



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

AMALGAMATION OF OUR LADY OF THE NATIVITY, WEST ESSENDON & ST THERESE'S, ESSENDON TO FORM THE PARISH OF ESSENDON



Why amalgamate?

Currently the parish office staff maintain two sets of financial accounts and financial records, as well as two databases for parishioner records, safeguarding records and Sacramental records. This causes inefficiencies in every aspect of the administration of the parish. Amalgamation will remove these inefficiencies and let shared parish resources work in the best interest of a unified parish. Income, assets, and property belonging to St Therese's and Our Lady of the Nativity, will be consolidated, and managed at the single 'Essendon Parish' level.

Will both churches remain open?

Yes, both churches will remain open.

Will the churches keep their names?

Yes, Our Lady of the Nativity church and St Therese's church will retain their names and continue to serve their local communities. The two churches will be located within a single parish named 'Essendon Parish.'

Will there be any changes to Mass times?

Mass times will remain the same at the two churches while attendance numbers remain at current levels. Parishioners still have the choice of either church for the purposes of funerals and weddings. All other services, including weekday Masses, Baptisms, and Sacramental programs will continue to be held at St Therese's as they have been since February 2023.

Will boundaries for school enrolments change?

No, the boundaries remain as they are now for the purposes of school enrolments. Any changes to enrolment criteria at Catholic schools is the responsibility of Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) and changes to our parish will not impact school enrolments.

Will there be one parish website?

Yes we plan to create a single parish website.

What will happen to parish assets/properties?

OLN is the owner of three properties which are currently leased: 35 Fawkner St rented to Ave Maria Kindergarten on a new 10-year lease (commencing November 2024), Tennis Courts 1 & 2 are leased to Our Lady of the Nativity Tennis Club and 33 Fawkner St is leased to New Care Services on a 3-year lease.

St Therese's is the owner of three leased properties: 50A Lincoln Rd, residential unit leased to tenants, Tennis Courts 1, 2 & 3 leased to St Therese's Tennis Club and telecommunications tower in St Therese's church leased to Indara.

Arrangements of the various leases will not change under an amalgamated parish as all leases of parish property are undertaken by The Roman Catholic Trusts Corporation (RCTC) for the Diocese of Melbourne on behalf of a parish. The Essendon Parish administration team will continue to oversee all leases as they do now.

Arrangements with either school regarding shared use of some property (for example the Fawkner St carpark and OLN parish hall) will remain as they are now. These arrangements are set out in Right to Use Land and Buildings Agreement (RULBA) which are agreements made between our parishes and MACS.

Is OLN financially viable or will it be a drain on the assets of St Therese's?

Parish Support contributions at OLN are significantly less than at St Therese's however the rental agreements mentioned previously provide both parishes with steady income and mean that neither church will be a financial drain on the other once we are a unified parish entity.

Does the PLT consider needs of the OLN parish to be as important as those of the St Therese's?

The PLT considers each church to be an equal part of the combined parish. There are parishioners from both parishes on the PLT to ensure that both parishes are represented.

Who are the current members of the Parish Leadership Team?

Current PLT members (in alphabetical order by surname) are Michael Balia, Tony Feain, Michael Fitzpatrick, John Hannon, Jacinta Hyland, Margie Kerr, Kevin McCartney, Tatiana Polizzi, Jac Radcliffe, Murray Sykes, Leanne Torr, Paul Whiting and Lynette Xerri. Posters showing the PLT members are on display in our churches and on our website: <https://www.stthereses.org.au/groupsministries/parish-leadership-team/> Parishioners are welcome to approach PLT members when they have concerns or questions.

What will happen when Father John retires in just over 3 years? How can we be sure we won't get a cleric who is not interested in the pastoral aspect and will result in significant drop in Mass attendees?

The appointment of John's successor is made by the Archbishop and is out of the hands of parishioners and Father John.

What are the future plans for the combined Essendon Parish?

Good question! The Parish Leadership Team have received many suggestions and reflections from parishioners since we announced the proposed amalgamation. Once amalgamation is complete the parish can look forward to the future. When the parish begins a process of strategic planning all submissions will be considered.

The process of strategic planning is far more complex and time-consuming than amalgamation. We would expect to begin a strategic planning initiative commence within the next 12 months.

Next steps?

Canon Law requires consultation with the parishioners of each parish community as part of the amalgamation process which occurred at community information sessions. Fr John will soon submit a report to the Council of Priests requesting amalgamation, which will include a summary of feedback from the community meetings. It is expected that the amalgamation process will be finalised by 1 January 2025.

What do you mean by...?

- PLT** Parish Leadership Team: A representative group from OLN and St Therese's which aims for parish-wide representation and an overall parish focus rather than personal views. The group was established to identify opportunities in the parish and set priorities while supporting development of parish rather than 'managing' activities.
- CAM** Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne: Geographically large, our Archdiocese is made up of over 200 parishes in an area as vast as Yarraville to Yea, Geelong to Greensborough, Healesville to Hadfield. The Vicar General of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne is Very Rev Anthony Kerin EV JCL. Melbourne has three Auxillary Bishops: Terry Curtain, Martin Ashe and Anthony John Ireland.
- RCTC** The Roman Catholic Trusts Corporation (RCTC) is the legal entity holding all property on behalf of parishes.
- MACS** Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd is responsible for the governance and operation of approximately 300 Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. The board of MACS was established in 2020 by Archbishop of Melbourne Peter A Comensoli.
- RULBA** Right to Use Land and Buildings Agreement. A formal agreement reached between the parish and school for the exclusive and for the shared use of all parish land and facilities. For example a school would generally have exclusive use of classrooms and the school yard and a parish would have exclusive use of a church and presbytery but they may share use of some facilities like parish halls, tennis courts and carparks. RULBAs include the overall responsibility of coordinating the usage, maintenance and financial responsibility of all shared facilities (including insurances).