

Good morning/evening

For those of you who don't know who I am, my name is [Name] and I am speaking to you today as a member of the Steering Committee that has been tasked with assisting Father Tru in bringing our parish and [Parish name] together.

With me is fellow Committee member [Name] from St John the Apostle Parish / St Thomas Aquinas Parish.

I am here today to bring you up to date on where things are currently at.

A facilitated meeting of the Steering Committee was held on the 19th of February.

At that meeting, the facilitator had us face several "realities", namely:

- There is a shortage of priests across the archdiocese and in the western world generally.
- Vocations to the priesthood are declining.
- There are another 8 parishes in the archdiocese which are in a similar situation to us.
- All church land and buildings belong to the archdiocese notwithstanding that parish communities may have paid for the structures that have been built on that land.
- Next year, we may only have one priest to cover both Kippax and Charnwood.

And

- Under Canon Law a priest can only say three Masses in one day.

The Steering Committee acknowledged these realities and agreed that a coming together of our two parishes is the only option open to us.

The Committee then turned its attention to the model that best suited our circumstances. Three options were presented:

- A "cluster" or "collaborative" model. This is basically the model that we are currently operating under. It effectively doubles the priest's workload.
- An amalgamation. Under this model one parish absorbs another.
- A merger. Under this model a new parish is created but there can be two or more Mass sites. Examples are St Michael's, Kaleen which has combined with St Monica's, Evatt, to form a new parish called North Belconnen; and St Matthew's, Page which has combined with St Vincent's, Aranda, to form a new parish called South Belconnen.

The Committee opted for the "merger" model. While the new parish will be called "West Belconnen", each Mass centre will continue to maintain its own name under this overarching umbrella. The overarching name would primarily be used for administrative purposes.

Under the merger model:

- The Parish Pastoral Councils of both parishes would be dissolved and a single new one established.
- The Finance Committees of both parishes would be dissolved and a single new one established.
- Administration for both parishes would be centralised.
- There would be one parish bulletin and one website.

It is intended that these actions be completed by the end of this year.

Some changes have already occurred:

- We now have one Sacramental Coordinator for both parishes who is preparing our children for the sacraments.
- Weekday Masses are now shared.
- Our parish pastoral councils have been combined and we have a new chair, James Nield from Kippax, and deputy chair, Julie Lean from Charnwood, who we think will bring fresh vigour and life to our new combined parish.

There are some decisions still to be made. These include:

- What Mass times and where. No decision on this will be made until we have a clearer picture of what's happening with msc priest appointments.
- How best to use the presbyteries and parish centres.

To facilitate the transition to the new structure, the current Steering Committee will be dissolved and be replaced by a Transition Committee.

These outcomes may be unsettling for some, but we ask that you walk with us and focus on the things that unite rather than divide us as we navigate these changes. Let's move forward together with hope and optimism. We are after all, one people under God.

We will be available to talk with you in the church foyer after Mass.