

Recommendation to the Planning Commission from the Church of St. Joseph, Waite Park

Acknowledging the changing demographics of the area and availability of priests in the diocese, we recognize that something needs to be done to address these changes and still meet the needs of the community for a vibrant parish life. Yet there are several considerations and concerns in the parish of which we want the Planning Commission to be aware:

Many St. Joseph parishioners feel that the parish is still financially and spiritually sound, and any major changes could cause disillusionment and distrust.

Additional concern was the fairly recent history of having a building project planned and eventually fail in the St. Joseph parish community in the early 2000s. It ended up being quite detrimental to the parish both financially and spiritually with the people. There are still hard feelings amongst many parishioners, and a number of parishioners left the parish because of those issues.


A number of people expressed concern that merging and eventually closing a location (like St. Joseph) while leaving open another location for worship (like St. Michael) would make it feel like some people “lost” and others “won” the planning process. A new worship space and the collaboration in building it would help the communities move forward on more equal footings, all starting from the same place.

Having heard those concerns, **we would recommend an immediate recluster of multiple parishes together, looking to a long-term plan of merging those parishes and building a new worship space.**

The most obvious and favorable clustering and merging combinations for St. Joseph would be to continue with St. Michael and include the Churches of St. Peter and St. Paul, with whom there has been a connection through the All Saints Academy. Though it was acknowledged that a different, more geographical approach would be understandable as well, including St. Joseph in St. Joseph and St. Anthony instead.

The newly formed cluster could then operate together to look at moving forward with a merger and new space for worship and offices in the 5-7 year range. Until such time as a new space is built, the cluster would likely need the service of two priests for Mass and the sacraments. Business could continue operating more or less as it currently is. Once the merger and new worship space is completed, however, the new parish would conceivably be able to manage with one priest (in line with the example of St. Francis Xavier which has approximately twice the number of families and parishioners as St. Joseph and St. Michael combined but operates with one priest). This is a reasonable and responsible option that addresses the shortage of priests and the changing demographics in the diocese and nation, while being flexible and addressing some of the major concerns of the people.

Sincerely in Christ,



Fr. Timothy Gapinski
Pastor, Church of St. Joseph