



Realign Resources for Mission Committee  
Key Findings and Recommendations

Thursday, November 18, 2021  
Dedication of the Basilicas of the Apostles Peter and Paul

Preface by Father Mathias Thelen,  
Chairman of the Realign Resources for Mission Committee

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It has been over two years since Bishop Earl Boyea convened our 14-person Realign Resources for Mission Committee. Assisted by the grace of the Holy Spirit and the prayers of the entire diocese, our complex and arduous work has come to an end. We are deeply humbled by Bishop Boyea's confidence in us, and we sincerely hope that the fruit of our labor will assist him in his apostolic office of leading our diocese.

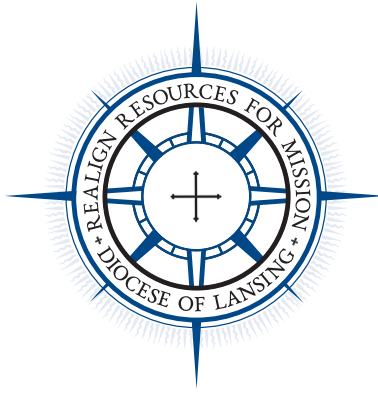
As a communion of believers, the Church exists to proclaim the infinite love of the Father that we have in His Son Jesus Christ. Led by the Holy Spirit, we are tasked with forming communities of missionary disciples capable of bringing Christ to our contemporary society which desperately needs his healing and saving love. This is the mission of every person, family, parish, school or other agency within the Diocese of Lansing.

In the following pages, we present to the diocese our key findings and recommendations that we submitted to Bishop Boyea. While we wait for a prayerful response from the Bishop, I invite you to read this document in its entirety and take it to prayer. I believe that a prayerful understanding of the theological and pastoral context of these recommendations is a helpful first step in processing the proposed changes and going on mission together. Prayer is also critical in every aspect of implementing these recommendations. Since prayer is at the heart of all apostolic fruitfulness, our success in forming communities of missionary disciplines will rise or fall according to the measure of our dependence in prayer on the Spirit of Jesus who makes holiness and mission possible. In our committee's work, we experienced the Holy Spirit's profound inspiration, strength and guidance and we know that for any implementation to be successful, His grace will be needed all the more.

As we move into the implementation of the recommendations accepted by the Bishop, my hope is that every priest, deacon, and lay faithful of the diocese will take seriously the call to deeper personal conversion to Christ and accept the rewarding challenge to work together for the sake of mission. Our realignment process began after our diocesan Year of Prayer to the Holy Spirit. May we continuously pray for a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon our diocese so that we can present Jesus as Lord to every person in our 10-county diocese for the glory of God the Father.

Yours in the Sacred Heart of Jesus,

Father Mathias Thelen,  
Chairman, Realign Resources for Mission Committee,  
Pastor, St Patrick Parish, Brighton



# Realign Resources for Mission Committee

## Key Findings and Recommendations

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# I. Introduction: The Work of RRM

Before we present the key findings and final recommendations of our Realign Resources fir Mission Committee, we believe it is important to recall the context of our work:

- Bishop Boyea's Pastoral Letter, *Go and Announce the Gospel of the Lord* (2012)
- Diocesan Year of Prayer: Holy Spirit Prayer said in Parishes (2013-14)
- Three Diocesan Assemblies on Evangelization:
  - Household of the Faith (2014)
  - Lost Sheep (2016)
  - Court of the Gentiles (2018)
- Diocesan Strategic Planning (2018)
- Presbyteral Convocation (2018)
  - Priests identified three areas we needed to work on to go on mission: a) Sunday Experience, b) Campus Ministry, c) Restructuring Parishes/Schools for Mission
- Diocesan Priest Day to discuss these three areas (February 2019)
- Presbyteral Council recommends the formation of a committee to consider how to best realign resources for mission (Spring 2019)
- Newly formed Realign Resources for Mission Committee begins its work (August 2019)

The essence of our work is spelled out in the Realign Resources for Mission Charter that Bishop Boyea ratified in August 2019:

*The Realignment of Resources to Mission Committee seeks the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the presbyterate, the parish and school staff, and faithful men and women of this diocese to determine how best to realign our resources (personnel, property, financial, material) to further the mission of forming communities of missionary disciples who go announce the Gospel of the Lord.*

Throughout the two years, even in the midst of a global pandemic, we have worked hard to follow the vision, values, and norms of this charter. While we did so imperfectly, we are confident both in the process and outcomes of our work.

## **Data Gathering and Consultation:**

To accomplish such a task of this magnitude before us, we consulted widely and gathered a tremendous amount of data:

### **Experts and dioceses consulted:**

- Fr. James Mallon and Divine Renovation;
- Fr. John Riccardo and the Acts XXIX team;
- Dan Celucci and Catholic Leadership Institute;
- Dioceses consulted who completed, or are in, the restructuring process including Halifax, Pittsburgh, Hartford, Detroit, Kalamazoo, and Saginaw.

## **Key Data Sources:**

- Latest demographic and census data of parishes and schools (and surrounding regions) sacramental trends; financial data; pew counts; school enrollment; Vera Cruz consultants; Map Dash; and Data Story.

## **Surveys:**

- Called for More surveys: Parish Disciple Maker Index; Key Parish Leader Survey; Called for More Priest Survey.
- RRM surveys: Multiple priest surveys; multiple lay staff surveys; multiple lay faithful surveys; deacon survey.

## **We hosted key presentation events from which we gathered information:**

- Day with Priests (October 1, 2020)
- 67 Parish Visits (November 2020 to January 2021)
- One-on-One Interviews with Priests (Lent 2021)
- Day with Priests (June 15, 2021)
- Day with Lay Staff (June 16, 2021)
- Day with Deacons (July 17, 2021)
- Presentation to Lay Faithful of Diocese (August 29, 2021)
- Discussion at Presbyteral Convocation (September, 2021)

## **Communication of our Efforts:**

In addition to the key presentation and feedback events above, we have also communicated consistently with the diocese, both clergy and lay faithful, about our process. This has been achieved via various means including, so far, 24 weekly e-mails sent to over 33,000 subscribers per week. Each weekly update focuses on a particular principle of the RRM process and contains a written article, a video update, and a weekly prayer intention. The e-mail delivery system, Flocknote, facilitates direct feedback from subscribers. Each element of the update is also disseminated via our various social media channels as well as to parish bulletins. The video updates alone have received over 10,000 views on YouTube. There have also been regular monthly updates via FAITH Magazine. Further one-off videos, bulletin inserts, and podcasts have also been deployed. September's RRM Regional Meeting video presentation has now had over 7,100 views on YouTube making it the third most watched Diocese of Lansing YouTube video ever.

## II. Foundational Presuppositions and Key Findings

### Three Foundational Presuppositions

The key findings need to be understood in light of *three foundational presuppositions* that undergird our recommendations.

First, we believe that the Church of Lansing needs a serious spiritual renewal in order to go more on mission. By “going on mission” we mean to more intentionally strive to fulfill the mission of the Church as was given at her divine founding:

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you,”* Matthew 28:19-20

In fact, we take as a given that the Church in the Western world is experiencing a crisis of faith, which in turn causes crises of holiness and mission. Since the Church is always in need of reformation, *ecclesia semper reformanda*, we recognize that the Diocese of Lansing needs to continually heed the call to return to radical fidelity to Jesus Christ, His Holy Church, and His mission. So, while the spiritual nature of the crisis in which the Church finds herself was not the immediate focus of our work, our committee understands profoundly that, at the root of many problems there is a lack of faithfulness to Christ. Therefore, we presuppose that, for the Church of Lansing to go on mission, we need a serious spiritual renewal in which Jesus Christ truly becomes the Lord of our parishes, schools, families, and individual lives. We know that such a renewal of holiness and mission is only possible by the grace of the Holy Spirit, who reveals Jesus and makes following him possible. Moreover, the source of our hope for this renewal lies in the fact that we believe that the Holy Spirit already has a plan to make all of this happen and will give each of us the grace and wisdom we need for it to happen.

Second, we are convinced that the Church as a whole, and in the Diocese of Lansing, needs to rediscover and adopt what various writers call an “apostolic mode” of thinking and living in order to better go on mission in our current culture. We agree with the assessment of Acts XXIX in their 2020 white paper on reimagining the Catholic parish:

*“For close to 1500 years, the Church in the West has operated under what might be called a “Christendom” cultural mode. By this is meant that the Church was preaching and living in societies where Christianity had fertilized the soil from which the basic assumptions of life — the narrative of the human drama and its corresponding moral order — were prominent and for the most part accepted. At other times, though, the Church found herself living and preaching in what might be called an “apostolic” mode. In this situation, she found herself living among peoples whose basic orientation to life and societal structure was very different from Christianity. These are the two basic modes by which Christianity interacts with human societies: an apostolic mode and a Christendom mode.*

*Part of the great change noted by [the 20th century Catholic historian] Christopher Dawson is the rapid transformation away from a Christendom mentality to a very different non-Christian and even anti-Christian one. We are seeing far-reaching changes taking root around us in understandings of morality, of human nature and human success, and in the overall cosmic narrative of life. Simply put, we are no longer in a Christendom world; we have entered a missionary era, and our witness to Jesus needs to take stock of the new apostolic situation; our way of thinking about, organizing, and equipping parishes does too.*

*Not surprisingly, there are many American Catholics who still have a Christendom mentality. They were raised with it, and it has become part of the assumed “furniture” of their minds. This mentality is understandable, but from a strategic point of view, disastrous. Many of our current Church strategies, our ways of organizing ourselves and interacting with the wider society, were developed during a Christendom age. They performed their work well for their time, but they have been increasingly ineffective as the cultural climate has changed. We should not be surprised, in fact we should take it as a given, that a time like ours, a time that can aptly be called a “change of the ages,” should demand significant adaptations as we continue our witness of the unchanging Truth to a rapidly changing world. The signs are all around us, and the need is urgent.”*

In some ways, the real work of realignment for the sake of mission can only truly begin when clergy and lay leaders in the Church of Lansing understand the need to return to an apostolic mode of engaging with the culture in which she finds herself.

Third and finally, we are presupposing the Church’s foundational understanding of discipleship and evangelization as defined by Bishop Boyea’s 2012 Pastoral Letter, *Go and Announce the Gospel of the Lord*. To evangelize, strictly speaking, is to proclaim the *kerygma*, i.e. to announce the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for the purpose of eliciting a personal response of faith and repentance in Jesus and to decide to become His disciple. Led by the Holy Spirit, disciples both seek holiness of life and go on mission by being salt, light, and leaven in the world.

Bishop Boyea has stated that his desire is for all parishes and schools to be places that form missionary disciples. Since the Diocese of Lansing exists to form communities of missionary disciples who go and announce the Gospel of the Lord, we have found it helpful to understand parishes and schools as outposts of communal missionary activity.

The four key findings below go right to the heart of explaining both why the Church is not sufficiently on mission and how to turn that around in order to go more on mission.

### **Key Finding #1: The Church of Lansing is Not Sufficiently on Mission**

The main problem we have discovered in our process, one that we also presupposed to a large degree, is that the Church of Lansing is not sufficiently on mission. To say this is not to discount the many good things the People of God are doing for the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our diocese. God is evidently at work. And yet, indicators abound suggesting a lack of missionary focus: A decline in Sunday Mass attendance; a decline in the reception of other sacraments including Holy Matrimony; a decline in the number of converts to the Faith; a decline in priestly vocations, and so forth. The hard truth of these numbers is enough for us to change. After all, if we go on with “business as usual”, sooner or later we’ll be out of business, our “business” being the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the salvation of souls. As a committee, though, we have become utterly convinced that the real reason why change is needed in the diocese is not the decline we are experiencing. Rather, the reason for the need to realign our resources to mission is that we are not sufficiently on mission. That is the root of the problem, which causes these very trends we are witnessing.

We have to acknowledge this problem in order to solve it. We cannot continue as we are and yet, somehow, expect different results. It’s potentially even worse: We are unsure that a clear and unified

understanding exists regarding who Jesus Christ is; what he has done; and what he's asking of us in response. While it is true that the crisis of faith and the change of ages in which we live, as noted above, play a significant role in this lack of missionary fruitfulness, we must understand that this core problem we face represents an *opportunity* for us to rediscover our identity as a missionary Church and to respond to the grace of renewal that God is offering us in this moment.

## **Key Finding #2: Structures Should Serve Mission**

Structures such as parish, church, and school property should serve our mission, not the other way around. Caring for structures and buildings not needed for mission itself can, in fact, be a hindrance to that mission because it drains the resources of time, talent, and treasure away from what is needed for mission. In fact, an indispensable criterion for considering whether or not to combine structures, parish buildings, church buildings, and other institutions/ministries is whether or not they are needed or well-suited for that divine mission of the Church. We believe it is a serious mistake to conserve structures unnecessarily, such as refusing to close church buildings or school buildings when they are not suited to mission.

Organizational structures such as councils, teams, and administrative processes also need to serve mission. We believe it would be a serious mistake to conserve human structures unnecessarily, if they are not as well-suited for mission as they could be. Looking for organizational efficiencies will help free up human and financial resources for mission.

Since any effort to realign these structures of the diocese is most likely to meet with a degree of resistance, it is critically important to keep the vision of the Church's divine mission at the forefront of our minds so that we can help lead our brothers and sisters in Christ through any necessary change for the sake of mission. If we can effectively help them to understand the difficult decisions around change in our parishes, in terms of how it helps each of us to grow personally in our relationship with Jesus, and go on mission, then we believe we can move people through that change. People are willing to go through change, even difficult change, if they are trained and guided through that process of change and can begin to see fruitful apostolic results emerging.

## **Key Finding #3: Central Importance of Culture and Leadership**

No matter how profound or innovative our pastoral strategies are in our diocese, parishes, schools, and apostolates, if the respective cultures of these entities do not support the execution of such strategies, they will likely fail. In this sense, the notable management consultant Peter Drucker is correct, "culture eats strategy for breakfast." Fr James Mallon adds in his book *Divine Renovation: Beyond the Parish* that "organizational culture is the environment we create by what we allow, celebrate, and value in the life of the diocese or parish." We are convinced that a culture of evangelization isn't sufficiently prevalent, nor effective, throughout our diocese because the culture in parishes and schools does not support those efforts as much as they could or should. Sometimes, cultures can even undermine the strategies of evangelization. To go on mission, we need to foster and promote a culture of conversion and discipleship, and that cannot happen without solid pastoral leadership.

Indeed, if "culture eats strategy for breakfast," then it can be said that "leadership eats culture for lunch." Leaders, at their best, can help shape and form culture. We are certain that without well-formed and decisive leaders in our parishes, schools, and apostolates, our desire to "go on mission" will be hindered.



We believe the previous attempts to restructure in our diocese fell short of moving us to mission, in part, because they were focused more on organizational restructuring than on the vision for leadership, and the cultural change necessary, that make such restructurings successful. Hence, the Church of Lansing must be a healthy place that nurtures and sustains leaders. Establishing good leadership and striving to achieve cultural change are not self-executing. We recognize that there will be a need for the diocese to assist leaders in what will, admittedly, require attentive, prayerful, servant-leadership as they strive to bring about positive changes in parish cultures.

Defects and inadequacy of leadership among bishops, priests, deacons, and lay leaders, wherever they occur, necessarily have cascading effects down to the people of God in the pews and then into the world. When bishops, priests, and deacons are not leading well and, therefore, are not leading the laity to live out their vocation, then we cannot have a healthy Church on mission. Conversely, it is precisely when clergy are leading well, according to their gifts and strengths and are living holy and healthy lives, that the lay faithful, who are co-responsible for the mission of the Church, can come alive in Christ, seek holiness, and better go on mission themselves.

### **Key Finding #4: Vision for Healthy Parishes**

A key moment in our process was prayerfully identifying the problems, or wounds, in the Diocese of Lansing that currently prevent us from going on mission. We believe the Holy Spirit identified four major problem areas that, if addressed, could shift us to go on mission:

1. Priest Health;
2. Clergy Vision and Leadership;
3. Lay Leadership;
4. Parish Organizational Structures.

After identifying these areas of concern, we discerned a vision that, if executed, gives us the best chance of remedying these problems and help us go more on mission. This is how we developed the “Diocesan Vision for Parishes.” To underscore the importance of this vision, here are a few key points:

1. We believe this vision is inspired and confirmed by the Holy Spirit.
2. This compelling and unified vision makes mission possible. It is hard to overestimate the power of a unified diocesan vision for parishes to help them to go on mission. It allows for clarity and accountability around mission alignment from both clergy to laity. It can also foster a diocesan-wide unity among priests and laity.
3. The vision is an ideal for us that we strive to achieve. No matter how robust the implementation process, we recognize we may never fully realize this vision. It remains, however, a guiding vision that inspires and keeps us focused.
4. The vision has an internal logic to it. The principles depend on each other, starting from the bottom up. For example, when Principle One is in place, then Principle Two can happen, which enables Principle Three, which enables Principle Four. Thus, the importance of Principle One cannot be overstated.
5. The vision intentionally allows ways of executing it on a local level, which would be determined by local parishes or parish groupings. The inherent flexibility for execution and strategy at the local level allows for the Spirit to move both in and through the leaders and parishioners of those parishes. This flexibility not only respects the principle of subsidiarity, but it also maximizes the spiritual gifts, strengths, and talents of parishioners to reach the communities in which they live.

**Diocesan Vision for Parishes:** *Healthy parishes in the Diocese of Lansing are led by priests striving for health and holiness, equip and empower parish staff, make and form missionary disciples, and seek the lost and serve the poor.*

### **1. Led by priests striving for health and holiness**

- Priests support one another.
- They live in community, even if not in the same rectory.
- Multiple priests serve a parish grouping together.
- On-going formation, mentoring, and coaching are provided to diocesan clergy.
- Priests are unified with and accountable to the Bishop.
- A pastor or moderator has the charism of leadership and has a parish leadership team. Other priests operate out of their charisms and gifts too.

### **2. Equips and empowers parish staff**

- Parishes hire the best and most competent people.
- Every defined critical ministry/role in a parish has a competent leader.
- Parishes have sufficient staff to fulfill the mission.
- Those staff are paid competitively.
- Parish staff are a healthy team aligned to the mission and vision of the parish.
- Staff also receive on-going formation/mentoring and coaching.

### **3. Makes and Forms Missionary Disciples**

- There is much greater access to sacraments and devotions.
- Sacred worship is dynamic, reverent and beautiful.
- Parishes have a discipleship process that moves people of all ages to spiritual maturity.
- They have a process to get people serving others according to their gifts.
- Parishes have a vibrant community life.
- All parishes have a commitment to Catholic education.

### **4. Seeks the Lost and Serves the Poor**

- Parishes have designated processes to evangelize the local community (adults, young adults, teens, and children).
- They prioritize spiritual and corporal works of mercy in local communities.
- They instill shared responsibility by all members for the mission of seeking the lost and serving the poor.
- Parishes are invested and recognizable in the local community as salt, light, and leaven.
- They offer easy and accessible entry points for unbelievers to encounter Jesus Christ.

# III. Final Recommendations

## I. Parish Groupings

The final recommendations for the parish groupings below are the fruit of intense prayer, debate, months of data analysis, as well as consultation with the bishop, the priests, deacons, and the lay faithful of the diocese. Here are a few important notes about these recommendations:

1. We are recommending the *in solidum* leadership structure as a default for these groupings. The advantage of starting with the *in solidum* structure is that it remains the most flexible state within Canon Law for future possibilities to be determined by the bishop and the local Moderators, such as ungrouping or merging.
2. While we are not making concrete recommendations for the merging of parishes, we strongly recommend that the implementation process, along with the moderators of the groupings, evaluate whether or not merging is in fact a better way forward than the *in solidum* model.
3. While we are not making concrete recommendations for the closure of parish sites or school buildings, we strongly recommend that the implementation process, along with the moderators of the groupings, evaluate the viability of all sites.
4. While we are not making any concrete recommendations for mergers of parishes, we strongly recommend that the implementation process, along with the moderators of the groupings, evaluate the viability of maintaining separate leadership teams, parish councils, and parish staff. To facilitate unity of mission and for the sake of efficiency, we believe consolidation of organizational structures will prove appropriate and beneficial.
5. We came to these groupings without privileging current priestly assignments. In fact, we often had to remind ourselves to look at what is possible including the idea that, over time, many priests could be moved from their current assignments to better utilize their gifts and serve our communities. This proved difficult as current priest personnel shape the culture in parishes in such a way that makes some groupings more likely to work than others. This is a confirmation of the influence of clerical leadership.
6. We know these groupings are not “perfect.” Nevertheless, we believe this eighth and final draft represents a solid way forward in considering the future of the diocese for years to come.
7. We believe these groupings should be rolled out in phases over three to five years with no more than six groupings to be rolled out in the first phase.

The final recommendations for the Parish Groupings are as follows:

### **Jackson**

- St. John the Evangelist (includes St. Joseph Oratory), Jackson
- Queen of the Miraculous Medal, Jackson
- St. Mary Star of the Sea (includes St. Stanislaus Oratory and Sagrada Corazon Community), Jackson
- St. Catherine Laboure, Concord

### **The Lakes**

- Our Lady of Fatima, Michigan Center
- St. Rita, Clarklake
- St. Joseph Shrine, Brooklyn

### **Hillsdale/Western Lenawee**

- St. Anthony of Padua, Hillsdale
- Sacred Heart, Hudson
- St. Mary on the Lake, Manitou Beach

### **Eastern Lenawee**

- Holy Family (includes St. Mary of Good Counsel and St. Joseph Oratory), Adrian
- St. Elizabeth (includes St. Dominic Oratory, Clinton), Tecumseh
- Light of Christ (includes St. Alphonsus and St. Peter Oratory, Blissfield), Deerfield

### **Lansing North**

- St. Mary Cathedral, Lansing
- Church of the Resurrection, Lansing
- St. Jude, DeWitt
- St. Therese, Lansing
- St. Andrew Dung-Lac, Lansing

### **Lansing South**

- Immaculate Heart of Mary, Lansing
- Cristo Rey, Lansing
- St. Peter, Eaton Rapids
- SS. James, Cornelius and Cyprian (includes SS Cornelius and Cyprian Oratory, Leslie), Mason

### **Eaton**

- St. Gerard, Lansing
- St. Michael, Grand Ledge
- St. Mary (includes St. Ann Oratory, Bellevue), Charlotte

### **East Lansing**

- St. Thomas Aquinas (includes St. John Church and Student Center), East Lansing

### **Eastern Ingham**

- St. Mary, Williamston
- St. Martha, Okemos

### **Clinton**

- Most Holy Trinity, Fowler
- St. Joseph, St Johns
- St. Mary, Westphalia

### **Flint**

- St. John Vianney (includes St. Mary Oratory), Flint
- Holy Redeemer, Burton
- St. Matthew, Flint
- Christ the King, Flint
- St. Pius X, Flint
- Our Lady of Guadalupe, Flint

### **Eastern Genesee**

- St. John the Evangelist (includes Blessed Sacrament Oratory, Burton), Davison
- Holy Rosary, Flint
- St. Francis Xavier, Otisville
- St. Mary, Mount Morris

### **Western Genesee**

- St. Robert Bellarmine, Flushing
- St. Mary Queen of Angels, Swartz Creek
- Good Shepherd, Montrose
- SS. Charles & Helena, Clio

### **Southern Genesee**

- Holy Family, Grand Blanc
- St. John the Evangelist, Fenton
- St. Mark, Grand Blanc

### **Shiawassee**

- St. Paul (includes St. Joseph Oratory), Owosso
- St. Mary, Morrice
- St. Mary and St. Joseph (includes St. Joseph Oratory, Gaines), Durand
- St. Isidore, Laingsburg (includes Holy Family, Ovid)

### **Downtown Ann Arbor**

- St. Thomas the Apostle, Ann Arbor
- St. Mary Student Parish, Ann Arbor

### **St. Francis**

- St. Francis of Assisi, Ann Arbor

### **Eastern Washtenaw**

- St. John the Baptist, Ypsilanti
- Christ the King, Ann Arbor
- St. Joseph, Ypsilanti

### **Southern Washtenaw**

- St. Andrew, Saline
- Immaculate Conception, Milan
- St. Mary, Manchester

### **West Washtenaw**

- St. Joseph, Dexter
- St. Mary, Chelsea

### **Southern Livingston/Northeast Washtenaw**

- St. Mary, Pinckney
- Holy Spirit, Brighton
- Old St Patrick, Ann Arbor

### **Western Livingston**

- St. Joseph, Howell
- St. Agnes, Fowlerville

### **St. Patrick**

- St. Patrick, Brighton

### **Northeast Livingston**

- St. Mary Magdalen, Brighton
- St. John the Baptist, Howell
- St. Augustine, Howell

## **2. Implementation: Next Steps**

The scope of our committee’s work does not include the implementation of our recommendations. We contend that our recommended implementation process, which we believe is strong, reliable, and agile, will help the diocese to be well poised in order to move from maintenance to mission. We offer these recommendations regarding implementation out of a passionate desire to see this diocese poised for success. We recommend:

1. The creation of a **Parish Vision Implementation Office** that will create, communicate, and oversee the Parish Vision Implementation processes to advance the “Vision for Parishes” within the Diocese of Lansing among the *in solidum* groupings.
2. The creation of an **Implementation and Sustainability Steering Committee** that will work with the bishop to provide oversight of the Parish Vision Implementation Office. We envision that the Office will be part of the Chancery of the Diocese of Lansing and will report to the bishop with additional governance by the Implementation and Sustainability Steering Committee.

## **3. Roles and Responsibilities for Clergy**

After discerning that we would recommend the *in solidum* model, we thought it would be fitting to recommend to Bishop Boyea, and to the Parish Vision Implementation Office, robust outlines for the roles of clergy in the *in solidum* leadership structures.

Parish priests working *in solidum* will be required to collaborate as pastors under coordination and direction of a moderator. Priests working *in solidum* will develop a Priest Covenant Agreement outlining expectations and duties. Additional external counsel will be available through the appointment of a new Episcopal Vicar for Priests *In Solidum* who will share in the governance of the bishop in this specific area of competence.

## 4. Assignment of Priests

A significant achievement of our RRM work was helping the priests through presentations, interviews, and surveys to acknowledge and communicate their varying capacities and desires when it comes to serving in both parish and non-parish ministry. We know that when priests are serving in their area of giftedness, it is good both for the priests and for the people. Consequently, a critical part of realigning resources for mission is getting the right priests in the right place in these new groupings.

When Bishop Boyea asked the Priest Assignment Board to be responsible for helping him with this part of the process, our initial work was refined even more. There are many important takeaways from some of this data. For example, there was an overwhelming recognition among the priests of the need for community. That data is available to the bishop but since it is not a part of the scope of our work, they do not form part of these recommendations. Nevertheless, we recommend the following principles regarding priest assignments:

1. Moderators should be chosen carefully according to leadership abilities and desires with special consideration being given to these characteristics:
  - a. He can and is willing to lead out of a team.
  - b. He is able to lead other priests and make tough decisions.
2. Strategically assign certain priests with other priests;
3. The research and expertise accumulated by the RRM process should help inform priest assignments during the period of implementation;
4. Moderators should be diocesan priests.

## 5. Catholic Schools

As Bishop Boyea and countless leaders in the Church, including in our diocese, have oft-stated: Catholic schools perform a vital ministry in our Church. In this ministry, parents and schools partner to form and educate children so that they grow in knowledge, wisdom, and virtue. The aim of this partnership is young people who develop into adults who are both happy and holy as they fulfill their God-given potential. Studies and data show that Catholic schools, when on mission, produce vocations, future church-goers, converts, and active, faithful citizens in this world who become, God willing, future citizens of heaven.

Given the importance of Catholic schools to evangelizing and forming disciples, we desire to make Catholic schools truly available, affordable, and accessible for all families throughout the diocese. The need for distinctively Catholic education is greater than ever today. Secular humanism has been growing for decades. In recent years, we have witnessed troubling attacks upon the fundamental tenets of Christian anthropology as we understand it as Catholics. These attacks often come in the form of identity politics, expressive individualism, “progressive” views of human sexuality, and gender ideology.

Since Bishop Boyea is well aware of the significant value and missionary importance of Catholic schools, we have focused here on the practical recommendations we are making regarding the organization and governance, availability, and revised funding model of schools that we believe can help make our Catholic schools sustainable and viable for the long term. The goal of offering these recommendations, as with all RRM recommendations, is to more effectively align parish and school resources to fulfill the vision and

mission that Bishop Boyea has laid out. These recommendations assume that we will continue to strive for “right-sizing” our schools, by growing enrollment strategically and reviewing systematically the efforts of schools to reduce their cost-to-educate.

## Our Recommendations

Given the vital role that Catholic schools play in helping us fulfill the vision and mission of the Church, we recommend establishing expectations that make clear that all parishes support Catholic schools and that “systems” of schools are formed to benefit from economies of scale and to enhance the viability of our offerings. Hence, our recommendations for organization and governance are as follows:

**Recommendation 1:** Every parish grouping should have at least one school. A school can be a traditional parochial school; a diocesan school; a school governed by a religious order; a parish homeschool co-op; or a parish homeschool hybrid.

**Recommendation 2:** Every school should be part of a “system” of schools. We recommend the following seven systems:

- Hillsdale/Lenawee
- Jackson
- Ann Arbor (Washtenaw)
- Lansing (Ingham & Eaton)
- Livingston
- Clinton/Shiawassee
- Flint (Genesee)

**Recommendation 3:** Every system should have a governance structure that includes all pastors and/or moderators on a Board of Governors. We already see this happening in Jackson and a similar plan is underway in Genesee County.

**Recommendation 4:** Every system should have a high school option; a homeschool option; and a classical curriculum option. This will entail the opening of new schools, as things develop, to create homeschool hybrids; classical schools; and micro-schools.

**Recommendation 5:** We should change our funding model to make Catholic education more affordable in these three ways.

1. Work on efficiency (Cost-To-Educate or CTE) by
  - a. Increasing enrollment (Strategic Enrollment Management initiative is underway)
  - b. Right-sizing staff using Staffing Model based on enrollment
2. Change the assessment model:
  - a. Apply assessment for schools to all parishes, not just parishes without schools, to broaden support from 3% to 7% over five years.
  - b. Eliminate credits so all support from assessments goes to support parishes with schools operating expenses



3. Increase needs-based support by:
  - a. Working with the Catholic Foundation to increase diocesan Catholic education financial aid endowments from \$12.5 to \$50 million.
  - b. Supporting parishes and high schools in their efforts to grow local endowments for local financial aid

## 5. Other Resources

Most of the work of our committee dealt with parishes, schools, staff, and clergy. Below are other significant recommendations on how we believe we might realign other resources for mission in the Diocese of Lansing.

### 1. Seminarian Formation

1. We recommend establishing a team of priests and lay leaders to evaluate the current formation process considering the RRM process, 21<sup>st</sup> century parish reality, the vision and mission of the Diocese of Lansing, historical precedent, and formation from other parts of the world.
2. Key Questions:
  - a. Does the current model consistently recruit, train, and commission healthy men ready to lead the current parish reality?
  - b. Does the current seminary model fulfill the needs for the RRM committee's definition of a healthy priest?
  - c. If you had eight years to form a man into a missionary disciple who can lead communities that do likewise, what would you do?

### 2. Religious Communities

1. Establish a liaison team to coordinate and engage religious communities both currently in the diocese and those outside of it.
  - a. Examine the relationship with each of the existing religious communities within the diocese to determine what unique contribution they are bringing and could bring to the service of mission.
  - b. Key Questions:
    - i. Are there other communities that should be invited to our diocese because of their particular charism/unique outreach (i.e. Sisters of Life)?
    - ii. Which current buildings/structures could be revitalized by being gifted to a religious community?

### 3. Lay Apostolates

1. Establish a liaison team between the diocese and local and national lay apostolates.
  - a. Create a comprehensive list of all the lay apostolates, non-profits, and extra-parish ministries.
  - b. Strategically reach out to the list to solicit their support and ideas for mission in the Diocese of Lansing. The liaison team would then create a list of potential collaborations that could be evaluated by the implementation committee.

#### 4. Catholic Charities

The Realign Resources for Mission Committee recognizes the important role of our six Catholic Charities agencies in supporting Principle #4 of the RRM vision: “A healthy parish seeks the lost and serves the poor”.

Thus, a healthy parish collaborating with Catholic Charities agencies, as well as the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul conferences and other charitable apostolates, will strive to live out Jesus’ mission as articulated previously in Matthew 28:19 and his divine call towards “works of mercy” in Matthew 25:31-46 which he concludes thus:

*“Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me,” Mt 25:45*

It is therefore essential to pursue opportunities to strengthen the connections between, and among, our parishes, schools; Catholic Charities agencies and charitable apostolates to carry out Jesus’ mission towards the lost and the poor

#### 5. Stewardship

Stewardship, or the spirituality of stewardship, is underdeveloped in many of our parishes, and therefore presents a significant opportunity as we embark on realigning resources for mission. The spirituality of stewardship, the recognition that everything we have is a gift from God and that God calls us to share these gifts with others, is foundational for discipleship, especially missionary discipleship. Stewardship and discipleship go hand in hand. There are numerous Scripture passages, wonderful pastoral letters and programs/initiatives available to help parishes and parishioners grow in understanding and responding to the calls for greater stewardship, leading to greater discipleship.

As we move towards implementing the realignment of resources to mission, we would be remiss not to point out the reality that more resources are available to be in service to the mission of the Church, if we but ask. It is often found in parishes that the few support the many, not just in treasure but also in their time and talent. But perhaps what is unknown, is the capacity that we believe is largely untapped. Just think, if all of our 65,000 households gave just 0.1% more (only one tenth of one percent) of their median income, that would translate into an additional four million dollars annually that our parishes could use to support missionary discipleship efforts.

As we know though, stewardship is about so much more than just money or material resources; it is also about responding with generosity with our talent and time. What if our parishioners spent 1% more of their time each day in prayer, (15 minutes a day)? That would be over 16,000 more hours each day of prayer in households around our diocese. This would change lives and families. What if our parishioners spent 1% more of their time each week using their talents in service to the Church and evangelizing their local communities (over 100 minutes per week)? That would be over 113,000 hours each week of more missionary discipleship activity focused on seeking the lost and serving the poor. This would change our communities. And what if our parishioners gave 1% more of their income to support these missionary discipleship efforts? This would fund so many ministries and reignite our diocese for the salvation of souls..

Stewardship matters. What if our parishioners recognized that the greatest gift we have been given is the hope of eternal salvation through Jesus Christ and were trained, mobilized, and determined to share this gift with others, to witness, and to bring God's love, mercy, and healing grace into the world?

### **Recommendation**

Therefore, we recommend that diocesan offices research available resources around stewardship and develop training for priests and lay leaders in the new parish groupings on how to preach and promote a culture of stewardship in our parishes. This training, partnership, and systematic implementation by the diocese and parishes can bear great fruit both in terms of unifying the new parish groupings around efforts to promote missionary discipleship and also in growing the gifts of time, talent, and treasure that will be available to serve the mission of the Church in the Diocese of Lansing.

## **IV. Conclusion**

These recommendations are humbly submitted to Bishop Earl Boyea under the patronage of Mary the Immaculate Conception to whom our diocese is entrusted,

Yours sincerely in Christ,

### **The Realign Resources for Mission Committee**

*Fr. Mathias Thelen (St. Patrick, Brighton), Chairman*

*Deb Amato (St. Joseph, Howell)*

*Fr. Bob Bacik (St. Gerard, Lansing)*

*Pete Burak (Christ the King, Ann Arbor)*

*Fr. Chas Canoy (St. John, Jackson)*

*David Kerr (Resurrection, Lansing)*

*George Landolt (St. Mary, Williamston)*

*Tom Maloney (St. Thomas/St. John, East Lansing)*

*Fr. Steve Mattson (Resurrection, Lansing)*

*Steve Nowaczewski (St. Joseph, Ypsilanti)*

*Fr. Jim Rolph (Powers Catholic, Flint)*

*Terri Witt (St. Robert, Flushing)*

*Deacon Devon Wolfe (St. Mary Magdalen, Brighton)*