

Connected in the Spirit “Listening Session” with Archbishop Thompson

In 2015, and continuing into 2016, our parish was engaged in the Archdiocesan-wide **Connected in the Spirit** process. That process began with an evaluation of our own parish ministries followed by extensive conversations within our assigned four-parish Cohort of Holy Family, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, St. Anthony of Padua, and St. Mary of the Annunciation.

After comparing data and looking at the models presented by the Archdiocesan Planning Commission, our Cohort submitted a Suggestion to the Commission in which we concluded that a “Partnership Model” would enhance our experience of faith and community here in Southern Indiana. In other words, we believe that by working together and finding ways to collaborate so as to conserve resources, strengthen and enhance ministry, expand our outreach, and by providing more opportunities to deepen our faith and relationships, we will grow more perfectly into the Body of Christ.

The Archdiocesan Planning Commission accepted our Suggestion and subsequently made its Recommendation to then-Archbishop Tobin but final approval was unavoidably delayed pending Archbishop Thompson’s installation.

We’re now pleased to report that the *Connected in the Spirit* process has resumed and a **Listening Session** has been scheduled for **January 30, 2018, at 6:00pm, in the Robinson Theatre at Providence High School** to give interested parishioners an opportunity to ask questions or voice their concerns to Archbishop Thompson who will be present.

As a further matter, you may recall that *all* parishes within the Archdiocese of Indianapolis have participated in the *Connected in the Spirit* discernment process. Other Recommendations which the Archdiocesan Planning Commission has made to Archbishop Thompson regarding the New Albany Deanery are as follows:

[PLEASE NOTE: These are NOT final decisions]

Mergers¹

- St. Peter, Harrison County to be merged into St. Joseph, Corydon
- Most Precious Blood, New Middleton to be merged into St. Joseph, Corydon

Linkages

- Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville continue to be linked with St. Augustine, Jeffersonville
- St. Bernard, Frenchtown continue to be linked with St. Michael, Bradford and with St. Joseph, Marengo
- St. John the Baptist, Starlight to be linked with St. Mary of the Annunciation, Navilleton
- St. Michael, Charlestown continue to be linked with St. Francis Xavier, Henryville

Partnerships

- Holy Family, New Albany to be partnered with Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany and with St. Mary of the Annunciation, New Albany and with St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville
- St. Joseph, Corydon to be partnered with St. Mary, Lanesville
- St. John the Baptist, Starlight to be partnered with St. Mary of the Annunciation, Navilleton and with St. Mary of the Knobs, Floyd Knobs
- St. Michael, Charlestown to be partnered with St. Francis Xavier, Henryville and with St. John Paul II, Sellersburg

We look forward to the opportunity to hear from Archbishop Thompson and invite you to pray for him as he discerns these important decisions for our parish, our deanery and for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

¹ The Commission’s rationale for this Recommendation is: “We make these recommendations based on the goals and criteria of Connected in the Spirit established by the Archbishop, their own parish study and Parish, Cohort and Archdiocesan data. Our thinking is also based on their desire and ours to have a strong Catholic presence in the area: While there is a strong desire to stay as they are the future does not show continued growth in this part of the county; the reliance on priests from St. Meinrad is getting more difficult as they are not sending that many priests into parish ministry as they have in the past; it is important that the parishes be less parochial and more cooperative with other parishes in their area as a show of collegiality and serve the parishioners more effectively; sharing of resources allows for continued growth in cooperation; no RCIA, little or no catechesis, no or little social outreach at Precious Blood and St. Peter parishes is a cause of concern; there have only been three baptisms at St. Peter and one baptism at Precious Blood in the last 5 years; there have been 18 funerals at St. Peter and six at Precious Blood in the five-year period; Most Precious Blood is relying on bequests to balance the budget which is not sustainable; between 2000 and 2010, the number of Catholics has declined by 30% in Harrison County while the population increased by nearly 15% in the same time period.”

Excerpted from **Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin's comments at a May 21, 2014 press conference at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis**
(<http://www.archindy.org/connected/indianapolis-archbishop.html>)

The decisions make use of three different models for the Catholic communities in the four deaneries of greater Indianapolis. You will hear me speak of merged or consolidated parishes, linked parishes and parishes in partnership; let me briefly describe each:

The term **“merged parishes”** describes a new configuration in which an existing parish is entirely joined to another; in these cases, the independent identity of one of the parishes will cease with the merger, and its members and assets will be incorporated into another.

“Linked parishes” are produced when two parishes share a single pastoral leader. Linked parishes cooperate in as many ways as possible, since the pastor or administrator is striving to serve two separate parishes.

Parishes in **“partnerships”** are created through the implementation of joint programs, the appropriate sharing of staff with a view to enhancing the quality of ministry as well as the practice of good stewardship of resources and the use of joint councils and commissions. All the remaining parishes will be expected to form effective partnerships with a view to sharing planning and resources aimed at implementing and, eventually, evaluating joint programs of evangelization, catechesis and the effective exercise of charity.

Excerpted from **Summary of *Connected in the Spirit* decisions for Indianapolis Deaneries**
(<http://www.archindy.org/connected/indianapolis-summary.html>)

Partnership Parishes

Partner parishes are parishes which have not been juridically altered, merged, or linked by a common pastor or parish life coordinator but which are committed to work together where possible to offer common pastoral care and administration. Thus, for example, partner parishes may eliminate duplication of programs by offering a program at one of the partner parishes for members of all of the parish partnership.

Parishes enter into partnerships with other parishes when:

- They create joint programs.
- When appropriate, they share staff to enhance the quality of ministry and practice good stewardship of resources.
- They share in-service or retreats for parish pastoral councils, finance councils, or parish committees.