



## **St. John – St. Paul Collaborative**

### ***Frequently Asked Questions***

Below are 20 *Frequently Asked Questions* that were published in the St. John and St. Paul parish bulletins and websites between July 2013 and December 2013.

#### **Question 1: What is a Parish Collaborative and why are Parish Collaboratives being formed around Boston? Will our parish go into a Collaborative?**

The Archdiocesan Pastoral Planning Commission, over the last several years, evaluated the resources (the number of priests, new vocations, church buildings, etc) available in the Boston area for the foreseeable future and has made a determination as to how to allocate these resources in a manner that will enable the mission of Christ and the Catholic Church to grow stronger. Parish Collaboratives are affiliations of two to four parishes which will work together in significant ways. They will share a Pastor, a team of appointed Clergy (Parochial Vicars and Deacons), a Pastoral Team, and a Pastoral Council. They will work off of a Local Pastoral Plan which they will develop together. It is important to remember that each parish will maintain its own identity – its own name, its buildings, its canonical rights, its own Finance Council, its own bank accounts, its own books, its own financial assets, and its own financial obligations. Common costs of the Collaborative (such as staffing and shared programs) will be shared between the member parishes. At some point soon, St. John's and St. Paul's will together form one of these Collaboratives.

#### **Question 2: I've been reading that Parish Collaboratives are being formed throughout the Archdiocese. How was it determined which parishes would be grouped together? Why have St. Paul's and St. John's been grouped together?**

Parishes in close geographical proximity to each other, often located in the same town or zip code have been grouped together for logistical and practical purposes. In addition, the Archdiocese sought to ensure that the parishes in the Collaborative will have enough financial resources to sustain the Collaborative. Another metric that was used is the parishioner-to-priest ratio: about 1,600 parishioners attending weekly mass to one Pastor. (A second full-time priest, or Parochial Vicar, may be assigned to Collaboratives when weekly mass attendance exceeds 3,200 parishioners.) The analysis utilized to form Parish Collaboratives also took into account the "vitality" of the parishes, including the combined number of baptisms, weddings, funerals, and weekly mass attendees are in the parishes being grouped together. Trends in population growth, educational requirements, cultural and language changes, family and household economic challenges, and migration patterns were also considered. St. John's and St. Paul's were a natural fit forming a Parish Collaborative.

#### **Question 3. Since St. John's and St. Paul's are forming a Collaborative, does this mean the parishes will be merging in the same way that companies merge?**

No. If St. John's and St. Paul's were to merge, the two parishes would cease to exist, and a new parish would be created. Instead, St. John's and St. Paul's will still continue to exist after the Collaborative begins. Think of our Collaborative as an "affiliation of parishes" – not a new parish. Both St. John's and St. Paul's will remain open. St. John's and St. Paul's will each maintain its own identity – its own name, buildings, canonical rights, bank accounts, books, financial assets, and financial obligations.

**Question 4: We're hearing a lot about Parish Collaboratives lately. Will our parish be in a Parish Collaborative? When will our Parish Collaborative start?**

Yes, our parish will definitely be in a Parish Collaborative. We know that St. John's and St. Paul's will be grouped together in the Collaborative, but we don't know specifically when the Collaborative will begin. Parishes around the area will start their Collaboratives in phases over a five year period. Twenty-eight parishes in the archdiocese formed twelve Collaboratives in Phase I, which began earlier this year. St. John's and St. Paul's will be in a later phase. We don't have an exact date yet, but we will keep you informed as details become available. When we form our Collaborative, each parish will maintain its own identity – its own name, its buildings, its canonical rights, its own bank accounts, its own books, its own financial assets, and its own financial obligations. Common costs of the Collaborative (such as staffing and shared programs) will be shared between St. John's and St. Paul's.

**Question 5: I keep hearing that our parish will be part of a Parish Collaborative. Is there a plan specifically customized for the local needs of our two parishes and the unique character that our "Wellesley/Newton Lower Falls" Collaborative will have?**

We know that our Parish Collaborative will be comprised of St. John's and St. Paul's. We don't know when our Collaborative will start, but we do know that a "Local Pastoral Plan" will be developed once our Collaborative is up and running. The Pastor will appoint a team to write the Local Pastoral Plan for our Collaborative. This Plan will contain the details of how St. John's and St. Paul's will run their programs, promote vocations, and engage in "radical hospitality" to promote the goal of New Evangelization. The Plan will contain goals and ways to measure the movement toward these goals and will need to be approved by the Archbishop. Our Local Pastoral Plan will be unique to our Collaborative.

**Question 6: When it's time for our parish to start our Parish Collaborative, what will happen to our pastors?**

In short, we don't know yet. There will be one Pastor shared between St. John's and St. Paul's. The Archdiocese has stated that the Pastor for each Collaborative shall be a priest:

- Whose reputation is well established
- Who is committed to the mission of the Church and to the New Evangelization
- Who has a proficiency in working in a collaborative environment, with strong skills of leadership, decision-making, oversight, and communication
- Who can work well with staff and parish councils
- Who can maintain an equitable relationship between/among the parishes
- Who is respectful of the different cultures of the parishes
- Who has the language skills to care for the people of his parishes
- Who is willing to participate in significant training and evaluation.

**Question 7: How can one Pastor handle the job of being Pastor for both St. John's and St. Paul's?! What type of training will he receive to enable him to tackle such a big job?**

Although there will be just one Pastor for each Collaborative, he will not be the only person carrying out the work of the Church. He will leverage his time by utilizing a team of appointed Clergy (Parochial Vicars and Deacons), a Pastoral Team, Pastoral Council members, Finance Council members, and School Board members. Many of these individuals will undergo formal training with the Central Ministries of the Archdiocese. Training will focus on New Evangelization, Catholic Leadership, and the mechanics of Collaboration. In addition, the pastor and pastoral service team will be developing a pastoral plan that will include opportunities for laity in both parishes to support various parish ministries and activities.

**Question 8. I keep hearing that St. John's and St Paul's are forming a Parish Collaborative. Does this mean that one of the churches here in Wellesley will be closing?**

No. Both St. John's and St. Paul's will remain open, which happily is a key benefit of the new Pastoral Collaborative program. The Archdiocesan Pastoral Planning Commission, over the last several years, evaluated the resources (the number of priests, new vocations, church buildings, etc) available in the Boston area for the foreseeable future and has determined how to allocate these resources in a manner that will enable the mission of Christ and the Catholic Church to grow stronger. Think of our Collaborative as an "affiliation of parishes" – not a new parish. St. John's and St. Paul's will each maintain its own identity – each with its own name, buildings, canonical rights, bank accounts, books, financial assets, and financial obligations.

**Question 9. Given that St. John's and St. Paul's are forming a Parish Collaborative, will religious education programs at our churches merge into one mega-program?**

The structure of the Religious Education Programs will be left to the discretion of the Pastor in each Collaborative. The Pastor will seek input from his Pastoral Team and Pastoral Council members on this matter. The Archdiocese expects that in some Collaboratives, the programs will merge, and in some cases, they will remain separate. In each Collaborative, the Pastor will make his decision based on what he sees as the most effective way to promote the goals of the New Evangelization.

**Question 10. When the Collaborative between St. John's and St. Paul's starts, will mass times change?**

Mass times in each Parish have traditionally been determined at the discretion of local Pastors. After the Collaborative starts, the Pastor will seek input from his Pastoral Team and Pastoral Council regarding Mass times. The Archdiocese expects that in many places, mass schedules in Collaboratives will need adjustment.

**Question 11. I know that each parish has its own Finance Council, which is responsible for the financial activities of the parish. What will happen to our Finance Council, and our finances, when we begin our Parish Collaborative?**

St. John's and St. Paul's will continue to have two separate Finance Councils. Each parish will maintain its own identity (its own name, its buildings, its canonical rights) and this extends into the financial realm. Each parish will continue to have its own bank accounts, its own books, its own financial assets, and its own financial obligations. Common costs of the Collaborative between St. John's and St. Paul's (such as staffing and shared programs) will be shared between the two Parishes. Although the Finance Councils and our financial assets and liabilities will remain distinct, members of the Finance Councils will have to work together to support the mission of New Evangelization. Direction for this mission will come over time from our Pastor.

**Question 12: It is my understanding that each Catholic parish has its own local governing body, the Parish Council. How will this work once we start our Parish Collaborative?**

St. John's and St. Paul's will have one combined Pastoral Parish Council, made up of parishioners from both parishes. Although each parish will maintain its own identity (each will keep its own name, buildings, and canonical rights), there will be one Parish Council to assist and advise the Pastor in the mission of the Parishes of the Collaborative. The Pastor will seek to structure the Pastoral Parish Council in such a way that all parishioners will be able to have open and honest communication with him, both through the Parish Pastoral Council and in other settings.

**Question 13: What is evangelization, really? Why is “New Evangelization” highlighted as a key part of the Parish Collaborative Process? How are the two related, anyway?**

Evangelization is the work of reaching out to our brothers and sisters and drawing them more fully to Jesus Christ. Cardinal Sean, echoing the teaching of Blessed Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, has repeatedly emphasized that the Church will only be strengthened to the extent that every practicing Catholic embraces the “New Evangelization,” the particular work of reaching out to Catholics who are not currently active in the Church. Evangelization is a component of the Parish Collaborative Process because evangelization and collaboration are two critical ways which will enable the mission of Christ and the Catholic Church to grow stronger. We all know Catholics in Wellesley and elsewhere who have drifted away from the Catholic Church. To make our Catholic community stronger, we need to find ways to welcome our brothers and sisters back to active practice of the faith.

**Question 14. It has been said that evangelization is a critical component of the Parish Collaborative process and the long term strength of the archdiocese. What does it mean to be an “evangelizing parish”?**

Evangelization (reaching out to our brothers and sisters and drawing them more fully to Jesus Christ) is a component of the Parish Collaborative Process because evangelization and collaboration are two critical ways to enable the mission of Christ and the Catholic Church to grow stronger. To make our Catholic community stronger, we need to find ways to welcome our brothers and sisters back to active practice of the faith. Evangelizing parishes exercise what is called “radical hospitality.” They are always mindful of the lost. They pay careful attention to what they look like to people coming through the door for the first time. They make excellent and bold use of social media. They are committed to forming disciples, who in turn form other disciples. They have a strong focus on adult religious experiences, and adult faith formation, especially in small groups. We all know Catholics in Wellesley and elsewhere who have drifted away from the Catholic Church. To make our Catholic community stronger, we need to find ways to welcome our brothers and sisters back to active practice of the faith.

**Question 15. When will St. John’s officially begin its Parish Collaborative with St. Paul’s? Is St. John’s and St. Paul’s going to be one of the first Collaboratives to form in the Archdiocese?**

The Archdiocese is implementing the Pastoral Plan in phases. Phase One began on June 4, 2013, when twenty-eight parishes came together to form twelve Collaboratives. Phase One is being carefully followed by the Archdiocese. Phase Two parishes were announced in September, 2013 and these Collaboratives will begin on June 3, 2014. In Phase Two, forty-four parishes will come together to form twenty-one Collaboratives. Each year going forward, about twenty new Collaboratives will form. We don’t have an exact date yet for the collaboration of St. John’s and St. Paul’s, but we will make an announcement as soon as we have any information.

**Question 16. I’ve heard that when the Parish Collaboratives form, all the Pastors in that Collaborative Phase have to resign. Is this correct?**

Yes. However, the Archbishop will appoint the best Pastor for the unique needs of each Collaborative. It may be the case that the best Pastor for a given Collaborative is one of the current Pastors or Administrators (interim Pastors), or it may be the case that the best choice is someone new, from another Parish altogether. In Phase One, which began in the summer of 2013, half of the twelve Collaboratives got a new Pastor, and the other half retained a Pastor from one of the Collaborating parishes.

**Question 17: Once our Collaborative is formed with St. Paul's, is there a "blueprint" of how we're supposed to operate?**

Yes. After our Collaborative is formed and is up and running, the Pastor will appoint a team to write the Local Pastoral Plan for our Collaborative. The Plan will contain the details of how St. John's and St. Paul's will engage in the work of the New Evangelization (reaching out to Catholics who are not currently active in the Church and welcoming them back to the active practice of the faith). Our Local Pastoral Plan will contain the details of how we will run our programs, how we will promote vocations, and how we will engage in radical hospitality. The Local Pastoral Plan will also contain specific goals and how we will measure movement toward these goals. The Local Pastoral Plan will be different for each Collaborative and will be approved by the Archbishop.

**Question 18: Once our Collaborative with St. Paul's begins, will there be any training or guidance for the Pastors and other individuals on how to keep things running smoothly as a new Collaborative?**

Yes. After a Collaborative Pastor is appointed, his training begins right away. Collaboratives will typically start in June of each year, and training will begin that fall for the combined Pastoral Council, the two Finance Councils, and the two School Boards. Early in the following year (January or February), the Pastoral Teams will begin their training, which will be focused on the New Evangelization, Catholic Leadership, and the mechanics of Collaboration.

**Question 19: Since Phase One is underway already, has the Archdiocesan Pastoral Planning Commission noted any challenges or surprises with these initial Collaboratives?**

As we all know, change is rarely easy! Phase One Pastors have embraced major change: they left familiar surroundings and started working with new staffs and parishioners. They are learning the culture of their new parishes while trying to keep up Mass schedules and levels of involvement with their parishioners. These Pastors have committed themselves to grow strong, intentional, and effective centers for the Archdiocese's New Evangelization. One area which posed some surprising false starts for the Collaboratives was IT. Getting the proper networking, internet, phone, and wiring in twelve Collaboratives up and running proved to be more complex than anticipated. Things are going more smoothly now; patience and persistence is paying off.

**Question 20: I feel like I've probably missed some of the questions that have been published in this section of the Bulletin. Where can I learn more about Collaboratives?**

All of the questions we've published so far can be found on the St. John's web site – click [ST. JOHN-ST. PAUL COLLABORATIVE NEWS](#) under "Quick Links." In addition, the Archdiocese regularly updates a detailed website: [www.disciplesinmission.com](http://www.disciplesinmission.com).