

Towards a Strategic Plan for our Parish of St Joseph's

Dear fellow parishioners,

You may recall that when this Parish Pastoral Council was established last year, it was given two main tasks to undertake. The first was to draft a constitution for the Council and have it approved by parishioners. This was finalised at our parish forum in December last year.

The second was to draft a strategic plan for our parish and also have it approved by parishioners. In recent weeks we have commenced this planning work. It has been largely based on what we heard from parishioners during the consultations we held throughout November, as well as on the feedback received from Bishop Martin during his visit at that time. You will see that we have adopted a strategic plan structure commonly used in various types of organisations, including church parishes. It involves statements of vision, mission, guiding principles and priorities.

Before we move to the next stage of making more concrete and detailed action plans, we are keen to get your feedback on our planning work thus far.

To this end we invite you to attend either of two parish forums to be held over the coming week:

St Margaret Mary's: Thursday, March 23 at 7pm

Sacred Heart: Sunday, March 26 at 11am

It would be great if you could attend one of these forums. However, we fully understand that may not be possible for all parishioners, so please feel welcome to forward your comments via email to stjosephvicppc@gmail.com or by dropping a note into the presbytery.

You may find the prompts at the end of this letter helpful in shaping your thoughts.

Our suggested statements of Vision, Mission, Guiding Principles & Priorities

When drafting the suggested Vision and Mission statements we have kept in mind that they are generally expected to be high level in nature and to be succinct.

Vision

Our vision describes what we aspire for our parish to be. Establishing a vision that is shared by as many parishioners as possible helps us all understand the trajectory we are on.

Our suggested Vision: *“St Joseph’s Parish as a dynamic and growing Catholic faith community, that welcomes everyone to the living presence of Jesus Christ.”*

Mission

Our mission describes what we aspire to do. It identifies the main activities we will undertake in pursuit of our vision.

Our suggested Mission: *“Our Mission is to create vibrant and rich liturgical experiences, a deep sense of belonging and connection for all, opportunities for ongoing education in faith, and to provide outreach and service within and beyond our community.”*

Guiding Principles

Our guiding principles describe the behaviours we commit to. They serve as reference points for the decisions we take, our policies and practices, and for what we can expect of each other. Here we have adapted for this purpose, many of the principles in the Parish Pastoral Council Constitution previously approved by parishioners.

Our suggested Guiding Principles:

As parishioners of St Joseph's, we strive to:

1. Act in a spirit of appreciation and gratitude for First Nations People.

To acknowledge First Nations People as the traditional owners of our land, to respect and honour their culture, and to offer welcome, kindness and support to everyone.

2. Act in a way that upholds the safety of children and all vulnerable people.

To hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and all vulnerable people as a central and fundamental responsibility for our community.

3. Act to support all parishioners to live a more connected life within our Parish Community.

To work in an outward facing manner, placing people in the centre, and focusing on building relationships with others, whether or not they regularly attend Mass, so that the needs of the other are met by and with people they trust.

4. Act with a listening heart

To ensure that everyone knows that their voice is unique and indispensable and that what they contribute is of value to our parish community, always listening to understand and to empower others.

5. Act with selflessness

To act for the benefit of all and always strive to achieve the common good.

6. Act fairly and with openness

To work collaboratively and to make decisions fairly and transparently, appreciating that honesty and accountability are the foundations of trust and social relationships that provide hope and confidence.

7. Act with an appreciation of the need for all of us to continually develop our talents and skills.

To step back and to set aside sacred space every day so as to genuinely live in the present while respecting the past, appreciating that everyone is called to help create the future, a future for the Parish of St Joseph that is good, beautiful, just and true.

Priorities

The vision, mission and guiding principles answer the question concerning what sort of parish we want to be and what we want it to achieve.

But when considering what we now need to do, not all things will be of equal importance or urgency, and there will be some interdependencies between them. And of course, with our limited resources, we can't do everything at once. So, we need to prioritise the matters to which we devote our efforts, in a way that gradually builds momentum.

You will see that our suggested priorities at this stage are high level in nature. After we have received parishioner feedback on them, we will develop concrete action plans for each.

Suggested priority for the next nine months:

“Our primary focus for this period will be on building a more welcoming, connected, and inclusive parish community.”

We see this as being foundational. So much of what we want to achieve is going to be dependent upon more people feeling welcome, connected to one another, and finding ways to make their unique contributions.

We have been thinking about initiatives such as:

- establishing a “ministry of welcome” at weekend Masses,
- preparing information packs for new parishioners,
- being more intentional about creating opportunities for parishioners to get to know one another and socialise,
- establishing a formal home visiting program to the isolated and lonely,
- outreaching and listening to those who may not regularly attend Mass,
- and establishing symbols that indicate that everyone is truly welcome.

To succeed in this, our primary focus, we recognise that we need to bring our parishioner database up to date and improve our methods of communication and reaching out to people. This is particularly the case with families who have children in our two primary schools and young people, in order for us to better understand how our parish can be more relevant to their lives.

Whilst we suggest this should be our primary focus throughout this year, within the constraints of the limited resources available to us, we think we should be alert to opportunities to undertake preliminary work on the other important, but less urgent matters outlined below.

Suggested longer term priorities:*1. "Build the long-term sustainability of our parish."*

Here we have in mind matters such as:

- Engaging with the Archdiocese concerning its plans for establishing geographic based "missions" in which parishes share resources.
- Establishing a short- and longer-term financial strategy that would include determining the future of the convent and presbytery properties.
- Creating committee and working party structures appropriate for engaging as many parishioners as is possible in the initiatives prioritised under the strategy.
- Fostering of a culture of diffused leadership.

2. "Enhance our liturgies and create more opportunities for ongoing faith development."

Here we have in mind matters such as:

- Making our liturgies, particularly our weekend Masses, richer, more vibrant prayerful experiences. In our consultations with parishioners during November last year, we received very positive feedback concerning our liturgies, but we recognise that more could be done.
- Strengthening our introduction to the parish when families bring their children for baptism.
- Addressing the expressed desire of parishioners to have greater opportunities for ongoing formation in faith.

Prompts for parishioner feedback.

Taking into account the issues identified in our consultations last year and the feedback received from Bishop Martin, do you think the suggested statements of Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles adequately answer the questions concerning what sort of parish we aspire to be and what we want it to achieve?

Do you think we have chosen the right focus for the year ahead?

What do you think would help us become a more welcoming, connected, and inclusive parish community?

Thank you for your consideration of these matters and for your ongoing contributions to our parish.

Kind regards,

Katherine Wong

Chairperson, Parish Pastoral Council