

***Our Virtual Parish Assembly was available online from September 1 through September 13, 2020. This assembly set forth our vision moving forward as a new combined parish of Saint Catherine of Sweden and Saint Richard, while detailing our financial position. The assembly also included a survey for input for our new name (now declared Saints Martha and Mary Parish) as well as asking for feedback and questions. Below are answers to some of the questions posed. This is not a comprehensive list of the questions which were posed, but these are the ones that can be answered at this time. We will continue to update this page as more information becomes available.***

## **Responses to Questions from the Parish Virtual Assembly survey:**

**Q: What changes do you anticipate to the Mass schedule after the merger, or do you envision that the current schedule will remain the same?**

A: At this moment, we do not anticipate any changes to the current weekend Mass schedule except to restore the Sunday 12 Noon Mass at the Saint Catherine site once the pandemic is over. At this point, we anticipate that each church building will continue to have one Saturday Vigil Mass and two Sunday Masses. Regarding the daily Mass schedule, we recently added a Friday 9:00 AM Mass at St. Catherine of Sweden. This change allows us to offer Mass every day of the week.

**Q: Could we standardize the steps or process of how each Mass runs at either church (i.e., ringing the bells at consecration and method of passing the collection basket from the front of the church to the back pew)? Can lectors and servers serve at both church buildings?**

A: Our goal is to establish more consistent processes in how the Mass flows at either church. We will be starting to make those changes soon. And yes, our goal is to allow lectors and servers to minister and participate at both churches.

**Q: Will parish council members be voted or picked by the pastor? Can you describe the process for selecting new pastoral council members? What is the timing for forming a new council?**

Pastoral council members are not handpicked or named. In fact, the parish pastoral council does not operate from standards of voting, winning and losing, or popular recognition. Rather, pastoral council members are selected through a process of prayerful discernment. This approach identifies members of the parish who have gifts for the ministry of leadership, which ultimately should lead to a consensus about which parishioners are needed to carry on the leadership role. This process consists of several stages where the parish at large is invited to identify those parishioners who may have the specific gifts needed. Potential members come together for prayerful and practical discernment with the clergy and current council members. We anticipate beginning the process of forming a new pastoral council within four to six months after the merger date of January 4, 2021.

**Q: Can you describe the process for selecting new finance council members? What is the timing for forming a new finance council?**

Finance council members are appointed by the pastor as per Canon Law. We anticipate beginning the process of forming a new finance council within 90 days of the merger date in January 2021.

**Q: Will we produce a new parish directory after our merger date?**

We recognize that a new parish directory is a fantastic idea. We will explore the feasibility and costs associated with creating a new directory after the merger date.

**Q: Was the financial statement presented in the virtual assembly combined for both St. Catherine of Sweden and St. Richard Church?**

A: Yes. That is correct. The financial information presented in the Parish Virtual Parish Assembly represented the combined financial data for both parishes.

**Q: Can you explain the information regarding the U.S. fiscal stimulus payment of \$240k? How and why did we receive federal money?**

The COVID-19 Pandemic Phase III Stimulus Package (also referred to as the CARES Act) was signed into law in April 2020 to covers secular employees' salaries for private companies and nonprofit organizations through the Small Business Administration. Like small business organizations and self-employed individuals, Catholic churches and pastors were encouraged to apply for this one-time fiscal stimulus package to help financially weather the economic turmoil wrought by COVID-19. The government money was distributed through banks and acts like a loan, although the loan is forgiven if the money is used to pay for secular workers' salaries.

**Q: After the merger, will contributions be made in the name of the new parish name and no longer to St. Catherine of Sweden or St. Richard Church? How will new envelopes be written up? Will income reside in the separate churches or in the merged parish grouping?**

A: All contributions will be made in the name of our new parish. We will create and distribute one standard envelop that will be used by all parishioners starting in January 2021. Our new merged parish will have one budget and one account reflecting the combined income.

**Q: Please describe the process that will be used to assess staffing needs and realignment of positions?**

A: An important step in the merger process is to carefully examine our current staffing levels and the needs fulfilled by each staffing position. Our goal is to honor the contributions from our staff, while continuing to be good stewards of the resources that our faith community provides to our parishes.

After reviewing parishes finances and to create financial stability while maintaining parish vibrancy, we recognize that it may be necessary to realign and/or reduce our current staffing levels. Such decisions require thoughtful consideration and careful analysis. Towards this end, we are in the process of working with individual staff members to compile a comprehensive list of all roles, scope of responsibilities and tasks performed for each position. Based on the analysis, we will work with current staff members to identify areas where we can create greater efficiency of tasks and resources, reduce redundancies, and discover unmet or under-fulfilled needs. Once this step has been completed, we will be in a better position to assess if specific positions need to change or if new ones should be created.