

**By Mary Rueter**  
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A move to appeal to the Iowa Supreme Court a ruling by a Clinton County judge also has moved the Spiritual Healing Team of SS Philip and James Catholic Church in Grand Mound to action.

Last week attorneys for the Diocese of Davenport filed applications for interlocutory appeal to the Supreme Court in cases brought by James Wells and John Doe III against James Janssen, Francis Bass, Anthony Geerts — who formerly served as priests at Clinton County churches — and the diocese. Janssen served the Grand Mound parish 1980-1990.

The appeal is based on Judge C.H. Pelton's opinion the diocese's motions for summary judgment based on the statute of limitations contain fact issues a jury should decide.

The plaintiffs — two victims of sexual abuse by priests — claim fraudulent concealment or mental illness prevented them from filing their lawsuits earlier. The abuse allegedly occurred 35-50 years ago. Wells is Janssen's nephew.

The diocese disagrees those issues are appropriate defenses to the statute of limitations and also believes the same legal issues exist in 13 law suits scheduled for trial in Clinton and Scott counties beginning in November and continuing through December 2005.

"It would be in the best interests of justice for all concerned for the Supreme Court to decide these legal issues before all these cases go to trial," the diocese commented in a news release.

The diocese also has asked for a "stay" of all trials until the legal issues are resolved.

The Grand Mound Spiritual Healing Team, however, takes issue with the diocese's action. "We're very saddened and disappointed by the latest 'legal' move by the Davenport Diocese," a spokesperson said.

The healing team is composed of about 45 persons, including parishioners of SS Philip and James and neighboring parishes, clergy and community members. Its goal is to address the impact of the sexual abuse crisis on the local parish and the community, believing accountability is an important piece of the healing process for survivors and the parish.

"The diocese has clearly documented and concealed the long history of abuse by Janssen on the innocent children of our communities," the team states in its response to the diocese news release.

"This is illustrated in the many documents and affidavits that have been entered into public record throughout the legal proceedings. These records, include numerous notes and documents from Janssen's personnel file and affidavits courageously submitted by survivors outlining the horrendous abuse suffered at the hands of priests."

In fact, in cooperation with an organization called Bishop Accountability, the team has taken steps to make those documents readily available for public view on the Internet by logging on to <[www.bishopaccountability.org](http://www.bishopaccountability.org)>.

Contrary to the diocese position the appeal is "in the best interest of justice for all concerned," the spiritual healing team believes the bishop accepting responsibility for poor decisions made by the hierarchy of the diocese and addressing the issue of sexual misconduct head-on would better serve all concerned — including survivors, their families, parishioners, priests of integrity and diocesan officials.