

Catholic Diocese of Columbus

Office of the Bishop
614 • 224 • 2251

July 31, 2024

Dear Ms. _____

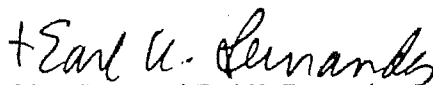
I am in receipt of your email of July 22, 2024, regarding the situation of St. Leonard in Heath. Regarding the alleged closure of St. Leonard, I told Fr. Hritsko more than a year ago that I was content to let him finish his pastor's term before making a decision. At that time, I met with Father Hritsko, as well as some parishioners and members of the business community. I thought that the remaining years would serve as a suitable period of discernment. Obviously, circumstances changed.

I have asked Fr. Sizemore to form a transition team to begin to discuss the future of St. Leonard. Father Sizemore is examining more thoroughly the financial situation of the parish, as well as the demographic factors. Having served as an episcopal vicar for the Real Presence Real Future initiative, he has ample experience in leading the process. But, know that it takes a tremendous amount of work to bring communities together and to lead such a process, which is not without difficulties, hurt feelings, confusion, and comparing one parish to another. Neither priests nor people want it. For this, I ask your prayers, especially for priestly vocations.

The Pope keeps calling us to move from maintenance to mission – to the mission of evangelization. This is what we are trying to do. I invite you and your family to try to see what might be possible rather than stand by and judge the situation. No decision has been made, and there is an entire process which must be followed, which includes consultation with the Presbyteral Council before a parish can be suppressed. I encourage you to be involved in the process regarding the future of St. Leonard here in the Diocese of Columbus.

Wishing you every blessing, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,


Most Reverend Earl K. Fernandes
Bishop of Columbus

cc: Reverend David Sizemore