

Sister accepts new SSND leadership position

Sr. Anna Marie Reha has resigned from her position as



director of the Diocese of New Ulm's Office of Hispanic Ministry to serve in a leadership

position with the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Her last day was May 31.

As director, Sr. Anna Marie oversaw the pastoral activities for the diocese's Hispanic faithful. She provided pastoral care where the pastoral leader was not fluent in Spanish or where there was no one hired to respond to the pastoral needs of the Hispanic community.

She also directed the diocese's two adult formation programs geared to Hispanics, "Llamados a Servir" ("Called to Serve") and "Enviados a Servir" ("Sent to Serve").

Most recently, she developed and implemented a bilingual consultation process that created the diocese's second pastoral plan for Hispanic/Latino ministry. She also served on a number of local

and national boards dedicated to Hispanic ministry.

One of her most rewarding experiences was helping prepare lay leaders in the Hispanic community through "Llamados a Servir" and "Enviados a Servir." "When I go out to the parishes, it is obvious who has participated in these courses because they have become more confident leaders and self-assured catechists," she said.

Before coming to the diocese in 2005, Sr. Anna Marie served for nine years as a pastoral administrator at the Union de las Aldeas, Corpus Christi Parish, for the Diocese of San Marcos in Guatemala. Before that she was a sixth-grade teacher at St. Matthew's Elementary School in St. Paul.

On June 13, 2015, Sr. Anna Marie will be installed as a counselor of the Provincial Council of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, Central Pacific Province. Provincial counselors assist the provincial leader in administering the affairs of the province. She will be stationed in St. Louis.

Diocesan director of New Evangelization resigns

Matthew Tsakanikas, director of the Diocese of New Ulm's Office



of the New Evangelization, has resigned from his position. He has accepted a full-time

teaching position at Christendom College in Front Royal, Va., and will move there this summer.

As director, Tsakanikas helped develop curriculum for the diocese's lay formation programs, including Foundations and Together in Mission. He served as staff theologian for the bishop's staff, and he assisted in the continuing faith formation of Catholic school teachers.

One of his favorite duties was serving as academic dean for the permanent diaconate formation program. "It is my favorite role because I get to work through development of curriculum and courses in view of training future leaders for the new evangelization," he said.

Tsakanikas will continue to serve as academic dean for the diocese's program and also plans to continue teaching in it.

"Hopefully people who have attended programming walked away edified and will share such edification with others," Tsakanikas said. "Hopefully they will have more desire to live their lives in thanksgiving to Jesus Christ."

Prince of Peace Area Faith Community to dissolve; parishes to join other AFCs

by Sam Patet
The Prairie Catholic

NEW ULM – Effective July 1, 2015, the three parishes in the Prince of Peace Area Faith Community – St. John's in Appleton, St. James in Dawson, and St. Michael's in Madison – will become part of three separate area faith communities.

St. John's will be reassigned to the St. Isidore the Farmer AFC (St. Francis in Benson, St. Malachy in Clontarf, Visitation in Danvers, St. Bridget in DeGraff, and Sacred Heart in Murdock).

St. James will become part of the Holy Family AFC (St. Clara in Clara City, St. Andrew in Granite Falls, and St. Joseph in Montevideo).

St. Michael's will join the St. Hubert AFC (St. John in Ortonville and St. Joseph in Rosen).

"I know that this change is not easy for you to make. I wish that it were not necessary," wrote Bishop John M. LeVoor in an April 20 letter to the parishioners in the

three affected parishes.

"In order to plan for the future, difficult decisions are being made throughout the diocese."

Fr. Brian Oestreich is currently pastor of two parishes in the Prince of Peace AFC. He said that while change isn't easy, it's always been part of the life of the Church.

"It's like the early Church right after Pentecost: Everything was changing, people were moving, various communities were being established in order to live and spread the gospel message throughout the world," he said.

The reconfiguration was made in response to the retirement of Fr. James Devorak, parochial administrator of the parishes in the St. Hubert AFC since September 2014. With one less priest serving in the region, the diocese chose to reduce the number of AFCs in the region by one as well.

"The only way we could give up one priest was for the Prince of Peace AFC to be dissolved," said Fr. Bill Sprigler, parochial

administrator at the Church of St. James in Dawson since July 2014. "There is really no one lined up to come in."

"I met several times with the priests and deacons of Region 4 to determine the best pastoral plan, given the shortage of priests and the needs of the parishes," wrote Bishop LeVoor. "The discussions went very well."

Tom Keaveny is director of pastoral planning for the diocese. The reconfiguration needed to take place not only because Region 4 was losing one priest, he said, but also because of changing demographics. According to the "Fourth Plan for Parishes," the populations of the five counties that compose Region 4 – Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift, and Yellow Medicine – are all projected to decrease between 2010 and 2040 (see Figure 3.12 of the "Fourth Plan").

"The population decline in this region of the diocese was greater than anyone would have predicted when these AFCs were first created," Keaveny said.

Sisters' Council votes to disband

by Sam Patet
The Prairie Catholic

NEW ULM – After nearly 50 years of existence, the Sisters' Council of the Diocese of New Ulm has been dissolved. Members of the council made the decision by vote April 18, 2015, at their general meeting.

"I think just meeting with the sisters throughout the diocese was very important," said Sr. Anna Marie DeVos, a member of the Sisters' Council since she arrived in the diocese in 1972. "We knew what they were doing, and we could say what we were doing."

"The Sisters' Council was formed ... really as a way for the sisters to support each other and to be a bond between consecrated women living in the diocese," said Sr. Anna Marie Reha, a School Sister of Notre Dame and outgoing president of the council.

The reason why the council dissolved, Sr. Anna Marie Reha

explained, was because there weren't enough sisters to keep it going. When the council was formed in 1968, there were over 230 sisters from 15 congregations ministering in the diocese. In 2015, those numbers had dropped to 54 sisters from 14 congregations.

Preparations for the council began in January 1968, when Bishop Alphonse J. Schladweiler met with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet who were serving in the Marshall area. At the end of the meeting, the sisters expressed their desire that all women religious serving in the diocese could have the same experience. Bishop Schladweiler supported the idea of forming a Sisters' Council to achieve that purpose.

So on March 16, 1968, an informational meeting was held in Marshall for all women religious serving in the diocese. Constitutions were drawn up over the next two months, and on May 18, 1968, the council had its first meeting.

One religious sister who was part of the council from the beginning was Sr. Carolyn Puccio, at the time a second-grade teacher at Holy Redeemer Catholic School. She said the Sisters' Council was a great grace and gift for the diocese.

"We needed an opportunity to bring people together. And at that time, there wasn't the same sense of collaboration and cooperation and support that there is now," she said. "One of the things I'm most proud of is that it encouraged the women to get to know one another, to support each other, to collaborate, to really work together in the diocese."

The council offered other benefits including educational opportunities, inviting in speakers who presented on a variety of topics. It was also a way for women religious to voice their ideas and concerns to the bishop and his staff.