Diocesan Implementation Handbook
2012-17

Diocese of Duluth
Diocesan Implementation Resources

Revised May 2013
September 7, 2012

“I am the vine, you are the branches...if you remain in me you will bear much fruit” (John 15:5).

Dear Brothers and Sister in Christ,

Last year as a local church we engaged in a planning process that brought together more than 250 people from across Northeastern Minnesota to formulate a diocesan strategic plan for the next five years (2012-2017). I want again to express my gratitude to the priests, deacons, and lay faithful of the diocese for the time and attention they gave to this important work.

The Diocesan Strategic Plan (2012-2017) takes into account a possible lower number of priests, shifting demographic trends across the diocese, the fiscal health and infrastructure of our parishes, as well as the health and well-being of our clergy. After much prayer, thought and discussion the planning process resulted in the recommendation of a number of possible clusters and mergers of parishes.

To provide assistance to pastors and parishioners involved in the clustering or merging of parishes, a Diocesan Implementation Committee was formed and given the task of assembling an implementation handbook. The Diocesan Implementation Handbook that I am issuing today is the fruit of their labors and is comprised of two main sections: the first takes up the important challenge of providing pastoral care to communities and individuals experiencing clustering and merging; the second contains administrative policies and procedures that must be followed when a cluster or merger is undertaken.

The Lord said to his first disciples: “I am the vine, you are the branches...if you remain in me you will bear much fruit (John 15:5). My hope and prayer is that this handbook will help us remain together in the Lord as we face the challenges of our day. If we work together, care for each other, and unite our hearts in prayer I am confident that the Lord will bless our efforts to organize ourselves in new ways that will allow us more effectively to witness to Jesus Christ as the way and the truth and the life of the world.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Paul D. Sirba

Most Reverend Paul D. Sirba
Bishop of Duluth
Diocesan Implementation Handbook

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Pastoral Care
For Parishes
Clustering or Merging

Diocese of Duluth
Diocesan Implementation Resources
INTRODUCTION

This handbook is designed to provide assistance to pastors and parishes involved in the implementation of the Diocesan Strategic Plan (2012-17). It has two distinct parts: one that focuses on the pastoral needs of people in clustering and merging parishes, another that focuses on administrative matters, which is made up of checklists and forms that will help parishes accomplish the detailed, legal work of clustering and merging church and civil corporations.

Meeting the pastoral needs of people going through the change involved in clustering and merging will be challenging. Through it all we need to keep asking the question, “How can we best come together to serve the Lord and build up the Body of Christ?” We need to be prepared to engage those impacted by change, understanding that the more engaged they are, the more positively they can contribute to the changes. We must also be ready for the discomfort that accompanies change and be ready to address that sense of loss with compassion. As a people of faith, we should also lift all of our needs and challenges to the Lord in prayer and use ritual as a source of healing, and as a way of marking endings and new beginnings.

The process of developing the Diocesan Strategic Plan involved active participation of laity and clergy from across the Diocese. The plan was created in an environment that promoted involvement at the level of parishioners in every parish, and was transparent and inclusive. The implementation of this plan will also strive to be transparent and inclusive. Pastors will be asking forward thinking parish leaders to participate in Transition Advisory Committees to help them gather and disseminate information about parishes involved in clustering and merging. These groups will hold meetings to keep parishioners informed and engaged in the changes that are affecting their parishes. Parish leaders will be asked to listen carefully and must be prepared to walk with fellow parishioners through changes that have the potential to better equip parishes for the New Evangelization.

The Diocesan Implementation Committee will work to support changes at the parish level by providing parish leadership with resources like this handbook, as well as tools that will be downloadable from the Diocesan website. Committee members will be available to attend parish meetings and answer questions or to provide consultation in the areas of: creating Transition Advisory Committees, dealing with change, addressing Canon Law issues, managing civil and corporate mergers, as well as financial reporting, property and building issues, creating Liturgical Inventories and transferring Sacramental Registers.

The current status of the Diocesan Strategic Plan will be available at www.dioceseduluth.org which will be regularly updated.
THE TRANSITION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Transition Advisory Committee is to assist the Pastor (who will function as its chair) and parish leadership to understand the culture and needs of the parishes involved in a cluster/merger. It should facilitate parish town hall meetings and listening sessions so that members of the parish have the opportunity to participate and learn what it will mean to function in their new parish arrangement.

The Transition Advisory Committee should be composed of four lay representatives from each parish involved in the new cluster/merger that are faith filled, forward thinking and open to new opportunities. Of the lay members, at least one member should be drawn from the Pastoral Council and one from the Finance Council of each parish involved. This group should plan on meeting on a monthly basis for as long as they are required by the Pastor.

Transition Areas to Be Addressed

Basic Data to be gathered:

- Number of registered and contributing households
- Average Mass attendance and seating capacity of churches
- Annual number of baptisms, weddings and funerals
- Number of students involved in Religious Education or School Programs
- Growth trends, has the parish grown, stayed the same or declined in recent years?
- Distance, condition of roads and travel time between parishes

Culture and Identity of the Parishes

- What makes each parish unique?
- What is important to know about the history of the parishes?
- Are there any special customs, traditions, significant annual events?
- Special Ministries in each parish (hospital, nursing home, prison ministries)

Staff

- Explore possible roles and responsibilities for Business Managers, Administrative Staff, Deacons other full time employees and volunteer staff.
- Review existing or explore new systems for staff supervision, meetings, annual reviews, etc.
• Discuss appropriate staffing levels in cluster or merger to provide for vibrant faith communities.

Pastoral Council and Finance Council

• Rosters
• Constitutions, bylaws
• Feasibility of parish meetings on the same night in the same location
• Possibility of joint Pastoral Council

Worship

• Mass Schedules: weekly, daily, Easter, Christmas, holy days
• Review planned marriage and baptism dates in both parishes and accommodate dates and presiders, especially where there are conflicts
• Worship/Liturgy Committee
• Training and roles of liturgical ministers
• Music: cantors, musicians, choirs
• Devotions

Education

• Advisory Board or Advisory Committee for Catholic Education
• Catechesis program/staff
• School(s)
• Youth ministry
• Adult education

Finances

• General financial condition of respective parishes including assets and liabilities
• Bookkeeping services and accounting system
• Discuss and make recommendations for how parishes contribute to salaries, benefits, housing for Pastor and other shared staff
• Have parishes annually met the UCA assessments and maintained support of area schools?

Buildings and Grounds

• Overall condition of buildings—any pending or anticipated renovation or repair needs?
• Rectories and parish offices
- Options for use of empty rectories and other parish buildings (check with Diocese for guidelines)
- Long range plans for renovation or expansion of buildings
- Is there a plan to provide for care of cemeteries?
- Do current facilities meet the needs of the parishes?

Adjusting to Change

- Keeping parishioners informed and providing opportunities for input
- Being aware of loss and opportunity that often accompanies change
  - *Making sure that a personal contact is made with each household* in the parish to answer questions, hear concerns and in mergers, to ask which parish that they plan to attend after merger
- If parishioners choose to attend a parish outside of the cluster, provide a list of these parishioners to the pastor of the parish they plan to attend
- Helping parishes realign expectations when it comes to the availability of the Pastor
- Helping the Pastor adjust to the demands of multiple parish ministries
DEALING WITH LOSS, CHANGE AND NEW BEGINNINGS

Changes to parish life will disturb habits, may affect feelings of security and will generate worry and uncertainty. Changes will make some people uncomfortable and before they reach a stage where they can accept change, it is normal that they may focus on obstacles, magnify problems, and become irritated, aggressive or depressed. It takes time, prayer, and intentional positive communication to overcome worry and uncertainty.

Parishioners should be given many opportunities to become actively involved in the clustering and merging process through town hall style, open meetings where they can express their negative feelings and begin to embrace positive attitudes toward change. They should be encouraged to share stories of their parish with each other, expressing feelings of gratitude, even through change and loss and begin to appreciate the gifts that they will be bringing with them into new parish arrangements. They should also be encouraged to pray, letting the Holy Spirit guide them. There needs to be trust that people will grow spiritually in their new situation. The question will need to be repeatedly asked, “How can we best come together to serve the Lord and build up the Body of Christ?”

The liturgy is a natural moment in which healing can occur. As a parish moves towards its final moments, an important element of that process will be the closing liturgies. The liturgies need to both express the people's grief while allowing for a sense of solace and promote a sense of healing and sense of movement as the people journey to a "new" home.

The change is a transition, a "journey:" There is a "from where," "to where," and "through what" dimension of this change. Liturgies will not accomplish that journey, but will symbolize and nurture it. It could be helpful to identify a parish planning group both to help the Pastor be in tune with the needs and feelings of the parishioners and to involve them so they have ownership of the process. It is important that feelings of loss are recognized and normalized and that sacred places/events be reverenced.

The ultimate goal of reconfiguration of parishes is to better serve the Mission of the Church. It may be helpful to identify a "closing theme" based on familiar scriptures and music and rituals that can express what the community is experiencing. A couple of broad suggestions would be: “We are One Body”, “Good Shepherd”, “Vine and Branches”, Psalm 121 or whatever would be meaningful to the established community and the receiving community as well. "Going gracefully" demands preparation, inclusion and direction and will require considerable pastoral support.
Provisions should be made to address making a home for the community or communities who suffer loss. Art and artifacts from the merging parishes can be incorporated into the worship of the newly merged community. The following is a list of suggestions that parishes may want to consider as part of their planning of a merger of faith communities. These are offered as idea starters for conversations:

- Invite former parishioners/pastors/religious to closing liturgies
- Offer unified training for Eucharistic Ministers, Lectors and Altar Servers
- Combine water from both baptismal fonts
- Use the "best" of each parish (altar/candle/font/cross/stations)
- Transfer of significant items i.e. patron saint statue in special place of honor
- Use of church bulletin and website for ongoing communication and updates to make sure that there are no surprises
- Combine church bulletins into one, and explore the possibility of linking or sharing websites
- Recognize and honor parish traditions (fundraisers/community builders etc) and faith expressions (Christmas/Easter/funerals)
- Create photo displays of significant parish activities — invite parishioners to share photos of weddings/baptisms/First Communions etc. — use both at parish being closed and bring to new parish for display and an opportunity to share and be recognized
- Invite contribution in writing and photos to keepsake booklet of shared parish life
- Use parish website to host photo galleries and histories of parishes
- Make time for story telling — sharing as an opportunity to heal
- Recognition of special gifts (windows, vessels etc.) and written thank you in bulletin
- Consider changing a Mass time at the new parish to reflect a popular Mass time at the merging Parish
- Recognize and invite homebound parishioners to liturgies and make sure they are followed by new Pastor, assuring there is no lapse in their receiving Eucharist
- Assure persons that they will have a place and a voice in their new parish home, integrating ministers, musicians, customs
- Invite entire Diocese to pray with and for those experiencing change by using Prayers of the Faithful
• Recognize some families have experienced birth to death association with the parish — they have been baptized, had First Reconciliation and Eucharist, Confirmation, Marriage and perhaps buried family members from the parish
• Perhaps have a Sunday to renew Baptismal promises, another to renew wedding vows, another to honor deceased parish members
• Recognize/invite vocations that have been nurtured by parish
• Offer an opportunity during closing liturgy for parishioners to venerate altar prior to recession and procession
• Process via bus or car procession from one church to another with reception awaiting at new church
• Process with parish registry into new parish
• Merging parishes can be similar to the experience of marriage in terms of commitment/compromise/sacrifice/ceremony/celebration — they also reflect death/dying and moving to new life
• Closing potluck to honor parish family and give opportunity to grieve and celebrate and share stories
• Provide opportunity for Holy Hour and benediction
• Produce a Holy card of Church patron Saint (dates of opening/closing)
• Create a time of thanksgiving for shared experiences and blessings
• Receive written prayers/petitions/fears/hopes and carry to altar in procession
• All night parish Eucharistic vigil before closing Mass
• Closing liturgy needs to emphasize past with gratitude and future with hope in readings/music/petitions/participation
• Ring church bells at time of leaving and time of arriving — solemnly transfer remaining Eucharist
• Recess and process with parish banners if available or meaningful artifacts (statue/candle/painting/crucifix)
• Have parishioners extinguish altar candles and remove altar cloth during final hymn and recession
• Invite further and meaningful suggestions from parish specific to their tradition
• Mark new beginnings with a “unity” Mass where new parish leaders are installed
• Plan a day of reflection or retreat for staff and parish leadership or parishioners
Best Practices for Parishes in New Cluster/Merger Relationships  
Diocese of Duluth

While each parish entering into a new relationship with another parish is unique, there are some overarching best practices that should be explored and discussed. Parishes may discover new opportunities to increase or improve catechetical programs and other services through synergies created by clustering and mergers as they review best practices.

Common Training and Continuing Education

- Conducting joint area trainings for catechists, lectors, Eucharistic ministers, greeters, extraordinary ministers to the sick.
- Training and orientation for new and continuing members of Pastoral and Finance Councils

Standardization

- Basic organizational policies and procedures
- Personnel and salary policies
- Accounting and database systems
- Missalettes and hymnals
- Operating guidelines for Pastoral Councils, Finance Councils and Advisory Committees, constitutions and bylaws
- Technology

Common Calendar

- Mass schedules for weekend, weekday and holy days
- Basic Pastor Schedule including parish meetings, vacation times, days off retreat times and office hours
- Significant individual parish events
- Programming, such as catechesis, youth ministry, sacramental prep, Confirmation dates
- Parish meetings

Staff Distribution

- Evaluate the overlap of staff positions with sensitivity and ask hard questions about staffing in the light of good stewardship
- Explore the benefits of shared, centralized staff
- Will individual parishes in a cluster need secretarial staff? Part time? Full time?
- Impact of distance between parishes on staffing?
- Consider hiring a business manager
Building Community

- Should you give your new Parish Relationship a name:
  - Are the parishes located close enough together to create a new, shared name/identity: “The (name of region/city) Catholic Community” or “The (name of region/city) Catholic Initiative”.
- Share Spiritual and Catechetical Opportunities and Programs
- Produce just one bulletin:
  - Have separate sections for each parish in one common publication
- Explore the possibility of linking or sharing websites
- Explore creating new parish events
- Explore creating new programs and traditions
  - Develop food/clothing drives
  - Honor volunteers from all parishes, create awards for service
- Consider carpooling for parish leaders and parishioners to attend events
- Council Meeting Night
  - One meeting night for parish Pastoral and/or Finance Councils
  - Consider possibility of a Joint Pastoral Council

Finances

- Financial issues addressed quickly and fairly
- Envelopes and collections
  - Use unique envelopes for each parish in clustered parishes
- Joint purchasing
- Sharing expenses

Evangelization and Catechesis

- The New Evangelization calls for emphasis to be placed on evangelization and catechesis. Since the parish is the primary “locus” for catechesis, this is an opportunity to evaluate a parish’s catechetical programming.
- Do a self-assessment with the goal of making one’s faith formation programs the best possible. Consider the following:
  - Are we following the diocesan *Curriculum Standards for Catechesis* and using approved textbooks?
  - Does our Religious Education Director/Coordinator receive ongoing formation and participate in diocesan meetings?
  - Do our catechists receive ongoing formation and training?
  - Are we providing adequate resources for our youth?
  - Do we provide ample opportunities for adult catechesis?
  - Do we have a solid RCIA process?
Worship and Sacraments

- Major celebrations rotation (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil, Midnight Mass…)
- Consider parish liturgy coordinators (sacristans)
- Inter-parish choir(s)
- Sacramental Preparation Programs (RCIA)
- Common hymnals and missalettes
Tools and Resources
APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY TOOL

Appreciative Inquiry is a process that invites people to inquire about what most "gives life" in their parish. It forms the foundation for envisioning a parish that is centered in Jesus Christ and a model of the New Evangelization. Envisioning a positive future is especially important to successfully merging parishes that may have very different histories and traditions. By asking questions, people are invited to find what is good and valuable in the present situation and discover the possibilities for a positive future.

To understand the basis of Appreciative Inquiry it is useful to look at the meaning of the two words in context.

- **Appreciation** means to recognize, affirm and value the strengths, history and potentials of a community of faith.
- **Inquiry** means to explore and discover, in the spirit of seeking to better understand and being open to new possibilities.

Appreciative Inquiry is the process of asking questions and exploring things that most give life, health, vitality and excellence.

Appreciative Inquiry asks people to take a deep inventory of their personal and communal experiences, recount events and times that had the most vitality and inspiration, and then compile those compelling features into a vision for positive change and a fuller faith life.

Underlying Principles of Appreciative Inquiry

- **The Importance of the Questions We Ask:** The questions we use and how we word them are very significant. There are no neutral questions. The energy in people and their potential for positive change are affected by the first questions we ask. What we ask and seek, we find. What we find, we talk about. What we talk about creates the images that shape the future we live.

- **The Power of Our Images of the Future:** Our images of the future guide our current behavior and the eventual future of the parish. By anticipating the future in a hope-filled and creative manner, we help create it this way.

- **The Value of Positive Questions:** The momentum for enhancing parish life requires large amounts of positive affect, social bonding and creative energy. The old adage that nothing happens between strangers is true. Social bonding
enhances collaboration, while positive affect lessens resistance to change. The more positive the questions used to guide community building or parish planning, the longer lasting and more effective the change will be. Positive questions lead to positive images, which increase positive energy and positive relationships, resulting in positive change.

The technique of Appreciative Inquiry has four stages that form a cycle—Discover, Envision (or Dream), Construct (Design) and Sustain (Destiny). This session focuses on the Discover and Envision stages and will generate themes, ideas and dreams that can be used by parish planners in the future.

The Construct stage is about the present and asks the questions: How can we move from where we are now to this vision of the future that we have envisioned? How can we put these ideas into practice and who will be involved? The Sustain stage is about putting ideas into practice and allowing them to flourish and develop. There is emphasis on empowering and encouraging people to take their ideas forward. The heart of the Sustain stage is the willingness of parishioners to allow change to continue to happen. While the Construct and Sustain stages are not part of the Appreciative Inquiry session described below, it is easy to see how all four stages are complementary and how the process generates ideas and results in powerful planning.

**Appreciative Inquiry Methods**

Good questions evoke the stories which people hold in their minds and hearts. It is these stories that reflect the deeper meanings, beliefs, hopes and dreams, which people have about their parish. As it has been since the early days of the Church, telling stories is a powerful way to share our faith, to inspire others and to build up the Church.

The interview method is the best way to bring out these stories and to help people to encounter each other in a meaningful way. The interview offers the most in-depth way to listen to another person and be attentive to their respective reflections and deliberations. This process has proven to be rewarding for those who participate in it.

Through the interview process both the interviewee and the interviewer are engaged in a collaborative effort to discover values and history and reflect on how their involvement with the parish has contributed to their lives. The result of these interviews is a discovery of positive emotions that are generally compelling and inspirational and provide starting points for larger group discussions that help shape the planning priorities for the future of the parish.
The Interview

Below is the set of questions that you should use in your Appreciative Inquiry interviews. Use the interview form as your script. Please ask the questions as they are written, but do not be afraid to probe further in the responses by using follow up questions like: Why do you feel that way? Why is that important to you? How did that affect you? What was your contribution? How has that changed you? Please tell me more. Let the interviewee tell her/his story. Listen carefully without interrupting. Please avoid giving your opinion; you will have the opportunity to be the interviewee next. Take good notes and be listening for great quotes, images and stories. Finally, some people will take longer to answer some questions—allow for silences.

Large Group Discussion of Interview

Each pair of the interviewee and interviewer reports to the large group, summarizing the main points of their interviews. This is an opportunity to share short stories from the interviews that are particularly moving or special. The main points of these interviews are recorded on a flip chart (or other medium that the group can see and share). These points should be grouped into themes and session participants should prioritize which of these themes or ideas are the most important to the group.

Three Wishes Exercise

Having discovered some of the best experiences from the past and indentified what made them valuable, participants now look to the future. Session participants break into small groups and come up with three wishes for the future of the parish. How can some of the great experiences of parishioners be used now to build the future? What can be done to enhance the life and vitality of the parish? What would the group like to see in the future and how do they want things to be?

It is important that all session participants feel free to make genuine statements about the future that they would like, regardless of how realistic they think these statements are.

The small groups share their three wishes with the whole group and these wishes are recorded on a flip chart (or other medium that the group can see and share).
Session Conclusion

The Appreciative Inquiry session has taken the participants through the process of discovering some of their fellow parishioner’s best experiences—experiences that they were enthusiastic about and are proud of. In the three wishes exercise, the participants began to envision possibilities for the future of their parish built on the rich history of the parish.

Many others have used the Appreciative Inquiry cycle in different ways to help in planning on the parish level. The Diocese of Cleveland used Appreciative Inquiry in their parishes taking the information gathered in the Discover stage by typing all the responses to the interviews and forwarding that information to pastoral planning committees to discover the most *common* answers, and the most *compelling* responses to questions. They also used this material to identify topics for further study looking for phrases and images that were most frequently mentioned as well as looking for novel or innovative ideas.

Your parish may want to retain the flip charts (or other medium that you use) so that parish leaders can reflect on what was most compelling and inspiring in the discussions. Planning groups may also look for things that the group valued and had a genuine desire to see grow.

Using Appreciative Inquiry puts change into a positive perspective and will present a whole new set of positive solutions to current problems as well as providing a solid list of ideas and dreams that can be the foundation of future parish planning.
APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY SESSION
SAMPLE AGENDA
6:30 PM—9:00 PM

Opening Prayer

Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry and goals for this session 10 Min
Appreciative Inquiry Interviews (Two twenty-five minute interviews) 50 Min
Large Group Discussion of Interviews
  What ideas or themes are most important to the group? 20 Min

——Break—— 10 Min

Small Group “Three Wishes” Exercise 20 Min
Large Group Discussion of “Three Wishes” 20 Min

——Break—— 5 Min

Conclusion 15 Min

Closing Prayer
APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY QUESTIONS

Name of Interviewee:
Name of Interviewer:
Date:

1. To start, I’d like to learn about your beginnings with our parish. What first attracted you to the parish?

What were your initial excitements and impressions when you began as a member?

2. Looking at your entire experience in our parish, can you recall a time when you felt most alive, most proud and committed, most enthused about the parish?

Tell the story of what made this such a fulfilling experience…

What was it about you and others that made it so?
APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY QUESTIONS

3. What do you value most about...
   
   Yourself as a person, a Catholic, a parishioner?

   The nature of your involvement and ministry at our parish?

   Our parish and what it has contributed to your life?

4. As you think about the parish in general, what is the core image or quality that represents its essential spirit—its most life-giving force—without which it would cease to exist?
If you could imagine or transform our parish in any way you wished, what three things would you do to enhance its life and vitality?

1.

2.

3.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This tool draws much of its design and content from the work of Dr. David Delambo of the Diocese of Cleveland and of Jenny Smith and her 2003 work “The Voice of the Learner” Trainer Toolkit.

FURTHER READING

Appreciative Inquiry Commons:  www.aiowru.edu.  This website is hosted by Case Western Reserve University and is a worldwide portal to academic resources and tools for Appreciative Inquiry.


Imagine Chicago Initiative:  http://www.imaginechicago.org/what.html
SWOT TOOL

SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) is an exercise that can help parishes discover and focus on their strengths, match those strengths with opportunities and try to begin to understand how weaknesses and threats can become opportunities for the parish.

This tool provides a useful framework for analyzing strengths, weaknesses, and the opportunities and threats that are faced with parishes. It can be used successfully by large groups in a town hall style meeting or by small leadership groups like Pastoral and Finance Councils in two one hour sessions with a break between sessions.

Session #1 (55 minutes): To conduct a SWOT analysis with a group, divide a blackboard or flip chart into four sections. An example of a SWOT diagram:
How to use SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis is powerful because it will be a great “icebreaker” to help a group get together to share their impressions and perspectives. It will also be possible to use the SWOT to begin to develop strategies to take advantage of opportunities that clustering and merging may provide.

The person who is acting as moderator may want to be the “writer” on the board, making sure that ideas are placed in the right part of the quadrant.

In the “Strengths” quadrant you may want to ask the following questions to get things rolling:
As a parish:

- What do we do really well?
- What do we have that is unique or special?
- What do people in the parish see as strengths?

(If you have a hard time finding the first group of “Strengths”, consider asking the group to start to list characteristics of the parish—hopefully this list will show several strengths).

In the “Weaknesses” quadrant you may want to consider these areas:
As a parish:

- What could we improve?
- What should we avoid?
- What do people in the parish see as weakness?

In the “Opportunities” quadrant consider:
As a parish:

- What good opportunities can you spot?
- Are there things we’ve always wanted to do that we should consider now?

In the “Threats” quadrant:
As a parish:

- What obstacles do you face?
- Are any of our weaknesses potential threats?
For the most part, once the group starts to find things to put into each quadrant, they will “self correct”, reconsidering if an item should be placed in a different quadrant than originally suggested.

It may be a benefit to work on the SWOT analysis for a set amount of time to give the group time to consider the following questions:

- What are our strengths?
- Are there opportunities that we have discovered which could become new strengths?
- Are there any weaknesses that we can convert to opportunities?
- Are there any threats that we can convert to opportunities?

At the end of session, the SWOT information should be recorded and retained to be used in future planning.

**Session #2** (55 Minutes) after you return from a short break, ask this question to the group:

*With the simple goal of having a well functioning merged/clustered parish, how do we get from where we are to where we want to be?*

Record the answers and comments and keep them with the SWOT information from Session #1.
Liturgy on the Occasion of the Closing of a Parish

PREPARATION FOR THE CLOSING LITURGY

When preparing the closing liturgy, the readings and the prayers of the particular Sunday which the parish is slated to celebrate its final liturgy may not adequately address this particular moment in the life of the parish. Therefore, the Bishop, in accordance with article no. 374 of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, is granting his permission for the use of the Masses for Various Needs and Occasions included in this handbook. Out of these Masses, two in particular have been chosen for the celebration of this moment. They are called Option A, which is the Mass for Christian Unity and Option B, which is the Mass in Thanksgiving to God.

Option A was chosen because its prayers and readings remind us that the Church is the people who have been created by the Spirit in baptism and formed through the gospel and the Eucharist. As important as the parish is to the lives of the people connected to it, we must always recognize that we are part of a community that transcends building walls or parish boundaries, these prayers and readings help to point to the greater reality to which we belong as a member of the Catholic Church. There is, of course, grief attached with the passing of a parish community. But, there is also the possibility of hope for through the new parish family to which one will belong there will be new opportunities to recognize how the life of the Church can be expressed and experienced.

Option B was chosen because its prayers and readings remind us in midst of this change to give the thanksgiving that is due to God for all that the parish has meant through the years of its existence. The liturgy can help the assembly to focus on all that God has done for the members of the community through the entire life of the parish. As such, as this parish comes to an end, the good that has been accomplished through it by God does not end. It continues through the lives of the people and it is those good works of the Lord that they will bring with them to their new parish family. It is thus both a time of grief for what is lost but also a time of remembering and a time to give thanks for what will always remain with them.

It must be noted that permission is granted only for the options provided in this handbook and these options can only be used if the parish is closing on a Sunday in Ordinary Time. A final consideration in the choice of Mass texts is that if the parish determines that the prayers and readings of the proper Sunday Mass during Ordinary Time is applicable to the moment, then it is appropriate to use those for the celebration.

Finally, this part of the handbook is broken down according to the structure of the Mass. Included in each section are the possible options that can be used and a particular recommendation of what to do and why. These are simply suggestions and the final choices must be made based on the best pastoral needs of the people. It is important to note, though, that this Mass will have a special significance for the people, as such, adding a greater sense of solemnity to the celebration is not out of place.
As the parish prepares for this celebration please keep in mind the following:

- More diligent preparation may be necessary for parts of this celebration.
- Having some form of practice before the celebration may be helpful, particularly if there is to be different processions as part of this celebration.
- It will be important to prearrange some of the details with the new parish if they will be involved.
- Choose which Mass will be celebrated; Option A, Option B or the proper Mass of the day.
- Choose from the options below and adapt as needed.
  - As the closing liturgy in the Church, it would be important to consider making the Mass a more solemn occasion. As part of that, the use of a full procession, thurifer, cross, candle bearers and so forth might be something to consider.
  - The use of incense in this celebration could lend greater solemnity to this celebration. The places where incense would be appropriate to use in the celebration will be presented below.
  - The choice of appropriate music will be essential to this celebration. Choosing music that the parish is already familiar with is of the utmost importance at this time.
  - There is a third option included in this handbook that is called Optional Concluding Ceremony. Optional Concluding Ceremony is an adaptation to the liturgy that can be used at the end of the service. It can be used with either Mass options given or even with the regular celebration. Where it would best fit into the celebration is discussed in the Concluding Rites section below.
  - Having a program for the people could be very helpful as well as possibly a prayer card of the patron saint of the parish.

Before Mass

Symbols of parish life may be displayed in the gathering space, sanctuary or other visible space. The symbols may include: Parish Register, Registers of Sacraments of Initiation and Marriage, Book of the Dead, History of the Parish, etc. It is important to note, though, that the sacramental registers should not be displayed in such a way that people may have direct access to them. These are private records that are not intended for public inspection. These symbols may be brought forward in the entrance procession or simply placed in the sanctuary before hand and sent forth with the people at the final blessing. It would be inappropriate for these symbols to be presented with the gifts of bread and wine during the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Another possibility

In the weeks preceding have people write down their prayers, intentions, people from the parish they want to remember, fears, or hopes, which are then brought to the Mass, and placed in a container or basket which is brought forward in the entrance procession.
Introductory Rites

Entrance Song and Procession

The entrance song has three purposes: to accompany the procession, to foster unity within the gathered community, and to promote the mystery of the feast or season. It should be chosen carefully. It is important to note at this time the obvious grief and pain that many in the parish will be feeling, but at the same time the celebration should be a place for the people to find some sense of hope and solace…A possible theological focus is, of course, Christ being the center of both the Church and the celebration.

As part of the procession the use of incense and carrying in the Book of the Gospels should be considered. This can help to lend a more solemn expression to this liturgical celebration.

The proper procession would be: thurifer carrying the thurible, followed by cross bearer and two candle bearers, then any other altar servers and ministers, followed by the deacon (or if no deacon the lector) carrying the Book of the Gospels. The last person in the procession of course is the presider. This procession would be adjusted, accordingly, based on the decisions that will be made on the structure of the service.

After the altar has been venerated and kissed, as is appropriate to the moment, the celebrant may then incense it as part of the entrance. If this is done the entrance song should be of such a length to accommodate this action.

OPENING COMMENT: after the greeting, the celebrant might possibly speak to the assembly in these or similar words:

We gather today to give thanks to God for the - years that St. ______ Parish has served the people of ____________ community. While there is sadness in the closing of this parish, we can be grateful for all that it has meant to us.

Although this is our last celebration in this Church, we will continue to hear God's Word and share the Lord's table because as a people of faith we know that who we are in God's eyes and what we believe in cannot be limited by bricks and mortar and human structures. In a spirit of gratitude then, let us prepare ourselves for this Eucharist by seeking God's mercy and forgiveness.
Sprinkling Rite or Penitential Rite

When choosing between the Sprinkling rite and the Penitential rite, a stronger consideration should be given to the Sprinkling rite for this celebration, since it recalls our baptism, and the unity of the Spirit derived through baptism. As the people are preparing to be united to a new parish community, using the liturgy to remind them that they are already united to every Catholic parish through baptism can be helpful. We are in a sense not strangers but rather family members who have not yet met. Examining the options given for the Sprinkling Rite, Prayer A might be the better choice and its text is included below:

Dear friends, this water will be used to remind us of our baptism. Let us ask God to bless it and keep us faithful to the Spirit he has given us.

After a brief silence, he joins his hands and continues:

God our Father, your gift of water brings life and freshness to the earth; it washes away our sins and brings us eternal life.

We ask you now to bless this water, and to give us your protection on this day which you have made your own.

Renew the living spring of your life within us and protect us in spirit and body, that we may be free from sin and come into your presence to receive your gift of salvation.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

The celebrant then would sprinkle the ministers in the sanctuary and move through the Church sprinkling the rest of the people. An appropriate song should be sung at this time.

When he returns to his chair the celebrant says:

May almighty God cleanse us of our sins, and through the Eucharist we celebrate make us worthy to sit at his table in his heavenly kingdom.

The Gloria is then sung, if appropriate to the season.
If the Penitential Rite is chosen then the celebrant or deacon might say the following or something similar:

Lord Jesus, you have been our companion and guide on our journey.
Lord have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you stand by us in hard times.
Christ have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you lead us in hope to resurrection and new life.
Lord have mercy.

May Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life.

The Gloria is then sung, if appropriate to the season.
Opening Prayer

The choices for the Collect are either Option A—The Mass For Christian Unity or, Option B—Mass of Thanksgiving to God, or if the prayers of the day are either required or appropriate then the prayer of the day.

OPTION A

Almighty ever-living God
who gather what is scattered
and keep together what you have gathered,
look kindly on the flock of your Son,
that those whom one Baptism has consecrated
may be joined together by the integrity of faith
and united in the bond of charity.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit
one God, forever and ever.

OR

OPTION B

O God, who always listens mercifully
to your servants in distress,
we humbly beseech you,
as we give thanks for your kindness,
that, free from all evil,
we may constantly serve you in gladness.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who Lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit
one God, forever and ever.
Liturgy of the Word

Readings

If the parish has selected either Option A or Option B then the readings that are included for that option should be used. If the parish has chosen the Mass of the day or it is required then the readings for the day would be used. See readings in the Lectionary, Mass for Various Needs and Occasions; Option A, For the Unity of Christians or Option B, In Thanksgiving to God.

Gospel

Before the proclamation of the Gospel, a Gospel procession would be fitting. The Book of the Gospels should either have been carried in procession and placed on the altar or placed on the altar prior to the celebration. The use of candles and incense would be most suitable for this procession.

Homily

As the presider prepares the homily, here are some suggestions to keep in mind. During the homily, the message should encourage a trust that God will continue to lead your community to a better tomorrow. The tone should be hopeful as the homily at a funeral liturgy is hopeful. Other ideas include:

- Acknowledge that many important life events and joys, hopes and sorrows have been celebrated in this church over the years. The church moved from being a building to being the center of lives. Refer to the books naming the members who celebrated the Sacraments in the parish.
- Express gratitude for all that has been. Name the positive actions that may have come during the process of closing.
- From a psychological perspective, it is natural to go through a grieving process.
- From a faith perspective, we are living the paschal mystery:
  As a church, there have been changes before. For new life to emerge there is a sacrifice (the story of Abraham leaving his homeland for a new place).

Some days the journey will be difficult, some days the journey will be easy. The thing to remember is that we do not journey alone.
As the Body of Christ, we will stand by each other in sadness, pain, anger, hope and joy.

We will move through this change because: we are a people who stay together, God will be with us and the Holy Spirit will lead us.

-We celebrate who we can be. Perhaps the call is to take more responsibility to be church. We remember that at Baptism we were anointed priest (commissioned to celebrate, pray and be holy); prophet (commissioned to proclaim, explain, evangelize and echo God’s word); and king (commissioned to be servant, to guide, heal and do spiritual and corporate works of mercy, justice and peace).

Please avoid:

- Preaching which ignores feelings (stressing God’s will without acknowledging God’s understanding of any uncomfortable feelings.)

- Comparing other parish closures, mergers or clustering because each parish situation is unique.

- Naming bad memories and the failures of particular leaders should be avoided.

- Do not blame the people for their lack of financial contributions or cooperation as a cause for the closing of the church.

After the Homily, the Creed and Prayer of the Faithful would follow as usual.
Suggested Petitions for the Prayers of the Faithful

Celebrant: God, our Father, as our parish of ____________ has been chosen to close, send your spirit of wisdom that we may continue to fulfill your will in a gentle and trusting manner with concern for past, present and future generations. With confidence we place our petitions before you:

(Please choose any six of the following, use them as they are, adapt them as desired, or have those preparing for the celebration of the liturgy write their own.)

That all who suffer from the loneliness of separation may discover the opportunity for reconciliation; let us pray to the Lord.

That the Church may be healed of all divisions and proclaim the Word of God with one heart and one voice; let us pray to the Lord.

That the seeds of faith sown by the parents, catechists, (school administrators and teachers) of this parish may continue to bear lasting fruit; let us pray to the Lord.

That our memories of the many blessings which we have received in this parish will stir us to respond generously to the call to share our faith with others; let us pray to the Lord.

That the strong sense of family and community that has been nurtured in this parish will lead us to recommit ourselves to the Lord’s work of mercy, serving the homeless, the hungry, and all who are in need; let us pray to the Lord.

For the youth of this parish, that they may always take with them the strong faith and spiritual commitment that is their heritage; let us pray to the Lord.

For all of the religious sisters and priests who have served at this parish, that God will crown their generosity with the gift of everlasting life; let us pray to the Lord.

Your Son assured us of his presence wherever two or three are gathered. Challenge us to seek his face in the new communities that will form in his name; let us pray to the Lord.

You gave us (Mary and the saints, parish patron saint) as image and models for following Christ. Give us the strength to keep the faith alive that has been handed over to us; let us pray to the Lord.

That the diocesan-wide efforts at spiritual revitalization may strengthen the bonds that unite us as God’s church, keeping us true to our inheritance, joyful in daily life, and devoted in our mission; let us pray to the Lord.

As we are called to live our lives in a new parish inspire us to fashion with you a parish that promotes fullness of life for its members and for all peoples; let us pray to the Lord.
Like your chosen people in the desert, we feel empty, dry, and lost. Transform our pain and loss into hope and gentle peace in the knowledge of your care for us; let us pray to the Lord.

May we recognize the gifts we have received from the Spirit and use them freely for the good of all; let us pray to the Lord.

Many people (parishioners of ________________) have gone before us who have run the race and won the prize of eternal life. May their memory call us to continue the journey, to persevere in building the kingdom; let us pray to the Lord.

**Concluding Prayer:**

Celebrant:  **God, Source of all hope, we thank you for the gift of change, the gift of opportunity. We also bless you for our living tradition which gives meaning to the new. We praise you for your constant love. Help us not to fear change but to welcome your grace as we work together to serve you and one another. We ask this through Christ our Lord.**
Liturgy of the Eucharist

Preparation of the Gifts

This is another opportunity for incense in the celebration. Incense the gifts after they have been placed on the altar but before the priest washes his hands. Following the incensing of the gifts, then the people can be incensed. This act of incensation of the people is a sign of their baptismal dignity. Incensing the people is done either by a deacon, if one is present or by the thurifer if there is no deacon. First, the person incenses the priest and then the other ministers and the rest of the assembly. The person first bows and then incense and then bows again.

Prayer over the Gifts

The choices for the Prayer over the Gifts are either Option A- For Christian Unity or Option B- In Thanksgiving to God or if the prayers of the day are either required or appropriate then the prayer of the day.

OPTION A

O Lord, who gained for yourself a people by adoption through the one sacrifice offered once for all, bestow graciously on us, we pray the gifts of unity and peace in your Church. Through Christ our Lord.

OR

OPTION B

O Lord, who gave us your Son to rescue us graciously from death and from every evil, accept, we pray, in mercy this sacrifice which we offer you in thanksgiving for our deliverance from distress. Through Christ our Lord.
Preface

In the choosing the Preface please consider the following:

If Option A is chosen for the Eucharistic Prayer, it is recommended that *Eucharistic Prayer for Masses for Various Needs* be used. In particular with this Mass use *I. The Church on the Path to Unity*. The proper preface to use is found on page 1273 of the Roman Missal:

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord.

For through him you brought us to the knowledge of your truth so that by the bond of one faith and one Baptism we might become his Body.

Through him you poured out your Holy Spirit among all the nations, so that in a wondrous manner he might prompt and engender unity in the diversity of your gifts, dwelling within your adopted children and filling and ruling the whole Church.

And so, in company with the choirs of Angels, we praise you, and with joy we proclaim...
If Option B is chosen for the Eucharistic Prayer, it is recommended that *Eucharistic Prayer for Masses for Various Needs* be used. In particular with this Mass use *II God Guides the Church along the Way of Salvation*. The proper preface to use is included with the prayer:

- **It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,**
- **always and everywhere to give you thanks,**
- **Lord holy Father, creator of the world and source of all life.**

- **For you never forsake the works of your wisdom,**
- **but by your providence are even now at work in our midst.**
  - **With mighty hand and outstretched arm**
  - **you led your people Israel through the desert.**

- **Now, as your Church makes her pilgrim journey in the world,**
- **you always accompany her**
- **by the power of the Holy Spirit**
- **and lead her along the paths of time**
- **to the eternal joy of your Kingdom,**
- **through Christ our Lord.**

- **And so, with the Angels and Saints,**
- **we too, sing the hymn of your glory,**
- **as without end we acclaim:**

If the parish chooses to use the Mass and the readings of the day and this has been a particularly divisive process for the people, then it might be appropriate to use one of the Eucharistic Prayers for Masses for Reconciliation. *(Roman Missal page 750)*

- **Eucharistic Prayer I** might also be considered an appropriate choice to add a greater sense of solemnity to the celebration.

**RECOMMENDATION FOR PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS AND EUCHARISTIC PRAYER:** incense both the gifts and the people; consider using incense during the Eucharistic Prayer.
Prayer after Communion

The choices for the Prayer after Communion are either Option A—For Christian Unity or, Option B—In Thanksgiving to God or if the prayers of the day are either required or appropriate then the prayer of the day.

OPTION A

Let us pray.

Pause for silent prayer

As this reception of your Holy Communion, O Lord, foreshadows the union of the faithful in you, so may it bring about unity in your Church. Through Christ our Lord.

OR

OPTION B

Let us pray.

Pause for silent prayer

Almighty God, who through this Bread of Life are pleased to free your servants from the bond of sin and in your compassion to restore their strength grant us to advance without hinderance towards the hope of glory. Through Christ our Lord.
Concluding Rites

Optional Ending Ceremony

Following the Prayer after Communion, but before the final blessing you may consider using the following:

The following comment could be made by a representative of the parish.

As we mark the end of our time as St. ____________ Parish, there are many memories we hold close to our hearts. To keep the memory of St. ____________ Parish alive, we will share with our new parish a few tokens of our history. These things represent what we will bring to _____________________ which so many of us will call our own soon.

We take with us these books, Registers of the Sacraments of Initiation. They record the names of those who were reborn in Christ, confirmed in his Spirit and fed at his table. May we be faithful to our Christian calling.

We take with us this Register of Marriages. Here are the names of those who pledged their love as signs of Christ’s covenant with his church. May the love of our families enrich our new parish and our world.

We take the Register of our departed brothers and sisters. May we remember those who went before us and share with the glory yet to come.

Suggestion: If the building will no longer be used as a worship site, other liturgical vessels can be gathered up (without comment) to be carried out, for example:

- the parish processional cross
- a special chalice
- a cross that marked the entrance to the school
- contents of the cornerstone
- a parish history book
- altar candlesticks

Only a few such items should be included--those with special meaning. (This is not the time to empty the church.)
Another Optional Ending

Another option for the ending involves using a procession through the Church to highlight noteworthy places in Church where important actions have occurred, such as the baptismal font. This needs some preparation so a good route for the procession can be developed.

Therefore if you choose to enhance the end of the celebration you can:

- Incorporate Optional Concluding Ceremony in its entirety followed by the optional ending.

- Or, use the Optional Concluding Ceremony alone,

- Or, use the optional ending alone or adapt what is presented here.

If you use the Optional Ending, Optional Concluding Ceremony or simply end in the usual way you would use the Final Blessing
FINAL BLESSING

The use of a more solemn form of the blessing would be appropriate at this time. There are various choices; one is provided for you below.

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

All: And with your spirit.

Deacon/Celebrant: Bow down for the blessing.

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

All: Amen.

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

All: Amen.

Celebrant: 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.

Celebrant: May Almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Deacon/Celebrant: Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.
Procession out of the Church

During the final hymn, while all are still in their places extinguish the altar candles and remove the altar cloth.

In the recessional, the entire congregation is asked to walk in the procession, led by the thurifer (if incense is used), cross bearer with candle bearers and people carrying selected items from the Church. All can then proceed to the hall for a reception.

If the parish receiving the parishioners of the closed parish is within walking distance, there might be a procession to the new church.

Possibly this could be a Eucharistic procession with the remaining Eucharist brought to the new parish.

Possibly a particularly important item from the Church could be brought to the new parish, i.e. a statue, painting or crucifix.

If there is a parish banner, this could be carried to the new parish. (How this would occur, of course, needs to be prearranged with the new parish.)

If there are Church bells, they could be rung during this final movement.

Additional speeches and addresses might be given in the parish hall at the reception.

Acknowledgements

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PARISH RETREAT TOOL

For your convenience, the content for the “Parish Retreat” PowerPoint follows below. To download the .pptx version click here in the on-line version of this document.

1  Parish Retreat
For Clustering or Merging Parishes

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” ~ John 15:5

2  Sample Retreat Schedule

9:45 – Coffee and doughnuts
10:00 – Welcome and Opening Prayer
10:10 – 10:40 – Talk #1 – The Church – The Body of Christ 10:40 – 11:00 – Personal Reflection Time
11:00 – 11:30 – Talk #2 – Many Parts, All one Body 11:30 – 12:00 – Adoration with Guided Prayer
12:00 – Potluck Lunch

3  Talk #1 – The Church – The Body of Christ

*You may have many questions now.


*These questions will be answered, but not today.

*Today is to come together to pray for the uniting of these parishes.

*Big decisions begin with prayer.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.” (Psalm 127:1)
*The Church as the Body of Christ.

*The Church is to get us to Heaven.

*The physical and spiritual aspects of the Church.

*Parish buildings and furnishings are important to us because they involve significant times in our lives and they involve our loved ones.

*Everything physical is to lead us to something spiritual, which is eternal.

*Acknowledging change.

*Change can be difficult.

*Change can also lead to something better.

*Christ as our source.

*"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)

5  

**Talk #2 – Many Parts, All one Body**

*St. Paul – We are each members of the one Body of Christ. *We each have our gifts to share.

*We have an opportunity to gain more gifts among these combined parishes.

*How can I help make this parish the best it can be? *Sacrifice

*Contribution

*Conversion
6

*A parish that reflects the love of Jesus Christ *A parish that leads others to Jesus Christ

*Reflections

*How can I best share the gifts I have?
*How can I bring out the best in others?
*How can I work with my pastor in building up the Body of Christ in our new parish structure?

7  

Adoration with Guided Prayer

*The Eucharist is the greatest source of unity within the Church. *Reflect upon the presence of Christ.

*He desires that we be one.

*Reflect upon the Vine and the Branches *How can I bear good fruit?

*Decade of the Rosary (Prayer for Strategic Plan)

*Asking our Lord's guidance and strength as the parishes move ahead.
CHANGE: AN OPPORTUNITY TO SURVIVE AND THRIVE

This tool is a tri-fold brochure that can be downloaded here in the on-line version of this document. It should be reproduced in color and folded prior to distribution.
Administrative Matters For Parishes Clustering or Merging
ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

INTRODUCTION

This section of the Implementation Handbook focuses on administrative matters. It is made up of explanations, procedures, checklists and forms that will help parishes accomplish the detailed, legal work of clustering and merging church and civil corporations.

Clustering of Parishes

Clustered Parishes are parishes that work together sharing clergy (and possibly staff), but maintaining separate Finance and Pastoral Councils (although they may choose to have joint meetings). In clustered parishes each parish maintains its church building for worship, is a separate legal entity, and maintains its separate identity as a parish.

The clustering of parishes is effected through a letter of appointment by the Bishop which is sent to the pastor who is to serve more than one parish. This pastor is to provide for the pastoral care of the parishes of the cluster.

Under the guidance of the Bishop and the leadership of the pastor, collaboration between the members of the individual parishes in the cluster can be built up through a coordinated approach coupled with joint discussions and activities. Over time, this could result in unified or complimentary Mass and sacramental schedules, ministries, projects and outreach.

Merged Parishes

Merged parishes share clergy and staff and have one or more church buildings but are one parish in church law and civil law. In merged parishes things are not only shared but done as one family of faith under one pastor.

Following the Diocesan Strategic Plan, there are two types of merger: 1) a parish is merged with another parish. This means that two (or more) parishes become one parish but retain multiple church buildings; or 2) a parish is merged into another parish. This means two (or more) parishes become one parish with one church building for worship. In a merger one of the parishes receives the other parish(es). In sample documents (Handbook p. 68-84) and elsewhere, this receiving parish is designated as the “receiving/surviving” parish. Parishes may also merge and construct a new church building per the Diocesan Strategic Plan.
In a merged parish, all individual churches, property, boundaries, assets and liabilities become the responsibility of the receiving parish. There is one set of trustees, a single Finance Council, Pastoral Council and staff.

The receiving parish is one entity according to the law of the Church (Canon Law) and according to the law of the State of Minnesota (Civil Law).

Under the leadership of the pastor, together with the cooperation and collaboration of parishioners, a unified Mass and sacramental schedule, pastoral care programs, projects and outreach are established.

The merging of the parishes is brought into effect through a decree of the Bishop (formal document) establishing the merger.
Parish Merger Check-List

Beginning the Process
☐ Letter sent from Pastor to Bishop requesting parish merger
☐ Decree from Bishop to Pastor received and posted
☐ Pastor submits completed “Verification of Communication” form to the Chancellor

Implementation
☐ Effective date decree is implemented: _________________

Closing Liturgy:
☐ Bishop Sirba’s office contacted to schedule closing liturgy.
☐ Chancellor notified of date for closing liturgy.

Corporate Structure:
☐ Arrange merger meeting with Bishop’s office
☐ Pastor and Trustees Read Agreement of Merger
☐ Complete civil merger data sheet (Handbook p. 66)
☐ Mail civil merger data sheet, parish certificate of incorporation, bylaws and copy of merging parish deed to the Diocesan Finance Officer at least two (2) weeks before merger meeting
☐ Corporate board meeting for merging parish corporations held with trustees at Pastoral Center

Parishioner Care:
☐ All parishioners contacted.
☐ Updated list of parishioners with their parishes sent to Chancellor.
☐ List of parishioners attending other parishes given to their new Pastor(s).
Liturgical/Sacramental Affairs:

☐ Liturgical inventory completed & sent to Chancellor (Handbook p. 85-86)

☐ Mass Intentions transferred to neighboring parish(es):
  How are these recorded? (book, etc.): _______________________
  Amount transferred/Number of Masses ___________
  Parish(es) transferred to: ___________________________

☐ Sacramental Registers documented & notice sent to Chancellor.

☐ Sacramental Registers transferred to new parish.

Transition Advisory Committee

☐ Committee membership established and meetings scheduled

Financial Data:


☐ Final parish audit scheduled with Diocesan Finance Officer.

Building, Grounds and Cemetery Issues:

☐ Building and Grounds inspection scheduled

☐ Plan for cemetery care complete (if applicable)

☐ Insurance changes:
  Letter to Diocesan Finance Officer requesting change in coverage (Handbook p. 61)

Archives:

☐ Parish archives and historical items transferred to Diocesan Archives.

☐ Copies of any closing histories, videos, etc. provided to Diocesan Archives.

Final Documentation of the Process:

☐ A copy of this completed check-list is provided to the Chancellor.
I, _______________________, pastor of the parish of ____________________________ located in ________________, MN, hereby attest that the necessary tasks for merging or clustering of the parish have taken place and all the proper persons involved and notified as outlined above.

Signature of pastor: ________________________________

Date: _____________________
Process for Completing a Parish Merger According to Church Law (Canon Law)

1. A letter is written to the Bishop from the pastor indicating that the parishes are ready for the implementation of the strategic plan requesting a merger. In the letter, the pastor explains the reasons for the merger.

2. The Presbyteral Council, a group of priests who advise the Bishop, meets to consider the merger request. The Bishop hears their recommendation.

3. When a merger is decided upon, a decree (formal document) from the Bishop is sent to the pastor. The decree is dated two months from the date the document takes effect to allow for any appeal of the decision. The decree contains:

- The Bishop’s reasons for the merger in response to the request
- The date that the Presbyteral Council met to consider the merger and their recommendation
- The date that the merger will take effect
- A reminder that the temporal goods, assets, debts, liabilities, and Mass intentions are to be transferred to the receiving parish (canon 121)
- A reminder that the sacramental registers are to be transferred to the receiving parish. (canon 535)
- The establishment of the territorial boundaries of the receiving parish
- An explanation of how a parishioner who wishes to appeal the merger may do so. An appeal must be received within 10 useful days. Church law defines useful days as days the parishioner is able to appeal. Days that the Diocesan offices are closed or holidays would not be considered useful days. (canons: 1732-1739)
- The decree is signed and dated by the Bishop and notarized by the Chancellor

4. Once the pastor receives the decree from the Bishop, it is to be posted on the parish bulletin boards, the parish website and the Diocesan website for two weeks. This period allows the parishioners to know of the decree and to appeal it if they wish.

5. After the two weeks have passed, the pastor sends a completed ‘Verification of Communication’ form (not included in this handbook, but available upon request from the Chancellor’s office) to the Chancellor to show that the parishioners have been notified of the decree and their right of appeal.

6. The merger comes into being on the effective date of the decree.
Process for Completing the Civil Merger of Parishes

After the canonical merger process is **complete**, the civil merger process to conform to the laws of the State of Minnesota can begin. A civil merger is extremely important, because without it, the courts and laws of the land will continue to recognize the parishes involved as separate entities. Without a complete civil merger, the receiving parish has very limited ability to transact business. The civil merger needs to be accomplished with extreme care and attention to detail.

As with any legal process, the State requires various legal documents to be filed. In addition, the articles of incorporation and bylaws of the parishes require a very **specific** process to be followed in order to accomplish a civil merger. To assist parishes in completing a civil merger, a detailed explanation of the process is provided below.

**Process for Completing Agreement of Merger**

1. Arrange a merger meeting with the Bishop’s office.
2. Complete merger data sheet. (Handbook p. 66)
3. Read Agreement of Merger (Pastor and both trustees). (Handbook p. 68)
4. Mail merger data sheet, parish certificate of incorporation, corporation bylaws and copy of merging parish deed to the diocesan Finance Officer at least two weeks before merger meeting.
5. Finance Officer will review all documents submitted and forward merger information to the Diocesan Attorney to prepare the official agreement of merger. The pastor will be contacted if there are any questions or issues.
6. Attend the merger meeting at the diocesan Pastoral Center (Pastor and both trustees).
   A. Two (2) original copies of the agreement of merger to be signed by the governing boards
   B. All signatures will be notarized (please bring photo id)
   C. One photo copy of the signed agreement of merger will be given to the pastor
   D. A copy of the meeting minutes will be mailed to the pastor (Handbook p. 79-84). The minutes should be noted and placed into the Corporate Book of the parish and signed by the officers of the corporation, Pastor (Vice President, Secretary (Lay Trustee) and Treasurer (Lay Trustee).)
7. Diocesan Attorney will file the agreement of merger with the appropriate county office and the Diocese will pay all fees.
8. County will return the agreement of merger to the Diocesan Attorney, with the merger date stamped.
9. Diocesan Attorney will make Torrens or abstract filing with the appropriate county office.
CARE OF BUILDINGS, LAND AND CEMETERIES

As we implement our Diocesan Strategic Plan a number of church buildings may be closed. These closures will necessitate a uniform approach so that they take place in a manner that does not increase the liability of the parishes involved. In order to facilitate a uniform approach, the Implementation Committee has recommended a number of guidelines for preparing a building for sale, demolition or to safely prepare it to be saved for future use.

These guidelines are meant to give direction to the parishes as they prepare to deal with church property that may no longer be needed. The main emphasis is to guarantee that every effort has been made to insure that there are no hazards present that would increase the chances of injury and liability.

In the event that a parish is planning to close a structure, it is necessary to keep the diocese informed. Many of the decisions concerning closure must be approved by the diocese and a diocesan representative must complete an on-site inspection. The inspection is designed to confirm that good stewardship practices have been implemented and also to make recommendations in areas that need improvement. The following individuals are available for inspections: Deacon Jim Kirzeder, 907-980-8501 Paul Altman (Catholic Mutual), 715-394-0222.

The land and church buildings are assets (and liabilities) that belong to the parish. Parishes must have an ongoing financial plan for maintaining and adequately insuring closed buildings or buildings that will only be used occasionally. Parishes are also responsible for maintaining and caring for cemeteries. Separate checking and savings accounts for cemeteries should be maintained. If an existing perpetual care fund is not adequate, sufficient funds should be set aside out of the merging parish operating account to ensure maintenance obligations are met.

While these guidelines may not include every scenario that may be encountered, (for example: demolition of a sacred building can only take place following a specific canonical procedure in coordination with diocesan officials) they are nevertheless, intended to give guidance and establish policies that will be helpful as the Strategic Plan is implemented.
Building and Property Issues to Address on Closure

These are three scenarios involved in building closures:

- Closing a building in preparation for sale
- Closing a building for future needs or expansion
- Closing a building in preparation for demolition

The following issues must be addressed when closing a parish building or discontinuing use of parish land. Please note that the list is not exhaustive. The “X” indicates that the issue must be addressed in each scenario.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSIDERATIONS</th>
<th>FOR SALE</th>
<th>FOR FUTURE NEEDS</th>
<th>FOR DEMOLITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Building</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asbestos – location and removal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windows – removal or board up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewer, private well capped</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewer, city well disconnected</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underground tanks located/removed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underground power lines disconnected</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural gas or propane lines disconnected</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overhead electrical lines disconnected</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluorescent lights removed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead paint located</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mold located</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazardous materials removed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periodic building checks</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heated above freezing point</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water lines drained</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disclosures of all hazards and defects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Land                                        |          |                  |                |
| Ponds drained/fenced                        |          |                  | X              |
| Lawns maintained                            | X        |                  |                |
| Playground equipment removed                |          |                  | X              |
| Dead trees/limbs removed                    |          |                  |                |

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Changing Insurance Coverage

Lowering insurance coverage has important ramifications and can only be done with the approval of the diocese in consultation with Catholic Mutual. If you believe reducing coverage to liability and demolition is appropriate, please read the following and call the diocesan business office for more information.

The listed demolition limit in the endorsement is determined by an appraisal made by a contractor. It is the parish’s responsibility to obtain an appraisal before making an application to change coverage to Demolition Cost Coverage. If there are hazards or pollutants present, the appraisal should be itemized to isolate the cost of removal for these substances.

**DEMOLITION COST COVERAGE** (Catholic Mutual Relief Society)

*If a covered cause of loss occurs to a building covered by this endorsement, in an amount in excess of 50% of the listed demolition limit, we will pay the cost to demolish and clear the site of undamaged parts of the property. We will not make any payment under this endorsement until evidence of actual demolition is given to the Society.*

*We will not pay more than the amount you spend to demolish and clear the site of the covered building or the scheduled limit of coverage whichever is less.*

*We will not pay under this endorsement for the cost associated with the enforcement of any ordinance or law which requires any Protected Person or others to test for, monitor, clean up, remove, contain, treat, detoxify or neutralize, or in any way respond to or assess the effects of Pollutants.*

*The terms of this endorsement apply separately to each building to which this endorsement applies.*
In order to lower insurance coverage to liability and demolition only, an inspection is mandatory along with a formal request to the diocese using the form of this letter printed on parish letterhead:

{Insert Date}

(Finance Officer)
Diocese of Duluth
2830 E 4th St.
Duluth, MN 55812-1501

Dear ____________________,

I am requesting that you change the insurance coverage for {insert property name and location} to liability and demolition only. I had {insert name} complete a full inspection of the building and property to ensure the necessary steps have been taken to secure the site for demolition. In addition, I consulted the parish trustees/finance council and showed them the endorsement for demolition cost coverage from Catholic Mutual.

I understand that once the coverage is changed, a covered loss would need to be in excess of 50% of the demolition limit before Catholic Mutual will pay the demolition amount. This coverage also does not cover removal of pollutants.

Sincerely,

{insert pastor’s name}

CC: Bishop Paul D. Sirba
FINANCIAL PROCEDURES FOR MERGING A PARISH

To effectively control and safeguard assets as well as establish accountabilities during the merging of parishes, certain financial procedures are required of a merging parish. *These procedures should not be started until after the canonical and civil merger is complete.* The Finance Officer of the diocese will notify the pastor of the official date of civil merger.

Once the civil merger date is known, all financial operations for the merging parish will cease at the end of the month in which the merger occurs. This financial merger date is necessary for completing the financial procedures for the merging parish.

1. Immediately after the civil merger meeting:
   A. Attempt to contact those individuals who have not cashed outstanding checks. Inform them that all Parish and associated organization accounts will be closed 30 days after the financial merger date.
   B. 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 these accounts must be retained.
   C. Obtain and review existing documentation regarding all pledges, restricted and endowment funds and contact the Finance Officer of the Diocese for discussion on the proper handling of such funds.
   D. All bills must be paid to date whenever possible, prior to the financial merger date.
   E. Prepare a complete list of service contracts and agreements detailing vendor name, contact info and brief description of the service or product provided. Advise all vendors in writing that the parish is merging and that the vendor’s service should be either discontinued or new arrangements made with the receiving/surviving parish. A copy of each written notification is to be retained with the list.
   F. Prepare a complete list of lease/rental agreements detailing the vendor name, contact info and brief description of what is leased/rented. Notify the leasing/rental vendor in writing that the parish is merging. Make arrangements to either terminate the agreement or transfer it to the receiving/surviving parish. The written notification must document the arrangement and a copy is to be retained with the list of lease/rental agreements.
G. Prepare a list of real estate that the parish leases/rents to other organizations or individuals for which a formal lease or rental agreement exists. Contact the diocesan Finance Officer to review the list and discuss next steps. If a building is to be closed, contact all other organizations and groups who have used the facility, notifying them of the impending closure.

H. Prepare a list of charge accounts detailing the vendor name, contact info, and brief description of services/products that are typically purchased. The balance on the charge account must be paid in full and the charge account closed prior to the financial merger date. A copy of the final statement showing the account is closed should be retained with the list. If it is not prudent to discontinue business with a vendor, then a notification in writing should be sent to the vendor, making arrangements with the receiving/surviving parish to create a new charge account.

I. Prepare a list of credit cards detailing the name of the credit card company, the card # and credit card company contact info. The balance on the credit card account must be paid in full and the card cancelled prior to the financial merger date. Please retain a copy of the final statement showing the account is closed and attach it to the credit card list.

J. Assemble all real estate documents (e.g. deeds, abstract of title, Duplicate Certificate of Title, mortgages, etc.) concerning real estate owned by the Merging Parish.

2. Week Prior to Financial Merger Date:
   A. New signature cards for the parish operating bank account (and cemetery if applicable) and any restricted accounts must be prepared listing the Pastor of the receiving/surviving parish as the primary signatory on the account. A copy of the signature card should be retained by the receiving/surviving parish.
   B. Complete a change of address form at the local post office branch. All mail should be forwarded to the receiving/surviving parish.
   C. Final paychecks for all employees for work up to the date of financial merger should be issued. Any accrued and unpaid vacation pay should also be paid out with the final paycheck.
   D. Contact the Finance Officer to arrange a final parish audit. The date of the on-site audit should be scheduled within 30 days of the financial merger date.
3. After the Financial Merger Date:
   A. Prepare/organize documentation for the on-site parish audit
      I. Prepare a final YTD Revenue and Expense report up to the financial merger date.
      II. Prepare a balance sheet as of the date of financial merger
      III. Bank statements for the parish operating account and cemetery if applicable.
      IV. Check registers
      V. Final Federal 941 form and data for the state withholding filing. Make sure the “final” report box has been checked.
      VI. Form W-2 for all employees. This would include all payroll checks issued by the parish from January 1 to the financial merger date.
      VII. Form 1099 Misc for all vendors and independent contracts where payments meet or exceed the $600 IRS threshold. This would include all checks issued by the parish from January 1 to the financial merger date.
      VIII. Prepare appropriate tax receipts/contribution statements for parishioner donations from January 1 to the date of financial merger.
   B. The pastor and bookkeeper meet with the diocesan auditor to review all documents. No internal control review will be conducted.
   C. At the time of the audit, some final entries may be made in the CDM+ program (if used). Once final entries are made, backups of the system should be made, one copy to go with the auditor and one to the receiving parish with full security access.
   D. Diocesan auditor will prepare a final financial report for the pastor and the diocese. This report should be made available to any parishioner that requests it.
   E. After the audit and final financial report is prepared, destroy/shred all unused checks and deposit slips on closed accounts.
   F. Transfer all official parish corporation documents (e.g. Certificate of Incorporation, By-Laws, Minute Books) to the receiving parish for archiving as well as all bank statements and financial records of the parish.
   G. Forward original equipment lease agreements and continued service provider agreements to the receiving/surviving parish.
H. Contact specific vendors to forward ongoing bills related to buildings (e.g. insurance, utilities, alarm services, lease payments, tax statements etc.) to the receiving/surviving parish.

I. Any computers, copy machines and other electronic devices not transferred to the receiving/surviving parish containing confidential information are to be scrubbed of all such data prior to destruction or other disposition.
## Civil Merger Data Sheet

### Merging Parish (#1)

Legal Name of Parish (as stated in the articles of incorporation):

_________________________________________________________________

Other Names the Parish has used:

_________________________________________________________________

Address: __________________________  City: ______________________
Zip: __________  County: __________________
Pastor phone number: ________________

Date of meeting to vote on merger resolution: ____________

Bishop:  
Bishop Paul Sirba  
Vicar General:  
Fr. James Bissonette  
Pastor:  
_______________________  
Secretary Trustee/Lay Member:  
_______________________  
Treasurer Trustee/Lay Member:  
_______________________  

### Receiving/Surviving Parish (#2)

Legal Name of Parish (as stated in the articles of incorporation):

_________________________________________________________________

Other Names the Parish has used:

_________________________________________________________________

Address: __________________________  City: ______________________
Zip: __________  County: __________________
Pastor phone number: ________________

Date of meeting to vote on merger resolution: ____________

Bishop:  
Bishop Paul Sirba  
Vicar General:  
Fr. James Bissonette  
Pastor:  
_______________________  
Secretary Trustee/Lay Member:  
_______________________  
Treasurer Trustee/Lay Member:  
_______________________  

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66
New Parish

Legal Name of Parish (as stated in the articles of incorporation.):

_______________________________________________________________

Other Names the Parish has used:

_______________________________________________________________

Address: _______________________ City: ________________ Zip:_________

County: ________________________

Date of meeting to vote on merger resolution: __________

Bishop: Bishop Paul Sirba

Vicar General: Fr. James Bissonette

Pastor: __________________________

Secretary Trustee/Lay Member: ___________________________

Treasurer Trustee/Lay Member: ___________________________
AGREEMENT OF MERGER AND CONSOLIDATION OF

(#1) __________ CHURCH, __________, MINNESOTA, LOCATED IN __________ COUNTY, MINNESOTA, AND

(#2) __________ CHURCH, ____________, MINNESOTA, LOCATED IN __________ COUNTY, MINNESOTA

WHEREAS, the undersigned ____________________, Roman Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Duluth, Minnesota ("Bishop"), together with his board of consultors now deem it advisable to merge and consolidate __________ (#1) __________ Church, ____________, Minnesota, and __________ (#2) __________ Church, ____________, Minnesota, both parish religious corporations located within this State and organized under the Statutes of the State of Minnesota in such cases made and provided and has associated and does hereby associate with him for that purpose Reverend __________, Vicar General of said Diocese ("Vicar General"), and Reverend (#1) __________, Pastor of __________ Church, ____________, Minnesota, and Reverend (#2) __________, Pastor of __________ Church, ____________, Minnesota (collectively "Pastors"); and

WHEREAS, the Bishop Vicar General and Pastors have, in accordance with the statutes in such cases provided, selected and designated, and do hereby select and designate, to be associated with them in the formation of the merged and consolidated religious corporations, __________ (surviving) and __________ (surviving), two lay members of the Roman Catholic Church all belonging to said church and residing therein (collectively "Lay Members");

NOW THEREFORE, KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS, that We, __________, Bishop, Reverend __________, Vicar General, Reverend (#1) __________, and Reverend (#2) __________, Pastors of the aforementioned parish religious corporations (collectively "parish property religious corporations") and __________ (#1) __________, __________ (#1) __________, __________ (#2) __________, and __________ (#2) __________, all of the Lay Members of the parish property corporations, pursuant to the provisions of Minnesota Statutes Section 315.365, and all laws amendatory thereof or supplemental thereto, do now adopt, execute and acknowledge this Agreement of Merger and Consolidation ("Agreement"): 
ARTICLE I.

Name and Location of Parish Property Religious Corporations

The parish property religious corporations who are parties hereto are

(#1) ___________ Church, ________________, Minnesota and

(#2) ___________ Church, ________________, Minnesota, with their locations in

the Cities of ___________ and ________________, respectively, in the County of

______________, State of Minnesota.

ARTICLE II.

Name, Location and Area to be Served of Surviving Parish Religious Corporation

The name of the surviving corporation is ___________ Church, ________________, Minnesota (“surviving parish religious corporation”), and the

location of its principal office shall be ___________, City of ________________,

County of ________________, State of Minnesota. The general area to be served by the

surviving parish religious corporation shall be the vicinity of the City or Cities of

______________, in the County of ________________ and State of Minnesota (“Parish”).

ARTICLE III.

Governing Board of Surviving Parish Religious Corporation

The persons who shall constitute the governing board of the surviving parish religious corporation until their successors are duly elected and shall qualify and their offices are as follows:

__________, Roman Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Duluth, Minnesota

Reverend ____________, Vicar General of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Duluth, Minnesota

Reverend ____________, Pastor of Parish

__________, Lay Member

__________, Lay Member
ARTICLE IV.

General Purposes of the Surviving Parish Religious Corporation

The general purposes of the surviving parish religious corporation is to take charge of and manage all of the temporal affairs of the Roman Catholic Church in the Parish; to promote the spiritual, educational and other interests of the Roman Catholic Church in the Parish; including all the charitable, benevolent and eleemosynary work of the Church in the Parish; to take charge of, hold and manage all property, personal and real, that may at any time or in any manner come to or vest in the surviving parish religious corporation for any purpose whatsoever, whether by purchase, gift, grant, devise, or otherwise, and to mortgage the same, sell or otherwise dispose of it as the necessities of the surviving parish religious corporation may require.

ARTICLE V.

Date of Adoption of Authorization to Merge and Consolidate

The authorization for this merger and consolidation was had at a meeting of the Members of the merged and consolidated surviving parish religious corporation to which the aforesaid merging or consolidating parish property religious corporations pertain on the day of , 20 , the Members and Board of Directors of said merging or consolidating parish property corporations having also authorized such merger and consolidation as of that date.

ARTICLE VI.

Members of Surviving Parish Religious Corporation

The persons at any time holding the offices hereinbefore specified in Article III shall, by virtue of their respective offices, be Members of and, with the Lay Members aforesaid, constitute the surviving parish religious corporation ("Corporation"), with the power to transact all the business of such Corporation, but every such person, on ceasing to hold such office, shall cease to be a Member hereof, and his successor in office shall become a Member in his place. The two Lay Members designated above shall remain Members of the Corporation for the term of two years from the date hereof, and thereafter the term of office of Lay Members shall be two years, and in either case until their successors are chosen. Such Lay Members shall always be designated and appointed by the Bishop, Vicar General and Pastor, or their respective successors, who shall also fill all vacancies in their number. The appointment of such Lay Members shall be in writing and entered upon the records of the Corporation. If at any time there be a vacancy in the office of the aforesaid Roman Catholic Bishop, or in the event any other person is appointed in his stead to administer the spiritual and temporal affairs of this Diocese, then during such vacancy or suspension of the authority of such Bishop, such administrator of the affairs of this Diocese, or any other person appointed under the rules of this denomination to preside over and administer its affairs, shall, while acting as such administrator or appointee, be a Member of this Corporation, with all the rights and powers incident thereto; but his Membership shall at once cease when such vacancy has been filled or suspension
of authority removed. Moreover, during such vacancy in the office of the aforesaid Roman Catholic Bishop, the Chancellor of the Diocese shall, in lieu of a Vicar General, be a Member of this Corporation, with all the rights and powers incident thereto, but his Membership shall at once cease when a Vicar General has been appointed.

ARTICLE VII.

Officers of Surviving Parish Religious Corporation

The officers of this Corporation shall be a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. The Bishop, or person appointed in his place or stead, shall be ex officio President. The Pastor of the Parish (i.e., the priest of the Roman Catholic Church, who, with the approval of the Bishop of the Diocese, is given and has regular local jurisdiction over the spiritual and temporal affairs of the Parish) shall be ex officio Vice President. The Secretary and Treasurer shall be elected from and by the Members of this Corporation. The terms of office of the Secretary and Treasurer and the duties of each, except so far as the same are fixed by the Articles/Certificate of Incorporation, may be prescribed by the By-Laws. This Corporation may at any time remove any Secretary or Treasurer, if it deems that the best interests of this Corporation require such removal, but the Secretary or Treasurer, as the case may be, whose removal is in question, shall have no vote upon such question.

ARTICLE VIII.

Powers of Surviving Parish Religious Corporation

The Members of this Corporation shall have all powers as are granted by Minnesota Statutes, Section 315.10, as amended.

ARTICLE IX.

Sale, Encumbrance or Disposition of Assets of Surviving Parish Religious Corporation

The Members of this Corporation may, by a majority vote, contract debts in accordance with the specifications and limitations set forth in the By-Laws of this Corporation. No real estate or fixed assets, such as buildings, bonds, investments, etc., shall be sold, mortgaged, encumbered, or disposed of in any way except as provided for in the By-Laws of this Corporation.

ARTICLE X.

Adoption of By-Laws

This Corporation may, by unanimous vote of its Members, adopt such By-Laws not contrary to the laws of this State, the Statutes of the Diocese of Duluth, the discipline of the
Roman Catholic Church and this Agreement, as may be deemed necessary for the proper
government of this Corporation and the management of the property and business thereof; and
may, by a like vote, alter or amend the same, and, when so adopted, such By-Laws and all
amendments thereof, shall, before they can take effect, be signed by each of said Members and
be recorded by the Secretary in a book to be provided and kept for that purpose.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, We have hereunto set our hands and seals this
_______ day of ____________________, 20____.

________________________________________
Bishop of Duluth

________________________________________
Vicar General

________________________________________
Pastor of
(Surviving)______________, Church
__________________________, MN

________________________________________
Pastor of
(#1)______________, Church
__________________________, MN

Lay Member (Surviving)__________, Church

Lay Member (Surviving)__________, Church

________________________________________
Pastor of
(#2)______________, Church
__________________________, MN

Lay Member (#1)______________, Church

Lay Member (#1)______________, Church

Lay Member (#2)______________, Church

Lay Member (#2)______________, Church
The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this _____ day of ______
___________________, 20____, by ____________________, Bishop of Duluth.

______________________
Notary Public

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this _____ day of ______
___________________, 20____, by ____________________, Vicar General.

______________________
Notary Public

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this _____ day of ______
___________________, 20____, by ____________________, in his capacity as Pastor of
(#1) ____________________, ____________________, Minnesota.

______________________
Notary Public

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this _____ day of ______
___________________, 20____, by ____________________, in his capacity as Pastor of
(#2) ____________________, Church, ____________________, Minnesota.

______________________
Notary Public
STATE OF MINNESOTA )
COUNTY OF ____________)

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this _____ day of _______
_______________, 20____, by ____________________ in his capacity as Pastor of
(surviving)________________________ Church, __________________, Minnesota.

________________________________________
Notary Public

STATE OF MINNESOTA )
COUNTY OF ____________)

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this _____ day of _______
_______________, 20____, by ____________________ Lay Member.

________________________________________
Notary Public

STATE OF MINNESOTA )
COUNTY OF ____________)

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this _____ day of _______
_______________, 20____, by ____________________ Lay Member.

________________________________________
Notary Public

STATE OF MINNESOTA )
COUNTY OF ____________)

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this _____ day of _______
_______________, 20____, by ____________________ Lay Member.

________________________________________
Notary Public
STATE OF MINNESOTA 
COUNTY OF ____________

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this _____ day of _____ ________________, 20_____, by ______ (#1) __________, Lay Member.

____________________________________
Notary Public

STATE OF MINNESOTA 
COUNTY OF ____________

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this _____ day of _____ ________________, 20_____, by ______ (#2) __________, Lay Member.

____________________________________
Notary Public

STATE OF MINNESOTA 
COUNTY OF ____________

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this _____ day of _____ ________________, 20_____, by ______ (#2) __________, Lay Member.

____________________________________
Notary Public
CERTIFICATE OF PARISH PROPERTY CORPORATION

I, ______________, do hereby certify that I am the Secretary/Recording Officer of (#1) ____________ Church, ____________, Minnesota, located in the County of ____________, State of Minnesota, a parish religious corporation duly organized and existing under and by virtue of the laws of the State of Minnesota, and as such Secretary/Recording Officer I have access to all original records of such Corporation, and I do hereby further certify that at a meeting of the members of such Corporation, duly called, held and convened according to the law on the ______ day of _____________, 20___, a quorum being present and voting thereon, a resolution was unanimously adopted authorizing the merger and consolidation of (#1) ____________ Church, ____________, Minnesota, located in __________ County, Minnesota, and (#2) ____________ Church, ____________, Minnesota, located in __________ County, Minnesota, and directing the execution of the foregoing Agreement of Merger and Consolidation, said merger to be accomplished under the provisions of Minnesota Statutes Section 315.365.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand by virtue of the authority granted to me by this corporation this ______ day of _____________, 20__.

________________________________________________________________________

STATE OF MINNESOTA )
) ss.
COUNTY OF ST. LOUIS )

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this ________ day of ___
________________, 20___, by ____________________, to me known to be the Secretary/Recording Officer of (#1) ____________ Church, ____________, Minnesota, and he acknowledges that he signed the foregoing Certificate as Secretary/Recording Officer of said corporation by and on behalf of the corporation.

________________________________________________________________________

Notary Public
CERTIFICATE OF PARISH PROPERTY CORPORATION

I, ________________, do hereby certify that I am the Secretary/Recording Officer of
(#2) ______________ Church, ______________, Minnesota, located in the County of
______________, State of Minnesota, a parish religious corporation duly organized and
existing under and by virtue of the laws of the State of Minnesota, and as such Secretary/
Recording Officer I have access to all original records of such Corporation, and I do hereby
further certify that at a meeting of the members of such Corporation, duly called, held and
convened according to the law on the ______ day of ______________, 20__, a quorum
being present and voting thereon, a resolution was unanimously adopted authorizing the
merger and consolidation of (#1) ______________ Church, ______________, Minnesota,
located in __________ County, Minnesota, and (#2) ______________ Church, ______________
______________, Minnesota, located in __________ County, Minnesota, and directing the
execution of the foregoing Agreement of Merger and Consolidation, said merger to be
accomplished under the provisions of Minnesota Statutes Section 315.365.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand by virtue of the authority
granted to me by this corporation this ______ day of ______________, 20__.

________________________________________

STATE OF MINNESOTA )
 )ss.
COUNTY OF ST. LOUIS )

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this ______ day of ____
_________, 20___, by ______________________, to me known to be the Secretary/
Recording Officer of (#2) ______________ Church, ______________, Minnesota, and he
acknowledges that he signed the foregoing Certificate as Secretary/Recording Officer of said
corporation by and on behalf of the corporation.

________________________________________

Notary Public
CERTIFICATE OF SURVIVING PARISH RELIGIOUS CORPORATION

I, ________________, do hereby certify that I am the Secretary/Recording Officer of (surviving) ___________ Church, ____________, Minnesota, located in the County of ____________, State of Minnesota, a parish religious corporation duly organized and existing under and by virtue of the laws of the State of Minnesota, and as such Secretary/Recording Officer I have access to all original records of such Corporation, and I do hereby further certify that at a meeting of the members of such Corporation, duly called, held and convened according to the law on the _______ day of ____________, 20____, a quorum being present and voting thereon, a resolution was unanimously adopted authorizing the merger and consolidation of (#1) ___________ Church, ____________, Minnesota, located in ____________ County, Minnesota, and (#2) ___________ Church, ____________, Minnesota, located in ____________ County, Minnesota, and directing the execution of the foregoing Agreement of Merger and Consolidation, said merger to be accomplished under the provisions of Minnesota Statutes Section 315.365.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand by virtue of the authority granted to me by this corporation this _____ day of ____________, 20____.

______________________________

STATE OF MINNESOTA )
) ss.
COUNTY OF ST. LOUIS )

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this _____ day of ______
_______, 20____, by ____________________, to me known to be the Secretary/
Recording Officer of (surviving) ___________ Church, ____________, Minnesota, and he acknowledges that he signed the foregoing Certificate as Secretary/Recording Officer of said corporation by and on behalf of the corporation.

______________________________
Notary Public

This instrument drafted by:
Diocese of Duluth
2830 East Fourth Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55812
MINUTES OF A SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND MEMBERS OF (#1) CHURCH, __________ (Merging Parish Corporation)

A special joint meeting of the Board of Directors and Members of (#1) Church, __________ (“_________ Church”), a Minnesota parish religious corporation, was held at the Diocesan Pastoral Center in the City of Duluth, Minnesota, at the hour of ______ o’clock _______ M. on the ______ day of ______________, 20____, pursuant to the call of Bishop Paul D. Sirba. All Directors and Members of (#1) ________ Church were present in person as follows: Bishop Paul D. Sirba, Bishop of the Diocese of Duluth, Member and Director; Reverend James Bissonette, Vicar General of the Diocese of Duluth, Member and Director; Reverend ____________, Pastor of (#1) __________ Church, Member and Director; ____________, Lay Member and Director; and ____________, Lay Member and Director.

After leading the Members and Directors in prayer, Bishop Paul D. Sirba, as Chairman of the Board, called the meeting to order and noted that a quorum was present. All Members and Directors acknowledged receiving due notice of the meeting and waived any objections that might otherwise exist in regard thereto. The Agenda was reviewed and approved. Reading from the Minutes from the last Joint Meeting of the Members and Board of Directors was unanimously waived by all Members and Directors.

Upon motion duly made, seconded and unanimously carried, the following resolutions were adopted:

RESOLVED, that any and all requirements of notice of time, place and purpose provided by Minn. Stat. §315.365 and all other applicable laws are hereby waived in regard to the Merger of (#1) __________ Church with (#2) __________ Church, __________.

RESOLVED, FURTHER, that the attached Agreement of Merger and Consolidation of (#1) __________ Church, __________, Minnesota located in __________ County, Minnesota and (#2) __________ Church, __________, Minnesota located in __________ County, Minnesota is hereby ratified, approved and adopted by the Members and Directors and all of the Members and Directors are authorized and directed to execute the same as certification of its adoption and to make arrangements to have the same filed for record with the County Recorder of __________ County, Minnesota, and in the office of the County Recorder of the County in which is located the principal place of business of each parish religious corporation that is a party to said Agreement of Merger and Consolidation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Officers and Directors of (#1) __________, Church are hereby authorized and directed to proceed to complete the terms of
suggested Agreement of Merger and Consolidation in accordance with that Agreement, being fully empowered to execute any and all documents, certificates, contracts, or other documents or contracts necessary or incidental thereto.

FINALLY RESOLVED, that the acts and proceedings of the Officers, Members and Directors as heretofore taken since the time of the last meeting of the Members and Directors are, in all respects, ratified, approved, accepted and confirmed.

There being no further business to come before the meeting, upon motion duly made, seconded and carried unanimously, the joint meeting of the Members and Directors was adjourned.

______________________________________
Secretary

ATTEST:

Presiding, Bishop Paul D. Sirba
MINUTES OF A SPECIAL JOINT MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND
MEMBERS OF (#2) CHURCH, __________
(Merging Parish Corporation)

A special joint meeting of the Board of Directors and Members of (#2) Church,
(“_______ Church”), a Minnesota parish religious corporation, was held at
the Diocesan Pastoral Center in the City of Duluth, Minnesota, at the hour of ______ o’clock
. M. on the ______ day of __________, 20____, pursuant to the call of Bishop Paul D. Sirba.
All Directors and Members of (#2) Church were present in person as follows: Bishop
Paul D. Sirba, Bishop of the Diocese of Duluth, Member and Director; Reverend James Bissonette,
Vicar General of the Diocese of Duluth, Member and Director; Reverend ______________________,
Pastor of (#2) Church, Member and Director; ______________________, Lay
Member and Director; and ______________________, Lay Member and Director.

After leading the Members and Directors in prayer, Bishop Paul D. Sirba, as Chairman of the
Board, called the meeting to order and noted that a quorum was present. All Members and Directors
acknowledged receiving due notice of the meeting and waived any objections that might otherwise
exist in regard thereto. The Agenda was reviewed and approved. Reading from the Minutes from the
last Joint Meeting of the Members and Board of Directors was unanimously waived by all Members
and Directors.

Upon motion duly made, seconded and unanimously carried, the following resolutions were
adopted:

RESOLVED, that any and all requirements of notice of time, place and purpose
provided by Minn. Stat. §315.365 and all other applicable laws are hereby waived in regard to
the Merger of (#2) Church with (#1) Church,

RESOLVED, FURTHER, that the attached Agreement of Merger and
Consolidation of (#2) Church, __________________, Minnesota located in
_______________ County, Minnesota and (#1) Church,
____________________, Minnesota located in ______________ County, Minnesota is
hereby ratified, approved and adopted by the Members and Directors and all of the Members
and Directors are authorized and directed to execute the same as certification of its adoption and
to make arrangements to have the same filed for record with the County Recorder of
________________ County, Minnesota, and in the office of the County Recorder of the
County in which is located the principal place of business of each parish religious corporation
that is a party to said Agreement of Merger and Consolidation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Officers and Directors of (#2)
Church are hereby authorized and directed to proceed to complete the terms of
said Agreement of Merger and Consolidation in accordance with that Agreement, being fully empowered to execute any and all documents, certificates, contracts, or other documents or contracts necessary or incidental thereto.

FINALLY RESOLVED, that the acts and proceedings of the Officers, Members and Directors as heretofore taken since the time of the last meeting of the Members and Directors are, in all respects, ratified, approved, accepted and confirmed.

There being no further business to come before the meeting, upon motion duly made, seconded and carried unanimously, the joint meeting of the Members and Directors was adjourned.

________________________________________
Secretary

ATTEST:

Presiding, Bishop Paul D. Sirba
MINUTES OF A SPECIAL JOINT MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND
MEMBERS OF _______________ CHURCH, ________
(Surviving Parish Corporation)

A special joint meeting of the Board of Directors and Members of _______________ Church, ________ ("_____________ Church"), a Minnesota parish religious corporation, was held at the Diocesan Pastoral Center in the City of Duluth, Minnesota, at the hour of ______ o’clock _______M. on the ____ day of ______________, 20____, pursuant to the call of Bishop Paul D. Sirba. All Directors and Members of _______________ Church were present in person as follows: Bishop Paul D. Sirba, Bishop of the Diocese of Duluth, Member and Director; Reverend James Bissonette, Vicar General of the Diocese of Duluth, Member and Director; Reverend __________________. Pastor of _______________ Church, Member and Director; __________________, Lay Member and Director; and __________________, Lay Member and Director.

After leading the Members and Directors in prayer, Bishop Paul D. Sirba, as Chairman of the Board, called the meeting to order and noted that a quorum was present. All Members and Directors acknowledged receiving due notice of the meeting and waived any objections that might otherwise exist in regard thereto. The Agenda was reviewed and approved. Reading from the Minutes from the last Joint Meeting of the Members and Board of Directors was unanimously waived by all Members and Directors.

Upon motion duly made, seconded and unanimously carried, the following resolutions were adopted:

RESOLVED, that any and all requirements of notice of time, place and purpose provided by Minn. Stat. §315.365 and all other applicable laws are hereby waived in regard to the Merger of (#1) _______________ Church with (#2) _______________ Church, ________________.

RESOLVED, FURTHER, that the attached Agreement of Merger and Consolidation of (#1) _______________ Church, ________________, Minnesota located in _______________ County, Minnesota and (#2) _______________ Church, ________________, Minnesota located in _______________ County, Minnesota is hereby ratified, approved and adopted by the Members and Directors and all of the Members and Directors are authorized and directed to execute the same as certification of its adoption and to make arrangements to have the same filed for record with the County Recorder of _______________ County, Minnesota, and in the office of the County Recorder of the County in which is located the principal place of business of each parish religious corporation that is a party to said Agreement of Merger and Consolidation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Officers and Directors of _______________ Church are hereby authorized and directed to proceed to complete
the terms of said Agreement of Merger and Consolidation in accordance with that Agreement, being fully empowered to execute any and all documents, certificates, contracts, or other documents or contracts necessary or incidental thereto.

FINALLY RESOLVED, that the acts and proceedings of the Officers, Members and Directors as heretofore taken since the time of the last meeting of the Members and Directors are, in all respects, ratified, approved, accepted and confirmed.

There being no further business to come before the meeting, upon motion duly made, seconded and carried unanimously, the joint meeting of the Members and Directors was adjourned.

____________________________________________________
Secretary

ATTEST:

Presiding, Bishop Paul D. Sirba
Parish Sacred Art and Liturgical Inventory - Instructions

The pastor of each merging parish is responsible for the completion of this form to document the disposition of sacred items from the parish. Its purpose is to assure proper disposition of consecrated items, to safeguard the history and patrimony of parish articles, and to assist in fulfilling liturgical needs of the parishes within the Diocese of Duluth. A complete inventory of all sacred art and religious articles must be submitted to the Chancellor who will also approve the disposition of all items.

Principles to follow:

1. Tabernacles, chalices, ciboria, altar stones, relics, anything else used for the Eucharist and stained glass windows, if not used in new or merged parish MAY NOT be sold or given away to individuals. If these items are not transferred to another diocesan parish or religious institution, make arrangements to have them properly stored in consultation with the diocese. Contact: Fr. Peter Muhich of the Diocesan Implementation Committee to make arrangements.

2. Mass vestments, various religious items and certainly consecrated religious articles may be transferred to a neighboring parish that the people plan to attend.

3. An inventory of ALL religious articles which are not consecrated, such as pictures, statues, etc. needs to be submitted to the Chancellor’s office at the Pastoral Center and these items are not to be given away or sold.

   A certain amount of pastoral common sense should apply to this inventory. Historically, this inventory is crucial to answer questions, years later of, “Whatever happened to the steeple bells from the parish?” Pastorally, it may be used to show the parishioners that the items they hold dear have been properly taken care of. Consumables, such as candles, would not need to be listed. A hand carved set of the Stations of the Cross is important to document thoroughly, while a laminated set of prints could be mentioned without much thought. It is not necessary to know the final disposition of all purificators, but it is important to assure that they are not simply tossed away, etc.

4. Liturgical items may be transferred between parishes and institutions, but they are transferred as the property of the institutions, never of the individual priests. If an exception needs to be made, for the purpose of serving the pastoral needs of the faithful, this must be explicitly arranged with the Chancellor’s Office.
Parish Sacred Art and Liturgical Inventory for __________________________________

parish of ____________________, MN

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<th>Proposed Disposition</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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(Copy and use additional pages if necessary)

I, ____________________, Pastor of the parish of ____________________, attest that this is a complete and accurate inventory and record of disposition of the sacred items of this parish.

Signature of Pastor __________________________________ Date: ___________________

Page _____ of _____