



## IMPLEMENTATION OF PARISH MERGERS *MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS*

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### **CANONICAL/CIVIL**

#### **1. What is the status of the new parish?**

By the cardinal's decree of November 2, 2014, former parishes A and B merged to become new parish C, with the implementation of the merger to take effect by or on August 1, 2015.

Parish C is, at this time, only a canonical entity. It is not yet a civil corporation under the New York State Religious Corporation Law and Not for Profit Law, as are all archdiocesan parishes. Requiring court approval, it is anticipated that the new civil corporation will be established by September 1, 2016.

Until the incorporation is completed, the new canonical parish C will be governed under the direction of the pastor/administrator by the civil corporations of former parishes A and B, which continue to exist as civil corporations even though they are no longer canonical entities.

In some ways, having one pastor administer two corporate entities is hardly new, as a few dozen pastors are already also administrators of neighboring parishes, requiring them to administer two corporate entities, though in these cases they are also two canonical entities.

**2. When two or more parishes merge, who becomes the pastor/administrator of the new parish?**

By canon law, when parishes A and B are merged, they cease to exist as parishes. Parish C, the new canonical entity, is established. So, all priests will be invited to apply to serve as pastors/administrators of the new parishes. The pastors/administrators of former parishes A and B, still in place and guiding the implementation process, will, of course, be listened to very closely for their counsel as to which, if either, should remain or become pastor/administrator of the new parish, and will be given special consideration.

The cardinal will appoint pastors/administrators of the new parishes by the effective date of the implementation of his canonical decrees of November 2, 2014, which is by or on August 1, 2015.

**3. How do we choose a name for the new parish?**

For the present time, the name of the new parish will be the joined, hyphenated names of the former parishes. Prior to incorporation, the new parish must submit two or three names to the cardinal which will be either a new name or the aforementioned joined, hyphenated name.

**4. How and when does a pastor/administrator of the new parish select the two trustees and parish and finance council members?**

They must select trustees and members of the parish and finance councils for the new canonical parish immediately after the implementation is completed and they are strongly encouraged to select persons from both former parish communities.

**5. What will be the boundaries of the new parish?**

For the present time, the existing boundaries of the former parishes A and B will be the boundaries of the new parish C. In time, with the assistance of the episcopal vicar, presbyteral council, dean, pastors within the deanery, and chancery, boundaries for all archdiocesan parishes and deaneries will be established. Then, a new archdiocesan map will be created.

**6. Does recourse to the Holy See affect anything?**

The archdiocese carefully complied with every requirement of the Holy See for merging parishes, and is therefore confident that all the canonical decrees of November 2, 2014 will be upheld. Until such time as the Holy See accepts an appeal, which the archdiocese will know about in the near future, the plan is to proceed with the implementation of all new parishes.

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## PASTORAL

**1. When will Masses and sacraments be celebrated in the new parish where both churches are used?**

Masses and sacraments will be celebrated on a regular (daily and Sunday) basis in both churches.

**2. When will Masses and sacraments be celebrated in the new parish where only the one parish church will be used?**

Masses and sacraments will be celebrated on a regular (daily and Sunday) basis in the new parish. In the other church, Masses and sacraments will be celebrated only on special occasions, not on a regular (daily or Sunday) basis.

**3. What is a “special occasion?”**

A special occasion means that Masses and sacraments will be celebrated at the discretion of the pastor/administrator on specific occasions, such as funerals of long-time parishioners; a significant anniversary of the former parish; the feast day of the former parish; and weddings that were scheduled prior to the date of the canonical decree, November 2, 2014, and to be celebrated prior to August 1, 2016, one full year after the implementation of the merger.

**4. What becomes of the artifacts of the church that will be used only on special occasions?**

For the most part, it is anticipated that they will remain in the church. However, at the discretion of the pastor/administrator, having heard from the new parish community, those artifacts that are of the most historic and artistic value may be carried over to the new parish church. A Mass with a procession of these artifacts to the new parish church may be celebrated.

**5. Is the Blessed Sacrament ever to be reserved in the church that will be used only on special occasions?**

No.

**6. What becomes of unused artifacts and historical (neither sacramental nor financial) items, records, and documents-such as parish histories?**

The archdiocesan archive office will assist pastors/administrators in this determination. Please contact Father Michael Morris, director, or Ms. Kate Feighery, manager, at 914-968-6200. They, in turn, may put the pastor/administrator in contact with Mr. Kevin Shaughnessy, director of the office of patrimony (the warehouse located on Staten Island), at 718-227-0192.

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## ADMINISTRATION

**1. How will the new parish be administered in the normal course of business, i.e. bank accounts, bills, human resources, etc.?**

Until new parish C is incorporated, it will be governed under the direction of the pastor/administrator by the civil corporations of former parishes A and B, which continue to exist as civil corporations even though they are no longer canonical entities.

While the civil corporations of former parishes A and B continue to govern the new parish C until it is incorporated, steps will be taken to transfer business activities when parish C is incorporated. The associate directors of finance will be of assistance to the pastors/administrators of all the new parishes during this time of transition.

**2. Is the new parish C responsible for the debts of the former parishes A and B?**

By canon law, new parish C inherits both the assets and liabilities of former parishes A and B. Debts of both merged parishes will be managed consistent with existing archdiocesan practices, i.e. repayment of any outstanding debts are not to impact the viability of existing operations. Only when income and/or the disposition of assets provide excess funds, which are surplus to the operating needs of the new parish, will any outstanding debts be addressed.

**3. Does new parish C pay all the expenses of both former parishes A and B on an ongoing basis, including the churches that will be used only on special occasions?**

As noted above, the civil corporations of former parishes A and B continue to be responsible for all expenses until the new parish C is incorporated. However, in cases where there is a shortfall during the transition, please contact Mr. Frank Napolitano, of the office of parish finance, at 646-794-2707. Short-term loans and subvention agreements can be considered, as we do now.

**4. What steps should be taken by the new parish when excess property becomes a financial burden?**

Although we encourage patience and careful deliberation, a parish may, at any time, petition the cardinal for the disposition of such property. For church buildings, this will involve another canonical decree. By archdiocesan (particular) law, which has been the praxis in the archdiocese for some three decades, on a case-by-case basis there may be a *taxa* on significant proceeds.

**5. Who is responsible for the properties of a new parish?**

The pastor/administrator of the new parish.

**6. When a local real estate broker inquires about unused parish property, how should the pastor/administrator respond?**

Do nothing other than refer them to Mr. David Brown, director of the archdiocesan real estate office, at 646-794-2676.

**7. Can a pastor/administrator permit parishioners, friends, or anyone to take up residence in any unused parish building, even temporarily?**

No.

**8. Are parishioners of former parishes A and B obligated to become parishioners of new parish C?**

By canon law, a person is a parishioner of the territorial parish within the boundaries of his/her domicile. However, in reality and practice this is not always so, and people have chosen to register as parishioners of other parishes.

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**COLLABORATION**

**1. Are pastors/administrators and parish implementation teams of merged former parishes expected to participate in the cluster collaboration process?**

Yes, in due course. It is recognized that the members of the new parish will need to focus their attention initially on the implementation process. However, when this process is completed, the new parish will be expected to be part of the ongoing cluster collaboration process going on in *every* parish in the archdiocese. With this in mind, it would be beneficial that a representative of the new parish attend the cluster collaboration process meetings from the outset.

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## **FUTURE PARISH PLANNING**

### **1. Is parish planning completed and over?**

Not quite. As with every other (arch)diocese, the archdiocese will be in “planning mode” for the foreseeable future. Even the present arrangement of *Making All Things New* is to be re-evaluated after two years. It is for this reason that the archdiocese recently established the office of parish planning, with Ms. Eileen Mulcahy as director. She may be reached at 646-794-2732.

### **2. Will parish planning always be about the merging of parishes?**

No. Parish planning is about ensuring that our parishes are as strong, active, and vibrant as they can possibly be. Now and into the future, the expansion of existing parishes and the establishment of brand new parishes will undoubtedly be part of the parish planning picture.

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## **FINAL NOTE**

These questions and answers are not meant to be all inclusive. Nor is the manual, even though it is far more detailed. As *Making All Things New* is the archdiocese’s first comprehensive parish planning process, questions and issues will likely arise that are not covered in either these questions and answers or in the manual. Feel free to contact the chancery office or the office of parish planning for counsel.