



The Newman Cluster of Churches

Christ the King, Kingstanding [Parish No. 24], Our Lady of the Assumption, Maryvale [Parish No. 25], St. Margaret Mary, Perry Common [Parish No. 30].

[Date]

Most Reverend Bernard Longley
Archbishop of Birmingham
Your Grace,

Petition for Merger

In accordance with Canon 515 §2, which entrusts the competence for parish modifications to the diocesan bishop, I humbly submit this formal petition on behalf of Christ the King, Kingstanding [Parish No.24] and Our Lady of the Assumption, Maryvale [Parish No. 25] for your prayerful consideration and approval. Your Grace appointed me as Parish Priest of both Parishes by letter dated (**/**/2026 *to be added*).

As parish priest and juridic representative of both of these parishes under Canon 532, it is my duty to propose the following modification: the merger by fusion of Christ the King, Kingstanding [Parish No.24] with Our Lady of the Assumption, Maryvale [Parish No. 25] so as to create one single unified parish under a new name. ***[Note to Parishioners reading this draft: merger by fusion is the way we have consistently explained what is going on. In the actual petition to be presented the formal canonical language will be used. The formal language and “merger by fusion” mean exactly the same thing.]***

This proposal originated in discussions which began in the **Autumn of 2023** when the Newman Cluster was being formed. The then Dean, and now Vicar-General, Canon Jonathan Veasey chaired a number of meetings between myself, Fr. Leonard Cox [Assistant Priest at St Margaret, Mary], Fr. Thé-Quang Nguyen and the Deacons of the Cluster, Revv. Gary O’Brien and Dominic Fahey. It was discerned amongst us that by 2027 the three parishes within the Newman Cluster would eventually be merged into one single parish with a single parish priest. It was agreed that this discernment had to be shared with the lay faithful. Accordingly, Deacon Gary, whom the Dean had appointed as

Cluster Coordinator, preached at all seven Sunday Masses then celebrated within the Cluster over the course of two weekends [28th January and 5th February 2024] in which the discernment was presented in the context of the renewal of the Church's mission in the area.

Since preaching that homily, Deacon Gary O'Brien as the authorised delegate of both myself and my predecessor, Fr. Thé-Quang Nguyen, has conducted an extensive consultation with the parishioners in both Christ the King, Kingstanding and Our Lady of the Assumption, Maryvale. The individual phases of the consultation are evidenced in a bundle of documents which has been supplied to the Reverend Chancellor both in hard copy and electronically. For your Grace's convenience, the index to that bundle is attached to this Petition as Appendix I. This sufficiently demonstrates both the length of time taken and the range of views sought as well as the means by which all relevant stakeholders have been kept informed about the progress and outcomes of the consultation. ***[Note to Parishioners reading this draft: this is an index of all Parish Council minutes, Merger Advisory Group minutes, Merger News publications etc.]***

For the avoidance of doubt, this Petition is confined to the fusion of Parishes No.24 and No.25. The consultation has canvassed a wide range of issues concerning communion and mission in the context of the Diocesan Plan and specifically Cluster development. Chief among these has been the inadequacy for current needs of the place of worship for Our Lady of the Assumption on Old Oscott Hill. There will, in the fulness of time, need to be a second Petition relating to the future of that particular building. Finally, there will need to be a third Petition addressing the merger of St Margaret Mary, Perry Common of which I am also the parish priest. Both the second and the third Petition will be preceded by further periods of consultation on the specific issues raised by each proposal.

Regarding the name of the proposed new parish, two rounds of consultative voting have been conducted to produce a shortlist from a much longer range of suggestions. Although I am aware from official guidance that three possible names are requested, there was a tie for third place in the second vote and so the following shortlist is offered for your discernment and decision:

- St. John Henry Newman
- St Francis of Assisi
- St Padre Pio
- Sacred Heart and St John Henry Newman

In all cases, the geographical designation proposed is Kingstanding and Maryvale.

The consensus amongst the parishioners of Christ the King and Our Lady of the Assumption is that this is the logical consequence of the considerations set out below and more particularly explained in the Merger Document. This document has functioned in the same way that Green and White Papers precede the enactment of parliamentary

legislation. By means of publication on the parish websites and being placed in hard copy before meetings of differing kinds within the Cluster, it has been shared with the parishioners through various drafts and the final version of which is attached to this Petition as Appendix II. ***[Note to Parishioners reading this in draft: the final version of the Merger Document is available at the back of Church and will be published on the websites].***

In summary, for the better pastoral care of the faithful within the territorial boundaries of both Christ the King, Kingstanding and Our Lady of the Assumption, Maryvale and therefore for the good of souls, the merger by fusion of these two parishes is proposed for the following reasons:

- i. enabling a better sharing and allocation of resources- material and liturgical: one key point of learning from the round of consultation carried out in September 2025 was that the growing families in the two parishes are choosing Christ the King for their place of worship and so it is from that resources that new lay ministers will primarily be found.
- ii. breaking down a residual us/them attitude which the Parish Council has discerned: it is agreed that this barrier must be overcome by gentle nurturing;
- iii. creating a more energised foundation for the parish's mission to Maryvale Catholic Primary School and Cardinal Wiseman without impinging on the current work carried on between Christ the King and Christ the King Catholic Primary School;
- iv. enabling us to form lay ministers working across our United Catholic Community- not just about liturgical ministers and lay leaders of worship but also health and safety officers and premises managers; catechists and community organisers; safeguarding representatives and future parish pastoral councillors with an understanding that they are ministers of governance; lay missionaries and ministers of hospitality and welcome. We need to accept there that at the very least investment in training courses is going to be needed and possibly more employment contracts.

Merger is necessary to achieve these laudable ends so that the financial investment required can be appropriately targeted at the area of greatest need. A single finance committee and a single parish pastoral council will be able to offer better advice and counsel to Fr. Simon on these issues.

Regarding Mass times, with effect from 4th January 2026 and my appointment as the sole parish priest within the Cluster [and following a general parish meeting on 9th December after my appointment had been announced], the seven Masses previously celebrated within the Cluster were reduced to four: two Vigil Masses on Saturday and two on Sunday morning. Weekly Mass attendance at those four Masses is averaging 500 per weekend.

Regarding the pastoral leadership of the parish, your Grace has already appointed me as the parish priest of all three parishes within the Cluster. I am assisted by Fr. Leonard Cox and the two permanent parish deacons, Gary O'Brien and Dominic Fahey. Fr. Jude Mbonu is resident in the former Presbytery of Christ the King and also assists as and when he is able alongside his full-time responsibilities as a Law Lecturer at Newman University. It is earnestly hoped that in July of this year, your Grace will ordain Thomas Joseph a congregant of St Margaret Mary to the permanent diaconate also for service within the Cluster. Claire Adler who was appointed Parish Secretary of Christ the King and Our Lady of the Assumption has now become the Cluster Secretary and with the concurrence of the relevant Finance Committees and with the assistance of Julia Hale, her hours have been extended to accommodate her additional responsibilities.

Regarding the bodies of ecclesial co-responsibility within the parish, the Finance Committee of each parish has met jointly in single session all through the tenure of my predecessor. If your Grace accedes to this Petition then that unified body will become the Finance Committee of the new parish. Likewise, under my predecessor a Pastoral Council was established for each parish which from the beginning met effectively as a single body in accordance with a constitution drafted *ad experimentum* by Deacon Gary. Since the publication of your Grace's decree mandating the establishment of a Parish Pastoral Council for every parish, a new body was reconstituted in accordance with the Model Articles circulated by the Reverend Chancellor. Again, that unified body will become the new PPC of the new parish if your Grace decrees the merger hereby proposed.

Recognising the gravity of such a decision, I acknowledge the canonical obligations to consult with the Council of Priests and, in cases involving the alienation of sacred edifices, to seek the consent of the Chapter of Canons and the Diocesan Finance Council as stipulated in Canon 1292.

Furthermore, I understand the Diocesan Solicitor will review the petition to ensure compliance with civil and charity law, safeguarding both canonical integrity and legal propriety.

To ensure thorough coordination, a copy of this petition has been shared with the Diocesan Chancellor, who oversees the procedural aspects of such matters.

Thank you for your guidance and prayers. I respectfully submit this request for your approval to initiate the process

Respectfully in Christ,

Fr. Simon Ellis

Parish Priest of Christ the King, Kingstanding and Our Lady of the Assumption, Maryvale

[Parish Seals]