



Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools

The Way of the Gospel

How our local communities of faith might continue to address the missionary call of the Gospel into the future.



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge that MACS offices and Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne are situated on the lands of the five language groups that make up the Kulin Nation, who have walked upon and cared for this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge their continued deep spiritual connection and relationship to Country.

We pay respects to their Elders past, present and future, and commit to the ongoing journey of reconciliation.





School Advisory Councils

Formation for mission is a process that is:

- systematic,
- collaborative,
- graduated and
- ongoing.

Formation for School Advisory Councils supports their roles in:

- articulating and enacting the school's vision and mission.
- promoting the school's Catholic ethos and culture.
- promoting faith formation and development.



Key Principles

- This process holds itself within relationships built on accompaniment centred on the self, others, creation and God.
- Catholic educators need a “formation of the heart”: they need to be led to that encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others, so that their educational commitment becomes a consequence deriving from their faith, a faith which becomes active through love (cf. Gal 5:6)
- [Educating Together in Catholic Schools](#)
#25



Formation for mission in Catholic education:

1. Is “formation of the heart” that is characterised by prayerfulness and reflection.
2. Is respectful, experiential and relevant, building on participants’ personal story and everyday reality.
3. Is explicitly Christological, scripturally rich and ecclesially grounded.
4. Has an affective focus on a person’s faith journey and discipleship.
5. Has substantive theological content.
6. Sets out to build communal Catholic religious identity and culture.
7. Is differentiated according to individual and community needs.
8. Promotes personal vocation, connection with the Catholic tradition and responsiveness to mission.
9. Develops the willingness, confidence and capacities of participants in their roles to serve the evangelising mission of Catholic school education.

[A Framework for Formation for Mission in Catholic Education](#): p14



Prayer

All:

Lord, we thank you for your presence as we start our Archdiocesan 'Take the Way of the Gospel' journey together in prayer.

May we open ourselves to you with a new depth of trust and conviction in your guiding hand, so that we may discern our journey with compassionate and humble hearts and come to know your Holy Spirit moving within and amongst us, and so be transformed.

Amen.



The way of the Gospel was, from the very beginning, a changing of arrangements to engage with changing circumstances.

Melbourne is a city of cities, meaning it is a territory comprising many diverse locations, each different in character and culture. We are a local Church that is made up of many and varied realities, and this is deeply embedded in our history



Process:

In looking to the future and how best to organise our Parishes as the basic cell structure of Gospel life within our wider community, we must look to newer ways of thinking... Our current structures are unsustainable...

Each session allows us to work through 3 stages:

- **Explore,**
- **Reflect**
- **Respond**





At a glance:

[*The Way of the Gospel*](#) is The Archdiocese of Melbourne's process of exploration about how our local communities of faith might continue to address the missionary call of the Gospel into the future. Archbishop Peter's [Pastoral Letter](#) in Pentecost 2021 was just the first step of a much longer journey of reimagining our missionary communities.

The Archdiocese has begun the task of re-framing how we arrange our local communities of grace, be they parishes, language communities, or movements, by identifying the various Mission areas of our Archdiocese, and start the process of arranging the resources we need to bring these about.

This task of identification has occurred over the 12 months, and moves to a staged establishment of them over the next three to five years. Archbishop Peter envisages around 50 to 60 such Missions to be established.

This is not about parish amalgamations or closures at this stage but an opportunity to see how we might arrange ourselves into Missions, to see what our families look and feel and live like, before questions of the number of parishes or communities within each mission might be properly asked.



Explore:

to travel through (an unfamiliar area) in order to learn about it

In Catholic schools and our parishes we feel the uncertainty that the future holds in our current circumstances. The Gospel that inspired the founding of each and every school in the Archdiocese is seriously challenged by cultural shifts, social disinterest, pandemic-induced loss, and a painful history.

But we also recognise that our present way of doing things needs reframing; we know that a change of tactics is needed in the changed circumstances in which we live.

Calling ourselves, and our people, and our schools to this change is never easy, but it is our hope.

Focus:

What are missions and how might they impact on parishes and their schools?



“

I dream of a “missionary option, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation. The renewal of structures demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light: as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented, to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open.

POPE FRANCIS, EVANGELII GAUDIUM §27



“

The Way of the Gospel – the path of missionary discipleship – has always been adapted by every generation to fit the local circumstances. Now is our time; here is our place.

Our parishes will remain at the heart of the gathering of God's people locally, but we need to adapt the way we resource our local communities, including the placement of clergy, catechists and other lay leaders, to form Missions that comprise a family of faith communities.

ARCHBISHOP PETER A COMENSOLI



Explore: How do we arrange our local communities of grace?

What the Archbishop is inviting us into is a re-framing of how we arrange our local communities of grace, be they parishes, language communities, or movements. This begins with identifying the various Mission areas of our Archdiocese, followed by the process of arranging the resources to bring these Missions about. In inviting us into this task, the archbishop has acknowledged that some Missions will be very readily identifiable and need to be established quickly, while others will take time to develop.

He asks that local communities embark on identifying these missions over the next 12-18 months, before moving towards a staged establishment of Missions over the next three to five years.



'Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Gospel to all creation.'
Mark 16:15

AN INTRODUCTION

This document provides a brief introduction into this process and what this invitation means for you and your parish.

What is 'Take the Way of the Gospel' inviting us to?

We are being called — laypeople and clergy together — to a renewed sense of our missionary purpose. Exploring and dreaming a missionary way forward lies at the heart of our baptismal call to live out the Gospel. It is something that Pope Francis talks about in his Apostolic Letter, *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013): 'I dream of a "missionary option", that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that: the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation. The renewal of structures demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light: as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented, to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open.'

But why now?

Over many years, our lay people and clergy have identified the need to find new and fresh ways to proclaim the Gospel into our local communities. One aspect of this re-awakening is to attend to the manner in which these local communities of grace — be they parishes, language communities or movements of our Archdiocese — are arranged and function so that they bring renewed and ongoing life for God's people. In the context of our current COVID reality a sense of urgency to this re-imagining has also grown.

As Archbishop Peter A Comensoli has reflected, 'The Way of the Gospel — the path of missionary discipleship — has always been adapted by every generation to fit the local circumstances. How this is arranged has varied according to time and place. Now is our time; here is our place ... Our parishes will remain at the heart of the gathering of God's people locally, but we need to adapt the way we resource our local communities, including the placement of clergy, catechists and other lay leaders, to form Missions that comprise a family of faith communities.'

So what does being more 'mission-oriented' look like?

Pope Francis offers some guiding principles in *Evangelii Gaudium* (§28) for how a parish might become more missionary. They are worth reflecting on in the context of our own parishes here in Melbourne:

- Is our parish 'in contact with the homes and lives of its people?'
- Is our parish 'an environment for hearing God's word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration?'
- Does our parish 'encourage and train its members to be evangelisers?'
- Is our parish 'a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach?'



'In our day Jesus' command to "go and make disciples" echoes in the changing scenarios and ever new challenges to the Church's mission of evangelization, and all of us are called to take part in this missionary "going forth". Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out ... to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the "peripheries" in need of the light of the Gospel.' POPE FRANCIS, *EVANGELII GAUDIUM* §20





The Aim

Effectiveness
in sharing
the Gospel

Vibrancy,
vitality,
viability

Equitable
sharing of
resources



What is a Mission?

A distinctive faith locality that lends itself to being lived out in family-like arrangements

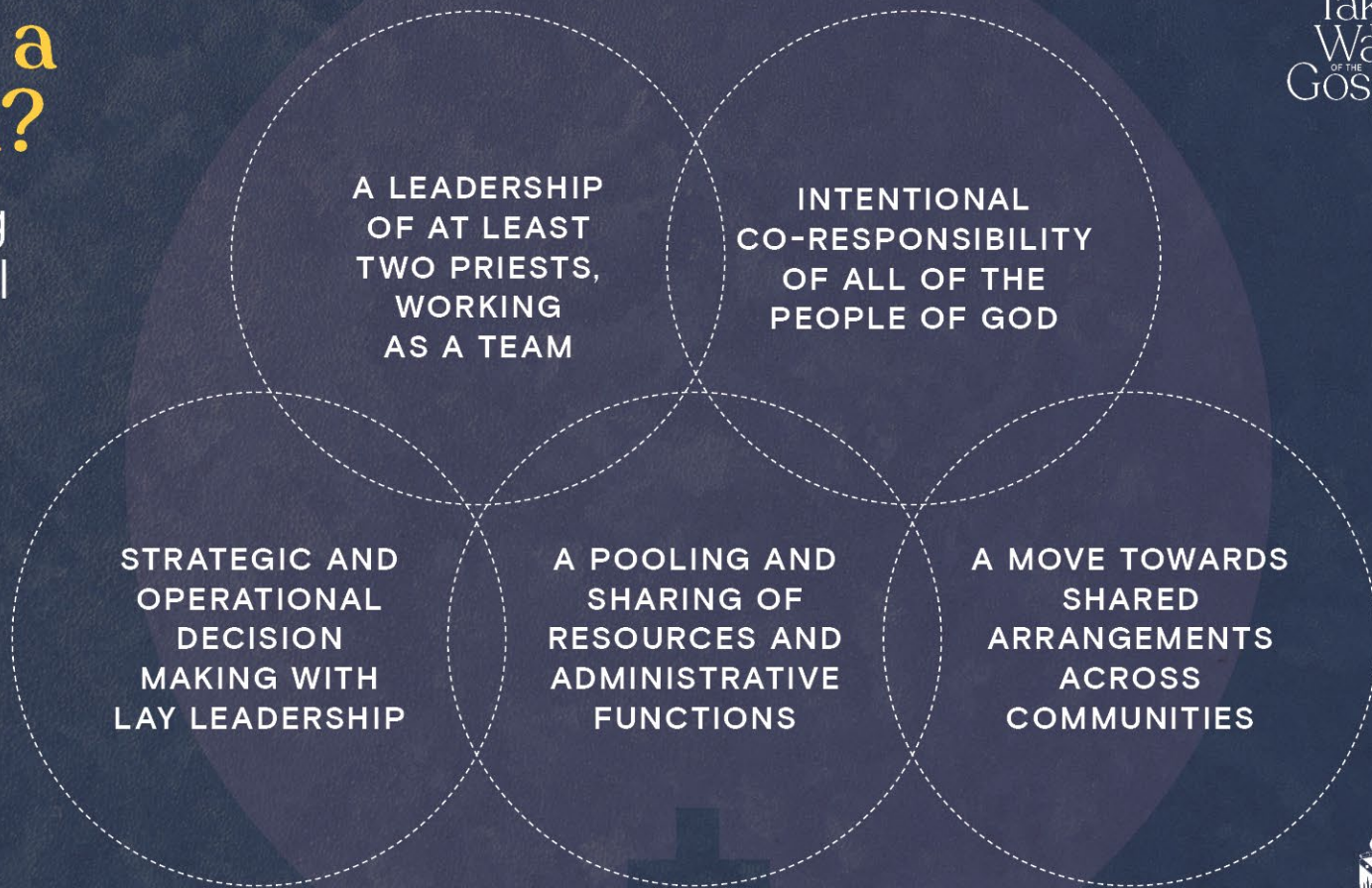
A LOCAL AREA,
WITH COMMONALITIES
IN HISTORY,
DEMOGRAPHICS,
GEOGRAPHY

A COLLABORATIVE
FOCUS ON
EVANGELISATION,
WORSHIP,
FORMATION AND
OUTREACH

A FAMILY OF
COMMUNITIES,
WORKING TOGETHER
FOR VIBRANCY,
VITALITY AND
VIABILITY

What is a Mission?

A reordering of ministerial and material resourcing





Explore: A Mission is a distinctive faith locality

A MISSION IS:

- A local area, with commonalities in history, demographics, geography
- A collaborative focus on evangelisation, worship, formation and outreach
- A family of communities, working together for viability and vitality
- A reordering of ministerial and material resourcing
- A leadership of at least two priests, working as a team
- A strategic and operational decision making with lay leadership
- An intentional co-responsibility of all of the people of God
- A pooling and sharing of resources and administrative functions
- A move towards shared arrangements across communities, working in solidarity.

Choose a:

Word that captured your attention or struck you as powerful.

Phrase that moved, engaged, or provoked you.

Sentence that was meaningful to you, that you felt captures the core idea of the text.

Share and identify common themes



Reflect:

to bend back light from a surface

What might we ask of our local parish do as a mission: a family of faith communities?

- Is it in contact with the homes and lives of its people?
- Is it an environment for hearing God's word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration?
- Does it encourage and train its members to be evangelisers?
- Is it a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach?

[Evangelii Gaudium](#) #28 #109

Focus:

How do these questions about parish impact on our understanding of school?

Reflect: I know the plans I have for you

A Reading from Jeremiah 29:11-14

For I know the plans I have in mind for you – declares the LORD – plans for peace, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.

When you call to me and come and pray to me, I shall listen to you.

When you search for me, you will find me; when you search wholeheartedly for me, I shall let you find me – declares the LORD.



Reflect:

Key quotes

The challenges, wounds and disruptions of recent years, coupled with the life-changing reality of the COVID pandemic, have opened my own eyes, ears and heart to recognise that our present way of doing things needs to be re-imagined in the face of the changing circumstances in which we live.

But what might this look like?

Reflect

Silently:

What was in your heart as we began to reflect today?

Where are you now?

What moves in your heart?

What longings can you feel?

What hesitations or fears are you aware of?

Quietly bring these to

Share:

Each member in turn nominates one hope.

“My hope for re-imagined missions is that they can bring
to our school community”



Respond: to say something in return

The big picture presented earlier only works when a single parish focus is its starting point. It isn't about the partnering of parishes so much as sharing the ways various parishes have renewed their purpose and what other parishes might learn from them. The message is that mission renewal starts locally.

Focus:

How can mission renewal in the parish find expression in the school?





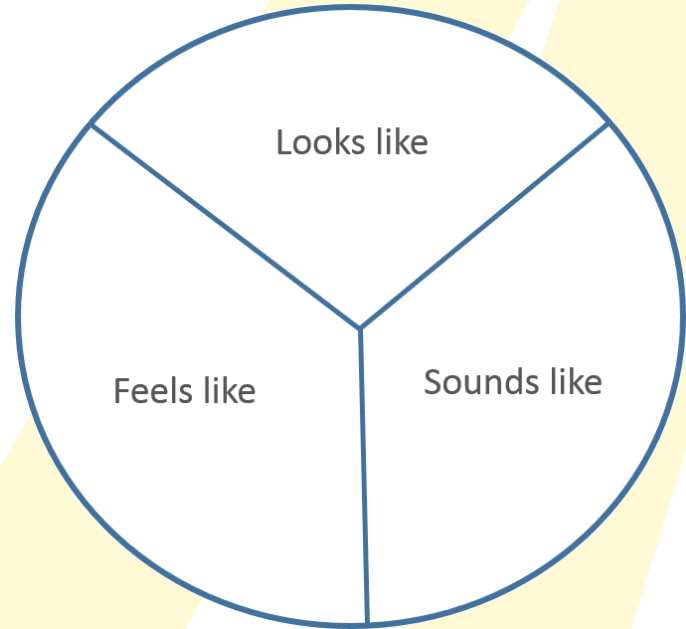
Respond: Co-responsibility in the Church

How do we share mission now?

What does the shared mission of parish and school: look like, sound like, feel like?

A Looks Like/Sounds Like/Feels Like chart is a simple tool that helps participants identify the specific kinds of behaviors that accompany team cooperation goal or strategy.

It is a way of making otherwise invisible processes visible—and thus accessible—to participants.



Respond: Co-responsibility in the Church

Key Concepts

- The connection between parish and school enables our young people to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist and the sacraments: the 'source and summit' of our Christian lives.
 - Life-giving relationships between parishes and their schools lie at the heart of an educational experience that is truly Catholic.
1. How can a shared approach of co-responsibility in the Church and this invitation to shared discernment facilitate renewal of parish and invigorate mission within schools?
 2. How can the work being done in school invigorate the parish?





In conclusion

Each aspect or session of formation builds on the past and has a context ahead, so each aspect or session builds into the next. This reflective, developmental process enables participants to apply the experience to their everyday life and their ministry in Catholic education.





The context ahead

- How can the reflective, developmental process (explore, reflect and respond) impact on the experience of your everyday life and your ministry in Catholic education?
- What will you take away?
- What action can we take as a next step to bringing the mission to life?
- Commit to something today that builds on the experience you shared here today.





Closing prayer

All:

Come, Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts of your faithful,
and enkindle in us the fire of your love.

Send forth your Spirit and we shall be
created, and you shall renew the face of
the earth.

Holy Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for
us.

Amen





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