



Pre-Implementation Info & FAQ

The next phase of Growing Disciples begins for all parishes on July 1, 2024. Every parish will participate in a **Preparation** Phase and an **Implementation** Phase.

Below is a preview of the content that is forthcoming in the Implementation Resource Document, which will be made available in July. Every priest and parish secretary will receive a *digital version* of the Resource Document. Additionally, a *printed version* of the Resource Document will be mailed to every parish office. More details will follow in the weeks to come.

Preparation Phase

Beginning July 1, every parish will be asked to take part in the **Preparation Phase**. This looks different for those with no change and those where a merger or relegation is occurring.

In preparation for a merger or a relegation, the pastor is asked to select a Parish Transition Team of 6-12 people, composed of leaders from each of the parishes that will be involved in the merger. (If the group of parishes to be merged is served by more than one pastor, the pastor chosen to lead this process will oversee this group.)

The Parish Transition Team will be asked to assist the Pastor in the following. More detail will be included in the Resource Document which will be made available in July:

- Review the Mass schedules of the parishes and discuss a new Mass schedule to be implemented after the merger is complete.
- Propose three possible names for the new parish (It is possible in some cases to keep the name of the principal parish.)

- Study the staffing needs for the merged parish.
 - *Staff changes as a result of the merger should wait until the parish merger is decreed.*
- Study the calendars, traditions, ministries, and organizations of each parish to determine how they can be integrated into the new parish
- Consider the best location for the parish office, and the best location for the rectory or priests' residence.
- Carry out a self-inspection of the parish buildings to assess and plan for any needed future repairs.

After the Preparation Phase is complete, the Bishop will choose the new parish name. He will also issue the decree of merger and the time frame in which it will take effect.

Implementation Phase

Once the decree has been issued, the **Implementation Phase** will begin. For merging parishes, this is the time to put into action the planned merger of parishes. Parishes with no change will not receive a decree, and will follow a more streamlined process.

The following tasks are not to be completed **until the Preparation Phase has been completed** and/or the decree has been received. This will be detailed in the Resource Document which will be made available in July:

- The Office of Finance will request a new EIN number so financial accounts can be transferred. The Office of Finance will help migrate and set up your accounting data.
- The Office of Development will advise about the merged ADA goals after the merger.
- The Office of Divine Worship will help renew the mandates of your extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion and will answer questions about the removal of sacred items from closed churches.
- The Office of Information Management will work with your parish to ensure accurate reporting for the Kenedy Directory and the Diocesan website.
- The Office of Human Resources will assist in any staffing changes.
- The Legal Department will review any sale or demolition of property.

- The Office of the Vicar General will oversee the appointment of two trustees of the newly merged parish.
- The Judicial Vicar will advise regarding the decrees, both in merging the parishes and in the relegation of any churches to profane use.

The Pastor, with the Parish Transition Team, will be responsible for the following local decisions. (The Diocesan staff is available for assistance if needed.) This will be detailed in the Resource Document which will be made available in July:

- The formation of a new combined parish council and finance council;
- The integration and retraining of extraordinary ministers, lectors, servers, ushers, and collection counters;
- The consolidation of parishioner data and contribution data;
- The selection of a new parish website domain name, website, email addresses, stationary, signage and logos.

Frequently Asked Questions:

These will be detailed in the Resource Document which will be made available in July.

My parish has no canonical change. Do I need to follow these steps? The steps above focus on parishes that are preparing for a merger or a relegation. Most of these steps do not apply to parishes with no canonical change. However, all parishes will be asked to carry out a self-inspection of the parish buildings and a review of their Mass schedules. Furthermore, all parishes will be asked to undergo a revitalization and renewal process under the direction of the Office of Mission.

My parish is involved in a merger. How do we choose a new parish name? When several parishes are merged together, the merged parish will normally need to be given a new name. The pastor and the Parish Transition Team will ordinarily be asked to suggest three names for the new parish.

Does a parish merger need to choose a new name? In general, when parishes merge, a new parish name will be chosen. However, in some cases, a smaller parish can be absorbed by a larger parish without a change of name. Furthermore, if a parish is merged with other

parishes whose churches will not be in use, such that only one church remains, the principal parish can retain its name.

Can I begin a new Mass schedule on July 1, 2024? The new schedule will presumably begin when the parish merger takes effect. Please begin studying your Mass schedules in preparation for the implementation of a new Mass schedule.

I need to make an adjustment to our Mass schedule. Can I adjust our current schedule? If it is not possible to maintain the current schedule, it is possible to make an interim adjustment to the Mass schedule. This is a temporary measure in anticipation of the new Mass schedule that will take effect with the parish merger.

What will happen to my Annual Diocesan Appeal goal if my parish is merged or scheduled not in use? All parishes are asked to conduct the ADA as usual, as money raised goes to help those in need and ministries across the Diocese. After a parish is merged, its goal and all pledges will be merged into the new parish. All parishioners will be asked to integrate themselves into the larger community as a member of their new parish, supporting both their parish and the diocese.

My parish is proposed not in use. What do I do if I receive a bequest or gift for the parish? To determine whether any gift or bequest can be accepted, please contact the Legal Department.

Do I have to wait until June 30th to carry out the merger of my parishes or the relegation of a church? Some parishes will be ready to proceed sooner than others. When your Parish Transition Team has completed the steps in the Preparation Phase, you can request the canonical decree from the Bishop and then begin the Implementation Phase of your merger. In some cases, there may be reasons to request the relegation of a church more quickly. Please contact the Bishop's Office or the Judicial Vicar to arrange for the decree.

My parish is proposed not in use. Can I schedule a closing Mass? Closing Masses can be scheduled once the decree of relegation has been issued by the Diocesan Bishop. Please contact the Judicial Vicar or the Bishop's Office to make arrangements for the official date of your closing Mass. A decree of relegation will be prepared in advance of this date.

My parish is proposed not in use, but services have already been suspended for some time.

If services are already suspended, it is recommended that you not schedule a closing Mass. A decree of relegation will be issued to officially deconsecrate the church. After the decree of relegation has been issued, you can begin consideration of the sale, repurposing, or demolition of the property.

My parish is proposed not in use. May I begin the process of selling the church building?

A formal request must be submitted to the Diocese before any sale of property can take place. If you have a prospective buyer, please contact the Legal Department to seek advice. However, a church cannot be sold before the decree of relegation to profane use has been issued by the Diocesan Bishop.

What about the sale of property other than the church building? A decree of relegation to profane use is not needed for the sale of rectories, halls, or other parish buildings. However, a formal request must still be submitted and approved. Please contact the Legal Department to seek advice.

How do I determine the sale price for a church property? Please work with the Legal Department in negotiating the sale price. The sale of a property can take place only after a signed formal request has been obtained.

Can I have Mass in a church that has been relegated to profane use? Once the church building has been relegated, it will no longer be a sacred space and sacraments cannot be celebrated there.

Can a Catholic cemetery be closed if no one new will be buried there? Cemeteries must be maintained in a manner suitable to the peace of those who are laid to rest there. Questions about cemeteries should be directed to the Vicar General.

How do we handle payroll during the interim period? Continue processing payroll through Paycor using the process currently in place. The Office of Finance will notify you when the new EIN or change of parish name is in place and when the corresponding Paycor account is set up.

How do we pay bills during the implementation period? Continue processing invoices through ParishSoft as currently in place. The Office of Finance will notify you when the new file is ready to use.

How long do we keep the bank accounts from merged in parishes open? The bank accounts should remain open until all checks are cleared and any automatic payments are transferred to the new bank account, or six months from the last check written.

What do I do with liturgical items in a church that is closing? Sacred objects should be removed from a church that is closing. This includes sacred vessels, vestments and liturgical books, and may also include statues, stations, stained glass windows, altars, and high altars. These items may be handled in a variety of ways. First of all, it is ideal if these items can be incorporated into the merged parish. If this is not possible, the pastor should contact the Office of Divine Worship to make these items available to other churches in the Diocese of Peoria or elsewhere. Please consult the Office of Divine Worship before any action is taken.

One of my parishioners has asked a liturgical item to be returned to himself or to his family. Sacred objects donated to the parish belong to the Church. If possible, these sacred objects should be conserved by the merged parish or by another church in the Diocese of Peoria. If the sacred object is not valuable and cannot be used in another church, the object may be simply returned or gifted to the parishioner. Please consult the Office of Divine Worship before any action is taken.

My parish would like to receive some liturgical items from churches that are closing. The Office of Divine Worship will be sending out a survey to assess what liturgical items are desired by parishes. We will use this survey to make liturgical items available where they are needed.