

July 17, 2023

Most Reverend Bishop Robert Gruss
Bishop of Saginaw
Diocese of Saginaw
5600 Weiss St.
Saginaw, MI 48603-2762

Dear Bishop Rubert Gruss,

We are the Michigan Chapter of DoCoMoMo, which stands for the “**D**ocumentation and **C**onservation of building, sites, and neighborhoods of the **M**odern **M**ovement.” We are a regional chapter of DoCoMoMo International, an organization whose goal is to promote the study, interpretation, and protection of the architecture, landscape, and urban design of the Modern Movement. Our board consists of historians, museum professionals, and professors who are knowledgeable and passionate about the preservation of Michigan’s 20th century architecture. We are writing this letter to oppose the proposed demolition of the Church of St. Mary in Alma and encourage your parish to pursue rehabilitation or sale to an entity that will.

The Church of St. Mary is a stellar example of mid-century modern architecture designed by William Wesley Peters, a Taliesin Fellow, son-in-law of Frank Lloyd Wright, and supremely talented architect. Michigan has very few buildings designed by William Wesley Peters. The building has been featured in numerous publications about Taliesin architecture, with a resounding conclusion that it is a prime example of Peters’ work, as well as one of the more successful examples of church architecture from this period. The Church of St. Mary is like no other Catholic church in the State of Michigan and worthy of preservation.

On behalf of the Michigan Chapter of DoCoMoMo, I urge you to reconsider plans to demolish The Church of St. Mary. We do not oppose altering the building to increase its usefulness for the community of Alma, but vehemently oppose any plans to demolish the building in its entirety. Even if the Diocese of Saginaw prefers to relinquish its ownership, there are countless examples of successful adaptive reuse of religious structures globally. This church is of utmost historical and cultural significance and will only continue to grow in its importance. We encourage the Diocese of Saginaw to work with the State Historic Preservation Office to fully document the structure and create a sustainable plan for rehabilitation or adaptive reuse for the structure that respects the design and intent of the original building.

Sincerely,



Vice President, DoCoMoMo-Michigan

Cc:

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