

# *On the Closing of Churches*



A church is closed and the congregation disbanded when:

- a. the vestry votes to close, and/or
- b. the Diocesan Council declares it to be closed

Such a closing is often traumatic and is somewhat akin to a death in the family. Therefore, it should be approached with deliberate pace and high sensitivity to the feelings of all concerned. The furnishings and appointments of the church are emotionally viewed, and should be disposed of with much care and preferably with the willing agreement of the remaining parishioners.

Steps to be taken in a closing are as follows:

1. A final vestry is called to make the necessary resolution re closure, and members should be determined according to the usual rules for membership of a vestry (Canon 14.1). The incumbent will preside or the bishop or his appointee. The area bishop should always be informed when a congregation is about to disband.
2. The vestry will assure itself that the future pastoral care of the affected people has been duly considered.
3. All assets (cash, furnishings, buildings and property) are vested in the diocese which now assumes direct control through the Executive Board, but the vestry may wish to make suggestions regarding the disposition of these assets, including a recommendation to Diocesan Council through the Secretary of Synod of any future use, maintenance or demolition of the building.
4. If the congregation is part of a multi-point parish, a meeting should have been called with the whole parish represented so that any shared costs and budget apportionments can be cared for by the continuing points of the parish.
5. It is appropriate for the area bishop to arrange a service of thanksgiving and deconsecration to take place.

In order to relieve the diocesan budget of any sudden loss of revenue due to a church being closed, the following formula was accepted at the Diocesan Executive Committee (Diocesan Council) meeting on October 3, 1986:

“All or any unremitted portion of the current year’s Subsistence Budget of the closed church be paid from the funds accruing to the Synod from the disposal of the closed church, as well as 50% the following year and 25% the year after.”