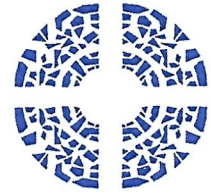




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18th October 2025

Dear Parishioners and School Families of St Cecilia's and St Michael's,

We are writing to announce that St Cecilia's Parish and St Michael's Parish are entering into a process of partnering. This means that the two parishes will be cooperating closely with one another, and some things which were previously done separately will soon be done together. For example, we may have a combined Sunday bulletin, or cooperation in the delivery of programs of preparation for the Sacraments.

There are several reasons for this development. Since May 2021, the Archdiocese of Melbourne has been involved in a process of renewal called *Take the Way of the Gospel*. This process recognises that the Church is now in a very different situation from where it was decades ago, and therefore that we need to redesign our church structures so they are appropriate for today's reality. The aim of *Take the Way of the Gospel* is to foster parish communities that are viable, vibrant and vital.

In our local context, Fr McGovern's appointment as Parish Priest of St Cecilia's ends on 25 November 2026. Fr McGovern came to St Cecilia's on 25 October 2016, and will have been in the parish for ten years when his appointment ends next year. He has indicated that he will not seek an extension of his appointment after November 2026.

Earlier this year, the Vicar General of the Archdiocese Fr Tony Kerin met with us, and asked us to explore what it might look like for our two communities to journey more closely together in partnership.

As we considered this together, we could see both challenges and possibilities. Seen positively, it is an opportunity for the two parishes to grow in relationship with one another — to listen, to learn, and to share the gifts that each of our communities brings. By working together, we could broaden our ministry and outreach, and strengthen our witness to the Gospel in our local area.

To help us take these steps, we have established a Partnership Team with representatives from both parishes. Along with the two of us, our Partnership Team includes Giuletta Petrone, Gail Ryan, and John Whitehouse from St Michael's; Helen Dee, Trudy Maiden, and Paul Townshend from St Cecilia's, and Suzette Diaz from the

St. Michael's and St. Cecilia's Parishes are committed to the safety, wellbeing and dignity of all children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

Archdiocese. This team together will seek to discern the best way forward for our communities of faith. You are welcome to speak with us or with anyone on this team to ask questions and to express your concerns or hopes.

In both St Cecilia's and St Michael's, we will have the opportunity to talk together about what partnering will involve. What we hear and learn from these discussions will be very important in guiding our discernment of how we can grow together. Our first opportunity for these discussions will be after the Sunday Masses in each parish on the weekend of 15th and 16th of November.

Some of you might be wondering if partnering means that it is inevitable that at some time in the future, the two parishes will amalgamate into a single parish. At this stage, we are only thinking about partnering. If our partnership is successful, some years from now, many of us may have come to the view that this is working well and the next step is to become a single parish. But even if that is considered in the future, there is a detailed process which we would have to follow. We mention this matter now only to be as transparent as possible.

It is our hope that, by walking together, we will become better equipped to respond to the needs of our people and to Christ's call to be His Church in the world today. We ask you to join us on this journey: to discern with us the positives and negatives of growing together, and perhaps to step out in faith as we try something which will be new and a bit different.

Let us remain attentive to the Holy Spirit, who leads us in prayerful discernment, so that our steps may be guided in faith, hope, and love.

In Christ,



Fr Darien Sticklen
Parish Priest
St Michael's, Ashburton



Fr Kevin McGovern
Parish Priest
St Cecilia's, Camberwell South

Together with:

Giulietta Petrone
Gail Ryan
John Whitehouse

Helen Dee
Trudy Maiden
Paul Townshend