



DIOCESE OF SAGINAW

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DECREE

Relegating St. Andrew Church in Saginaw to Secular but not Unbecoming Use

In November 2011, participating in *Planning Tomorrow's Parishes*, each parish in the Diocese of Saginaw formed parish core teams for a parish self-study. Each parish's self-study entailed regular communication with parishioners, including bulletin announcements, town hall meetings, and surveys. St. Andrew Parish in Saginaw worked in close collaboration with the surrounding parishes during the planning process.

On January 18, 2013, Most Reverend Joseph R. Cistone (deceased) decreed that St. Andrew Parish and St. Helen Parish, Saginaw would merge on July 1, 2014, with St. Helen Church named as the parish church. The new parish was subsequently named, "Christ the Good Shepherd Parish." Since July 1, 2014, occasional Masses were celebrated at St. Andrew Church. The Pastor has been approached regarding possible closure of the Church and sale of the property.

The Pastor and members of the Parish Finance and Pastoral Councils have expressed concern that, because the St. Andrew Church property is not used frequently, the Church is likely to rapidly deteriorate or to be vandalized. Capital improvements have occurred at St. Andrew Church to preserve the integrity of the building; in addition, the Parish Finance Council estimates that maintenance of the church building costs between \$40,000-50,000 per year.

Recently, the Pastor discussed with the Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils an offer to purchase the property. Following the advice of the Councils, the Pastor began to explore closure of St. Andrew Church.

On November 13, 2019, the membership of the Pastoral Council and the Finance Council voted to request closure of St. Andrew Church. The Parish Finance and Pastoral Council members advised the Pastor to inform the parishioners of the Councils' support of closing St. Andrew Church and to request a decree relegating St. Andrew Church to secular but not unbecoming use. The Pastor made his recommendation public and placed it in the Parish bulletin on December 8, 2019 and on three subsequent Sundays. No letters of objection were received.

The Pastor wrote to me on December 23, 2019, requesting closure of St. Andrew Church. He sent copies of the parish announcements and minutes of the Parish Finance Council and Parish Pastoral Council, in which all members supported relegating the church to secular, but not unbecoming use.

The request to close St. Andrew Church was approved by the respective members of the Parish Pastoral Council and Finance Council.

The following grave causes suggest that St. Andrew Church be relegated to secular, but not unbecoming use:

1. There has been little use of St. Andrew Church since July 1, 2014 and the use is decreasing over times as individuals request the use of St. Andrew Church less for funerals, weddings and other occasions;
2. Following evaluation of financial needs of Christ the Good Shepherd Parish, the Christ the Good Shepherd Finance Council concluded that there was not adequate financial support for the repair and maintenance of St. Andrew Church;
3. There is no other source of funding and the financial burden of repairing and maintaining the church would cause important pastoral programs of Christ the Good Shepherd Parish to suffer due to lack of funds;
4. Funds from the sale of the church property would bolster the pastoral programs, such as outreach to the poor and support of Catholic faith formation;
5. The closure of St. Andrew Church will not make it impossible to hear the word of God, to receive the sacraments, to participate in public worship, and to exercise the works of charity; therefore, the care of souls would not suffer because of this decision due to the commitment of the parishioners to worship and participate in parish activities at St. Helen Church; and
6. The Pastor and the Finance Council, and Parish Pastoral Council members are in favor of relegating the church to secular use in order to provide for the financial stability of Christ the Good Shepherd Parish.

Therefore, having determined that no other parties can legitimately claim rights for themselves in St. Andrew Church, and having heard the opinion of the Presbyteral Council on March 10, 2020 according to the norm of canon 1222 §2 regarding the proposal to relegate the church to the secular but not unbecoming use,

And having judged that sufficient grave causes are present and having determined with moral certitude that the good of souls will not thereby be impaired, I hereby DECREE that St. Andrew Church, Saginaw, Michigan be relegated to secular but not unbecoming use. In addition, I decree that the remaining sacred objects are to be removed and treated in a manner befitting their character.

The provisions of this decree are to take effect *nunc pro tunc*, all things to the contrary notwithstanding. These provisions may be appealed according to the norm of law (cf. canon 1734 §1).

Given at the Diocesan Offices
March 10, 2020



Most Reverend Robert D. Gruss
Bishop of Saginaw



Sister Mary Judith O'Brien, R.S.M.
Chancellor