

Terms of Reference

South Edinburgh Cluster Merger Enquiry Group

1. Purpose

To investigate the issues around the coming together of the 3 Cluster Parishes – St John Vianney, St Gregory the Great and St Catherine of Alexandria into a single parish. To identify key risks and challenges and suggest possible mitigations of these.

2. Objectives

- Describe a future state combined parish as a model we wish to aim for.
- Look at the key actions required to move us from our current state to that future state.
- Identify what requirements there are from the Archdiocese in such an activity
- Create clear channels for two-way communication between Parishioners, Parish and Cluster councils and parish priest.
- Identify risks and opportunities and suggest mitigations or actions to appropriately manage these
- Make a recommendation to Fr Alex regarding the way forward

3. Scope

Included

- Activities necessary to make a recommendation and to ensure good communication throughout the process
- Suitable liaison with other Cluster groups – CPC, Ministry Groups etc
- Reviews relating to all aspects of parish management including finance and premises, school links etc.
- Look at the issues around parish name.

Not Included

- Creation of new committees or bureaucratic structures which last beyond the Enquiry period.
- Activities that replace existing parish ministries or councils.

4. Key Activities

- **Describe the Future Merged Parish** Develop a clear, shared picture of what the single parish would look like in practice: identity, ministries, governance, Mass centres, communication, finances, and pastoral priorities.

- **Identify Principles to Guide the Work** Agree the non-negotiables and guiding assumptions (e.g. commitment to two Mass centres?; safeguarding continuity of pastoral care; honouring each parish's heritage).
- **Assess Current State vs Future State** Map the gap between the present reality and the desired merged parish. Identify obstacles, risks, dependencies, and opportunities.
- **Gather Evidence and Insights** Consult parishioners, ministries, finance teams, and other parishes that have undergone mergers. Capture lessons learned and relevant diocesan guidance.
- **Develop Options and Recommendations** Produce a balanced set of options, with implications, risks, and benefits clearly stated. Formulate a final recommendation for the parish priest.
- **Support Clergy in Diocesan Dialogue** Provide the priest with the information needed for discussions with the Archbishop and diocesan structures.
- **Build a plan** for merger with timelines and resources
- **Provide ongoing communication** with key groups (parishioners, PPCs, CPC and ministries)

5. Roles & Responsibilities

Enquiry Group

- Lead the investigation into the implications, risks, and opportunities of merging the three parishes.
- Maintain objectivity and transparency throughout the process.
- Ensure communication with parishioners is clear, timely, and accessible.
- Produce the final recommendation and supporting documentation.

Parish Priest

- Provides pastoral direction and ensures alignment with diocesan expectations.
- Receives the group's findings and engages with the Archbishop.
- Communicates key messages to parishioners.

Cluster Pastoral Council (CPC)

- Offers pastoral insight and ensures the work reflects the needs of parishioners.
- Supports communication and helps maintain unity across the cluster.
- Prepares to become the unified pastoral structure if merger proceeds.

Parishioners & Ministries

- Provide feedback, concerns, and ideas through consultations.
- Highlight practical implications for ministries, volunteers, and community life.

Project Lead

- Coordinates the initiative.

- Organises meetings and sets direction.
- Ensures progress of activities.
- Reports progress to clergy and councils.

6. Deliverables

- **Future Parish Description:** A clear articulation of what the merged parish will look like.
- **Guiding Principles:** The agreed assumptions and commitments shaping the work.
- **Gap Analysis:** Identification of what must change to achieve the future state.
- **Risk & Implication Register:** Clear documentation of risks, mitigations, and dependencies.
- **Consultation Summary:** Insights gathered from parishioners, ministries, and external parishes.
- **Final Recommendation Report:** A structured document for the parish priest and diocesan authorities.
- **Communication Plan:** A simple, practical approach to keeping parishioners informed.

7. Timeline

- To be determined, but indicatively ensure we have completed groundwork by the end of calendar year 2026, with a recommendation to follow early in 2027.