

**SHAPING OUR FUTURE TOGETHER (S.O.F.T.)
UNAPPROVED DRAFT PLAN
Bonnots Mill, Folk, Frankenstein, Linn, Loose Creek, Westphalia
(Coalition of the Southeast Deanery)**

On October 18, 2022, Bishop McKnight of the Jefferson City Diocese announced a diocesan-wide planning initiative called Shaping our Future Together (SOFT). Bishop McKnight asked each deanery to develop its own process for gathering information and input from the parishes of that deanery. Gathered information and input was then used to develop a plan for the viability and thriving of parishes within the deanery for the next 5-10 years. The following is the product of this effort, prepared by parish leaders from the above listed parishes.

ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC & APOSTOLIC CHURCH

“What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?” (Mt 16:26)

“The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. While certainly not the only institution which evangelizes, if the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be ‘the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters.’ This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people, and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few. The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a center of constant missionary outreach.”

Pope Francis’ encyclical, The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)

Seven Essential Values for thriving Catholic parishes as outlined by Bishop Sean McKnight:

- 1. Sacraments are accessible and celebrated well**
- 2. Hospitality**
- 3. Clergy well-being**
- 4. Canon Law and current Church teaching**
- 5. Faith Formation**
- 6. Human and financial resources**
- 7. Fulfillment of the Mission**

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SHORT TERM (1-2 years)

THEME: REFINE (PROTECT EUCHARIST/SACRAMENT ACCESSIBILITY BY STRENGTHENING CO-RESPONSIBILITY and THE SPIRITUALITY OF STEWARDSHIP)

1. Priests remain in their assignment for extended time.
2. Form a coalition council. The council will consist of at least one member from each parish pastoral council. Parish Council presidents may appoint 1-3 additional members from the parish, with the approval of the parish pastor.
 - a. The coalition council will continuously assess & address present and future needs of the coalition.
 - b. Designate a coalition coordinator to ensure implementation of coalition plan.
3. The coalition coordinator, coalition council, assigned priests, will identify & implement ways in which the churches within the coalition can better work together to ensure parish efficiency and a thriving environment for the salvation of souls. Examples include:
 - a. Stagger Mass/Confession times/priest days off within the coalition ensuring each church has a Sunday (or Saturday vigil) Mass.
 - b. Identify and limit burden on the priests:
 - i. Utilize Deacons in their ordained roles.
 - ii. Designate administrative positions (either diocesan or coalition positions) to cover administrative duties of coalitions/parishes/schools.
 - iii. Priests encouraged to discern possible redistribution of non-sacramental commitments.
 - c. Meet with individual ministries to perform an efficiency/quality study. The study results will be addressed so that the excess will be trimmed so that the Mass can be protected. Examples include:
 1. uniformizing materials and practices across the coalition (e.g. bulletins, contribution envelopes, websites, missalettes, Mass preparations . . .).
 2. merging of ministries/roles.
 3. efficient/effective communication.
 - d. To overcome transportation obstacles, coalition coordinated transportation will be provided for faith enrichment opportunities.

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4. Advocate for Priestly vocations.
 - a. Specific & Intentional Prayers for priestly vocations.
 - i. Interspersed within routine prayers (e.g. rosaries, stations of the cross, prayer groups).
 - b. Identify ways to promote priestly vocations.
 - i. (e.g. Increase the number of men in roles as acolytes and lectors).
5. Advocate for an increased faith in the Real Presence.
 - a. Specific & Intentional Prayers for faith in the Real Presence.
 - b. Coordinated adoration opportunities across the coalition.
6. Current ministries continue their strong presence in our coalition.
 - a. Women's ministry continues active role drawing from resources within the coalition and Diocese.
 - b. Knights of Columbus (fraternal brotherhood) continues to promote a more authentic Catholic atmosphere drawing from resources within the coalition and the fraternal order.
7. Transparency
 - a. Routine sharing of information from diocese/deanery/parish: Q&A, town halls, surveys, etc.
8. Individuals commit to living our lives as an example to draw others TO Christ & the Catholic faith: by our love, clinging to our Catholic values and frequent participation of the Sacraments.
 - a. *"Since the laity, in accordance with their state of life, live in the midst of the world and its concerns, they are called by God to exercise their apostolate in the world like leaven, with the ardor of the spirit of Christ."* (DECREE ON THE APOSTOLATE OF THE LAITY, POPE PAUL VI, 11/18/1965)
9. As the Traditional Latin Mass is currently celebrated at a church within our coalition, Addendum A, provided by representatives of the Traditional Latin Mass community, includes an adjoining plan for a thriving future for this community within the Diocese.

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MID-TERM (3-5 years)

(Inclusive of prior short-term plans)

THEME: REINVIGORATE (ENHANCE PARISH SYSTEMS AS THRIVING SANCTUARIES OF MERCY)

1. Ensure wellness of parish environment. Allow for the full movement of the healing grace available in the Real Presence and the Sacraments by bringing to awareness and reconciling wounded areas of our parish community.
2. Identify ways to engage youth ministry/young adults. Examples include:
 - a. Sunday evening Mass.
 - b. Prayer/Worship nights with music
 - c. Effective communication
3. Identify ways to provide support & ministry for the domestic church (young families).
4. Utilize rectories within the coalition to provide free housing for retired priests. Light support provided by volunteers & school children in parishes. (e.g. driving, meals, house duties, social, etc.) All priests (active/retired) within the coalition will be given the option to live together in community to enhance brotherhood & well-being.

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LONG-TERM (5-10 years)

(Inclusive of short-term and mid-term plans)

THEME: REINVISION (RECOGNIZE PARISHES AS CENTERS OF CHARITY)

1. Using the coalition model, begin consideration of merging the churches within the coalition into a single canonical parish, with 2-3 priests assigned. The canonical parish would make the best and highest use of combined resources to provide pastoral care and outreach to its members and its entire geographical area.
 - a. Consolidation of administrative duties of the parishes.
 - b. Parish council would be comprised of equal representation from each church.
 - c. Masses continue to be celebrated in each church.
 - d. If decided to merge into a larger canonical parish, allow several years to make the transition easier (e.g. – endowment funds, etc.).

2. Faith Formation/Outreach opportunities, to empower individuals and spread the Gospel/true Catholic message.
 - a. Evangelization, healing, etc.
 - i. Everything else must be subordinated to the goal of helping people get to heaven.
 - b. Domestic church (i.e. young families at home).
 - c. Domestic ministries to the margins within our coalition. For example,
 - i. hands on serving locally (Nursing homes, Good Shepherd Pantry, etc.)
 - ii. Welcoming atmosphere and highest attention to hospitality within the congregation).
 - d. Continue sharing resources/guest speaker opportunities across the coalition.

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ADDENDUM A

Reduce demand on coalition personnel and resources by establishing a dedicated Traditional Latin Mass (TLM) parish in this diocese, staffed and administered by a recognized TLM apostolate. The TLM community has been in our diocese since 2008 with growing interest that has more than doubled over the past three years. An estimated 220 households from throughout the diocese either attend or have expressed interest in attending the TLM currently celebrated at St. Joseph in Westphalia.

ADDENDUM A outlines a proposal being submitted by the TLM community to Bishop McKnight. Key benefits include:

- a. The addition of two priests from outside of the normal seminary pipeline **at no additional overhead cost to the diocese**
- b. The **freeing up of a diocesan priest and a Mass time slot** for celebration of the *Novus Ordo* Mass
- c. **Increased availability of Mass, the Sacraments and pastoral care**
- d. **Potential use of a diocesan church property that is under threat of closure**

The SHORT-TERM goal is for the bishop's approval of this plan. MID-TERM and LONG-TERM goals are implementation and building ongoing support.