

IV. PARISH DESIGNATIONS

Parish life has become more complex and culturally diverse. Both church law regarding parishes and the collective wisdom of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) have provided some potential strategies for parishes to better serve their people. The following designations have been identified for use in the Diocese. They are either already in use or may be used in the future.

STAND-ALONE PARISH

A traditional parish with its own pastor, parish church, finances, finance and pastoral councils, parish staff and office.

CLUSTERED PARISHES

Two or more parishes with a shared pastor, their own churches, finances, councils, and staffs. There can be additional collaboration in personnel, ministries, and resources.

MERGED PARISH

One type of merger has one or more parishes being combined into an existing parish. The parishes are closed, and the churches can either be closed or serve as a worship site as a “sister church.” Another type of merger has the merging parishes combined into one parish with a single name formed from those of both parishes. The third type of merger has two or more parishes which become a new parish with a new name, one pastor, finances, finance and pastoral councils, parish staff and office. One church is identified as the parish or “mother” church. There can be additional sites for Mass and other celebrations which are referred to as “sister churches.”

SHARED PARISH

A parish in which two or more languages or cultural contexts are present in the ministerial life of the parish and they worship and share their common faith under the same roof.

SISTER CHURCH

When two or more parishes are merged, one church is designated as the parish or “mother” church and the others serve as “sister” churches.

PARISH FAMILY

A group of parishes are organized to collaborate on ministries and other activities. This designation is used when clustering and/or mergers cannot create the efficiencies which will aid viability and future growth. A parish family is frequently formed among the parishes in a deanery. Like all relationships, the degree to which these parish families collaborate over the years will depend on the depth of their bonds and commitments to each other.