

Parish Merger Survey – January 2024

Feedback from St. Winefride's and Our Lady of the Angels

Overview and analysis by Mark Hessey - St. Winefride's, Shepshed & Sean Hale – Our Lady of the Angels, East Leake.

Total Number of Respondents 110

66 respondents from St Winefride's

44 respondents from Our Lady of the Angels

Question 1:

We will be retaining the two existing church names and create a new overall parish name.

a) What impact do you envisage this having on you personally?

Overall Summary: 35 responses indicated that the merger would have very little impact on them personally. Several people across both churches indicated that because of the proposed Mass times they would need to consider attending Mass elsewhere.

Feedback from St. Winefride's

- 17 people said that it would have no impact on them at all.
- 12 people said that the distance to travel to East Leake would mean they would not travel to East Leake to go to mass etc.
- The proposed mass time change to 09.00am on a Sunday would mean that some parishioners who were dependent upon carers or had work issues could not guarantee they would go to mass at that time.
- Several people mentioned attending Mount St. Bernards or going into Loughborough instead.
- The choir, due to health needs, work requirements or other commitments, felt they would not be able to continue if the Sunday Mass moved to 09.00am.
- The feeling was that the parish priest would be too busy to know the parishioners well.
- It was mentioned that there would need to be a robust enquiries and emergencies facility.

Feedback from Our Lady of the Angels

- 18 people felt it would have minimal or no impact on them personally.
- The proposed 4.00pm Saturday Mass time was of concern to some people who felt they would probably look for Masses elsewhere but not Shepshed.

b) What impact do you think it will have on your existing parish community?

Overall Summary: 12 of the responses across the 2 churches indicated that there wouldn't be major negative impact on the existing parish communities. However, concerns were raised about potential fragmentation due to people choosing to go to Masses at other churches.

Feedback from St. Winefride's

- 3 people thought that there would be very little or no impact.
- Transportation to and the lack of parking at East Leake was highlighted as a reason people would not be travelling to East Leake and would rather go to churches that were perceived as nearer such as the Monastery or in Loughborough.
- The overall feeling was that the priest would be very busy, and this would eventually result in reduced numbers of masses, people going to other parishes and an eventual decline in Shepshed as a parish.
- Alternatives suggested included, move priests from academic work to parish life, more on-line masses, have a Deacon at St. Winefride's as well (is he going to be shared?), reduction to 3 masses over the weekend over the 2 parishes.
- The choir would effectively disappear at St. Winefride's.
- The travelling between the 2 parishes would mean that the priest would not be able to attend or stay for coffee mornings.
- There would be a reduction in weekday masses.

Feedback from Our Lady of the Angels

- 9 responses indicated that there would be little or no impact on the existing parish community.
- Some people were concerned about a potential fragmentation of the community they currently feel a part of. This was mainly relating to the 4.00pm Mass time resulting in people going to Mass elsewhere.

c) Do you think the merger will bring any benefits?

Overall Summary: Generally speaking, most people couldn't perceive or were unsure about any benefits. Some people identified that there could be new ideas, financial savings, new friendships made, with more social events and more spiritual ties created.

Feedback from St. Winefride's

- 18 people thought that there would be no benefits at all.
- 13 people were unsure about any benefits.
- There was support for it in that there could be new ideas, financial savings, new friendships made, with more social events and more spiritual ties created.
- The biggest benefit mentioned was that it would keep the churches open.
- Having 2 churches gave people more flexibility as to which mass to attend.

Feedback from Our Lady of the Angels

- Whilst very few people indicated positive impact, some did recognise that there may be opportunities in the new arrangement e.g.: a new approach, single administrative processes and for people to come together socially.

d) Do you think the change may cause some difficulties?

Overall Summary: Main concern raised was around the geographical distance between the 2 churches and lack of public transport. Concerns were also raised about the availability of the priest.

Feedback from St. Winefride's

- The availability of transport and the availability of the priest were the 2 biggest issues.
- There were questions about how that would affect the financial and administration of the parishes, including whether that meant if there would be 1 or 2 Diocesan parish fees.
- Differing Mass times were also provided – especially for Sunday morning at 9.30 or leaving it as it is, with East Leake having a later mass.
- The role of Deacon Keith was questioned and whether he could do the masses at East Leake instead, whether he could and is he going to be shared across the 2 parishes.

Feedback from Our Lady of the Angels

- A number of people felt that building a new single parish community would be problematic due to the distance between East Leake and Shepshed and the lack of any convenient public transport.
- With some people considering leaving the parish there may be impacts on income.

Question 2: Mass times

Overall Summary: The proposed 4.00pm Saturday Mass did generate some unfavourable feedback. Issues around the change to a 9.00am Sunday morning Mass at Shepshed with the Choir members. Strong indication that people would not be prepared to travel between East Leake and Shepshed or vice-versa to attend Masses.

Feedback from St. Winefride's

- 33 for Saturday @ 6.00pm
- 19 for Sunday @ 9.00am
- The rest abstained or said that they would not come to either church.

Feedback from Our Lady of the Angels

- 12 for Saturday @ 4.00pm
- 28 for Sunday @ 11.00am
- The rest abstained or said that they would not come to either church.

Question 3: What level of ministry would you like to see outside the weekend Masses (e.g. Confessions, weekday Masses, Christmas and Easter Masses, Sacraments etc)?

Overall Summary: A significant majority of people wanted to maintain the current levels of ministry they experience. There was some recognition that services at Easter and Christmas would need to be shared. Access to sacrament of reconciliation appeared to be less contentious.

Feedback from St Winefride's

- The vast majority of people (29) wanted no change to the existing arrangements.
- 7 asked for guaranteed masses at Christmas and Easter.
- A further 10 asked for weekends and Holy Days of Obligation (as generally they didn't come at other times) with a further 3 also asking for the HDoO's and 3 wanted just the weekends. (I think that this should be all lumped together, with people just expecting to come at the weekend and for HDoO's.)
- Other options included on-line services, more lay people being trained to deliver the sacraments, priest needed for funerals, sacraments (reconciliation mentioned), using Deacon Keith and asking the Deanery for more help.

Feedback from our Lady of the Angels

- 50% of the respondents (23) indicated that they would like the current arrangements to continue.
- 4 asked for Masses at Christmas and Easter to be available.
- 4 people requested that confession was available on a regular basis.
- 2 respondents specifically requested Masses on Holy days of Obligation.

Question 4: What are your views on Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist carrying out weekday services/Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament etc when a priest is not available?

Overall Summary: There was generally good support for the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion taking weekday services in the absence of the priest.

Feedback from St. Winefride's

- There was a lot of support (about 2/3rds) for Eucharistic ministers providing services in the absence of a priest.
- 6 said that they would support it only in cases where a priest was not available.
- 7 said they were not in favour of using Eucharistic Ministers in this way.
- There were concerns that if the parishes moved to this model, there would need to be more Eucharistic Ministers, as several of them work and they would not be able to pick up many more activities.
- One suggestion was that they let women and married men become priests – but this falls outside of the remit of this survey.

Feedback from Our Lady of the Angels

- Almost unanimous support for the use of Eucharistic Ministers providing services in the absence of a priest. This is already the case in East Leake.