

Information Report for Parishioners of St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church on Initiating a Merger with St Martin's Anglican Church

Two important meetings are scheduled for the parishioners of St. John the Evangelist regarding initiating a merger with St. Martin's:

- An Information Meeting on the initiation of a merger with St. Martin's to be held on **Saturday, May 14, 2022 at 10 am** on Zoom. To encourage full participation of those who may not have virtual access, there will be a gathering at 10 am on May 14th in the Church Lounge with a Zoom link.
- An Extraordinary Vestry Meeting on **Sunday, May 29, 2022** in the church sanctuary following the service to conduct a secret ballot vote on initiating a merger with St. Martin's. There will also be a Zoom link for an anonymous poll vote.

Background to merging churches

The process of merging two churches is set out in Canon 8 of the Diocese of New Westminster regulations. In nearly all mergers, one church (the lead church) absorbs another (the joining church). The lead church is usually the larger congregation which in this case is St. John's. The churches become one to achieve a common purpose: working together as a vibrant, healthy expression of Christ's body, the church. St. Martin's was established as a missional church of St. John's over 110 years ago. In their words, returning to St. John's is a symbolic coming home. They have found that St. John's has been enthusiastic, invitational and welcoming to St. Martin's. The Church Wardens and clergy of St. Martin's have met with leadership from multiple parishes in this region. It is the view of St. Martin's that St. John's has made the most compelling invitation to St. Martin's: both congregations place a high value on quality traditional liturgy and music. The leaders of both parishes do not see value in renaming and rebranding the existing parish of St. John the Evangelist, particularly since it is the first church of any denomination on the North Shore which seeded almost all Anglican parishes on the North Shore.

St. Martin's vote to initiate the process to merge at their Extraordinary Vestry Meeting

The leadership of the parish of St. Martin's has been in active discussion with their parishioners for several months regarding the financial and ministry challenges the parish currently faces. The St. Martin's parish leadership believes that God is calling the parish to end its current form of ministry so that the parish and its parishioners can serve Christ in new life-giving ways. On Sunday, March 27, 2022, St. Martin's held an Extraordinary Vestry Meeting. At that meeting, they held a vote on the future of their parish with two motions: one to initiate a merger with St. John's and the other to close the parish. A total of 41 members voted at the Extraordinary Vestry: 35 voted in favour of the merger, and 6 opposed, representing just over 85% in favour. After the vote, many parishioners expressed their optimism and excitement about what comes next, including several that had voted to remain worshipping at St. Martin's. This vote initiates a vote at St. John's, and potential merger process and negotiations between the two parishes. Bishop John Stephens, Executive Archdeacon Douglas Fenton and Capilano Archdeacon Stephen Muir are aware and supportive of this development.

The text of the St. Martin's motion is as follows:

THAT this Extraordinary Vestry of the Parish of St. Martin's North Vancouver

(i) requests that the Bishop of New Westminster initiate the necessary legal and canonical process to merge the Parish of St. Martin's North Vancouver with the Parish of St. John The Evangelist North Vancouver and,
(ii) directs the Trustees of the Parish of St. Martin's North Vancouver to undertake the requisite legal and canonical steps mandated by Canon 8 of the Diocese of New Westminster to accomplish the merger of the Parish of St. Martin's North Vancouver with the Parish of St. John The Evangelist North Vancouver.

This Resolution was passed by the requisite 2/3 majority of the members of Vestry in attendance and entitled to vote.

Response to the St. Martin's motion to initiate a merger with St. John's

In response to this motion, the priest and Church Wardens of St. John's have sent a letter of acknowledgement to St. Martin's and our commitment to move forward with an Extraordinary Vestry Meeting at St. John's to vote on initiating a merger. The Ven. Richard Leggett, Archdeacon Stephen Muir, the Rev. Mark Munn of St. Martin's and the Rev. Patrick Blaney of St. John's met on April 5th to discuss and set out the steps to better understand the merger process. The Church Wardens and priests of St. John's and St. Martin's have met twice to begin the dialogue about merging.

The next step in the process is for St. John's to consider making the same motion as St. Martin's and to that end, an Extraordinary Vestry Meeting is set for Sunday, May 29th in the sanctuary after the service for a vote on the following motion:

THAT this Extraordinary Vestry of the Parish of St. John the Evangelist North Vancouver
(i) requests that the Bishop of New Westminster initiate the necessary legal and canonical process to merge the Parish of St. John the Evangelist North Vancouver with the Parish of St. Martin's North Vancouver and,
(ii) directs the Trustees of the Parish of St. John the Evangelist North Vancouver to undertake the requisite legal and canonical steps mandated by Canon 8 of the Diocese of New Westminster to accomplish the merger of the Parish of St. John the Evangelist North Vancouver with the Parish of St. Martin's North Vancouver.

This Resolution would need to be passed by the requisite 2/3 majority of the members of Vestry in attendance and entitled to vote (including online attendees), there having been not less than 14 days notice of the same as per Diocesan Canons.

In advance of this vote, there will be an Information Meeting on Zoom on May 14th. Those without virtual access are invited to gather in the Church lounge at 10 am with a Zoom link. You are invited to bring your questions for discussion.

How the vote will be conducted

For the Extraordinary Vestry Meeting, you may attend and vote in person or online. Proxy votes are not permitted by the Diocese in the case of a vote for a merger. Voting will be conducted by anonymous secret ballot (if you are attending in person) or using an anonymous secret poll (if you are attending online). No one will know your vote decision. There will be assigned scrutineers for the vote count. Amendments to the motion are not

recommended, as this resolution has been provided to the parish by the Diocese in consultation with legal and canonical experts. The results of the votes will be announced before the closure of the Extraordinary Vestry Meeting.

Only members of Vestry may vote. The criteria for voting at Vestry as per Canon 9 of the Diocese of New Westminster are:

Baptized persons of the age of fifteen or over:

- who are accustomed worshippers in the parish and
- whose names have been on the parish list for at least three months preceding the Vestry Meeting.

An accustomed worshipper may include, among other things, a person's:

- frequent attendance
- material commitment of time, talents or financial resources; or
- receipt of the ministrations of the Parish because of illness or other incapacity.

A list of parishioners eligible to vote in the Extraordinary Vestry Meeting will be prepared in advance by the Church Wardens. Please check with the office before May 29 if you are unsure of your voting status. Non-members are able to attend as guests but may not vote.

Benefits to a merger

There are several benefits to a merger:

1. As two churches, we can fulfill our God-given mission better together than separately. Mergers can and do produce positive growth and admirable fruit, unifying local congregations around a shared mission that is producing more effective spiritual and social impact.
2. Mergers offer parishioners a clear path to transition their life in faith together as a community in an orderly way, rather than individually and in a haphazard way.
3. Mergers often feel like life-giving processes that offer hope and new life after difficult times.
4. And, in the context of a merger, parishes retain creative control over the closure process, the allocation of the parish's financial resources, and the handling of sacred objects.

Next Steps:

As a parishioner of St. John's, you are strongly encouraged to attend both the Information Meeting on Saturday, May 14th at 10 am and the Extraordinary Vestry Meeting on Sunday, May 29th after the service (online Zoom or in person) to vote on the motion.

If St. John's parishioners vote in favour of a merger with St. Martin's, this would be communicated to the Bishop with a formalized request to initiate the necessary legal and canonical process for St. Martin's and St. John's to merge, and would direct the Trustees to do the same. The information on the vote would be presented to Diocesan Council at their meeting in June.

In the event of a positive vote, future opportunities with St. Martin's would include a combined worship service (potentially later in June), and other occasions to meet at either St. John's or

St. Martin's to begin to connect with the life of each community. There would be negotiations on sacred artifacts used in worship and items at St. Martin's that they would like to incorporate into a new life at St. John's, where possible. The St. Martin's memorial garden will remain in place for the foreseeable future and it will be up to the Diocese to choose what to do with it in the coming years. Key items of discussion would be our styles of worship and ministry in the community with a goal to establishing common ground and accommodations for differences. St. Martin's liturgies include the Book of Common Prayer (BCP) Holy Eucharist (1st, 3rd & 5th Sundays), BCP Sung Matins (2nd Sunday), a contemporary Holy Eucharist liturgy (4th Sunday) and a monthly Agape Gathering on the 1st Sunday afternoon for worship around conversation, fellowship and food.

In the event of a merger, the priest, administrator, music & choir directors and caretaking staff at St. John's would continue as is. The priest at St. Martin's has been placed there for a one year term ending in January 2023 but may be extended depending on the Extraordinary Vestry vote at St. John's or other timeline factors. St. Martin's administrative, music and janitorial staff would not be allocated to St. John's.

In the case of a merger, the St. Martin's rectory, church and hall would come under the administration of the Diocese and it is envisaged that these properties would continue to be held by the Diocese. Currently it is the practice of the Diocese to maintain rectory buildings to help house clergy in the region. The Diocese would take over as administrator of the St. Martin's church property with newly appointed trustees, and would likely retain most rental and tenancy agreements with current users, particularly as they cover the site's operational costs. Any surplus would be allocated to Diocesan mission and ministry. St. Martin's will not be deconsecrated prior to closure and may remain consecrated as a site for worship for some time whilst new appointed trustees determine the building's next best use.

The timeline for a merger would be established between the parishes and Diocesan leadership ensuring that the transition would be conducted in a faithful, orderly, respectful, pastoral and transparent manner. There would be opportunities for St. Martin's to celebrate and remember its ministry. Diocesan Canon 8 outlines that the process of merger shall be completed within 18 months of its formal initiation but the Bishop may extend the time limit.

Please keep the people of both St. Martin's and St. John's in your prayers as we begin the discernment process in this journey together. With open minds, open hearts and the love of God we trust this journey will lead to a shared future of rich Anglican worship and ministry in our community.

The Rev. Patrick Blaney, Priest
Yasmine Bia, Church Warden
Alison Brookfield, Church Warden

April 27, 2022