



Prayer - Planning - Possibilities

Implementation Guide for Partnered Parishes



PASTORAL PLANNING PROCESS
Diocese of Erie - January 2024





Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Thank you for taking the time to review this implementation guide.

Creating and finalizing a new configuration for parishes involves a significant process. But as the planning process transitions into implementation, a completely new journey begins. Whether your parish is part of a new partnership, a merger, or perhaps welcoming new parishioners who join your parish due to changes at their own, these guides are designed to help you consider the many aspects of the experience that need to be taken into consideration.

These moments are very important for both parishioners and parishes. While there are many logistics to address, we must begin by ensuring that all parishioners, old and new, feel a sense of welcome and belonging. Pastors, pastoral teams and parishioners should all be involved in the process, sharing insights and ideas about ways to make transitions not only manageable, but also life-giving.



Generosity and patience as well as honest, charitable discussions will help us live out the Pastoral Planning Prayer created for the Diocese of Erie:

“...for the vision to see new paths of possibility; for a spirit of mission that invigorates our every effort; and for the strength to be unafraid of what is new.”

Sincerely yours in Christ,

The Most Rev. Lawrence T. Persico
Bishop of Erie

+ Forming a **TRANSITION TEAM**



Each pastor is invited to create a transition team. While not every pastor will find it necessary, a transition team can help to carry out the many aspects of change involved as parishes partner.

Giving thoughtful and prayerful attention to the membership of this team will pay dividends. A trusted advisor or two from the parish staff, Parish Council, Finance Council or other parish organization can be of great assistance to the pastor in determining how a transition team can be used most effectively in each parish.

Once membership is established, consider bringing the entire team together for fellowship, discussion and brainstorming. Encourage members to read this guide, available at www.ErieRCD.org/planning.html, prior to meeting so they are prepared to bring ideas to the table. Transition team members will have strong connections to other parishioners who can work on various aspects of the transition.

In addition to the logistics discussed in this guide, transition team members can be involved in a number of activities, including:

Communications: What methods might be used to keep parishioners apprised of new initiatives and changes?

Ministries: What is the best way for the parishes involved in the partnership to share outreach efforts they have offered and to brainstorm ways they can be brought together, refined or reinvented?

Worship: How might the parishes involved in a partnership express their new identity in prayer? What kinds of special events might be arranged? What might be adopted on an ongoing basis?

Staffing: The transition team might create a subcommittee or a task force—in some cases simply naming an individual to serve in an advisory capacity to the pastor—to help formulate a staffing plan.

There is no set way to go about the transition. Each parish is unique, and as parishioners come together for discussion, new ideas will emerge.

PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL

Every parish is to have a Finance Council as stated in Canon 537.

The Parish Financial Practices Policy Manual for the Diocese of Erie, which can be found at www.ErieRCD.org/finance/financemanual.html, includes a chapter with the diocesan norms that all parishes should review, whether they are updating membership in their Finance Councils or not. Among the topics are: membership requirements, meeting guidelines, a list of duties and responsibilities, the role of pastors and business managers, and recommended practices.



According to diocesan law, once parishes have partnered, pastors will have the option of having the members of each parish's Finance Council be taken from among the parishioners themselves (option 1), or taken in equal proportion from each of the partnered parishes (option 2).

OPTION 1: The Finance Councils remain absolutely separate. They have entirely different members, drawn only from the parish which that council serves, and separate meetings.

Parish A	Finance Council Members:	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Parish B	Finance Council Members	7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

OPTION 2: The two separate Finance Councils have identical membership. The same people, drawn from both parishes, serve on both Finance Councils. Meetings continue to be held separately, although they may be held consecutively.

Parish A	Finance Council Members:	1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9
Parish B	Finance Council Members	1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9



If option 1 is chosen, the existing parish Finance Councils can simply remain in place, and nothing else needs to be done.

If option 2 is chosen, the existing parish Finance Councils must be disbanded, and new Finance Councils constituted within three months. It is recommended that for the initial appointments, one-third of the members receive a one-year appointment, one-third receive a two-year appointment and one-third receive the full, three-year appointment. For this reason, newly partnered parishes are automatically granted, for the first three years of the partnership, a derogation from the diocesan norm requiring all members of parish Finance Councils to have a three-year term (cf. *The Parish Financial Practices Policy Manual for the Diocese of Erie*, chapter 5, section 3a). All subsequent appointments must be for the full three-year term.

It is important that separate minutes be kept of each parish's Finance Council meeting, even if the councils have the same members, as in option 2, and that the finances of individual parishes not be commingled in any way. In addition, copies of the minutes from Finance Council meetings are to be retained for seven years.

+ PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

By diocesan law, partnered parishes in the diocese are to share a parish Pastoral Council (cf. can. 536 §§1-2), which is an advisory body to the pastor. **Once parishes have partnered, it will be necessary to constitute a new parish Pastoral Council.** The existing Pastoral Councils are to be disbanded, and a new, shared Pastoral Council with an equal number of members from each of the partnered parishes is to be constituted within six months.

It is recommended that for the initial appointments, one-third of the members receive a one-year appointment, one-third receive a two-year appointment and one-third receive a three-year appointment. As there are no diocesan norms specifically governing the term limits of Pastoral Council members, no derogation from any such norm is required.

Copies of the minutes for Pastoral Council meetings are to be retained for seven years.



From the OFFICE OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

Parish partnering will result in many improvements and increased efficiency in the financial administration of parishes. Fewer office locations will be needed, and the accounting duties and office functions can be streamlined. More detailed tracking of church building costs will aid in future planning decisions. These and other economies will result in significant cost savings and quicker access to important data.

Parish communities that have partnered are to maintain the separate budgets already in place for each of the parishes. Most records will continue to be maintained separately for each parish on an ongoing basis.

The guidelines that follow will help your parish achieve a smooth financial and administrative transition. Questions can be addressed to:

Patrick Barron, Director of Parish & School Financial Services
at pbarron@ErieRCD.org or
by calling 1.800.374.3723 extension 185, or 814.824.1168.



The Parish Financial Practices Policy Manual developed for the Diocese of Erie, a valuable resource that addresses many questions, is available at:
www.ErieRCD.org/finance/financemanual.html

FINANCIAL REPORTING/DIOCESAN OBLIGATIONS

Each parish will continue to file its own parish Annual Report and Budget. Each parish will also continue to have its own Catholic Services Appeal goal and diocesan assessments.

Separate financial reports are to be filed and maintained on an ongoing basis for each parish cemetery.

ACCOUNTING, BANK AND INVESTMENT ACCOUNTS, AND PAYROLL

The business manager is to use the same accounting software while maintaining separate accounting systems for each parish.



This policy should be implemented no later than six months after the effective date of the partnership.

All financial bank or investment accounts need to be maintained separately for each parish.

Salaries and benefits are to be recorded separately for each parish, based upon each employee's duties.

For the sake of efficiency, smaller partnered parishes may find it helpful to combine existing payrolls into a single parish payroll. The other partnered parish(es) would then reimburse the paying parish for their own share of the payroll. The same thing could be done with health insurance invoices and the 401(k) Retirement Plan Contribution Report.

As noted in the previous section, parishes will be billed separately for diocesan assessments; all information regarding assessments should be maintained separately for each parish.

The pastor, in consultation with the Finance Councils, will need to determine how to divide shared expenses.

OFFICE LOCATION

The pastor, with the consultation of the Finance Councils and the transition team, needs to select a single office location. **This decision is to be implemented as soon as practicable.**



+ RECORD-KEEPING

CHILD PROTECTION RECORDS

Please ensure that all records regarding child protection compliance are in place for your parish and that they are stored in a secure, locked file. All records must be kept from every site, including old records from secondary or former churches that no longer have any programs. All Safe Environment Training for Youth records must be kept on file indefinitely. Parishes may choose to store files in one office or separately at each parish.



Records for all parish and school personnel, as well as regular and occasional volunteers, must be on file per the Policy for the Protection of Children, sections IIIA and IIIB. Documentation to be kept on file includes applications, clearances, trainings, compliance forms, etc. Complete lists of required records can be found in Section III. A. of the Policy.

Questions can be addressed to:

Cindy Zemcik, Coordinator of the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth
at czemcik@eriercd.org or
by calling 1.800.374.3723 extension 195, or 814.824.1195.

SACRAMENTAL RECORDS

All sacramental records for partnered parishes should be stored in one office. Going forward, separate records should continue to be maintained in the name of each parish community. Please remember that all official sacramental records must be kept in written form in the official sacramental books. Sacramental records may also be kept electronically, but only as a backup to the hard-copy version.

ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS

All records such as Parish and Finance Council minutes, financial records, deeds and other administrative information for each of the parishes involved in the partnership should be stored in the one parish office, but without mixing the records of one parish with that of the other. Copies of the Finance Council and Pastoral Council minutes are to be retained for seven years.

Refer to page 3-3 of the *Parish Financial Practices Policy Manual* available at www.ErieRCD.org/finance/financemanual.html for details regarding records retention.



+ From the OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Careful consideration of human resources is essential for parishes making changes as a result of parish restructuring. Treating parish staff and volunteers with sincere respect and pastoral care should remain a priority.

Jim Tometsko, director of Human Resources, can assist with your questions and refer you to resources that will be helpful as you navigate changes. He can be reached by email at jtometsko@ErieRCD.org or by phone at 814.824.1189.

POSITION PROFILES

Pastors should verify that all the partnered parishes have updated all job descriptions and/or position profiles for every employee. More information, along with sample job profiles, is available at www.ErieRCD.org/Human-Resources.html.

Since parishes that are partnering are combining their staffs into one office, please make sure that all job profiles are updated and filed together in the same location.

Remember that all positions must now be designated as either exempt or non-exempt per the U.S. Dept. of Labor. A worksheet to help pastors and business managers determine this status is included at the end of this guide and available at www.ErieRCD.org/Human-Resources.html.



EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

Do all parishes involved in the partnership have employee handbooks? If so, they should be compared to determine whether one will suit the new circumstances best, or if a new handbook needs to be developed. This is an ideal assignment for a member of the transition team.

A model for a parish handbook can be found at www.ErieRCD.org/Human-Resources.html under the heading, Developing a Parish Employee Handbook.

STAFFING

Staffing is one of the major concerns of parishes that are partnering. Remember that decisions can be made over the next several months, as budgets in force through the end of the fiscal year in which the partnership takes effect will allow all parishes involved in a new partnership to maintain current staffing levels. This should give pastors and parish administrators time to assess their needs and bring staffing in line with their new circumstances by the end of the fiscal year. Whether or not all staff remain employed until that time is at the discretion of the pastor.

The Human Resources Office of the Diocese of Erie recommends this topic be addressed with staff from day one. Pastors should be open with staff members, letting them know that every position and every staff member's role must be carefully evaluated in order to make the best, most efficient use of parish resources. During the first days and weeks after parish restructuring is implemented, pastors should make it a priority to systematically meet with each current staff member, gaining as much insight as

possible from the people who have held positions in all of the parishes involved. The information will be helpful, but staff members also will benefit from having the opportunity to be heard.

All job descriptions must be updated to reflect any new staffing configurations. If staff changes or reductions need to be made, a selection process must be initiated. Regarding hiring, take steps to ensure that the hiring process complies with local, state, and federal labor laws. Again, please follow the guidelines as described in the *Parish Restructuring Preparation Guide*.

The authority to hire staff rests with the pastor. Once a plan is developed, he needs to work with staff members, one-on-one, to develop plans for each individual. Having a plan in place early, and having met with all staff members to gather their insights, will facilitate this process. Some staff members may be preparing to retire; others may simply decide this is a good time to move on. If a pastor chooses not to rehire any former staff members, he is encouraged to give the employees several months' notice before their positions are eliminated.

+ From the **CHANCERY OFFICE**

PARISH ORGANIZATIONS AND MINISTRIES

Ministries like those of lector, extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, and hospitality will remain distinct in each of the partnered parishes. With the help of the members of the Pastoral Council, pastors will need to consider how other ministries of the partnered parishes could or should be blended together to provide for stronger and more coordinated ministry.

As a general rule, OCIA, youth ministry and faith formation programs in partnered parishes should be merged. There may be certain circumstances where this is impractical. In some cases, it may be more prudent to take time to lay a solid foundation for these merged programs than to rush the process.

Members of other parish organizations and groups can be encouraged to seize the opportunity to update their mission and seek new ways to collaborate within the partnered parish structure.

THE CELEBRATION OF SUNDAY, WEEKDAY, AND HOLY DAY MASSES

In accord with diocesan law, parish Sunday Masses and holy day Masses, and Mass on the evenings preceding them, may only be celebrated in parish churches or mission churches, while funerals and weddings may take place in any church (parish, mission or other secondary church) at the request of the parishioners or the family. Baptisms may be celebrated in any church in which a baptismal font is already in place.

In accord with diocesan norms, Mass on the evening preceding Sundays and holy days of obligation is not to begin before 4:00 p.m. except with an indult granted by the diocesan bishop.

The number of parish Masses scheduled for Sundays and holy days of obligation is not to exceed the total number which the priests assigned to partnered parishes are lawfully permitted to celebrate. As a rule, this means one Mass per priest on weekdays, and two on Sundays. Pastors will need to decide how best to divide the weekday Masses between the partnered parishes. Pastoral need may occasionally require additional Masses, but these should not be scheduled as a regular practice. The provision of the universal law remains in place by which priests are always permitted to celebrate three Masses on All Souls Day and on Christmas Day, provided that they keep the stipend for only one Mass. Additional stipends should be forwarded to the Chancery Office for the contribution to the Priests' Retirement Fund.

In addition, according to diocesan law concerning partnered parishes, there is to be only one Mass celebrated on the evening preceding Sundays and holy days of obligation. The time and place for that Mass is to be determined by the pastor, after having consulted the members of the shared parish Pastoral Council and the diocesan bishop. Pastors who discern a need for multiple anticipated Masses must request an indult from the bishop.

Weekday Masses and public devotions (e.g., novenas, Stations of the Cross, etc.) in missions and other secondary churches are at the discretion of the pastor. The faithful are always free to offer private devotions or prayer, provided that the church is unlocked. Efforts to accommodate reasonable requests for this purpose should be made.



MASS INTENTIONS AND OTHER LITURGICAL REQUIREMENTS

The following items are not new, but this is an opportune moment for calling them to everyone's attention.

***Pro populo* Mass requirements**

Every pastor is personally obliged to offer Mass for the people (*pro populo*) entrusted to his care on all Sundays and all holy days of obligation. He is not to receive a stipend for this Mass (cf. can. 534 §1). Pastors of partnered parishes can satisfy this obligation by offering a single Mass each Sunday and holy day for the combined membership of all of the parishes entrusted to their care (cf. can. 534 §2). There is no need to offer separate *pro populo* Masses for each parish.

Because the offering of the *pro populo* Mass is a serious personal obligation of the pastor himself, arising from the spiritual relationship which he shares with his parishioners, he may not entrust the Mass to another priest, or celebrate it on a different day, *except when he is unable personally for some serious reason to celebrate the Mass himself* (cf. can. 534 §1). If multiple priests celebrate Sunday Masses in a parish, the pastor is to see to it that he personally always celebrates the *pro populo* Mass.

Parish administrators are bound by the same duties as pastors concerning the *pro populo* Mass (cf. can. 540 §1).

Satisfying multiple intentions in the same Mass

It may happen that two parishes which are partnered had Mass intentions previously scheduled for the same day, creating a conflict. When that happens, both Mass intentions can lawfully be satisfied within a single celebration of the Mass, provided that:

- The donors of the two intentions have been notified and agree to combine the intentions;
- The place and time of the Mass is publicly announced;
- The celebrant keeps only one stipend. As with any other bination stipend, the priest may not keep the second stipend, but instead must send it to the Chancery Office, for deposit into the Priest Retirement Fund. (cf. can. 951 §1. Formerly, these were sent to the seminary, but are now to be sent to the Chancery.)

The law does not permit such a combining of Mass intentions more than twice in a single week.

Pastors are to see to it that only single intentions for a given day are accepted from this point forward, so that all conflicts with previously scheduled Mass intentions should resolve themselves within a year.

Reservation of the Holy Eucharist

The Eucharist *must* be reserved in all parish churches (cf. can. 934 §1, 1°).

The Eucharist *may* be reserved in another church (i.e., in a secondary church, whether it has mission status or not), but only with the permission of the bishop or episcopal vicar and provided that Mass is celebrated there at least twice a month (cf. can. 934 §1, 2° and can. 934 §2).



Churches in which the Eucharist is reserved are to be open for at least some hours each day, unless some grave reason (e.g., security concerns) intervenes (cf. can. 937). For churches in which the Eucharist is not reserved, pastors are encouraged to delegate deacons or trusted lay persons to unlock these churches occasionally to allow the faithful to enter for private prayer and devotion (cf. can. 1214).

Sacred objects and all items necessary for divine worship should remain in place within parish churches as well as mission and other secondary churches, for as long as the church remains in use, even in a limited way.

The titular solemnity of a church

In every church, whether it be a parish, mission or other secondary church, Mass is always to be celebrated on the solemnity of the church's titular feast (i.e., the feast indicated by the title of the church building).

(Note: This is often thought of as the patronal feast of the parish, but in truth, it is the titular feast of the church building and follows the title of the church, regardless of the name of the parish. By extension, the titular feast of the church building also celebrates the community that worships within it.)

This Mass is to be celebrated as a solemnity with three proper readings, proper orations, *Gloria*, and creed, using the texts for the feast day.

It takes precedence over every other liturgical celebration except the Easter Triduum; Christmas; Epiphany; Ascension; Pentecost; the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter; other Solemnities in the general calendar, All Souls Day, and the solemnity of the anniversary of the church's consecration.

The titular solemnity of a church is never suppressed. If it falls on one of these above-mentioned dates, then its observance is transferred to the first date thereafter which does not outrank it. In addition, if the titular feast occurs during Ordinary Time, its observance may be transferred to the nearest Sunday.

The solemnity of the anniversary of the consecration of a church

In every consecrated church, whether it be a parish, mission, or other secondary church, *but only if the church was truly consecrated*, Mass is always to be celebrated on the solemnity of the anniversary of the church's consecration. Pastors may need to consult parish records or the Chancery to determine if a church was ever consecrated, i.e., if the altar and walls were anointed with chrism.

(Note: The anniversary of the consecration [now called dedication] of a church recalls that Christ is the true Temple for every Christian, and we are the living stones of that Temple. As a result, the anniversary is always observed as a Solemnity of the Lord Jesus, and not of any particular saint after whom the church is named.)



This Mass is to be celebrated as a solemnity with three proper readings, proper orations, *Gloria*, and creed, using the texts from the Common of the Dedication of a Church.

It takes precedence over every other liturgical celebration except the Easter Triduum; Christmas; Epiphany; Ascension; Pentecost; the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter; other solemnities in the general calendar, and All Souls Day.

The anniversary of a church's consecration is never suppressed. If it falls on one of these above-mentioned dates, then its observance is transferred to the first date thereafter which does not outrank it. Also, if the anniversary occurs during Ordinary Time, its observance may be transferred to the nearest Sunday.

CONTACT US for more information

As parishes work through this guide, please remember the Chancery, the Communications Office, the Finance Office and the Human Resources Office are all available to help. Please begin by contacting the people listed below. If they cannot answer your questions, they will know who can.

The Chancery **REV. CHRISTOPHER SINGER Chancellor**
CSinger@ErieRCD.org
814.824.1130

Communications Office **ANNE-MARIE WELSH Director**
AMWelsh@ErieRCD.org
814.824.1167

Finance Office **PAT BARRON Director of Parish and School Financial Services**
PBarron@ErieRCD.org
814.824.1168

Human Resources **JAMES TOMETSKO Director**
JTometsko@ErieRCD.org
814.824.1189

Vicar General **VERY REV. NICHOLAS ROUCH Vicar General**
NRouch@ErieRCD.org
814.824.1144

Exempt/Non-Exempt Worksheet

(to be completed by all not-teacher employees – keep in personnel file)

In order to clearly identify those employees who are, or are not, exempt from current regulations governing the Fair Labor Standards Act, it is necessary that a worksheet such as this be completed for every non-teacher employee. It is necessary to do this to make certain that your pay practices comply with current federal law. ***The fact that you may presently be paying someone on a salaried basis does not mean that the person qualifies as an exempt employee. It is crucial that you complete this worksheet to ensure proper classification of employees.***

Employee:	Job Title:
Salary Test: Annualized wages: _____ Gross weekly wages: _____	If employee's annualized wages total less than \$35,568 per year or \$684 per week and is not employed as a computer specialist, STOP HERE! This employee is non-exempt and is entitled to compensation of 1.5 times his or her hourly wage for all hours worked over 40 hours per week (Sunday through Saturday) If the employee's annualized wages total more than \$35,568 per year or \$684 per week, continue with the duties test.
Note regarding Blue Collar Workers	The exemptions provided by FLSA Section 13 (a)(1) apply only to "white collar" employees who meet the salary and duties tests. The exemptions do not apply to manual laborers or other "blue collar" workers who perform work involving repetitive operations with their hands, physical skill, and energy. Non-management employees in production, maintenance, construction, and similar occupations such as carpenters, electricians, mechanics, plumbers, iron workers, craftsman, operating engineers, dock workers, construction workers, and laborers are entitled to minimum wage and overtime premium pay and are not ever subject to an exemption under the FLSA>
Duties Test: If an employee meets the stated criteria in any one of these areas listed below, that person is exempt from receiving overtime pay.	
Executive Exemption Meets: _____ Does not Meet: _____	The employee's primary duty must be managing the enterprise, or managing a customarily recognized department; The employee must customarily and regularly direct the work of at least two or more other full-time employees or their equivalent; and The employee must have the authority to hire or fire other employees, or recommend the hiring, firing, advancement, promotion, or any other change of status of other employees.
Administrative Exemption Meets: _____ Does Not Meet: _____	The employee's primary duty must be the performance of office or non-manual work directly related to the management or general business operations of the employer or the employer's customers; and includes the exercise of discretion and independent judgment with respect to matters of significance.

<p>Professional Exemption</p> <p>Meets: _____</p> <p>Does Not Meet: _____</p>	<p>The employee’s primary duty must be the performance of work regarding advanced knowledge, defined as work which is predominantly intellectual in character, and which includes work requiring the consistent exercise of discretion and judgement;</p> <p>The advanced knowledge must be in the field of science or learning; and involve advanced knowledge customarily acquired by a prolonged course of specialized intellectual instruction.</p>
<p>Creative Professional Exemption</p> <p>Meets: _____</p> <p>Does Not Meet: _____</p>	<p>The employee’s primary duty must be the performance of work requiring invention, imagination, originality, or talent in a recognized field of artistic or creative endeavor.</p>
<p>Computer Employee Exemption</p> <p>Meets: _____</p> <p>Does Not Meet: _____</p>	<p>The employee’s primary duty must be the performance of work as a computer systems analyst, programmer, software engineer or similarly skilled work in the computer field performing a) application of systems analysis techniques and procedures, including consulting with users to determine hardware, software or system functional specifications; or b) design, development, documentation, analysis, creation, testing or modification of computer systems or programs, including prototypes, based on and related to user or system design specification; or c) design, documentation, testing, creation or modification of computer programs based on and related to user or system design specifications; or a combination of the duties described above, the performance of which requires the same level of skills. Examples: system analyst, database analyst, network architect, software engineer, programmer.</p>
<p>Outside Sales Exemption</p> <p>Meets: _____</p> <p>Does Not Meet: _____</p>	<p>The employee’s primary duty must be the performance of sales work off the company’s premises and whose primary duties include making sales or obtaining order or contracts for services or for the use of facilities for which the client or customer pays. This employee is customarily and regularly away from the company’s place of business while performing such duties. Examples: sales representative, account manager, business development representative.</p>