

# St John the Apostle Parish Open Forum 29 August 2024

## Questions sorted into Categories

### Communication and Information Sharing

**Q: How can we keep all parishioners informed about the amalgamation process?**

**A:** While this is not a formal amalgamation, the priests will work together collegially in the pastoral care of Kippax and Charnwood parishes. Communication will be key to keeping everyone informed. We will utilize all available platforms, such as the parish bulletin (COMPACT), the newsletter (KIT), the website, and direct emails, to ensure updates are consistently shared.

**Q: Why has there been a lack of communication since the November 2023 announcement?**

**A:** The transition period, beginning with Fr. Tru's arrival in January 2024, required time for him to familiarize himself with the parish community and its needs. Priority was given to Easter preparations and the Sacramental program. With those completed in June, we are now ready to engage with parishioners on the next steps of the process.

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### Preservation of Identity and Charism

**Q: How can we preserve the MSC Charism during and after the amalgamation?**

**A:** Heart Spirituality, which embodies the MSC Charism, is deeply rooted in our parish life. Our community has embraced these values for over 50 years, and we are committed to ensuring they remain a living part of our parish identity, regardless of future changes.

**Q: How can we ensure the MSC spirit is maintained?**

**A:** By continuing to live out Heart Spirituality in our daily actions, especially through virtues such as kindness and humility, we can ensure the MSC spirit thrives within our community.

**Q: How can we address the fear of losing the MSC's in the next 5 years?**

**A:** While it is true that the number of MSC priests is declining, Heart Spirituality can continue to live on through the parish community. We can empower parishioners to take up the mantle of this spirituality, ensuring its vitality even if MSC priests are no longer available.

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## **Financial and Resource Management**

**Q: How will the amalgamation impact the parish financially and spiritually?**

**A:** Financially, each parish will maintain its finances independently, as advised by Archbishop Prowse. Spiritually, the process offers an opportunity to deepen collaboration between the parishes while preserving their unique spiritual and communal identities.

**Q: What will be the impact on the financial health of the parishes?**

**A:** While the financial status of St Thomas Aquinas Parish is not fully known to us, St John the Apostle Parish is currently experiencing financial challenges. Parishioners will need to be informed about these realities, and we will encourage greater participation in Planned Giving.

**Q: How can we ensure adequate resources for the future?**

**A:** To secure our financial future, it will be essential to engage parishioners in supporting the parish through regular contributions and fostering a deeper understanding of financial stewardship within the community.

**Q: Sharon goes to Charnwood one day a week – who is paying Sharon's salary at Charnwood?**

Sharon's employment at STA Charnwood was arranged by Sharon and Charnwood, this arrangement was made independent of SJA Kippax. Her wages are paid by, and will continue to be paid by Charnwood.

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## Pastoral Care and Community Engagement

### **Q: How can we ensure pastoral care is provided to both parishes?**

**A:** Both parishes will continue to offer pastoral care, and will continue to do so through the dedicated work of the priests, and parishioners. At St John the Apostle we have SJACare and many other groups that participate in pastoral care.

### **Q: How can we engage the Charnwood community in parish life?**

**A:** The focus should be on collaboration, rather than assimilation. We aim to work *with* the Charnwood community, sharing programs such as the Sacramental Program, to build a cohesive, mutually supportive relationship between the two parishes.

### **Q: How can we involve younger parish members in the process?**

**A:** Engaging our younger members will be essential, and the YCS youth group can serve as a starting point. Involving youth in leadership roles and giving them a voice in the discussion can help integrate them more fully into parish life.

### **Q: What can be done to better represent and engage young families and single parents in the parish?**

**A:** This is a key issue for the Parish Pastoral Council to address. A valuable first step would be inviting young families and single parents to share their ideas on how the parish can better meet their needs and help them engage more fully in parish life.

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## Concerns about Priests and Leadership

**Q: Will Fr. Gerard be committed for the next 5 years?**

**A:** Fr. Gerard is currently committed until the end of 2025. Should there be changes after that, it is unlikely that the MSC will replace him due to the limited availability of priests.

**Q: How will the potential withdrawal of MSC's affect the current priests and staff?**

**A:** MSC priests typically serve 3 to 6 years. If the MSCs withdraw, current staff will remain a stable presence in the parish, helping ensure continuity in parish life and administration.

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## Assimilation Process and Lessons Learned

**Q: How can we manage the change process effectively?**

**A:** The first step is identifying what specific changes will take place. Clear communication, ongoing consultation with parishioners, and a focus on maintaining our shared values will help manage the transition smoothly.

**Q: What lessons can be learned from other parishes that have undergone similar amalgamations?**

**A:** Parishes in North Canberra, served by the Blessed Sacrament Priests, are currently managing a similar transition of the 5 parishes in that area. Each parish has retained their Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils and they have formed a steering committee with representatives from each parish. This committee meets regularly. Collaboration between parishes is key, and their approach can serve as a model for our process.

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## Impact on Schools and Parish Relationships

**Q: How will the relationship between schools and the parishes be affected?**

**A:** The Sacramental Program will continue to serve as the primary point of connection between schools and parishes, ensuring that this vital relationship is maintained and nurtured.

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## Parishioner Demographics and Concerns

**Q: Is it mainly older parishioners who are concerned about the amalgamation?**

**A:** This is a question best answered by parishioners. However, it is important to engage with people of all age groups to understand their concerns and ensure the process is inclusive.

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## Agreements and Intentions

**Q: What is the intent of the agreement between the MSC's and the Archdiocese?**

**A:** The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSCs) have been integral to the ministry of St John the Apostle Parish since its establishment in 1972. The intent of the agreement between the MSCs and the Archdiocese is to ensure that the MSCs continue to provide pastoral leadership and spiritual guidance to the parish for as long as they have the resources to do so. Currently, Fr. Tru Nguyen MSC has been appointed to serve as the parish priest for a six-year term, concluding at the end of 2029. The long-term continuation of MSC involvement will depend on the availability of priestly resources.