

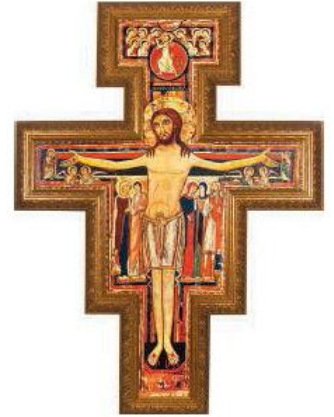
After Decision are Announced: Next Steps for Parishes with Structural Changes

“For I know well the plans I have in mind for you ... plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope.” Jeremiah 29:11

With trust in our Lord, we step forward to be led by the Holy Spirit toward our future.

What’s Next for our Parish?

Now that the specific decision concerning our grouping and parish has been shared, the next effort will focus on supporting all that needs to occur during the transition. A dedicated team from the Archdiocese will provide hands-on assistance to ensure the most effective and positive implementation of any necessary changes, such as financial and facilities planning.



- Members of the archdiocesan team will be on-site in the coming months to introduce themselves, provide an overview of the support process, and gather feedback from staff.
- Specific and meaningful guidance will be provided regarding the parish naming process. Recognizing the emotional and personal nature of this – we are, in fact, seeing the birth of a new, unified parish community – there are very helpful steps that the Church provides.
- We will hold opportunities for parish-wide prayer and liturgies, reflection, and sharing.

Keeping an Eye on Why We Need Renewal

With each step forward, we must keep reminding ourselves why this is so important to our parish, our families, and our own faith lives. Look around and what do you see? Fewer and fewer people attending mass. An alarming number of people choosing to reject any religious affiliation. A broken world that doesn't even know it's broken.

1. Jesus is calling us to follow Him more closely and seek out His lost sheep. As Catholics baptized into the life and love of God we are called – and commissioned – to discern our part in **making disciples**. What do we need to do to ensure we are not the last Catholics in our family? How do we practically evangelize others and promote/encourage vocations to the priesthood, religious life and married life?
2. Stretched, limited resources have challenged parish ministries; even parishes with abundant resources struggle to engage youth and young adults. Christ is calling us to discern what parish and school vitality means in today's world and to **build communities**. How do we work together, across parishes and throughout the Archdiocese, to strengthen each other today and create Catholic communities that are sustainable for the future?
3. As Christians, we bear Christ's light and hope in the world. Just as Jesus moved among the people, Pope Francis implores us to go out to the world and to those on the margins. How can we work together in new ways to **inspire witness** within a world that is numb to the real presence of God?

We Are a People of Great Faith and Hope

With any discernment process comes an element of change and self-giving infused with great hope knowing that what our Lord Jesus Christ has in store for us is so much bigger than what we could imagine for ourselves. The future will be strong and vibrant for the current generation, as well as many more to come!

I am excited and eager to see the fruits of this work come to life. At the same time, I am fully aware of how difficult this change will feel. For many of us, you can't get much more personal than how, where, and when we practice our faith and encounter Jesus in the sacraments. Fortunately, He is our faithful Shepherd who teaches us that "with God all things are possible." We will truly marvel at His handiwork in all of this. Please continue to pray for a successful transition and renewal that will lead to greater discipleship, community and witness for our parish, your loved ones, and our entire Church.

After Decision are Announced: FAQs for Parishes with Structural Changes

What does it mean for us to become one parish with multiple active worship sites?

Uniting as one parish means bringing all that we are and hope to be together, as one Catholic community. Our gifts, our talents, our hopes, our prayers, our needs ... they are all shared to the benefit and vitality of the entire, unified parish community led by one pastor. Mass and the sacraments will continue to be celebrated regularly at each individual church (future adjustments to mass and/or confession times are a possibility and will be clarified and communicated in advance of any changes taking effect).

The congregations of each location will now have the benefit of shared resources to work together in new ways to make disciples, build communities and inspire witness.

What does it mean to be an active worship site?

Worship sites are churches where regular Mass and sacraments will continue to be celebrated as part of the combined parish. Future adjustments to mass and/or confession times are a possibility and will be clarified and communicated in advance of any changes taking effect.

What will be the name of the new parish? What happens with our parish name?

This is an opportunity to look forward with a new beginning and, as such, step forward together with a new name that reflects the faith, hope and love of the entire community. The new parish community can propose possibilities for the new name. Cardinal Cupich makes the final decision on the parish name.

The specific churches of the uniting parishes will keep the names they received at their dedication. Nonetheless, if there is a good reason, the good of the faithful allows the archbishop to grant a dispensation (that is, he may allow a change of name for a remaining church). If a change of name is desired, the community may request such a dispensation from Cardinal Cupich.

Why do we need structural changes like closings and mergers to *Renew My Church*?

As we have begun to see through the recent decisions concerning the first set of parish groupings, there is no cookie-cutter approach to how the Holy Spirit will lead our Archdiocese and parishes through renewal. Some parishes will see structural changes, and some will not. But all are being called to renewal, which will take shape in many forms. In those instances in which parish and/or school structural changes do occur, there are many factors that lead to those thoughtful and forward-looking decisions (e.g., changing demographics, the conditions and affordability of our buildings and our resources). Any changes are intended to establish a more secure and sustainable foundation that make ministerial renewal and vitality possible. As a community of believers in the archdiocese, we pray for the wisdom and humility to be good stewards of what God provides today so that we may sow an abundant harvest for generations to come.

What happens with parishes that are not joining with another parish? Are they unaffected?

For parishes that do not experience structural changes, such as closings or unifications, the next steps for those communities will focus on creating an intentional culture of evangelization to make disciples, build community, and inspire witness. All of our parishes, regardless of structure, must respond to the call of Jesus Christ to renew His Church, and will do so by: evangelizing and forming new and existing Catholics in the faith; increasing vocations; improving leadership development and support; increasing parish and Catholic school mission vitality; and, building solidarity.

How and when will the pastor be selected?

The Archdiocese's Priest Placement Board is working to identify a pastor whose gifts and skills will fit well with the particular needs of the new community. The Board will propose a candidate for Cardinal Cupich who will make the final appointment decision. All priests across the archdiocese, including the current pastors, may apply to become pastor of the new parish.

What will happen with Mass times?

Mass times will be reviewed in a manner that is both in the interest of the parishioners as well as the schedule of the local pastor and available priests. It is the goal to review the schedule of Mass times and adjust, as necessary, to support a new Mass schedule on the weekend after the start of the pastor's assignment.

Will our parish organizations merge? What will combine and what won't?

For parishes that are combining and unifying, some elements will necessarily merge, such as finance, operations, human resources and facilities management. Regarding parish ministries, how those groups work together and strengthen each other will be addressed by the pastor, with support from the Archdiocese, during integration of the new parish community.

Now that the decision has been shared, what will happen next?

An Archdiocesan operations team will support parishes undergoing reorganization. This team will work with parish staff during the transition to help set up new parish structures including financial planning and facilities management. In the weeks ahead, this team will work to schedule a meeting to introduce the support team and provide an overview of the transition schedule.

What happens with our current funds?

As we unite to form one parish, our assets will come together under the new parish. The new parish will have one budget and one Finance Council to serve our entire community. A dedicated Archdiocesan Finance Manager will support the financial planning aspects of reorganizing a new parish, which will likely include setting up new bank accounts and financial accounting systems. The Archdiocesan operations team will support the best practices in financial management, which can be found on our [Financial Services page](#).

What will happen with our *To Teach Who Christ Is* (TTWCI) funds?

When multiple parishes are combined, their individual TTWCI accounts will initially be kept as separate accounts. The RMC team will review the original intent of the donors (via the case statement) to ensure that funds are applied to those original intentions within the context of the new parish reality. Honoring the original case statement to the greatest extent possible is a priority. If there are changes or excess funds left over, the pastor will work with the parish finance council on any request to use the funds for anything other than its originally intended purposes.