



Missoula Deanery Plan

Approved by Bishop George Leo Thomas, December 12, 2012

Areas where no change is recommended at this time:

- Hamilton, St. Francis of Assisi with a mission in Darby: Maintain a priest presence in Hamilton serving the south end of the Bitterroot Valley.
- St. Michael in Drummond and St. Philip in Philipsburg continue as they are currently, served with a retired priest for weekend Masses and a pastoral administrator to coordinate services. This parish has the services of a newly ordained deacon.
- Gold Creek would be officially designated a “Church of Occasional Worship”.
- St. Ignatius Parish in St. Ignatius; Sacred Heart Mission in Arlee; and St. John Berchmans Mission in Jocko are currently staffed by a Jesuit priest for as long as the Jesuit Community can provide priestly ministry in those sites. There are also two Dominican Sisters who serve these communities. The plan does not envision any change in this configuration unless there is no longer a Jesuit available to serve this area and then a diocesan priest will need to assume this ministry.

Note: The connection to the Missoula Deanery for St. Ignatius, Arlee and Jocko is primarily because of St. Francis Xavier Parish in Missoula, which is a Jesuit parish and keeps the Jesuit staffed parishes in the same deanery. If it is no longer possible for the Jesuits to provide a priest for St. Ignatius, Arlee and Jocko, then the reservation parishes would request to be part of the Kalispell Deanery to keep the Native American parishes together in the Flathead Valley. While there is a Jesuit presence in St. Ignatius and Missoula, the configuration works and should stay as it is.

- St. Mary in Stevensville would remain as it is, with one priest serving Stevensville and Florence.
- The Diocese has a commitment to the University community and so maintains a parish that has a special relationship to this community. Because of this there is one priest who would serve Christ the King with a special ministry to the University community. This model may need to be revisited as models of ministry in the area change.

Areas where some change is envisioned if it becomes necessary:

- There are currently two Jesuit priests assigned to serve St. Francis Xavier Parish in Missoula. If the Jesuits are no longer able to staff St. Francis, the Diocese would need to provide a priest to serve this parish.
- One priest would serve St. Ann in Bonner, and Missions in Seeley Lake and Condon. If that is no

longer possible, St. Ann in Bonner; Living Water Mission in Seeley Lake; and Our Lady of Swan Valley in Condon, would be served by priests from Missoula with service from the Mission Ministry Team that would provide support, training and the scheduling of priests for those parishes. Wherever fiscally possible a pastoral administrator could serve areas where there is no resident priest.

Note: Condon may be served from The Sycamore Tree Prayer Center if a qualified resident priest is available for Mass at that facility.

- One priest would serve St. John the Baptist in Frenchtown as long as that is possible. If there is no longer a priest available, St. John the Baptist in Frenchtown; St. Albert Mission in Alberton; and Mary Queen of Heaven Mission in Superior would be served by priests from Missoula with service from the Mission Ministry Team that would provide support, training and the scheduling of priests for those parishes. The Diocesan opportunity to celebrate Mass in the Extraordinary Form (Latin Mass) would still be available at St. John the Baptist in Frenchtown. Wherever fiscally possible a pastoral administrator could serve areas where there is no resident priest.

Note: There was also some discussion that consideration may be given to Superior being served from St. James in Plains. It was noted that, in the past, St. James in Plains, and St. William in Thompson Falls, were part of the Missoula Deanery.

Long range:

Vision: There is a desire to provide ministry in areas of growth in Missoula where there is currently no parish to serve.

Action: Study the location of Blessed Trinity Parish in relationship to the population growth in Missoula to determine the best placement for this parish. As need dictates and it is financially feasible, begin the process of locating and procuring land and relocating the parish community in the area where the Missoula population is growing and there is no Catholic Church currently to serve. The Diocese would need to redraw Missoula parish boundaries to reflect the potential “new” site. Spirit of Christ in Lolo continues as a mission of Blessed Trinity Parish.

Some next steps:

- Formal land study of the southwest corridor in Missoula
- Boundary review of current parish boundaries
- Consider and develop “Mission Ministry Team” opportunities
- Formation of Diocese-wide lay leadership

Mission Ministry Team

- There was a proposal sent to the Parish Input Sessions regarding the formation of a Mission Ministry Team. In the responses from the parishes of the Deanery, there was support for further development of the concept presented as the Mission Ministry Team.
- It is recommended that the Missoula Deanery be tasked with developing the concept of the Mission Ministry Team further and exploring the practicalities, working with an ad hoc group within the deanery, especially including some from the areas that would be potentially impacted by the projected approach. Those practicalities included:
 - Developing the model for this mission-based ministry

- Recommend training/competency for Mission Ministry Team members
- Funding for this team
- Developing leadership on the local level – with local communities and pastoral administrator.
- Some of the aspects of the work of the Mission Ministry Team already proposed to the parishes in the Parish Input Session were the following:
 - To ensure the ongoing growth of ministry and vision for each of the mission parishes and to insure “quality pastoral care”
 - To maintain parish identity
 - To develop all areas of parish life – liturgy, social concerns, faith formation, pastoral council, stewardship, administration, etc.
 - To develop parish lay ministry, and to surface and train parish leadership
 - To work as a team and to enable the resources of the Missoula Parishes to be of service to the mission parishes
 - To organize and secure Sacramental Ministry and to develop and maintain a common approach to Sunday Eucharist and the celebration of the Sacraments
 - To prepare the parish for Sunday Celebration in the absence of a priest and to train and form presiders for that Rite on an ongoing basis.

All sites in this Deanery and throughout the Diocese will be part of a yearly, ongoing process to study their sustainability. Some of the aspects of this study will include an annual look at Parish Mass attendance, annual offertory income, debt retirement (if any), parish plant maintenance, and parish and diocesan financial obligations met. It will also consider parish vitality and engagement. This study will be completed each year and any adjustments needed to the plan will follow.

Some considerations:

- Pastors in the Missoula area will need to study the current Mass schedule to see if the current schedule could be coordinated. The Missoula area pastors will need to meet with an eye to creating space for the future needs of some of the parishes/missions to be served from Missoula.
- Flexibility and adaptability are key in looking to the future. Other observations made by the Planning Group
- There is a need for ongoing, planned, accessible training for parishioners in various areas of parish leadership.
- There is a need to identify persons with the skills necessary to assume leadership in parishes as pastoral/parish administrators and to provide the appropriate training and support for them so that the parishes where a pastor is shared may have good leadership and remain vital and viable. Explore the economic possibility of a pastoral/parish administrator in areas where there is no longer a resident pastor.
- Continue to explore and develop the Mission Ministry Team concept as a way to provide leadership and pastoral care in a parish without a resident pastor and provide a conduit to assure sacramental care.
- Whatever plan is finally adopted, it is understood that it will be implemented on an “as needed” basis.
- One of the drivers of this process is the reality of the priest shortage and the anticipated retirement of some of our senior priests from active ministry. Another is to provide quality pastoral care for our people – the aim of the Mission Ministry Team.