A GUIDE TO PARISH CLUSTERS, MERGERS AND CLOSURES
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June 2, 2008

Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord,

Believing the promise of our Lord, “I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:20), the Church of Lansing embarked on a comprehensive diocesan study to strengthen our Catholic presence in every region. My predecessor, Bishop Carl Mengeling, established the Office of Pastoral Planning to accomplish this ambitious endeavor involving parishes and schools. The methodology included listening sessions connected with the VOICES process, the self-study through the PEI/SEI, parish assemblies, and regional meetings with parish representatives leading to recommendations for the restructuring of parishes, the more effective deployment of clergy, and a revitalization of every aspect of parochial life. For the past three years, the Diocesan Coordinating Commission: Planning Tomorrow’s Churches analyzed the data presented to them from the broad consultation to make their recommendations to me. Moreover, Faith magazine, and the diocesan website, Catholic and secular newspapers and parish bulletin articles, communicated to the faithful the progress of the Coordinating Commission.

Near the end of the process, Church law requires that I consult the Presbyteral Council. I will also consult the College of Consultants, the Council of Vicars, the Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Diocesan Finance Council for their assessment of the recommendation before finalizing my decisions.

Ever since my installation as Bishop of Lansing, I have prayed for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to illuminate all who participated in the process, particularly the members of the councils and commissions in their deliberations. I also invoked the patrons of each parish to help us find a new impetus whereby her Son Jesus can be made known through our faith communities. Finally, I implored the intercession of St. Mary, the Immaculate Conception, our patroness, to guide the final decisions that I would make so that we may give praise and honor to her Son.

Our journey of faith is not going to be found in a building, a program, or a formula. Rather, our mission as a Church and as believers is to present a person - Jesus Christ -
living and active in our cities and towns, parishes and families. The assurance of the Lord’s presence has accompanied the Church in the past. That same assurance guides us today so that we may truly become “People of Hope!”

In the wake of any important decision, we ask ourselves the same question put to Peter immediately after his Pentecost speech: “What must we do?” (Acts 2:37). For this reason, as of today, I promulgate this manual, “A Guide to Parish Clusters, Mergers and Closures” to assist parishioners and parish leadership in the steps that must be taken to become renewed, grace-filled, and life-giving communities of faith. Simultaneously, I also decree that the policies and procedures contained in this manual supersede any other similar diocesan policy or procedure, anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Trusting the words of our Lord, “I am with you!”, and the powerful intercession of St. Mary, the Immaculate Conception, our patroness, for each of you, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

† Earl Boyea
Bishop of Lansing

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Life is filled with change. It seems that the only constant in life is change. Beginning with the Book of Genesis right on through to the Book of Revelation, God calls us to accept change. He continually calls us to a “change of heart”, to conversion, to acceptance of His ways, ways that are not our ways.

Anyone with the slightest knowledge of Church history recognizes the life-changing Holy Spirit present in Christ’s Mystical Body. Likewise, all who study world history, regardless whether or not they are people of faith, recognize the ever-changing experience of the Church both internally and externally. Indeed, if throughout the centuries the Church had not changed, it would not be what it is today.

The Spirit is now calling us, the faith-full people of the Diocese of Lansing, to recognize our need to change our ways, our structures, and our deployment of God’s gifts, and then to have the courage and faith to actually change things.

This tests our faith. This tests our willingness not only to change but also to rely on the presence of God’s Spirit among us, along with recognizing the paths down which He is calling us and leading us.

To that end we have been prayerfully and, yes, laboriously, discerning what it is our individual parishes are all about, what their pluses and minuses may be, and what it is they face, both internally and externally, in their individual futures.

Our unique parish families have their histories, their memories, their cherished moments, their trials, and now their changed surroundings. The neighbors around our parish families have moved. Our neighborhoods have changed. The members of our parish families have changed. Our futures are now different. In some instances our futures are hugely different from what our past experiences have been.

What is the Spirit calling us to do in the light of the changes we have faced, as well as the changes we know we will face in our futures?

For the past two years we, as a diocesan family of faith, have been trying to ask the right questions in order to get the right answers to these many and vexing questions. Our Diocesan Coordination Commission, courageously established by Bishop Carl F. Mengeling, has been sensitively and yet forthrightly encouraging us to face the inevitable changes confronting us all.

Change is inevitable. We do not have the option not to change. The question is: How will we change? Hopefully we will respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in faith, hope, and in love.
The Human Response to Change
by J. Kevin Ford, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology, Michigan State University

“Faced with the choice between changing one’s mind and proving that there is no need to do so, almost everyone gets busy on the proof.”

John K. Galbraith, Economist

“All changes, even the most longed for, have their melancholy; for what we leave behind is part of ourselves; we must die to one life before we can enter into another.”

Anatole France, French Writer

“Habit is habit, and not to be flung out of the window by any man, but coaxed downstairs a step at a time.”

Mark Twain, American Writer

The quotes above illustrate the complexity of change and reactions to it. Resistance to change, especially when people do not understand it or do not like the consequences, is a typical response. Change processes are often slow, messy, and unpredictable. This leaves lots of room for people to deny that change will really happen or for people to form groups to push back in the hopes that change will not happen. When change does actually occur, it may be difficult for some people to be ready to accept it and move forward.

As noted by Bridges (2003), it is not the change that does people in, it is the transitions. Change is situational - such as a parish merging with another parish or a parish closing. Transition, on the other hand, is psychological. As he notes, people have to go through a process as they internalize and come to terms with the details of the new situation that the change brings about. Understanding this transition is critical to coming up with strategies for helping people going through this transition.

Zell (2003) presents research that supports the notion that people can go through a number of distinct psychological stages during this transition. The first stage is denial or the “it can’t be true” stage. A person may go about life as if nothing is wrong or nothing is really going to happen. The second stage that occurs when the change is impending is anger. Here individuals can experience deep emotions such as rage, frustration and resentment which can be directed at others (especially those in perceived authority positions). The third stage is bargaining which is a period of time in which individuals seek to delay the inevitable. Stage four is dejection during which the individual becomes somber and mourns for what is being lost with the change. Finally, individuals may reach the stage of acceptance during which they are no longer fighting the inevitable and are preparing for what is to come. This progression through the stages can take a long time (up to 2 years). Only if a large majority of the individuals progress to the acceptance stage can there be a form of organizational rebirth.
How can people in authority positions help individuals move through the transition process? Bridges contends that we must help people progress through three phases. First, leaders need to help people to let go of the old ways and the old identity that people have. This is the time to help people to deal with their perceived losses. Second, leaders must help individuals reorient themselves when they are in the “neutral” zone when the old is gone but the new is not yet fully realized. Third, leaders can help individuals who are coming out of the transition and making a new beginning. In this way, people can develop a new identity, experience new energy, and discover a new sense of purpose. The paradox, then, is that transitions must start with an ending (letting go of the past) and then finish with a new beginning. Of course, not everyone moves easily from letting go, reorienting and new beginnings.

To help others “let go”, leaders must accept the reality and importance of people’s sense of loss and not be surprised by any overreactions. People need information communicated to them over and over and over again. In this way, people are confronted with the reality of change through credible data about the necessity for change. In this way, individuals can come to accept the reality of the loss at an intellectual level i.e., develop a satisfactory account of what is happening and why. Leaders can also help individuals understand what is “over” and what is not. Even with a major change, a majority of things will stay the same. In this way, the conversation can move to what is positive about the change rather than dwelling on what is painful. Leaders must also ensure that people treat the “past” with respect and let people take a piece of the old way with them. Finally, leaders can discuss and show how endings actually ensure the continuity of what really matters.
Diocesan Coordinating Commission

Foundational Documents

Mission Statement

Seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit and input of the faithful, the Bishop’s Coordinating Commission for the Diocese of Lansing will design a plan to address the sacramental, pastoral, leadership and formational challenges and opportunities of each diocesan faith community.

The Commission will monitor the timely implementation of the approved plan, assuring that the process is carried out with great sensitivity for each individual faith family and its unique culture.

Guiding Principles for the Work of the Coordinating Commission

1. We will openly communicate our efforts to the people of the diocese and strive to ensure that all the work of this commission will be characterized by mutual respect and honesty.

2. Full Sacramental ministry will be available to all our Catholic people in every geographic area of the diocese.

3. Competent pastoral ministers (lay, religious or ordained) will serve in every geographic area of the diocese.

4. We will have a special concern to meet the needs of the poor and marginalized.

5. We will engage all of our individual faith communities in planning for their future. Every faith community will evaluate its communal, spiritual and Sacramental life, its faith formation programs and its financial stability.

6. We will seek to be creative in our efforts to re-configure our diocese for an era with fewer priests and shifting population.

7. Any re-configuration of the diocese will respect the needs of both the people and the individual minister.
Principles for Communications

1. All communiqués will be positive in tone while responding to the needs of the people of our diocese to be well informed.

2. Communiqués will be summary in nature, detailed only when necessary for clarity. Brevity is a blessing for all concerned.

3. Transparency is essential. We will be forthcoming in our efforts to communicate the work of our Commission.

4. The Bishop will approve any public communications/statements from the Commission prior to their publication/distribution. All Commission members will be included in the distribution of such communications.

5. We will issue our communiqués and/or press releases to FAITH Magazine, our diocesan Communications Department, our diocesan VOICES Alive newsletter, The Catholic Times, and to regional secular newspapers.

6. The Diocesan Director of Communications will be the designated Commission spokesperson and all public inquiries received by the Diocese or any Commission member will be referred to that spokesperson for handling.

7. We will employ the Diocesan website to support our public communications efforts wherever possible. The following are representative of the types of information that, if appropriate, will routinely appear there:
   * Commission’s mission statement and any other public overarching documents
   * All press releases, public statements, or other documents made public by the Commission
   * Roster of Commission members with very brief resumes (two or three lines) pertinent to their appointment to the Commission
   * FAQs about the Commission’s assignments (e.g. recent Faith Magazine articles on manpower and education issues)

8. Sensitivity, respect, accuracy, discretion and good judgment will characterize any informal discussion Commission members may have with others relative to the Commission’s work.
Care of the New Faith Community

Whether a parish has been clustered, merged with another community or closed, “new communities” are formed. The pastor/pastoral coordinator and all parish pastoral leadership are the ones who will allow people to express their feelings of fear, anger, or loss; but are also the ones to help them move beyond those feelings with some sense of hope for a brighter future. Restructuring of the parishes in the Diocese of Lansing was done to further the mission of the Church. We are going to better use our resources to strengthen our parishes so that we can form all our people in the Gospel, feed the poor, clothe the naked, house the homeless, and heal the wounded and broken-hearted. The parishes that remain will energize themselves as places of spiritual renewal and evangelization. The prospects for growth as a faith community will depend on our willingness to rebuild the church by renewing our commitment to her mission.

Christ never promised that discipleship would be easy, but He promised to be with us and send His Spirit to guide us. This Spirit brings new life and makes all things new.

I. Parish Clusters

(Material has been used with permission from the Diocese of Green Bay, Department of Stewardship and Pastoral Services, Mark Mogilka, Director)

“The parish is not principally a structure, a territory, a building. The parish is first of all a community of the faithful ... that is the task of the parish today; to be a community ... Make yourselves builders of communities in which, after the examples of the first community, the Word lives and acts.”

_Pope John Paul II_

A parish cluster is formed when two or more parishes are served by one or more priests. The parishes retain separate identities, but collaborate in the sharing of ministries and resources.

Background information:

Dioceses across the country have formed a variety of parish cluster models. Some things have been learned from their experiences:

1. The greater the involvement of parish staff, leadership and parishioners in decision-making regarding planning and implementation of parish clustering, the greater the likelihood of success.
2. The better the preparation, training, coaching and support of pastoral leaders the greater the likelihood of success.
3. It is important to provide community pastoral care that allows sufficient time for parish communities to grieve – as they adjust spiritually and emotionally to change (Ref Grieving and Moving to Wholeness in Life, page 24).
4. When parishes come together, use of a facilitator will help in decision-making.
5. A valuable resource to help pastoral leaders understand the challenges and strategies for bringing parish communities together is found in the literature for step parent or parenting of blended families. (Ref Appendix M, page 110)

6. To be successful, pastoral leaders must be collaborative, know how to empower people and be able to delegate without abdicating responsibility.

7. Peer support systems and/or mentoring by peers who have experience with parish clustering is critical.

8. There is no one model or one way to effect parish clustering that can be applied to every situation in the diocese.

9. It helps to select a transition team to advise and assist in this transition.

Various models have been created. We list four here. The determination of which model should be utilized in any given situation should emerge from a prayerful collaborative planning process that involves parishioners, staff, parish pastoral councils, pastors/pastoral coordinators and a representative from the diocese (eg. the facilitator assigned to the process).

Four models of parish clusters may be found in Appendix A, page 44.

Successful parish reorganization benchmarks: ref Appendix F, page 58.

Diocese of Lansing Policies: (adapted from the Archdiocese of Dubuque)

1. Formal notification of parish clusters will be made by the Moderator of the Curia or the Chancellor of the Diocese of Lansing.

2. Upon notification of formally being clustered, a transition facilitator will be named by the Office of Pastoral Planning to assist the parishes of the future cluster.

3. A parish assembly (or some other suchlike event) must be held to inform the parishioners of this change of canonical status.

4. A transition team will be named with membership from each parish in the cluster.

5. Parish leadership and the transition team will come together in a series of meetings to:
   a. Celebrate their history through prayer and dialogue.
   b. Review their parish profiles and determine their commonality in mission, worship, formation and social ministry.
   c. Develop a transitional plan to determine liturgical schedules, potential staffing needs and shared operational expenses.
   d. Keep their congregations apprised of the cluster process through parish assemblies, parish bulletins and weekend announcements.
   e. Plan joint liturgical and social activities for the congregations to come together during the transition period.

6. Preparation for pastoral assignment:
   a. Whenever possible, a new pastor will be assigned to a cluster; however, one of
the existing pastors may request to become the cluster pastor when a collaborative relationship has been established.

7. Liturgical Celebrations in clusters:
   a. Parish leadership will determine the schedule for liturgies to ensure an adequate amount of time between liturgies. One liturgy for Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil, Christmas Eve and Holy Days of obligation may be celebrated in clusters with parishes rotating as the host site, depending upon the size of the facilities and the number of available priests.
   b. Each priest serving the cluster will celebrate Mass not more than three times on a weekend.
   c. The worship commissions of the cluster parishes will meet at least quarterly to plan combined liturgical celebrations, e.g., Advent/Lent, Reconciliation services, Christmas, the Triduum, devotions, weekday Mass, etc.
   d. Combined liturgical celebrations will reflect the cultural and ethnic traditions of each parish.

8. Finances:
   a. While each parish in the cluster maintains its separate financial status, the Finance Councils of the parishes will meet at least quarterly to review the financial status of the parishes and to determine if there are cost duplications that can be eliminated.
   b. Annually, Finance Councils will formulate a cluster budget in addition to their parish budgets to ensure a fair and equitable distribution of shared costs, e.g., staff, equipment and/or facilities.
   c. Finance Councils will encourage parishioners to use marked envelopes and educate them on the importance of stewardship in order for the parishes to maintain financial stability to carry out their individual ministries.
   d. Finance Councils will ensure that parishioners may deposit their marked envelopes in whatever church of the cluster they attend, with the understanding that the funds will be forwarded to their home parish. Undesignated funds stay in the parish in which they were collected.

9. Communicate regularly with the parishioners. The Office of Communications at the diocese (See Appendix O, page 114) is available for consultation in your overall communication plan during this transition. The transition facilitator and team will be helpful in the drafting of this plan.

10. On the date the cluster takes effect, a decree of promulgation will be issued by the Bishop of Lansing.

II. Parish Mergers

“And all who shared the faith owned everything in common; they sold their goods and possessions and distributed the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed. Each day with one heart, they regularly went to the temple but met in their houses for the breaking of the bread; they shared their food gladly and generously; they praised God and were looked up to by everyone. Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved”.

Acts of the Apostles 2:44 ff
“When parishes are merged, two or more parishes become a single worshiping community. Parish boundaries are redrawn and a new canonical entity is formed. Two or more parishes, rich in tradition, come together in peace and love to form a new faith community, deriving its strength from the gifts of the former communities. And this new combination, this new reality, will give birth to new gifts and deeper faith.”

Background information:

1. When parishes merge, there is one pastor, one staff, one Parish Pastoral Council and one Financial Council who serve one or multiple churches.
2. When parishes merge, the assets and liabilities are also merged and become the responsibility of the new parish entity.
3. All sacramental records go to the site where the merged parish will worship.
4. When one parish merges with another, the new entity will assume responsibility for the cemetery if one exists.
5. The best way to work out details of a merger is to form a transition team.
6. The transition team will be responsible to establish a liturgical schedule, devotions, activities and organizations that will reflect the composition of the new parish.
7. The new parish community can take on a new name, but the name of an individual church, once it has been dedicated, cannot be changed. This accommodates the use of each parish site in the merger, (Ref Appendix H, page 60).
8. Should the merged parishes choose, they together could build a new larger church. In this case, existing churches are closed and properties sold to provide funding for building the new church. This new church as one pastor, one staff, the traditional leadership structures with a Parish Pastoral Council and a Parish Finance Council.

Two models of parish mergers may be found in Appendix B, page 46.

Successful parish reorganization benchmarks: ref Appendix F, page 58.

Diocese of Lansing Policies:

1. Formal notification of parish mergers will be made by the Moderator of the Curia or the Chancellor of the Diocese of Lansing.
2. Upon notification of formally being merged, the Office of Pastoral Planning will name a transition facilitator to assist the parishes throughout the merging process.
3. A parish assembly or suchlike event is to be planned so all parishioners are formally notified of this change in canonical status.
4. This transition facilitator will work with the transition team. A typical transition team might include a staff person and three to five parishioners from each parish depending on the number of parishes involved in the merger. Members of the transition team should be supportive of the merger and understand it to be a way of building a stronger and more vibrant parish. Transition team members do not represent their former parish, but the new entity.
5. The transition team, in dialogue with the Office of Pastoral Planning, will establish a
time line for implementation. This would involve the final liturgical celebration for each
site, closure dates for any sites not to be used, official date for the erection of the new
parish and/or the initial liturgical celebration of the new parish. Closing liturgies will be
celebrated by the Bishop of Lansing. Call the Office of the Chancellor (See Appendix O,
page 114) to schedule. (Ref Appendix K, page 63, and Appendix L, page 64.)

6. Hold joint Parish Pastoral Council meetings as soon as possible to discuss matters of
mutual concern. (Ref Appendix I, page 61)

7. As soon as the merger is announced, opportunities for prayer and socialization will be
scheduled for the parishes involved in the merger. Parishes might have a heritage night
when parishes would share with one another their history and “finest moments”, or they
might have a joint liturgy on some appropriate upcoming feast day or holiday.

8. If the primary site for the merged parish has not yet been selected, the following
criteria should be considered:
   a. geographic location
   b. condition of the buildings and property
   c. handicapped accessibility
   d. appropriateness of the church size and availability of other space for meetings
   e. adequate parking area
   f. cost factor – what is the cost of current repair needs, utilities, and continuing
      maintenance
   g. condition/safety of surrounding area – are sidewalks and streets in good repair?
      Is the area well lighted and relatively safe for events held after dark?

9. If there will be a single worship site, the church will be renewed in some way to
indicate that it has become “new” in order to welcome a “new” merged community.
Each parish should identify some element(s) from its church that might be brought to the
merged worship space and incorporated into the renewed space. (Ref Appendix G, page
59.)

10. If more than one worship site will be used, the transition team will work out a new
schedule for Masses and other activities. Devotions that have been very meaningful in
the parishes that have merged should be incorporated into the life of the new parish.

11. All ministries will be evaluated, and new, needed ministries will be discussed and
eventually initiated.

12. Integrate Religious Education Programs as soon as possible, with the merger parish
as the base. Collaborate with the merging parish(es) on sacramental preparation.

13. Existing parish societies and organizations that will remain in the “new parish” will
merge into one group.

14. The merged parish should combine its activities into those buildings that it needs.
Disposition of unneeded buildings and other temporal goods should be discussed with the

15. All human resource issues should be discussed with the Diocesan Legal Office (See
Appendix O, page 114).
16. Follow the Diocese of Lansing procedures:
   a. Preparing for New Parish Leadership. *(Ref Appendix I, page 61)*

17. Communicate regularly with the parishioners. The Office of Communications at the
diocese *(See Appendix O, page 114)* is available for consultation in your overall
communication plan during this transition. The transition facilitator and team will be
helpful in the drafting of this plan.

18. On the date the merger takes effect, a decree of promulgation will be issued by the
Bishop of Lansing.

### III. Parish Closures

“Our prayer then, is not just for ourselves. We hope these months of preparation will find us open to new
possibilities of being church so that we may pray, worship and serve one another in your name. We know that
you have already given us all we need to make our hopes for ourselves and for this church a reality. Our prayer
is that we trust in and rely on your goodness. When the day comes for us to worship in our new house, we will
sing your praises as a church marked by its unity, and strong in the knowledge that you are with us.”

*(A Struggle for Holy Ground by Michael Weldon, p 152-153)*

Parishes that will be closed will do so at some designated date. Closing a parish is the
canonical declaration by the Bishop of Lansing in consultation with the Presbyteral Council that
a parish ceases to exist. When a parish is closed, the remaining parish boundaries are redefined
and Catholics are invited to join a parish within the newly defined parish boundaries.

**Background information:**

1. Parishes were encouraged over the past several years to formulate and implement
   a pastoral plan which would strengthen the mission of the parish in meeting the
   needs of its parishioners as defined in our Diocesan Pastoral Plan.

2. Parishes were strongly encouraged to network and collaborate with neighboring
   parishes to provide ministry if they were unable to provide it by themselves.

3. Following this five year diocesan wide effort, an overall Parish Evaluation
   Inventory (PEI) process took place. Parishes were asked through a self evaluation
   instrument to assess Worship and Sacraments, discipleship (programs and
   staffing), and sustainability of the parish.

4. Regional Review Committees met over many months to review each PEI and the
   parish’s alignment to the Indicators and Descriptors which guided the review
   process. Overall regional observations were made based on the findings from the
   PEI process, the demographic shifts and numbers of available clergy for the
   region.
5. The Diocesan Coordinating Commission reviewed regional observations, consulted the Presbyteral Council, Council of Vicars, College of Consultors, Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Diocesan Finance Council before formulating recommendations which were presented to the Bishop of Lansing. These final recommendations ensure that the pastoral, leadership and sacramental needs of our people will be met, wherever they are located in our 10-county diocese.

**Diocese of Lansing Policies:**

1. Formal notification of parish closing will be made by the Moderator of the Curia or the Chancellor of the Diocese of Lansing.

2. Upon formal notification of closing, a transition facilitator will be named by the Office of Pastoral Planning to assist the parish in moving through this transition.

3. A parish assembly (or some suchlike activity) must be held to inform the parishioners of this change of canonical status.

4. A transition team will be named to assist the parish leadership in the task that lies ahead.

5. The pastor/pastoral coordinator will be called upon to minister to the people in making difficult adjustments, dealing with grief issues, and facing new challenges and opportunities. The primary need is to deal with these issues yourself: your feelings, your fears, your questions. Spend the necessary time in prayer, in working things through and working things out in your own life about this new experience. Talk with friends; be patient with yourself, seek professional advice should the need arise. Take care of yourself to ensure a better and healthier approach in caring for your people and the parish.

6. The transition team should prepare a check list of what needs to be done. *(Ref Appendix N, page 112.)*

7. This check list should include *(in addition to Appendix C, page 47):*

   a. take an inventory of all parish property to update the existing inventory.
   
b. planning of special events with each group, council, commission and organization in the parish. Advise them to plan for dissolution (close their treasuries and provide final documentation to the pastor/pastoral coordinator when the account is closed.)
   
c. provide the opportunity to have grief counselors address the parish on the topic of grief and mourning for the loss of a parish entity. Have the counselor lead parishioners through the stages of denial, anger, bargaining, and hopelessness towards a sense of hope and acceptance.
   
d. work collaboratively with parishes that welcome parishioners from the closed parish. Determine if there are specific items appropriate to take from the closed parish to the welcoming parish.
   
e. Cancel all standing orders for the parish:
      
      (1) envelopes
      (2) missalettes
      (3) palms
(4) ashes
(5) bulletin covers
(6) Eucharistic Bread

f. contact the Legal Office at the diocese for direction on human resource issues
(See Appendix O, page 114).
g. transfer background checks on employees and volunteers to the diocesan Safe
Environment Office.
h. prepare for closing ceremonies. Closing liturgies will be celebrated by the
Bishop of Lansing. Call the Office of the Chancellor (See Appendix O, page 114)
to schedule. (Ref Appendix K, page 63, and Appendix L, page 64.)
i. poll the parishioners to determine which parish they plan to join upon the
closing of your parish. Inform the welcoming parish.
j. ensure that all Communion calls (shut-ins), hospital and nursing home coverage
is transferred
k. reschedule weddings to other parishes.
l. transition Religious Education students to new programs.
m. communicate regularly with the parishioners. The Office of Communications
at the diocese (See Appendix O, page 114) is available for consultation in your
overall communication plan during this transition. The transition facilitator and
team will be helpful in the drafting of this plan.

8. On the date the closure takes effect, a decree of promulgation will be issued by the
Bishop of Lansing.

PARISH/SCHOOL CLOSING RESPONSIBILITIES

Within two weeks following the official announcement of closing, a meeting of all principal
parties will be held, i.e., Pastor/Pastoral Coordinator of parish changing status, Receiving Pastor,
Bishop’s Representative for Consolidation, Diocesan Director of the Office of Pastoral Planning,
Diocesan Director of Communications, Diocesan Finance Officer, Diocesan Director of
Properties, Diocesan Superintendent of Schools (if a school is involved), Chancellor and
Moderator of the Curia. The agenda for this meeting will outline the procedures to be followed
throughout the closing process. No closing related decisions of any kind are to be made and no
sacred items, furnishings or other property are to be distributed during this two week period.
Members of the consolidation team will be given identification badges to be worn at all times
when on the property or in the buildings. When distribution of sacred objects and furnishings
takes place, those picking up items must have been previously registered with the Bishop’s
Representative for Consolidation.

Responsible parties will be convened by the Director of the Office of Pastoral Planning. The
meeting will be facilitated by the Moderator of the Curia.
Responsibilities throughout the closing process are defined as follows:

1. Bishop’s Representative for Consolidation:
   a. Oversees all procedures related to parish closing and fields all questions from the receiving pastor and pastor of parish which is closing.
   b. Within two weeks of the announcement of a parish closure, inventory of all sacred objects; sacramental and parish records; and, furnishings according to Appendix D (page 53) in A Guide to Parish Clusters, Mergers and Closures will begin.*
   c. Provides all necessary information concerning severance and benefit packages to employees.
   d. Sets date for parish offices to officially close within two-four weeks after the closing liturgy.
   e. Meet with the pastor on the day the office closes to review the inventory of all items and accept all keys from pastor, maintenance and parish staff. Following this meeting, the door locks of all buildings on the parish site will be changed. Second day after closing Mass is pick-up day for anyone approved to remove any furnishings, sacred objects or other property. Any objects and furnishings not picked up with one week of the designated pick up day will be returned to inventory.
   f. Prepare listing of all liturgical/sacred items available for purchase.
   g. The authority of the Bishop’s Representative ends at midnight the day the parish office closes.
   h. Dispose of liturgical items (to missions, etc) after two month period of website listing.
   i. Offer the possibility of a parish assembly to inform parishioners of the various details in the closing of a parish.
   j. Offer the possibility of a grief facilitator to work with the grieving process with those parishioners requesting this service.

2. Pastor/Pastoral Coordinator of parish that is closing:
   a. Continue to minister to the spiritual needs of the people.
   b. Inform the parishioners of the parish closing and timetable.
   c. Maintains parish grounds and do necessary upkeep on building until time of closing.
   d. Prepare parish records for transfer to the diocesan archives according to the specifications of Appendix D (page 53) in A Guide to Parish Clusters, Mergers and Closures.
   e. Provide access to all parish facilities for the transition team and provide a set of labeled keys at time of parish closing.
   f. The pastor’s responsibility for the parish ceases on midnight the date/time that is given in the decree.
   g. Inform parishioners that if they desire sacramental certificates with the parish seal imprinted, they must request them prior to the closing Mass.
   h. Supply Bishop’s Representative for Consolidation with one complete set of labeled keys for all parish buildings and one additional key to the church.

3. Receiving Pastor:
   a. Prepare a list of items being requested and notifies Bishop’s Representative of who will be picking up these items.
   b. The receiving pastor assumes the pastoral care of the community at midnight the day of the closing of the parish offices (the date/time that is given in the decree).
c. The ownership of the property and grounds belongs to the receiving pastor on the day indicated by decree; however, the care of the property and grounds remains the responsibility of the Diocesan Property Manager until the building is sold or taken off the market.
d. Plan for the reception of the Blessed Sacrament on the day of the Closing Mass.

4. Diocesan Property Manager:
   a. Within 5 working days of the announcement of a parish closing, the alienated property will be appraised. No property will be listed until appraisal is complete or the parish offices are closed, whichever comes latest.
   b. Hires and is responsible for all dealings with a real estate company. No real estate listing or showing may take place in the parish buildings until after the parish officially closes.
   c. Coordinates inventories of all parish furnishings (pictorial).
   d. Collaborate with Bishop’s Representative for Consolidation in disposal of furnishings. *
   e. Prepare listing of all non-liturgical property available for purchase for diocesan website.
   f. Immediately after closing:
      Oversees the boarding up and changing of locks on buildings after closing.
      Oversees contracts for services, eg, lawn, etc.
      Prepares all buildings for dormant state until sale: building and property security, utilities, etc.
      Coordinates the covering of parish signage
   g. Dispose of all non-liturgical property after final closing of parish. Whatever is not purchased will be donated to the local Saint Vincent DePaul Society or disposed of appropriately.
   h. The ownership of the property and grounds belongs to the receiving pastor on the day indicated by decree; however, the care of the property and grounds remains the responsibility of the Diocesan Property Manager until the building is sold or taken off the market.
   i. Responsible for the recovery of contents of all time capsules/cornerstones (if applicable) to be displayed during the Closing Mass. Announce the day/time of the opening of the time capsule/cornerstone.
   j. Responsible for the payment of all utility, telephone and other invoices after the parish office has closed.

5. Diocesan Director of Communications:
   a. Prepare a page within the login section of the diocesan website that lists all liturgical items available for purchase by other parishes within the diocese. This will be maintained for two (2) months.
   b. Maintain the parish’s website for one year following the closing date of the parish. Website will contain information on where sacramental records may be found.
   c. Handles all media communication. However, the pastor of the closing parish may talk to media if he is comfortable in doing so.

6. Diocesan Finance Officer:
   a. Review all DSA materials in light of pending parish closures to ensure appropriate sensitivity to the upcoming parish situation.
   b. All transition costs are consolidated and paid from the Diocesan Finance Office.
7. Diocesan Chancellor:
   Calendar closing Mass on Bishop’s calendar.
   Prepare decree of closing at appropriate time.

*Sacred objects and furnishings will be distributed according to the following order:
Receiving parish/school will make requests first.
Items may be requested for the archives and diocesan museum.
Neighboring parishes/schools will make requests third.
Other diocesan parishes/schools and institutions will then make requests through the diocesan log in website listing available items.
The parish which is closing may wish to supply a listing of where sacred objects and furnishings were distributed when financial statements are issued.
CHECK LIST FOR CLOSING DAY

☐ Sacramental Records

☐ Parish Seal

☐ Recent Financial Records

☐ Checkbook

☐ Tax forms status regarding W-2, 1099, 941

☐ Payroll done

☐ Password for computer

☐ Letters from employees about severance package

☐ Combinations to safes:
  ☐ Church
  ☐ Rectory
  ☐ Other

☐ Credit cards turned over

☐ Most recent financial records including copies of bank statements for all accounts

☐ End of year statements ready to mail or already sent

☐ Mass intention book
Grieving and Moving to Wholeness in Life

We all experience at one time or another loss in our lives which leaves us with pain and the grief that follows. Our journey to wholeness asks us numerous questions. Why am I experiencing this pain and why do I feel sad, angry and depressed? You are normal and going through a life cycle which we all at one time or another will experience.

Parishes closing, merging or clustering gives us the same feelings. The big question is why? As we explore the reasons, know that your feelings are normal, but must be allowed to be expressed. Grieving takes time and the process should not be rushed. As we look at the why we must also look at how we can deal with this pain.

“Life experience has taught me that it does no good to ask “why.” We have no control over the “why.” That is not our proper question. It is beyond our realm of understanding. Our energies should instead be in the pursuit of the question “how?” How am I going to respond to this particular event? How can I remove the obstacles that will allow God to transform this suffering? How can I recognize the presence of God? This allows me to be a participant in the direction my life will take. The living out of the “how” calls me into co-partnership with my God. Together we co-create my response to life with all its complexity. I am convinced today that it is not the load that weighs us down, but rather how we carry it.”

Beverly Lancour Sinke, Wrestling with God and Cancer

We are people of hope as we walk through life.

Some of the various stages of grief include:

- Denial and Isolation
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance
- Reaching Out

We will look at the above throughout this section to help you understand the question of why?

First let us look at the reasons why you might experience your parish closing, merging or cluster.

Through VOICES and the various parish and diocesan meetings we learned that our diocese is starting to experience the priest shortages many other dioceses have already seen. Realizing that change is difficult especially when it involves my parish and priest, we must understand what the future looks like for the Diocese of Lansing.
As the number of Catholics increase, the number of priests decreases. How do we minister to the people of God through the celebration of the sacraments? We have deacons, lay minister, sisters and brothers who all can share in ministry. However, only the priest can consecrate the Eucharist and offer reconciliation. Knowing we will experience priest shortages within our parishes means we must look at change. Sometimes merging of parishes is felt unequally with some parishes/people. This experience of loss must be validated.

Pain in our lives is not new, but pain within our parish family may be a new experience. How do we experience the news that the parish will change? We have been told our parish will close, merge or cluster with another parish. Our first reaction might be denial. This cannot be happening to our parish. This sense of denial might lead us to a feeling of isolation. Things that were our constant at the parish are no longer true. We feel alone and shaken which brings us to a sense of anger. Why should I be experiencing this feeling? Let me try bargaining. Maybe things will change. When we discover nothing will change our feelings may turn to depression. A sense of loss beyond our control leaves us numb and unable to cope, the pain is too much. As we learn that nothing will change a sense of acceptance to the situation brings us a little peace. Now we start reaching out to others looking for a sense of peace in a new community.

Let us look at how we can move from grieving to wholeness. We are family, we are Catholics experiencing the loss and change within our parishes. How can we move to wholeness?

- Telling the Story
- Remembering the Parish
- Lost vs. New
- Vision
- Passion, Death and Resurrection

Allow people to tell their stories sharing what they feel are important to them. Each story is unique, the good, the funny, the growth and change over the years, and has to be told about their parish. What wonderful things happened over the years that made our parish the community who worshiped together, cried together, brought new life into the parish and experienced the loss of loved ones from our parish family? In supporting those who suffered a loss, theologian Paul Tillich’s statement ought to be a guiding credo: “The first duty of love is to listen.” Listen with the heart or the third ear. Empathy to the situation is important. Parishioners will have much to say or maybe not. What ever need arises, “presence” will be important. Reflective listening will also be needed during this time.

As the change comes about whether it be closing, merging or clustering, what is our new vision? How can I contribute to that vision for the future for our parish?

In order to move forward we must realize that we have experienced a loss which has hurt us deeply. Now that we have shared that pain with our family, friends and parish community we can move on to wholeness.

Like Jesus who experienced His passion, death and resurrection, we too are being called to a new resurrection. We have said our “good bye” through the final closing liturgy, the removal of Sacramental objects and now we move on.
Stories of Others’ Experiences
Adapting to Change Is Driving Force Behind Mergers

Four recently merged parishes find planning process is sometimes painful

By Margaret Plevak
Special to the Catholic Herald

Second of two parts (NOTE: Part One of this two part series can be found at http://www.lakeshorecreative1.org/2003/2003-09-25/index.html)

As the Archdiocese of Milwaukee implements the third cycle of its Parish Planning, the Catholic Herald looks at some of the parishes that have been created through mergers. This story examines four recently formed parishes: Our Lady of Divine Providence and Three Holy Women in Milwaukee, St. Martin of Tours in Franklin and St. Elizabeth Parish in Kenosha.

PRAYING TOGETHER - Fr. Gerry Hessel, pastor of Our Lady of Divine Providence parish in the Riverwest area of Milwaukee, begins Mass at the recently merged parish. The Milwaukee Archdiocese currently is in its third planning cycle since 1989. This past July saw the official start to Our Lady of Divine Providence, a new parish formed by the merger of the former St. Casimir and St. Mary of Czestochowa parishes in Milwaukee’s Riverwest neighborhood.

Parishioners, however, say the idea of collaboration is nothing new. Mary Anne Borowski, who joined the former St. Casimir in 1964, said the two parishes often met and worked together to plan events such as festivals. Like the Riverwest neighborhood she called home for 30 years, she said St. Casimir had a history of adapting to change.

Patricia Beirne, who grew up at St. Casimir and became a pastoral associate there in 1997, agreed. She remembered the parish school with two classrooms of over 50 children in each grade, and a barracks to hold students. Today, the parish school is part of a multi-parish endeavor, Catholic East Elementary.

Beirne, now pastoral associate for Our Lady of Divine Providence, said that after the archdiocese recommended collaboration for the two parishes in 1989, evening Masses alternated at both sites. Later a joint parish council was established, and administration, human concerns, and even volunteer programs were combined.

“There always have been people who were ready, who tried to move things forward. And, of course, there will always be others who, like when we asked for names, suggested, ‘The Two Judases,’” Beirne said, chuckling.
Financial difficulties lead to merger

When Fr. Gerald Hessel came to the parishes in 2000, he said he was told by the archdiocese that the merger would not be necessary, and in his first two weeks as pastor, he told people that. But within a month, he realized that both parishes were in financial trouble, and turned back to the archdiocese, asking for a merger.

Hessel said he was told that parishioners needed to be prepared for a merger, and Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland recommended strategic planning.

So Fr. Hessel and Beirne arranged a planning committee and set up information sessions to explain the situation, answer questions and consult with parishioners on options. At the end of the sessions, all registered members were asked which direction they’d like to take. Overwhelmingly, they voted for a merger, Hessel said.

Beirne said that some savings have been realized, since now there is only one insurance policy and one bank account. But with the merger only a few months old, it’s too soon to judge how the parish has been affected financially.

Parish population about 400

Fr. Hessel estimated parish population at about 400 families. He doesn’t know if new development along the Milwaukee River will bring an influx of Catholics, but he realizes the need for a strong evangelization program that will involve the entire parish.

There is also a thriving Hispanic community in Our Lady of Divine Providence. The parish offers a Sunday morning Spanish Mass, at which bulletins and archdiocesan mailings printed in Spanish are available.

Eugenio Imirez, a deacon at the parish, said the Spanish Mass started about seven years ago. He believes parish collaboration has brought about some changes. “I think that the community has accepted the Hispanic community now since we’re going to be worshiping together more now than before,” he said. His sister, Isabel Velazquez, attended St. Casimir when her children, now grown, went to the parish school.

“For a while we felt like we didn’t belong and then we stopped coming, but with the Spanish Mass, we came back,” she said, adding that the merger has started to form a sense of community among people. “It used to be, ‘This is my church. This is your church.’ I don’t hear that now.”

Three Holy Women Parish

Fr. Timothy Kitzke came on as pastor to Milwaukee’s Three Holy Women Parish in 1999, in the middle of the merger process of the three former parishes of St. Hedwig, St. Rita and Holy Rosary.

Collaboration had already been going on through Catholic East Elementary School, a joint effort of six area parishes, and a religious education program called East Side Child and Youth, which
involves five parishes. Holy Rosary and St. Rita had been sharing a parish administrator. But Fr. Kitzke knew that people had questions.

“Whenever there’s a merger, there’s always a little percolating going on,” he said. “What’s going to happen? What are we going to lose in this? Who’s the new guy on the block coming in with ideas?”

He encouraged people not to talk about buildings right away, but focus instead on building a parish. To him that meant balancing the needs of two generations.

“The original three parishes were built on a lot of blood, sweat and tears, so what we tried to do is show ultimate respect and gratitude for the past. Yet we have a new reality as well, with all these people who don’t have that historical connection, but are moving into this part of the city, thus increasing our membership,” he said. “We have to envision the future, and realize that we need to work together.”

**Parish offers ethnic diversity**

Three Holy Women’s incorporated ethnic traditions, such as a St. Patrick’s Day dinner or the Polish custom of blessing Easter food, were new to Jane Schumaker, who moved here from Omaha, Neb., about three years ago, shortly after the merger.

“At that time, I didn’t understand how ethnic Milwaukee was,” she said. “I do now.”

People like Schumaker are helping Three Holy Women grow; according to Fr. Kitzke, the parish registered 150 new families since the beginning of the year. While the three original parishes combined had a population of about 900 families, Three Holy Women currently has over 1,000, he said.

Much of the area within the parish’s boundaries is growing itself. City land, opened up with the removal of the Park East Freeway, is becoming a site for condominiums and other urban development that promises to bring in more people.

And while the three former parishes averaged about five weddings annually, this year Three Holy Women has had 40 so far, Fr. Kitzke said, adding that many of the young couples return to the parish for Masses.

**Serving young and old**

Parish programs often focus on attracting young adults back to the church. Three Holy Women is one of the sites for a diocesan-sponsored discussion program called Theology on Tap. The parish also holds its own version, Eat, Drink and Be Catholic.

While Kitzke estimated that the median age of parishioners is about 50, he’s quick to note that the elderly are still present. The parish partners with a program called East Side Senior services to meet seniors’ needs, and hopes to expand its own services, he said.

At present, Three Holy Women keeps all three sites open, with no unused space, Fr. Kitzke said. The parish is using the Holy Rosary site for adult formation programs, and the St. Rita’s parish hall for socializing; a senior center, possibly in the basement of the church at the St. Hedwig site,
is being considered. Fr. Kitzke, in his first pastorate at Three Holy Women, believes such parish collaborations are the sign of a future he envisions as promising, not cloudy.

“I would like to see the whole merger and planning process as more than a knee-jerk reaction to losses in the Church, be it of priests or resources,” he said. “We have to see it not so much as what we are losing but how we can use the gifts God has given us more gracefully and efficiently. I think what people are realizing through it all is that they’ve not lost anything, really, but that they’ve gained a whole lot.”

**St. Martin of Tours**

Before Holy Assumption and Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary parishes merged in 1998 to form St. Martin of Tours Parish in Franklin, Sacred Heart of Jesus Fr. Anthony Russo was first an associate pastor, then an administrator at both places. He’s since become St. Martin’s pastor.

Over nine years, he’s witnessed the two different parishes - Sacred Hearts, with 1,300 families and an elementary school, and Holy Assumption, with fewer than 200 families and no school - come together. The merger has culminated in the ground breaking of a new church, but the process was not without growing pains along the way.

Though once associated with St. Mary Parish in Hales Corners, Holy Assumption had begun collaborating in a religious education program with Sacred Hearts by the early ‘90s, in part because of its proximity.

But when the merger recommendation came down from the archdiocese, Fr. Russo said that the consensus of both parishes was to remain separate, citing strong differences in areas like liturgical styles. When the merger went through, many people felt the archdiocese hadn’t really listened to them, he said.

**Sale of church fuels anger over merger**

Two years ago, the Holy Assumption church building was sold to members of another denomination, fueling the anger some had felt over the merger, the priest said.

Carl Wise, once a member of Sacred Hearts, said he knew some former Holy Assumption parishioners didn’t want to subsidize St. Martin’s elementary school. The parent of a sixth-grader and a third-grader, he sees the school as a vital part of parish operations.

“This with Franklin and Muskego growing as fast as they are, if you have a school available, that at least becomes an option for parents who want to give their children a strong, moral, value-based education,” he said.

Jeannette Schupp, 41, called Holy Assumption home even when moves took her from Franklin to Greenfield and West Allis. When asked by St. Martin’s former pastor to be on the joint parish council, she said she felt a commitment to see the merger through. Now she’s involved in St. Martin’s music ministry and on several committees. She found the people from Sacred Hearts welcoming and her transition easy, but knows others were hurt over the merger. “There were a lot of people (from Holy Assumption) who had family history in the parish, so it was hard on a lot of them,” she said.
Parish now has 1,300 families

Fr. Russo estimated 70 families from Holy Assumption joined St. Martin, leaving about 125 families who went to other parishes. Those who joined, he said, have become some of the most active members of the new parish, joining its council or the choir, becoming Eucharistic ministers and lectors. Some families from Sacred Hearts also left, giving St. Martin a parish population of about 1,300 families, according to Fr. Russo.

“I think we’ve done very well,” he said of the merger. “I think we’ve overcome some of the obstacles. At a certain point, you realize that you’re not going to convince people that we’re supposed to be part of this (and get them) to come back, but they’re always welcome. Some of the things you wish could be different, you let go and you move on.”

This month, St. Martin began construction on a new church, which will retain the Sacred Hearts building as its narthex. The church will seat 750, with space for up to 1,000. Construction should be completed by next fall, according to Fr. Russo.

Members are also contemplating long-range building plans for the parish, including a new school, fellowship hall and space for office and meeting rooms.

Kenosha church merger led to lawsuit

Fr. Roman Stikel, the 45-year-old pastor of St. Elizabeth Parish, looks to the future as well, although when he came to Kenosha in January 2000, shortly after the merger of St. Casimir and St. George parishes, he felt a bit apprehensive at the challenges lying ahead.

The merger had been scheduled to take place the previous summer, but a number of people from the former St. Casimir had filed a civil lawsuit against the archdiocese, trying to prevent it. When the suit was dismissed, they filed challenges with the Vatican, alleging the closings violated canon law, but lost before the top Vatican court. They appealed the decision.

“There were many people who went to other parishes, who didn’t want to participate - not so much in St. Elizabeth, but the merger,” Fr. Stikel said. He felt he brought a new perspective to parishioners as someone who couldn’t be seen to take sides. He recognized the importance of incorporating some traditions, so he brought a statue of St. Casimir into the former St. George church, now the site of the new parish. He kept Oplatek (blessed wafers shared by Polish Catholics at Christmas) sales going each December. But he also put up a painting of St. Elizabeth in the church and ordered missals with the parish’s new name on their covers. And he allowed parishioners to grieve, while encouraging them to move ahead.

“Part of the tone I set early on coming here was that this has been very difficult, very painful, but at the same time, we’re here for a reason, and that is we proclaim and we live and we speak the Gospel. We have to make that tangible. And I think people responded to that message,” he said.

Sense of community arises from turmoil

Among the approximately 800 families at St. Elizabeth, Fr. Stikel sees a sense of community. And in spite of - or perhaps because of - the earlier dissension, there is a strong sense of dedication in parishioners that has led to active parish involvement and support, he said.
Although the parish is in the final year of a five-year lease of the former St. George school building to Kenosha Unified School District, Fr. Stikel said parishioners’ generosity has allowed St. Elizabeth to bankroll much of the rent that’s been collected.

Fr. Stikel said the merger has also allowed the parish to add a pastoral minister and parish nurse-positions neither former parish had to meet the needs of many homebound elderly parishioners, or those in hospitals or nursing homes on the fringes of the parish’s neighborhood.

He credits parishioners for helping bring St. Elizabeth to life through turmoil.

“I think what allows one to work in the situation is that there were just a lot of good people, who supported the merger from both parishes, who decided to stay, to contribute, to volunteer,” he said. “People who kind of had a broader vision of their faith, who said, ‘Yeah, this is our parish, but it’s also God’s kingdom and not our own. We sort of follow the Spirit and see where we go.’”

**Looking back, looking ahead**

Planning commission stresses need for communication

Parishes throughout the Milwaukee Archdiocese have already begun preparing for the third cycle of a long-range archdiocesan planning process by scheduling parish/cluster meetings and district consultations this month. An Archdiocesan Parish Leadership Day was held Sept. 27 to help focus on the planning process.

Parish input is particularly being emphasized in the cycle, said Auxiliary Bishop Richard J. Sklba, who chairs the Milwaukee Archdiocesan Parish Planning Commission.

“This time we will be depending more immediately on the various recommendations which will come from the parish clusters themselves,” Bishop Sklba said in an e-mail interview with the Catholic Herald. “That will be evident from the fact that the central steering committee last time had a person or member from each district, whereas this time the regional contribution will be at the more local level of conversation and recommendation.

“Each parish/cluster situation is unique and we will try to respect the ideas which are proposed, recognizing that parishes which choose not to participate may find themselves severely disadvantaged in the future.”

He said the commission had also learned to bring tentative directives back to the district dean and parish cluster for reactions and review before submitting them to the archbishop.

Maureen Gallagher, the archbishop’s delegate for the Department for Parishes, and a member of the parish planning commission, said parish participation made the difference in successful mergers.

“We learned that the more people who were involved and the greater the priest leadership - no matter what the directive was - the greater was the acceptance by the people,” she said. “We are terribly in debt to the priests and the lay leadership in the parishes for the success of the process.”
Bishop Sklba acknowledged that lessons the commission learned in cycle two helped shape changes in the third cycle of planning, but said he doubted the commission would have done anything differently the last time, “given the reality of people’s mindset.”

“We probably could have communicated more intensely with the parishes and more often,” Gallagher said. “The longer I’m involved in planning with parishes and school, the more I know that we cannot ‘over communicate.’”

- Margaret Plevak
Smooth, Collaborative Three-parish Merger in Cleveland Credited to Work of the Holy Spirit
By Dennis Sadowski

CLEVELAND, Ohio (Catholic Universe Bulletin) - Although the plan has not yet been formally approved, three predominantly African American parishes are looking forward to the New Year when they become one community.

BIRTH OF A PARISH - The parishes of St. Catherine, St. Henry and St. Timothy have been having a joint Mass monthly since 2006. A Mass on August 19 found Mattie Talmadge, Juanita Larkin, Jesse Erwin, Deacon Shelby Friend, Sophie Redd and St. Joseph Sister Kathleen McCafferty coming together. (George Shuba)

St. Catherine, St. Henry and St. Timothy parishes are seeking to merge and become the new Holy Spirit Parish. The new parish would be located at the current St. Timothy Church on East 131st Street near the Cleveland-Garfield Heights border.

The merger process has taken 29 months and under canon law the plan to come together on January 6 still must be heard by the Presbyteral Council before Bishop Richard G. Lennon gives his final approval.

The council will discuss the plan at its November 30 meeting. Deacon Shelby Friend of St. Henry said the effort has focused on maintaining a strong, vibrant Catholic presence in southeast Cleveland rather than going it alone amidst the pressures of a changing population, the declining number of priests and financial burdens.

Membership totals about 475 households which is almost equally divided among the three parishes. Membership includes African Americans, whites, Hispanics, Asians, island blacks and bi-racial people.

“We’ve tried to bring together the concept of hope,” Deacon Friend said. “If we can focus on what we gain in coming together as a community as opposed to what we might lose, that’s what made us persevere in our discernment process and in our prayer.”

Representatives of the steering committee which has met since June 2005 credit the Holy Spirit for the birth of the new parish. They said they knew the Holy Spirit was at work when the new parish’s proposed name was the most popular in voting at all three parishes over the summer.
“(The vote) just blew our minds,” Deacon Friend said. The overall effort has focused on the need for collaboration and the importance of maintaining a vibrant Catholic presence in southeast Cleveland, explained Ron James of St. Catherine Parish.

“I think it’s very important we do have this Catholic African American presence in the southeast side of the city,” he said. “When you look at the needs of the community, the poverty, the hunger, the children being raised in single parent homes, the desperation people feel. We need the sense of community we bring.”

Archbishop Lyke School, with campuses at St. Timothy and St. Henry, will be unaffected by the merger, said Ursuline Sister Brigetta Waldron, elementary principal at the St. Henry site.

The school has served as a stabilizing factor in the southeast Cleveland community by giving parents an alternative to public schools. The school’s enrollment is largely non-Catholic.

“The support the school can give to the families in the area is far reaching and very important,” Sister Waldron said.

**Work of the Holy Spirit**

Deacon Friend said the voting outcome on the new parish’s name was a sign that what the three parishes were doing the right thing.

“I think it’s appropriate that it was the Holy Spirit who brought us together.” Deacon Friend said. “I think it’s appropriate that it was the Holy Spirit who gave us the energy to sustain ourselves. … That’s what’s going to keep us going.”

“When we first started this we were all afraid,” James added. “But as we got into the process through prayer, through discernment, through getting to know each other, it began to come together.

“We’re still a little afraid, but we’re still committed to it. We’re hopeful. We’re guided by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Bishop Lennon complimented the parishes for their foresight in initiating the merger process.

“They have been working together tremendously,” he said. “They’ve done so with a true to desire to remain vibrant as a community and realized their future would be one of coming together.

“People realized what is truly important is to live Catholic life in a vibrant way.”

**Long process**

The idea of coming together originated in 2004 when the three parish communities, along with St. Cecilia and Epiphany parishes, began to explore opportunities to collaborate in ministry to the Catholic African American community. The initial step followed a successful revival sponsored by the parishes.
Citing common interests and financial realities in summer 2005, St. Catherine, St. Henry and Epiphany agreed to form a steering committee to consider the possibility of merging. At the time, St. Timothy decided simply to observe the process. St. Cecilia withdrew from the process.

A few months later, Epiphany raised some reservations about merging and also withdrew. The steering committee continued to meet every two weeks. The three remaining parishes planned joint reconciliation services, liturgies and socials that allowed parishioners to get to know each other.

Early in 2006, Bishop Anthony M. Pilla visited the communities and formally opened the merger process. Soon thereafter, St. Timothy formally committed to the merger. The parishes convened town hall style meetings to hear updates on what had been discussed by the steering committee and to give parishioners the chance to offer ideas on how to proceed. The communities also began worshiping together monthly.

“First and foremost, we had to get to know each other,” James said. “It’s a lot easier to love people when you know them.”

The same held true for the children. A two-week summer camp and Christmas party in 2006 and three activity days this summer gave youngsters the chance to mingle, play and talk.

For 16 months, subcommittees met and addressed issues such as communication, relationship building, worship, site feasibility, financial concerns, religious education, youth ministry and grant writing. They reported on their progress at steering committee meetings.

Finally this fall, steering committee members presented a proposal to Bishop Lennon. Among their recommendations:

● The site for St. Timothy was deemed the best suited for the new parish.

● The name Holy Spirit was presented as the one selected through a vote by parishioners. Other parish names considered were St. Catherine Drexel and Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament.

● Each parish would have closing liturgies on December 30.


In the meantime, Father Donald Oleksiak will meet with parishioners to discuss the qualities and skills they would like to see in a new pastor during a town hall meeting at 7:00 p.m., November 19 at St. Timothy Church.

Much work remains in the months ahead. Decisions will have to be made on which sacred vessels, statues, artwork and mementoes to bring to East 131st Street. Parish finances will have to be reconciled. James said the new parish council also will prepare a mission statement that will guide Holy Spirit’s ministerial work.
TITLE: Three Blue Water parishes merge to form Our Lady on the River
AUTHOR: Robert Delaney
SUMMARY: Three parishes that operated as a cluster under one pastor formally became a new parish on March 05, 2007. During that time, they combined Parish Councils, had a single bulletin, created one Religious Education program, etc. The three churches will remain in existence and have Sunday Masses but will collectively be known as Our Lady on the River Parish. Keys to the success of this cluster merger were communication with and cooperation of the laity, according to pastor, Fr. Timothy Birney. All three church communities view the merger as the way for them to continue as a vibrant community of faith.

TITLE: How do merged parishes choose a new name?
AUTHOR: Robert Delaney
SUMMARY: Several different parish mergers were cited as an example of how new parish names were developed. Typically, the new name evolved as a process that included inviting all parishioners to submit suggestions for names; the submitted names were read aloud at a community Mass. They were then reviewed against the Church’s requirements under canon law for names. The combined Parish Pastoral Councils from each parish reviewed the names and submitted their choice to the Cardinal, who approved and promulgated the name. The article contains a sidebar that summarizes the applicable canon law for the naming of a parish.
SOURCE: The Michigan Catholic, August 11, 2006

TITLE: St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Francis merge
AUTHOR: Kristin Lukowski
SUMMARY: The two parishes operated as a unit for several years before their merger was announced; for that reason, clustering was never a consideration. St. Max had a pastor but no church building. St. Francis had a church but no pastor. The merger, then, was one of convenience and recognition of the current state of the two parishes. The plan is to sell properties owned by both communities to pay of existing debt and to finance a new church, located somewhere between the two parishes.
**TITLE:** Pastor shares help for parishes facing merger  
**AUTHOR:** Robert Delaney  
**SUMMARY:** Fr. Donald Archambault advises parishes required to merge to get started on it as soon as possible – it takes a good year to do it. The success of the transition depends on strong support from each of the Parish Pastoral Councils and from many active lay people. He cites as obstacles such things as emotional attachments to parish buildings and names as well as customary ways of doing things. Many parishes want to continue the programs they established and supported. Another obstacle is debt that one parish may carry and another does not. It is most important that the merger be given the full support and encouragement of the Diocese and clergy.  
**SOURCE:** The Michigan Catholic, April 07, 2006  

**TITLE:** Former Martyrs parishioners welcomed at St. Cecilia  
**AUTHOR:** Robert Delaney  
**SUMMARY:** Martyrs of Uganda Parish was formed in 1989 from the merger of two other parishes. It was closed, not merged, and its parishioners decided to be transferred to St. Cecilia Parish. The new parishioners seemed to take the transfer in stride, saying that they had been through it before. Some of the sacred vessels and statues also found a new home at St. Cecilia.  
**SOURCE:** The Michigan Catholic, June 16, 2006  

**TITLE:** Parish celebrates 100 years and plans for merger  
**AUTHOR:** Robert Delaney  
**SUMMARY:** In 2000, Annunciation merged with Our Lady of Sorrows. Now those merged parishes are once again being merged with St. Anthony. However, this time a new parish will be formed – Good Shepherd Parish. In addition, when a nearby parish, St. Rose of Lima, was closed, their parishioners transferred to Annunciation. The Annunciation church will remain as the worship site, with all other buildings to be sold in the future.  
**SOURCE:** The Michigan Catholic, June 30, 2006  
TITLE: Guardian Angels and St. Brendan close
AUTHOR: Robert Delaney
SUMMARY: Two parishes were closed, while the parishioners transferred to other nearby parishes or to parishes in the suburbs where they lived. Guardian Angels had dwindled to about 100 families while St. Brendan was down to only 60 families. A parish closing can be an emotionally troubling experience for all involved but the way to look on it is not as a failure but as a mission having been accomplished.

TITLE: Saying goodbye – Our Lady Help of Christians celebrates last Mass before merger
AUTHOR: Deb Anderson
SUMMARY: The “smallest parish with the biggest heart” closed and its parishioners merged with those of a neighboring church. Unlike many closings, however, the church property was not sold. Instead, most of its vestments, sacred vessels, even the altar and the pews were given to a small church in Poland. The parishioners expressed joy that their church would “live on.” The closing Mass was heralded as an opportunity for parishioners – and former parishioners – to express their sorrows, joys, and memories. It was truly a time to honor the parish’s past.
SOURCE: The Michigan Catholic, November 03, 2006

TITLE: Southfield parish to be at St. Michael's site
AUTHOR: Joe Kohn
SUMMARY: In one of the broadest moves, three parishes closed and merged with a fourth parish and retain its buildings. The Cardinal said that it was imperative that the new parish be given a new name and was not to remain as St. Michael Parish. The three parish buildings would be sold. The four parish councils were united as one to begin the task of selecting a new name; new commissions will also be formed out of the existing ones. Because the size of the undertaking (both in area and demographics) the project is lace with uncertainty and some sadness. The merger is expected to take two or three years to accomplish.
Our Lady of the Angels Parish was formed from the communities of St. Cyril of Jerusalem and St. Paschal Baylon parishes. The community, in coming together, focused on its Christian mission. Although the process of coming together required months of planning and hard work by the two communities, they were just getting started. One new parishioner said that it was scary—like leaving your own home. "As we went through the process, people told the truth, and the truth didn't always feel good," another parishioner said. There was a transition team formed from both parishes that worked closely to achieve a smooth beginning for the new parish.


Appendices
APPENDIX A

CLUSTER MODELS

Model I - Separate Parishes - Coordinated
- Each parish has a Pastor (P), Pastoral Council (PC), Finance Council (FC) and Staff (S)
- Cooperation between parishes is facilitated through a Coordinating Council (CC)
- Programs, staff, resources, are shared and planning done through cooperation of pastors and representatives on the CC with the support of respective parish leadership i.e. PC, FC and S

Model II - Separate Parishes - One Pastor & Parish Life Coordinators
- There is one canonical P for all three parishes
- Each parish maintains separate lay leadership structures i.e. PC & FC & S
- The canonical P serves primarily in one parish, while Parish Life Coordinators (PLC) lead the other two parishes providing pastoral care in all areas except sacramental ministry (See Canon Law 517.2)
- Cooperation between parishes is facilitated through a Coordinating Council (CC)

Model III - Separate Parishes - One Pastor
- There is one pastor (P) who provides leadership, sacramental and pastoral care for all three parishes
- Each parish maintains separate leadership structures i.e. PC, FC and S
- A greater degree of cooperation between parishes is facilitated through the CC
Model IV - One Pastor - Centralized Team & Council

- One P who works with one S - who may work out of one location in service to all three parishes
- Individual parishes may have minimal support staff
- Area pastoral Council (APC) is primary consultative body for P and has greater decision making influence over P than individual parish PC’s and FC’s
- APC works closely with an Area Finance Council (AFC) which has a budget and pays salaries of P, S, inter-parish programs and services
- A variation on this model has a team of priests serving several parishes “in solidum” (See Canon Law 517.1)
APPENDIX B

MERGER MODELS

Model V - Merged Parish
- All councils, committees, finances, sacramental records, are merged together to create a new canonical parish
- There is a new canonical parish name. However name of individual churches remain
- There is one P, S, PC, FC, who serve three worship sites or churches

Model VI - Build & Close
- All three parishes are merged
- Together they build a new larger church
- Existing churches are closed and properties sold to provide funding for building new church
- New parish has one P, S and traditional leadership structure with PC and FC
APPENDIX C

DISPOSITION OF TEMPORAL GOODS, PARISH AUDITS, PROPERTY AND CEMETERIES

To effectively control and safeguard assets as well as establish accountability during the closing of the Parish and Parish Operations, the following procedures are required of a Parish during the closure or merging process.

I. At the Time of Announcement

A. Bank / Investment Accounts

1. Prepare a list of all Parish and Parish organization bank accounts, including investment and brokerage accounts, noting the name of the bank or investment institution, account number, account signer(s) and the current balance.

2. Attach a copy of the latest bank statement(s) and corresponding monthly bank reconciliation.

3. Please indicate if funds in any of the listed bank accounts are restricted as to use by donor. Attach all documentation as to the restriction(s).

4. Forward this list to the receiving parish and to the Bishop’s representative for consolidation.

5. Add Bishop’s representative for consolidation’s name to all parish accounts.

B. Contracts / Agreements

Prepare a list of real estate that the Parish leases and/or rents to other organizations for which a formal lease or rental agreement exists, as of the announcement date notifying Parishes of closure. Copies of all leases and rental agreements should be forwarded to the diocese. The diocese will work with the parish and organization regarding the lease or rental agreement.

C. Inventory

Following notification of the Parish closing, all clergy residing in the Parish rectory must take a personal inventory. This needs to be completed prior to the buildings and sacred objects inventory.

II. During the Months Prior to Closing

A. Bank / Investment Accounts

1. An attempt should be made to contact those individuals who have not cashed outstanding checks. Inform them that all Parish and associated organization accounts,
except the parish operation and any donor restricted accounts, will be closed 60 days prior to the scheduled Parish closure date.

2. All Parish non-restricted savings, investment and associated organization accounts are to be closed. The balance of funds in these accounts is to be deposited in the Parish operating account. Documentation from the banking or investment institution as to the closure of your account must be retained and submitted with the closure of the primary operating account.

B. Contracts/Agreements (Services/Vendors) *(Checklist for Closing a Parish, Appendix N, page 112.)*

1. Forward a list along with copies of all contracts and agreements for services and vendors.

2. Notify, in writing, all service contract vendors, with the exception below, that the Parish will be closing. Arrangements need to be made with these service providers to discontinue service. The Parish must request confirmation from the vendor that service will be discontinued on the specified date. This would include your bulletin and/or envelope company, and website host. Copies of these letters are to be retained.

3. The service contracts or agreements with your oil or gas company, alarm system, telephone lines for security/alarm system, water, landscaping company, snowplowing company or electricity services should not be cancelled. These companies should be notified of a change in billing address effective the date of closure.

4. Leasing or rental companies should be notified in writing that the Parish is closing. Arrangements should be made with the lessor/rentor to terminate the agreement and return the equipment and/or vehicle. Additional costs may be incurred as a result of early termination, per the agreement. The Parish should request confirmation from the vendor that the lease agreement has been terminated and the return date of the equipment or vehicle.

5. The Parish may also have organizations that use the buildings for meetings or workshops without a formal agreement, such as the Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts. These organizations must be notified in writing that the Parish is closing and the buildings will no longer be available for them to use as of the effective date of closure.

C. Charge Accounts

The balance on all store charge accounts must be paid in full and the accounts closed, prior to the closing date of the Parish. Please retain a copy of the final statement showing the account is closed as part of the closure process. The Parish should request confirmation that the account will be closed on the specified date.
D. Memberships / Subscriptions

Notification needs to be sent to vendors to cancel the membership and/or subscription prior to the closing date of the Parish. The Parish should request confirmation that the membership and/or subscription will be canceled on the specified date.

E. Credit Cards

The balance on any credit card account must be paid in full and the credit card canceled prior to the closing date of the Parish. Please retain a copy of the final statement showing the account is closed as part of the closure process. The Parish should request confirmation that the credit card has been canceled. The confirmation notice should be retained as part of the closure process.

F. Employees

1. Prepare a list of all Parish employees currently working in the Parish. The listing should detail their names, address, date of hire, rate of pay, last day of work, accrued and unused vacation days, Social Security number, hours worked per week, employee benefits, and gross salary for the current calendar year. Ensure that all employees are listed.

2. Notification must be sent to the MCC as to the last date of employment for all lay employees currently enrolled in benefit plans.

3. The Friend of the Court must be notified in writing of an employee whose wages are currently being garnisheed. The letter should notify them that the Parish is closing and specify the employee’s last date of employment. The letter must include the name of the Parish, name of the employee and the last four digits of the employee’s social security number.

G. Inventory of Office, Computer Equipment and Furnishings

1. An inventory of all office and computer equipment with an estimated value of $500 or more must be taken. A representative from the diocese will be on site to complete the inventory with Parish personnel, under the supervision of the Pastor. Inventory control numbers will be assigned to each inventory item in order to catalogue the equipment. (Furnishings category is distinct from sacred objects.) (Sample Inventory Forms, Appendix P, page 116.)

2. Copies of the inventory are to be distributed as follows:
   • Original – Diocese
   • Copy – Pastor
H. Financial Records

Prepare a listing of all financial documents/records for the Parish for the last seven years refer to record retention timetable). The financial information should be organized and boxed by fiscal year and clearly labeled.

I. Fundraising / Charitable Gaming

The Parish Bookkeeper/Business Manager must cancel the charitable gaming permit(s). Any State filings due for fundraising events must be filed prior to the Parish closure date.

J. Facility Planning (for receiving parish)

1. Determine short and long term building needs and consolidated maintenance costs of the new/consolidated parish. Prepare an action plan to implement long and short term needs. Include plans for care and maintenance of empty facilities. Send one copy of the plan to the diocese.

2. If a reduction in facilities is anticipated familiarize yourself with the Best Practice - Land Transaction manual available from the Diocese. Contact the diocese prior to implementing any agreements.

K. Facility Planning (for providing parish)

1. Provide all building architectural or other similar plans, and plot, site or other property plans to the diocese.

2. Provide the diocese all original deeds.

L. Parish Cemeteries

1. Gather all permanent cemetery files (e.g., plot books, all burial records, equipment inventory, service contracts, accounts and finance records) for the welcoming parish.

2. Review cemetery situation and provide necessary input to ensure upkeep and maintenance to the host parish.

3. Ensure that endowed care and other cemetery funds are properly recorded in chart of accounts of the welcoming parish.

4. Identify any person who has knowledge of the cemetery who can be called upon if questions or situations arise.

III. Week of Closing

A. Bank Accounts

1. New signature cards for the Parish Operating bank account and any restricted accounts must be prepared listing the Bishop’s representative for consolidation, as the primary
signatory on the account. The bank signature card should be forwarded to the Bishop’s representative for consolidation for signing. (These should be the only bank accounts that remain open at the time of closure.)

2. The address for the mailing of the monthly bank account statement must be changed to the diocese.

B. Unpaid Bills

Any remaining outstanding bills/invoices that cannot be paid by the parish due to insufficient funds are to be forwarded to the diocese.

C. Forwarding of Mail

A change of address form must be completed at your local Post Office branch. All mail should be forwarded to the diocese in care of the Bishop’s representative for consolidation.

D. Financial Reporting

The Parish Bookkeeper/Business Manager must prepare the final financial report as of the last date of operation of the Parish, up to and including the date of closure as much as reasonably possible.

E. Payment of Employees

All employees must be paid up to the date of closure by the Parish.

F. Tax Filings

1. Parish Bookkeeper/Business Manager must prepare the final Federal 941, Employer’s Quarterly Federal Tax Return and all State and local tax returns. Make sure the “final” report box has been checked.

2. A copy of the final Federal 941 and all other returns must be forwarded to the diocese. Please include verification that the appropriate tax payments have been made including EFT # (if applicable) and amount of payment.

3. The Parish Bookkeeper/Business Manager must prepare a Form W-2 (employee Wage and Tax Statement) for all employees. This would include all payroll checks issued by the Parish from January 1st to the date of closure.

4. A copy of the W-2 Forms and W-3 Transmittal of Wage and Tax Statement Form must be forwarded to the diocese. Please include verification that the appropriate tax payments have been made including EFT # (if applicable) and amount of payment.

5. The Parish Bookkeeper/Business Manager must prepare Form 1099 Misc. (Miscellaneous Income) for all vendors and Independent Contractors where payments
meet or exceed the $600 Internal Revenue Service threshold. This would include all checks issued by the Parish from January 1st to the date of closure.

6. A copy of the 1099 Miscellaneous Forms and 1096 Annual Summary & Transmittal of US Information Returns Form must be forwarded to the diocese.

7. If a Parish has an outside payroll service it will be the responsibility of the payroll service to issue the final 941, WR-1, W-2 forms to employees and 1099 Miscellaneous Forms to vendors (where contracted to do so).

8. The payroll service must be notified of the Parish closing and that the payroll service is responsible to issue the W-2 and 1099 forms (when contracted).

9. The payroll service provider must forward a copy of the W-2 forms, W-3 Transmittal of Wage and Tax Statement Form, 1099 Miscellaneous Forms and 1096 Annual Summary & Transmittal of US Information Returns Form to the diocese.

G. Financial Software / Data

Two complete system back-ups of financial programs and data should be made. Send one to the receiving parish and one to the diocese.

H. Donations / Census Software

The Parish Bookkeeper/Business Manager should issue the appropriate tax receipts for Parishioner donations to the Parish up to the date of closure. A listing of all donations received up to the date of closure must be provided as part of the closure process.
APPENDIX D

PARISH RECORDS AND SACRED OBJECTS

Overview

All parish records, administrative, historical and sacramental, are the property of the Diocese of Lansing. When a parish is closed or merged, the records may only be placed in a repository designated by the Bishop of Lansing or his delegate. The designated repository is the Archives of the Diocese of Lansing. The archivist will work closely with the pastor/pastoral coordinator in preparing a records inventory and to prepare records for preservation in the diocesan archives.

Sacred objects in a parish are the property of the Diocese of Lansing. After an inventory is made and the parish closes, the diocese assumes custodial care of those items and provides for their retention (i.e. in the archives), transfer (temporary or permanently to another diocesan unit) or disposal (i.e. sent to missions or sold to church outside diocese).

These policies are for parishes designated for closure or merger only.

Parish Records

Upon the announcement of the closure or merger of a parish community, within two weeks, an inventory of parish records needs to be prepared according to the following outline. Every parish will not have everything on the outline, but include what you do have. Please indicate range of dates for all categories. Parishes that close will forward administrative, historical and sacramental records to the diocesan archives. Parishes that merge will forward administrative and historical records to the diocesan archives. Sacramental records will remain at the new parish site for a period of three years and then their placement will be reevaluated by the person in charge at the new site and the archivist. The records may then be transferred to the archives or kept for another three year period. At the time of closure or merger the information regarding locations of sacramental records of closed parishes will be added to the Official Catholic Directory and to the diocesan directories.

I. Administrative Records
   A. Annual Reports
   B. Building information - blueprints, specifications, architect’s drawings
   C. Calendars (if printed)
   D. Canonical Documents
      Decree of establishment, naming of parish, boundaries, appointments of clergy, documents relating to parish closing or merger.
   E. Correspondence with diocese unique to parish.
   F. Census or membership lists
   G. Financial Records (Personnel and current financial records go to the Finance Department)
      Account books, ledgers, financial statements, trust and estate correspondence, collection reports, summary reports.
   H. Legal Documents
      Construction contracts, leaser, tax information on property not part of site, any court case materials in which the parish or its organizations may have been involved.
   I. Parish Organizations (especially pastoral and finance councils)
      Articles of incorporate (if any) constitutions and by law with dates, minutes of meetings, lists of officers and members, financial reports, correspondence, publications, programs or publicity of special activities.
J. School (transcripts go to Education Office)
   Faculty rosters, list of principles, promotional pamphlets or brochures, handbooks, yearbooks, programs, photographs.

II. Historical
   A. Announcement Books (preceded bulletins)
   B. Artifacts (badges, commemorative cups, plates, t-shirts, etc. or other items which depict the life of the parish.)
   C. Booklets
   D. Bulletins with dates
   E. Contents of cornerstones (church, school, etc.)
   F. Newsletters (monthly, bimonthly, semi annually, etc.)
   G. Newspapers or magazine articles on clergy, members, staff or vocations from the parish.
   H. Histories of any parish organizations or school groups
   I. Pictorial Directories
   J. Photographs (use pencil, if possible, in identifying photographs. Identify as to when, where, who and what event)
      - interior and exterior of all buildings
      - interior of church after end renovations
      - clergy, members, staff or vocations
      - parish events and anniversary celebrations

III. Sacramental
   A. Parish Seal
   B. Prenuptial Investigations filed chronologically
   C. Registers of baptism, confirmation, first communion, marriage, sick calls and death.
      (make sure each volume has the name of parish and inclusive dates of entries in the front of it.)

Overview for Packing and Transferring Records
The following guidelines will expedite the packing and transfer of records. This will enhance access to records and ensure greater ease of records management before final processing at the archives.

Administrative and Historical Records
When packing these records use the boxes supplied. As you place records in the boxes, respect the order - or disorder - of your files. Pack records according to your own filing system. Once again, please do not attempt to cull from your files “uninteresting” items. Records should be transferred as you have created and maintained them.

Once records have been packed in boxes, prepare an inventory page for each box. Use your folder titles in creating the inventory and enclose a copy in each box. Label all boxes with the name of the parish, contents, and dates of records enclosed. If you enclose photographs, please try to identify the photos by date, event or subject.

Sacramental Records
Each volume of sacramental records must be identified. Identifiers should include the parish, the sacrament, and the span dates of each volume. Such information can be penciled on the
flyleaf or on a clean slip of paper inserted into the volume. Completed prenuptial forms for marriages should be boxed with identifying labels including parish and dates.

Guidelines for transfer of Records to Archives

A. Pack Records in Boxes
   1. Boxes will be supplied
   2. Respect original order (or disorder) of records
   3. Do not try to separate “important” from “unimportant” records
   4. Prepare inventory for each box and enclose in the box
   5. Label boxes: parish, contents, dates of records (e.g. Humility of Mary, Lansing, Box 1 of 10: Bound Bulletins 1970-1980)
   6. Try to identify subjects of photographs: people, events, dates, etc.
   7. Identify each volume of sacramental records

B. Contact the diocesan Archivist, (see Appendix O, page 114).
   1. The Archivist will provide help, guidance, instruction or consultation, and serve as general resource for any archives/records related issues
   2. The Archivist is available at any point in the process, please don’t hesitate
   3. The Archivist will make onsite visits on request

Sacred Objects

Within thirty days of the announcement of a parish closure, an inventory of sacred objects will be conducted by the individuals from central services, including one from archives and one from properties. Sacred Objects include: windows of stained, painted, or etched glass; altars; candle holders and stands; stations of the cross; statues; crucifixes; sanctuary furnishings (chairs, pews, credence tables, lecterns, ambos, kneelers); ritual objects (thurible, incense stand, boat and spoon) sacred vessels (chalices, patens, ciboria, monstrances); art objects of religious nature (paintings, framed pictures, mosaics, frescos); textiles (altar linens, vestments, banners); audio/visual equipment used to support liturgy; parish-owned musical instruments.

The inventory team will label or group the items with a label identifying the parish name and number (the numbers will be those used by the finance office for billing parishes.) Each item will then be photographed.

All saved items are to remain in the church or rectory after the final Mass, unless the object in question is removed as part of the closing liturgy or ceremony of transfer. No more than 10 days after the final Mass, a member of the inventory team will meet with the pastors, review the inventory, and accept all keys before the church door locks are changed. At that point, the pastor/administrator’s responsibility for the inventory ends.

All Sacred Objects, not the personal property of the clergy/administration, will be distributed in the following manner: 1.) The host parish may take furnishings or religious artifacts that may be used in the host parish. Anything taken must be so recorded on the inventory sheet. 2.) Others that would be valuable additions to the diocesan archives or the Cathedral museum will be taken there. 3.) The properties will make items available to other parishes, agencies and institutions in the diocese for their use as either a temporary or permanent loan. 4.) Remaining items will be sent to the missions or offered for sale to churches outside the diocese.
A sample of the form used to complete the inventory of sacred objects can be found in Appendix P, page 116.

Summary to the Records section:

1. If the parish site is closed and the parish merged, the following objects will be inventoried by the Diocese of Lansing:
   a. Sacramental records
   b. Parish records
   c. Sacred objects
   d. Furnishings

2. If the parish is maintained as a chapel (oratory), the following objects will be inventoried:
   a. Sacramental records
   b. Parish records

3. If the parish has undergone clustering, neither a nor b will happen.
APPENDIX E

HUMAN RESOURCE ISSUES

Any questions regarding Human Resource Issues are to be directed to the Legal Office at the Diocese of Lansing, *(see Appendix O, page 114).*
As the transition journey moves steadily forward, it is helpful to set short term and long term goals for the journey. Behaviors and attitudes are an inherent part of the transition process and need to be aligned for each goal to become a reality. Below are some tried and true practices that will be helpful in moving forward the process and assess it success along the way.

1. Common Goals and Priorities:
   a. Adopt a common mission statement
   b. Identify a designated number of priorities that all parishes in the cluster or the “new parish” resulting from mergers/closures will work on during the coming year

2. Move Through Transition:
   a. From single to shared multiple parish ministries
   b. From defensiveness toward collaboration
   c. From survival mentality toward growth, hope, evangelization
   d. Move from anxiety/uncertainty toward calm, peace, confident in the future

3. Practice Good Stewardship:
   a. Make the best use of time/talent of staff and volunteers (ref Appendix E, page 57)
      (1) Duplication of effort
      (2) Pastor/Pastoral Coordinator isn’t trying to do it all
   b. Make the best use of material goods
      (1) Buildings
      (2) Finances

4. Stability – Growth:
   a. Membership
   b. Mass attendance
   c. Community participation
   d. Faith formation enrollment
   e. Finances
   f. Evangelization

5. Balance Individual Needs and Common Needs:
   a. Roots, traditions, history of each parish in the cluster or each parish in the new entity are affirmed and respected
   b. Parish leadership and parishioners are able to work together for the common good

6. Pastors/Pastoral Coordinators/Staff:
   a. Ministry is energizing and life-giving:
   b. Expectations are realistic for self, staff and parishioners
   c. Workload is manageable
   d. Staff has adequate time off to refuel and refresh spiritually, emotionally and physically
APPENDIX G

WELCOMING SUGGESTIONS FOR PARISH MERGERS

Some welcoming suggestions that others have learned from experience:

1. Hospitality is of utmost importance.
2. Being welcoming, open, and patient with all who now are joined in worship and in community.
3. Respecting unique culture and faith expressions; learning and listening to how parish feasts have been celebrated.
4. Providing a prominent place for patron saints and the things that speak of “who we are” in the welcoming parish church building.
5. Providing for a real, expected, and valued voice in parish life for all parishioners.
6. Being open to learning and celebrating special times in faith life with all parishioners.
7. Integrating ministers (ref Appendix E, page 57), musicians, language, music and customs into, for example, the Rite of Christian Burial.
8. Willingness to celebrate special liturgies with the newly formed community and not for the newly formed community.
9. The pastor of the affected parishes should supply the parish designated as the welcoming parish with a list of all parishioners.
10. The pastor of the welcoming parish should write a welcoming letter which will be mailed to parishioners of all affected parishes.
11. A formal welcoming Mass and reception should be scheduled very soon after the date of the official suppression or merger. (Ref Appendix K, page 63 & Appendix L, page 64)
12. A procession to the new parish could take place soon after the suppression of a parish or merger of parishes, memorabilia could be transported in this procession. Greeters should be available.
13. The parish that is closed or merged should decide the role that the bishop of the diocese will have at the closing Mass.
14. A committee should be appointed by the Parish Pastoral Council of the welcoming parish to concern itself with the integration of the parishioners of the closed or merged parish into the life of their new parish. Parishioners from closed or merged parishes should be invited to be part of this committee.
15. Parish feast days that have traditionally been celebrated in closed or merged parishes should be marked with celebrations in the new parishes.
16. Remembering always the words, “Where two or three gather in My Name, there I am in their midst” and reminding the newly formed community often, not only in word but in deed, that they are really and truly part of their new parish family.
NOTE: The new parish community can take on a new name, but the name of an individual church, once it has been dedicated, cannot be changed. This accommodates the use of each parish site in the merger.

Soon after the official announcement of parishes that will merge, the “new community” can choose a new name:

- Appoint a “New Parish Name” subcommittee using members from both communities.
- The name of the new parish should be that of a saint or title of Christ, the Trinity or the Blessed Mother.
- Develop a time line in which a new name will be chosen.
- Engage the whole community in the process.
- Names along with rationale for submission should be submitted to “New Parish Name” Sub-Committee.
- Collate submitted names, eliminate duplicates, prepare final list of names.
- “New Parish Name” Sub-Committee should discern the top 10 and the rationale for choice.
- Top 10 names are submitted to the Combined Parish Council who will choose three names.
- Three names are forwarded to the Bishop of Lansing with signatures of pastor and council members for final decision.
APPENDIX I

PREPARING FOR NEW PARISH LEADERSHIP

Preparing for new parish leadership:

- Parish Pastoral Councils should hold joint meetings as soon as announcements of mergers or suppression have been made.
- Councils members, especially from parishes which have been closed, should be given the opportunity to deal with the loss they are experiencing. They could reflect on what they will miss about their former parish. They might be given the opportunity to speak about their hopes and expectations of the new situation. *(Ref Grieving and Moving to Wholeness in Life, page 24)*
- Council members of the welcoming parishes should be encouraged to be sensitive to needs of these new members.
- Immediate needs should be identified, e.g., welcoming liturgies, and planned and both Councils should be involved in the planning. *(Ref Appendix K, page 63, and Appendix L, page 64.)*
- Volunteers should be chosen from the merged or closed parishes as well as the welcoming parish to assist in the planning and implementing of these needs.
- Assessments need to be made about the needs of the homebound, hospitals and nursing homes, youth, young adults and faith formation. Determine what is immediate and what is short range.
- As the vision of the Council begins to become unified, they should form one new Council, possibly with new membership as needed, and begin the process of defining the mission of the “new” parish *(Ref Appendix J, page 62).*
APPENDIX J

DEFINING THE MISSION OF THE “NEW PARISH”

Preparing to define the mission of the “new” parish:

- This process probably won’t begin for six to eight months.
- A comprehensive needs assessment should take place; the existing pastoral plans need to be reviewed. (This information can be taken from the PEI process completed in March 2007. Is there new information that has surfaced and needs to be added?)
- When the needs assessment has been completed, the new mission of the parish can be discerned:
  - Who are we as a people of God?
  - What is God calling us to do at this new moment in our history?
  - (Follow process in PARISH COUNCILS AND COMMISSIONS book for Diocese of Lansing)

Following the drafting of the new mission statement, a new pastoral plan should be put in place:
- review pastoral plans of merged/closed parishes
- incorporate all pertinent components into a new document
- review all new information:
  - PEI from all merged/closed parishes
  - needs assessment held as part of the mission statement process
APPENDIX K

A STRUGGLE FOR HOLY GROUND:
RECONCILIATION AND THE RITES OF PARISH CLOSURE
by Michael Weldon, O.F.M.

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APPENDIX L

TRANSITIONAL RITUALS

I. RITE OF CLUSTERING PARISHES
   Within a Celebration of the Word

II. RITES OF MERGING PARISHES
    Within Mass
    Within Evening Prayer
    Within a Celebration of the Word
    Music Suggestions

III. RITES OF CLOSING PARISHES
    Within Mass
    Within a Celebration of the Word
    Sample Intercessions
    Music Suggestions
    Additional Texts
I. RITE OF CLUSTERING PARISHES
WITHIN A
A CELEBRATION OF THE WORD

When two or parishes are clustered they maintain separate canonical status, but are served by one pastor or pastoral coordinator. Thus, this rite focuses on the spirit of collaboration which will exist between these parishes and thanksgiving for the leadership which will guide them.

The presider may be the bishop or he may delegate the regional vicar.

Those who prepare this liturgy will also find the next section to be helpful – Rites for Merging Parishes. Scripture readings, prayer texts, and music suggestions will be similar.

INTRODUCTORY RITE

Opening Hymn

See suggestions, pages 92-95

Greeting

Presider: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
All: Amen.
Presider: Peace be with you.
All: And also with you.
Introduction

*in these or similar words*

**Presider:** Tonight [today] we gather to finalize all your discussions and deliberations. Each of your parishes have a wonderful and distinguished history in the diocese and have indicated that you can continue to be vibrant and productive communities of faith. Each will continue to do God’s work and to spread His message of salvation. Because you have exhibited such resolve, I have appointed one person to lead you [and to serve your sacramental and liturgical needs]. Under his [her] guidance, your parishes will continue to thrive.

Let us first pause to thank almighty God for his abiding presence and his unfailing grace.

**Opening Prayer**

**Presider:** Lord God,

From age to age, you have provided workers for your vineyard so that your kingdom may grow more abundantly. Give us a unity of purpose, that we may walk together with you and with one another. Send your blessing upon our leader(s) and our parishes, that what we have begun in the Spirit may be brought to completion by your power.

To you be glory and honor, now and for ever.

**All:** Amen.

**LITURGY OF THE WORD**

**First Reading**

_Ephesians 4: 1-6_  
1 Timothy 2:5-8

_(choose one)_  
_Colossians 3:2-17_  
_Philippians 2:1-11_

**Responsorial Psalm**

Psalm 67 “O God, let all the nations praise you.”  
Psalm 100: 1-6 “We are his people, the flock of the Lord.”  
Psalm 113 “Blessed be the name of the Lord forever.”
Gospel Acclamation (or Verse before the Gospel)

Gospel
John 10:11-16 OR John 17:1-11a OR John 17-20-26

Homily
The homily may be given by the bishop or the new pastor

RITE OF CLUSTERING

Renewal of Baptismal Commitment

Presider: My brothers and sisters,
God our loving Father calls us
to be one body in Christ our Lord.
Let us renew the promises we made in baptism,
when we promised to reject sin
and to serve God and his holy people, his Church.

Presider: Do you reject sin so as to live in the freedom of God’s children?
All: I do.

Presider: Do you reject the glamour of evil, and refuse to be mastered by sin?
All: I do.

Presider: Do you reject Satan, father of sin and prince of darkness?
All: I do.

Presider: Do you believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth?
All: I do.

Presider: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was born of the Virgin Mary,
was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead,
and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?
All: I do.

Presider: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

All: I do.

**INSTALLATION OF THE PASTOR**

**Presentation of the Pastor-Elect**

**Presider:** My dear friends, because I am aware of your pastoral needs and am confident of Father ______’s qualifications for the office of pastor, I now commend Father_________ to you as your new pastor.

**Welcome by the People**

All: Alleluia  *(or other sung acclamation)*

**Profession of Faith and Oath**

**Presider:** Remember, my brother ______, always be a loving father, a gentle shepherd, and a wise teacher of your people, so that you may lead them to Christ who will strengthen all that you do.

Pastor: With firm faith, I believe everything in the Creed and I believe everything in God’s Word written or handed down in tradition, and proposed by the Church whether in solemn judgment or in ordinary and universal Magisterium as divinely revealed and calling for faith.
I also firmly accept and hold everything that is proposed by the Church definitively regarding teaching on faith and morals.

Moreover, I adhere with religious submission of will and intellect to the teachings which either the Roman Pontiff or the college of bishops enunciate when they exercise the authentic magisterium even if they proclaim these teachings in an act that is not definitive.

*The pastor signs the oath of fidelity at the altar immediately after the oath.*

**Presentation of the Parishes’ Staffs**

*The pastor comes to stand before the bishop.*

Presider:  
N.______, my brother,  
Deacon ______ and N.__________ (other staff members)  
will assist you in the pastoral care of the people of ________.

Deacon ______ and N.__________ (other staff members)  
will assist you in the pastoral care of the people of ________.

Share this ministry in a spirit of mutual trust, common prayer, and genuine concern.

*The new pastor is greeted by his associates in the parish ministry.*

**Presentation of the Parish Councils**

Presider:  
Father _____, this is the pastoral council of _____ parish.  
It is the voice of your people  
and will assist and counsel you as you minister to this parish.  
They bring with them the names of all the baptized.  
Always be attentive to the needs that your council expresses.

Pastor:  
My friends,  
I pledge to seek your counsel, guidance, and advice  
in the spiritual and temporal care of my pastorate.

*The members of the parishes’ pastoral councils immediately come forward and greet the new pastor. The parish registries from the merging parishes are brought forward and placed on the table in front of the altar by a member of each of the parishes.*
INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Invitation

Presider: United in Christ, 
let us offer our petitions to God who answers all our needs.

Petitions

Minister: For the Church throughout the world, including our diocesan Church 
and for our parish communities, we pray.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Minister: That we will continue to recognize Christ in the stranger at our door, in the 
poor, the sick, the lost and homeless, we pray…

That the celebration of the Eucharist continue to be the source and 
summit of our parish life, we pray…

For the new opportunities that this cluster will bring 
and for the gifts we will share for God’s glory, we pray…

For our beloved dead and for those who mourn them we pray…

Lord’s Prayer

Presider: Gathering our prayers and praise into one, 
let us pray in the words our Savior gave us. Our Father, …

Collect

Presider: Gracious God, 
Hear and answer our prayers. 
Send your Spirit to guide these communities. 
Unite us in harmony 
and guide us on the path of peace. 
Grant this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.
CONCLUDING RITE

Greeting

Presider: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Blessing

Presider: May the God of all consolation bless you in every way and grant you peace all the days of your life.

All: Amen.

Presider: May he free you from all anxiety and strengthen your hearts in his love.

All: Amen.

Presider: May he enrich you with his gifts of faith, hope and love, so that what you do in this life will bring you to the happiness of everlasting life.

All: Amen.

Presider: May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Dismissal

Pastor: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Hymn

See suggestions, pages 92-95
II. RITES FOR MERGING PARISHES

Within Mass
A. Mass of Thanksgiving
B. Mass for the Promotion of Harmony
C. Mass of the New Parish’s Patron Saint
D. Mass of the Day

Additional Texts

Within Evening Prayer
Within a Celebration of the Word

Music Suggestions

RITES WITHIN MASS

1. Prepare a worship aid that will enable the assembly to participate at Mass and which will serve as a commemorative of the occasion.

2. Include historical data on both parish communities.

3. Invite all former pastors or parochial vicars to concelebrate.

4. Choose ministers, of various ages, that represent each former community.

5. A day should be chosen when the assembly can gather in large numbers.

6. A) On weekdays, when the day allows, Mass texts may be chosen from the Masses for Various Needs and Occasions, no. 39, “In Thanksgiving,” option B (Sacramentary, page 922 and readings from Lectionary nos. 943-947) OR no. 42 “For the Promotion of Charity or to Foster Harmony” (Lectionary number 953-956).

   B) If this celebration occurs outside Advent, Lent, Triduum, the Easter Season, the solemnities of the Lord, solemnities of the BVM or the saints listed in the general calendar, you may also choose the Mass texts for the patron saint of the parish.

   C) The Mass of the Day -- required on days which are ranked #4 or lower (GNLYC #59). On Sundays and solemnities, the Mass texts will be from the Mass of the Day.

7. Choose hymns suited to the Mass texts and readings and ones that will be familiar to several generations of parishioners. See music suggestions, pages 92-95.

8. If there is music or readings that allude to the new title of the new parish, these may be advantageous.
**OPTION A: “MASS OF THANKSGIVING”**
**MASSES FOR VARIOUS NEEDS AND OCCASIONS (39-B)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[Prelude]</th>
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**INTRODUCTORY RITES**
- Opening Hymn
- Greeting
- Penitential Rite
- Glory to God
- Opening Prayer

**LITURGY OF THE WORD**
- First Reading: Sirach 50:22-24
- Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 138: 1-5
  - “Lord, I thank you for your faithfulness and love.”
- Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1: 3-9
- Gospel Acclamation: Verse: John 15:11
- Gospel: John 15: 9-17
- Homily
- Creed
- General Intercessions

**LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST**
- Preparation of the Altar and the Gifts
- Presentation Hymn
- Prayer Over the Gifts
- Eucharistic Prayer: MVNO - II
  - Preface MVNO - II
  - Holy, holy, holy
  - Acclamations
  - Lord's Prayer
  - Sign of Peace
  - Breaking of the Bread: Lamb of God: ____________________________
  - Ecce Agnus Dei
  - Prayer of Humility
  - Communion Hymn(s)
- Prayer After Communion

**CONCLUDING RITE**
- Greeting
- Blessing: Solemn Blessing #13 - Ordinary Time IV
- Dismissal
- Closing Hymn: *Now Thank We All Our God* or any setting of the *Te Deum*
INTRODUCTORY RITES
Opening Hymn
Greeting
Penitential Rite
Glory to God
Opening Prayer

LITURGY OF THE WORD
First Reading
Responsorial Psalm

Setting
Second Reading
Gospel Acclamation
Gospel
Homily
Creed
General Intercessions

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST
Preparation of the Altar and the Gifts
Presentation Hymn
Prayer Over the Gifts
Eucharist Prayer
Preface
Holy, holy, holy
Acclamations
Lord's Prayer
Sign of Peace
Breaking of the Bread
Ecce Agnus Dei
Prayer of Humility
Communion Hymn(s)

CONCLUDING RITE
Greeting
Blessing
Dismissal
Closing Hymn

OPTION B: “MASS FOR THE PROMOTION OF HARMONY”
MASSES FOR VARIOUS NEEDS AND OCCASIONS (42)

[Prelude]
OPTION C: MASS OF THE NEW PARISH’S PATRON SAINT

[Prelude]

INTRODUCTORY RITES
Opening Hymn
Greeting
Penitential Rite recited____  sung _____
Glory to God sung ____  omitted _____
Opening Prayer Page ____

LITURGY OF THE WORD
First Reading
Responsorial Psalm
Setting
Second Reading
Gospel Acclamation Verse:
Setting
Gospel
Homily
Creed recited_____  omitted ____
General Intercessions See samples attached

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST
Preparation of the Altar and the Gifts
Presentation Hymn
Prayer Over the Gifts Page _____
Eucharistic Prayer I  II  III  IV
Preface Preface ____
Holy, holy, holy
Acclamations
Lord's Prayer recited ____  chanted _____
Sign of Peace
Breaking of the Bread Lamb of God:
Ecce Agnus Dei
Prayer of Humility
Communion Hymn(s)

Prayer After Communion Page _____

CONCLUDING RITE
Greeting
Blessing Solemn Blessing #13 - Ordinary Time IV
Dismissal
Removal of Blessed Sacrament Procession forms
Closing Hymn Now Thank We All Our God or any setting of the Te Deum
OPTION D: MASS OF THE DAY

[Prelude]

INTRODUCTORY RITES
Opening Hymn
Greeting
Penitential Rite recited_____ sung _____
Glory to God sung _____ omitted _____
Opening Prayer Page ____

LITURGY OF THE WORD
First Reading
Responsorial Psalm
Setting
Second Reading
Gospel Acclamation
Setting
Gospel
Homily
Creed recited_____ omitted _____
General Intercessions See samples attached

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST
Preparation of the Altar and the Gifts
Presentation Hymn
Prayer Over the Gifts Page ____
Eucharistic Prayer I II III IV
  Preface Preface _____
    Holy, holy, holy
    Acclamations
  Lord's Prayer recited _____ chanted _____
Sign of Peace
Breaking of the Bread Lamb of God: ________________________
Ecce Agnus Dei
Prayer of Humility
Communion Hymn(s)

Prayer After Communion Page ____

CONCLUDING RITE
Greeting
Blessing Solemn Blessing #13 - Ordinary Time IV
Dismissal
Closing Hymn Now Thank We All Our God or any setting of the Te Deum
ADDITIONAL TEXT:
RITE FOR THE MERGING OF PARISHES WITHIN MASS
ADAPTED FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF DETROIT

PREPARATION

- Hospitality Ministers should be stationed outside and inside the welcoming church (as the situation permits).

- There should, if possible, be an equal number of liturgical ministers from each of the former parishes involved in this liturgy. Worship commissions of both parishes will work together to develop liturgical procedures based on the traditions of both parishes. Lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion and servers should be trained in the combined procedures.

- The altar should be bare as the liturgy begins. It will be dressed at the Preparation of the Gifts. Representatives of both parishes will take part in this rite.

- Prepare a large vessel of blessed water from each of the merging churches. This water will be mingled and used in the Sprinkling Rite. Vessels of the Sacred Oils may be mixed together and placed in the ambry, if possible.

- Prepare a special program which could contain a message of welcome, the music for the celebration (with the proper copyrights), and especially the people’s responses for the Blessing Over the Water and the Proclamation of Consent.

- The music selections should complement the readings and the occasion. The music should be familiar to both communities and reflect their cultural diversity.

INTRODUCTORY RITES

The liturgy begins with a full procession including incense, cross, candles, and the Book of the Gospels. It is important that the Opening Hymn (as well as all the music used in this celebration) is well known to and reflects the diversity of both communities so that there may be full participation by everyone present. Representatives from both merging parishes carry in the large vessel of blessed water from their parish as part of the procession.

The procession moves to a visible place near the font, where the two containers of water can be easily poured.

The priest celebrant greets the people.
Invocation Over Blessed Water

Presider: My dear brothers and sisters, we have been called to this water that we may share in the faith of the one Church and that we may have eternal life. By the mystery of this water, may we rededicate our lives to our baptismal call and to live the Gospel as a new community of faith. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Presider: God of mercy, through the waters of baptism you have filled us with new life.

All: Blessed be God.

(All sing or say this or another suitable acclamation.)

Presider: From all who are baptized in water and the Holy Spirit, you have formed one people, united by your Son Jesus Christ.

All: Blessed be God.

Presider: You have set us free from sin and filled our hearts with the Spirit of your love, that we may live in your peace.

All: Blessed be God forever.

Presider: You call those who have been baptized to announce the Good News of Jesus Christ to all people.

All: Blessed be God forever.

Presider: You call us to this cleansing water and to new birth. By sharing the faith of your Church may we come to know the joy of eternal life. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.

All: Amen.

The presider sprinkles the assembly with the blessed water.
Glory to God
The choir intones the Gloria. Church bells or hand bells may be rung to add to the festivity.

Opening Prayer
In Ordinary Time, the Opening Prayer may be taken from the Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar.

Presider: Lord,
    fill this place with your presence,
    and extend your hand to all those who call upon you.
    May your word here proclaimed
    and your sacraments here celebrated
    strengthen the hearts of all your faithful.
    We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
    who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
    one God, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD
If the liturgical day allows, the readings for the Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar may be used (Lectionary nos. 701 – 706).

Homily

Renewal of Baptismal Commitment

Presider: My brothers and sisters,
    God our loving Father calls us
    to be one body in Christ our Lord.
    As we come together as one community
    let us renew the promises we made in baptism,
    when we promised to reject sin
    and to serve God and his holy people, his Church.

Presider: Do you reject sin so as to live in the freedom of God’s children?
All: I do.

Presider: Do you reject the glamour of evil, and refuse to be mastered by sin?
All: I do.

Presider: Do you reject Satan, father of sin and prince of darkness?
All: I do.
Presider: Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?

All: I do.

Presider: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?

All: I do.

Presider: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

All: I do.

Proclamation of Consent

Presider: I ask the people of __________ and __________ is it your intention to become one parish community?

All: It is.

Presider: Do you promise to walk together for the unity of the Church?

All: We do.

Presider: Are you resolved to unite yourself more closely with Christ, and try to become more like him?

All: We are.

Presider: Do you promise to celebrate the sacraments together and to manifest the presence of Christ in our midst?

All: We do.

Presider: May the Lord in his love keep you close to him always, and may he bring all of you to eternal life.

All: Amen.
DECREE FROM THE BISHOP

The opening paragraph of the decree from the bishop is read ending with the name of the new parish.

INSTALLATION OF THE PASTOR

Presentation of the Pastor-Elect

Presider: My dear friends, because I am aware of your pastoral needs and am confident of Father ______’s qualifications for the office of pastor, I now commend Father________ to you as your new pastor.

Welcome by the People

All: Alleluia (or other sung acclamation)

The pastor comes to stand before the bishop.

Profession of Faith and Oath

Presider: Remember, my brother ______, always be a loving father, a gentle shepherd, and a wise teacher of your people, so that you may lead them to Christ who will strengthen all that you do.

Pastor: With firm faith, I believe everything in the Creed and I believe everything in God’s Word written or handed down in tradition, and proposed by the Church whether in solemn judgment or in ordinary and universal Magisterium as divinely revealed and calling for faith.

I also firmly accept and hold everything that is proposed by the Church definitively regarding teaching on faith and morals.

Moreover, I adhere with religious submission of will and intellect to the teachings which either the Roman Pontiff or the college of bishops enunciate when they exercise the authentic magisterium even if they proclaim these teachings in an act that is not definitive.

The pastor signs the oath of fidelity at the altar immediately after the oath.
Presentation of the Parish Clergy and Staff

Presider: N.______, my brother, Father(s) ________, Deacon _______ and N________(other staff members) will assist you in the pastoral care of the people of this parish. Share this ministry in a spirit of mutual trust, common prayer, and genuine concern.

The new pastor is greeted by his associates in the parish ministry.

Presentation of the Parish Council

Presider: Father _____, this is the pastoral council of _____ parish. It is the voice of your people and will assist and counsel you as you minister to this parish. They bring with them the names of all the baptized. Always be attentive to the needs that your council expresses.

Pastor: My friends, I pledge to seek your counsel, guidance, and advice in the spiritual and temporal care of my pastorate.

The members of the parish council immediately come forward and greet the new pastor. The parish registries from the merging parishes are brought forward and placed on the table in front of the altar by a member of each of the parishes.

General Intercessions See samples page 91

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST
Members of both communities should be a part of the procession of gifts and the dressing of the altar. The altar might be clothed with a new altar cloth, candles, etc. If possible use incense.

Mass proceeds as usual.

CONCLUDING RITES
After communion devotional items may be brought forward and placed in shrines or other appropriate places. The celebrant or another might explain what the items are, why they are important to the community and where they will be placed as a sign that two communities have become one.

A Solemn Blessing should be used.
The following service may be used on a weekday night. Perhaps a parish dinner or reception will follow. The presider should be the bishop or the new pastor assigned to both parishes. Other ministers, especially cantors, should be chosen from among the liturgical ministers of the former parishes.

**INTRODUCTORY RITE**

**Introductory Verse**

Leader: + O God, come to our assistance.
All: Lord, make haste to help us.

**Doxology**

All: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning is now and will be forever. Amen. [Alleluia]

**Hymn**

“Day is Done” or “This is a Day of New Beginnings” or other suitable hymn.

**PSALMODY**

| Antiphon I | __________________________________________ |
| Psalms | __________________________________________ |
| Psalm Prayer | __________________________________________ |
| Antiphon I | __________________________________________ |

| Antiphon II | __________________________________________ |
| Psalms | __________________________________________ |
| Psalm Prayer | __________________________________________ |
| Antiphon II | __________________________________________ |

| Antiphon III | __________________________________________ |
| NT Canticle | __________________________________________ |
| Antiphon III | __________________________________________ |

Sunday- EP I Phil 2:6-11
Monday Eph 1:3-10
Tuesday Rev 4:11; 5:9,10,12
Wednesday Col 1:12-20
Thursday Rev 11:17-18; 12:10b-12a
Friday Rev 15:3-4
Sample Psalm Prayers

A:  Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation, whose goodness fills our hearts with joy.
    Blessed are you who have brought us together this day to work in harmony and peace.
    Strengthen us with your grace and wisdom, for you are God for ever and ever. Amen.

B:  Lord, may everything we do begin with your inspiration and continue with your help, so that all our prayers and works may begin in you and by you bear much fruit. Glory and praise to you for ever and ever. Amen.

C:  Almighty God, we have gathered here to celebrate our unity in Jesus Christ. Send your Spirit to direct our efforts so that this community may always be ware of your saving presence and rely upon your constant help. For you are God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE WORD OF GOD

Reading

Responsory

Homily

RITE OF MERGING

Presider  Almighty God, hear our prayers for the communities of and who have come here today to be united as one faith community. Increase their faith in you and in each other, and through them, bless your Church. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

All:  Amen.
Bishop: My dear friends, you have come together in this church so that the Lord may seal and strengthen your unity as one parish, as one community of believers. In the presence of Almighty God, your Bishop, and this community, please state your intentions.

The president of each parish pastoral council states separately:

We, the people of [Parish] come here freely and publicly state our desire to become one faith community with [Parish.] We promise to work tirelessly to achieve that unity that is rooted in baptism and strengthened in the Eucharist, the sacrament of unity.

Our liturgy proclaims that the dying and rising of Christ has won our salvation. We will live this mystery of love as one faith community.

Bishop: Christ abundantly blesses your commitment of unity. You have declared your intention before the Church and I confirm your consent. I now establish this new faith community under the title of _________. May you be faithful to your commitment and always live together in peace, good will, and love. May God bless this new community of faith now and in the years to come.

Sign of Peace

Bishop: Let us now offer one another a sign of Christ’s peace.

Bishop exchanges sign of peace with the pastor and presidents of former parish councils. The Sign of Peace is then exchanged throughout the assembly.

GOSPEL CANTICLE

Antiphon

Canticle of Mary/ Luke 1: 46-55 sung setting:
INTERCESSIONARY PRAYER

Invitation

Bishop: United in Christ, let us offer our petitions to God who answers all our needs.

Petitions

Minister: For the Church throughout the world, including our diocesan Church and for our new faith community, we pray.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Minister: That we will continue to recognize Christ in the stranger at our door, in the poor, the sick, the lost and homeless, we pray…

That the celebration of the Eucharist continue to be the source and summit of our parish life, we pray…

For the new opportunities that this merger brings and for the gifts we will share for God’s glory, we pray…

For our beloved dead and for those who mourn them we pray…

Lord’s Prayer

Bishop: Gathering our prayers and praise into one, let us pray in the words our Savior gave us. Our Father, …

Collect

Bishop: Gracious God, Hear and answer our prayers. Send your Spirit to guide this community. Unite us in harmony and guide us on the path of peace. Grant this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.
**CONCLUDING RITE**

**Greeting**

Bishop: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

**Blessing**

Bishop: May the God of all consolation bless you in every way and grant you peace all the days of your life.

All: Amen.

Bishop: May he free you from all anxiety and strengthen your hearts in his love.

All: Amen.

Bishop: May he enrich you with his gifts of faith, hope and love, so that what you do in this life will bring you to the happiness of everlasting life.

All: Amen.

Bishop: May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

**Dismissal**

Bishop: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

(or deacon)

All: Thanks be to God.

**Hymn**

______________________________________________________
RITE OF MERGING PARISHES
WITHIN A
A CELEBRATION OF THE WORD

INTRODUCTORY RITE

Opening Hymn
Greeting
Introduction
Opening Prayer

Bishop: Lord God,
whose blessings reach to the ends of the earth,
you show us your love
in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
Confirm us in the unity of faith
that we may walk together
with you and with one another.
Send your blessing upon your Church,
that what we have begun in the Spirit
may be brought to completion by your power.
To you be glory and honor, now and forever.

All: Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading Ephesians 4: 1-6 OR Colossians 3:2-17 OR Philippians 2:1-11

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 67 “O God, let all the nations praise you.”
Psalm 100: 1-6 “We are his people, the flock of the Lord.”
Psalm 113 “Blessed be the name of the Lord forever.”

Gospel Acclamation (or Verse before the Gospel)


Homily
RITE OF MERGING

See the text provided in the Rite within Mass -- pages 77-82

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Invitation

Bishop: United in Christ,
let us offer our petitions to God who answers all our needs.

Petitions

Minister: For the Church throughout the world, including our diocesan Church and for this new faith community, we pray.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Minister: That we will continue to recognize Christ in the stranger at our door, in the poor, the sick, the lost and homeless, we pray…

That the celebration of the Eucharist continue to be the source and summit of our parish life, we pray…

For the new opportunities that this merger brings and for the gifts we will share for God’s glory, we pray…

For our beloved dead and for those who mourn them we pray…

Lord’s Prayer

Bishop: Gathering our prayers and praise into one,
let us pray in the words our Savior gave us. Our Father, …

Collect

Bishop: Gracious God,
Hear and answer our prayers.
Send your Spirit to guide this community.
Unite us in harmony
and guide us on the path of peace.
Grant this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.
CONCLUDING RITE

Greeting

Bishop: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Blessing

Bishop: May the God of all consolation bless you in every way and grant you peace all the days of your life.

All: Amen.

Bishop: May he free you from all anxiety and strengthen your hearts in his love.

All: Amen.

Bishop: May he enrich you with his gifts of faith, hope and love, so that what you do in this life will bring you to the happiness of everlasting life.

All: Amen.

Bishop: May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Dismissal

Bishop: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

(or deacon)

All: Thanks be to God.

Hymn

_______________________________________________________
The General Intercessions should be carefully composed to address the new parish situation. The following are some suggestions that might be modified to fit the local needs.

For the Holy Father, our Bishop, priests, and deacons, that they may have the courage to lead the Church with fidelity and compassion, we pray.

For the people of __________ and __________ as they come together as __________. May they be a living sign of the presence of God to all whom they meet, we pray.

For patience and understanding as we grow together as a family of faith, we pray.

For the ability to rejoice in the blessings we have received through our former parishes and the courage to move onward with hope, we pray.

For other parish, schools, and institutions throughout the country facing significant changes and transitions, that the love and solidarity of all Catholics may overcome all fear and sadness, we pray.

For the Church throughout the world, including our diocesan Church and for this new faith community, we pray.

That we will continue to recognize Christ in the stranger at our door, in the poor, the sick, the lost and homeless, we pray.

For a renewed appreciation of the Eucharist as the source and summit of our parish life, we pray.

For the new opportunities that this merger brings and for the gifts we will share for God’s glory, we pray.

For all who have gone before us in faith, especially the deceased members of __________ and __________, may we always remember their faith and their good works, we pray.

For our beloved dead and for those who mourn them, we pray.
Thanksgiving
Come, Rejoice Before Your Maker  RS
Confitemini Domino/ Come and Fill (Taizé)  GC2
Earth and All Stars  RS
Father, We Thank Thee  various
For Builders Bold  RS
For All the Saints Who’ve Shown Your Love  GC2
For the Beauty of the Earth  various
For the Fruits of All Creation  WLP
From Springs of Living Water  Duffner
Give the Lord Your Heart (bilingual)  GC2
Give Thanks to the Lord  OCP
God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending  various
God Made from One Blood  RS
God’s Love is Everlasting  OCP
In the Lord I’ll Be Ever Thankful (Taizé)  GC2
Joyfully Singing  RS
Let All Things Now Living  various
Now Thank We All Our God  various
Renew Your People  RS
Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above  various
Table Prayer  RS
Thanks Be To God  OCP
To God with Gladness Sing  RS
We Praise You  GC2
We Give You Thanks  GC2
We Gather Together  various
With All Our Hearts  OCP
You Gather Us  Duffner

Church
Christians, Lift Up Your Hearts  RS
Come, Host of Heaven’s High Dwelling Place  GC2, Iona
For Builders Bold Whose Vision Pure  Stuempfle
Gather and Remember  OCP
Gather Us Together  OCP
Gather Your People  GC2
God is Here as We His People  RS
Jesus Christ by Faith Revealed  Duffner
O Christ the Great Foundation  various
O Spirit All-Embracing  Duffner
The Church of Christ in Every Age  various
The Spirit Brooding  Duffner
We Are Your People  WLP
Where Two or Three Have Gathered  OCP
You Gather Us  Duffner
### Ministry & Mission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bring Forth the Kingdom of God</td>
<td>GIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clouds of Witnesses Surround Us</td>
<td>Stuempfle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Come Sisters, Brothers, One in Faith</td>
<td>Stuempfle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the Healing of the Nations</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Christ There is No East or West</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jesus Calls Us Here to Meet Him</td>
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<td><em>Laudate, Laudate Dominum</em></td>
<td>OCP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Let Us Stay Together for a Time</td>
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<td>Make Us Bold</td>
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<td>O Christ the Great Foundation</td>
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<td>O Christ, Who Called the Twelve</td>
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<td>One Spirit Falls Like Living Fire</td>
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<td>Send Us Your Spirit</td>
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<td>Sisters and Brothers with One Voice</td>
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<td>The Hand of Heaven</td>
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<td>To Be Your Presence</td>
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<tr>
<td>We Are Your People</td>
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<td>We Are Many Parts</td>
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<td>We Sing a Beginning</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is This Place?</td>
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### Unity

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<td>As the Grains of Wheat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Church of God</td>
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<tr>
<td>Companions on the Journey</td>
<td>OCP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diverse in Culture, Nation, Race</td>
<td>GIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Draw Us in the Spirit’s Tether</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gather Us Together</td>
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<tr>
<td>God, You Call Us to This Place</td>
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<tr>
<td>Help Us Accept Each Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>In This Place</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journeysong</td>
<td>OCP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let Us Be One</td>
<td>WLP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make Your Home in Me</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sing a New World</td>
<td>Duffner</td>
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<tr>
<td>The One Same Spirit</td>
<td>WLP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We Gather Round Your Table</td>
<td>Stuempfle</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Key

- "various" – may be found in the publications of all the mentioned publishers
- OCP – available in many Oregon Catholic Publications
- WLP – available in many World Library Publications
- RS – * RitualSong* published by GIA, Chicago (may also be available in other GIA publications)
- GC2 – *Gather Comprehensive, Second Edition*, published by GIA, Chicago (may also be available in other GIA publications)

Additional musical resources cited above,
- Dolores Duffner, *The Glimmer of Glory in Song*, GIA G-6192
- Alan Hommerding, *Song of the Spirit*, WLP
- *Iona Abbey Music Book*, Wild Goose Publications (GIA)
- Herman Stuempfle, *The Word Goes Forth*, GIA G-4045
§ PSALMODY §

Settings of Psalm 90 (p13)
(Hint: This is the Responsorial Psalm for the 23 Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)
O God Our Help in Ages Past (various publishers)

GIA
RitualSong #120 using ant. I and either psalm tone or Gelineau tone
Gather Comprehensive I, #83, Michel Guimont
Throughout Every Age, Jennifer Breedlove, G-3632
You Have Been Our Dwelling Place, Lori True, G-6067
You Are the Hearts True Resting Place, Marty Haugen, G-5444

OCP
Flor Y Canto, Fransisco Palazón
Singing the Psalms, vol. 2, Bernadette Farrell
Singing the Psalms, vol 5, Timothy Smith (also Journeysongs II)
In Every Age, Janét Sullivan Whitaker, 11579
In Every Age, M.D. Ridge, 9505

WLP
Psalms of the Notre Dame Folk Choir, Steve Warner
In Every Age, Ed Bolduc, 007359
In Every Age, Berrell/Tate, 008229
O Lord, You Have Been Our Dwelling Place/O God, Our Help in Ages Past, Hal Hopson, 008774
Psalm 85
MVNO – Mass for the Promotion of Harmony (p. 19)
(Hint: This is the Responsorial Psalm for Independence Day)
There are many settings of the psalm with the refrain “Lord, let us see your kindness”.
Ps. 85, ant. II, Richard Proulx, RS (GIA)
Psalms for All Seasons, Howard Hughes, NPM Publications

Psalm 67
Merging of Parishes Within a Celebration of the Liturgy of the Word
(Hint: see Responsorial Psalm for the Sixth Sunday of Easter, Cycle C, and the Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A.)
Singing the Psalms, vol. 5, Timothy R. Smith, OCP
Eleazar Cortés, Timothy R. Smith, JS (OCP)
Richard Proulx, WLP (various publications)
Michel Guimont, GC, RS
Marie Kremer, RS

Let All the Nations Sing Your Praise, James Chepponis, GIA, G-4226
Let All the Peoples Praise You, Carl Johengen, GIA, G-3997
O God, Let All the Nations Praise You, Richard Proulx, WLP, 006238
O God, Be Merciful Unto Us, Seitz, WLP, 006231
Psalm 100
(Hint: This is the Responsorial Psalm for the Fourth Sunday of Easter, Cycle C)
We Are God’s People, Haas, various (GIA)
We Are His People, Stephen Sommerville, (WLP)
We Are God’s People, Timothy R. Smith, JS (OCP)
Nosotros Somos Su Pueblo/We Are God’s People, Jaime Cortez, JS (OCP)
Somos Su Pueblo, John Schiavone, FyC (OCP)
Somos Su Pueblo, Manuel Ponce Ranget, FyC (OCP)
Nosotros Somos Su Pueblo/We Are His People, Lorenzo Florián, Celebremos!, (WLP)
Singing the Psalms, vol. 4, Timothy R. Smith, OCP
Singing the Psalms, vol. 5, Bob Dufford, OCP
Psalms for All Seasons, Howard Hughes, NPM Publications
We Are His People, Craig and Kristen Colson, OCP, 20278-Z2
Psalm III for the Year – We Are His People, C. Alexander Peloquin, GIA, G-1665

Psalm 113
Ritual Song #150 (use the optional “Alleluia” refrain except during Lent)
By Flowing Waters #281, The Liturgical Press
Praise the Lord, You Servants, Perza, WLP, 008772
1. Prepare a worship aid that will enable the assembly to participate at Mass and which will serve as a commemorative of the occasion.

2. Include historical data on the parish community. Note any history of this or other church buildings.
3. Invite former pastors or parochial vicars to concelebrate.
4. Choose ministers that represent the various ages of the parish community.
5. A day should be chosen when the assembly can gather in large numbers.
6. On the following pages, you will find three options for Mass texts.
   a. On weekdays, when the day allows, Mass texts may be chosen from the Masses for Various Needs and Occasions, no. 39, “In Thanksgiving,” option B (Sacramentary, page 922). Readings may be chosen from Lectionary nos. 943-947.
   b. If this celebration occurs outside Advent, Lent, Triduum, the Easter Season, the solemnities of the Lord, solemnities of the BVM or the saints listed in the general calendar, you may also choose the Mass texts for the patron saint of the parish.
   c. The Mass of the Day -- required on days which are ranked #4 or lower (GNLYC #59).
7. Choose hymns suited to the Mass texts and readings and ones that will be familiar to several generations of parishioners.
8. Designate ministers of various ages to carry out sacred objects such as the cross, statue, icon, or altar cloth. The priest celebrant will carry out the Blessed Sacrament.
OPTION A: MASS OF THANKSGIVING
MASSES FOR VARIOUS NEEDS AND OCCASIONS (39-b)

INTRODUCTORY RITES
Opening Hymn
Greeting
Penitential Rite
Glory to God
Opening Prayer

LITURGY OF THE WORD
First Reading
Responsorial Psalm

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST
Prayer Over the Gifts
Eucharistic Prayer
Preface
Holy, holy, holy
Acclamations
Lord's Prayer
Sign of Peace
Breaking of the Bread
Ecce Agnus Dei
Prayer of Humility
Communion Hymn(s)

CONCLUDING RITE
Greeting
Prayers
Blessing
Dismissal
Removal of Blessed Sacrament
Closing Hymn
**OPTION B: MASS OF THE PARISH’S PATRON SAINT**

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<td>Opening Hymn</td>
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<td>Greeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Penitential Rite</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glory to God</td>
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<td>Opening Prayer</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>LITURGY OF THE WORD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Reading</td>
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<td>Responsorial Psalm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
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<td>Second Reading</td>
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<td>Gospel Acclamation</td>
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<td>Setting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gospel</td>
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<td>Homily</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creed</td>
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<td>General Intercessions</td>
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<tr>
<th>LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of the Altar and the Gifts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation Hymn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prayer Over the Gifts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eucharistic Prayer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holy, holy, holy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acclamations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lord’s Prayer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sign of Peace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Breaking of the Bread</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ecce Agnus Dei</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prayer of Humility</td>
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<td>Communion Hymn(s)</td>
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<tr>
<th>CONCLUDING RITE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prayers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blessing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dismissal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Removal of Blessed Sacrament</td>
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<td>Closing Hymn</td>
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Now Thank We All Our God or any setting of the *Te Deum*
## OPTION C: MASS OF THE DAY

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Greeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Penitential Rite</td>
<td>recited_____ sung _____</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glory to God</td>
<td>sung _____ omitted _____</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opening Prayer</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>First Reading</td>
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<td>Responsorial Psalm</td>
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<td>Setting</td>
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<td>Gospel Acclamation</td>
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<td>Setting</td>
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<td>Gospel</td>
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<td>Homily</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creed</td>
<td>recited_____ omitted _____</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Intercessions</td>
<td>See samples attached</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td>Eucharistic Prayer</td>
<td>I II III IV</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>Preface _____</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holy, holy, holy</td>
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<td>Acclamations</td>
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<td>Lord's Prayer</td>
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<td>Sign of Peace</td>
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<td>Breaking of the Bread</td>
<td>Lamb of God: ____________________</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prayer After Communion</td>
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<th>CONCLUDING RITE</th>
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<td>Prayers</td>
<td>at devotional area(s), font, cross, ambo, altar, tabernacle</td>
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<td>Blessing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Removal of Blessed Sacrament</td>
<td>Procession forms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Closing Hymn</td>
<td>Now Thank We All Our God or any setting of the Te Deum</td>
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A RITE OF LEAVE-TAKING OF A CHURCH
WITHIN A CELEBRATION OF THE WORD

The assembly gathers in the worship space in the usual way.

HYMN
“What Is This Place?” or other suitable hymn

GREETING

Presider: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
All: Amen.

Presider: Grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you.
All: And also with you.

INTRODUCTION

After the greeting, the presider speaks to the assembly in these or similar words.

Presider: As the Lord’s temple, God’s holy people, let us give thanks today for the ___ years St. __________ Parish has served the community.
At the table of God’s Word and the table of the Eucharist our communion with Christ and one another will be strengthened for our ongoing journey of faith. Especially aware of any unresolved conflict or broken relationship because of the consolidation discernment, let us prepare our minds and hearts for these holy mysteries, by acknowledging the need for the mercy of God in all our lives.

PENITENTIAL RITE

A sung version of the Taizé Kyrie chant, with its extended litany, would be a healing form of the familiar Lord, have mercy, speaking to those areas still unhealed or painful. The presider can create some space in the rite for public apology (should it be necessary) especially for words spoken in the heat of attempts to save the parish during the process of decision-making.
Opening Prayer

Presider: God our Father,
source of unity and love,
From age to age you have gathered your people
to serve you and to proclaim the Good News of your love.
We thank you for the many gifts you have bestowed on this parish
and praise you for all
you have allowed us to accomplish in your name.

Make your faithful people one in heart and mind
so that your Church may live in harmony,
be steadfast in faith,
and secure in unity.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God forever and ever.

All: Amen.

THE WORD OF GOD

You may use any of the suggested readings from the previous pages.

First Reading

Responsorial Psalm

Second Reading

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel

Homily

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Invitation to Prayer

Petitions See samples herein

Lord’s Prayer
Collect

Presider: Lord, hear the prayers of your people and bring the hearts of believers together in praise. May all peoples rejoice in the perfect unity of your Church, and move together as one to eternal life in your kingdom. Make us able and willing to do what you ask. May Christ’s peace be our sign of unity and bond of charity. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

OR

The concluding prayer may be said by all.

All: Lord God, in Christ you made us your people, a chosen race, a royal priesthood. Throughout these past years your Church has been realized in the life of this parish. Although the service of this parish has now come to an end, we pray that you keep us ever mindful that wherever two or three are gathered in your name your holy presence will be known. Wherever you lead us we will continue to be your holy people, your imperishable temple. Hear us as we raise our minds and hearts to you through Christ our Lord. Amen.

CONCLUDING RITE

Greeting

Blessing

Procession with Sacred Objects See text and rubrics, pages 105-108

Hymn
SAMPLE GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

You may choose from among the following intercessions.

For all members of our parish community, both past and present, who daily shared the Good News of Jesus Christ with a world in need of it, we pray.

For all our benefactors and for all who so generously gave of their time, talent, and treasure to benefit our parish, the diocesan Church, the local community, and the world, we pray.

For our bishop and all the pastors, parochial vicars, deacons, and religious, and lay men and women who have lead this parish, we pray.

For all those who have served as preachers and catechists and have shared the word of God - in our worship, in the classroom, and in the missions, we pray.

For all who have served in this place as liturgical ministers - as priest, deacons, servers, lectors, musicians, choristers and cantors, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, ushers, and greeters, and who enabled each of us to participate more fully in our liturgical celebrations, we pray.

For those who built this building with the works of their hands, for those who maintained it, and for those who, each season, created liturgical environments, we pray.

For healing and forgiveness, we pray.

For the poor, the sick, the lost, and the homeless, and that in recognizing Christ in them, we may continue to serve the needs of God’s people, we pray.

For all those who come to know Jesus in our midst and who, as infants or adults, have been welcomed here into the Body of Christ, we pray.

For all the countless youth and adults who have been strengthened by the Spirit in the sacrament of confirmation, we pray.

For those who were joined in marriage in this church and for all the married couples who modeled for us the sacrificial love of the marriage covenant, we pray…

For all those who have been ill, who were strengthened with the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, and for all who comforted them and tended to their needs, we pray…

For our beloved dead, young and old, whose funerals we celebrated here and whom we have relied upon in the communion of saints, we pray…
MUSIC SUGGESTIONS
SONGS OF THANKSGIVING

Hymnody

Come, Rejoice Before Your Maker  RS
Confitemini Domino /Come and Fill (Taizé)  GC2
Earth and All Stars  RS
Father, We Thank Thee  Various
For Builders Bold  RS
For All the Saints Who’ve Shone Your Love  GC2
For the Beauty of the Earth  Various
For the Fruits of All Creation  WLP
Give the Lord Your Heart (bilingual)  GC2
Give Thanks to the Lord  OCP
God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending  Various
God’s Love is Everlasting  OCP
In the Lord I’ll be Ever Thankful (Taizé)  GC2
Joyfully Singing  RS
Let All Things Now Living  Various
Now Thank We All Our God  Various
Renew Your People  RS
Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above  Various
Table Prayer  RS
Thanks be to God  OCP
To God With Gladness Sing  RS
We Praise You, O Lord  GC2
We Give You Thanks  GC2
We Gather Together  Various
With All Our Hearts  OCP

Psalm 138

The rulers of the earth shall praise you  Duba/Williams
Lord, your love is eternal  Stewart/ GIA
In the presence of the angels, Lord...  Haas/ GIA
I thank you, Lord, with all my heart...  Psallité C-180
In the presence of the angels...  Psallité C-108
On the day I called...  Cooney/OCP; JS 109; BB 821
Te Doy Gracias  Rosas/OCP: Una Voz 256
Te Doy Gracias  Montgomery/OCP: Una Voz 257

KEY

various may be found in the publications of all the mentioned publishers
OCP Oregon Catholic Press
WLP World Library Publications
RS Ritual Song, published by GIA, Chicago
INTRODUCTION

Presider:  *In these or similar words*

As we celebrate Mass here for the last time,
let us enter with full hearts into thanksgiving
for the gifts of God
and the grace he has bestowed on his people in this place.

GREETING

Presider:  Blessed are you, loving God.
In this place we have known your love.
We trust our future to your care.
Blessed be God forever!

All:  Blessed by God forever!

Presider:  As we leave this place of worship,
we give thanks to God
for all the blessings we have found here.

*If possible, have all join in a procession of remembering. Cross and candle bearers lead the procession to the various areas. Adapt the route according to the layout of the building, but culminate with the altar.*

*Sing during the procession. Use Psalm 90 (“You have been our haven, Lord, from generation to generation”), another psalm of thanks or praise: or a well-known hymn of thanks or praise.*

*If procession is not possible due to the nature of the building, invite all to turn in the direction of the prayer and sing between each invocation of thanksgiving.*

At the font:

Presider:  Let us remember the baptisms celebrated here...

We thank you and praise you for the life of faith
given to all who have passed through
the waters of new life at this font.
Blessed be God forever!

All:  Blessed be God forever!
At the confessional or reconciliation room:

Presider: Let us remember the times when we have been forgiven, comforted, consoled in the sacrament of penance...

We thank you and we praise you for the healing and reconciling love that has been given through the sacrament of penance in this church.
Blessed be God forever!

All: Blessed be God forever!

At a devotional area - particularly a Station of the Cross or an image of Mary (repeat as necessary):

Presider: Let us remember the generations of prayer and devotion that this sacred image has inspired...

We thank you for inspiring in us here true devotion to [the way of Christ’s cross, the Blessed Mother, Saint ___].
Blessed be God forever!

All: Blessed be God forever!

At the ambo:

Presider: Let us remember the power of God’s word proclaimed here in scripture and in preaching...

We thank you and we praise you for your holy Word proclaimed here in faith and preached here in sincerity. May it echo always in our hearts.
Blessed be God forever!

All: Blessed be God forever!

At the altar:

Presider: Let us remember the times we have gathered for the sacred banquet: the Triduum kept each year, the Sundays on which we worshiped faithfully, the First Communion celebrations, the feast days of saints and martyrs, the weddings witnessed here, the funerals celebrated here in certain hope of the resurrection.
Let us pray.  

Pause for a longer time

God our refuge, our home is in you.
You are greater than any temple, church or cathedral
which was built by human hands.
Yet in this place we have met your divine majesty:
This church building has been a place of blessing for us.
Protect us on our way.
Lead us to new friends in another parish community.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

If the entire community is being transferred to another church, delegate one or more members (the parish council president, the eldest member of the parish or the youngest) to carry an object (or objects) that can and will be used in the new place (such as a sacred vessel, a small icon, a parish sacramental register, or the Book of the Gospels.) The items may be gathered on a nearby table and presented to each delegate as he/she comes forward.

Presider: The life of this community will continue in another place.
[Name] receive this [name of item]
that will be used at [name of the new church].
Take it (directly) from this place to
[name of the new parish or pastor/pastoral administrator]
as a sign that our journey of faith will continue there.

SOLEMN BLESSING  

Ordinary Time IV

Presider: May the God of all consolation bless you in every way
and grant you peace all the days of your life.  Amen.

May he free you from all anxiety
and strengthen your hearts in his love.  Amen.

May he enrich you with his gifts of faith, hope and love,
so that what you do in this life
will bring you to the happiness of everlasting life.  Amen.

May almighty God bless you,

THE REMOVAL OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

The principal celebrant dons the humeral veil and goes to the tabernacle. He removes the Blessed Sacrament, offers a benediction over the people, and follows (or leads) the procession out of the church. The Blessed Sacrament is then taken directly to the new church or reserved in a previously-appointed place.
PROCESSION
The processional cross leads the people out the main door. The candle bearers remain with the principal celebrant, who is the last member of the procession.

CLOSING OF THE CHURCH DOORS

When the principal celebrant arrives outside the doors, the people pause and turn. Since he is still carrying the Blessed Sacrament he may delegate another person (perhaps a parochial vicar, a deacon, a charter member of the parish, or the Pastoral Council president) to close the doors and lock them.

Presider: In this building, we, and those who have gone before us, have celebrated the mystery of our faith and shared our joys and sorrows. In this church we have encountered Jesus Christ in Word, sacrament, and one another. But now, after ____ years of faith, and with gratitude to almighty God for what He has allowed us to accomplish here, I declare this church of St. _________ closed.

Several representatives of the parish, especially senior members, may seal the church doors with purple ribbon.

HYMN OR ACCLAMATION  
optional
APPENDIX M

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(This list is in no way meant to be exhaustive.)


APPENDIX N
CHECKLIST FOR CLOSING A PARISH

☐ Review the entire manual

☐ Gather your parish staff and volunteers to plan how best to close your parish

☐ Prepare for a diocesan review of your accounts and financial books

☐ Take inventory of personal items in the rectory. Separate and mark clearly

☐ Create a list of those items in the rectory that will be moved to a new location

☐ Discard anything in the rectory and sacristy that has little remaining use

☐ Publish in the bulletin all dates affecting your parish closing

☐ Plan what is best for your parish to help the grieving process (Ref Grieving and Moving to Wholeness in Life, page 24.)

☐ Reschedule all weddings to other parishes

☐ Set up Liturgical Committee for Closing Liturgy (Ref Appendix K, page 63, and Appendix L, page 64.)

☐ Contact the Superintendent of Schools for school issues

☐ Transition Religious Education students to new program

☐ Gather all information of volunteers and ministries and forward to appropriate parish

☐ Transfer background checks on employees and volunteers to Safe Environment Office

☐ Ensure that Communion Calls are transferred

☐ Work with the Diocesan Finance Office to complete all financial record requirements (Ref Appendix C, page 47.)

☐ Ensure that Diocesan Services Appeal pledges are transferred to appropriate parish

☐ Consult Diocesan Human Resource Office for all necessary information and distribute to employees accordingly.

☐ Take inventory of parish items

☐ Make sure mail is forwarded to 228 N. Walnut, Lansing, MI 48933, beginning the day before the office closure.

☐ Identify sacred objects (Ref Appendix D, page 53.)
CHECKLIST FOR CLOSING A PARISH, continued

☐ Organize historical records to transfer to the Archives (Ref Appendix D, page 53.)

☐ Arrange for phones to be forwarded to receiving parish, effective the day after parish closes

☐ Copy all Service Agreements/Contracts and forward to Bishop’s representative for consolidation:

- Electric
- Water
- Gas
- Phone
- Internet
- Security System(s)
- Lawn Care
- Snow Plowing
- Cleaning
- Garbage/Dumpster
- Cell Phones/Pagers/Radios
- HV/AC Contracts
- Payroll Service(s)
- Copier Agreement(s)
- Postage Machine
- Fax Machine Maintenance
- Leased Equipment
- Bingo Equipment
# APPENDIX O

## DIOCESAN STAFF RESOURCES

### CONTACT INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARCHIVES</th>
<th>Msgr. George Michalek</th>
<th>517-485-9902</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:gmichalek@dioceseoflansing.org">gmichalek@dioceseoflansing.org</a></td>
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APPENDIX P - 1

Sacred Objects Inventory Form

Parish #: Record (Inventory) #: Date:

Original Owner:

Current Location On Site: Storage Site:

Title (Category):

Notes (Description):

Engraved/Donated By:

Material: Size/Dimensions:

☐ Set of Items  ☐ Identical Items  # in set/identical:

Condition: Damaged ☐ No ☐ Yes If Yes, explain:

Restorable: ☐ No ☐ Yes

Photo: ☐ No ☐ Yes Photo ID: Additional Notes:

Inventoried By (Initials):

Disposition

☐ Transferred

○ Permanent

○ Temporary

Located at:

Address:

Phone Number:

Authorized By:

Received By:

Date

☐ Donated

Sent to Mission:

Located in:

Address:

Authorized By:

Date

☐ Sold

Sold to:

Address:

Authorized By:

Date

For Accounting Purposes

☐ Monetary Offering  ☐ Cash  ☐ Check #  Amount
APPENDIX Q

3.2.3 CHURCHES OTHER THAN THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH

1. The diocesan bishop freely designates the primary or principal parochial church and the location for the pastoral administrative offices for a parish. The principal parochial church is to be the center of divine worship as well as the center of the spiritual, liturgical, teaching and social mission of the entire parish community. If the diocesan bishop permits other churches to be maintained as part of the same parish, then they are regulated by the following norms.

2. The pastor, as well as all who cooperate with him or assist him,\(^1\) is to take particular care so that all parishioners are concerned for the entire parish community and work to promote it.\(^2\)

3. The pastor is to see that all churches belonging to his parish are suitably furnished for divine worship, cared for and safeguarded in a manner appropriate to their status as sacred places.\(^3\) However, the principal parochial church of the new or receiving parish is to enjoy a priority of resources in order to fulfill the mission of the entire parish community. Resources should not be allocated to other churches to the detriment of the principal parochial church.

4. Acts of divine worship can be performed in another church of the parish by way of exception with due regard for the parochial rights of the new or receiving parish.\(^4\)
   a. The rites of the Triduum are normally to be celebrated in the main parochial church.\(^5\)
   b. The rites of the Catechumenate and of Reception into Full Communion with the Church are normally to be celebrated in the main parochial church of the parish.
   c. Churches other than the main parochial church may have a baptismal font.\(^6\) If the pastor determines that a just cause exists, infants and adults may be baptized in a church other than the parochial church outside of the Triduum.\(^7\)
   d. The pastor is to take care that Masses are not multiplied needlessly.\(^8\)

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\(^1\) c. 519.
\(^2\) c. 529 §2.
\(^3\) c. 1220.
\(^4\) c. 1219 and see c. 530 and cc. 558-559.
\(^5\) See Paschalis Solemnitatis, nn. 43, 46-49, 94.
\(^6\) c. 858 §2.
\(^7\) c. 857 §2.
e. For a just pastoral reason, the pastor may authorize the celebration of Mass on a Sunday in any other church of the parish.

f. For a just pastoral reason, the pastor may authorize the celebration of Mass in any other church of the parish on a holy day of obligation, Ash Wednesday, All Souls Day and on the patronal feast of the church or community.

g. If the pastor determines that it is of spiritual advantage to the faithful who live nearby and the norms of canons 934-944 are carefully observed, he is authorized to reserve the Most Holy Eucharist in a church other than the main parochial church.\(^9\)

h. The Rite of Distributing Holy Communion outside Mass within a celebration of the Word is to be done only at the main parochial church and only on an emergency basis.

i. According to the judgment of the pastor, confessions may be scheduled in another church in the parish.\(^10\)

j. For a serious pastoral reason, the pastor may permit a wedding to be celebrated in any other church of the parish.\(^11\)

k. According to the judgment of the pastor, a priest may administer the Anointing of the Sick on an individual basis in another church in the parish.\(^12\)

l. For a just pastoral reason, the pastor may authorize any of the rites of the Order of Christian Funerals, including the Funeral Mass, to be celebrated in another church of the parish.\(^13\)

m. According to the judgment of the pastor, sacramentals and the Liturgy of the Hours as well as approved public devotions may be conducted in a church other than the parochial church. These include, illustratively, those associated with a patronal feast, a public novena, Stations of the Cross, etc.

5. The pastor is to take care that

a. No group of people associated with another church appear to supplant the parish pastoral council, parish finance council or any other parish commission. They are to represent all people who are now part of the newly merged parish.

b. All actions of divine worship in other churches that require recording are promptly and accurately inscribed in the parochial register or book of Mass intentions which are stored in the parish office of the main parochial church according to the norms of law.\(^14\) None are to be stored in other churches.

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\(^9\) c. 934 §1.
\(^10\) c. 964 §1.
\(^11\) c. 1118 §1.
\(^12\) c. 1002.
\(^13\) c. 1177.
\(^14\) c. 535.
c. All collections, offerings and records are safely and promptly transported to the business office of the parish. None are to be stored in other churches.

6. Before a donation that is restricted to the use of a church other than the parochial church is accepted by the pastor, he must consult the diocesan bishop and receive permission if necessary.\textsuperscript{15}

7. No secular activity or event is to take place in these churches without the permission of the ordinary (that is, the diocesan bishop).\textsuperscript{16}

8. See \textit{A Guide to Parish Clusters, Mergers and Closures} for additional norms\textsuperscript{17} (especially regarding records [not sacred objects] which will be transferred to the diocese.)

\textsuperscript{15} c. 1267 §§2-3.

\textsuperscript{16} c. 1210.

9. Commentary

Parishes and churches are distinct notions in canon law. A parish is a determined and stable community of the faithful with its pastor under the diocesan bishop (c. 515 and c. 519). A church is a sacred building in which divine worship takes place (c. 1214). While a parish may have more than one church building in its territory, only one of them is the parish or parochial church.

When a parish is merged or amalgamated into another “new” or “receiving” parish, it loses its canonical status as a parish. However, unless a particular action removes its sacred character (c. 1212 and c. 1222), that former parish church continues to be a sacred place as a church (c. 1214). It continues to possess the title that was given to it when it was dedicated (c. 1218). It belongs to the new or receiving parish that the diocesan bishop designates (c. 121), and is subject to the administration of its pastor (c. 519, c. 532, c. 1279 §1).

When the diocesan bishop designates one church to become the parochial church of the new or receiving parish, it becomes the principal and primary sacred place for divine worship and the principal and primary place of origin for all other activities of the parish.

Still the diocesan bishop exercises authority and oversight over these other churches and over the acts of divine worship which are conducted in them (c. 381 §1, c. 392 §2, c. 397, c. 838 §4, and see c. 1213).

These norms apply when one or more parishes are merged or amalgamated into a new or existing parish by the diocesan bishop.

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18 That is, the “unio extinctiva” of canon 121. See in Congregation for the Clergy, Prot. N. 20060481, letter to Bishop William Skylstad as president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.