

Archdiocese of Detroit Cluster Guidelines

I. Definition of a Clustered Parish:

A Clustered Parish has a priest as its pastor, however the priest may live at another location and be pastor of more than one community. The communities each have a parish pastoral council, and may or may not have geographical boundaries. (See Canons 516, 517, 518, 536, 905)

II. Rationale:

The church of the Archdiocese of Detroit cannot continue to operate as did the church of the last century because of the continuing impact of urban sprawl, fewer priests, the new immigrant and constant changes in economics and ministry needs. The clustering of parishes and the collaboration of parishes within vicariate boundaries will allow for a more effective expression of Church through the sharing of human and capital resources and the coordination of ministerial activities.

III. Goal:

The goal is that by clustering parishes the identity of each parish will be respected and maintained. Through good stewardship of resources by coordinating ministerial activities, the sharing of staff, program expenses and capital resources, parishes can sustain a vibrant and life-giving community.

IV. Expectations:

- ❖ Parish communities will become more life giving and self-sustaining through the establishment of common goals and the sharing of resources while maintaining individual parish identity.
- ❖ New friendships and new small faith communities will emerge within the larger community when collaboration occurs across generational, racial and cultural lines.
- ❖ New lay leadership will emerge taking on new roles and responsibilities.
- ❖ Parishes will maintain a neighborhood presence of an evangelizing Catholic community especially in areas with few Catholics.

V. Cluster Policies:

Policy 1: Identification of potential clusters

Vicariate Pastoral Councils (VPC's) in consultation with Parish Pastoral Councils will submit to the Archdiocese a listing of possible clusters or mergers to be implemented within the next ten years. Some factors to be considered: availability of clergy, household numbers per parish, financial status, proximity of parishes, racial and ethnic similarities, geographic proximity, size and shape of worship space, meeting space and school buildings. In emergency situations, the bishops with the assignment board may propose parishes for a cluster. Parish openings will be listed as cluster assignments.
(517.1, 517.2, 518, 536.1)

- ❖ Vicariate Pastoral Councils (VPCs) in consultation with Parish Pastoral Councils (PPCs) will submit to the Archdiocese a listing of potential clusters that may be implemented within the next five years.
- ❖ The VPC will require each PPC to compile a parish profile. The profile will be shared in discussions at the PPC and VPC tables, which will result in potential collaborative relationships and/or future clusters.
- ❖ All parishes are encouraged to form collaborative relationships with parishes within the vicariate boundaries looking at ways to share liturgical celebrations, to develop collaborative programs and to share resources.
- ❖ When a vacancy occurs in the absence of a vicariate plan the bishops with the assignment board may propose parishes for a cluster.
- ❖ Parish openings may be listed as cluster assignments.

Policy 2: Preparation for Clustering

Parishes will be notified at least one full year in advance of clustering and a transition team from the Department of Parish Life will work with both/all parishes to prepare for the clustering. This includes, but is not limited to: a financial audit, building audit and reviews of liturgical schedules, current and future staffing needs and parish calendars.
(517.1, 517.2)

- ❖ It is the preference that parishes will be notified one year or more in advance to begin a transition process to formally cluster, with the exception of emergency situations.
- ❖ Upon notification of formally being clustered, a transition facilitator will be identified to assist the parishes of the future cluster. Parish Leadership will come together with a facilitator in a series of meetings to:
 - Celebrate their history through prayer and dialogue.
 - Review their parish profiles and determine their commonality in Mission, Worship, Religious Education and Christian Service.

- Develop a transitional plan to determine liturgical schedules, potential staffing needs and shared operational expenses to be submitted to the regional bishop and vicar for review and approval by the pastor elect.
- ❖ During the transitional process parish leadership will keep their congregations apprised of the cluster process through town hall meetings, the bulletin and weekend announcements.
- ❖ Parish Leadership will plan joint liturgical and social activities for the congregations to come together during the transition period.
- ❖ Parish Leadership and parishioners will have the opportunity to attend the workshop, *The Sharing of a Pastor*.

Policy 3: Preparation for Pastoral Assignment

Every priest will notify the assignment board of their intention to retire, renew their current assignment, or to request a change in the fourth of their six-year assignment. Whenever possible, a new pastor will be assigned to the cluster. In emergency situations, an administrator may be assigned until a permanent assignment can be recommended.

(517.2, 536.1)

- ❖ Priests considering retirement will notify the assignment board of their intention to retire in the fourth of their six-year assignment.
- ❖ Priests considering to renew their current assignment or to request a change will notify the assignment board of their intention at the end of the fourth or beginning of the fifth of their six-year assignment.
- ❖ Whenever possible a new pastor will be assigned to a cluster; however, a pastor may request to become a cluster pastor when a/or another parish has an established collaborative relationship.
- ❖ In emergency situations, a temporary administrator may be assigned until a permanent assignment can be recommended.
- ❖ First-time cluster pastors will attend the workshop, *Transitioning from Pastoring One Parish to Pastoring Multi-parishes*.
- ❖ Pastors transitioning into a cluster are encouraged to join the Cluster Pastor Support Group.

Policy 4: Liturgical Celebrations in Clusters

Parish leadership will determine the schedule for liturgies to ensure an adequate amount of time between liturgies. One liturgy for Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil, Christmas Eve and Holy Days of obligation may be celebrated in clusters with parishes rotating as the host site, depending upon the size of the facilities and available number of priests. (536.1, 905.1, 905.2)

- ❖ Each priest serving the cluster will celebrate Mass not more than three times on a weekend whenever possible. (905.1, 905.2)
- ❖ The worship commissions of the cluster parishes will meet at least quarterly to plan combined liturgical celebrations, i.e. Reconciliation Services, Holy Days, Advent, Christmas, Lent, The Triduum, Devotions, Weekday Mass, other.
- ❖ Combined liturgical celebrations should reflect the cultural and ethnic traditions of each parish.

Policy 5: Finances

There shall be an understanding in clusters that individuals may deposit their marked envelope in whatever church of the cluster they may attend with the understanding that it will be forwarded to their home parish. Each parish in the cluster maintains a separate financial status.

- ❖ While each parish in the cluster maintains a separate financial status the Stewardship Commissions of the parishes will meet at least quarterly to review the financial status of the parishes to determine what costs can be shared jointly to eliminate duplicate expenses.
- ❖ Yearly, Stewardship Commissions will formulate a cluster budget in addition to their parish budgets to ensure a fair and equitable distribution of shared costs, i.e. staff, equipment and/or facilities, etc.
- ❖ The Stewardship Commissions will ensure that parishioners may deposit their marked envelopes in whatever church of the cluster they may attend, with the understanding that it will be forwarded to their home parish. Loose money stays in the parish in which it was contributed.
- ❖ The Stewardship Commissions will encourage parishioners to use marked envelopes and educate them on the importance of stewardship in order for the parishes to maintain financial stability to carry out their ministry.

“And all who shared the faith owned everything in common; they sold their goods and possessions and distributed the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed. Each day with one heart, they regularly went to the temple but met in their houses for the breaking of the bread; they shared their food gladly and generously; they praised God and were looked up to by everyone. Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved” (Acts of the Apostles 2:44 ff).

VI. Three-Year Cluster Implementation and Evaluation Guidelines

First Year

- ❖ During the first six months the parishes will work with the pastor to implement the operational and liturgical recommendations made in the transitional plan.
- ❖ In the first six months the pastor will review job descriptions with all staff in the parishes evaluating the gifts of each individual and how they may be used for the common good of the cluster.
- ❖ The pastor is encouraged to implement cluster parish staff meetings and informal gatherings such as luncheons. This will allow for:
 - Staff to come to know each other.
 - Staff to share in ministry together.
 - Staff to come to know the parish communities and their needs, as well as the neighborhood needs.
 - Staff to determine additional training and development that they need as a team.
 - The development of team ministry within the cluster.
 - A better use of the pastor's time.
- ❖ The parish staffs will participate in a one-day planning retreat to evaluate all the ministries in the cluster and to determine where possible ministries should be consolidated. For example: an evaluation could be made to determine if one RCIA program, one senior program, one bookkeeper, etc. would serve the cluster of parishes more effectively than would individual ministries in each parish in the cluster. Staffing recommendations will be made to the stewardship commissions for budget consideration for the coming fiscal year.
- ❖ The Parish Pastoral Councils will evaluate their parish using the evaluation *What a Parish is, What a Parish Does, and What a Parish Needs*; they will create or reclaim a mission statement and develop a parish plan with goals and objectives for the next three years.
- ❖ The Parish Pastoral Councils of the cluster parishes will meet at least quarterly to share their parish plan, to develop joint goals that will foster collaboration between the parishes for the mission of the church, and to review parish calendars to eliminate overlapping events. The Parish Pastoral Councils need to keep in mind and respect the time of the pastor. For example, two fundraisers should not occur within the same month.
- ❖ The Stewardship Commissions of the cluster parishes will meet at least quarterly with the pastor to review the parish budgets and plant operations to determine good stewardship of resources. They will identify systemic ways to streamline or eliminate duplicated costs; for example: snow removal, maintenance, supplies, etc.

Second Year

- ❖ The parish staffs will implement staffing recommendations determined in year one. They will continue to work cooperatively and develop collaborative programs for the common good.
- ❖ The Parish Pastoral Councils of the cluster parishes will continue to meet quarterly, to share calendars and to share their parish plans.
- ❖ At the end of the fiscal year the Parish Pastoral Councils will evaluate their cluster arrangement, determine its strengths and weaknesses, and develop additional cooperative goals. They will report their findings to their parishioners and the vicar, regional bishop and the Vicariate Pastoral Council.
- ❖ The Pastor of the cluster parishes should provide a “state of the cluster” address, which would articulate a pastoral vision for the cluster parishes.
- ❖ The Stewardship Commissions of the cluster parishes will continue to meet at least bi-annually with the pastor to review the parish budgets and plant operations to determine good stewardship of resources. Special consideration should be given to the use of the buildings in relationship to the cluster. If there are schools involved in the cluster, then they should evaluate enrollment, tuition, and financial liability in each parish.

Third Year

- ❖ In the middle of the fiscal year the pastor, pastoral staff, and parish leadership will come together to evaluate and to determine if, as a parish and a cluster, they are building a life-giving and healthy parish community. They should use the criteria set forth in *What a Parish is, What a Parish Does, and What a Parish Needs*. It is important that they review the past four years (status before becoming a cluster, the transition period and the past two years as a cluster).
- ❖ The parish leadership of the cluster parishes will come together and share their evaluations. They will develop ways to build on their strengths and to overcome their weaknesses.
- ❖ A written cluster evaluation should be shared with the parishioners, the vicar, regional bishop and the Vicariate Pastoral Council for feedback.
- ❖ If it should be determined that the cluster arrangement is not life-giving then the parishes need to reformulate the parish/cluster within the next two years with the assistance of the Department of Parish Life.

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

The writing of this document was a collaborative effort of our Council of Vicars, our Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, our Vicariate Pastoral Councils, our Parish Pastoral Councils, the pastors and parish representatives of our nineteen Parish Clusters and the Department of Parish Life. The production of this document was collaborative effort of the Archdiocese of Detroit's print shop and our layout and design artist.

A special thank you to the Pastoral Planning offices of the Archdiocese of Dubuque, Iowa, the Diocese of Owensboro, Kentucky, and the Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton, Canada, for sharing their resources.