

Where 2 or 3 are gathered in my name
there I am in the midst of them
Matthew 18:20

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- 1. Why are we considering joining with the Chelmsford Catholic Collaborative (CCC) of St. Mary Parish and St. John the Evangelist Parish?** A review of the past several years, reveals that the number of active clergy serving in the Archdiocese has suffered a severe drop since 1970. There are 30% fewer priests to serve the parishes of the archdiocese. It is expected the trend will continue with the age of the clergy continuing to climb while the number of newly ordained continues to be insufficient. It is estimated that in 5 to 7 years there will be approximately 140 priests for roughly 270 parishes. In the past few years we have seen the formation of many collaboratives. And so in joining with the CCC we believe this will strengthen each parish, affording everyone to share more resources, enabling us to be able to do more spiritually and pastorally than we have recently and continue to grow and thrive as vibrant faith communities.
- 2. Is our parish going to close?** St. Margaret of Scotland Parish is not going to close. We are looking to the future and longevity of our parish. To join with the CCC would be advantageous for all three parishes. We are looking towards growth, revitalization and evangelization of a greater Catholic community.
- 3. How will this affect us? Will our Mass schedule change again?** When we were able to resume offering public Masses in June, our Mass schedule did reduce from 4 to 3 weekend Masses. This Mass schedule will most likely continue for at least a year. As we move into the future, the Mass schedule will be reassessed and adjusted as we see the need.
- 4. How will this affect weekly morning Mass?** It is expected that weekly morning Mass will continue for at least a year and then will be reassessed and readjusted as needed.
- 5. Will Fr. Ray be replaced?** Fr. Ray will continue serving at St. Margaret of Scotland Parish and in the collaborative as a Senior Priest. He will be involved in the liturgical and spiritual life of all the parishes in the collaborative: St. Margaret of Scotland, St. Mary, and St. John the Evangelist.
- 6. Who will be Pastor of this new collaborative?** Based on current indications, Fr. Brian Mahoney will most likely be Pastor of the collaborative and there will be a realignment of responsibilities.
- 7. Where will Fr. Ray reside?** Priests serving the parishes in the collaborative will reside together at the Rectory of St. Mary's Parish. This will be to provide for their safety, health, spirituality and development of a strong support community.
- 8. How will this affect our parish finances?** Each parish will keep its own individual finances. According to Canon Law, finances of parishes may not be co-mingled. However, joining with the CCC will allow the three parishes to join together in sharing some administrative expenses as well as sharing in the expense of some staff members to decrease the costs for each parish.
- 9. Is our parish financial stability in jeopardy?** St. Margaret of Scotland Parish finances are stable and reported yearly in an Annual Financial Report. The parish has significant financial savings as a result of some bequests made by parishioners. Over the last two financial years some of savings have been utilized for parish expenses.
- 10. Will we still have a parish office and staff, or will it be relocated? Will staff remain?** That is unknown at this time. The Pastor of the collaborative, in consultation with his Pastoral Council and Finance Council, will review matters and realignment will be implemented as necessary.
- 11. Status of Religious Education/Faith Formation for all levels? Are all age levels from St. Margaret working with the CCC now?** This current year the Faith Formation program of St. Margaret of Scotland Parish - Kindergarten through Confirmation - has been operating successfully under the guidance of the Faith Formation Director of the CCC. The Faith Formation program has been totally remote because of the pandemic.
- 12. Will all parishes continue to have their own bulletin, or will all be combined within the CCC?** It is anticipated that as the new collaborative progresses there will be one bulletin for all three parishes of this new Collaborative. We invite you to go online to chelmsfordcatholic.org and stmargaretlowell.org to view the current bulletins.
- 13. Will this be a merger or a new collaborative? What is the difference?** This will be a new collaborative of three parishes St. Mary Parish, St. John The Evangelist Parish and St. Margaret of Scotland Parish. Each parish stays open with its own financial stability, serving its parishioners and sharing in all the religious, spiritual and social opportunities of the entire collaborative. There is a difference between a merger and a collaborative. A merger means the existing parishes are suppressed and become one new parish with a new name. And this new parish retains all churches, properties and finances to service the people and maintain the properties in this one parish. You may go online and review *St. Matthew The Evangelist Parish of Billerica* which is comprised of St. Andrew Church, St. Mary Church and St. Theresa Church.

Where 2 or 3 are gathered in my name
there I am in the **midst of them**
Matthew 18:20

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- 14. Why would we do this?** It is to the benefit of all three parishes for us to be pro-active at this time. By being pro-active we are choosing our destiny while we are viable as opposed to doing nothing right now and waiting until we are faced with challenging decisions resulting from the decline in active clergy available to serve separate parish communities. We are proposing to choose and shape our future rather than reacting to a future that could be imposed by circumstances outside our control.
- 15. When would this take place?** If this proposal of a three parish collaborative is approved by all 3 parishes, a recommendation will be presented to the Archdiocese that this is what the people of God in these parishes see as strengthening our Catholic community and faith sharing.
- 16. Will the individual parishes have control over liturgical planning, such as music ministry, lay ministers, and altar servers?** All of this would be under the auspices of the Pastor of the collaborative who will work with the priests, deacons, religious, the PPC's and lay personnel.
- 17. Will my weekly donation stay with my parish, or will it be shared?** Weekly donations remain with the parish for which they are intended. The donations always belong to the parish to which it is intended.
- 18. What will happen to each parish's funds?** Each parish will continue to maintain its financial viability. A joint Finance Council will work within the collaborative to share those expenses that are truly collaborative expenses.
- 19. Where would the parish offices be located?** At this time the CCC parish offices are at St. John the Evangelist rectory and St. Margaret of Scotland Parish office is located here in our parish. Any change would be decided by the Pastor of the collaborative through discussions with the parish Finance Board and the new collaborative PPC.
- 20. Each parish has similar ministries. Would these ministries have to merge into one, or would they stay at their own parish?** Parish ministries would continue to support their individual parish in whatever way is best to utilize the gifts and talents of the laity. Faith Formation will continue to collaborate as this seems to be satisfying the needs of the three parishes.
- 21. What happens to the Parish and Finance Councils?** Each parish will continue to have their present Finance Council and Parish Council structures. At some point there will likely be one Parish Council which will be comprised with laity from all 3 parishes.
- 22. How long would this take to be finalized? What is the timeline?** If all parishes agree, we will move with this as soon as possible. St. Mary Parish and St. John the Evangelist Parish have been implementing their collaborative for the past 4-5 years and it is a progressive process. For this new collaborative, it would be advantageous for all of us if this were timed for the beginning of the next fiscal year which is July 1, 2021.
- 23. What would our parish identity be? Would we retain our parish name, or would there be one name for all three parishes?** Each parish retains its own identity and its own parish name. However there would be a new name for this collaborative.
- 24. How did this proposal come?** The process of discernment for a collaborative of three parishes was initiated by Fr. Ray who presented his suggestion to the Finance Council. He asked for their agreement to approach Fr. Brian Mahoney about this parish joining with the two parishes of the CCC in a new collaborative as an opportunity for St. Margaret of Scotland Parish to be proactive in terms of its own future. The Finance Council expressed their support and then Fr. Ray brought this proposal to Fr. Brian Mahoney. Fr. Brian prayerfully reflected on this and then invited Fr. Ray to speak with his parish staff as to why he was making this proposal. After several such meetings and with further reflection, prayer and consideration, it was decided to bring the matter to everyone on the Parish Pastoral Councils and Finance Councils of all three parishes via a Zoom meeting. And once again after several meetings and discussions and prayer, all agreed we should proceed with this proposal. So Fr. Brian brought the proposal to Bishop Hennessey and to the Archdiocese of Boston.
- 25. How is the final decision to be made?** Bishop Hennessey and the Archdiocese of Boston gave their approval for Fr. Brian and Fr. Ray to have discussions with parishioners of all three parishes to explore the benefits of forming a new collaborative. It is important to carefully weigh the pros and cons of this change which will affect the lives of the people of three parishes. And it is important to realize there are many benefits for the good of the people of three parishes in forming this new collaborative: pastoral, spiritual and faith formation benefits. If you have any questions or concerns or wish to verify the accurateness of anything you may hear about this proposal, we invite you to please seek the truth by calling upon Fr. Brian and/or Fr. Ray. They will carefully listen to your concerns and conversations, and will welcome your questions, reflections, and thoughts. Ultimately, it will be the responses and the input from parishioners of all three parishes that will be carefully considered when making a recommendation to Cardinal Seán O'Malley who will make the final decision about this proposal.