



Beginning July 1 St Patrick in O’Neill, St Joseph in Amelia, St Joseph in Atkinson, St Boniface in Stuart, Sacred Heart of Boyd County (Ss. Peter and Paul –Butte, St. Mary – Spencer, and Assumption – Lynch) will be realigned to work with each other more closely. We have talked about this briefly in recent months at Mass and some of you may have read the articles in the most-recent issue of *The Catholic Voice* regarding the changes. I am sure you have realized by reading the article in *The Catholic Voice*, we in Western Holt and Boyd Counties are not the only parishes or people affected by

change. We just happen to be in “first wave” of realignments and those areas that were not affected this year will experience similar changes in the next year or two. We want to take this opportunity to communicate some of the specific details.

1. Each parish will remain an independent parish of the other, but the way we do business will change to a more centralized model with a Director of Operations who will focus on the administration aspects of the parishes as well as some centralized bookkeeping. This will enable the priests to devote more time and energy to the pastoral and spiritual aspects of the parish.
2. We are moving from three pastors and one associate pastor, to one pastor, Fr Starman, and two associates, Fr Sund, and Fr. Weeder.
3. Fr Doug Scheinost will begin his new assignment in West Point, NE on August 1. He will continue to reside and minister in Boyd County through the month of July.

The rationale for moving from four to three priests is to address the declining the number of priests in the Archdiocese. There are currently 130 active diocesan priests in the archdiocese and in the next three years, we know that that number will decrease to 124 and will continue to decline in the years following.

The model of one pastor and two associates is to help us focus on a singular vision for the area parishes and to give the associates an opportunity to be mentored. In the past, associates have moved on an average of every two years and often have become pastors at the end of their second year. By implementing the “hub and spoke” model as we are, the idea is to allow associates to be mentored for a longer period and to better ensure that when they become pastors, they are set up for success.

Those who serve on the parish staffs in each of the parishes will continue to fulfill their responsibilities so you will continue to call on them for scheduling and day to day activities.

Working together, we will be ministering to the parishes mentioned above. Some of the changes you may not notice. However, a change that you will notice is who offers Mass. Fr Starman, Fr Sund, and Fr. Weeder will be rotating parishes on the weekends and occasionally during the week. This will allow us to get to know more people and you to get to know all priests. Fr Starman and Fr Sund will continue to live in O'Neill and Fr. Weeder will continue to live in Atkinson. We will travel to the parish that we are covering for the day or weekend.

Another change that you will notice is the weekend Mass schedule. In communicating with the regional pastoral planning team (3 members of each of the above-mentioned parishes) and other individuals we came up with adopted the following Mass times:

1. St. Boniface – Stuart: Sat. 6:00 p.m.; Sunday 10:30 a.m.  
St. Joseph – Atkinson: Sunday, 8:30 a.m.  
*Atkinson & Stuart will rotate Masses every six months in August and February. **This schedule will take effect on August 1<sup>st</sup> for Atkinson and Stuart.***
2. Ss. Peter and Paul – Butte: Sat. 7:00 p.m.  
St. Mary's – Spencer: Sunday: 9:30 a.m.  
ABVM – Lynch: Currently No Masses Scheduled due to flood damage.  
*Rotate Masses every six months. Once the Lynch church is repaired, a new schedule will be announced.*
3. St. Patrick – O'Neill: Sat. 5:00 p.m., Sun. 9:00 a.m. Effective July 1<sup>st</sup>.  
St. Joseph – Amelia: Sat. 7:00 p.m. (Spring, Summer & Fall) Sun: 11:15 a.m. (Winter)  
*Or use the six-month rotation the rest of the parishes use.*

Upon reviewing the schedule, you will notice that the Mass times are staggered so that you will have six options to attend Mass within a reasonable driving distance. Knowing that you may not attend your home parish every weekend, be assured that so long as you attend one of the churches mentioned above, your Sunday offering envelope will get back to your home parish. Or you may want to consider electronic giving so that you don't have to remember your envelope or checkbook, therefore skipping the hassle. You can contact the parish office for details.

These are a few realignment details, and we realize that you may still have questions, but we ask that you to be patient as we move forward with this process. There are many things that we still need to figure out and some things that we haven't even thought of, but we believe that this process will lead us to a stronger, more unified church by utilizing the diverse gifts of our people and resources. As we move forward with this realignment, we will make mistakes and must adjust, but in the end, we hope to move all of us toward the Archdiocese Vision of *One Church: Encountering Christ, Equipping Disciples, Living Mercy.*

One question we invite you to ponder in the coming weeks, "How do we become a community of communities?"

Sincerely yours,

Fr. Bernard Starman Fr. James Weeder Fr. Joseph Sund