

Editorial - A halt to church closings

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We hope the Diocese of Springfield will heed the call of Representative Daniel Bosley and declare a moratorium on North Berkshire church closings so the affected communities can have the kind of discussion that should have taken place before the closings were announced Monday. Closings will have a long-term impact and they are coming too quickly and with too little public input.

The church closings in Pittsfield were done with inadequate concern for the opinions of parishioners and city officials, which briefly raised the ire of City Hall. Rather than learn from the experience, the Diocese repeated it in North Berkshire County, blithely engaging in what the North Adams Democrat accurately describes as a "heavy handed, top-down policy," which shows little concern for church members or the towns they are located in.

The diocese wants to close six more churches, including two in North Adams and two in Adams, by the end of the year, an unduly hasty timetable even if justified. The decision to close the large St. Francis Church in North Adams is puzzling, but closing St. Stanislaus Church in Adams, a gorgeous church closely linked to the substantial Polish-American community, may resonate more than any other closing in Berkshire County.

Springfield has legitimate concerns, among them declining numbers of church members, difficulty in finding priests, and the costs of maintaining old churches. They also have responsibilities to parishioners and community members, the "real people" Mr. Bosley referred to, and they have not been met.