Richmond