

United in Christ, Called to Mission

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS Regarding New Priestly Assignments in Chippewa Falls

As announced at the Masses on April 11-12, 2026, effective July 1, 2026, in addition to retaining his appointment as Pastor of Notre Dame, Holy Ghost, and St. Bridget parishes, Fr. Daniel Sedlacek is being appointed as Pastor of St. Charles and St. Peter parishes as well. Fr. Timothy Oudenhoven is being assigned as Associate Pastor of Holy Spirit Parish, St. Stephen Parish and St. Joseph Parish, all in Stevens Point, and Chaplain to University Ministry in Stevens Point. He will retain his appointment as Director of the Marian Messengers Apostolate. In addition, Fr. Alex Kren and Fr. David Nowicki will retain their assignments as parochial vicars and become parochial vicars for all 5 parishes. Fr. Kren will remain Chaplain of McDonell High School and Middle School. In addition, Fr. Nowicki will become the Chaplain at Regis High School and Middle School in Eau Claire. Fr. Timothy Welles is being assigned as parochial vicar for all 5 parishes. Following this assignment, the 5 parishes will be served by 4 priests – a pastor and 3 parochial vicars – and 3 deacons, Deacons Daniel Rider, Kevin DeCook, and Sean Hanson.

The following list of questions and answers has been prepared to help address questions parishioners may have following the news of this transition:

Q. Why is this 5-parish grouping happening, and what fruits can be expected?

A. This 5-parish pastoral grouping is a fruit of the Meitler pastoral planning process begun here in Chippewa Falls dating back to 2019. The first 5 years of implementation of this pastoral plan, released in May of 2021, have been largely successful and have continued to help the 5 parishes work more closely together in ministry and evangelization in the Chippewa Falls area. While we do not know every detail of where this process will take us, we trust in God's plan for us, our parishes, and the diocese. The Catholic faithful here in the Chippewa Falls area have already demonstrated a mission-driven spirit of evangelization and discipleship that sets an example of resurgence in Catholic life in our diocese— a resurgence noticed and encouraged by Bishop Battersby.

Q. Are the parishes merging?

A. No. This action does not constitute the merger of any or all of the parishes. This action is analogous to the status St. Charles and St. Peter have shared for many years and Notre Dame, Holy Ghost, and St. Bridget have shared for the past 4 years. The only difference is that there will be more parishes in the cluster led by a single pastor assisted by 3 parochial vicars.

Q. Does this decision reflect a declining Church in the Chippewa Falls area?

A. No. This decision was made with the intention that it would allow for even greater evangelization in the Chippewa Falls area and reflect the community nature of the Church in Chippewa Falls rather than parochial divisions based upon which hill or outlying town in which a Catholic happens to reside.

Q. Was this decision based upon financial strain on any parish or parishes?

A. No. All of the parishes involved are currently solvent and, in fact, continue to be blessed by the generosity of their parishioners.

Q. Will weekend Mass time be changed?

A. Not in the foreseeable future. Since the number of priests serving the 5 parishes will remain the same, there is no immediate need to change Mass times. If Mass times are changed in the future, such changes will be the result of further discussions to better serve our Catholic community.

Q. Will any parishes close?

A. No.

Q. How will this affect the schools?

A. Fr. Alex Kren will remain as chaplain at MACS. St. Peter's School will continue to operate as a parish school for St. Peter's parish. Much as clustering with St. Charles had minimal effect on the operation of St. Peter's school, these changes will have minimal, if any, impact on the operation of St. Peter's school. Fr. David Nowicki is also being assigned as chaplain at Regis Catholic Schools.

Q. What will happen with parish finances?

A. Parish finances will remain unchanged. Each parish will remain a separate financial entity with its own separate finances and finance council.

Q. What will happen to the parish employees?

A. Parish employees will remain employed in their present capacities and there is no plan in place to reduce the number of employees. A transition team will be appointed with representatives of all 5 parishes to evaluate the needed roles within the parishes and how to maximize the unique skills and abilities of each of the parishes' valued employees. It is intended that the effect of this clustering will be to increase the services offered by the parishes and result in greater evangelization capacity.

Q. How will this transition be managed?

A. Between now and July 1, 2026, Fr. Sedlacek will be assembling a transition team consisting of parishioners from each of the 5 parishes who will consult and advise Fr. Sedlacek in effectuating this transition.

Q. What actions have already been taken?

A. Since the practice is to keep announcements of pastoral assignments confidential until public announcement, very little has been allowed to take place aside from preparing for this announcement on Divine Mercy Sunday. Over the next several months, the transition team will meet regularly to advise Fr. Sedlacek and ensure the representation of all 5 parishes.

Q. Will any parish or group of parishes have greater voice or control over this process or the cluster?

A. No. Each parish is a separate entity and Fr. Sedlacek will be the pastor of each, together with all the responsibilities and privileges which accompany the position.

Q. Where will the priests live?

A. The official assignment has all four priests in residence at Notre Dame rectory. However, there will be a time of transition and consideration by Fr. Sedlacek in consultation with Fr. Kren, Fr. Nowicki, and Fr. Welles and Bishop Battersby as to the healthiest living arrangements for the priests.

Q. Where will the parish offices be located?

A. The parish offices for each of the parishes will not be immediately affected. Any future changes will be determined by Fr. Sedlacek in consultation with the transition team and affected employees.

Q. Will any other current parish ministries be affected?

A. No. It is hoped that this cluster will serve to help all current parish ministries grow and provide further opportunities for new parish ministries which will aid in the evangelization of the Chippewa Falls area.

Q. What comes next?

A. We do not fully know. A cluster of this size is novel within the Diocese but is the extension of the intentional pastoral planning process begun here in Chippewa Falls dating back to 2019. Our pastoral transition team will assist Fr. Sedlacek by offering opportunities for input and solidifying pastoral strategies to faithfully serve all people in the Chippewa Falls area.

Prayer to Our Lady for Our Parishes

We fly to you, O Lady of the Falls,
Mother of this City and of the whole Church,
That all our efforts would begin with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit
And continue with His good Help and yours.

We especially entrust to you
The care of the New Evangelization in Chippewa Falls,
The sanctification of all its people,
And the direction of all its apostolates, most especially our Catholic schools.

Obtain for us this grace, for which we already express our gratitude:
That this pastoral plan would find its origin in Him,
Through Whom all things are possible,
And by Him, be brought to fruitful completion.

With the intercession of St. Peter the Apostle, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Bridget,
all our patron saints and guardian angels,
And St. Joseph, patron of our Diocese and protector of the Universal Church,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.