

Parish Twinned/Clustered and Merged

No. 1100

Policy Statement: The Archbishop will be the final authority on whether or not a church will be closed. Before a church is closed, the Archbishop or his delegate will enter into discussions about the proposed closure with the Pastor and Parish Pastoral Council. The Archbishop will also discuss the proposal to close the church with the archdiocesan consultors.

Intent of Policy: To assist parishes in their deliberation and implementation vis-à-vis their reorganization and restructuring into twinned/clustered parishes, or a merged parish.

Definition: For the purposes of these regulations, a church is defined as the physical structures that will close as a result of the parish being merged with another parish.

Procedure: The merged parishes will be formed into a new parish centered, in most cases, at the site of one of the existing churches of the merging parishes. To facilitate a smooth transition between parishes:

Temporal Goods

1. An inventory of all assets, excluding property and buildings, will be completed under the direction and supervision of the pastor. A general dollar value will be assigned to the items inventoried by the pastor in consultation with the Parish Pastoral Council, the Parish Finance Committee, and with the archdiocesan Financial Administrator.
2. An inventory and assessment of all property and buildings will be completed under the direction of the pastor in consultation with the archdiocesan Financial Administrator.
3. A parish financial report will be completed under the auspices of the pastor and Chairperson of the Finance Committee, in consultation with the archdiocesan Financial Administrator.
4. The balance of the parish operating and savings accounts will be combined into the account of the new parish, as will the funds received from the sale of assets excluding funds received from the sale of building and property.
5. The income from the sale of buildings and property will be held on account at the Chancery Office. These funds will be for possible future use of the parish for capital construction or capital expenditure.

6. Where applicable, appropriate government regulations will be followed in order to transfer or cancel a parish Charitable Registration Number.
7. Other than as indicated herein, the archdiocesan Financial Administrator will be responsible for disposing of all physical assets including property. The archdiocesan Financial Administrator will record the proceeds of the sale of all assets and property.

Parish Staff

When dealing with staff, archdiocesan personnel policies must be followed.

Sacramental Registers

1. Sacramental Registers are transferred to the new parish church office. (see Policy No. 807 Sacramental Registers Location)
2. No more entries are to be made in the Sacramental Registers pertaining to the parish being merged. (see Policy No. 805 Sacramental Registers)

Parish Records

1. Records to be transferred to the new parish:
 - sacramental registers and associated files, e.g., marriage files, burial permits, etc.
 - financial records of the previous seven (7) years, including general ledgers, invoices, receipts, accounts payable, accounts receivables.
 - current employee files
2. Records to be transferred to the archdiocesan Archives
 - financial reports
 - general ledgers dated prior to seven years
 - annual reports
 - minutes of meetings
 - correspondence
 - parish bulletins
 - photographs and albums
3. Contact the archdiocesan Archivist to inventory the parish records and to determine how to transfer the records to the Archives.

Religious Artifacts

1. Items of a religious nature such as vestments, sacred vessels, statues, altar stones (see Policy No. 825 Disposal of Altar Stones and Relics) not required in the new parish will be disposed of through the Archives.
2. Contact the archdiocesan Archivist to inventory the parish religious artefacts and to determine how to transfer them to the Archives.

Transformational Celebrations

When a decision has been made to close a church, special celebrations will be organized by the Parish Pastoral Council to mark that time of transition for the parishioners of that community.

Implementation

I. Parish Pastoral Council

- a) Twinned/Clustered Parishes
 1. Every effort should be made to create one joint Parish Pastoral Council with, at least initially, an equitable representation from each of the parishes.
 2. Issues that are unique to individual parishes can be dealt with, if necessary, by the representatives from those parishes.
- b) Merged Parishes
 1. One new Parish Pastoral Council will be formed for the new parish that has been created through the merging of two or more single parishes.

II. Parish Finances

- a) Twinned/Clustered Parishes
 1. One Finance Committee will be created with, at least initially, an equitable representation from each of the individual parishes.
 2. The finances of each parish could be recorded, maintained, and managed as separate entities.
 3. One common bank account will be opened for parishes in a particular grouping.

b) Merged Parishes

1. One Finance Committee will be created with, at least initially, an equitable representation from each of the parishes.
2. All finances and financial records will be consolidated as quickly as possible.
3. One common bank account will exist for merged parishes.
4. The new parish will be responsible for maintaining or closing the physical facilities of the parish that was merged, in consultation with the Archbishop.
5. In the case of rural parishes, the new parish will be responsible for the care of any cemetery of the merging parish.

III. Parish Staff

a) Twinned/Clustered Parishes

1. A complete review should be conducted as to the staff needs of the new grouping of parishes.
2. A common staff should be employed to carry out the functions of the parish grouping.
3. The physical location from where individual staff members will work can be determined by the pastor and joint Parish Pastoral Council.

b) Merged Parishes

1. The staff from those parishes being merged will be consolidated into one staff immediately.
2. Staffing needs for the new parish will be assessed and archdiocesan personnel policies are to be followed.

IV. Parish Ministries

a) Twinned/Clustered Parishes

1. A review of all ministries should be undertaken and, where possible, the ministries should be consolidated. For example, determine where one RCIA, one sacramental prep, one hospital ministry, etc., would serve the grouping of parishes more effectively than would individual ministries in each parish in the grouping.

b) Merged Parishes

1. The programs and ministries from the merged parishes will be consolidated immediately.

V. Parish Name

a) Twinned/Clustered Parishes

1. The name of the churches will remain as is.

b) Merged Parishes

1. The merged parish will be considered as a new faith community, but the name of the church where the merger took place could remain the same.
2. When two parishes merge into one parish at a new church, and at a new location, the new parish will follow the archdiocesan procedures for selecting the name of the new church. The name of one of the merged churches could be used for the new church and parish.

VI. Equipment, Furniture, Supplies

a) Twinned/Clustered Parishes

1. A determination should be made as soon as possible as to the needs of the new grouping re: equipment, furniture, supplies, etc.
2. Consideration should be given to the consolidation of such resources as printing, copying, and computer equipment. (The extent of the consolidation will be determined, by some degree, by the decisions a particular grouping might make regarding the staff that will be employed, and the location of that staff.)

b) Merged Parishes

1. Equipment, furniture, and supplies from the merged parishes will be consolidated in the new parish at the earliest possible date.
2. The disposition of excess equipment will follow procedures listed under **Temporal Goods** (*cf. 1, 5 & 7*).

VII. Transformational Celebrations

a) Twinned/Clustered Parishes

1. Celebrations and events should be organized that create unity among the parishes of the grouping.
2. Common social events and common liturgical celebrations such as missions, Easter vigils, special liturgies, etc. should be organized within the grouping.

b) Merged Parishes

1. A special celebration will be organized in the parish being merged into another parish to mark, in a formal way, the reality that there is an end to a particular era.
2. A special celebration will be organized in the new and larger merged parish to mark the joyful creation of a new faith community.

Refer to Policy:

No. 805 Sacramental Registers

No. 807 Sacramental Registers Location

No. 825 Disposal of Altar Stones and Relics